Spectrum

The Journal of the Association of Adventist Forums

From Utrecht To Sligo

WORLD CHURCH TAKES CONTROL

A SACRED MOMENT AT SLIGO

FIRST WOMEN'S ORDINATION: A DOCUMENTARY HISTORY

LAKE TITICACA TO PERU'S NATIONAL CONGRESS

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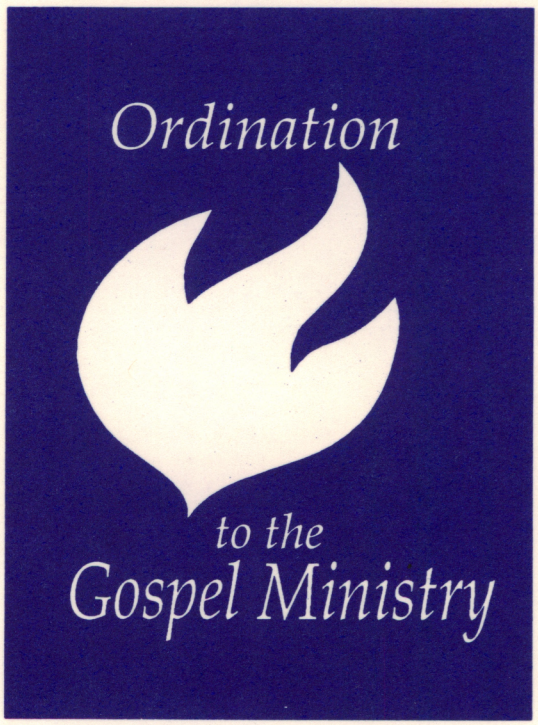

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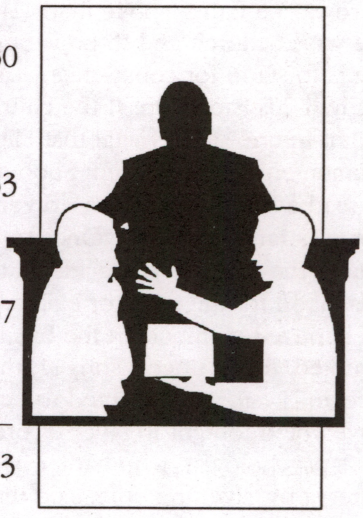
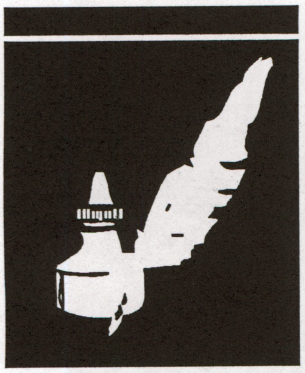
Adapted from the cover of the Sligo ordination service program (designed by Patricia Nash)





Unto the Third and Fourth Generation...

The faces were long, the mood somber. The Sligo Sabbath school class had just heard a report on the world church's two-to-one vote, forbidding ordination of women to ministry anywhere in the world. But when they heard a proposal that ordained ministers proceed with ordination of women, the class applauded, and within 24 hours had produced two drafts of resolutions recommending prompt action. Four days later, at the urging of the senior pastor, the Sligo church board voted to convene a business meeting (see pages 30-36).

Two weeks later, a 14-year-old was on his feet in the church business meeting. He favored the proposal of the *ad hoc* committee. Knowing that Sligo would treat women pastors equally, he said, "makes it a whole lot easier to think about revolving my life and my career around the Adventist church" (see pages 37-44).

Near the 14-year-old, all five members of a family sat in row. The father spoke first: "The only way to save the world church and to prevent the tithe from dissipating is to stand for conscience." Later, the older son, in his mid-20s, stood up: If the church was "to have a bright future," it was vital that Sligo proceed to treat women equally with men. Soon after, the mother rose to read a slightly paraphrased version of James Russell Lowell's famous poem: "Once to every *congregation* comes the moment to decide/In the strife of truth with falsehood for the good or evil side." After the ballots of all baptized members in the business meeting were counted, the youngest son, 11, tugged on his father's sleeve. "I *told* you I wanted to be baptized. I could have voted tonight in favor of ordaining women."

A psychologist, who earlier had advocated protesting Utrecht by diverting tithe, said that he was glad to hear his church "speaking with conviction on principles of justice and equality," and that he would happily continue to pay tithe. Indeed, during the two months that Sligo studied and then proceeded to ordain women to gospel ministry, tithe increased two percent and other offerings 10 percent over the same months the previous year. That will increase the $2.5 million Sligo annually sends on to the rest of the denomination.

The decision to act continued to energize the congregation. The church organist wrote an original anthem for the church choir to sing. A group designing and creating multicolored lectern hangings depicting the seven churches of Revelation, sewed into the hanging for September 23 the initials of the eight women who have pastored at Sligo.

As the October 13 *Adventist Review* reported, Sabbath afternoon "the crowd [1,100 persons] included more than 30 Adventist women in ministry from 10 different states and ordained Adventist pastors from seven different conferences." Participating in the ordination service were presidents of two North American Adventist colleges. Joining in the laying on of hands were black, Latino, and Caucasian ordained ministers from the United States and other countries, including ordained ministers from the General Conference headquarters. Worshippers included presidents of world divisions and unions.

Reporting in Sligo's newsletter, a 23-year-old member declared that "the ordination service in terms of 'eternal implications'" is "more than a few hours spent in a sanctuary." For her, "this event holds symbolic significance for the next generation of Seventh-day Adventists."

In ordination of women to gospel ministry, moral passion and worship converge to build up the Adventist Church—unto the third and fourth generation.

—Roy Branson

Lake Titicaca to the National Congress

Cristóbal Villasante, head elder of the Puno Central SDA Church, explains his election as a supporter of President Fujimori.

by Charles Teel, Jr.

THE DATE: *EL 28 DE JULIO*, 1995—THE EVE OF Peru's Independence Day, and the eve, too, of the second-term installation of Alberto Fujimori—Peru's president—his cabinet, and the Peruvian National Congress, the nation's 120-member unicameral legislative body. The venue: Hotel Bolivar, only one city square removed from Plaza Bolivar, the locus of Lima, Peru's Government Palace. The occasion: I have come to interview recently elected Congressman Cristóbal Villasante Chambi of Puno, Peru. Villasante is or has been, at one time or another, mayor of Puno City, Puno County supervisor, Puno City councilman, vice rector of Juliaca University of the Andes, dean of Puno College of Public Accountants, president of Puno's football league, a volleyball letterman, president and valedictorian of his high school graduating class, a successful businessman, an active hunter and fisherman. For three decades, *Don* Cristóbal Villasante has also been head elder of Puno Central Seventh-day Adventist church.[1] He is a product—as were his parents and grandparents before him—of the Lake Titicaca indigenous school system founded by Adventist missionaries Ana and Fernando Stahl.[2]

Don Cristóbal is of medium build, bright-eyed, brown-skinned, and blessed with a countenance weathered by 60-odd years of existence on the *altiplano*—Peru's 4,000-meter "high plain," which boasts Lake Titicaca and its surrounding dusty villages, mud brick huts with thatched roofs, fledgling commerce, and topsoil so thin it is barely able to sustain the Quechua and Aymara peoples who inhabit it. His expressive face runs the gamut from gravity to humor, from animated curiosity to calm self-confidence.

When I ask, jokingly, if the congressman is prepared to trade his Andean poncho and informal dress for the more formal attire dictated by congressional protocol, he recalls

Charles Teel, Jr. is professor of religion and society, La Sierra University, and director of the Stahl Center for World Service. He recently edited Remnant and Republic *(Loma Linda University Ethics Center, 1995). A 1989 article of Teel's, on the Stahls, was favorably cited by the bishop of Puno in a news conference held just before Fujimori's 1990 election to the presidency.*

a *28 de Julio* some 50 years earlier when he was a student at the Lake Titicaca Training School. "As president of the student body, it fell my lot to lead the Independence Day parade. Given that my family was too poor to supply me with pencil or notebook—let alone a school uniform—the principal found a uniformed student my size who agreed to trade his outfit for my sole shirt and pants for that half day."

But Cristóbal Villasante's story is more than that of a poor boy from the provinces who made good; it is also the story of a parochial people—poor and proud—whose forebears embraced a progressive Adventism that took them, not out of the world, but into it.

Villasante's peasant grandparents learned to read by singing hymns from Adventist hymnals imported by Ana and Fernando Stahl and their Argentine *compadres*, Guillermina and Pedro Kalbermatter. In turn, Villasante's parents were first schooled outdoors and later in mud-brick *chozas*, without benefit of chalk boards or maps. So fierce was the opposition by the privileged classes to the indigenous schooling brought by these missionaries that on one occasion a dozen people were killed; in another disturbance, 15 lost their lives.

Adapted from Carl Berman's "The Alcalde"—a Quechua representative of the Peruvian government, circa 1964

Newspapers in Puno City, capital of the Department of Puno, recorded the heated rhetoric from Villasante's village of Azágaro, whose ruling class recognized, correctly, the threat offered by education of the indigenous classes: "These schools spread doctrines of the most crimson communism. They destroy the spirit of the nation by teaching the most extreme and dangerous socialistic concepts of class and racial equality—and unbounded liberty in the ignorant masses."[3]

When I ask if he was raised in a "politically active home," Villasante offers an answer straight from Civics 101: "Life is political. How individuals and communities agree to organize themselves, their institutions, and their traditions is political. While my parents—as with their mentors the Stahls and Kalbermatters—eschewed political parties, the very act of establishing schools for an oppressed indigenous class was a political act. It challenged a status quo which kept knowledge and authority in the hands of a few powerful overlords—the landowners, priests, and judges. In short, my parents were not involved in party politics, but by teaming up with the Stahls and Kalbermatters, they were very much involved in the ongoing political process that brought a fenced-out majority into full participation in the religious, social, economic, and political life of the community and of the nation."

But, I counter, isn't their grandson now involved in party politics as a member of the national legislature? "Not really," he says, grinning; "the current administration's Change '90 initiative—followed in this last election by Change '95—is less a political party than a grassroots movement which achieved success outside any political party structure."

While acknowledging that he is playing with words, Villasante is emphatic about one crucial point: The 1990 election of Alberto Fujimori signaled an effort to renew the political process from without rather than from within. This presidential candidate of Japanese ancestry founded a people-based movement that claimed loyalty to no political party. And he won. Handily. This *chino* (generic in the Spanish for anyone of Asian descent) convinced majorities in the middle and lower classes that he was identifying as a *cholo* (an indigenous person from the provinces only a few steps removed from traditional village life).

"So," Villasante concludes, "my presence in congress rests less on a political party system than on an inclusive movement that opened politics to the people rather than limiting it to political professionals."

Indeed, at the outset of his 1990 campaign, the *chino/cholo* now leading Peru invited voters to declare their disapproval of "politics as usual" by electing a candidate with no ties to party politics. This engineer, *cum* professor, *cum* university rector presented his case to the Peruvian people in clipped sentences that contrasted starkly with the manicured syntax and rhythms of his opponent, Mario Vargas Llosa—a party-backed candidate whose prominence as an author provided him international name recognition. Fujimori won the 1990 runoff campaign against Vargas Llosa hands down. In 1995, Fujimori's two principal opponents ran campaigns as political party outsiders, mimicking his "politically free" 1990 campaign. Nonetheless, the sitting president walloped the opposition in the first round with a stunning 64.4 percent majority—especially impressive in light of the fact that one opposing candidate was former United Nations Secretary Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.

When I challenge Villasante to justify Fujimori's decision to close congress and the judiciary only months into his first term, Villasante pursues his "beyond party politics" line of argument. "In the United States you have had three centuries to perfect your 'balance of powers' doctrine, a plank central to your democratic platform. You must recognize, however, that in Peru we have not had the luxury of even three decades of uninterrupted true democracy in which to define and refine the democratic processes. Accordingly, with the shifting of winds brought on by coups and dictatorships, privileged and powerful interests have routinely 'owned' the vote, not only of congressional representatives, but of judges as well.

"Fujimori's election was a call to end that kind of 'democracy,' in which such forces as the terrorists and the narcotics lords could control the political process. Yet as the new president made bold strides in confronting/arresting the narcotics lords and the *Sendero Luminoso* terrorists, congressional representatives and judges alike blocked his efforts. In effect, what the president did was to wipe the slate clean so that the legislative branch and the judicial branch could be in a position to start anew, as had the executive branch."

