

Annual Council Approves Women Baptising
Healing in Hungary
Non-SDA Sabbath-keepers in Ghana

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JEWELRY

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Early Adventist Practice
Oh Wow, You've Pierced Your Ears!
Modesty Goes for Males Too

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If the People Can Change Eastern Europe, Why Not the Adventist Church?

Changes in life-style combine enduring principles with changing cultural practice. For example, what is considered appropriate dress for Adventists, including definitions of jewelry, may change over time, while the relevant principles remain the same. The special cluster of articles in this *Spectrum* raises scriptural, historical, theological, and moral questions about a largely ignored but emotionally-laden change taking place in the Adventist lifestyle—the increasing use of jewelry.

This *Spectrum* also reports on possible changes in the role of women—specifically their ordination to the Adventist ministry. The Annual Council voted to recommend that the 1990 General Conference Session retain the status quo—no ordination of women anywhere in the world. For many women—and men—this matter, more clearly than whether or not to wear jewelry, is a matter of principle. Here, they are convinced, change is long overdue and should come promptly. Discussion of this issue has intensified calls for a denominational leadership that welcomes

diversity of practice among members and greater self-governance among world divisions.

In some places, change comes within months, expanding from dozens of Protestants studying and praying in the basement of Johann Sebastian Bach's Thomas Kirche, to 500,000 East Germans singing and marching in Leipzig, to promises of free elections for the entire country. In some places, change is fundamental, sweeping from shipyard workers protesting one-party rule to Poland's communist party accepting pluralism in the government. In some places, 15,000 hesitant Prague dissidents swell in three days to 200,000 Czechs marching into Wenceslas Square, demanding and receiving freedom of the press and a new government. In some places, central leadership responds by itself calling for immediate comprehensive change. In some places institutions are being reinvigorated. If the members care enough, one of those places, one of those institutions, could be the Seventh-day Adventist church.

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From La Sierra to Cambridge: Growing Up Theologically

by Gary Chartier

A long time ago, I arrived at Loma Linda University intending to pursue a degree in political science, hoping to spend the rest of my life teaching at my *alma mater*, La Sierra Academy. Two years after my graduation, I have completed the first year of a doctoral program in theological ethics and the philosophy of religion at the University of Cambridge, in England, and wonder if someday I may spend the rest of my life teaching at my *alma mater*, Loma Linda University. What happened?

I had started, I realize now, to do theology long before I thought of theology as a vocation. I pored over the documents arising out of the Desmond Ford, Walter Rea, and Robert Brinsmead controversies, as I read an introductory philosophy of religion text, as I argued about the exegesis of Daniel and Revelation. But the realization that theology was for me came, in the end, from my interchange with five professors—whom I list in the chronological order of my studies with them: Charles Teel, Richard Rice, Fritz Guy, John Hick, and Brian Hebblethwaite.

Charles Teel: “Leave Home, Leave Home!”

A sandy moustache bristles over an expressive mouth framed by

Gary Chartier, a doctoral candidate in theology at Cambridge University, graduated from the College of Arts and Sciences, Loma Linda University.

prominent dimples. An unruly shock of hair wanders across his barely wrinkled forehead. His hands—especially the broken finger—move wildly, expressively. And his voice—whether heard in the course of one of his perennial snorts, guffaws, or chuckles, or as, in the cadence of Martin Luther King, he proclaims The Word to a class that’s never before seen a teacher throw chalk or stand on a table—is always rich and resonant. It is probably pronouncing words—or *wanna-be* words—ending in “ness”: humanness, churchness. “Charles Teel can make a noun out of anything,” a friend once told me.

I cannot forget that I heard that voice intone an indictment against the freshman honors seminar of which I was a part, condemning our failure to peruse what we thought was an impossibly long reading assignment. I remember, too, hearing the voice monotonously repeat the words, “Leave home! Leave home!” as Charles tried to nudge me to consider educational and experiential possibilities beyond the pale of southern California. I wish I had heard it echo off the walls of Riverside City Parish—a pioneering, sadly now-defunct effort in urban ministry and Christian community that Charles spearheaded in the 1970s—or listened as Charles sang freedom songs through the bars of a Southern jail cell.

Responsibility is the word that comes to mind as I trace the common thread binding together these disparate experiences. From that first class through my discovery of Charles’s committed past to my dialogues with him about education and vocation, he has taught me responsibility by

precept and example. Theology, I have learned from him, must be both personally and socially responsible.

Charles tells me he is not a theologian. I can only attribute this to false modesty after an evening in Loma Linda when, having arranged for a cocky but naïve freshman to present his honors seminar paper at a meeting of the university ethics colloquium, his comments “from the floor” helped to save that freshman’s theological hide. But even if he were not a theologian, it would still be true that he has taught me about theology. His honors seminar presentation on Latin American liberation theology encouraged me to make that theological movement the topic of my research paper for the class. And his willingness to afford me more than one opportunity to publicly share the fruits of that research gave me a measure of confidence that I had something interesting to say about a theological topic, and thus an incentive to think theologically.

In particular, he has taught me that theology must take account of and respond to its social, cultural, and historical context, not only by encouraging me to read responsible theology but also by showing me how it might be done. He has helped me see that all of life is God’s, and that the distinction between sacred and secular is thus both artificial and unhelpful. And he has consequently enabled me to realize that talk of God and Creation, of justification and sanctification, of sin and atonement, is relevant not merely for academics and pastors, but for communities—cities, nations, universities—seeking to live as God would have them live.

If all of life is God’s, then the validity of another of Charles’s favorite themes is evident: the border between the personal and social is vague, indefinite, and inconsequential. Every social problem has a personal dimension, and vice versa. To reflect theologically about a social situation is to lay the groundwork for responsible personal action. And to remedy an interpersonal relationship may be the first step toward the broader social change theological reflection has led one to envision.

Here, especially, Charles has instructed by example as well as precept. When he not only

prayed, but marched with civil-rights protestors, he risked the possibility that not only his faith but also his body would be pummeled by police water hoses. In leading a group of mostly white, middle-class La Sierra academics to worship and serve amidst a seedy, primarily black downtown Riverside neighborhood, he inspired them to explore what their commitment to justice and community might mean for them personally. And by exposing me to the right books, he made it necessary for me to confront my duty to the world’s poor.

So Charles has taught me that theology must respond to context and that the theologian must be responsible both socially and personally. He has also, I stress, helped me learn responsibility in other areas of my life. And he has practiced a commendable responsibility as he has lived out his commitment to being my friend.

Richard Rice: “How Are We to Know God?”

Dark, boyishly handsome, with just enough gray in his once jet-black hair to give him an air of distinction, Richard Rice seems to live an enormously full life. Woodworker, swim-club president, French-horn player, father, husband, author of four books, he exhibits an enviable ability to keep the diverse elements of his personal and professional life in balance. He is well-versed in literature, history, and philosophy, as well as theology; my friend Nabil Abu-Assal once described him to me as the most broadly educated person on the La Sierra faculty.

That breadth was something I felt I was lacking when I enrolled in his undergraduate course in the philosophy of religion. My educational focus remained history and politics, but a university teaching post now seemed more attractive than employment at La Sierra Academy. Political philosophy, I had decided, would be the subject I taught and wrote about primarily. And I realized that, while I had taken two courses in political thought at Loma Linda University, I had little or no formal training in any other area of philosophy.

The philosophy of religion had interested me for some time; and Rice's course was, in any case, one of the very few offered at the university in which I could obtain exposure to philosophy. So I enrolled—and was hooked.

The question, How are we to know God? has preoccupied Richard Rice throughout his theological career. In particular, he has devoted his considerable powers to exploring the relationship of so-called "natural" knowledge of God—that gained through reason, experience, and analysis of the world—to that provided by revelation. The

From Rick Rice I have learned the importance of rational reflection on God, humanity, and the world. Because God's world is one, philosophical and theological queries and approaches can never be appropriately separated.

problems surveyed in *Religious Belief and the Modern World* were not, therefore, simply nuisances to be dealt with by the apologist for Christianity before the truly important work of theology could be gotten on with. Instead, I realized—especially in a subsequent directed study—that wrestling with such matters as the problem of evil and the argument for God's existence is itself part of the theological task.

Because rational reflection is a key portion of the theological enterprise, Richard Rice taught me, theology must take serious account of philosophy. The questions he asks, questions about knowledge, human freedom, and the nature of necessity, are in large measure philosophical ones. And concern with such questions is not merely an idiosyncrasy of his. The questions, though by their nature philosophical, are vital for any theological system. Rational reflection on fundamental issues is indispensable for good theology.

Theology cannot avoid such fundamental issues because it must take experience seriously. The vision of theology I have acquired from Richard Rice is of a discipline that meets people

where they are, building upon their self-understanding and their interpretation of their world to explicate the significance of basic theological convictions. In a different sort of way, Rice, like Charles Teel, taught me that reality is of a piece, that our theology must be true to the whole of our experience of God, world, others, and self. Because this is God's world, and because we are God's creations, good theology cannot fail to take human nature and experience into account.

Another closely related theme that runs through Rice's evolving theological symphony is the integrity and significance of the created order, a theme that comes to particular expression in his first book, *The Openness of God*. I first encountered Rice in the pages of that book, as he developed a position I and many others found strange and not a little frightening. The future is in principle unknowable, he affirmed, and since God can't do the logically impossible, God can no more know the future than we can. Or at least that is what most readers remember about the book. But Rice has something with far wider implications to say—namely, that creation is real. What Rice has helped me see about creation is that God respects the created order. God grants to creatures the power to choose, to initiate novelty, even to go against the divine will. And if the created order is granted real integrity, Rice argues, then God's experience of it must, in some sense, grow and change with it. That's perhaps a new, crazy-sounding idea, but I think it follows from the fact that creation is real, and not just a puppet show being played out to amuse God.

So, from Rick Rice I learned the importance of rational reflection on God, humanity, and the world, informed by the realization that—because God's world is one—philosophical and theological queries and approaches can never be appropriately separated. And as I have watched him continue to write, even under the time pressures a Loma Linda University faculty member must always confront, as I have observed the discipline and rigor with which he thinks, I have been set an example that shames my all-too-often slipshod approach to doing theology.

When I completed Rice's *Religious Belief and the Modern World* course, I was still a history and

political-science major. But I had grown progressively more interested in theological questions. I had met Rice's revered teacher, Fritz Guy, wandered in hero-worship through all 500-plus pages of his dissertation, and prepared to register for a course he was teaching that summer in feminist theology.

Fritz Guy: "Why Karl Marx Should Have Gone to Sabbath School"

When you meet Fritz Guy, your first impression is of fragility: he is small and slight. Much of his hair—like mine—has fled, and after one has (inappropriately) thought “egghead,” it's easy enough, free-associating, to think of eggshells and their vulnerability as well. But a second glance reveals a quiet, controlled intensity as he fixes you with his penetrating eyes. The low, baritone voice adds to his gravity. A third look undercuts any hasty judgments formed earlier, as one discovers a droll, almost earthy sense of humor, together with an authentic pastoral sensitivity and a curiosity incompatible with, respectively, the ivory-tower isolation and the self-satisfaction of the professional intellectual.

Pastoral sensitivity was not the characteristic I would have attributed to Fritz Guy the first time I met him. That was my own fault. He didn't have time to discuss university politics with two of us who had come from the associated student body of Loma Linda University with a proposal for a faculty-student strategy at the 1986 university constituency meeting—and he let us know that in no uncertain terms. But I began to detect, and respect, his pastoral inclinations a few months later, when he ended a discussion with me to attend to a poor, mentally disturbed old woman who had come in search of prayer to the University Church, where he now serves as a member of the staff. I began to develop a more nuanced picture of the man everyone agreed was the leading Adventist systematic theologian of his generation.

He continued to underline the importance of

pastoral concern, albeit of a different sort, in the course I took from him that summer. Feminist theology was new to me, but as the weeks went on I began to understand what it meant. Perhaps as important was my realization that the status of women in the Adventist church was something that mattered profoundly to Fritz Guy, and that he believed it important that theologians do something about it. The theologian, I saw, was one who cared deeply about the experience of the person in the pew. Fritz *had* been a pastor before he served as professor of theology at Loma Linda University and at the seminary; before he was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences; before he was assistant editor of *Insight* (but after he functioned as assistant editor of the *Criterion*). His theology has had the benefit of formation in the rough-and-tumble of real church life, in experiences with parishioners and counselees. I've discovered from observing him that such pastoral work is both useful fodder for the theological mill—and important in its own right.

I think I first encountered Fritz Guy's written

Fritz has shown me that good theology is at the same time both constructive and synthetic on the one hand and in creative dialogue with its heritage on the other.

work while a junior high school student, when an *Insight* article called “Why Karl Marx Should Have Gone to Sabbath School” caught my eye. That article brings to light the second important thing he's taught me: good theology is at the same time both constructive and synthetic on the one hand and in creative dialogue with its heritage on the other. In *Insight* and elsewhere Fritz has shown us ways to let new meanings emerge from old beliefs in a manner that fosters their renewed vitality. Take the article just referred to. In it he develops the idea that the dehumanization wrought by mass society, so powerfully diagnosed by Marx, finds at least part of its remedy in the Sabbath—which offers freedom for God and others from the demand to produce and perform. A basic belief—in the continuing validity of the

Sabbath command—achieves new significance in the light of contemporary reflection. And one could also point to interpretations of justification by faith, the atonement, Christ's high-priestly ministry, and the new earth, characterized by similar attentiveness to the past and openness to the present.

Theologians must take their subject matter seriously; they must take their pastoral responsibility seriously, but they must not take themselves seriously. And that's something else I've discovered as I've gotten to know Fritz Guy and watched him in action. I offer a story to make my point.

Theology would undoubtedly be better off if more theologians took occasion to remind themselves and their various audiences of their own genuine humanity.

Sometime in the 1950s, when the SDA Theological Seminary was still located in Washington, D.C., Fritz was studying there. He was enrolled in a class whose key feature was the impromptu translation and analysis of selected passages of the Greek New Testament. The teacher would select students at random to translate and comment upon a segment of the text assigned for the day, mentally noting who participated and who did not. If you were called on at random you had to know the whole passage under consideration reasonably well—a task that many no doubt found difficult. Fritz's response was simple and quite clever: as soon as the instructor got started, he would ask a question about the passage—and the instructor would place a mark in his mental register next to Fritz's name.

Fritz obviously learned exegesis: his contribution to a recent volume of papers on theology and the freedom of the will includes more Greek exegesis than any of the other essays by systematic theologians. But it seems important to me that he didn't feel guilt about not being an overachiever. More important, I think, is the fact that he felt free to tell the story on himself. Theology would undoubtedly be better off if more theologians took occasion to remind themselves and their various

audiences of their own genuine humanity.

That genuine humanity was also on display in Fritz's office as he graciously listened to a theologically illiterate political science major prattle about his doctoral dissertation. It was evident again when he took the time to read draft after draft of a feminist theology paper by that same political science major—a paper far less block-bustingly creative than its author then realized. And it has continued to be evident as he has shared afternoons and evenings of good conversation, allowing me to benefit from his wisdom as I attempt to understand the intricacies of theology and university politics—not to mention real life. By taking time to be a friend and academic mentor, Fritz has sharpened considerably my image of what a theologian ought to be.

I had more fun in Fritz Guy's feminist theology class than in any course I had taken up to that time. The questions asked, the nature of the reasoning involved, the breadth of vision encouraged, all captivated me. And though I was applying, even as the class came to an end, to a Ph.D. program in government at Claremont Graduate School, when I went to Claremont, I made it a point to look up the chairman of the religion department, an English philosopher of religion I'd first met on paper in Rick Rice's class, Religious Belief and the Modern World. His name was John Hick.

John Hick: "How Do We Know What We Say Religiously Is Credible?"

Given the choice, John Hick prefers to ask, rather than answer, questions. Perpetually interested in people and their habits, vices, virtues, surmises, and experiences, he enjoys biographies more than other kinds of books. Despite his fascination with people, he needs to devote substantial energy to learning and remembering the names of his students, in what one senses is a surprisingly difficult enterprise. He is congenial, gracious, quintessentially Eng-

lish, with a warm—if not always revealing—smile, and a welcoming handshake.

When I first met him, I assumed I would only be an occasional visitor to the Claremont religion department. How much linkage could there be, after all, between the work in that department and the one in which I intended to enroll? But sometime during the course of the year I decided to pursue my study of political philosophy from within the philosophy department. And as I read John Hick's classic work, *Evil and the God of Love*, I began to realize that the philosophy of religion, rather than political philosophy, might take up the balance of my time in graduate school. When I encountered difficulties with the philosophy department, I took the plunge, and asked the department of religion to consider my application file.

By the time the department announced its acceptance, I had read most of John's other major works, including *Faith and Knowledge* and *Death and Eternal Life*. I knew that at Loma Linda University I had encountered subtle and powerful minds. But I had not previously engaged with a mind that had benefited from the regular opportunities for study, research, and publication—and resulting public dialogue—that the major universities make available to their brighter lights. John Hick was exceedingly bright, and his work had enjoyed a circulation that had allowed him to set the agenda for at least an entire generation of Anglo-American philosophers of religion.

I was surprised, thus, to find him unpretentious and unassuming to a fault. I was particularly struck by something that happened on the first day of a class I took from him on the problem of religious knowledge. In front of a large seminar made up largely of greenhorn graduate students, he admitted his frustrating inability to make sense of a major work of contemporary German philosophy. This might, I grant, have been merely a device to elicit student comment. But the nature of his subsequent remarks discourages me from thinking so. I left class that day with a great deal of respect for a world-class scholar who could admit his fallibility.

Admitting fallibility has, in fact, been important for John throughout his career. And his

admissions of fallibility have been part and parcel of his work as the architect of an impressive—if ultimately unsatisfying—global philosophy of religion.

As for Richard Rice, experience is key for John Hick. Beginning with his own attraction to, and

John Hick has never shied away from that most foundational of queries, “How do we know that what we say religiously is true, or even credible?”

repulsion from, the overwhelming divine presence he could not help sensing—and finally finding himself compelled to acknowledge while a young law student in Edinburgh—and continuing with his interest in mysticism and psychic phenomena, he has stressed the crucial character of religious and paranormal experience for religious discourse. One need not accept his claim that such experience is the only valid basis for knowledge of or about God to recognize its relevance for the theologian.

I could not help but learn from John that theology must concern itself with foundational questions. From the beginning of his career, the problem of religious knowledge has captivated him. Unlike many theologians, he has never shied away from that most foundational of all theological queries, “How do we know that what we say religiously is true, or even credible?” As I listened to the questions he raised, I realized that such questions about the bases of our beliefs can never be avoided, as uncomfortable as that often is.

Because of his belief that experience is the only sure basis for religious knowledge, it is not surprising that in the mid-to-late 1960s John found himself asking whether such experience outside Christianity could be any less valid than that inside. When he assumed a teaching post in the English city of Birmingham he found himself immersed in a seething cauldron of ethnic and cultural tension. Drawn by what he believed was Christian duty of involvement in groups dedicated to ameliorating interreligious and interracial strife, he soon found himself confronted with

the problem of reconciling the apparent genuineness of the faith and practice of his Muslim and Hindu partners with his Christian belief in Jesus as the ultimate and final revelation of God. Rational considerations like those so important for Rick Rice have never been convincing to John, since experience is all-important for his system, and historical evidence about Jesus' actions and beliefs seem inconclusive to him. Thus, it was easy for him to admit his fallibility and make the leap to pluralism—the view that all the great major religious traditions derive from valid, but culturally conditioned, encounters with Ultimate Reality, and that, consequently, none is any better than any other.

One does not have to believe that no religion has special advantages to recognize the importance of religious diversity for theology. The fact that persons of good will are to be found within each major religious tradition and outside it—the fact that persons outside Christianity are morally

Theology must take account of religious and paranormal experience; theology must deal with foundational questions; theology must be global.

and spiritually transformed within their various traditions—is a problem that will not go away. There are various options Christians can adopt for dealing with what seems to be the work of God—dare we say the revelation of God?—outside Christianity. What Christian theology cannot do is bury its head in the sand.

Theology must take account of religious and paranormal experience; theology must deal with foundational questions; theology must be global. These insights forced me to think anew about the beliefs I had inherited from my Adventist forebears. If Christianity, much less Adventism, was to remain a viable option, the exposition of the church's faith would have to proceed along lines other than those I had heretofore learned.

Such alternative approaches were not so alternative, I later realized, in England—John Hick's

home. The characteristic English way of doing theology, I discovered, was marked both by a commitment to Christian orthodoxy and by an appreciation for the critical questions John and others raised. The representative of that characteristic English theology I encountered first, the man who was to become my doctoral supervisor, was Brian Hebblethwaite, dean of chapel at Queens' College, Cambridge, and university lecturer in Divinity.