The newly elected congressman concludes with a flourish: "That this state of emergency

Former National Library Director Calls for International Conference

Four days following this interview with Cristóbal Villasante, the author interviewed former director of the National Library José Tamayo Herrera, esteemed Peruvian historian and published authority on indigenous movements in the Andes. In the course of this interview Tamayo Herrera called for two international conferences to be held which would bring together specialists from North and South America on the subject of indigenous education in Puno. One conference would be sponsored by the La Sierra University Stahl Center and the second by Lima's Centro de Estudios País y Regíon. The conferences would contribute to one of the key goals of Fujimori's second term: reforming/upgrading the nation's education system.

lasted but months; that the only person consistently articulating opposition was former presidential opponent Vargas Llosa (from the aseptic and less-than-informed distance of European capitals); and that the people resoundingly backed the president and re-elected him by the 64.4 percent margin speaks for itself."

In his state of the nation address the following day, Fujimori will cite the 64.4 percent figure twice, and I am curious why people support the former professor in such numbers. Villasante's staccato listing of Fujimori's accomplishments parallel responses offered by local taxi drivers—sources, I find, that tend to offer a fair reading of a nation's pulse: (1) The economy has been stabilized, and crippling inflation reigned in; (2) terrorism has been decisively limited, with the seemingly invincible leader of *Sendero Luminoso* arrested; (3) corruption in congress and the judiciary has been largely rooted out; (4) visible improvements have been made in the infrastructure—schools, hospitals, roads, and bridges; and (5) Peru has become, once again, a part of the global community of nations—paying off its loans in accord with standards of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund.

Villasante is only one of several Adventists in the current legislature who follow in the tradition of the first Adventist elected to that body—the eldest son of the Stahls' first assistant, Luciano Chambi. Villasante is a disciplined, religious man; his hope is grounded in the eternal, and he is informed by a world view that is theological to the core. Still, I wonder how he can hope to do God's work by trading his local church for a paneled room at the nation's capital; for the hustle and negotiation that is politics.

Villasante answers simply: "One's image of God affects the totality of how one understands the human experience. If one's image of God is that of a parochial and legalistic judge keeping track of behavior as requirements for entrance into a future heaven, one's lifestyle becomes exclusive, parochial, legalistic, and futuristic. In contrast, the gospel communicated to my family by the Stahls and Kalbermatters included an image of God as a loving and beneficent Creator seeking the best possible for all of the creation and in the present order—now. This 'best possible fulfillment' (and I share details of this experience with my legislative colleagues) was mediated to the altiplano by foreigners so dedicated that they passed nights on the ground beside peasant peoples who slept with animals to keep warm; they trudged miles to lower our fevers and deliver our babies; they shook our hands while looking us in the eye; and they called us 'brother' and 'sister.'

"These individuals brought a new world view to the highlands—a new understanding of God, ourselves, and our place in God's creation. This held implications not only for our spiritual understanding, but also for our intellectual fulfillment, for our social life, and for our economic development. That liberating image of God continues to shape my daily devotions, my weekly Sabbath school class, my monthly meetings with the church board. How much more ought that same image of God inform questions of public policy? What does justice and righteousness mean for this time and this nation? How can we effect justice on behalf of the poor less than on behalf of the privileged? How can we define what is 'equitable' in a national context in which a privileged few have extracted a toll on the destitute many?

"What better than a just and righteous image of God to inform an individual or group in wrestling with such questions?"

Dutch missiologist Jean Baptiste August Kessler, in his definitive history of Protestantism in Peru, endorses Villasante's understanding of God as mediated by the Stahls. Flatly asserting that "there was no sectarianism in Stahl," Kessler notes that "Stahl preached righteousness by grace alone," and suggests

that "in this he was well ahead of most Adventists of his time."[4] José Tamayo Herrera, Peruvian historian and two-term director of Peru's National Library, singles out the Stahls and the Kalbermatters by name, lauding their indigenous education efforts as having wrought "surprising and transcendent results." He concludes, "For the first time the indigenous acceded to hygiene, letters, and a consciousness of their own dignity."[5]

Cristóbal Villasante's story provides powerful evidence that in missiology the disciplines of theology, ethics, sociology, and anthropology must cohere. It demonstrates that Christian education can be a vehicle for progressive social transformation as politically marginalized peasants are transformed into politically aware professionals. His presence in Peru's National Congress offers evidence that terms such as grace, righteousness, and justice may find a place in the formulation of public policy. His experience demonstrates—in the words of one Peruvian social critic analyzing the Adventist presence in the *altiplano* some 50 years ago—that the gospel not only "saves souls," but also "saves lives."[6]

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Don* is a bestowed title that reflects the esteem and respect of associates.

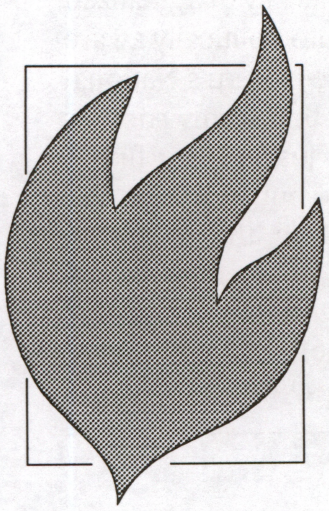
2. See Charles Teel, Jr., "The Radical Roots of Peruvian Adventism," *Spectrum* 21:1 (December 1990), pp. 5-18.

3. From an untitled memorial, September 1923, printed in *El Heraldo* 3:144 (June 2, 1927), p. 7.

4. *A Study of the Older Protestant Missions and Churches in Perú and Chile With Special Reference to the Problems of Division, Nationalism, and Native Ministry* (Goes: Oosterbaan, 1967), p. 230.

5. *Historia social e indigenismo en el Altiplano* (Lima: Trentaitres, 1982), p. 95.

6. José Antonio Encinas, *Un ensayo de escuela nueva en el Perú* (Lima: Imprenta Minerva, 1932), p. 148.



Utrecht 1995 Editor's Notebook

Snapshots of choirs dazzling, delegates dancing, saints hugging, and Dutch Reformed visitors looking on.

by Roy Branson

World Adventism Meets the Eastern Orthodox Tradition

SUDDENLY, I WAS TEARING UP. THE ZAOKSKI Seminary Choir from Russia was filling the first Sabbath morning worship of the session with an anthem in a minor key—music shaped by centuries of pain suffered by ordinary Russians, transformed by Orthodox Christianity into strains of affirmation, now being sung by Adventists who truly hope. In the midst of a session that was part convention, part rally, we were being invited into transcendent realms. World Adventism had never before heard anything like this. Singing with passion and uncompromising commitment to excellence, these Adventist Russians, who have themselves experienced both the euphoria of liberty and terrible poverty, moved a world church shaped by American gospel songs with the music of a distinctive Orthodox spirituality. They sang anthems that do not ignore humanity's tragedy but intensify it—anthems that ultimately overwhelm evocations of suffering with the harmonies of divine glory.

For the first time in the history of Adventism, large numbers of Adventists from Central and Eastern Europe attended a General Conference Session. More than 800 members came from the former Soviet Union, and over 1,000 from Romania alone. Some had sold homes to attend the session. Many slept on brightly colored air mattresses laid out on the floor of a building the size of an airplane hanger. Others lived in small, roofless, temporary cubicles thrown up in the same building on the Utrecht exhibition grounds. Instead of staying in the hotel rooms reserved for General Conference officers, Ted Wilson, president of the Euro-Asia Division, and his fellow officers lived in the same quarters as their

Roy Branson, a senior research fellow at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University, and director of the Washington Institute, is editor of Spectrum. *A graduate of Atlantic Union College, he received a Ph.D. in religious ethics from Harvard University.*

delegates.

The Zaokski Seminary Choir was only the tip of Eastern Europe's musical presence at the session. After the evening meeting, on the broad walkway outside the main auditorium, a choir from Poland, another from Moldavia, and still another from the Ukraine performed simultaneously. The most popular, by far, was the Ukrainian Bandura Folk Choir—12 women, wearing garlands of flowers and streamers on their heads, multi-colored skirts, and orange boots. Each singer accompanied herself on a 56-string instrument. Although at home they have only sung at Adventist church meetings, and this was their first trip to the West, this group, playing and singing in the style of traditional Ukrainian folk music, would dazzle any European, Australian, or American television audience.

Dancing Before the Lord

Parts of the world that spoke the most conservatively against ordination of women couldn't resist dancing when they had the opportunity. As I came out of the press office one afternoon, I heard the beat of drums. Right outside the door, in the main lobby, were a circle of smiling Adventists from Madagascar, off the eastern coast of Africa. They kept up a fast beat and danced in circles of eight, breaking up into single and double pairs of dancers. Those gathered around to watch, wearing conservative suits, were not sure whether to clap, smile, or frown.

ADRA's large exhibit area was opposite *Spectrum*'s display. Periodically, a group of pipers from the Andes, dressed in caps and ponchos, would play. One afternoon, during a performance, some South American Adventist women happened by. Two couldn't resist dancing in the aisle. A crowd quickly gathered and appreciatively clapped out the rhythm.

A Spectrum of *Spectrum*

Delegates often turned on their video cameras when they came by the *Spectrum* exhibit. It was as colorful as it was simple. A brightly lit band of *Spectrum* covers, five deep, arranged horizontally across 20 feet, from red to orange to green to blue, was mounted on a black background. To the right were three columns of *Spectrum*'s most interesting covers. Much of the time the exhibit was jammed with people reading copies of *Spectrum*, authors discussing possible essays and book reviews, and friends animatedly catching up on one another's lives.

One day, a hearty, gray-haired man came by and introduced himself as Augustine Stefanac. We embraced, although we had never seen each other before. We had talked over the phone a few years ago about the history of Adventism in Czechoslovakia. Pastor Stefanac spent one year (1955) of a three-year sentence in a Czechoslovakian prison for translating the works of American authors like W.H. Branson, my grandfather. Despite his sadness that Czechoslovakia had broken up into two nations, he had remained active. In addition to my grandfather's *The Holy Spirit* and *In Defense of the Faith*, Pastor Stefanac, a vigorous 40 years later, has translated *The Desire of Ages* (1993), *Acts of the Apostles* (1994), and *Patriarchs and Prophets* (1995) into Slovakian.

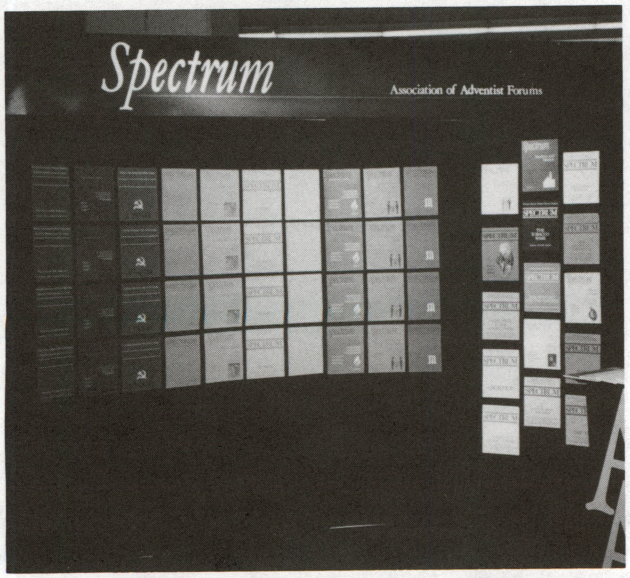
On another occasion, a couple stopped to glance at *Spectrum*'s colorful covers. As we chatted, I learned that Mr. and Mrs. Mircea Valeriu Diaconescu were Romanian Adventists now living in Germany. When I mentioned how much I appreciated hearing music influenced by Eastern Orthodoxy, Mircea quickly pointed out, "Of course, there are many Orthodox musical traditions—not one." The next day, he brought me two CDs of choral anthems drawing on the Romanian Orthodox tradition, including pieces he had composed himself.

People from all over the world asked for copies of *Spectrum*—from Holland, Portugal, Indonesia, the West Indies. The last Sabbath of the session, we gave away all our remaining copies. That day, the greatest number of takers came from Romania and the former Soviet Union. Some took as many as 14 different issues. An hour after taking an armful of *Spectrum* issues, a teacher from the former Soviet Union slipped back, handed me two wooden eggs, exquisitely painted in floral designs of blue, green, pink, and red, and shyly said, "Thank you."