Brian Hebblethwaite: "You Must Really Think We're a Bunch of Reprobates"

Big, bluff, and hearty, Brian Hebblethwaite can be surprisingly more adolescent than his 50 years and receding hairline might suggest. When my friend Ian Markham, another one of his doctoral students, cockily challenged him to a boat race on the river Cam, Ian found himself bested in short order by a man who has spent his summers as a Cambridge and Oxford student on the river in years past. Like most Cambridge faculty, Brian believes Timothy would have been told to imbibe a *lot* of wine for his stomach's sake if he'd had to deal with Cambridge students, so imbibe he does. I recall the evening when, sitting next to him at dinner, he reminisced about how, in previous years, he and another faculty member had forsaken the usual table wine for huge tankards of beer. Then he pointedly told a story about buying poker chips in New York and—even though I didn't look offended, as he'd apparently hoped I would—he finally said, with a twinkle in his eye, "You must really think we're a bunch of reprobates."

When he's not joking with his students, though, he's often helping them. He's gone out of his way on more than one occasion to help me through the red tape that fouls up life at Cambridge as much as it does at any other university. But he's done more, I stress, than help me through bureaucratic rough spots and make me laugh. He's opened me to the world of English theology.

When I stuck out my hand and said, “Canon Hebblethwaite?” as I met him for the first time at Los Angeles International Airport, I had already discovered his work. He had been among the more thoughtful opponents of a book John Hick and others had written denying the continuing validity of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, a move John believes necessary to place all religion on equal footing. Brian had reflected especially on the theological, moral, and spiritual significance of the Incarnation, arguing that the doctrine helped explain not only the life of Jesus but also a variety of the aspects of God’s interaction with the world, that the Incarnation made sense, that it was just what we might expect.

What was especially important was the way he and those on his side of the debate argued. They defended the orthodox view. But they did not appeal to mystery. They were confident that the truth was reasonable, that it was rationally defensible. Painstakingly, they defended the coherence of the doctrine, its religious adequacy, its basis in the historical evidence. They were defenders of the faith, but they were no less willing to engage with foundational questions than their opponents.

Their engagement with these foundational questions evinced a willingness to avoid dogmatic assumptions. Whether the gospel records, for instance, could be trusted in their portrait of a Jesus who could rightly be called the Son of God was exactly the question at issue in the debate with John and his associates. Brian and others who defended the orthodox view couldn’t simply appeal to the authority of Scripture; that was what the argument was about. Instead, they had to engage in careful historical-critical study of the relevant documents, which they were perfectly willing to do.

Brian, and the English theology to which he introduced me, took basic questions with the utmost seriousness. Good theology was like that, I saw. But orthodox theology, I learned, had no need to use orthodox methods. And I also discovered that orthodoxy didn’t have to be constricting. The faith of the Christian church throughout the centuries, as expressed especially in the Apostle’s and Nicene creeds, is very important for English theology. But outside those borders, English

theologians have felt free to be creative. I was amused, for instance, to discover that Dr. Rice’s position on divine foreknowledge, so controversial among both Adventists and conservative Christians generally in America, was the dominant view among English theologians of unquestioned fidelity to the Christian faith. By differentiating between the central and the peripheral, English theology has helped me to see that theology must adopt a proper sense of perspective.

When I met Brian Hebblethwaite at Los Angeles International Airport, I was taking him to a dinner that preceded a conference he and some other English philosophers and theologians were attending at Claremont. During that conference, Brian and his colleague, Don Cupitt, interviewed me and decided it would be appropriate to admit me for doctoral study at Cambridge, as I had requested earlier in the year. Having discovered English theology, I knew I wanted more of it.

There was, however, a major slip between the cup and the lip. Though I first left for Cambridge

In addition to the particular conclusions I have reached about the nature of the theological task in the course of my journey, I have been struck again and again by the significance of personal relationships.

in April of 1988, I had returned within three days homesick, lovesick, and culture-shocked. And it was not until, with Charles Teel’s damnations and assistances, I had crawled on my hands and knees, so to speak, and asked the divinity faculty of Cambridge University to accept me for the term beginning in September, that I really set out on my pilgrimage across the Atlantic in earnest. When I arrived and began my work, I found Brian as engaging as I had hoped he would be.

English theology has also taught me that theology is a literary activity. English writers of theology, perhaps because so many of their books first see the light of day as lectures, are expert at framing the most abstruse propositions with ele-

gance, finesse, and grace. I am still learning how to emulate them successfully.

That is the path that led me from political science to theology, and from California to Cambridge. In addition to the particular conclusions I have reached about the nature of the theological task in the course of my journey, I have been struck again and again by the signifi-

cance of personal relationships. Charles Teel, Richard Rice, and Fritz Guy at Loma Linda University have established a tradition of nurture and intellectual stimulation. Their example, and those of John Hick and Brian Hebblethwaite, have already motivated me to try to be the kind of theologian who is a teacher of his students because he is also their friend.

On The Road to Indianapolis: The 1989 Annual Council

This year our report on the Annual Council of the General Conference Committee, October 3-10 in Silver Spring, Maryland, takes a somewhat different form from other occasions. We begin with an overview of the highlights from a participant, who himself made several speeches from the floor, particularly regarding the ordination of women and interschool league sports. We then publish parts of three speeches by executive leaders of the church. Places where there has been slight editing of the talks, none of which were in manuscript form, are indicated by ellipses marks. For different reasons each talk was memorable.

For our overview of the council we invited Lawrence T. Geraty, president of Atlantic Union College and for many years leader of the denomination's archaeological expeditions in Jordan, to give us his personal perspective of the week's events.

Also, we have published the middle section of the Annual Council's opening address by Neal C. Wilson, president of the General Conference. The first part of the speech recounted achievements of the church in different parts of the world. The last part dealt with two specific cases of reconciliation: Des Cummings, Sr., retired president of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference, and Morris Venden, pastor of the Azure Hills Church in Southeastern California.

Charles L. Bradford, president of the North American Division, delivered his remarks extemporaneously from the floor of the council. They came on Thursday evening, October 5, following

a day of discussion on ordination of women and at least a half day on interschool athletics. The evening he spoke, the president of the General Conference had brought to the floor the issue of whether both parts of the action approved two evenings before should be taken to the 1990 General Conference session.

Before Bradford asked to be recognized, opponents of the ordination of women—particularly some of the retired General Conference officers still invited to Annual Councils as voting members—relied on a variety of parliamentary procedures designed to get the entire action referred to the 1990 General Conference session. They assumed that delegates from the world divisions would vote against both the ordination of women and women being permitted to perform baptisms and marriages.

When Bradford sat down he received loud and prolonged applause. One North American conference president said that around him the eyes of about 20 veteran members of Annual Council deliberations were actually glistening with tears. A union president said he considered Bradford's speech a landmark in the relationship of North America to the world field. That evening the council voted the way Bradford had urged them to do.

Toward the end of the council Jan Paulsen, president of the Trans-European Division, gave a report from the platform about events in Hungary. Although there are fewer members in the country than in the Loma Linda University Church, for years leaders of the denomination have unsuc-

cessfully attempted to heal a conflict that has inevitably involved the always-delicate relationship of the church to a socialist government in Eastern Europe. Times appear to be changing inside the Adventist church as well as in the government of Hungary.

— *The Editors*

The 1989 Annual Council: A Personal Account

by Lawrence T. Geraty

For the first time, a general church meeting was held in the new General Conference office building. At a cost of \$30 million the new building manages to be tasteful and functional without being ostentatious and elaborate. The impression is definitely one of a corporate headquarters. Missing, however, is an architectural statement that would be a unique witness to Adventism, but perhaps that will come eventually.

I was thrilled with the progress of the church. It is exciting to know that we now average 1,500 baptisms per day, our total number of members having passed the six million mark. It is remarkable that 75 percent of this number is in Africa and Latin America. I was pleased to learn that my own union, the Atlantic Union, was the fastest-growing in the North American Division. A new conference was voted in: the Quebec Conference, which in the past 10 years has gone from 600 members to nearly 3,000. Trans-European Division President Jan Paulsen shared the encouraging news that the "Egervari group" of breakaway Adventists in Hungary was rejoining the denomination. But it was probably the induction of a new division of the world field, the Soviet Union, that carried the most emotion. It was moving to see and hear the four delegates from Russia speak of their joy in seeing this day.

I appreciated the sense of mission that pervaded the annual meeting. There is to be a recog-

nition of the important centennial of the sending out in 1890 of the sailing missionary ship, *Pitcairn*. This anniversary will celebrate 100 years of Adventist missions with the hope that it will kindle anew the spirit of mission in many of our members.

There was also a sobering report of the denomination's new global strategy. An attempt is to be made within the next decade to reach all the population groups of the world which have one million or more people who have never heard about the belief and hope of Seventh-day Adventists. In order to help make this daunting project possible, the General Conference is planning on a \$7 million offering at its 1990 session in Indianapolis. A large part of that money will go for Adventist World Radio-Europe.

There were plenty of housekeeping details that had to be attended to. Probably one of the most important were changes made to the constitution and bylaws of the General Conference. The most significant increased the identity of the North American Division, as distinct from the General Conference itself, thus opening the way for the division to choose its own leadership, have its own budget, and schedule its own independent meetings. This was done, in part, because many are predicting a "takeover" of the denomination by the third world at a future General Conference session, if not the one in Indianapolis. Some of the changes sought will help give the North American Division a little more control over its own destiny. Though shrinking in terms of its percentage of membership in the world field, North America continues to provide 85 percent of the church's world budget.

At least three issues came before the Annual Council that are of keen interest to young people. The first is a document on courtship and marriage that forbids Adventist ministers to perform a marriage between an Adventist and a non-Adventist. Though this has always been the traditional stand, it has never been included in the church manual. Many youth workers feared that this policy could alienate precisely those who need to sense the church's love and care at a crucial time in their lives.

The second issue deals with interschool sports.

The document that came to the council from the 1988 council in Nairobi states that the Seventh-day Adventist church is against interschool sports. An attempt to broaden the document to include interchurch leagues was defeated, as was an attempt to provide opportunity for union executive committees to vote local exceptions. Despite the pleas of those who work with young people, the document was voted by a large majority. I found the procedure heavy-handed in the way it ignored input from the North American Division boards of education. The policy itself seems inconsistent—not to mention restrictive—in comparison with programs that have been voted into existence and are being monitored by local union conference committees. I am afraid it will be perceived by many young people as insensitive to successful programs that are meeting developmental needs.

The third issue dealt with the role of women in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Elder Neal Wilson reported on the recommendation of the Women's Commission that had met at Cohutta Springs, Georgia. The recommendation came with two parts. Part A recommended that women not be ordained to the gospel ministry, while part B allowed divisions to permit women to perform baptisms and marriages in a local church, provided they have received the same theological training as men, have been employed as full-time ministers, and are ordained as local elders. There were strenuous attempts by those opposed even to women baptizing to separate the two parts so that they could be voted on independently. Wilson insisted that they were a part of a single recommendation and had to be voted up or down together. In a secret ballot, 65 percent of all delegates voted Yes (287 Yes, 97 No). Even when General Conference Committee invitees (primarily North American local conference and institutional presidents) were, on a second ballot, not allowed to vote, 57 percent voted in the affirmative (104 Yes, 77 No).

One evening later President Wilson urged that the delegates separate parts A and B. That is, he recommended that Part A—refusal to permit women to be ordained—be sent to the 1990 General Conference session, since a report had

specifically been requested by the 1985 General Conference. Wilson argued that Part B—approval of women performing baptisms and marriages under specified conditions—should be considered a policy matter to be settled at the 1989 Annual Council.

A great deal was at stake on this procedural vote, since it was widely assumed that delegates (mainly clergymen) outside North America, would, at the General Conference session next year, insist on separating the motions and vote to force all divisions to deny Adventist women the opportunity, not only to be ordained, but also to perform baptisms and marriages.

The most memorable speech of the Annual Council was given extemporaneously from the floor by Charles Bradford, president of the North American Division. It followed several days of discussion of the role of women and league sports. When Bradford concluded his visionary challenge to the church the delegates uncharacteristically broke into prolonged applause. I was proud to be a North American Adventist (see p. 16 in this issue).

On the significant concerns of women, there continued to be resistance to such concepts as equal pay for equal work, the payment of a minister's spouse for "team ministry," and the need for more females in leadership positions where ordination was not required.

After an entire evening of heated debate, 81 percent of all delegates—regular and invited—voted (190 Yes, 45 No) to send only Part A to the General Conference session next year in Indianapolis, and to adopt Part B, effective immediately. The North American Division committee, meeting immediately following Annual Council, officially approved the implementation of Part B in its division.

When it came to a discussion of the significant concerns of women that had been compiled by the female delegates to the Women's Commission meeting at Cohutta Springs, there continued to be

resistance to such concepts as equal pay for equal work, the payment of a minister's spouse for "team ministry," and the need for more females in leadership positions where ordination was not required.

Although many opponents to ordination of

The only way I can justify to my constituency the actions taken on these issues is to say that the world church, because of its different experience and context, does not see the issues the same way so many of us in North America do.

women claimed to justify their position by citing lack of a specific biblical injunction, they also seemed reluctant to support measures regarding women that have nothing to do with ordination. It was pointed out to them that Ellen White had given specific counsel in favor of action on these matters, but they refused to act. That led Kit Watts, an assistant editor of the *Adventist Review* and a member of the Women's Commission, to wonder aloud from the floor if it would really have made a difference had there been specific counsel from Ellen White on the ordination of women.

The only way I can justify to my constituency the actions taken on the three issues is to say that the world church, because of its different experience and context, does not see the issues the same way so many of us do in North America. Therefore, we must be "actively" patient, doing our part to educate church membership on the issues, recognizing that church unity (not uniformity) is worth being patient for. In the meantime, the overall impression left by many of these actions was that the delegates found it necessary to "bat-ten down the holds" of the ship, despite the fact that there could be fewer passengers as a result.

My biggest concern is that college students, with whom I work so hard to elicit commitment to the church, will not be able to make sense of some of the actions. After all, according to Nathan Pusey, president of Harvard University during my

graduate school days, a college tends to "make a man wish to think for himself. It fills him with impatience at inertia and indifference and ancient incrustations that inhibit life, confining it in dark-ened places." Fortunately for the Adventist de-nomination, Pusey also says that college "breeds in him hope and interest and alertness, makes him sensitive to the needs of others, helps him lessen the constraints of his imperious self, puts purpose in life, and gives joy in the play of mind. It stimulates concern for things deeply felt and thought and excites in the individual the prospect of shaping for himself a full adult experience continued in such concern." (Quoted by Margarita Merriman in her essay on education for AUC's October 13, 1989, *Lancastrian*.)

Lawrence Geraty is president of Atlantic Union College and a frequent contributor to *Spectrum*.

A Decade of Healing and Reconciliation

Excerpts from the General Conference President's Opening Address

I have a little four-and-a-half-year-old grandson, a precious little fellow who knows how to work his grandfather. And his grandfather loves him. He came to me a little while ago and with him he brought a little basket filled with his little treasures. And as I looked in the basket it was interesting because there I saw a little dog that, when you turned the switch on, was supposed to bark. But the little dog didn't bark anymore. Then there was a toy helicopter, but the rotor wouldn't go around. There were a few balloons, but they had holes in them so it didn't do any good to blow them up. And there was a little watch in there that, when you wound it up, was supposed tick. But it wasn't ticking anymore. . . .

Here was this little lad and he came up to me and said, "Grandpa, you can fix them, can't you?"

You know, that's the last thing a grandpa needs . . . to admit to a four-and-a-half-year-old grandson that you really can not work magic, or do those things which are superhuman. And you just have to talk your way out of it. I wasn't very successful at that because he was sure his grandfather could take care of this.

Finally, when I had exhausted all explanations, the dear little fellow, Jonathan, said, "Grandpa, when I broke my arm, Jesus fixed it and you see, it's perfectly good. But Grandpa, why can't you fix these simple things?"

Well, it was pretty humiliating, but it was a good experience for me to go through because little Jonathan had faith—he knew Jesus could fix things—but he wasn't so sure about his grandfather. . . . My brothers and sisters, fellow leaders: There is so much brokenness in this church today . . . Broken hearts, disappointments, death, broken homes, and families. And I say, "Lord, where is the Elijah message? Why isn't it working? So many broken homes." You know we're not doing a whole lot better than the world is in this matter of divorce.

Broken health. Every time we have a committee—officers' meeting—and we ask if there are any who would like some special situations remembered in prayer—some special request—we always get requests for individuals who are suffering, who've been in terrible accidents, cancer . . . cardiac problems. Frankly we have so much sorrow because of broken health.

So many broken relationships within the church . . . some little thing has come along and it wasn't healed. It continues to fester and that poison goes through the system. Then they go out and they don't come back and nobody cares much. You've got too many other things to do, too busy to go after them and try to heal it. . . .

Did they pass out those *Reviews*? . . . I hope you look at one of the editorials, a guest editorial written by Elder Bradford, on this subject of finding the missing, reclaiming those who seem to be lost, who have drifted away. And they're out there, hundreds of them, thousands of them. . . . Who cares? Who has gone after them? Please don't feel guilty. . . . I'm just asking that somehow the Holy Spirit help us realize that there's a lot of

brokenness in this church that needs to be healed!

Broken promises. I tell you, it's so easy for a leader and administrator to make a promise at a certain point, on the spur of the moment, some

In this church, if a person is given a label, because of something they've done or they haven't done, you know they carry it pretty well the rest of their lives. We don't seem to know how to forgive. We're not very good at giving people a second chance.

situation, and then have to try and find his way out of it. Some life is disappointed, destroyed in many cases. Broken promises, broken contracts, broken agreements, broken friendships . . . I have actually seen, over the last couple of years, friendships between individuals broken because they have had a different opinion on a subject. Brokenness and no real attempt is made to heal it, and it continues; the breach gets wider until you can hardly bridge the gulf. . . .

In this church, if a person is given a label, because of something they've done or they haven't done, you know they carry it pretty well the rest of their lives. We're most unforgiving when it comes to some of those things. And don't try and tell me differently. I know. It has become a concern to me. We don't seem to know how to forgive. We don't seem to know that divine science of government, to be able to combine that reconciling grace, mercy, and justice. We don't seem to know how to forget. The Lord says he does. He puts it in the bottom of the ocean. We don't know how to forget. Somebody's name comes up—"Oh, be careful, you know, remember what happened 10 years ago." We're not very good at giving people a second chance . . . I'm concerned about the lack of healing in this church. There's too much brokenness. . . .

The cross tells us that when God saw us at our worst, He loved us the most. That's what the cross says. But it isn't that way with us somehow. You see people at their worst and you sort of always

keep them in that setting. Somehow, if the Lord could just help us to do something about this and learn that divine science of government, there could be healing and reconciliation . . . So I'm saying to you this evening, what I think this church needs to go along with Harvest 90 and global Strategy, is a decade of healing and reconciliation.

Neal C. Wilson is president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Approaching the Third Millennium

by Charles Bradford

Well, brother chairman, I just want to make an appeal. The North American Division officers and union presidents set up a special committee after the 1985 General Conference session to address this question that you read from the minutes, the matter of the authority or the functions of ministry that would be granted to commissioned ministers, those who were called associates in pastoral care.

That small committee . . . brought in a recommendation. . . . It essentially said that the associates in pastoral care would be given authority to perform the same functions as licensed ministers. We did that in good faith. But it was felt by some that it might be precipitous to bring it into the 1985 Annual Council session and so we turned away from it.

One union, having seen it in the materials, . . . thought it was passed, went back home and almost directed its conferences to act accordingly. I was embarrassed when they called me. I had to tell them that we pulled it off.

Some of you were there in 1985 when we pulled it back. And you were disappointed. Some said to me, "You have not carried out the directive of the General Conference. You had it in the materials for distribution, you withdrew it." I

really couldn't give any reasons other than I was counselled to do it. We accepted the counsel and we did not press the matter. It was thought that going this route would be better; it would give the world church an opportunity to hear and to consider, to empathize with, to better understand. And that has been done.

The [Women's] Commission met in March of a year before and met again this summer. It has been on the minds and, I say, on the lips of many for a number of years—almost, brother chairman, a decade. . . . Meanwhile, we're still discussing, *we are still discussing!*

It is a terrible burden trying to lead the division in soulwinning when you are constantly discussing these all-consuming issues. . . . Here we are in 1989, facing the last decade in the 20th century, looking on the eve of the third millennium—on the *eve of the third millennium!* That's where we are! And we have discussed this matter and discussed it and people have taken sides and some have said, "I'm not going to lose! I will use every ruse that I can—every political, every parliamentary motion and maneuver—I'll use it, so that I will not lose! I will have my way!" I would hope that in the church of the living God, we could come to the place where it would not be a win-lose situation.

I had to tug at myself to speak tonight because I know it will be misunderstood. Some will think that I am grandstanding, or playing to the gallery. But let me speak on.

This North American Division is the tax base of the world church. And if the superstructure outgrows its tax base, we have a tottering institution. Now I speak plainly; I speak boldly. I say that if we don't get on with the mission here in North America, and start winning people to this message as we should be, the church is going to suffer all around the world. There is nothing wrong with this North American Division that 100,000 fully instructed born-again new believers could not solve.