The Territorial Imperative

Space is less central to Adventism than is time, according to Malcolm Bull and Keith Lockhart in their provocative book, *Seeking a Sanctuary* (Harper & Row, 1990). The Utrecht General Conference Session challenged that thesis. At the front of the large exhibit area, near the huge globe that has appeared at every General Conference Session since at least 1952, was mounted perhaps the most spectacular exhibit of all. It was a large, authentic yurt, a dwelling for nomads in Mongolia, one of the countries in which Adventists first made converts within the past five years. Around the yurt, the office of Global Mission had mounted posters with facts about growth of the Adventist Church.

A spectrum of *Spectrum* greets the world church



For example, in 1990, Adventists had not yet entered 35 countries. In 1995, that number had dropped to 12: Afghanistan, British Indian Ocean Territory, the Holy See, Isle of Man, Maldive Islands, Qatar, San Marino, Svalbard and Jan Mayen Islands, Tokelau, Wallis and Futuria Islands, Western Sahara, and Wake Island. At the conclusion of the last meeting of the session, the Parade of Nations, President Folkenberg pointed to the flags of these nations, placed at the center of the platform. We have much to be joyful about, he said, but before the Lord can return, these remaining countries must first be entered.

All About Eve

For P. Gerard Damsteegt, "headship" of men over women goes all the way back to Adam and Eve. Certainly, few of Eve's daughters were invited to sit on the platform for the Sabbath morning worship services. The first Sabbath of the session, it was startling to see only dark-suited males on the platform. No one planned to deliberately exclude them. It's just that when rows of the world leaders of the General Conference are placed on the platform, one ends up with no women. Perhaps someone said something. The second Sabbath, three women were included in the platform party: the wives of the president, secretary, and treasurer of the General Conference.

The most moving moment of the entire session came Sunday evening, after the Trans-European Division showed on a huge video screen a picture of Meropi Gjika giving the first representative of the church to visit Albania the faithful tithe she had kept and hidden in a box through 40 years of Europe's worst totalitarian rule. The lights came on in the audito-

rium; on the platform the 90-year-old Meropi, sitting in a wheelchair, struggled to her feet, smiled a huge smile, and raised her arms high above her head. The delegates rose as one with thunderous, sustained applause. At the most media-conscious General Conference Session of Adventism's history, a live heroine was more moving than all the session's inescapable videotapes put together. Roman Catholics had their Albanian heroine—Mother Teresa. We had Meropi Gjika.

Later, I had the chance to greet Meropi, and tell her, through an interpreter, how much I had enjoyed visiting her country. She grinned and kissed me on both cheeks. I discovered a few days later that I was not as special as I had thought. This Albanian heroine greeted everyone with a hug.

The discussion of ordination of women clearly electrified the General Conference delegates as did nothing else. Wisely, the officers selected their star chair, Vice President Calvin Rock. Although Rock had outlined clear rules of engagement, they did not include a ban on clapping. Damsteegt's presentation was met with instantaneous applause from the Eastern Africa Division, facing the platform at the right rear of the auditorium. A scattering of applause in the adjacent Inter-American delegation—the largest of the session—quickly built, as did applause from the initially restrained South American and Africa-Indian Ocean divisions. North American delegates sat in the back, almost silent. The remarks by Raoul Dederen were more a debate with Damsteegt than a rhetorical tour de force designed to elicit passionate responses from the audience.

When delegates rose to speak from the floor, Ted Wilson moved to the *against* microphone; his father Neal Wilson, the immediate past president of the General Conference, headed to the *for* microphone. In the end, only the son had an opportunity to speak. Ted implored every delegate to vote against divisions being able to ordain women, because the devil would like to divide the church.

Several other speakers against the motion came from the Africa-Indian Ocean Division, but the Inca Union, comprised of more than 410,000 members in Bolivia and Peru, provided two of the most vociferous opponents of the motion. Many remember the speaker who thanked the Lord for his five sons, and a wife who gave him all the time he needed to preach the gospel; who then pulled his embarrassed mate from her chair, pinned her to his side with a sort of half-nelson grip, and completed his shouted opposition to ordination for women. Fewer remember another male delegate from the same union. Women, he said, should be content with their irreplaceable work: giving birth to and raising the future leaders of God's work.

European leaders made certain they were at the head of the line to speak repeatedly in favor of ordination of women. Still, two of the most emotional pro speeches came from persons of color from the North American Division. An Hispanic pastor from Southern California pleaded for consideration of North America's needs. Everyone knows, he said, that "if any other division had a specific need, the North American Division would support

Exquisitely painted wooden egg—a gift to *Spectrum* from a teacher in the former Soviet Union

the request." Benjamin Reaves, the president of Oakwood College, boomed out the message that oneness in Christ can truly be a reality only if we recognize equal gifts within the church.

The final vote was no surprise. Still, witnessing firsthand one's church betraying its denomination-long commitment to justice by officially approving unequal treatment of women caused deep moral pain. Later in the week, leaders from different parts of the world would come by our exhibit and plead that North America continue the struggle for justice. But the day of the vote I went to the *Spectrum* booth, put away the materials, and turned out the lights.

The Woman From Ede

Accommodations were impossibly expensive, I was told before the session. On a tip from a frugal friend, I reserved a bed-and-breakfast room in the town of Ede, east of Utrecht, not far from the German border. Not counting the cost of petrol for the half-hour drive each way, Fena Bokhorst (Ph.: 31 8380 3138550) gave me a sumptuous room and breakfast for $30 a night. She even packed sandwiches and a drink for my lunches.

Fena, a retired social worker, attends the Reformed Church just across the road from her house. Although the pastor is "a little strict," Fena has organized fund-raisers to support overseas missionary efforts—sometimes bringing in a thousand guilders in a year. After we got acquainted, she showed me some of her illustrations of scenes in the Book of Revelation.

She had seen television reports on the largest convention ever to come to the Jaarburg center. At breakfasts, she wanted to know what Adventists believed, where their membership was strong. I responded to her questions, told her about the *Spectrum* exhibit, gave her a copy of the journal, and explained to her the major issues being discussed at the session. The morning after the debate on women's ordination, Fena dispensed with the usual, "Did you sleep well?" demanding, "How did the vote on ordaining women go?" When I told her, she said, "I'm so sorry."

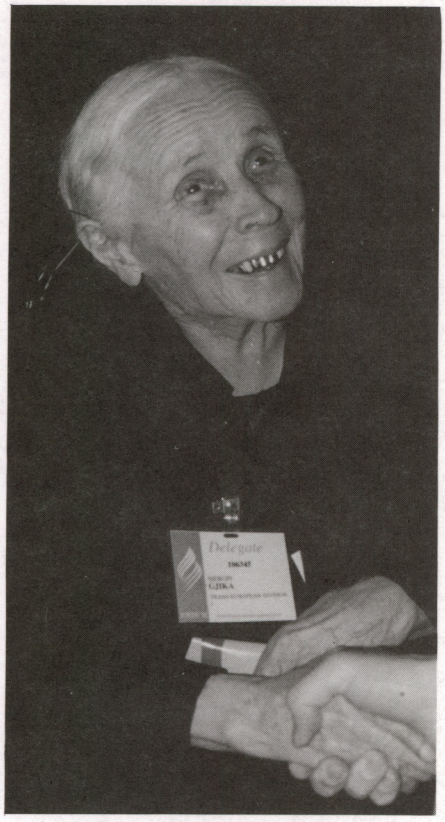
She was delighted when I invited her to visit the session. The last Sabbath, she traveled to Utrecht on the commuter train with her younger sister, visiting from the south. They had no trouble finding the *Spectrum* exhibit, but we had trouble getting a seat for the afternoon meeting. Instead, we spent our two hours together visiting all the displays in the exhibit hall. Fena always lagged behind. She couldn't resist getting as much material as possible and talking to exhibitors. She shook her head while looking at the typewriter that made underground copies of the Bible in Russia, and left money in a basket to help poor Russian Adventists. At the Loma Linda University exhibit, Gus Cheatham, vice president for public affairs, took time to charm both women, answering all their questions. At one of the Latin American exhibits, Fena donated some more money.

When we came upon the City of Toronto exhibit, the site of the next General Conference Session, the sisters picked up brochures and conversed together in Dutch. As I moved beyond earshot, Fena's sister followed me. She smiled. "Fena's talking about our attending the next General Conference in Toronto."

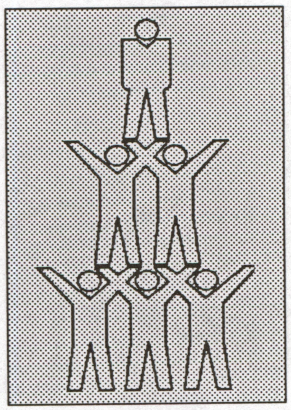
One of the 12 reasons the bandura folk choir was so popular (photograph by Adam Bujak)

Glimpses of Utrecht

Lay delegate from the Inca Union pulls his wife to the microphone (photograph by Jason Wells)



Meropi Gjika of Albania—Adventism's own Mother Teresa (photograph by Jason Wells)



World Church Takes Control

All union presidents, worldwide, now meet twice a year, joined by three laypersons from each division.

by John C. Brunt

THE GOVERNING BODY OF THE ADVENTIST Church—the General Conference Executive Committee—is dramatically more international since the Utrecht General Conference Session than before. Within months of the session, all union presidents from around the world gathered for the 1995 Annual Council of a General Conference Committee that is smaller than before—down to 260 from 360 members—and that excludes all associate departmental directors. From now on, the union presidents will also gather a second time each year for the spring meeting of the General Conference Committee. These changes may stimulate a more autonomous North American Division. The Utrecht meetings also created smaller, less-costly General Conference quinquennial general sessions (from a projected 3,000-plus delegates at the next session to 2,000) and auditors who are more independent. These are the most important changes in organization and structure voted at the 56th General Conference Session in Utrecht.

The delegates to the Utrecht General Conference Session did influence the basic structure and organization of the church. Discussion of the constitution and bylaws of the General Conference proved that in spite of a somewhat cumbersome and sometimes confusing process, delegates from the floor can make a distinct difference.

Most of the proposals that were brought to the delegates by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee were modified in important ways before they were passed by the session.

Basic Proposals

Members may find it interesting to follow the process by which these changes were made. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee, chaired by Calvin Rock, a vice president of the General Conference, and the

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secretary of the committee, Athal Tolhurst, undersecretary of the General Conference, brought proposal changes to the floor.* Some of the suggestions had come to the committee from a commission on world church organization that began meeting in 1992. One of the committee's most important proposals changed the structure of the General Conference Executive Committee in three important ways: reducing the committee from 362 to 240 members (at-large members from 80 to 30); excluding associate General Conference departmental secretaries and directors from membership; and financing the attendance of all union conference presidents to the fall and spring meetings.

Another proposed change concerned the election of officers. In the past, associate directors/secretaries of departments in the General Conference and world divisions have been elected at the General Conference Session. It was proposed that the associate directors in the General Conference be elected by the General Conference Committee at the annual meeting following the General Conference Session, and that division directors and secretaries be elected by division executive committees.

A third major proposed change concerned the General Conference Session itself. Currently, the number of delegates grows each quinquennium as the church grows. There were 2,650 delegates to the 56th session in Utrecht. It was proposed that a cap be set on delegates, either at the current 2,650 delegate level, or at a lower level of 2,000.

The President's Involvement

On the first Friday afternoon of the Session, President Robert Folkenberg introduced the concept of changing the size and membership of the General Conference Committee and changing the manner in which departmental personnel are elected. Hours after being re-elected, the president stressed two issues: fairness and accountability.

According to Folkenberg, the existing structure was not fair because many members of the General Conference Committee do not attend (or are even urged not to attend) its important fall and spring meetings. Many union presidents from the world field simply don't have the finances to attend. As a result, about 70 percent of the attendees at these crucial annual meetings come from the North American Division. According to Folkenberg, the North American members of the commission on church organization argued that fairness demanded a greater representation from the world field.

The second issue Folkenberg raised was that of accountability. He said the General Conference Committee used to meet every Thursday, but consisted almost entirely of departmental staff within the General Conference. Sometimes this gave the officers of the General Conference, who presented the material to the committee, the idea that they were on trial. In reality, Folkenberg argued, the departmental staff should be accountable to representatives of the world church. But when the majority of the General Conference Executive Committee is made up of General Conference employees, there is no accountability.

Therefore, he proposed that associate directors and associate secretaries of the departments of the General Conference not be members of the General Conference Committee, and that they no longer be elected at the session. Since departments have downsized, he argued, there is a need to choose carefully associates who will complement the directors.

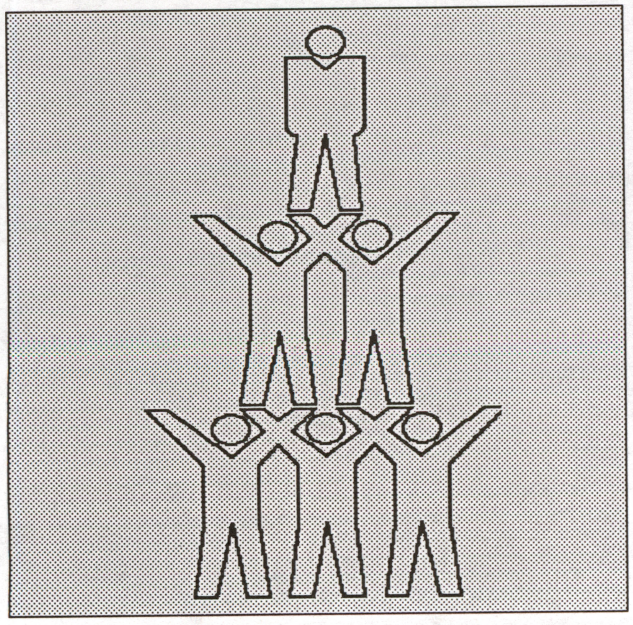
Folkenberg acknowledged that some viewed the proposals as attempts to consolidate more power in the General Conference, but added that he could not see how the proposals would have that effect. More accountability did not mean more centralized authority, for

accountability would be to the world church and the individuals and organizations within it.

Delegates Speak Up

When discussion from the floor began, some delegates described aspects of the proposals as dangerous, if not sinister. Delegates had a choice of microphones when they stood to speak. One was marked *for* and the other *against*, with chairs recognizing speakers from one mike and then the other. Interestingly, many delegates who raised objections went to the *for* microphone, said something good about the proposal, added a *but* or *however*, then voiced their objections. Several times the chair had to remind delegates that opponents of a proposal should really go to the *against* microphone. One delegate against a proposal admitted that he knew he would be recognized sooner by going to the *for* microphone.

On the opening Thursday night of the session, delegates voted to prohibit moving amendments from the floor, and on Friday began referring items back to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee for further consideration. As a result, almost every item brought to the floor was referred back to the committee. Calvin Rock, the committee chair, saved the frustration at the cumbersome and confusing process from boiling over by inviting delegates to come to the committee and express their concerns—seven hours on Sunday and two hours on Monday. Many delegates expressed their appreciation for Rock's chairmanship and for the responsiveness of the committee to many of the concerns. By the following Wednesday morning, Al McClure, president of the North American Division, while chairing one of the sessions on the main floor, commented that the Constitution and Bylaws Committee had already met more than 20 hours and heard from 75 delegates. As items were brought back to the floor, it was clear that the committee had made modifications based on the concerns expressed by delegates.



One factor that confused delegates was the linkage of so many items. Votes on any part of some proposals assumed other parts that might not yet have been voted. Fortunately, toward the end of the week, some chairs eased the confusion by breaking down some of the votes into conceptual units.

Delegates expressed a wide range of concerns. The very first person to rise after Folkenberg's initial speech was Neal Wilson, former president of the General Conference. He affirmed the basic proposal, but objected to what he called the negative reasons for it given by Folkenberg. He referred specifically to Folkenberg's statement that department directors had sometimes dominated the General Conference Committee. Wilson said no such thing had ever happened, and that the proposal should be voted because of the positive reasons stated, as long as the negative reasons were eliminated. Later, Folkenberg apologized, and affirmed that the positive reasons were sufficient to argue for passage.

Others worried that the proposed changes in composition of the General Conference Ex-

ecutive Committee gave it too much power. The General Conference Executive Committee would choose not only the 30 at-large delegates, but also division representatives as well. Susan Sickler, a North American delegate from Ohio and a lay member of the General Conference Executive Committee, pointed out that since divisions are a part of the General Conference, even those lay delegates elected by their division committees were really appointed by the General Conference. Some discussion followed about the difference between divisions and the General Conference. Sickler finally asked, "When is a division the General Conference, and when isn't it?" Calvin Rock, the chair of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, responded with one word: "Amen."

As discussion continued over the next week, some expressed fear that departments would be weakened by the new structure. Rudi Henning, for example, argued that having only 12 departmental representatives on a committee of 240 hardly seemed like balance, and that associate directors travel the world field and need to know what is going on. Delegates also expressed concern about the number of lay representatives, only two from each division, as well as the lack of front-line denominational workers (pastors and educators) on the executive committee.

Auditors expressed fear that being appointed, rather than being elected by the world church, would decrease their autonomy and ability to present objective reports without danger of reprisals. Max Mitchell objected that auditors would no longer be able to stand up and tell administrators the truth for fear of risking their jobs, and Tom Miller proclaimed that the General Conference Auditing Services would be emasculated, especially since some administrators tend to follow the lead of the Roman emperors in killing messengers of bad news.

Concerns came from other directions, too numerous to include here. It did not appear that the discussion about organizational issues was divided along any geographical lines, as was clearly the case in the discussion of some other issues, such as the ordination of women.

In general, more speeches were given against the proposals than in favor. By Wednesday morning, six days after discussion of organization and structure began, almost everything presented had been referred back to the committee. Many wondered if anything would ever actually be voted. Surprisingly, however, a lot happened during the last three days.

The Final Result

In concept, most of the proposals were accepted, but delegates modified most of them by raising objections on the floor and to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. For example, the General Conference Executive Committee was reduced, not to the original 240 membership that was proposed, but to 260 members. The modified, final version had three, rather than two, lay members from each division. The way these lay members are chosen was also modified. Instead of simply being elected by the division executive committee, now the division executive committee will choose lay members from nominees given by the unions within that division. This puts the election of lay leaders closer to the grass roots. In addition, the final configuration includes one front-line worker from each division, plus one for each additional half-million members beyond the first half-million. All of these changes were suggested by delegates who successfully referred items to the committee and there explained their objections.

On the matter of how to elect for association directors and secretaries of General Conference departments, the proposal was modified so that associate directors would still be elected by the general session through the nominating committee process, but assistant directors will be appointed. The delegates adopted the

proposal that these individuals no longer serve on the General Conference Committee. The delegates also approved the proposal that division departmental secretaries and directors be elected by the division executive committee, rather than at the General Conference Session.

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee gave special consideration to the concerns expressed about the autonomy of auditors. It brought a major proposal to the floor the last day of the session that was adopted: The director and associate directors of the General Conference Auditing Service will be elected, while associate directors who serve in the divisions will be appointed.

A more sweeping part of the proposal voted by the session requested the General Conference Executive Committee, over the next quinquennium, to give attention to the establishment of an auditing service board of 15 members. Two-thirds of the board would be nondenominationally employed Seventh-day Adventist members in professions that are relevant to the auditing service. The chair would be a lay member elected by the board. This board would recommend to the General Conference Session Nominating Committee the names of individuals for director and associate directors of the General Conference auditing service. In another change from the initial proposal, the committee removed the words "with the concurrence of" from a statement that originally said that the auditor would present his or her report "after consultation and with the concurrence of division administrations."

Finally, the delegates approved a cap of 2,000 delegates to future General Conference sessions. They voted a configuration of delegates that calls for 50 percent of the overall delegation to be comprised of lay members, pastors, teachers, and front-line workers, with the majority of that 50 percent to be lay members. Six hundred forty delegates will be delegates at large. These will include General Conference Executive Committee members, General Conference associate departmental/service directors, 34 General Conference appointed staff, and additional division and General Conference delegates.

Fifty percent of the delegates to the next General Conference Session will be comprised of lay members, pastors, teachers, and front-line workers, with the majority of that 50 percent to be lay members.

The remaining 1,360 will be regular delegates chosen in two categories. The first will be based on organization, with 22 delegates per division, one per union, one per local conference/mission, and one per division institution. The second category will be based on membership. Divisions will receive additional delegates according to their membership as determined at the close of the second year prior to the session.

Work on the constitution and bylaws is obviously never complete, and action taken toward the end of the session acknowledged that. Some delegates raised concerns about items in the constitution and bylaws that were not being modified at this General Conference session. For example, Susan Sickler raised a concern that according to the constitution, any member of the General Conference Executive Committee can also be a member of the North American Division Executive Committee, and since a quorum is only five members, it would be possible for five members who are not even from North America, but are members of the General Conference Executive Committee, to

call a North American Division Executive Committee and transact business. The chair ruled that it was too late for items that had not been discussed in the Constitution and Bylaws Committee to come to the floor at this General Conference Session. A motion was made to refer this, as well as some other items, to the Constitution and Bylaws Committee for consideration over the next five years, and discussion at the next session. Thus, the process of revision will continue.

Long-term Effect

First of all, it will be interesting to see how these changes affect the North American Division in the future. Will a more international General Conference Committee stimulate more separation between the General Conference and the North American Division?

Secondly, many delegates who had concerns about the centralization of power with the original proposals felt better with the proposals as they were modified by this process. For example, Delbert Baker, a delegate from Loma Linda University, affirmed the Constitution and Bylaws Committee and commented, "I believe this document is much more reflective of the wishes of the people."

There can be little doubt the delegates moved the church in the direction of greater representation of lay members and "front line" workers, and of increased checks and balances in areas such as auditing. Delegates pushed the original proposals even further in the direction of the fairness and accountability advocated by Robert Folkenberg.

* In addition to personal observations and notes, I am indebted to the "proceedings" and "actions" sections of the 10 General Conference Bulletins published by the *Adventist Review*, June 29, 1995, through July 13, 1995.

Conference Within A Conference

Stella Ramirez Greig reports on the best of times and the worst of times for women at the 56th General Conference Session

by Stella Ramirez Greig

For women, the 1995 General Conference Session was the best of times and the worst of times. The juxtaposition of these "best of times/worst of times" created cognitive dissonance and tension for Adventist women, and for the church in general. Women were certainly an integral part of the GC Session. Some, like Millie Kurtz, head of food Services, worked behind the scenes, making things happen. A few were delegates, speaking to and voting on policy changes.

Women were also on the main platform: Carol Rasmussen, taking minutes of the business sessions; Andrea Luxton, giving an early morning worship; Lyn Behrens, delivering nominating committee reports; and Rose Otis, presenting one of the Bible study hours.

And yet, every morning, it was a "bad time" for Adventist women. At the entrance to the convention grounds, women had to pass a large banner of a woman (doing a Hitler-like salute) in a circle with a line drawn through it, declaring "No new Gods," "No new leaders," "Vote no on women's ordination." By the sign, two young men with bullhorns proclaimed, "Vote No on women's ordination," as they distributed booklets. Though not an officially sanctioned display, it was public, persistent, unavoidable, and degrading. God only knows what the Utrecht cyclists, riding past on their way to and from work, thought.

Ordination Debate

The worst of times for Adventist women was July 5, sitting through the afternoon business session regarding the North American Division's request that divisions be allowed to ordain individuals without regard to gender. I personally know many women (not delegates, of course) who stayed away from the session because they did not want to subject themselves to the negative, anti-women rhetoric they knew was sure to emerge in the session.

Stella Ramirez Greig, professor of English and linguistics at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, received her Ph.D. in linguistics from Georgetown University. Along with Ann Gibson, Greig was elected by the Andrews faculty as a delegate to the 1995 General Conference Session.

And emerge it did: from the formal presentation of the anti-ordination speaker to the delegates lined up at the microphone for individuals speaking against the motion. It was especially painful for bilinguals because we heard the original Spanish of the speaker and then an English translation of many of the negative comments, ranging from "women belong in the kitchen and at home," to women seeking ordination are similar to "the third of the angels who fell with Lucifer."