The tithe dollar is the transaction that has the greatest impact upon this world church. When I baptize—and it is going to be my privilege and happy circumstance, I hope, in a few days, to do that more and more—when I baptize that dear

little sister down in whatever little city it is, maybe she is on welfare. But when she comes to church on Sabbath morning, she makes out her little tithe envelope and she puts in \$10 tithe, and two dollars winds up in Silver Spring, Maryland. That's impact! Giant Food only gets \$1.50 out of \$100 or more. That's right. This church has the greatest system in the world! But you know what we are doing? We are destroying it! That's what we are doing, we are destroying it!

In the North American Division, we have been destructive. Our attention has been taken away from the vital things. There are those who stand up and say "I am orthodox!" Show me the souls that have been baptized by your pronounced orthodoxy! There is such a thing as dead orthodoxy. The rabbis could quote the Pentateuch. But they were not, my friends, alive with a vital religion that satisfies the longings of men's hearts. We're going to make ourselves such an ingrown group, navel-gazing, looking at our own problems—introspection, until we wind up simply the keepers of the museum! We will have artifacts of the past, we will have monographs on the administration of Wilson, and Pierson, and Figuhr. But that is all that will be left. We will not have a vibrant, growing church.

It is a serious word that I speak to you. Jesus is coming soon. There are some people out there who are counting on you to lead them in ministry. There are some people who would be ashamed that we are spending God's holy money and God's holy time in several days in Annual Council, and yet we haven't come to the things that brought us here. We've held up the agenda. You are going to make it almost impossible for us to have a North American year-end meeting this year.

Now my brothers and sisters, the time has come. We must put aside all our preferences. I said to the division brethren—Elder Wilson, you allowed me to say it in Cohutta [Springs]—I said to them: "Brethren, will this provision made for commissioned ministers damage your field?" You'll remember I said that. "Will it damage you? Will it bring you to ruin? If it will, we'll turn aside."

They said, "No, it won't."

I said, "Well then, if it will not damage you, then allow the church to roll on; let the church move on. And if we have made a horrible mistake, there is such a thing as the Spirit's ministry and He will bring us back. Because, as Ellen White says, we are captives of hope. He has us in His hands. We are the remnant people of God."

Oh, I want us to march on. I want to hear the Word of God ringing throughout the North American Division, ringing throughout the world. I want to see the ministers on fire and the laymen going from door to door, and this continent stirred from stem to stern so that the brethren in other denominations will say: "You Adventists have filled this whole continent with your doctrine!" That's what I want to see happen.

Here we were on this sports thing nearly all day. Children dying of AIDS, children into drugs, teenage pregnancy, and we're arguing about a basketball game! I want to tell you, if the religion in our churches is vibrant enough, a hint to the wise is sufficient.

But it will never happen as long as we're standing on this line and you're on that line. I think that it is time for us to get on God's line. Will you please, brethren, have mercy upon us? For mercy is needed. You, brethren, need to pray for the North American Division. Pray for us!

I'm begging your pardon for taking your time, but this is the way I feel. I can but say what is on my heart. I would think that after 43 years you would allow me, for one night, to say what is on my heart, . . . to make a strong appeal to you, a fervent appeal.

Here we were on this sports thing nearly all day. Children dying of AIDS, children into drugs, teenage pregnancy, and we're arguing about a basketball game! I want to tell you if the religion in our churches is vibrant enough, a hint to the wise is sufficient. All you have to do is say, "Brethren and sisters, love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the

world, the love of the father is not in him.” And those that are in tune with heaven will say: Look, I don’t love the world. I will turn away from these things. You can make a thousand pronouncements and not change one heart! Not change one heart!

So let’s get on God’s side here, get this message going. Don’t you want to see the message go? I mean, we can do it! We can preach this message. We’ve got the greatest message in the world! And I just want us to join together. I’d be so happy. I could say then, “Let thy servant depart in peace.”

Charles Bradford is the president of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Healing in Hungary

by Jan Paulsen

Because of the relatively high international news profile that the schism in our church in Hungary has had, most of you are acquainted with some of the things that happened. It [the schism] took place almost 15 years ago.

The group has been led by a former leader in our church in Hungary, Oscar Egervari, who is a well-trained theologian with a very, very bright mind. . . . They have today approximately 20 pastors that they are employing and they have their own separate churches throughout the country . . .

At the time of the division of the church, several hundred of our church members who were in sympathy with this particular group of leaders were disfellowshipped wrongly from the church . . . It was done by committee action of the conference and the union and not by the local church. It was in breach of the church manual. But the fact was that 518 persons had their names removed from the church records.

A number of efforts have been made over the years to try to reconcile this group, maybe particularly the last five or six years . . . There were times

when one thought there were hopeful signals that they would come together, but it ruptured again and somehow they drifted farther apart.

Some of their claims and requirements were impossible for the church to meet, such as status as a separate conference directly attached to our division, which is one request that they made a little over a year ago. But we had constantly said to them as a church that we recognized that it was wrong to have disfellowshipped this group of believers . . . We have confessed our sins publicly, and have asked for forgiveness for it and wanted to find ways by which to heal that.

Another element that was very difficult for them to accept is that over a period of many years—three or four decades—our church has been a member of the so-called Council of Free Churches in Hungary. That is a small council, consisting of seven different church entities. Maybe the most prominent in this group were the Baptists and ourselves. They maintained that this involved the church in an ecumenical situation, which was in breach of the way we stand as a church on these issues, and that therefore they would not come back as long as we maintained this particular relationship. There are many arguments one could make, but we won’t take time to do that this morning. Just keep in mind that during the 60s and 70s and 80s, up until just very recently—a few months ago—the Council of Free Churches was an instrument of the government, a sort of clearinghouse of the government. Publishing rights to churches [came] through that particular council. Visits by church officials from outside of Hungary into Hungary—authorization for these visits were channeled through this council—and also visits by church leaders within Hungary out of the country. It was an instrument with several purposes. But nevertheless, it had come to be perceived as an ecumenical activity that we were involved in as a church, and they just simply did not find this acceptable.

They also were very unhappy with the ministerial training that we gave to our young workers in Hungary because they were trained through the theological seminary of the Council for Free Churches. We didn’t have our own training school. . . . Now this sounds worse than it is

because you've got to keep in mind that most of the teachers and most of the subjects that were taught in this seminary were taught by Adventists. So all the other ministers got their training by Adventists. But obviously it left certain holes in the teaching, particularly in regard to areas that are of importance to us as a church. So it was clearly an unsatisfactory way of training our ministers. . . .

Well, last April we had a union session. . . . Prior to the union session in April, from our division, we had made clear to the brethren in Hungary that we wanted the question of the membership in the Council of Free Churches on the agenda for the delegates to consider. . . .

We put it to a secret vote to the delegates, 160 or so. Ninety percent of the delegates voted to pull out of the Council of Free Churches. So that was done. At the same time as they pulled out of the Council of Free Churches, they took an action

endorsing their acceptance of the church's position of our relation to other churches, as it is spelled out in our policy book. They took an action at that time to restructure the whole ministerial training program for our workers.

It is interesting that at the opening meeting of the union session, as an act of courtesy, they had invited one or two of the other church leaders to bring greetings, as is customary in some of these socialist countries when you have a public gathering of this kind. The newly elected president of the Council of Free Churches was there to bring greetings, and used the occasion to give a 20 minute plea for continued membership in the Council of Free Churches. But obviously that didn't pay off.

We received, in June, a letter addressed to the General Conference Committee, sent through our division from the Egervari group, asking that ne-

Reconciliation in Hungary

This is the declaration agreed to by the representatives of the General Conference, Trans-European Division and Hungarian Union, as well as the "Small Committee," referred to by Jan Paulsen in his Annual Council report, as the "Egervari group." For the report from the "Small Committee" on recent developments in Hungary, see pages 62 and 63.

— The Editors

COMMON DECLARATION

which was formulated by the following persons in Szekely Bertalan u. 13., Budapest, on September 13, 1989:

Alf Lohne, Robert Spangler, and Jan Paulsen representing the GC, Jenő Szigeti, Zoltan Mayor, and Sandor Ocsai representing the Union Committee, Oszkar Egervari, Zsuzsa Vanko, and Karoly Sonnleitner representing the Small Committee.

Translator: Laszlo Hangyas

Prior to formulating the Declaration we agreed on the following:

Our conviction is that to be united is God's will. For that reason we make every effort possible to restore the unity of the Adventist Community in Hungary. Our intention is to achieve that goal by September 1990.

DECLARATION

1. We acknowledge that a large group of brethren and sisters were disfellowshipped without having biblical reason and the basis of the Church Manual. In view of that we make a proposal to the Union and the Conferences Committees to rehabilitate and to restore the official membership of the disfellowshipped 518 persons without individual votes.

2. At the Union Session held in April 1989 the position of our Church in view of Relationship with other Christian Churches and

Denominations (See: Working Policy 075) was reaffirmed. We suggest to the Union Committee to make a declaration in regard to the fact that the above mentioned standpoint is authoritative to the Union Committee, and both the Union Committee and the Union President distance themselves from declarations made in disharmony with that standpoint.

3. We acknowledge and reaffirm our responsibilities as Christian citizens in harmony with the standpoint of the world-wide Adventist Community. We make a proposal to the Union Committee to decide and to declare that the employees of the Church as such cannot take any public responsibility or accept appointment—openly or in secret—except if that is approved by the employing organization or by the Union Committee.

4. The Union is willing to make it possible to all Church members to express their conviction freely. It should be made possible also that everybody can express his/her conviction according to Christian moral standards.

5. In this distorted situation which lasts so long we made hurts on both sides and we mutually are ready to work for brotherly forgiveness.

6. A Standing Committee is being formed now to coordinate practical questions related to the preparation of merger. The President of the Division is the Chairman of the Standing Committee with a Deputy-Chairman and the members of the Committee are three plus three representatives from both sides.

Budapest, September 13, 1989

Paulsen, Jan	Vanko, Zsuzsa
Spangler, J. R.	Sonnleitner, Karoly
Lohne, Alf	Mayor, Zoltan
Jeno, Dr. Szigeti	Ocsai, Sandor
Egervari, Oszkar	

gotiations be reopened to seek to mend, to seek to heal the church in Hungary. You see, after the union session in April they also were coming under pressure from many of their own members, who said, "Look, many of the problems are now being resolved. Why don't we go back? That is our spiritual home. We belong to the Adventist church." Many of them wanted to come back . . .

Elder Wilson, Elder Thompson, and I were able to counsel together when we were at Cohutta Springs. In response to that we called a meeting in Hungary, just three weeks ago in Budapest, of the union committee members and of the 17 or 18 members of the corresponding committee in the Egervari group. Pastor Bob Spangler and Pastor Alf Lohne joined me to try to meet with this group to see if we could work through to a solution of the problem. I will have to confess that I went to that meeting . . . wondering if this was going to fare any better.

I was told, just as I came to Budapest three weeks ago, that shortly after we pulled out of the Council of Free Churches the Baptists said, "If the Adventists are gone, why should we stay in the Council of Free Churches?" So they pulled out of the Council of Free Churches. A week before we came, the council itself was abolished.

In the socialist countries of Eastern Europe they have a ministry that deals with religious affairs. And, you know, during the past few months enormous changes have taken place—are taking place—throughout the countries of Eastern Europe—enormous political changes. . . . The ministry that deals with religious affairs in Hungary was also dissolved a few weeks ago . . . The minister who was in charge expressed verbally to me on a visit there that the government is no longer interested in regulating the religious affairs of the people. Let them do what they want and go their own way.

Now to the story of the healing here. They made a number of requests of the union and at the end of our two days of negotiation together a joint declaration was signed. In the first place, it says that the 518 who were wrongly disfellowshipped from the church should be received back into fellowship expeditiously, without delay, without individual vote or discussion. . . . This

would be done over a three to four week period. So I expect that that has been completed. Also, the Egervari group felt that over the years the union committee—the union administration—had made statements that suggested a closer affinity to the ecumenical community than where we comfortably stand as a church. They wanted the union to distance themselves from their position and statements. . . . The union committee said it was no problem. . . . And this was written into the declaration.

They also wanted to be assured that it is possible today in the Adventist church to, as private individuals, have . . . the freedom to think. . . . The union group said, "That is fine with us."

The declaration that was signed says that we believe that it is the will of the Lord that we be united again as an Adventist family in Hungary, that we will work quickly to deal with all the practical issues so that by September of 1990 we can be merged into one church in Hungary.

We will take steps to incorporate many of their ministers back into the regular ministry of the church. Where some need some further education, we will help them with further education. We set down this small committee consisting of three from the union and three from the Egervari side and I met with them. . . . At the end of it all I turned to the Egervari group and said, "When you have a division of this kind there are always two sides. Would it not be true to say that also you have contributed to the pain and hurt that has been caused the Adventist family over the many years? Would it not be right for you to acknowledge that?" And you know, I'll never forget Pastor Egervari got up. . . . with tears running down his face and confessed that they have been part of the hurt and the pain that has been caused the church in Hungary over these past few years and asked for forgiveness. It is a magnificent sight to see brothers and sisters who have been divided and separated for many years . . . parents in one group and children in another, embrace and together confess their sins and their joys at being able to be together again.

Global Adventism— 1990 and Beyond

Adventists are increasingly turning their attention to the 1990 General Conference session. Last year (Vol. 19, No. 2, November 1988) we invited a cross-section of North American Adventists to share with Spectrum readers what they would say if they were asked to address the delegates of the 1990 General Conference session. In this issue we have invited individuals from around the world to also write their visions of the church.

Our contributors include laity and church employees, males and females, representatives of first- and third-world countries. We invite our readers to share with us letters that give their own hopes for the church, 1990 and beyond.

— The Editors

Doing Beautiful Things For God in India

by Shirani de Alwis

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "If God were to appear in India, He would have to take the form of a loaf of bread." Evangelism for the church of the 1990s must be conducted through everyday concerns that affect the lives of people. As a South Asian woman, an educator, and a second-generation Adventist, I would like to posit five such recommendations for the church.

In the 1990s I would like to see my church *straining every nerve to eradicate illiteracy*. Professor Sharma predicts that India will have the world's largest illiterate population by the year 2000—500 million! The task is a common one for the world church: illiteracy exists in the developed countries too. Using worldwide Adventist experts and Christian teaching materials, the church should undertake a drive to eradicate illiteracy by the year 2000.

In the 1990s, I want my church to be in the vanguard of bringing *relief to millions under yokes of oppression*. A third of India's workforce, 142 million, are child laborers. These children suffer from diseases induced by the cumulative effects of hard labor, lack of rest, undernourishment, and atrocious living conditions—all this, even though employment of children under 14 years of age is forbidden by law.

In addition to the child-labor problem, the drop-out rate of children in grade one is 60 percent in India! The reason for both problems is poverty, where it is essential that children augment the family income. The challenge to Adventist education is to meet this need. The church must set up Adventist vocational schools that are different—schools with curricula that will help develop functional skills, with an emphasis on values education, enabling the youth to take charge of their lives. To design school programs that will meet the needs of the village, to provide vocational skills, to set up workshops and small factories where these skills can be practiced, and to provide remuneration are all necessary aspects of such a program.

In the 1990s, I look to a church, in the developed and developing world, that will pool its resources (human and financial) in a caring *ministry to the handicapped*. Of the 15 million handicapped children in the world, three million live in developed countries, and 12 million in the less-developed countries. Special-education services are available to only one percent of the 12 million. With a large majority of the Adventist church membership living in the less-developed countries, it is imperative that programs be provided for such children. By training Adventist teachers in these methods, and providing them with the needed resources, we can help these children.

Recently, through correspondence with the North American Division Office of Education, it was learned that millions of dollars were invested

The church must explore ways to make the full participation of women in its polity real. Full participation, irrespective of sex, should be the guiding principle for women in the church of the 1990s.

in developing a reading-education program for North America, and that comprehensive curricula have been developed for teaching exceptional (learning disabled and gifted) children. Since we, in the less-developed countries, have no such financial resources for our teachers and researchers, could we, as the world Adventist church, set up a committee of educators who function as part of the Office of Education at the General Conference, to adapt research, and to culturally attune materials for Adventist world teachers? This would certainly build a sense of oneness and camaraderie that marks a global church with a mutual sharing of expertise.

I long for a church in the 1990s that will recapture the very essence of Adventism—a *climate conducive to thinking*. Arnold Reye, a veteran in the field of Adventist educational work in Australia, says that in Adventist circles, “thinking has often been treated as a virtue in rhetoric and a sin in practice”! If the church is to nurture thinking, we must master the paradox—discipline and

flexibility—and create environments that offer strength without strangulation. In a very concrete way, the church must provide an atmosphere where the church member has the ability to develop ideas or concepts without fear of being condemned. An open forum to discuss issues, church journals that publish new thoughts without fear or favor, are means that can release the potential creativity of the church to meet the challenges of our times. Did not the inspired word addressed to Adventism say 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. (Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 17.)

Lastly, in the 1990s, as an Asian woman, I would like to see a church that *stands for the full humanity of women*. I live in India where 81.6 percent of all women are illiterate, where each day there is one rape every two hours, where burning of brides (dowry deaths) is a common news item in the daily papers, and where we see the spirit of womanhood broken, and the self-esteem of women crushed. Only a church that cares for human dignity can minister to needs such as these.

The church, like society, is male dominated. Women are permitted to do “housekeeping” for the church, but on any decision-making body or committee of the church that interprets Scripture, determines church policy, or furnishes leadership, their presence is negligible or often absent altogether. Almost 80 percent of the Southern Asian students sponsored for high school, college, or graduate studies are male. How can the Adventist church, whose membership is 60 percent female, draw women from the periphery to its hub? The church must somehow sensitize both male and female members to an awareness of the value and potential of women that leads each one to Christian action. The church must foster a new partnership role in the family and a sharing of household responsibilities that will enable women to participate equally in church ministries. Even the language of the church of the 90s must be nonsexist, using comprehensive terms denoting humanity first and sex designation next.

The church must explore ways to make the full participation of women in its polity real. Mainly due to the unavailability of ordination for women, women have avoided taking theological training. Seminaries should encourage female applicants to theology departments, so that more seminal theological thinking from a woman's perspective will be a resource of the church in the 1990s.

Women must be given more visibility at the 11 o'clock church services. Full participation, irrespective of sex, should be the guiding principle for women in the church of the 1990s. Full participation cannot come about until women have the means to realize their own potential, and come to believe that they can change their present status in the church by changing themselves first. Since self-esteem is a social product that emerges within the framework of social interaction, the need of the 1990s is a church that restores the esteem of woman, the esteem that comes of being made in the image of her Maker.

In the third-world context, the words of the patron saint of the poor, Mother Theresa, must be heeded. She spurs us to action when she says, "Don't give of your abundance, but do something beautiful for God." Let us, the church, seek courage to be bold for Him through the Holy Spirit, who alone can help us effect changes in church structures and practices.

Shirani de Alwis is the dean of the Graduate School of Education and the director of graduate research at Spicer Memorial College, Poona, India.

The Family of God: An Aussie View

by Thomas H. Ludowici

As I ponder the fact of my church moving towards 2000 A.D., I can't help but think of the song line, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God."

The Adventist church family does many things well, and as a family member I am proud of these

endeavors—an excellent educational system, a person-centered health care approach, an innovative health food industry, extensive publishing, the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and welfare work, a life ministry, evangelism in developing countries. While these are all excellent attributes, the church, as it approaches the year 2000, must both expand its horizons and make some course corrections.

Horizons

To do this, we cannot simply look back to our 19th-century beginnings. While those beginnings are an important reference point, our theology must continue to develop, even as acknowledged by the preamble to the 27 fundamental beliefs. Our theological focus is not to be on historic Adventism: we have at times missed the guidance of God because we are determined to still live in the 1880s or the 1950s. True, it may be more comfortable for me to believe what I was taught 35 years ago, but God does not call me to live in the past. His bidding is to focus my faith on living for him now and in the future.

In the South Pacific Division, we have recently established the Christian Center for Bioethics at Sydney Adventist Hospital. This is the church's second such center (the first being the ethics center at Loma Linda University). The efforts we are making to deal with ethical issues are causing many people in Australia to look to Adventists for leadership in this new and challenging age of the technopolis. The church in other divisions should also be prepared to address the complex issues that are bound to arise as people experience the effects of advancing technology, and its impact on life and relationships. Especially because of the church's commitment to health care, it cannot ignore the opportunity to become a leading Christian voice in ethics in our world. Perhaps, in some institutions, we could afford to divert some of our energies, currently absorbed in less productive exercises, and channel them into ethics.

Thanks to ADRA and other church welfare work, we are able to reach the lower echelon of

society, but a vast deficit exists in the church's impact upon the upper classes. Ellen White's challenge to us in this specific ministry is yet to be taken seriously. While our media presentations and our health-care institutions attract the upper class, much that takes place in local congregations fails to capitalize on this attraction.

Course Corrections

The ecclesiology that I have understood from Scripture insists that the Spirit has led and still leads the church. That being so, we need to acknowledge that the Spirit is calling us to move forward quickly in at least five ways.

Ordain Women. It is amazing that as a church we have been ordaining men for nearly one-and-a-half centuries and yet we have never developed a theology of ordination. As soon as this is done, it will become apparent that women must also be ordained to the gospel ministry. This action cannot wait until every segment of the world

The church can grow in leaps and bounds when we acknowledge the fact that the Holy Spirit has gifted every believer for the benefit of the church. We do not need new programs to train the laity; we need to give the laity more authority to exercise their spiritual gifts under the direction of the Spirit.

church agrees, because cultural conditioning will prevent such a total agreement from ever occurring. Women have a magnificent contribution to make in ministry, and it is imperative that the way become open for this to occur, so that the church may move forward in its gospel proclamation.

Elect Youth to Leadership. We need to discover new ways to attract our youth into the employment of the church. I applaud the youth who sense their Christian witness in the various professions and careers where they work, but the

church also needs more young women and men to become involved in denominational structures. This will require a rethinking of employment practices, provision of opportunities for advancement, and a more open approach to youth. The student-missionary program is an exciting example of what can happen when young people are given opportunities for service. Those of us already involved in denominational service need to encourage innovation and not be threatened by youthful minds which will, at times, challenge the ways that we do things.

Decentralize Denominational Power Structures. The church will benefit from a wider input at all levels of organization. Presently it is only at the local congregational level that the voice of the laity is dominant. Ask any conference or union president the number of committees on which he serves. Chances are, his other duties preclude his attendance at many of these, or the sheer number of committee appointments makes it humanly impossible for him to apply his mind constructively to most of the issues involved. Often this leads to a "let us not move too quickly" response to important—and creative—solutions and ideas. The church can grow in leaps and bounds when we are ready to move forward, acknowledging the fact that the Holy Spirit has gifted every believer for the benefit of the church. We do not need new programs to train the laity; we need to give the laity more authority to exercise their spiritual gifts under the direction of the Spirit. To involve more laity in many aspects of conference, union, and General Conference endeavor will free up more of the clergy to fulfill their calling of "ministry." Too often, busy administrators have little time or energy left to minister to those with spiritual needs. We could begin to solve this problem by placing a larger number of laity on our executive committees so that they were in the majority, instead of in the traditional minority, or "balance" proportion.

Reconstruct Finances. The local conference struggles under a crushing financial load because so much of its tithe dollar is exported to higher organizations. In some instances, the same seems to apply to the local congregation and its funds. This situation must be more than "studied"—it

must be rectified in the next quinquennium. I know of local churches and conferences that are losing the battle to maintain their current level of outreach, simply because there is so little money remaining for local operating purposes. Allowing the local church or conference to have access to more of its funds would be in no way denying the world mission of the church. However, it would mean that the church could grow and develop in its primary mission territory—its own locality.

Relish Differences. With the Spirit's leading we shall enter into revival evidenced by a greater acceptance of, and friendliness toward, the different and unique in our communities. Without effecting changes such as these, the church will be inhibited in fulfilling its world commission. Such will be a tangible demonstration of our response to Jesus Christ, the head of the church.

By 2000 I will sing with greater joy, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God."

Thomas Ludowici is chaplain of the Sydney Adventist Hospital.

Caribbean Adventism Is a Youth Culture

by Edith G. Marshalleck

While the central content of the Adventist message remains the same, in the third world, the compass, the style, and the delivery have to be different.

First, with such a high percentage of third world population being young people, the Adventist message must be targeted more to the youth. It must be set in the context of their sociological and psychological realities. For example, from my third-world perspective, both young girls and boys leave the church during their teen years, partly because of peer pressure to prove sexual maturity. For boys, there is also the pressure of finding employment and pursuing commonly accepted manly behavior. Additionally, as we move toward the 21st century and

third-world development, young adults will be increasingly influenced by the media—television and video especially—which will accelerate secularization and the drift from the church.

Second, the Adventist message must be based on authentic and valid scholarship. With increasing educational opportunities and higher standards in many third-world countries, it is imperative for the message to rest on well-researched information. In our efforts to "get to the point," significant details are omitted in our preaching and literature.

The older members in the church must lead by example, rather than by precept. They must demonstrate the reality of a daily, personal walk with God.

For example, we fail to trace the gradual weakening of Sabbath observance in the early Christian church and present instead a sharp and decisive change of the Sabbath mandated by Constantine in 331 A.D. When further study reveals other contributing factors, faith is weakened. This would not occur were the full facts expressed from the beginning. The discovery of new facts should never deter us from bringing them to light. Examination of these against the known Bible positions will throw more light on the Bible positions themselves, and broaden and amplify our understandings. The young people will thereby gain confidence to explain and defend their faith.

Third, the message must be delivered in a language that is current with the young—a language to which they and their peers can respond with empathy. There is, therefore, need for more carefully researched understandings of the sociology and psychology of specific national cultures. Cultural biases are often denied rather than fully explored. The reason for our diverse, often subliminally influenced behaviors and responses should be understood.

It is necessary to develop a wide variety of programs that will hold the physical, mental, and spiritual interests of the predominantly youth culture of the third world. To be an attractive

option, the Christian subculture must assume greater vibrancy.

Perhaps most importantly, the older members in the church must lead by example, rather than by precept. They must demonstrate the reality of a daily, personal, meaningful walk with God. They must reach out to the young people—as older friend to younger friend, as older counselor to younger follower, as older traveler to younger hiker—together seeking the heights. Especially in the third world, youth are not just the future. Youth are the present reality.

Edith G. Marshelleck, as Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Public Service in Jamaica, is that ministry's highest ranking civil servant. She is a graduate of the University of the West Indies, and received her Ed.D. from Andrews University.

Education—The Hope of Africa's Awakening Giant of a Church

by Mutuku J. Mutinga

At the onset of the decolonization of the African continent about three decades ago, an eminent British prime minister stated that a "wind of change was blowing across Africa." Indeed it was, because now almost the entire continent is free—comprising 54 independent nations. Africa has been previously referred to as "a sleeping giant"; the fact is, Africa is "an awakening giant."

African problems are enormous, almost matching its size. Larger than many people realize, Africa is the world's second-largest continent, occupying one-fifth of the earth's total land surface. Africa encompasses the world's largest deserts—such as the Sahara—and tropical forests; the equator as well as temperate zones both north and south; the high mountain peaks of Kilimanjaro and the world's deepest lake, Lake Tanganyika. Best of all, one finds in Africa the Seventh-day Adventist church.

The Adventist church in Africa is one of the fastest-growing churches in the world. Indeed, church growth has been so rapid that it has caught Adventist leadership by surprise. On Sabbath morning, most urban churches—even those built within the last decade—cannot accommodate the crowds, 70 percent of which are young people.

These young people are different from the older generation in terms of their having better education, social standing, and greater exposure to socio-economic problems, such as drug abuse and unemployment. Those who minister to this caliber of new Adventists will have to meet their needs and match their expectations. "Ministry" to this new generation will have to include teachers, health workers, preachers, and technology developers. The situation poses a tremendous challenge to the church leadership of the 1990s.

The greatest challenge to the Adventist church beyond 1990 will be to encourage participation at all levels of church life and to develop skills of members to respond to the needs of their communities. Specifically, in the continent of Africa, church members must be trained to shoulder all aspects of the Adventist church's work.

Happily, in the past decade or so, Adventist institutions of higher learning have been established on the African continent to prepare its people for service. Although, in my view, this should have been done long ago, it is very commendable that the church now operates four universities in Africa. It is my belief that tremendous progress can be realized if even more of the meager resources of the Adventist church members in Africa were sacrificed to the development of these institutions.

Such enduring growth also needs the concern and help of our lay brothers and sisters abroad, whom the Lord has blessed with financial means and capabilities. They must come forth and participate in these endeavors. Also, there is need for our brethren who still have missionary strength, vision, and the willingness to give of themselves, to offer their talents. Africa's very young Adventist educational institutions can foster growth in Adventist membership and service; they can expand the influence of the church for good in society to an extent unprecedented in the

history of Adventism.

Today one can witness, on a daily basis, in many countries of Africa, a people so thirsty for the Word of God that one only needs to stand with a microphone in many of our city streets and an audience gathers. During a single evangelistic crusade, evangelists bring in new believers by the hundreds, even thousands.

These new believers must be shepherded and educated according to the biblical way of life. Adventist church leadership will have to mobilize financial and manpower resources throughout the world church to build and strengthen institutions of higher learning that will train workers equipped to meet the emergency of shepherding both current and rapidly multiplying large congregations of better educated, more prominent, converts.

If we fail today it may be too late tomorrow, and such a golden opportunity may never present itself again. For “who knoweth whether [we] art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Mutuku J. Mutinga is director of the Medical Vectors Research Program of the International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology, Nairobi, Kenya. He received a Ph.D. in Entomology from the University of Nairobi, and has written widely in international scientific journals.

Europe’s Dream: The Priesthood of All Believers

by Irmtraut Wittenburg

U ntil I received an invitation from Elder Wilson to attend the General Conference session and address you, the plans committee, here in Indianapolis, I had never been to the United States, never visited this land of the “American dream.”

America. When I heard that word, I always envisioned an enormous country, so big and so lovely that its people did not need anything else—except a large “mission field” outside. And there it was: Africa, Asia, Europe—just waiting to be

introduced to democracy and the “American Way of Life.”

It was this missionary thought that stuck, and still sticks with me most about America. It is found not only in politics, but in Adventism as well. When our pastors return from their studies at Andrews or Loma Linda universities, for instance, they come with their suitcases full of new American ideas. Their main point? Church growth. All this growth seems only to be possible through a lot of costly programs that offer answers

The priesthood of all believers implies a completely new “image of man.” Each of us is a gifted person. We each have value.

to questions nobody is asking (at least in this part of the world).

My feelings toward America and Americans are not wholly negative, however. I have great respect for the open-mindedness of the American church members, and for their courage in discussing church problems. No topic seems to be excluded. I would greatly like to see such open discussion in my own country. Such conversation could be one of the first important steps toward the priesthood of all believers.

Certainly, all of us are familiar with the idea of the priesthood of all believers—at least theoretically. So I need not talk about baptism, the Holy Spirit, and the spiritual gifts God offers to all who follow Jesus through baptism. We know about it. But what do we do?

Look at all the struggles for the ordination of female pastors. As long as we believe in the Catholic idea of a two-class system of *laos* and *clerus* in our church, this discussion will remain necessary and important to convince our brothers and sisters, who still cannot believe it, that all of us are equal—men and women alike. But if we really practiced the priesthood of all believers, this discussion would become completely superfluous. When looking for a church member to fit a certain position or office, we would no longer have to consider the person’s sex, but simply his or her skills and abilities.

The priesthood of all believers implies a completely new “image of man.” In Germany we talk of “*menschenbild*.” It states not only that all people are equal, but that each person has at least one special skill that is needed to build up a church or congregation. This concept seems so very simple, but it has enormous effects on our conception of ourselves. Each of us is a gifted person. Our church is dependent on each of us. We each have value. We are all different parts of one body—Jesus’ body—and it does not matter at all that one part is female and the other male.

Practicing the priesthood of all believers offers us a completely new type of perception. We have to become aware of each other, to care for one another, and to watch each other very closely—in a positive sense—to find out the spiritual gifts of our sisters and brothers so that we can then encourage them to use and practice those gifts.

God might bestow spiritual gifts we never thought of as being necessary in our church. This is a tremendous opportunity for us, because these very spiritual gifts might be the ones to build bridges to our neighbors, friends, and colleagues—and to believers in other countries.

To truly be aware of somebody means to understand his or her needs and shortcomings. It means to consider his or her background. A strong commitment to the priesthood of all believers would help us to overcome cultural and sociological gaps. We would accept regional and individual differences, and encourage individuals in their uniqueness, while reminding them that unique gifts also bring responsibilities.

The struggle for the realization of the priesthood of all believers means far more to me than struggling for more “rights” for lay members. It means not distinguishing between lay members and pastors, or “officials,” at all! And it means giving more self-confidence and more responsibility to each church member. Do not think that such responsibility is easy to take. The priesthood of all believers does not leave the back door open, allowing us to expect all decisions, impulses, and activities to come from our pastors and presidents. Each one of us in our own individuality is responsible. For our church as a whole can never be stronger than its weakest part.

I want to take the risk of being a priest—with all the consequences. I want to be courageous, and therefore I need encouragement. My church can offer me this encouragement, and I am eager to give it back, in turn, to my sisters and brothers. The priesthood of all believers, while offering us opportunities to work together with our gifted (and democratically elected!) leaders, makes us dependent on one another and on God, not on church leaders.

This is what I expect from my church in the 1990s: acceptance and awareness of the individual; uprightness and honesty; open-mindedness; courage; self-confidence; and the consciousness that individuality of the parts is not an obstacle to, but a great advantage for, building up a healthy body—the body of Christ.

Irmtraut Wittenburg is editor of the German *Signs of the Times* (*Zeichen der Zeit*) and the author of the two-volume book *Start Into Life*.

Independent African Churches— Are They Genuinely Christian?

by J. J. Nortey

On Saturday, July 16, 1988, in the company of a Seventh-day Adventist minister, I attend a church service at Accra New Town, the headquarters of the Kristo Asafo Mission Church. The founder of this independent African denomination grew up knowing Seventh-day Adventists, and the 350 congregations of his denomination worship on the seventh day of the week.

By 3:00 p.m. when we arrive, the church is already full. We are shown a porch where we must leave our shoes. The usher permits us to enter the sanctuary with our socks on. The service is held in a school classroom. The benches are so arranged as to provide a corridor in the middle of the hall so, from the pulpit, the preacher can walk up and down and get within arms' reach of every member.

On the farthest west is a table covered with white cloth. On each side of the table is a wooden lectern. On the west wall, behind the table, is a large wall clock, stuck between the carved wings of a golden eagle. On the table is a tall glass vase

with artificial flowers in it. On each side of the flower vase is a table clock. Pictures of Bible characters and scenes are painted in lovely, bright colors all over the four walls.

This morning, approximately 300 people are in attendance. The women and children are seated toward the pulpit, and the men are seated at the farthest east of the hall. The elders and two choirs sit apart from the worshippers. All the women have their heads covered with long, white shawls, which cover their shoulders also. At first sight, one has the feeling of seeing a Muslim assembly.

At 3:00 p.m., one choir after the other sings lively songs in Twi. (One of the choir directors is a member of the Accra Seventh-day Adventist Church. He teaches songs to the Kristo Asafo Mission at Accra New Town.) After each lyric or song, the congregation applauds. There is applause, also, after each interesting or touching statement of the preacher. It appears that the applause replaces the "amens" heard in many churches.

The preacher, evangelist Akwasi Gyebi, arrives at 3:30 p.m. He removes his shoes and socks before entering, then kneels by the pulpit. The choir heralds his rising from his knees with a touching Ghanaian lyric welcoming the Sabbath. In the spirit of Psalm 136, it reminds the congregation that the Lord, the Creator, Sustainer, and Provider, is the Lord of the Sabbath. Polite, graceful, holy dancing accompanies this Sabbath song. The evangelist congratulates the members of the choir and gives each of them a 100 cedi note,

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placing these on their foreheads. (The notes stick for a few moments because of the sweat on their foreheads.)

Tithes and offerings are actively promoted and collected. The evangelist then greets the congregation and calls for a repeat of the Sabbath song. After that, a second joyful lyric is sung in loud praise of the leader and founder. The preacher next leads the congregation in repeating the following statements responsively: “Service to Mankind—Service to God,” “The Voice of the People—The Voice of God.” This is followed by the singing of two more songs.

The preaching, in eloquent Twi, starts at 3:40, with the evangelist citing from memory 10 to 12 Bible passages, which he assigns to two young men who are, by then, standing by the two lecterns. Leaving his Bible on the table, the evangelist walks to the middle of the hall and begins preaching and teaching. There is no specific subject matter. From time to time he calls on one of the two readers to read one of the texts assigned earlier. He then comments on the text and applies it to life today. His explanations are very basic and straightforward. On Matthew 21:7, for instance, he spends some time explaining how Jesus could ride an ass and its colt.

When he is through at 5:45 p.m., he quickly steps out of the building, puts on his socks and shoes, and leaves. The service continues for another hour with the resident pastor summarizing the sermon, calling for more songs, collecting more offerings, and giving more admonitions. Everyone kneels for the final benediction.

Why Are There African Independent Churches?

Are African independent churches, such as the one described above, making a valid contribution to Christianity? Or are they merely competitors on the religious street, “me too” traders, loudly touting their wares?

A way to evaluate whether the African independent churches are valid is to examine African

independent churches that observe the seventh-day Sabbath. First, however, a few facts should be noted about African independent churches in general.

Many Africans are searching for a closeness to God. In the four independent churches I visited in Accra, an enquiry indicated that more than 30 percent of the “registered members” were actually people who held their current membership in a “mission church,” but who attended the African independent churches for greater fulfillment and healing. The history and form of the African independent churches in Ghana, popularly known as “spiritual churches,” strongly indicate that the explosion of the independent churches may also be due to a desire to “grow” spiritually.

The African independent churches are teaching Christianity, but, unlike the mission churches, they are teaching it with a “holistic” approach. The principles of the doctrine of Christ are not alien to the African thought pattern.

Attainment of Ghana’s political independence in 1957 seems to have accelerated the growth and spread of the African traditional churches. Once the missionaries left, the indigenous people were able to do what their consciences and feelings dictated without showing “disrespect” to their European “brothers and masters.” What colonialism had suppressed now came alive.

Between 1900 and 1957, growth of the Adventist church in Ghana, as a whole, was slow; but phenomenal growth has taken place in the past 30 years. In 1957, there were 30 recorded churches; by 1980 there were 570.

In the Ghanaian context, and especially within the people forming the Ashanti or Akan nation,¹ Saturday has been a traditionally accepted “holy” day, a day for worship of God.² This no doubt accounts, to a large extent, for the tremendous growth seen in the Seventh-day Adventist church around Ashanti.

One would have thought, therefore, that when Ghanaian Christians decided to go cultural, traditional, or independent, the first thing they would do would be to adopt the Saturday Sabbath, and to reject Sunday worship, since Sunday is the “white man’s day.”³ And this appears to be what actually occurred.

Sabbathkeeping indigenous churches in Ghana come in two kinds: Those related to the Seventh-day Adventist church, and those not related to it. Practically all of the Adventist-related churches have been founded by former Seventh-day Adventists who have left or broken away from the church for one reason or another.

These churches, established by former Seventh-day Adventists, have not shown any signs of progress or prosperity. Unlike other African independent churches, none of these churches has ever exceeded 500 members, or spread beyond a given district. This lack of growth has persisted despite the idea of liberalizing on church doctrines, such as polygamy.

By contrast, the two seventh-day Sabbath-keeping churches in Ghana *not* started by former Seventh-day Adventists, have flourished. The Memeneda Gyidifo (The Savior church) has nearly 7,000 members; and Kristo Asafo has 350 congregations throughout Ghana. Before concentrating on the Kristo Asafo church—our primary focus—the Memeneda Gyidifo church deserves brief mention.

Memeneda Gyidifo

The founder of Memeneda Gyidifo (now referred to as Memeneda Kokoo), was Samuel Brako, a Methodist living in the Tafo-Akim district of the eastern region of Ghana. Never a Seventh-day Adventist church member, there is no indication that he was ever taught by any Seventh-day Adventist. He claimed to have been taught about the Sabbath by the Lord himself, in a series of dreams in 1924. The dreams also pointed out errors of the Christian church, in respect to adultery and drunkenness. Brako died in 1946, and his nephew and heir succeeded him. The group had grown to nearly 7,000 members by 1960.

The main weekly service occurs on Saturday morning from 10:00 to 12:00, with daily prayers held at 4:30 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. During the Sabbath worship service, no foreign melodies are sung; only hearty singing of African lyrics, begun

by one person and joined in by the whole congregation, occurs. Prayers are usually punctuated by singing and “amens.” The sermon can be given by the preacher while he is seated. No footwear of any kind may be worn by anyone going into the church.

While women are allowed to be members and

Baptism of either infants or adults is by total immersion, three times, in running water. Baptized people receive an African name instead of a Christian name.

attend worship services, they cannot preach, teach, or give instructions during worship services, nor can they participate in church board or similar meetings.

No offerings are requested during church services. When funds are needed for a specific purpose, members provide for it.

Baptism of either infants or adults is by total immersion, three times, in running water. Baptized people receive an African name instead of a Christian name.

Other unique features of Memeneda Gyidifo include the fact that polygamy is regarded as normal; there is no restriction as to the number of wives a man may have. Members refuse the intake of any alcoholic substance. There is some healing done.

Men appointed to be pastors of Memeneda Gyidifo have their own means of stable livelihood. Most of these, including the Opanin or elder, have been cocoa farmers. Other pastors have been carpenters, masons, smiths, tailors, et cetera.