The formal presentation by P. Gerard Damsteegt against women's ordination was both painful and confusing. Damsteegt emphasized headship theology, hierarchy, leadership authority, and power, but these are in such vivid contrast with the gospel presentation of the life and ministry of Christ as that of servanthood, service, and caring. And while Damsteegt spoke against women having "authority" over men, it is a fact that women, and some women pastors, are already in positions of leadership. Both in the U.S. and Scandinavia, some churches have a woman as the senior pastor. Some unions and conferences in the North American Division and Trans-European Division already have women as officers, such as youth directors and education directors. Furthermore, from its founding, Ellen White has had authority within the church.

The greatest cognitive dissonance resulted from the contrast between the refusal of the church to officially recognize, through ordination, the work of the Spirit accomplished by women and the fruit of the Spirit produced through the work of women pastors, evangelists, teachers, Dorcas leaders. We glimpsed their work in several venues. One place was the main hall during the evening division pageants and reports. Another venue was at the July 4 GC president's luncheon meeting with women organized by the General Conference Office of Women's Ministries (now a department). While we ate from elegant purple sack lunches, we heard plaques read out honoring two women pastors from China. Zhou Hui-Ying and Wu Lan-Ying have each raised up churches of more than 1,000 members. Interestingly, the first question posed to Elder Folkenberg during the question and answer period was, "Do you support the ordination of women?" He replied, "That's a very good question; come tomorrow afternoon [July 5 business session] and find out."

Morning Sessions

Rose Otis, director of the Office of Women's Ministries and chair of a planning committee, and Ardis Stenbakken, the assistant chair, along with a hard-working committee,* had organized parallel events for the five weekdays of the session: plenary sessions in the morning, myriad simultaneous workshops in the afternoon. Since the morning meetings were held during the morning business session for delegates, and the afternoon sessions were held during the afternoon business session, female (or male) delegates could not attend any of the women's meetings. This was disappointing, not only because the topics covered during these meetings are very important, but because delegates were not as able as others to network, extending fellowship into the future.

According to Otis, there was a strong commitment to bringing an international aspect to the programs. To this end, key speakers from countries (Brazil, Kenya, Norway, and South Korea) representing four non-North American divisions were financially sponsored jointly by the Office of Women's Ministries and the relevant divisions. Indeed, each day at least five divisions were represented.

Sunday morning, July 2, Carla Gober, from Loma Linda University, spoke on mental and emotional health issues for women, including self-esteem, and Irene Eide Elisenberg, a Norwegian pastor, spoke of the importance of "Living God's Love in My Personal Life," by

sharing personal experiences of how this can be both difficult and possible.

Monday morning, July 3, Chun-Ok Im was so animated, so full of humor and transparent body language, that though she spoke in Korean, the audience laughed and reacted appropriately even before the translation. She recounted her joining the church through roadside evangelistic activities and experiences from her own evangelistic activities, which have resulted in hundreds of baptisms.

In her devotional, "Living God's Love in My Intentional Witness," speaker Jerusyha Muga, from Nairobi, Kenya, demonstrated the fiery, evangelistic style that has brought many to Christ in her evangelistic campaigns and revival meetings.

Tuesday morning, July 4, Marit Balk spoke of the need to have "balcony people" in our lives, who support us when we can't see beyond today, when there seems to be no way out of our present circumstances. Her voice broke with emotion when she confessed that some of her balcony people were present in

Women's Issues—Special Breakout Sessions

Spiritual Growth

Defining Your Spiritual Gifts—Rosa Banks
And So We Walk Together—Ruthie Jacobsen
Personal Devotions—Nancy Van Pelt
God's Guidance System—Barbara Folkenberg
Creative Worships—Dorothy Watts
Effective Bible Study—Eleanor Green
Reaping the Blessings of a Prayer Group—Ruthie Jacobsen

Leadership/Work

Christian Principles in the Workplace—Ruth Parish
Leadership Skills for Women—Andrea Luxton
Communication and Committee Skills for Women—Noelene and William Johnsson
Public Speaking—Carla Gober
How to Prepare a Stimulating Devotional Talk—Carol Ferch-Johnson
How to Become the Woman You Want to Be!—Dorothy Watts
Understanding the Temperaments—Birthe Kendel

Technical

Questions You'd Like to Ask Your Lawyer—Free—Lisa Saveikis Burrow
How CompuServe Can Work for You—Ralph Blodgett
Home Organization for Busy Women—Nancy Van Pelt

Children's Ministries

Children's Ministries—Cradle Roll—Margaret Taglavore and Jeannine Duncan (English and French)
Children's Ministries—Kindergarten and Primary—Donna Williams

Women's Ministries

How to Begin/Build Women's Ministries—Ellen Mayr (French); Ramona Perez Greek (Spanish); Meibel Guedes and Daise Reis (Portuguese)

Women's Health

Nutrition and Nurturing Through a Woman's Life—Pat Johnston
Women's Health, From Childbearing Through Menopause—Mary Small, Faye Whiting, and Barbara Frye
HIV/AIDS and Women's Health—Joyce Hopp
Primary Prevention of Addictive Behavior Among Young Women—Joanne Park
Violence: Women in Danger—Barbara Frye, Ellen Balk Dick, and Rebecca de Graaff (English, Dutch, and French)
Does Abuse Exist in the Christian Home?—Alberta Mazat
Healing from Abusive Relationships—Adly Campos (Spanish)
Forgiveness in the Home—Adly Campos (Spanish)
Healthy and Unhealthy Bonding—Adly Campos (Spanish)
Sexual Ethics—People in Power—Ardis and Dick Stenbakken
Healthy Sexuality: Issues Relating to Gays and Lesbians—Alberta Mazat and Halcyon Wilson

Reaching Out

The Value of Women—Siriporn Tantipolvinai
How ADRA Can Empower You to Help Other Women—Gail Ormsby
How to Begin Literacy Programs—Gail Ormsby and Ardis Stenbakken
Reaching Out to Muslim Women—Joyce Neegard
How to Organize and Conduct Lay-Evangelism Campaigns—Sharon Cress

Tapes are available of the morning plenary sessions and some of the seminars. For a list of tapes available, write ADVENTIST MEDIA CENTER, 1100 Rancho Conejo Blvd., Newbury Park, CA 91320. Ask for a price list of the 1995 GC Session tapes and an order form.

the room. Sharon Cress, director of Shepherdess International, focused on abuse in her devotional, "Living God's Love in My Family." "If someone came into your church and tipped the furniture over and violated the sanctuary, what would you think? What would you do? What about people who violate the temple of the living God?"

Wednesday morning, July 5, Ullanda Innocent, who has sung in Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall, and the Lincoln Center, traced her path to singing the Lord's praises as a crusade team member with the *Breath of Life* telecast. Carole Ferch-Johnson, in "Living God's Love Through Difficulty," talked about living God's love when bad times come: a husband's untimely death, a son's rejection, trouble with eyesight.

Thursday morning, July 6, Daise Bezerra Dos Reis testified how God had taken her from a shy daughter of a pastoral family and given her the courage to become a leader of women in one of the world's largest cities—Sao Paulo, Brazil. Daise's learning to speak English in seven months, so that at Utrecht she could make her presentation in English, was proof that God enables us to reach our potential.

In the devotional for the final women's meeting, Rose Otis chose as her topic, "Living God's Love in My Church Family." Her presentation centered around the challenge of being all we can be in our local congregations and church communities. Since her appointment in 1990 as the director of the Office of Women's Ministries for the General Conference, Otis has seen the growth of women's ministries programs in eight of the 11 divisions.

Afternoon Seminars

In the afternoon (Sunday through Wednesday) one could select from 10 different seminars, organized by the Office of Women's Ministries, for a total of 40 seminars (see box, p. 22). Six seminars, discussing specific areas of women's health, were marked *Women Only.* The seminars were intended to be practical: issues such as literacy, poverty, abuse, risks to health, length of women's workday. In addition, there was a focus on training and mentoring for involvement in the church's mission. The 43 talented presenters represented all walks of Adventist women's lives. They included Barbara Folkenberg, mother of the president of the General Conference, 12 doctors from Loma Linda, and a quartet of men. On Thursday afternoon, July 6, the Women's Ministries group joined with Family Life, Children's Ministries, and Risk Management in leading out in a meeting discussing the important topic of family violence. At the end of the afternoon the group shaped recommendations regarding the issue to present to the Administrative Committee.

The Office of Women's Ministries is to be commended for tackling some "hard issues" during this Year of the Adventist Woman. While a business session debated the wording of the church manual statement on divorce, the women's seminars examined the issues of

sexual ethics, spouse abuse, and violence toward women. In addition, whereas the business session debated the issue of the ordination of women, the women's meetings presented "women ministers" sharing the stories of the work and fruits of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

For women, the 1995 General Conference Session was the best of times; it was the worst of times. In the final analysis, whether many of us will ultimately remember Utrecht as the best of times or the worst of times still depends to a large extent on what the church now does about ordination of women; what the church—its international, divisional, and local leadership, as well as its men and women in the pew—does to come up with satisfactory and creative ways to fully recognize through ordination the Holy Spirit's endowment of women with ministerial, pastoral gifts.

* Rosa Banks, Sharon Cress, Celia Cruz, Linda DeLeon, Karen Flowers, Anita Folkenberg, Ramona Perez Greek, Frances McClure, Barbara Mittleider, Julia Norcott, Elizabeth Sterndale, and Nancy Vasquez.

Are Adventists Still People of the Book?

Only 300 delegates gather to discuss authority and use of Scripture in Adventism.

by Douglas Clark

ONLY 250 TO 300 PEOPLE OUT OF MANY thousands took advantage of the opportunity to explore together an understanding of what the Adventist Church claims as a basic doctrine: the centrality of the Bible to belief and practice. Among the six breakout discussion papers prepared and distributed in advance of the 1995 General Conference Session, two dealt specifically with the Bible: "The Authority of Scripture" and "The Use of Scripture in the Life of the SDA Church." The authority of Scripture document drew no more than a couple hundred individuals to the main meeting hall of the session. The music hall across the street was virtually empty, with audience members ready to discuss the use of Scripture outnumbering the six panel members by no more than five or six to one.

Douglas Clark, dean of the School of Theology at Walla Walla College, received his M.Div. from Andrews University and his Ph.D. in Hebrew from Vanderbilt University. He is consortium director of the Madaba Plains Project.

The Authority of Scripture

George Reid, director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference, chaired the session on the authority of Scripture. He was assisted by a panel consisting of Artur Stele, president of the Zaokski Theological Seminary in Russia; Jairyong Lee, dean of the theological seminary in the Philippines; Loron Wade, dean of theological studies at Montemorelos University in Mexico; Gerard Fandel, an administrator from the South Pacific; and Richard Lehmann, president of Saleve Adventist Institute, Collonges, France.

Following Reid's introduction to the session topic, Raoul Dederen, former dean of the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University, read the document in its entirety. The document itself addressed the issue of biblical authority directly and forcefully, focusing in the first section on an unquestioned and essential authority inherent in the Bible. This

authority, according to the document, must undergird the correct approach to Scripture and should be clearly apparent in "objective" divine revelation of "objectively communicated" statements and events. Threats to the authority of the Bible arise from relativistic, tentative, and self-serving perspectives and motivations that ultimately undermine biblical theology.

The question of the normative value of Scripture and the sources of normative revelation occupied the second section of the document. Again, fears regarding threats to the Bible as the "infallible revelation" of God's will characterized the tone. All too often, the document asserted, human reason, tradition, or experience have replaced Scripture as *the* norm for Adventist belief and practice.

The "pernicious claims of science" to supersede biblical truth came under strong critique in the document's third section. Historicity and factuality in the Genesis accounts of Creation take center stage and stand in judgment of errant scientific theories and of those church members anxious "to placate the scientists." While not dismissing science entirely, the document clearly and categorically subsumed science beneath the factual claims of the Bible.

Threats springing from an overemphasis on the cultural conditioning of biblical texts have further undermined biblical authority, according to the next section of the document. Decrying the devastating effects resulting from this relativising trend, the paper laid claim to "a continuous history and an unbroken connection" that binds the biblical past to the modern reader in such a way as to supersede all cultures. It is the more independent among us who tend toward cultural relativism, the document asserted.

The subsequent section called, in the face of destructive methods of biblical investigation, for "better" research—research which, among other things, takes account of biblical languages and background material. Claiming that "we regard no difficulty as insuperable," the document's author cited reversals in archaeological interpretations that once conflicted with the Bible as proof that the Scriptures are trustworthy and will be vindicated in the end.