The growth rate of the Savior Church, between 1954 and 1960, of nearly 100 percent net increase, has not continued since the 1960s. The church has remained mainly rural, and the few congregations in the city of Accra and Kumasi have not shown any real increase in membership. Many of the children of members, after receiving formal education, have not remained in the Savior church.

Numerous members have converted to Sev-

enth-day Adventism. This is especially the case at and around Osiem, where Opanin Samuel Brako, founder of the Savior church, lived. Some of these converts have become Seventh-day Adventist ministers and have “worked” among their brothers and sisters in the Savior church.

The Sabbathkeeping Kristo Asafo Mission

The following information about the Kristo Asafo Mission comes from the personal contacts I have made, from experiences of friends who know members of the mission, and from direct interviews conducted at my request. I have had the opportunity of meeting the “apostle,” the founder and leader of the Mission, Opanin Samuel Kwadjo Safo, on two occasions; I have also met his second-in-command, and some of the pastors. I attended a church service at the headquarters of the mission at Accra New Town and talked with several members. The dedicated leaders of Kristo Asafo Mission of Ghana (or Kristo Asafo, as it is commonly called),

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informed me that they wanted the name of their denomination to emphasize that Christ is, and should be, the head, visible and invisible, of each church.

Accra New Town, where the church was founded, is the headquarters of Kristo Asafo. But the church has not remained confined to one area; it has spread throughout other parts of Accra, and also to other parts of the country.

Kristo Asafo’s founder, Opanin Samuel Kwadjo Safo, came to Accra New Town from the Ashanti region. After his primary and middle-school education, he learned the welding trade. He was then a member of the Methodist church of

Ghana, in which he had been christened. Opanin Safo’s colleagues affirm that he was never a Seventh-day Adventist. However, he did know about Seventh-day Adventists.

Sometime in early 1969, Safo felt the need for a closer walk with his Lord. He studied the Scriptures and prayed fervently, finally receiving a revelation that urged him to establish a church that would bring together young, energetic people who, while practicing their trades, could do so with a touch of pure religion. This resulted in the establishment of a 10-member bible study and prayer group. The group started as Sunday worshippers. Everyone expected the group to grow; instead, the membership dwindled. Opanin Safo decided to pray and fast for understanding. In early 1971, while he was praying, the Seventh-day Sabbath was revealed to him, and he told his congregation about it. With this new truth, they set out as never before to proclaim their teaching everywhere. A new denomination was born.

With zeal and enthusiasm the members preached and taught. And they saw growth! By 1975, they had members in areas outside Accra New Town. The church embarked on a strong expansion program, coupled with various economic enterprises, to finance the growing church.

As of 1985, 350 churches of the Kristo Asafo Mission had sprung up in seven of the 10 regions in Ghana. The three unentered regions, all in northern Ghana, are targeted for outreach in the next few years.

The Kristo Asafo Mission teaches that the Sabbath begins at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, the day of preparation, and ends at 6:00 p.m. on Saturday. The Sabbath church service begins at 3:00 p.m., because the mission teaches that worship should be done from the ninth hour, according to Acts 3:1. The morning hours are devoted to personal Bible study, meditation, and prayer; all members are to remain indoors during this time. Ministers use this time for personal preparation for the afternoon services, which consist of a lot of singing, dancing, and prayer, in addition to preaching and instructions by the pastor.

According to Kristo Asafo, no secular work should be done by members on the Sabbath. They should do good and be of service to God and

humanity, but no unnecessary and long travel is allowed on the Sabbath.

Theologically, Kristo Asafo accepts the Bible in its entirety. No other book is considered to have any real value when it comes to faith and belief. Both Old and New Testaments are seen as the inspired and authoritative voice of God, but in areas of doctrine, the New Testament is seen as an improvement on the Old. Where a doctrinal point appears in both the Old and New Testaments, the mission takes the teaching of the New Testament as the current teaching.

The Bible is read very literally by both leaders and members. Sermons and biblical instructions reveal the very nature of the mission. No attempts are made to involve the congregation in any theological and scholarly discussions. "The Bible is plain enough and no attempt should be made to explain it by human knowledge and ideas," a Kristo Asafo pastor told me. He added, "Preaching is the work of the Holy spirit; it does not necessarily come by learning." Often, the founder and leader receives inspiration and prophecies as God sees fit. The mission firmly teaches the existence of God, and his participating in the affairs of humans. Jesus and the Holy Spirit are close companions of God, all of them being, at the same time, separate and one.

Though no extensive discussion is put into this topic, the mission acknowledges the unity of the Godhead, no doubt based on the leader's Methodist background. Still, the mission teaches that God is actually black. In fact, for thousands of years, Africa was his home—he lived in Ethiopia. Satan, seen as constantly antagonizing God, is indeed the opposite of black—white. While Jacob was black, his brother Esau was white, and not quite loved by God.

Baptism is done by immersion only. To be baptized, one has to be 16 years of age or older. The baptism takes place in a river. Baptismal candidates are immersed three times, in the names, successively, of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The literal return of Jesus Christ is supported by quoting Matthew 25:31 and John 14:1-3. At the second coming of Christ, there will be two distinct groups—the righteous and the wicked.

The righteous will be taken by Christ to the place he is preparing for them, while the wicked and the earth will be totally destroyed by the fire of God. A new era will begin at the second advent of Christ. There will be peace, plenty, and a place for all the righteous.

The mission has no creed regarding the state of the dead. No one really knows what happens in

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death. The righteous go into paradise "inside" the earth, but the wicked go into hell "under" the earth.

Kristo Asafo's leaders and members insist that they are not Pentecostals. They do not speak in tongues, nor do they go into trances. Women cover their heads when they come into the church and when in prayer, based on 1 Corinthians 11. Both men and women enter the church barefooted, in accordance with the Scriptures regarding entering the holy place.

So far, the local language is used exclusively in preaching and singing. The music is mainly the beautiful Ghanaian traditional lyrics. Local compositions, and on-the-spot compositions, are common. There is strictly no drumming in the sanctuary during services; however, during outdoor services, public preaching, and evangelistic efforts, which mostly take place at street corners and market places, lively drumming and dancing take place.

Every fourth month the Lord's Supper is celebrated. All baptized members partake of the wine and the bread, which are symbolic emblems. For wine, only the juice of the fruit is used.

Regarding marriage, the mission teaches that monogamy is the ideal marital situation that pleases God. However, people who are polygamists are accepted into full membership, as the Bible does not prohibit polygamy. Polygamists in good standing can receive baptism and participate

in the Lord's Supper. Polygamists must, however, vow to love their wives "equally." Single members are encouraged to marry only one wife, but if a member marries a second, he is not dropped from membership. He is "left to God," and may continue to participate in the Lord's Supper. He, too, must vow to love his multiple wives equally.

Health regulations for members of Kristo Asafo are straightforward. No foods or meats are prohibited, except animals slaughtered and offered to idols, a concept based on Acts 15:28, 29. Members are taught not to use tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

There is strong emphasis on the belief that Jesus Christ is the head of the Kristo Asafo Mission, both spiritually and organizationally. It is he who has directed how the mission should be run

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on earth, by directing the apostle and the founding leader of the denomination. The apostle, therefore, oversees all activities, including planning and decision-making. The apostle is assisted by his lieutenant evangelist Akwasi Gyebi, the "second in command," and a church secretary, Pastor Eric Akon, whose office is at the Accra New Town headquarters. There is one "senior pastor," Pastor Samuel Safo. These four serve as the highest executive committee or synod for the committee.

Closely working with these four in Accra are a corps of district pastors, each administering the activities of the mission in a given territory. Then there are local church pastors, and finally hundreds of local church elders heading the various churches and groups.

Only the four top administrators at headquarters in Accra receive salaries. The part-time district pastors are given allowances to meet travel expenses. Both district pastors and local church

leaders are engaged in some other form of business activity, working as technicians, farmers, et cetera.

The pastors and leaders have no formal theological or pastoral training. Once a month, all the pastors come together to Accra and spend two or three days receiving instruction from the founder and leader. This instruction and teaching forms the basis of the weekly sermons. The pastors, in turn, teach the local elders.

The ministers dress no differently from the lay membership, because Jesus dressed in just the same way as did his disciples and the people to whom they ministered. It was necessary for Judas Iscariot to kiss Jesus in order to identify him—obviously, Christ was not identifiable by his dress. Ministers and members alike freely use jewelry.

Tithes and offerings form the basic, but not the major, source of financing for the activities of the mission. Both tithes and offerings are promoted strongly during Sabbath services. General offerings are taken for the general operation; specific offerings, for housing a minister, et cetera, are also collected cheerfully. It is not uncommon during one Sabbath service to collect four or five offerings, and for the minister to ask for a sixth if the amount targeted is not reached.

It appears that the major source of financing comes from the many commercial and industrial ventures of the mission, notably the farm projects in all seven regions where the mission is active. There is also a large dam in Gomoa owned by the mission for farming purposes.

In addition to the farming projects, the mission has several small-scale electronics shops in the cities, which assemble, repair, and sell electric appliances like radios, televisions, sound systems, and the like. This provides apprenticeships and wage-earning possibilities for the youth in the mission. Carpenter shops and ceramics workshops are also being added to the list of mission ventures. This has considerably reduced unemployment and increased self-respect in their churches.

Every branch of Kristo Asafo must be self-supporting. Tithes, offerings, and incomes from branch projects, are all channeled to headquarters

and into a central fund administered by the apostle, founder, and leader.

Are African Independent Churches Really Christian?

Not everything about the independent churches is good. Perhaps the most serious weakness of the African independent churches is their apparent neglect of theological study. Most African independent churches content themselves with a very casual reading of Scripture and refuse any detailed and systematic study. Hence, meanings are read into texts and passages, sometimes to the point of making them appear fanatical. The second problem is the lack of adequately trained ministry.

Probably both of these problem areas came about because the African independent church idea reached and attracted only a certain class of people in the community. But this is fast changing. Now, people of all walks of life are joining these churches. In universities all over Africa there are young people, either direct converts or children of old converts, studying and taking their religion seriously. In time, this class of university-trained members will take theology seriously and enter the ministry.

African independent churches have been important in Africa and are beginning to have an impact globally. But are they truly an effective agent for the spread of Christianity? Are they making a worthwhile contribution? In my estimation, the African independent churches are, and continue to be, a valid part of Christianity within Africa, for the following reasons:

The appearance of the African independent churches has been timely—to meet political needs. The question, “Is everything in Christianity divine or Western?” has agitated the minds of many believers. In many cases the question was not asked, for fear that the questioner would incur the displeasure of the only people who could answer it. Thousands went to church in order to please the officials, or to get or keep a job.

To most Africans, Christianity came with, or

under, the protection of one colonizing power or another. In time, therefore, the two were perceived to be the same. Christian missionaries brought Christianity, along with their culture. But it took centuries for African Christians to grasp the fact that the missionaries were showing them how they, the missionaries, lived—as Danish Christians, British Christians, or American Christians—while Africans must live as African Christians.

In a way, the African independent churches have not only saved Christianity, they have expanded it in the face of political turmoil and social change in Africa.

With the advent of independence, mass education, and widespread travel, came a reaction. “Let colonialism go—bag and baggage.” Christianity, which had been seen as part of the neocolonialist package, also fell into disfavor. In some places, by national decrees, Christian names and Western style neckties and suits were abolished overnight. There were attempts to dismantle the whole Christian paraphernalia.

The African independent churches provided part of the solution. An old man I talked with told me that during that critical period, the African independent churches were, in effect, saying to Africa, “You can be Christian and remain African.” That was what thousands of people wanted to do: maintain their Africanness in dress, music, and thought, and at the same time appropriate the grace of Jesus Christ, and receive the assurance of eternal life. A possible mass exodus out of Christianity to something yet unknown to the African was averted into a mere “crossing the carpet,” as it was described in some countries in Africa, from missionary churches into independent churches.

In a way, the African independent churches have not only saved Christianity, but have expanded it in the face of political turmoil and social change in Africa. The African independent churches have held the banner of Christ high through Africa’s most critical periods. Christ has been made real by the one million Kibanguists in

Zaire, the hundreds of thousands in Aladura churches in Nigeria, and great numbers in the Zionist churches in South Africa.

The African independent churches have met needs that the missionary churches ignored. The converts into the missionary-church Christianity soon realized that their newly adopted religion dealt with only part of their life's needs—only a few hours a week of their time. The missionary churches dismissed issues like ghosts, witchcraft, and taboos. But to the African, these things were very real. The bonds with the spirit world could not easily be broken. They heard the spirits speak to them, they suffered the effects of spells of witchcraft, and mysterious things happened to them as a result of neglect or disobedience of the old-time rules of the tribe. So when a convert became sick and could not find healing from the hospital run by the missionary's cousin, he would secretly go anywhere for help.

By and large, the African independent churches have squarely addressed these neglected issues, through the presence of divine healing and the casting out of devils. In my estimation, these constitute real contributions to Christianity. In this way, Christians can confront such issues right in their own church, without resorting to diviners.

The African independent churches have fairly successfully indigenized Christianity. To make Christianity belong here in Africa is an achievement. For people to worship in their own language, and in the way that appeals to them, is definitely a plus. The efforts to indigenize Christian music, dress, and thought have paid great dividends, and could be part of that which will preserve Christianity on the continent of Africa.

Many missionary churches, especially the Roman Catholic church, have taken the hint and are fast indigenizing. African traditional lyrics, using Bible passages, are now common in the music of many churches. The use of traditional musical instruments—for example, drums, xylophone, bamboo, maracas,—is gradually becoming commonplace in many missionary churches. The graceful, polite swaying of the body, or holy

dancing of the African independent churches, is also creeping into the missionary churches.

Extemporaneous preaching, “amens,” and the freedom to be yourself in the house of the Lord is what the African independent churches are

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bringing into Christianity. Large numbers of Christians from the missionary churches frequently visit the African independent churches, from which they return home refreshed and challenged. The church in Africa must indigenize. It will be the only effective challenge to attempts being made by revolutionary elements in Africa to polish and market, in a new package, Africa's traditional heathen practices.

With zeal and energy, the African independent churches, by and large, are proclaiming the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes the conviction and urgency with which they preach the Lord's imminent return, and the clarity of the message, tend to surpass what we as Seventh-day Adventists preach. They might not have all the prophecies in proper order, and they might not line up exactly what events will take place at the Second Coming, but they surely and clearly announce the Second Coming. It is evident that the Lord is using them to do his work.

There is much the Seventh-day Adventist church can learn from the African independent churches. The Adventist church in Africa is proclaiming the truth, and has great potential for proclaiming it more effectively. But African independent Sabbathkeeping churches are also a part of the plan of God. We can work together, helping one another, until we all come into the full knowledge of the truth.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The Akans represent nearly 50 percent of the population of Ghana and are made up of the Ashanti, Fante, Brong, Akyem, Nzima, Akwapim, Kwahu, and the Anyi-Baule ethnolinguistic groups.

2. For a comprehensive study of the subject, see K. Owusu-Mensa: "Onyamee Kwamee (The Akan God of Saturday)", an unpublished manuscript.

3. Ibid.

Adventists and Homosexuality Revisited

by Larry Hallock

When the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference publishes a paper, it means something. The institute's approval, since it is a General Conference organization housed in its Silver Spring headquarters, is like a Seventh-day Adventist imprimatur. So when the institute decided to publish Ronald Springett's paper on homosexuality, many hoped it would be a turning point in Adventist thinking, demonstrating a clear and honest understanding of homosexuals and homosexuality. But it wasn't.

London-born Ronald Springett has a Ph.D. in New Testament backgrounds and has taught at Southern College of Seventh-day Adventists for nearly 20 years. In *Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures*, Springett builds a strong case (inadvertently, no doubt) for debunking the notion of biblical certainty on the issues. He also represents opposing viewpoints fairly, even convincingly. Many gay Christians will no doubt find some reassurance in this. They will also find the book's defensive stance refreshing for a change: its stated purpose is to "look at some of the claims put forward in pro-homophile literature of the last decade or so."¹

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Springett's 173-page book is divided into seven chapters. The first purports to tell what homosexuality is, the last summarizes the author's conclusions. The substantive middle portion of the book is a detailed, scholarly discussion of references to homosexual acts in ancient history and in biblical texts.

Springett often acknowledges the difficulty of determining the meanings of texts, and is candid about sometimes only "leaning" toward his preferred view because it is consistent with his basic point of view, and because it "cannot be entirely ruled out." His coverage of the Sodom story is one example of this ambiguity. Although Springett holds that homosexuality was *part* of the Sodom sin problem, he admits that "there is no explicit mention of homosexuality here. . . ."

Springett, in discussing the causes of homosexuality, makes it clear that no one knows what determines sexual orientation, and that there is a growing preponderance of evidence that biological factors play a major role. Regarding change of orientation, the author refreshingly avoids parroting the false claims of "change" programs, noting that those claims are challenged, and that the view that change is impossible "has been in the ascendancy for some time now." He distinguishes between change of orientation and change of behavior, and acknowledges that "the homosexual should not be led to believe that all desire for and temptation toward same-sex acts will be quickly removed."

But this modest progress toward understanding

the permanence of sexual orientation is tarnished by cliché rebuttals, such as equating all homosexual expression with heterosexual lust, and summarizing his insights with the comment that “we believe that the Lord can change what the world cannot.” Instead of offering any evidence that the Lord has ever chosen to grant an orientational change, Springett merely argues that the Lord *could*—a point that no one questions.

In spite of Springett’s distinction between orientation and behavior, and the arguments he reports on the improbability of change, he never quite boils the matter down to a serious discussion of the basic question—does God require Christian gays, in permanent, monogamous relationships, to be celibate? Even in 1989, it seems this much clarity of focus is too much to ask of many Christian writers, Ronald Springett among them.

Unwarranted Conclusions

Springett offers no original thought to challenge Adventism’s thinking in regard to homosexuality, and predictably picks his conclusion from the only two traditionally safe choices: all black or all white. And black it is. Springett concludes that condoning homosexual activity would require the church’s view of scriptural inspiration “to undergo such a radical, liberalizing change that the fundamental teachings of the church would be left without foundation,” the consequences of which “would be a giant step toward repaganization of the church.”

The extreme and certain nature of this conclusion is inconsistent with the author’s many acknowledgements of scriptural ambiguity. Suddenly the difficult texts Springett took a hundred pages to discuss have “plain meaning.” The author states that “numerous questions remain to be answered” and emphasizes that “if the church is to gain a clear picture of homosexuals . . . and how to relate to them, much consideration remains to be done beyond this [book],” which is just a “preliminary study.” Yet his conclusions are anything but tentative!

Springett, after acknowledging that “Advent-

ists have developed no universally consistent system of interpretation of Scripture,” lists four principles of interpretation that are “widely held” in conservative Adventist circles, and the book “proceed[s] along these lines.” But seven chapters later, the book’s conclusion cheats thoughtful readers out of a discussion of all acceptable Adventist points of view, denying what the book’s preface clearly implies: a more moderate Adventist interpretation could result in very different conclusions.

Absurdities

The unpardonable sin of the book’s introductory chapter is the author’s answer to “What Do Homosexuals Do?” Springett begins by noting the “considerable mythology” and “misinformation propagated in popular culture,” and continues by providing some of his own. Focusing on promiscuous genital activity, he details toilet sex, child molestation, “cruising,” fellatio, anal sex, sadomasochism, “trade,” et cetera, emphasizing his belief that the one most common social activity for gays is searching for a “one night stand.”

Springett showcases the sexual behavior of certain male homosexuals in a large inner-city gay ghetto as his chief example of what homosexuals do, omitting reference to a multitude of gay and lesbian organizations that exist in all major cities, such as gay academic organizations and professional groups; gay community groups; gay government liaison groups; gay political organizations; gay coffee houses, writers’ clubs and art and entertainment groups; AIDS organizations and projects; predominantly gay churches and synagogues, and gay religious organizations and support groups; legitimate gay publications; gay sports teams in tennis, swimming, racquetball, football, baseball, basketball, wrestling, bowling, and athletic events; gay choruses; and national gay advocacy groups—legal, political.² Springett’s assertion that sex with strangers is the most common social activity of homosexuals is challenged by the existence of such organizations, and

by the fact that many gay and lesbian people socialize in largely heterosexual circles.

Absent from Springett's discussion of what homosexuals "do," in short, is anything that would make them look good.

Scholarship and Readability

Actually, the book errs, for one example, in stating that homosexual acts are currently "illegal by general United States standards." In fact, as the states continue to repeal antiquated laws, a growing majority of Americans now live in states where all forms of sexual activity between consenting adults, including homosexuals, are legal.³

While the historical Sappho is discussed, lesbians are barely acknowledged in the book. Even granted that the term "homosexuals" includes women, the author repeatedly betrays himself as thinking only of men: his behavioral discussions are of male behaviors; he does not discuss how theories of etiology (such as environment) apply to women; he does not address the Bible's silence on female homosexual acts; and his momentary usage of the term "he/she" early in the book quickly reverts to "he" or "gays," a term usually taken to denote males.