The two sources of revelation—special revelation and general revelation (nature and reason)—came under discussion in the next section. Protection against any improper relationship between these can only be found in "an unequivocal" emphasis on the inspiration of the Bible. Inspiration was not defined, only appealed to.

The final and longest section of the document pulled together two threads woven throughout the entire piece. In its discussion of the need for church discipline in the face of failure to submit to biblical authority and norms, the document came to its major foci. The document took a defensive stance against threats to doctrinal fidelity. The underlying message of the document was concerned more with church authority than with biblical authority. For example, the document emphasized the integrity of the church, outlining how to deal with those apparently drinking too deeply of modernism or "those unwilling to listen to the advice of the believers."

The recommendations that concluded the document pressed forcefully for corrective measures—some educational, some disciplinary, some administrative—to bring church members back into conformity with biblical authority as defined by the church.

By and large, the panelists supported the document in its contents and its concern to protect the Bible against threats to its authority. Stele felt a loss of biblical authority would unravel church unity. Lee saw the 18th century as the turning point away from a belief in *sola scriptura* toward questions and doubts about biblical authority. Fandel affirmed the document's assessment of today's situation, worrying that for many, personal experience was replacing Scripture as the source of belief. Both Wade and Lehmann, while supportive of concerns raised in the document, did express reservations about the section on discipline, fearing a return to the Middle Ages of intolerance.

In contrast to the basic show of support for the document among panelists, speakers from the floor, while polite, almost consistently raised questions about its tone and/or its contents. Only one of the 12 or 13 spokespersons came out enthusiastically in support of the direct approach the document took to the problems the church faces today.

John Brunt, of Walla Walla College, recognizing the deep hungering of church members for practical help from the Bible, decried the stone-throwing tone of the paper. He called rather for a positive, clear, nurturing approach to the problem, with the goal of encouraging responsible and relevant Bible study and application.

Others raised questions about the disciplinary parameters of the document (who, exactly, would be subject to church discipline?); about the reference to a "creed" in the document (wondering if we were again toying with a creedal formation of doctrines); about the tone—which would only exacerbate the rift between educators (especially scientists) and church administrators; about problems surrounding the term *sola scriptura*; and about the quality of writing in the document itself. One seasoned pastor hoped we would never use a document like this for disciplining church members. Following this discussion, members of the audience who wished to do so submitted further recommendations in written form.

According to Reid, the document had served its purpose of generating discussion and would not be published officially anywhere outside the General Conference Session. The fate of the recommendations—those already formulated as part of the document and those submitted in written form by the audience—was not entirely clear.

The Use of Scripture in the Life of the SDA Church

Angel Rodriguez of the Biblical Research Institute chaired a panel that included Bertil Wiklander, new president of the Trans-European Division; Violeto F. Bocala, secretary of the Asia Pacific Division; Heikki Silvet, secretary of the Euro-Asia Division Ministerial Association; Jaime Castrejon, secretary of the Inter-American Division Ministerial Association; Johann Heinz, of Friedensau Theological Graduate School in Germany; and Miroslav Kis, chair of the department of theology and Christian philosophy in the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

Before reading the document, the chair indicated that it grew out of a request by the Administrative Council of the General Conference. The council had asked an unidentified individual to write an initial draft, which took on numerous changes as it snaked its way through a series of committees and readers. Whether or not any form of the document's contents or recommendations might appear in

published form was not clear. At minimum, the General Conference Administrative Council will see the results.

The document clearly issued from a deep concern about the use of Scripture within the church by administrators, publications, educators (especially those in higher education), personnel in medical institutions, pastors, and church members at large. The document relied on feelings, perceptions, and "anecdotal reports" within Adventism that expressed uncertainties about the Bible. "A recent study" apparently also indicated little attention and a dangerous lack of commitment to the Bible, certainly less than our forebears had.

A list of six recommendations concluded the document. These suggested assessments and evaluations of current trends, programs to foster appropriate study methods, and steps to ensure adherence to doctrinal truth.

Culture and experience cannot be surgically removed from the Bible. To assume a clean separation between "objective" truth and experiential truth is to deny the holism of human nature Adventists have affirmed for more than a century.

Panelists spoke initially to specific aspects of the document's content. Wiklander, while recognizing the diminished role of Scripture among Seventh-day Adventists today, nevertheless recommended changes to the paper (suggesting a future life for the document). Wiklander noted, among other concerns, an overemphasis on standards at the expense of salvation. Castrejon called for a greater balance between cognitive and practical/experiential approaches to Scripture. There should be, he noted, greater emphasis on the impact of the Bible on one's affective life.

Opening what turned out to be but the first volley in a fusillade of disparaging comments on Sabbath school lessons, Silvet pled for an overhaul that might enhance the value, depth, and appeal of the Sabbath school *Quarterly*. He also questioned the either-or dichotomy the document posed between devotional reading and deep Bible study. Heinz celebrated the centrality of the Bible in our Protestant heritage, and decried members' confusing their own ideas with scriptural truth.

Ruing the fact that postmodern thought diminishes biblical authority, Kis advocated rethinking the nature and purpose of the Bible in culture. Disagreeing with the document's concern that our publishing houses should pull in the reins on pluralistic and potentially divisive books and articles, Kis argued for increased publication outlets for new ideas intended to stimulate discussion.

Give and take between speakers from the floor and panelists raised other significant issues. Along with continued bombardment of the Sabbath school *Quarterly* and suggestions to make it inductive and more useful and relevant, participants celebrated personal discovery in Bible study. This cannot happen through spoon-feeding, many suggested, but through use of appropriate tools and methods. Couldn't we provide scholarly as well as more popular versions of an introduction to methods of interpreting Scripture, one participant asked, with an eye toward greater appreciation, understanding, and application of the Bible? Another participant wondered if its judgmental tone, based on perceptions and anecdotes, could be edited into a more positive and affirming expression, built on more adequate data?

The final hour dedicated to this document was set aside for consideration of recommen-

had been publicly neutral about the proposition that was coming to the floor in Utrecht. Where thunderous blasts might have had an impact, the world church leadership team had barely piped up.

It seemed clear that, for the proposition's partisans, the issue was how to lose with a minimum of damage—either to church unity or to women's prospects in the future. A recurring question was whether to use parliamentary or other means in an effort to block a formal vote. This would have prevented the negative outcome everyone was predicting. By Wednesday, most supporters of the proposition, aware that opponents might force a vote in any case, were prepared to put up the best effort possible. It would be, if nothing else, a witness.

History

At 2 p.m. on Wednesday, July 6, Calvin Rock, GC vice president and chair for the meeting, introduced the agenda. The recent conversation began, he said, in 1971, with a formal request from Adventists in Finland who wanted to ordain women serving as pastors in that country. But in 1881, 90 years before that, Adventists at a General Conference Session had considered ordaining women. At that session they had even resolved to do so, although the three-person General Conference Committee authorized to act on the resolution had failed to follow through.

The request from Finland had led to a 1975 conference at Camp Mohaven in Ohio, where the consensus was that the Bible does not prohibit the ordination of women. But no authorization of ordination to pastoral ministry for women had followed that meeting. Now, even though women local elders were receiving church-approved ordinations, the question of full equality in the Adventist ministry was still unresolved.

Rock explained that the North American Division president would speak on behalf of the proposition, and that two theologians, arguing opposite positions, would introduce debate. Then delegates would be able to line up at *for* and *against* microphones for two-minute speeches (three minutes if translation into English was required). The vote would be taken at 5 p.m. or thereabouts.

Alfred McClure affirmed the North American Division's "unshakable commitment" to the world church, but implored the delegates to grant "freedom" to the divisions to ordain women to pastoral ministry. In North America, he said, the church's success in mission required such freedom.

"Tomorrow's leaders believe [women's ordination] is right," he said, and would be disillusioned if the proposition failed. He described himself as a "convert" to the view that women are fully equal in their potential for ministry, and argued that God gives "spiritual gifts irrespective of gender."

McClure ended his remarks by reassuring delegates that, although some would be disappointed whichever way the vote went, the North American Division would remain loyal to the other divisions, and the world church would remain united.

Debate

P. Gerard Damsteegt, a professor at Andrews University, made the formal case against the proposition. Though "equal before God," men and women are "different in their functional roles," he said, citing 1 Timothy and Titus. Women must never exercise "headship" or "authority" over men, and are thus disqualified from ordination to pastoral ministry. He linked the North American Division request to the spirit of "Babylon," saying it amounted to rejection of the authority of Scripture. With respect to the Bible, he said, the requirement

dations. In addition to the six printed in the document, a number of others surfaced in the discussion. These included a call to open and maintain lines of communication, especially between teachers and administrators. Further attention to the study of interpretation of Scripture received wide support (in particular for use with the Sabbath school lessons). Some felt that heavier theological/biblical content in sermons would be preferable to socially oriented topics. Perhaps, suggested some, a series of booklets following a "What Does the Bible Teach About . . . ?" motif would prove useful.

A Personal Analysis

First, it is clear that the serious tone and protective stance adopted by the authors of the documents reveal deep concerns about Bible study in the life of the church. Honestly laying claim to the appellation "People of the Book" is much more difficult today for Seventh-day Adventists than in the past. Unfortunately, it is the very tone of the papers (especially the one on the authority of Scripture) that runs counter to meaningful attempts to create for Bible study an inviting atmosphere, an open door to discovery, a celebration of biblical curiosity.

Secondly, the contents of the documents argue almost exclusively from cerebral, academic, intellectual perspectives and have not taken into account the holistic creatures church members (and the worshipping community) are. Culture and experience cannot be surgically removed from the Bible. While inspired, the Bible was nonetheless written in and is read today within the context of life experiences and human stories. To assume a clean separation between "objective" truth and experiential truth is to deny the holism of human nature Adventists have affirmed for more than a century.

Finally, it is also clear, from the extremely low attendance levels at these sessions, that either the church and its members already believe they know what they need to about the Bible (its authority, inspiration, interpretation, and application), or they don't much care anymore. Neither option is very encouraging.

However, the future is not necessarily bleak. By putting our best and most dedicated minds and hearts together as a church, we may be able to work toward a dynamic approach to the Bible, an approach that studies the understanding of people who first heard prophets, poets, and apostles, but also explores the invigorating relevance of Scripture to life today. Such a twofold task is worth our continued and most profound efforts.

is "submission, not reinterpretation."

In arguing that ordination of women is permissible, Raoul Dederen, also from Andrews University, appealed to "the development of Scripture." The opposition, he said, overlooks what is summarized in Galatians 3:28, namely, that Jesus has brought about a new understanding of human relations. Now dividing walls are cast down. Although the Bible speaks no conclusive word about women and the ritual of ordination, equality best honors the spirit of the Bible as crystallized in Jesus. Oddly, however, Dederen weakened his case by saying that the idea of male headship still applies in the relation between husbands and wives.

Discussion

At the signal for the opening of floor debate, speakers—many more than would have a chance to speak before the 5 o'clock deadline—rushed to the *for* and *against* microphones. The arguments were familiar from the past quarter century of debate. As in 1990, one North American delegate, Ernest Castillo from the Pacific Union, spoke in Spanish and aimed his remarks at his brothers and sisters overseas. North America was in desperate need of a Yes vote, he declared, and would surely assist other divisions if they faced similar mission-based needs. "I guarantee you the North American Division would help," he said.

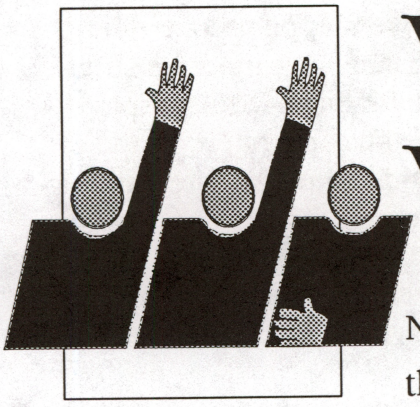
The opposition stood its ground. One delegate, a middle-aged man, pulled his wife from her chair near the microphone, enclosed her in a severe hug, and made her sad-eyed, voiceless presence a prop for his defense of male headship. To anyone looking on, she seemed negligible. Whether that mattered depended on the beholder's perspective, and by now it seemed unlikely that many delegates would change their viewpoint as a result of the afternoon's conversation.