The book is so poorly organized, developed, and edited that one wonders how it cleared the Biblical Research Institute. The discussion of orientational change is introduced in the "Conclusions" chapter. Issues are discussed or ignored without apparent reason. The author doesn't tackle—or even list—the "moral and ethical questions" he says arise.

Many seek an understanding of loving, monogamous gay and lesbian relationships and issues of celibacy—but Springett offers no substantive discussion of these. No one is arguing in favor of depraved, compulsive sexual activity—but Springett discusses it at length. If, as the author states, the book's purpose is to look at "pro-homophile" arguments, why does he focus on non-issues?

Editing problems range from the two dozen

typographical errors listed in the insert, to problems regarding terminology. Springett defines "pervert," "invert," "constitutional," "acquired," and "situational" homosexuals, then confuses readers with undefined terms such as "exclusive," "essential," "active," and "primary" homosexuals.

Numerous blanket assertions and overgeneralizations of varying importance are made. "Homosexuals," not just those in error, says Springett, "need to reconsider the scriptural passages." "Homosexuals in the Christian context need to study the Scriptures for themselves," he continues, as though many haven't spent their lives doing just that. Another example makes one suspect that the author is simply writing off the top of his head: "Many homosexuals are convinced that increasingly permissive sexual attitudes in the church will in time lead to acceptance of their sexual behavior. Consequently, it is difficult for many Christian gays to understand why they are scapegoats for sexual sins in the church." The author cites no study to support these broad suppositions.

Other problems are more serious. The difference between orientation and behavior is not clear

One thing about the church seems apparent: it is afraid to know homosexuals. Knowing homosexuals means wrestling with the heart, struggling with compelling issues.

in Springett's own mind. He uses *homosexuality* and *homosexual sex* synonymously, as if a difference does not exist. The various Scriptures, for example, are often mentioned as referring to "homosexuality." In a study where the distinction is crucial, such carelessness is a major flaw.

Springett seems to pick and choose which scripture passages to interpret literally. Although he readily admits in reference to Leviticus 19:19,⁴ that "as to seeds and cloth, this text is difficult to interpret at best. We do not really know what is meant here." Some might wish that he and the church were a fraction as aware of their fallibility

on the issue of homosexuality. Many would prefer that the church acknowledge honestly and courageously the true tenuousness of contrived “certainty” on issues that so directly affect people.

Conclusion

A review of this book must include a look at the church that commissioned it. One thing about the church seems apparent: it is afraid to know homosexuals. Knowing homosexuals means wrestling with the heart, struggling with compelling issues. Somehow the church has managed to reconcile a narrow view of inspiration, with science and the experience of

human beings, in regard to farming, blended fabrics, slavery, women, divorce, and more. But its method is still to pick and choose on the basis of convenience, and that is apparently how Springett’s paper—and *only* Springett’s paper—got published.

Homosexuality in History and the Scriptures tiptoes closer to reality than many Adventist writings, but this meager advance and its perfunctory call for compassion hardly mitigate the book’s faults. Pastors, teachers, parents, and young people seeking information will get little more than the same old genital caricatures and the same old proof-text certainty. For a meaningful discussion of issues that relate to real Christian people in the real world, Adventist readers will have to look to the presses of other Christian churches.

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1. The Biblical Research Institute had assigned a paper on the same subject to ethics professor David Larson of Loma Linda University. When Larson was asked to enlarge the study and revise his paper, he declined to continue. His paper encouraged the church to empower congregations to deal with homosexuality case-by-case.

2. In Chicago, for example, directories list 16 gay and lesbian academic organizations; eight professional groups; 32 community groups, including both women’s and men’s organizations; business/community associations; groups based on nationality, race, hobbies, et cetera; 17 gay and

lesbian political organizations; 10 entertainment spots; 28 AIDS organizations and projects; 36 religious organizations/support groups, along with several predominantly gay churches and synagogues; six legitimate gay publications; more bowling teams than gay bars; and several gay choruses, one of which has won multiple grants from the National Foundation of the Arts.

3. Only five states have laws that single out homosexuals; 20 others criminalize certain sexual activities for everyone, including heterosexual couples.

4. Revised Standard Version, as quoted by author.

Adventists in Plain Dress

by Gary Land

While many church members today are questioning the Seventh-day Adventist stand against the wearing of jewelry, a preliminary examination of the historical evidence suggests that early Adventist precept and practice was considerably more complex than might be expected. It appears that Seventh-day Adventists have inherited, particularly through Ellen G. White, a “plain tradition” rooted in earlier Christian movements. Although this “plain tradition” became the dominant position, particularly among the church leaders, many members who came from other Christian traditions had difficulty in accepting the ban on jewelry. In short, the “plain tradition” seems never to have completely won over the church membership.

The sources of the “plain tradition” lie in the radical wing of the Protestant Reformation. Sixteenth-century Anabaptists, for instance, opposed jewelry, hair ribbons, and other accessories, although this position seems to have weakened in some quarters by the end of the century.¹ In colonial America both the Puritans and the Quakers established the “plain tradition” in their opposition to gold ornaments, silver shoe buckles, feathers, ribbons, and lace, though the Quakers appear to have been the most successful in maintaining their prohibition of finery.²

For Seventh-day Adventists, however, the

most important source of the “plain tradition” was Methodism. The Doctrine and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal church of 1808 stated that the Christian must avoid “doing what we know is not for the glory of God: As the putting on of gold and costly apparel.”³ One scholar notes that while this general rule continued “essentially unchanged” until 1939, between 1876 and 1919 attempts to enforce the prohibition of jewelry were “greatly relaxed.” One minister addressing the Northern General Conference in 1900 lamented that “the plainness of the early Methodist congregations has disappeared.”⁴ This relaxation of standards in later 19th-century Methodism helped spark the Holiness movement, which took a strong stand against the wearing of jewelry. Some Holiness evangelists in the 1890s, for instance, condemned jewelry, including the wedding ring, as well as ruffles, feathers, and corsets. Early 20th century Holiness churches prohibited both jewelry and fashionable clothing. It was not until the mid-20th century that wedding rings became acceptable within the Church of the Nazarene.⁵

Despite the protests of the “plain tradition,” fashionable women in America always used jewelry as an important element in their wardrobe. While the popularity of specific types of jewelry changed over time, the desire for adornment seems not to have changed,⁶ affecting even followers of the “plain tradition.”

The importance of the Methodist influence on Adventism and the inability of Methodists to completely enforce their rule appears in Ellen White’s recollection that when she was 12, a

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woman came to her Methodist church wearing earrings and rings. Ellen was greatly troubled when she saw this woman greeted by the pastor and, after reflecting on 1 Timothy 2:9, 10, Ellen concluded that she must herself be plain in dress. She believed that it was wicked to think about one's appearance; instead, we must humble ourselves because of our sins and transgressions.⁷

This early rejection of jewelry because of the base nature of human beings pervaded Ellen White's comments on the subject through the early 1870s. In 1860 she remembered telling a woman in 1848 that Scripture forbade the wearing of gold and that "instead of decorating these bodies because Solomon's temple was gloriously adorned, we should remember our fallen condition, and that it cost the sufferings and death of the Son of God to redeem us."⁸ Elsewhere she warned parents against encouraging vanity by putting ornaments on children, criticized the "vain pride" exhibited in wearing jewelry, and spoke of the contrast between the ornaments and feathers of the fashionable and Christ's crown of thorns.⁹ Ellen White also urged economy in both use of time and money, saying that much was being wasted on jewelry and needless ornaments.¹⁰ Her advocacy of plain dress included not only jewelry but bonnets, collars, ribbons, laces and bows, although a note in the second edition of an 1856 *Testimony* said that she was referring only to expensive items rather than condemning entirely the wearing of such things as lace and collars.¹¹ In 1875 she pulled together a number of these concerns when she stated that "self-denial in dress is a part of our Christian duty. To dress plainly, abstaining from display of jewelry and ornaments of every kind, is in keeping with our faith."¹²

Beginning in the 1870s, however, Ellen White placed increasing emphasis upon the need to spend money otherwise used for "needless ornaments" for the poor or for God's cause. In 1878 she told *Review and Herald* readers that enough money was being spent by Christians for jewels and ornaments to supply the urban poor. Calling upon the young in 1880 to deny themselves, Ellen White counseled against buying needless "ornaments and articles of dress, even if they cost but a few dimes, and place the amount in the charity

box." Over 20 years later she similarly stated that "professed Christians adorn themselves with jewelry, laces, costly apparel, while the Lord's poor suffer for the necessities of life."¹³ In addition to using the money for the poor, she also advocated giving it to the church.¹⁴

However, this broadening of the rationale for opposing the wearing of jewelry did not displace Ellen White's earlier concern for self-abasement. In 1905, for instance, she quoted 1 Timothy 2:9, commenting, "This forbids display in dress,

Bourdeau said that the prohibition of gold was as clear as the prohibition of killing—for four reasons: biblical command, unnecessary expense, suppression of pride and self, and example.

gaudy colors, profuse ornamentation. Any device designed to attract attention to the wearer or to excite admiration is excluded from the modest apparel which God's word enjoins."¹⁵ It should be emphasized that Ellen White seldom spoke of jewelry alone, almost always including it with ruffles, feathers, bows, ribbons, embroidery, lace, costly apparel, and expensive furniture and houses.¹⁶ In other words, Ellen White applied the "plain tradition" broadly to all aspects of the Christian's material life rather than limiting it to a particular type of personal adornment.

Other denominational writers, likewise devoted little time to the issue of jewelry (theological issues and even the use of tobacco and pork attracted much greater attention) but their comments consistently advocated the "plain tradition." In 1859 the *Review and Herald* reprinted an 1831 letter from Baptist missionary Adoniram Judson appealing to Christian women in America to eschew jewelry. A short time later the *Review and Herald* published the letter in tract form and then again reprinted it in the weekly magazine.¹⁷ A few years later, D.T. Bourdeau referred to Baptists and Methodists, among other unnamed denominations, as condemning the wearing of jewelry. Referring to Isaiah 3:15-26, 1 Peter 3:3,4, and 1

Timothy 2:9, Bourdeau said that the prohibition of gold was as clear as the prohibition of killing. He went on to outline four reasons for not wearing jewelry: biblical command, unnecessary expense, suppression of pride and self, and example.¹⁸

In 1871, another well-known minister, J. N. Loughborough, reconstructed a conversation with a woman who had begun keeping the Sabbath but “did not see fit to give up the world.” He argued against jewelry, particularly brooches and “gold cuff buttons,” because of their expense and their contrast with “the plain vesture of Christ.” When the woman apparently said that the biblical texts were only against extremes, Loughborough responded: “Won’t you be so kind as to tell me where to lay down a line of distinction, so that, in

instructing the people, they may know what is excess in jewels.”¹⁹

While these comments from the 1850s through the early 1870s reveal no single dominant argument, the statements throughout the remainder of the century tend to revolve around concerns for inner spirituality. Perhaps significantly, most of the writers pursuing this theme were women. As early as 1872, Mary E. Guilford described outward adornment as inconsistent with God’s requirements for inner spirituality. Concern with fashion, in her view, led to heathenism. God, she argued, wants us to withdraw our attention from the vanities of this world. A selection taken from a non-Adventist periodical stated that “a meek and quiet spirit is a brighter adornment than diamonds.” By the 1890s Mrs. J. W. Rumbo was



The White family, about 1905, at Elmshaven, California. Left to right: standing, Ella White-Robinson, Does Robinson, Wilfred Workman, Mabel White-Workman; seated, Ethel May Lacey-White, Ellen G. White, William C. White; seated on rug, J. Henry White, Evelyn Grace White, Herbert C. White. The shell necklace, worn by Ella, Ellen White’s granddaughter, was purchased by Ellen White while she was in Australia. Does Robinson, the husband of Ella White-Robinson, was a long-time assistant to Ellen White. Photo courtesy of the Art Library, Review and Herald Publishing Association.

calling for “plain dress” and “true inward adorning.” If humans could only see themselves as God sees them, Mrs. Rumbo urged, “there would be no spirit of adornment left in us. Laces and ruffles and feathers and flowers, and such like adornments, would sink to their true level in our estimation.”²⁰ This emphasis upon inner spirituality rather than strictly legal precepts, suggests that Victorian female sensibility may have played a role in the expansion of theological understanding. This period—the late 19th century—was when Adventists struggled over law and grace.

Both Ellen G. White and the *Review and Herald* writers took an essentially Calvinistic view of human nature and therefore saw no reason for humans to adorn themselves. But, as noted previously, jewelry was only one of several means of

adornment, all of which were condemned. “The church has not been commissioned to prepare a list of articles of apparel,” wrote Clarence Santee in 1912. “But God has promised to remove the desire for unnecessary adornment when the heart has been willingly submitted to him and he comes in and reigns.”²¹

Despite the unanimity of published opinion against the wearing of jewelry, the issue does not appear to have been a matter of church discipline in the 19th century. The Battle Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church adopted a series of resolutions regarding dress on April 30, 1866. Point three stated: “We believe that every species of gold, silver, coral, pearl, rubber, and hair jewelry are not only entirely superfluous, but strictly forbidden by the plain teachings of the Scriptures.”



The White family at Elmhaven, California, in 1913. Left to right: standing, Mabel White-Workman, Wilfred Workman, Henry White, Herbert White; seated: Does Robinson, Ella White-Robinson, Ellen G. White, May White, William White; on ground: Virgil Robinson, Mabel Robinson, Arthur White, Grace White. This picture appears in Arthur White's biography of Ellen White. Although Ella's necklace was originally airbrushed out, the Review and Herald has determined that in future editions the photo will be reprinted unretouched. Photo courtesy of the Art Library, Review and Herald Publishing Assoc.

As with most other comments on jewelry, though, this one was surrounded by condemnation of such things as feathers and flowers in point two, and ribbons, braid, and embroidery in point four. Also, unlike most comments, which said nothing about men, point seven objected to mustaches or goatees in favor of full beards. A few weeks later the General Conference adopted these resolutions with some minor revisions and additions, “recommending” them to the people.²²

Interestingly, although its significance is unclear, Battle Creek College said nothing about

jewelry until its 14th school year. Although five years earlier it had counseled its students against “extravagance in dress,” not until 1889 did the school calendar state that “the wearing of jewelry and any unnecessary ornamentation in dress are not in good taste here, and will not be in harmony with the wishes of the managers.”²³ It seems unlikely that jewelry was allowed prior to 1889, but why the institution waited until that year explicitly to prohibit the wearing of jewelry is unclear. Possibly Adventist practice, particularly in the Battle Creek area, was undergoing change.

The evidence discovered, to this point, regarding actual Adventist practice, is sketchy, but it does suggest that a number of Adventist women continued to wear jewelry despite the arguments put forward in church publications. Writing in 1857, Joseph Clarke described a New York merchant as saying that “the money paid by our people for these baubles (jewelry, rings, necklaces), is absolutely past belief; and that it might better be cast into the ocean.”²⁴ Three years later James White advised Adventist ministers against accepting donations to the church in the form of jewelry because it usually did not have as much value as the giver thought. He closed his 1860 warning by referring to those who “from a sense of duty wish to wear it (jewelry) no more.”²⁵ Two decades later, Ellen G. White indicated that Adventists, presumably at the Battle Creek Sanitarium, were wearing rings, gold watches, and chains, although she also said that Adventists were known for not wearing such items.²⁶ Another indication of what Adventists in Battle Creek were wearing is the offering taken in 1893 after A.T. Jones read Anna Rice’s testimony advocating that church members “tear off” their gold. The resulting offering at Adventism’s flagship congregation appears to have been spontaneous and suggests that people were wearing these items to church, including “gold watches, gold chains, gold rings, gold



Four generations of Seventh-day Adventists: Seated right, with necklace, Marietta Walker Aldrich. At the age of 15, Marietta was hired by James White as one of the first three typesetters at the Review and Herald Publishing Association. Later, she was a kindergarten superintendent in the Battle Creek Church. Her husband, Homer Aldrich, served as press foreman at the Review and Herald for 33 years, and her father, Eli S. Walker, was the first treasurer of the General Conference. Her father-in-law, Jotham M. Aldrich, chaired the meeting that organized the first General Conference session. Photo courtesy of Madeline Johnston.

bracelets, gold sleeve-buttons, diamond studs and pins.”²⁷

Gerald Wheeler has recently described the ambiguity of Ellen White’s own practice. At the 1888 General Conference Mrs. White wore a “heavy metallic chain which hung suspended near her waist.”²⁸ Wheeler goes on to state that “an examination of photographs of Ellen White reveals that she enjoyed wearing pins and brooches.”²⁹ Photographs of other Adventist women from the turn of the century show them wearing jewelry. Ella White-Robinson, Mrs. White’s granddaughter, appears in a 1905 family photograph—which includes Ellen White—wearing a long necklace.³⁰ Wheeler describes a second photograph of Ella White-Robinson, again taken with Ellen White, in which she is wearing a shell necklace apparently purchased as gift by Ellen White for her granddaughter.³¹ In a photograph of the founders of Madison School, taken in 1909, it appears that Minnie Hawkins is wearing a small necklace.³² And photographs of Seventh-day Adventist family ancestors in the collection of Madeline Johnston of Berrien Springs, Michigan, show several women wearing necklaces. Whether this phenomenon of Adventist women wearing jewelry, particularly necklaces, was widespread, or largely limited to the “worldly” Battle Creek area, can only be determined as more people search their family heirlooms.

Photographs of early Adventist women, together with such evidence as the Battle Creek Church offering of 1893, indicate that despite church teachings, jewelry was never fully eradicated from the membership. The discussions of ministers like J. N. Loughborough show that new Sabbathkeepers from churches that did not follow the “plain tradition” sought to bring their jewelry with them. Between the pressures of a society in which jewelry was fashionable and new church members who may not have accepted the entire scope of Adventist teachings, 19th century Seventh-day Adventism apparently had difficulty enforcing the “plain tradition,” although obviously it never relaxed its standards in the manner of Methodism.

Although this essay focuses on Adventist prac-

tice in the 19th century, some evidence indicates that some Seventh-day Adventists continued to wear jewelry in the 20th century. In 1918, Stemple White quoted John Wesley and the 1855 Methodist Discipline in an apparent protest against increasing acceptance of the wedding ring in Adventist circles. A 1931 writer described

Between the pressures of a society in which jewelry was fashionable and new church members who may not have accepted the entire scope of Adventist teachings, 19th century Adventism apparently had difficulty enforcing the “plain tradition.”

“God’s professed people wearing rings, bracelets, chains, and almost everything in the line of jewelry,” including the wedding ring. And in 1956, R. R. Bietz stated that “today we see more and more fingers, heads, necks, and ears of God’s people decorated with ornaments of gold and silver.”³³

The challenge to the prohibition against jewelry clearly has historical precedent, although such precedent says nothing about the rightness or wrongness of the present challenge. What does appear to be most interesting, however, and remains to be unravelled, is how the 19th-century prohibition of jewelry, which was always part of a larger complex of prohibitions, came to be isolated so that today we are still concerned about bracelets, necklaces, and earrings, but say nothing about furniture or houses or the 20th-century equivalents of bows, feathers, and lace—perhaps expensive sports cars and yachts. A feminist perspective will also ask if the rules governing the female dress are yet another example of male oppression of women, especially since the restrictions regarding mustaches and goatees have been long since forgotten. But any analysis in this feminist direction must take into account the central role of Ellen White in establishing the dominance of the “plain tradition” in Seventh-day Adventist thinking.

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Adorning the Temple of God

by Madelyn Jones-Haldeman

Jewelry has long been used by many denominations as a religious yardstick to measure one's spirituality. Even the wearing of a simple unadorned gold ring, such as the wedding band, has been considered in our church, until recently, as on the brink of "worldliness," the wearer inexorably sliding into apostasy. How can a simple gold band, with or without precious stones, become an integral part of an issue of such momentous proportions? Some would argue that the expense involved precludes a Christian from wearing jewelry, but inexpensive yet attractive costume jewelry rules against such a conclusion. Others argue that adornment is really an issue relating to pride, and therefore must be off-limits to the Christian. For some, adornment includes make-up, certain styles of clothing, pins, brooches, and jewelry of any kind. The exceptions are tie pins or clasps, cuff links, watches, medical alert bracelets or necklaces, watches on gold chains, and decorative hair combs, which are acceptable because they are viewed as having a utilitarian purpose.

Most Seventh-day Adventists promote the lack of personal adornment. Their fingers, arms, and necks remain unadorned, save, perhaps, for a lovely watch or a beautiful tie clasp. However, Adventists do not promote the lack of adornment when decorating their homes, buying their cars, or landscaping their property. Pride is acceptable

and even endorsed in some areas of our lives, when we are admonished to "take pride in your school work," or "take pride in a job well done" or "take pride in your appearance." What kind of reasoning permits one to "take pride" in one's appearance but forbids "being proud" of one's appearance? Do the words "taking" and "being" change the basic meaning of pride itself? How much pride can one experience before it is "too much" pride?