Applause for opposition speeches mounted as the afternoon wore on. Not long after 5 p.m., Humberto Rasi, director of the General Conference Department of Education, made the motion to cut off debate. Before the delegates marked their ballots, Robert Folkenberg strode to the main podium to urge solidarity, no matter how the vote turned out. Taking no position of his own, he declared that he was pleased with the "process and decorum," and prayed that the delegates would leave the room "in one accord."

The delegates then divided, 673 votes Yes, 1,481 No. Although the outcome was expected, the actuality of defeat left supporters numb. Later in the evening, Alfred McClure faced the cameras, and in a comment beamed to North America by satellite, asked members of his North American Division to maintain unity with one another and with the wider church. Members should regard the vote, he said, as God's "will to the body." Nodding to the church outside North America, he declared: "We do not wish to break ranks with this great global family."

He then promised further attention to the role of women in ministry, with a view to "equity" at "decision-making levels." But it was his hope, he said, that this topic would not "distract us from our mission."

For proponents of women's ordination, justice belonged to the mission. Their frustration appeared to be a catalyst for deeper solidarity. Certainly, for supporters of North America's motion, the belief that women and men are absolute equals in their capacity for spiritual leadership was as strong as ever. Clearly, the conversation would continue.



World Votes *No* to Women's Ordination

North America's request is voted down at Utrecht by more than a two-to-one margin—1,481 against, 673 for.

by Charles Scriven

North America, with help from Northern Europe, roared Yes.

The rest of the world roared No. (The exact count? Who knows, division by division?)

The No's roared loudest, dashing, although by no means killing, hope for women pastors.

On July 6 in Utrecht, the labyrinthine movement for gender equality in the Adventist pastorate took a dramatic turn. With the delegates crowded into their seats, and the galleries at their weekday fullest, the 56th General Conference session rejected a proposition, presented by North America, that the ordination of women pastors to gospel ministry be permitted in the Seventh-day Adventist Church on a division-by-division basis.

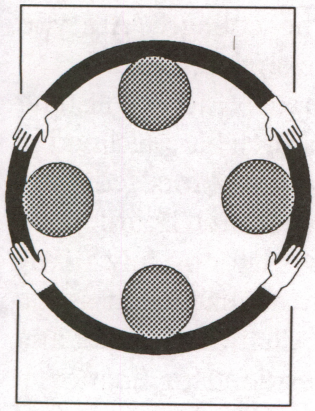
The proposition would have opened the way for the North American and Trans-European Divisions, the two with the most interest and the most candidates, to offer ordination to all pastors "without regard to gender." But only 673 delegates marked their ballots Yes; 1,481 opposed the proposition.

Procedure

On the days leading up to the Wednesday vote, *ad hoc* groups from North America clustered in hallways and side rooms to discuss strategy. One group involved Alfred McClure, the North American Division president, along with a few union and conference presidents and selected women delegates.

No one thought seriously that the issue was how to win. The partisans of justice for women knew that resistance to the proposition was overwhelming, especially in the giant African and South American delegations. They knew, too, that since the 1990 vote in Indianapolis against church-wide approval of women's ordination, the General Conference president

Charles Scriven, president of Columbia Union College, received his Ph.D. from the Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California. He is the author of several books, including The Transformation of Culture *(Herald Press, 1988), and* The Demons Have Had It *(Southern Publ. Assn., 1976).*



A Sacred Moment At Sligo

Bryan Zervos recounts the biography of the first ordination of women to gospel ministry in the Adventist Church.

by Bryan Zervos

"THIS SABBATH IS A SACRED MOMENT, . . . FOR me, for Sligo, for the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church." The words were Kendra Haloviak's. They expressed the sentiments of the more than 1,100 people in the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church attending the first ordination of women to gospel ministry. "Today," she said, "we let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. Today we are more Adventist than we were last Sabbath."

Adventist Church leaders from around the world attended the September 23 service. A score of women in ministry came from different parts of North America. Ordained Adventist ministers from across the United States participated in the ordination to gospel ministry of Penny Shell, director of pastoral ministries at the Shady Grove Adventist Hospital; Norma Osborn, associate pastor of the Sligo church; and Kendra Haloviak, assistant professor of religion at Columbia Union College.

Why did this service happen when it did? How did it come about?

The short answer is that when the 1995 General Conference in session voted to deny women the privilege of full ordination to the gospel ministry—as the session had in 1990—it provoked a moral maelstrom. And the Spirit began wooing local congregations into action.

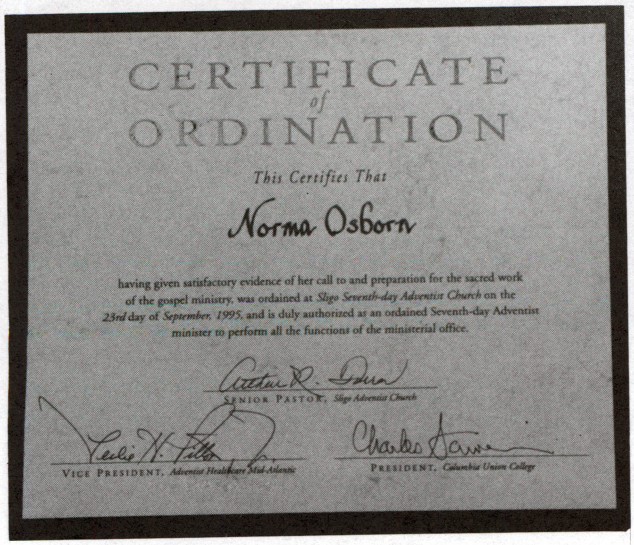
Ten days after the July 5 vote on women at Utrecht, approximately 50 people crowded into the Sligo Sabbath school class led by Roy Branson, editor of *Spectrum*, and Donald Ortner, acting director of the American Museum of Natural History. Members discovered that they were sitting in concentric rectangles, representing the typical layout of Dutch cities—their chairs corresponding to buildings, their feet dangling in what would have been canals. A large panel of class members who had gone to Utrecht shared their experiences at the 1995 General Conference Session: exhausting committee meetings on reorganiza-

Bryan Zervos, a graduate of Columbia Union College and president of its alumni association, is a member of the board of directors of the Washington Institute, Takoma Park, Maryland.

tion, musical performances that moved delegates to tears, lively discussions at breakout groups on biblical interpretation, family violence, and tobacco control.

A hush fell over the class as the panel began reporting the final item: *the* vote by the Session, 1,481 to 673, denying ordination of women to gospel ministry anywhere in the world. At the end of the sad account, Roy Branson said that after the vote, he had not found one North American conference or union president contemplating ordaining women to gospel ministry. That meant action had to be taken by others. It was time, he said, for women in ministry to go to their ordained colleagues and say, "It's time; ordain me now." It was time for Penny Shell to go to Les Pitton, vice president for new business, Adventist Healthcare Mid-Atlantic; for Norma Osborn and Esther Knott to go to Arthur Torres, senior pastor of Sligo church; and for Kendra Haloviak to go to Charles Scriven, president of Columbia Union College, and for each of them to say, "It's time; ordain me now." It was time, Branson said, for congregations in Adventism to ordain women *now*. The class erupted in applause and intense discussion.

Scriven, a member of the panel, supported the proposal wholeheartedly. Haloviak, followed by several others, wondered about



CERTIFICATE
of
ORDINATION

This Certifies That

Norma Osborn

having given satisfactory evidence of her call to and preparation for the sacred work of the gospel ministry, was ordained at *Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church* on the *23rd* day of *September, 1995*, and is duly authorized as an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister to perform all the functions of the ministerial office.

SENIOR PASTOR, *Sligo Adventist Church*

VICE PRESIDENT, *Adventist Healthcare Mid-Atlantic*

PRESIDENT, *Columbia Union College*

women initiating discussion of the matter. Uncharacteristically, some members remained deep in conversation for an hour after class. During that time, Scriven asked Haloviak, an assistant professor at the college, "Are you ready to go ahead?" She smiled; "I am."

Energized by the hope of accomplishing locally what the world church had declined to do globally, the class quickly focused on a regularly scheduled Sligo church board meeting, convening three days later on July 18. By Sunday morning, two who had been at the Sabbath school class, Charles Scriven and James Greene, vice president for finance at Columbia Union College, had already drafted proposals for action.

At the church board meeting, Torres repeated what he had said in his sermon to the Sligo congregation July 8—that the negative vote at Utrecht on ordination of women was so personally painful that he had literally gone to his home and wept. Now, Torres said, he had received a letter from which he would read. An active member of Sligo requested that her name be dropped from membership in a denomination that officially discriminated against women. Torres suggested that a church business meeting be scheduled for August 1, two weeks away, and that an *ad hoc* group be appointed to propose to the business meeting an appropriate response to the Utrecht action. Torres' suggestion was voted by the church board (with only one negative vote), and the members chosen from the floor: Roy Branson, Dorita Boulden, John Butler, Israel Castro, Dolores Maupin, Charles Scriven, Mitchell Tyner, and Kit Watts. Attending *ex officio* were Pastors Torres and Paul Anderson, and Robert Visser, a systems analyst who chairs the Sligo Church board, and who was also selected chair of the *ad hoc* committee.

Incorporating some of Greene's wording, Scriven's draft was a Rembrandt, exquisite in every detail. Not surprisingly, the principal discussion within the committee revolved

around setting the September 23 date for an ordination service to gospel ministry, even if the conference and union were to decline to vote ordained ministers' credentials. After two sessions of vigorous debate and editing, the *ad hoc* committee, with only one abstention, approved the proposal.

Tuesday evening, August 1, less than a month after the vote in Utrecht, more than 200 members packed into the Fellowship Room of Sligo church—more than had attended the business session to approve a multi-million dollar addition to the Sligo church building. The church board, meeting in business session, was called to order by Visser. When the resolution proposed by the *ad hoc* committee was distributed and read, a buzz spread through the room. The church was being asked to approve not just words, but action. A three-minute limit on each speech and a one-hour limit on the debate was adopted.

From the start, discussion was brisk but cordial (see excerpts on pages 37-44). First, members wanted to be reassured—and were—that Sligo was not breaking away from the Potomac Conference. Then, young people and women expressed how affirmed they felt by the convening of the meeting and the proposal. As the deadline for the end of the discussion approached, Ralph Thompson, a Sligo church member and secretary of the General Conference, rose to speak. Thompson stated that a letter was even then on its way from A. C. McClure, president of the North American Division, to the president of the Columbia Union, Ralph Martin, urging unity. Thompson personally favored ordination of women, he said, but approving the proposal meant that Sligo could be held in "rebellion," and "then some of us [would] have to make decisions whether or not we belong to a rebellious church."

After debate had been prolonged for another half hour, a vote was taken and the results announced: 138 in favor, 21 opposed.

Within three hours, Sligo's action had been distributed over CompuServe's SDAs Online forum, and, by noon of the following day, hundreds of reactions had been posted. Free association on the action—and the "meaning" of ordination—ranged from thoughtful comments for and against the proposal to allegations that it was satanically inspired.

For the next three weeks, the focus of attention turned toward the Potomac Conference Executive Committee. Passionate letters poured in to committee members in support of granting licenses to eligible women pastors (see pages 44-55). At the conference committee meeting, Sunday, August 25, Ralph W. Martin, president of the Columbia Union, explained that thoughtful Adventists are faced with a moral dilemma—following the dictates of justice and equality, or following the actions of the General Conference in session. Torn between an intense personal conviction that women should be treated equally and a sense of responsibility to the corporate church, Martin and Harold Lee, secretary of the Columbia Union, resolutely opposed the granting of credentials to women.

At a pre-meeting discussion, Scriven had invoked the example of Christ consistently acting on behalf of the oppressed. He pled with the committee, as well as with the conference and union officials, to vote according to their consciences, to take a stand on behalf of what was right. Repeating a long list of totally unfamiliar surnames, he asked if anyone recognized them. Hardly anyone did. These were all names of conference and union presidents, Scriven said. But you, he told the denominational officials, by doing what is right, could go down in Adventist history.

Torres said that his congregation simply could not fathom the Seventh-day Adventist Church's preventing women being fully recognized, ordained ministers of the gospel. Almost all the committee members who spoke

agreed with Scriven and Torres. But when the vote was announced (union officials did not cast ballots), the committee had voted 11 to 8 against granting women ordained ministers' licenses. Eleven years before, the same Potomac Conference Committee had tabled its action granting women the same license given to ordained men (see *Spectrum*, Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 2-4).