"Pride in one's appearance" is limited to certain categories determined by divines of long ago. An elegantly simple gold bracelet is forbidden but an elegant cuff on a sleeve is never questioned. What would be the response if that elegant cuff was detached from the dress and worn by itself, either on the wrist or around the neck? Or what would be the consensus if lovely material was cut in strips and worn on the fingers, the ankles, the neck, or the forehead? A pin placed on the lapel of a suit is considered adornment, and, therefore, improper. However, a lovely paisley print silk handkerchief worn in the breast pocket of that same suit is perfectly acceptable. Both perform the same function—"finishing off" the suit.

The "function" of the bracelet or necklace determines its acceptability. If it keeps a watch on the wrist or around the neck, the gold bracelet or necklace is not considered adornment. The watch is an utilitarian piece of adornment necessary in the 20th century. Everyone knows how to break rules that don't make sense. Wear a watch.

For most members, the simple answer to questions regarding adornment is that the Bible says to be modest and not to wear gold, and the *Seventh-*

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day Adventist Encyclopedia also invokes the Bible as the ultimate sanction against jewelry. “It is clearly taught in the Scriptures that the wearing of jewelry is contrary to the will of God . . . The wearing of ornaments of jewelry is a bid for attention which is not in keeping with Christian self-forgetfulness” (10:402). It is, therefore, the intention of this paper to examine major texts in the Old and New Testament referring specifically to the wearing of jewelry.

Old Testament

The Old Testament frequently refers to adornment of all varieties: amulets, bracelets, earrings, gold, nose rings, rings, silver, and necklaces, to name some of the most commonly mentioned items. The first reference to gold is found in Genesis 2:11, 12, in which the writer remarks that the land of Havilah contained “good gold.” Havilah is mentioned as one of the primeval lands watered by the four rivers flowing out of Eden. The reference to gold is the only description of the land.

The next reference in Genesis (13:2) concerns Abraham and his wealth, which consisted of much cattle, silver, and gold. Genesis 24:22-53 records that Abraham sent many generous gifts for Rebekah’s dowry—bracelets, a nose ring, and finger rings, each specified by weight. A bride was to be adorned for her husband in garments of silk and fine linen, bejeweled with rings, bracelets, necklaces, and anklets. When, therefore, we read in Genesis 35:1-4 that Jacob commanded his family to put away foreign gods and their earrings, it is important to note that no other rings or necklaces or bracelets or nose rings are mentioned.

Some scholars believe that these particular rings were “employed for purposes of idolatrous worship, which were often covered with allegorical figures and mysterious sentences, and supposed to be endowed with a talismanic virtue” (*Pulpit Commentary* 1:141). Such a conclusion appears valid since (1) the earrings are associated with the idols and (2) no other adornment is

mentioned. Also, no command is recorded against wearing jewelry between the time of Abraham and Jacob.

Three chapters later (38:18-25), we read of Tamar who, when playing the harlot, asked for Judah’s seal, staff, card, and signet ring.³ This passage is significant because it is the first clear reference to men wearing jewelry. Genesis 41:42 records Pharaoh placing his ring and necklace on Joseph who willingly wore these items. In this instance, the jewelry symbolized power and authority, as the jewelry of women designated their new status, acceptance, and worth.

The book of Exodus records several accounts of personal adornment. For example, when the Israelites left Egypt, they took gold, silver, and jewels from the Egyptians (see chapters 3, 11, 12, 35). From this store both the golden calf and the temple furnishings were made. In fact, there was such a supply of silver, gold, jewels, and materials that the people had to be restrained in their giving, indicating that the people had some of these precious items left over for themselves.

From Joshua to the prophets, the Old Testament refers several times to jewels, some gained through conquest, other by gift or purchase. The book of Judges (8:24-26) describes Gideon gathering the earrings from the spoil and making an ephod by which Israel played the harlot. For example, 2 Samuel tells us that Saul wore a crown and a bracelet when he died on the battlefield (1:10). The writer of 2 Chronicles recounts that Hezekiah made treasuries for his silver, gold, and stones (32:37). There is no record that these precious items would be taken to a giant “melting pot,” the residual sold, and the money given to some “worthy cause.” Such materials were not only used by the king himself, but also given as gifts to others. The account in 1 Kings (10:2) records that the Queen of Sheba brought to Solomon gold, spices, and precious stones. The books of Proverbs (20:15) and Job (28:12-19) point out that the higher and better things in life, such as wisdom, cannot be equaled by gold and silver. Canticles (1:10; 7:1) speaks of beads and ornaments in the context of an erotic love song.

The prophets use adornment symbolically; it was not banned. Indeed, adornment was clearly in

use. This is clear because adornment symbolized a relationship of betrothal, of worth and value. Probably the most important passage is Isaiah 3. Twenty-one different ornaments are mentioned in verses 18-23, and not one of the ornaments is banned. The prophet denounces members of the tribe of Judah because they set themselves against the Lord. Both men and women are mentioned in this passage. Not only are many kinds of jewelry mentioned, but also hand mirrors, outer tunics, cloaks, undergarments, turbans, and veils. Actually, the whole repertoire of woman's dress, including the necessary accoutrements to dressing, are all mentioned. To appear without adornment is one thing; but to appear without clothing was to be totally and completely destitute. Actually, the removal of women's adornment indicates God's displeasure and lack of acceptance of Judah as his people. Judah is a sad, unadorned woman, unbetrothed, without a husband.

This chapter in Isaiah is complemented with a description of the origin of Jerusalem. Ezekiel uses symbols to describe the birth of a baby girl who was thrown out into an open field to die. The Lord God passed by and said to the dying infant, "Live." The girl grew up and still was naked and bare. Then the Lord God passed by and spread his skirt over her so that she was no longer naked. As a symbol of acceptance and worth, the Lord adorned her with beautiful clothes and ornaments of all kinds. Then the prophet recounts the harlotry of the woman who trusted in her beauty and made idols from her gold and silver and jewels.

These two passages are very similar. However, Isaiah omits references to birth of the woman and passes directly to descriptions of her betrothal, accompanied by beautiful garments and jewels. Removal of these adornments leaves the woman as God found her—naked and bare—a condition that indicates "out of relationship." Thus we can see the symbolism involved in jewelry and other adornment. The giving of these beautiful ornaments indicated the intention of the giver to enter into a relationship, to become betrothed to someone. The recipient was the chosen one, considered of great worth and value. Literally, the bride was always thus adorned for her husband. Symbolically, then, Jerusalem was the chosen one

adorned for her husband, the Lord God.

It would be difficult to interpret any of these texts to mean that individual Hebrews were not expected to adorn themselves.

1 Timothy 2:9

The New Testament refers to jewelry in only two major texts. The first is found in 1 Timothy 2:9. It is reasonably clear from the entire letter that a number of false teachings had created dissension, schisms, and a highly charged atmosphere in the church. For example, false teachings included an ascetic approach to marriage and food (1 Timothy 4), strange doctrines (1:4, 5), mistreatment of elderly parents and grandparents (1 Timothy 5), and misapplication of the Old Testament scriptures (1:6, 7), to name a few.

Both men and women are exhorted in 1 Timothy 2. Certain men were creating disturbance, and verse 8 admonishes them to pray rather than create wrath and dissension. These men were responsible for teaching or perpetuating many of the heretical ideas and concepts found throughout the letter. The Old Testament quotation, "lift up holy hands," is a metaphor clearly aimed at these nefarious activities. These men are just as responsible for the doctrinal perversion in Ephesus as were the women who are addressed next. Therefore, when verse nine begins with "likewise," the reader is to understand that now the women are being admonished to cease their part in creating wrath and dissension. Inasmuch as the hands are symbols of the men's evil participation, the corollary for the women is their ostentatious dress. In some way, their extravagant attire is an expression of their authority and power, a badge of their hegemony, and is associated with the problem in the church. As the men are to pray, the women are to perform good works directed toward others, rather than spending enormous amounts of their time and money on adorning their own persons.

First-century sources indicate that only the very rich could dress in such an ornate way. Philosophers inveighed against the obvious van-

ity and pride of women who spent their entire lives decorating their bodies. Inasmuch as this letter is addressed to Christians, one can only conjecture from the contents of the letter why rich Christian women are being addressed. They would not have become part of the Christian community dressed in such an ornate way. These women must have chosen such opulent dress and coiffures for some specific reason. Rich women became patrons of itinerant preachers and philosophers in the first century, and the letter refers to many heretical teachings. Therefore, it seems reasonable to conclude that these women not only were dispensers of the erroneous teachings learned from these men, but their power and authority to teach was symbolized by their dress and ornamentation.

Thus, in exhorting the women to dress mod-

Paul was saying to rich, ornamented Christian women : Do not use symbols of power, authority, or status to lord it over others; do not exercise authority in a political way.

estly and discreetly, the author is really removing their power base. The adornment, symbolizing power, was to be replaced with proper clothing that did not symbolize authority. The good works in which they were admonished to engage are the opposite of their actions. These women were bringing in false teachings that created unheard-of problems in the homes and the home church. Therefore, these good works must be defined within this context—taking care of parents and grandparents, teaching women to love their husbands and children, and so forth.

We must understand the admonition against ornamentation against this background. First, we must recognize why it was given. Second, we must interpret it appropriately for our day. To be dressed modestly in the first century did not mean avoiding ornamentation of all kinds. Gold was worn by all peoples, but spectacular styles in which gold and pearls were intricately woven in the hair were time-consuming. No one in the ancient world—Christian or pagan—approved of

such high-handed vanity and personal expense. The exhortation to adorn oneself modestly and discreetly, then, is really a statement against the women's high-handedness in the home churches. Paul was saying: Do not use symbols of power, authority, or status to lord it over others; do not exercise authority in a political way.

Another interesting point about this passage emerges from verse 12. "To have authority over a man," is not the usual verb to describe one's power or responsibility. Rather, in Greek, the word conveys the idea of both seduction and murder. Female teachers in both Greek and Roman times had the reputation of sexually seducing their students. The word also suggests murder—to have full power over someone to the point of destroying the person. Thus the dress of these women suggested seductive powers, and the money they controlled suggested power of another kind. The passage truly deals with high-handed power and authority, used in the most unscrupulous ways. It seems clear, then, that 1 Timothy 2:8, 9 should not be reduced to a proof text condemning adornment.

1 Peter 3:3, 4

First Peter 3:3, 4 records another exhortation against ornamentation. The context of this passage provides perspective to the admonition. These verses are part of a house code that begins in 2:11 and extends to 3:12. Many have written on the house codes in the New Testament and suggested diverse reasons for their use here in 1 Peter. David Balch articulates the most reasonable explanation. House codes were not Christian creations, but came from the Greek philosophy that some persons were superior to others. To the inferior persons, in particular, much has been written concerning the appropriate behavior toward the superior ones. This epistle contains admonitions to slaves, but very little exhortation to masters.

Wives receive full treatment, whereas husbands are accorded one sentence. Balch argues that the house codes were a defense by Christians

against slander, rather than as a manual of Christian behavior.

Balch shows that the Romans in the first century criticized new and foreign cults, accusing them of perpetuating immorality, murder, and sedition. To be seditious in the first century meant reversing the “proper relationship” between a husband and wife or slave and master. Since slaves and women were considered inferior, they were to be submissive to their superiors—husbands and masters. Being women and slaves, they were duty bound to worship the gods of their masters and husbands. The particular rites of Christianity, in which women and men took part together, gave rise to the criticism that women (not men) were immoral. Thus the new religion was accused of corrupting the “weak vessels” of society. A similar charge had been brought against the followers of the Dionysian cult. A slander of this magnitude was tantamount to treason, inasmuch as every home was considered a “mini-state” and the integrity and success of the empire depended upon maintaining the superior/inferior positions in each home as well as the correct behaviors that corresponded to these positions. Failure to worship the gods of masters and husbands was considered seditious. For a cult to be slandered as immoral was a serious offense. The Dionysian cult, for example, was finally banned and its temples closed.

Therefore, this apologetic use of the house codes was, in a sense, a defense for the Christians. The writer is anxious to encourage conduct that would put a stop to the slander and reduce the risk of persecution that apparently loomed in the background.

The exhortation directed to the women included a missionary incentive. In light of the slander befalling the community of believers, it may have been felt that refraining from attending the home churches was necessary in order to avoid the charge of immorality. The reference in verse two to chaste and respectful behavior could well be a suggestion to Christian wives that staying at home (the state disapproved of women going out at night) might be prudent during these difficult times.

The exhortation against adornment must also

be seen against this use of the house codes and the very real charges of slander hurled at the Christians. First of all, only the rich could adorn themselves in such a way. Secondly, Christian wives were accused of immorality and reversing

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society’s role for husbands and wives. Thus, in society, men railed against women because they wore certain colors, used gold and jewels in adorning themselves excessively (according to the men’s standards), and treated themselves to certain oils and bathing rites. The men believed that women who indulged in such behavior were guilty of every crime and in particular, of violating their husband’s beds.

Thus, the writer of 1 Peter exhorts women to avoid any actions that would allow husbands or society to see them as adulterous. To be convicted by society of being adulterous was equivalent to sedition against Rome. The author of 1 Peter was concerned that women not give society any excuse to incriminate all Christians.

Although both Roman men and women wore gold, society considered decoration of the women’s hair with gold and jewels to be inappropriate. A woman’s adornment was to be in accordance with the will of her husband, and deviation from this norm was considered to be immoral. The austere dress suggested in 1 Peter contrasted starkly with the elaborate and exotic dress worn by female participants at the feast of Artemis. Writers of the day describe in detail the beauty of women who paraded through the streets dressed in purple chitons, their hair elaborately braided with gold and jewels. The women who dressed in such a fashion presented themselves as erotically attractive; male observers of the spectacle became convinced that these women were immoral.

The Christian women in 1 Peter 3 did not

participate in the pagan mystery cults. Rather, the accusations of immorality against ornamented and beautifully clothed women in Roman society made it necessary for Christian women to avoid even the “appearance of evil.” Also, Christians were already being accused of sedition because they were making a break with many other aspects of society’s mores. Christian women with pagan husbands were asked to observe society’s customs by treading softly in their homes and deferring to their husbands as lords.

As in 1 Timothy, dress carried important sym-

Jewelry does not need to be expensive, and those who wear it tastefully are not necessarily identified with sexually immoral practices.

bolism. However, 1 Peter does not refer to power and authority, but to morality. Rich women were to be extremely careful in their dress so that society would not consider these Christians as immoral as the women who attended the cultic feasts. Husbands could more readily be won over to the Christian religion if the women conformed to the norms of dress outlined by society because the husbands would not worry about the morality of the wives’ new religion or the purity of the marriage bed.

Thus, it would be a pity to use this passage as a proof text against the wearing of gold or even expensive dresses. In reality, it is not a text prohibiting ornamentation on the basis of some God-given commandment. The very real context was persecution of the church. Under the circumstances, Christians were responsible for one another’s well-being. In the first century, if one was accused of immorality, the whole group was considered guilty.

We must remember that this exhortation was written to women in a monarchic society, women whose very beings were organized around their husbands’ wants and desires. The whole philosophical system of the age was predicated on a system of superiors and inferiors—a principle

that Christianity did not accept. The real purpose for writing 1 Peter 3:1-7 was to encourage wives to look and act the part society demanded in order to lessen the criticism against the new church.

The Old Testament, with its understanding that ornamentation symbolized the acceptance and worth of the betrothed, differs from the New Testament. Gentiles converting to Christianity brought a new perspective to ornamentation. The converts accepted the prevalent idea that the success of the Roman Empire depended on homes’ maintaining the status quo (superior/inferior positions). Dress was a symbol of a hierarchical order of the empire. As a result, it was believed that wives were to respect every mood of their husbands, to the point of buying garments according to the demands and wills of the men in the homes. When the women in Rome finally convinced the government that women in particular needed a temple of their own, the Dionysian cult was born. But the fact that women went out at night without husbands and adorned themselves beautifully convinced Rome that the new cult was immoral.

The Biblical Positions

For Jews, ornamentation related to their belief about God—wives always adorned themselves for their husbands; and Israel adorned itself for its God. Although the promiscuous use of adornment was discouraged, the Old Testament never prohibited adornment itself. However, in the society of New Testament times, lavish adornment was proscribed. Roman society in the first century A.D. suspected that women who dressed in beautiful colors and exquisite materials were immoral. But the New Testament did not declare gold, silver, and jewels sinful. Rather, it recognized that conditions related to ornamentation might become detrimental either to the individual congregation or the church as a whole.

Such conditions do not exist in American culture today. Jewelry does not need to be expensive, and those who wear it tastefully are not necessarily identified with sexually immoral practices.

Furthermore, ours is a democratic society that inculcated the equality of women and men; we must be careful not to teach inequality by prohibiting adornment for women while we permit it for men.

One further point must be made concerning ornamentation. In the Old Testament, from the early tabernacle furnishings overlaid with gold to

the permanent temple building with its magnificent gold furniture, God is not portrayed as opposed to ornamentation, gold, jewels, and beautiful decoration. It is illogical to assume that we can delight in God's dwelling place, that is as ornate and beautiful as humanity can make it, yet we humans cannot delight in beautifying our bodies as the temple of God.

“I Didn’t Recognize You With Your Ring On”

by Charles Scriven

A pastor’s wife in the rural Northwest recently told me she puts her wedding ring on while at work, then carefully slips it off again whenever she returns to a predominantly Adventist setting. A member of her congregation saw her on the job one day, and gave her a long, quizzical look, as though confused. Finally he blurted out: “I didn’t recognize you with your ring on.” The woman told this story with the mixture of disbelief and aggravation to which we’ve all become accustomed.

Curiously, though, some items of jewelry evoke positive feelings. That is true, for example, of brooches. The most widely held view puts brooches in the same category as cuff links, tie clasps, and watches. It is not offensive to wear these provided they are modest.

Bracelets are different. They may not be worn, according to the most widely held view. Nor may rings that are not wedding bands be worn, nor necklaces.

I learned as a child that it was a sin to wear a wedding ring, and a mark of virtue not to wear one. This was the majority view back then. Recently, a friend told me about an unhappy little drama that was just then unfolding in an Adventist church in New England. A young couple with three children had just joined the church. The mother offered to start a new Sabbath school

division, one for two- and three-year-olds. But the pastor and leaders of this church, though aware of the changed views of even our highest officers, said she could not hold any church office while wearing her wedding band. The mother was the only volunteer available. To those in authority it seemed better to go without the Sabbath school division than to put someone in charge who wore a wedding band.

However, since at least the early 1970s, it has been fairly common, even among ministers, to say that persons who in good conscience wear a wedding band may be considered faithful members of the church and may participate fully in its life.

Other items remain problems. I know someone who once owned a small shell attached to a leather string; she’d gotten it as a gift from a friend in eastern Europe. The shell could be worn around the neck as one might wear a necklace—or a necktie. Being, however, neither metallic nor plastic nor derived from oysters, it wasn’t exactly a (forbidden) necklace. Nor, however, was it exactly a (permissible) necktie. Then what was it? Could a good Adventist wear one of these?

Well, this person, wanting to be safe, took a felt-tipped pen and drew on the inside of the shell the face of. . . a clock! This was a little joke, understandable when you know that a clock is typically considered legitimate to wear—even if hung (as a necklace is) around the neck. Hence another little joke, namely, that when members of our church meet St. Peter at the gates of heaven,

they'll say, "We're Adventist." St. Peter will respond, "Oh, yes," and turning to his assistants, say, "Hey fellas, bring over the crowns with the clocks in them!"

What about a tiny earring? In official teaching this is a forbidden item of apparel. But if I attach it to my tie, then it's a tie clasp. Attaching it to a woman's suit, of course, makes it a brooch. Either way, it suddenly belongs to the category of what can be worn. It's a simple transformation, but also a puzzling one—as is this whole topic.

Not long ago I was surprised to get a telephone call from a lady out West I had never met or heard of before. She was distraught over what she understood to be our community's current position with respect to jewelry. She told me that she had recently rejoined the church and had brought her non-Adventist husband with her. It embarrassed her not long ago when a Methodist woman in her town had come to the Adventist church as a guest singer only to be confronted with someone who insisted that she remove her earrings before going onto the platform. And quite apart from this unhappy episode, the lady on the telephone was bothered because she couldn't figure out the sense of what we typically say about these things. Why, she wondered, is a pin okay and an earring not okay? A friend had tried this explanation: "I think it's wrong if it touches your skin." But of course this hadn't resolved my caller's questions.

I think a pastor is someone who has a duty to respond to people's questions. So I want now to turn to the Bible, to turn to the Bible and away from the bangles. We've got work to do. The questions occupy our leaders; they disturb us; they endanger our children. We've got to think them through, and we've got to do a better job of answering them than we've been doing up to now.

Let us begin with Genesis 1:31—"And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (KJV). Can a pearl be intrinsically evil? Can a vein of gold? Think, in connection with this, of the picture of the bejeweled New Jerusalem in Revelation 21. God made a good earth, and the beauty in it is something he embraces—and always will embrace.

1 Samuel 16:7—"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance . . . ; man looks on

the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.'"¹ This is embedded in the story about Samuel looking over Jesse's sons in order to find a successor to King Saul. Samuel is impressed by the *looks* of the first son he meets, but God reminds him that what matters in heaven is what's on the inside, not what's on the outside.

Isaiah 3:14-19—"The Lord enters into judgment with the elders and princes of his people: . . . What do you mean by crushing my people, by grinding the face of the poor?" says the Lord God of hosts. The Lord said: 'Because the daughters

Everything in these verses suggests the spectacle of elitist wealth parading itself haughtily and ostentatiously before the poor. It is this disregard for the poor, this proud extravagance, this ravaging greed, that God especially condemns.

of Zion are haughty and walk with outstretched necks, glancing wantonly with their eyes . . . the Lord will take away the finery of the anklets, the headbands, and the crescents; the pendants, the bracelets, and the scarfs.' " Everything in these verses suggests the spectacle of elitist wealth parading itself haughtily and ostentatiously before the poor. It is this disregard for the poor, this proud extravagance, this ravaging greed, that God especially condemns.

Micah 6:8—"He showed you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" The same point: God expects compassion and justice from us, and humility in our walk with him. That is what's fundamental.

Matthew 5:20—"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." This is from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, and one major theme of the sermon is *heart religion*, not a merely external, legal religion. The scribes and Pharisees upheld 248 com-

mandments and 365 prohibitions about behavior. Jesus said that it is what's inside that matters most. And Ellen White, from our own heritage, agrees: performance of "outward requirements" is not enough. "A legal religion," she goes on, "is insufficient . . ." (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 53).

Mark 14:6—The background here is that a woman has poured an expensive flask of ointment over Jesus' head. Knowing Jesus' concern for the poor, some object that the ointment could have been sold and the money given to the poor. They even rebuke the woman. Now verse 6: "But Jesus

Simplicity is the attempt to master greed, to overcome extravagance, to live without that proud showiness which can only deepen the pain of the poor who cannot afford what we display.

said, 'Let her alone; why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me.' " The story does not concern jewelry, but it does concern an act of expensive extravagance. And against those who interpret his concern for the poor in a rigidly legalistic way, Jesus affirms the woman's gesture; he refuses to condemn her for it.

Luke 12:15—"Take heed, and beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." It is more important to *be* the right kind of person than to *have* material wealth. That's the simple, unmistakable message.

Luke 15:22—"But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.'" The father is the symbol of God in the story of the prodigal son; the ring—everyone agrees it was probably a signet ring—shows membership in the family, and the father does not hesitate to give it to his son. It was Jesus, of course, who told the story, and the fact that he could speak so comfortably of the "best robe" and the "ring" suggests that these were not items he prohibited absolutely.

1 Peter 3:3, 4—"Let not yours be the outward adorning with braiding of hair, decoration of gold, and wearing of robes, but let it be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable jewel of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

These words require more detailed attention. They are addressed to wives who had done something against all the ancient wisdom, namely, defied the authority of their husbands by taking a new, namely, Christian, religion. The author of 1 Peter is trying to say how these wives can win their husbands over to their own point of view. This would have been a shocking thought to pagans who considered wives mere property and expected them, among other things, to live in absolute religious harmony with their husbands. But the author says it anyway, and one key element of the strategy he recommends concerns outward adornment.

You may think, the biblical writer says, that hairdos or expensive jewelry or extravagant clothing will accomplish your objective, but they won't. The way to bear your witness is by an adornment that proceeds from within. It is not a showy, ostentatious outside that wins people over; it is the kind of person you are on the inside. And it's the inside, moreover, that God himself values most.

What are all these verses telling us, anyway? First of all, these verses tell us unmistakably that *simplicity in life-style* is one of God's requirements. *Simplicity* is an honored word that sums up the authentic Christian attitude toward money, possessions, and adornments. Simplicity is the attempt to master greed, to overcome extravagance, to live without that proud showiness that can only deepen the pain of the poor who cannot afford what we display. Simplicity is a focus on the inner person, not the outer person; it is concern for others, not preoccupation with one's self.

God looks on the heart, right? God rebukes those who parade themselves haughtily before the poor; he requires us to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with him; he says the best adornment of all is the adornment of the heart. All this means—how can we escape it?—that *God requires simplicity*. The leaders of North

American Adventism have recently called for new attention to “simplicity in lifestyle,” and this is something we surely ought to take seriously.

But now a story. Jan Daffern has told me about her experience some years back of taking classes at a Mennonite seminary in northern Indiana, near Andrews University. The Mennonites are very committed to simplicity, and Jan remembers that the seminary women typically wore their hair either in a short blow-dry style or pinned up in a bun. When an acquaintance of hers among these Mennonite women decided that she should pin up her own long hair rather than let it hang conspicuously down her back, Jan made her a gift of some fancy barrettes and combs. But the gift missed the mark completely; to the Mennonite woman the barrettes and combs were adornment when the whole point of the change in hairstyle was greater modesty.

Jan tells me that the women at the seminary took considerable offense at her own permed hair, not to mention her high-heeled shoes. To them, these things seemed far removed from the ethos of the Scripture. But they, on the other hand, were entirely comfortable wearing wedding bands on their fingers and tiny studs in their ears. It all seemed rather bizarre, this conflict between traditions, Adventist and Mennonite, which, after all, shared a common belief in simplicity.

The story shows the difficulty of *codifying* simplicity, of reducing it down to clear-cut commandments and prohibitions. Does the statement in 1 Peter about braiding of hair mean no permanents? Does it, for that matter, entail no braids at all, even on little girls? And what about “decoration of gold”? Why not require watches to have no gold on them at all? Why not allow any sort of, say, plastic decoration? Why rule out what is harvested from oysters?

Or consider again Isaiah 3. In his disdain for haughty ostentation, the prophet not only condemned pendants and bracelets, but also scarves. And he went on to condemn “signet rings”—which Jesus mentions favorably in the story of the prodigal son—and perfume boxes and handbags and linen garments and veils! You can look it up! Why not declare all these things off-limits for Christians today?

Well, the reason is this: simplicity can’t be permanently codified. We have to *discern* its meaning in a constantly changing world. If braided hair was once a sign of haughty ostentation, it is (typically) no longer so today. If scarves and handbags were once signs of haughty ostentation, they are (typically) no longer so today.

What all this suggest is that *we* must learn how to uphold simplicity without falling into legalism; we must disconnect the ideal of simplicity from the albatross of legalism.

And in any case, the attempt to make comprehensive codes inevitably entails loopholes and inconsistencies; these loopholes and inconsistencies in turn lead to anguish, then to doubt, and even to loss of faith. Every one of us knows some son or daughter of Adventism, who has gone down the road of anguish and doubt until it has led out the back door of the church, and left us who remain behind filled with sorrow.

This is why we must gain new maturity in our thinking about jewelry and adornment, and gain new respect for the whole teaching of Scripture and the special witness of Jesus. Jesus upheld simplicity, but he did so without being rigidly legalistic. What all this suggest is that *we* must learn how to uphold simplicity without falling into legalism; we must disconnect the ideal of simplicity from the albatross of legalism.

Jesus wants us to master greed; he wants us to overcome extravagance; he wants us to live without that proud showiness that can only deepen the pain of the poor who cannot afford what we display. At the same time he wants us to see the limits of a codified morality; he wants us to be discerning and flexible in the midst of change; he wants us to be sensitive to human needs and feelings, not rigidly severe and legalistic. He wants us to love simplicity and hate legalism.

1. Unless otherwise noted, all Bible texts in this article are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

Freedom Now, Peggy Sue!

by Alma Louise Potter

So, Peggy Sue, you're an Adventist woman, 38, and you've just had your ears pierced. Congratulations! Doesn't it make you feel great? It makes you look great! It is so liberating! You secretly craved earrings all of your life, didn't you? And you've just recently been freed by the realization that you won't go to hell, after all, if you wear them.

Tell me what it was like. Right—I understand—half gleefully, half resentfully, you underwent what for most women “of the world” was a giggly teenage ritual. You were gleeful because now you could wear “real” earrings; you were resentful because you were closer to menopause than to menarche when you finally got to have this privilege. But the wait wasn't so bad because now you are free—this experience symbolizes so many more misplaced legalisms that warped your upbringing and your relationship to God.

Now that you feel better about yourself, Peggy Sue, you'll probably want to explore your career options more creatively. Perhaps you would like to start by meeting some successful women who have learned to feel good about themselves.

Peggy Sue, let me introduce you to your worldly colleague, Barbara. She's a brainy MBA who, at 28, is on a fast track to a vice-presidency. Barbara doesn't even blink when her boss tells her to get a makeover that will make her more salable as a professional. Suspecting in her inmost soul that her taste in clothes has always been dowdy,

she follows her high-priced consultant around the best stores, restocking her wardrobe at \$300 per outfit. Then she undergoes an expensive haircut, learns how to apply the right shade of metallic coloring to her eyelids, selects jewelry that makes her look rich but tasteful, and, if she is attuned to the hoity-toityest of the cultural doyennes, she polishes the soles of her shoes.

If Barbara completes these rituals successfully, she will be judged worthy of her potential \$80,000 annual salary. She can now compete on an “equal” basis with her male colleagues, who, with modestly talented hair stylists and a decent array of business suits, are advancing their careers with an extra hour or two of work a day, while Barbara is making herself look right. In order to overcome this automatic disadvantage, Barbara will have to get by with one or two hours less of sleep per night, which will make her look older and more haggard than she otherwise would. Fortunately, this can be easily remedied by cosmetic surgery.

Barbara has bought into one of the oldest myths in the book—the belief that women are objects. But perhaps an intuition gnaws at her. Maybe, just maybe, Barbara starts asking herself how, after 25-plus years of feminine mystiques, and second sexes, and unprecedented professional opportunities for women, this myth is practically as healthy as it was millenia ago, when a woman's decorations symbolized her very real bondage to the patriarchal system.

What a revelation, what a liberation it would be to Barbara if someone she trusted would walk up to her and say, “You know, you don't have to do

Alma Louise Potter is the pseudonym of a female Adventist professional in her thirties, teaching in a denominational school in North America.

this.” Imagine Barbara’s relief upon hearing that her intelligence, training, personality, and professional, but not obviously decorated, appearance are the criteria upon which her job performance is evaluated . . . and upon which her friends relate to her. At work, she would be treated on the same basis as her male colleagues. In both her profes-

sional and her personal lives, she would retain her freedom to be a happy, fulfilled woman without jeopardizing her femininity. Then she would be liberated.

Barbara would love to enter that world.

And that, Peggy Sue, is a world you could have had all along.

Composing a Hungarian Rhapsody: The “Small Committee’s” List

Following is a statement by the “Small Committee,” as they call themselves, on the recent activities in Budapest to reunite the Adventists in Hungary. Readers will be pleased to see that their account and that of Jan Paulsen’s essentially coincide (see pp. 18-20 in this issue). Except for spelling, the wording of the report has been reproduced without editing for English usage.

— The Editors

Report on the negotiations of September 11-13, 1989, to the brethren living abroad.

Budapest, 28. Sept. 1989.

Dear Brethren,

First of all we thank you for your sympathies and prayers.

We have much pleasure in informing you that the negotiations led by the representatives of the General Conference and Division ended with a positive result. This happened unexpectedly, for the immediate antecedents of the negotiations had been depressing indeed and as from human point of view there had seemed to be little hope. The working of God could be clearly felt and we believe that it was His Spirit who actually changed the course of things into positive direction.

The following were present at the negotiations, as the representatives of the General Conference: Brother Alf Lohne, General Conference Vice-President, whose participation we had asked for, brother J. R. Spangler, general editor of *Ministry*, brother Jan Paulsen, president of the Trans-European Division, the Union Committee and the Small Committee with their full membership.

At the beginning of the negotiations all the participants were together. The aim and the main aspects of the negotiations were given first by brother Jan Paulsen, then by the Union president and finally by brother Oscar Egervari, on the part of the Small Committee. The following were said, in sum, our part by brother Egervari: These negotiations were initiated by us because we hoped that in these changing external circumstances (the political reforms in the leadership of the country, the ceasing of the State Office for Church Affairs and the Council of Free Churches) meritorious negotiations could be carried on and positive result could be achieved. We sincerely want the restoration of the unity. “It was not of our own will that we found ourselves outside the Church organization. It follows that we are always ready to unite with the Church as a whole in spite of its sins and faults. Although to belong to the church in

reality is not identical with an official organizational connection, we wish to live in the most complete unity with our brethren. We also want to make the preparations for Jesus’s second coming, including the evangelistic work together with all those S.D.A. believers who strive to fulfill this with all heart and according to the right principles. We want a unity which is in accordance with the above mentioned aims of faith. We cannot accept a unity being contrary to the principles of truth, which would cause spiritual destruction and would start further division.”

After the first introductory meeting with all participants, the negotiations with the world church leaders followed without the presence of the Union Committee. We laid before them the questions in which the settlement of the basic faith principles was required before any discussions about the practical questions of the reunion could be held. These can be summarized in the following four points:

1. We want the leaders of the Union to annul the 518 decrees of disfellowshippings by declaration. The General Conference, the Euro-Africa and Trans-European Division and, at last, the Union, too, have acknowledged that they were unlawful. Most of the decrees were pronounced not by the churches but by the conference or church committees. What is more, the conference committees and the ministers carried out the command of the Union Committee which obeyed the commands of the State Office for Church Affairs. A collective annulment of these decrees is the only reasonable and acceptable step to correct these most unlawful disciplinary measures.

2. We asked a declaration of the Union Committee to correct and dissociate themselves from those statements and deeds concerning the ecumenical movement and connections which were, indisputably and definitely, in opposition to the biblical faith principles of the Advent movement, and caused discord and crisis in our church.

(We presented to the leaders of the General Conference and Division the list of the most shocking deeds and statements.)

3. We asked the present leaders of the Union to state that they dissociate themselves from every unlawful open or secret cooperation with the State, holding political positions, and partaking in political activity, which unfortunately, has been the practice of recent times. We asked for a solemn declaration which compels them not to cooperate with the State and not to secretly maintain any dishonest relation with it in the future according to the biblical principle of the separation of State and Church.

4. We need a declaration which guarantees the absolute freedom of conscience. Today there is discord between the

representatives of historical Adventism and those of the so-called new theology within the Adventist Church all over the world. This phenomenon is gaining ground in Hungary, too. Although we feel ourselves in fellowship with the whole of the church, we do not agree with standpoints divergent from the Scriptures and the original Adventist faith principles. We feel the biblical teaching and arguing against these our Christian duty. Since we have already experienced being disfellowshipped from the church because of protesting for religious reasons, we need a guarantee that we will not be attacked and marked as off-shoots and that the lawfulness of the biblical discussion of religious questions will be acknowledged by everybody.

All our requests were considered equitable by the representatives of the General Conference and Division as ones that had to be fulfilled. Brother Alf Lohne took a standpoint on the annulling of the disfellowshippings and complete rehabilitation just as firmly and justly as he did it for the first time in 1977. It was good to experience that none of the leading brethren tried to justify the Union's improper deeds and statements concerning the ecumenical question. We bear witness that each of them behaved in a true and Christian way. In the afternoon the brethren talked to the Union leaders, as it used to happen at the previous negotiations. Three points remained without any real change. A debate developed about the request of correcting the improper deeds and statements concerning the ecumenical question. But of the Union Committee members only brother Jenő Szigeti, the Union president, tried to justify his own statements and deeds. However, none of the Union Committee members raised his voice in defense of brother Szigeti's arguments and standpoint and finally they also accepted and signed the declaration enclosed. The fifth point of the declaration was proposed at the final drafting by brother Paulsen. Saying that by it we would make the declaration—containing exclusively the accomplishment of our requests—more easily acceptable for the Union church members. On the other hand improper things might have been said and done by some of us, too. So, we readily agreed to the adding of this point to the declaration.

The negotiations ended with our signing this declaration. Thus consequently only the above mentioned theoretical questions were cleared up. The questions of the practical way of the organizational reunion are to be discussed further on by the coordinating Committee, mentioned in the point of the declaration. We have agreed that until September 1990 organizationally everything will remain in the present state, that is: the churches of the Union will stay under the leading of the Union and Conferences, and our churches

will continue their work under the leading of the Small Committee. We insisted on having one year of preparation for the organizational unity. We asked for adjournment of the conference election from spring 1990 to September of the same year when the final decision will be made. For if all preparations go properly and reassuringly, and the organizational reunion is established, our churches will also be able to take part in the election. This request of ours was also accepted.

There have remained difficult practical problems to be solved by the Coordinating Committee. Brother Paulsen will visit Hungary at least four times in the following year. Since the negotiations he has already sent a letter informing us that the next day of negotiations will be November 14. Our tasks are the following now: To send to the Union Committee the list of the names of the members who are to be rehabilitated so that they could forward them to the conferences and churches and thus on their basis the annulling of the disfellowshippings could be made. Also, the Union and its president have to prepare the declaration of correcting their deeds and statements contrary to our faith principles. Besides, we have to discuss what is to be done on both sides for the sake of real brotherly advance based on true faith principles and for the preparation of organizational unity within one year.

Please, continue to remember us in your prayers, that the Holy Spirit lead our every step in conscientious consideration so that we could avoid anything that means lack of principles or any harmful compromise but do everything that serves the unity according to God's will, and the growth and prosperity of God's work.

We hope that these events in Hungary will have positive influence on the whole world Church as well. We believe that our startling experience will hold back leaders and ministers, any time anywhere, from trying with unlawful measures to silence brethren who raise their voice for correcting the faults of the Church in Christian spirit. Our hope is that the calling for renewal and reformation will find place and will be preached within the Church Organization so that the up-to-date, urging message of the preparation for the last events can reach every Advent believer in the world as soon as possible and, as a result, a sanctified remnant will be prepared to receive the latter rain and finish the great work of world-evangelism.

With sincere brotherly greetings:
Oscar Egervari, Susan Vanko,
Károly Sonnleitner

The Adventist Theological Society: An Open and Shut Case

To the Editor: Your brief news report in Vol. 19, No. 5, seemed accurate enough, but perhaps gave the impression that members of the Adventist Theological Society are more exclusive than they intend to be. Though I have never received an invitation to join the Adventist Theological Society, I did receive a personal invitation from a member-friend to attend their September 9-10, 1989 meeting at the Mid-American Union Conference office in Lincoln, Nebraska. I rearranged my schedule so that I could attend because most members are friends of mine, because I want to foster unity, and because I hope to both learn and be inspired.

I still have not been invited to join the society, and was therefore excluded from the business meetings of the Adventist Theological Society. However, my attendance at the public meetings was rewarding. I renewed friendship with individuals from Southern College, the seminary, and the General Conference (the primary institutions represented). I sensed my participation was greeted with a positive spirit of unity. And I was both edified and inspired (the occasion reminded me of a mini-campmeeting). I found leaders of the Adventist Theological Society to be sincere and gracious. I take them at their word that they eschew political activism in favor of dialogue, from conservative presuppositions, on Adventism's fundamentals.

The only negative thing about the whole experience was the decision of the Adventist Theological Society to have their next meeting in November in San Diego, during the precise days the Andrews Society for Religious Studies, (till now the principal annual gathering of the Adventist religious teachers) was already scheduled to meet in Anaheim. I think this to be most unfortunate for the Adventist Theological Society, the Andrews Society for Religious Studies, and the church. Such a course of action, if continued, will confirm *Spectrum's* prophecy, "At this point, it appears that most Adventist religious teachers and scholars in North America will belong to one of these theological organizations, not both."

What is to be gained by forcing Bible scholars to make

such a choice? Do not both groups have something both to teach and to learn? I appeal to all sides not to hasten a schism, but rather to work toward the unity in Adventism for which Christ prayed in John 17.

Lawrence T. Geraty, President
Atlantic Union College

To the Editor: On behalf of the Adventist Theological Society I wish to express my appreciation for your coverage of our organization in your recent issue. Two points of clarification:

(1) Our meetings are open to anyone; it's the business meetings that are for members only. (2) There are religion teachers and scholars who belong to both societies.

Hope this will help to answer inquiries that might come to you.

God bless you in your ministry.

Jack J. Blanco, President
Adventist Theological Society

A Two-Term Limit For Elected Officers?

To the Editor: I think the Adventist church would benefit from a policy that limited the service of elected officers to two terms in any one position. This period is long enough to allow each leader to contribute fully to a developing program, but short enough to prevent stagnation.

This plan would circulate those with outstanding talents so that many sectors of the field could profit from their ministry. It would also insure that we have a constant influx of new ideas and leadership to keep the church invigorated and on the cutting edge.

It would be well to implement this policy at all levels, from the local conference to the General Conference administration, beginning with the General Conference session in 1990.

Phyllis Hall
Clackamas, Oregon

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