The drama shifted to the potential ordinands. In the light of the conference's action, would they still accept Sligo's invitation to proceed with ordination? Kendra Haloviak remained committed. After careful personal reflection, and assurances from Les Pitton that she would not be penalized professionally for proceeding, Penny Shell decided to participate in the ordination service. Norma Osborn believed in ordination of women to gospel ministry, but did not want to be part of what some would perceive as a rebellion. However, in a September 5 letter, she declared her decision to accept her church's invitation to participate: Because it is "more than, bigger than myself. It is for others—my children, my friends, my church. I must take my place in history"; because "change takes place from the grass roots up"; and because she believed that on September 23 "all our sparks can come together to make a great big joyful fire for the Lord."

All three candidates were examined by three ordained ministers. The candidates also participated heavily in planning the ordination service, along with other pastors and lay persons in a committee chaired by Marianne Scriven, director of the Sligo church choir, and a former Sligo minister of music. Eleven weeks after the vote at Utrecht, Sligo held its ordination service.

Saturday morning, the *New York Times* carried a feature report about the first ordination of women to gospel ministry among Seventh-day Adventists. The Sunday after the service, the *Washington Times* ran a front page account of the event, complete with two photos. The following days, officials in the General Conference were trying to minimize the significance of the event.

Whatever denominational officials may say, those who attended the event, lay persons and ordained ministers alike, affirm that it was the most moving ordination—indeed worship service—they had ever experienced. They agreed with the importance Penny Shell saw in the ordination. "Even more difficult than not being ordained, when it's expected, is to belong to a church that will not ordain women. I no longer belong to such a church, and it's a great joy."

Worshippers at the ordination service, September 23, believe that they and the Adventist Church experienced the reality of Paul's words quoted by Norma Osborn after her ordination: "If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NRSV).

Sligo's Action: The Documents

Toward a documentary history of how and why Sligo chose to ordain women to gospel ministry.

The July 5, 1995, vote of the General Conference in session denying divisions the opportunity to ordain women to the gospel ministry has generated many responses. Two days after the vote in Utrecht, the La Sierra University church in business session adopted a statement. Less than two weeks later the Sligo church board also responded.

The documents that follow proceed chronologically from the La Sierra University church action (see page 38). Increasingly, they revolve around the deliberations and actions of Sligo church.

For more than 22 years, Sligo church has included at least one woman among its associate pastors. Eleven years ago these pastors began baptizing. On July 18, the Sligo church board (with only one dissenting vote) selected an ad hoc *committee to prepare a statement for a church business meeting. Two weeks later, the* ad hoc *committee (with only one member abstaining) moved to adopt the document reproduced on page 39. What follows begins with excerpts from the two-hour church business meeting that adopted (138 to 21) the action reprinted on page 39. A more complete account can be read in Bryan Zervos' article, "A Sacred Moment at Sligo," beginning on page 33.*

—The Editors

Excerpts From the Sligo Church Business Meeting, Aug. 1, 1995

Carol Hooker: I'm concerned about the legal implications of what we do, and I'd like to hear from—I know there's at least one person from the legal department of the General Conference that could speak to that.

Bob Visser: I assume she has in mind Mitch Tyner.

Mitch Tyner: When you say *legal,* I presume you're talking about the jurisdiction of a civil court. No civil court in the United States in its right mind is going to take jurisdiction over the employment, the ordination, the credentialing of a minister of the gospel. That act itself, by a court, would be excessive entanglement, which would be a violation of the Establishment Clause. No court, quite literally, is going to take jurisdiction in that question.

Mary Lopez: Thank you. Before I cast my vote, I would like to know, after this, will Sligo be an independent church or will it be in conflict with the General Conference? Because when I accepted this Seventh-day Adventist message, I accepted it under the impression that the General Conference is the head of the church, so what will happen then?

Charles Scriven: I would just like to say that I think that's a fine question—it's an excellent question. There would be a kind of response to this action in Utrecht that would go like this: Let's just abandon the world church and become a congregational church. Let's start withholding our tithe. Why should we pay tithe to a community like this?

The proposal before you is an effort to counter both of those points of view. It is based on a deep conviction that we must save the world church. It is based on a deep conviction—you saw it, you can

see it right before you—that we must save the tithe base. The premise is, the only way to save the world church and to prevent the tithe from dissipating, is to stand for conscience and to allow liberty of conscience inside the remnant church in an effort to save the remnant church.

Dave Lamoreaux: I feel much elation on hearing and seeing this report from the committee. I was concerned what might come out, what might be recommended, and I'm absolutely delighted and certainly in favor, totally. One of the things that I wanted to talk about was the absolute necessity of grassroots initiative on the matter of justice for women. Grassroots efforts have a long and honorable tradition inside and outside of the church in bringing good things to pass. . . . When I was in Utrecht and heard the news [I] was disappointed. My own opinion was that this is where it will probably come to pass, one place at a time. . . . It will be a grassroots kind of thing. So when I heard those words in this report, I was pleased. I urge us to support this.

Frank Hooker: The report mentions the granting of credentials for ordained ministry. Will this credential have any value outside of the Potomac Conference? . . . My guess is it cannot have any relevance outside the conference. Am I correct? And if it has no value outside the conference, why involve the conference at all?

Rudy Torres: Sligo cannot ordain. Sligo doesn't have that kind of authority. Only the conference can ordain, and the normal procedure would be for the conference to make a request from the union, so it would have to be voted by the union and by the conference. And if those two decided to do it, then obviously that credential would be accepted within those jurisdictions.

Frank Hooker: Why are we putting them [the Columbia Union] in a position to support us when the world body has already said No? It creates undue tension among the higher organizations, who are pretty much sworn to abide by the Utrecht decision. If we want to [follow] our own course, then let Sligo do something on its own, and not involve Potomac, or Columbia Union whatsoever.

Les Pitton: I'd like to respond to that. I think what he's saying is, If the Potomac Conference and the union do approve what Sligo decides to do, is there any validity of that credential outside this union? Absolutely, because the credential is given for a three-year period. If they were to transfer to another church within that three-year period, that credential is still good; that ordination is still intact, unless someone annuls that ordination. I was ordained in the Florida Conference; when I went to Potomac Conference, that didn't mean that my ordination was annulled. Someone would have to make a specific action to annul that ordination.

Ed Burnett: There seems to be quite a misunderstanding in some people. There's nothing forbidding the ordination of women in the Adventist Church that I know of. The specific steps which were suggested were not approved, but no one has ever said that you cannot ordain women, not the General Conference at any time in its history. So if we approve this we're in no way . . . in rebellion . . . against any action of the General Conference.

Roy Branson: There are two parts to ordination: one is the laying on of hands in a worship service, and in the way that is endorsed by Scripture, and this is similar to a marriage ceremony or baptism. Then in addition, just like in those other ordinances, there is a license or certificate that is granted.

The first part—the ordination of people who have shown they have the gifts of the Spirit—can be performed by a community that wants to recognize those people, and wishes to recognize those people, in a worship service. The piece of paper that comes afterward, in our denomination, has usually gone through a process of a conference deciding who this is going to be, going up to the union, the union agrees, the conference gives the piece of paper.

Now, the question of who gets the piece of paper and who gives it is clear. It's the conference or the union. It is also clear that there is this worship service activity, which

La Sierra University Church Urges Women's Ordination

July 7, 1995

Whereas we, the La Sierra University Church, affirm our commitment to and affiliation with the Seventh-day Adventist world church, and

Whereas we appreciate the effort made by this conference and its various committees, including the Gender Inclusiveness Task Force, on the question of Women's Ordination,

The La Sierra University Church prayerfully requests, urges, and expects the Southeastern California Conference and the Pacific Union Conference to honor the trust and voted actions of the Southeastern California Conference constituents by authorizing formal pastoral ordination for women to the gospel ministry by November 1, 1995.

is an acknowledgment of the community of people who have shown that they have the gifts of the Spirit. This proposal that you have here suggests that this congregation can perform that service in showing that we believe that these people are full, gospel ministers.

Les Pitton: I just wanted to speak on behalf of the chaplains of some of our hospitals. I think the hospitals and the healthcare system in the Adventist Church has long supported women in ministry, and I think that, just like a college institution would support their chaplain or their lady from their institution, the Adventist Health System would also be recommending somebody to Sligo church for [ordination].

Shana Visser: We're getting into the logistics of everything here, and I understand that that's very important, but I would just like to say, . . . as a member of the younger generation . . . that it's very important to me that we're . . . doing this. I mean, whether this passes or [not], it's very difficult—I know many people who are my age who feel this way—that it would be extremely difficult for us to stay in a church that patently supports discrimination against women, and this is important to me that we're doing it, no matter what happens. . . .

James Greene: The concern I have is that the document does not address the issue that was raised by someone over here, what happens

Action of Sligo Church in Business Session, August 1, 1995

WHEREAS: The Holy Bible, interpreted through Jesus Christ, the "exact imprint of God's very being" (Hebrews 1:3), affirms the equality of all God's children (Luke 10:38-42; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:9-11); and

WHEREAS: The 13th of the 27 "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists" declares believers of every race and nation—"high and low, rich and poor, male and female"—to be "equal in Christ," and summons them all "to serve and be served without partiality or reservation"; and

WHEREAS: Ellen White believed that God prepares both women and men to be "pastors to the flock" (*Review*, January 15, 1901), and said that women who minister should themselves be "set apart" by "prayer and laying on of hands" (*Review*, July 9, 1895); and

WHEREAS: Creative and energetic Adventists in the culture Sligo serves, particularly second- and third-generation Adventists and particularly the young, hold to the above convictions *as a matter of conscience*; and

WHEREAS: These highly able Adventists, with their potential for congregational and institutional leadership, regard timidity and indecisiveness concerning the ordination of women as a betrayal of these convictions; and

WHEREAS: The fallout of anger and disappointment is leaching morale and commitment out of Adventism, particularly in the original strongholds; and

WHEREAS: The depletion of the leadership pool in these strongholds is putting the tithes and offerings at risk, further weakening the body of Christ; and

WHEREAS: Decline in the original strongholds imperils both the idea of a world church and the infrastructure and missionary zeal that sustain it; and

WHEREAS: The recent action in Utrecht reveals the absolute necessity of a grassroots initiative on the matter of justice for women; and

WHEREAS: The window of opportunity may slam shut at any moment as disappointment careens toward indifference among many Adventists;

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED: That out of passion for the Gospel, obedience to conscience, faithfulness to mission, and commitment to the building up of the church's spiritual and financial resources, the Sligo congregation

1.) plan, for September 23, 1995, a festival service in which eligible women working in pastoral ministry at Sligo, and related institutions, undergo the laying on of hands as a public affirmation of their call to pastoral ministry; and

2.) ask the Potomac Conference and Columbia Union Conference committees to offer their blessing and participation—including the granting of credentials for ordained ministry—in connection with this joyful and historic occasion.

if—this document makes no commitment on the part of Sligo church that we are and want to continue to remain a part of the sisterhood of the churches in the Potomac Conference. I would be opposed to any action that would take Sligo church outside and make it a congregational independent of the Potomac Conference, and I wish this document had language that specifically stated that we are pledged and continue to remain a part of the sisterhood of churches and continue to support the Seventh-day Adventist Church through our tithe and offerings. And it's silent on this point. It alludes to the fact that we're fearful that we're going to lose tithes and offerings because we don't take this decision which, personally, I believe morally the church needs to be doing, but I wish the document had that commitment that we're stating very clearly, not only to the Potomac Conference but to the world field, we're not trying to take Sligo church out of the sisterhood of churches, and we support the 27 Fundamental Beliefs and we also support this church with our tithes and offerings.

Les Pitton: The second item is asking for the conference and the union approval, so why even make the statement?

Charles Scriven: . . . I want to try something out, and I wonder if both Les and Jim might agree with this. Suppose that, right after "Be it hereby resolved"—are you with me?—"that out of passion for the gospel, obedience to conscience, faithfulness to mission, and commitment to the sisterhood of Seventh-day Adventist churches, and to the building up of its spiritual and financial resources." I'm asking Jim whether that would sort of do it without having a major rewrite—"Commitment to the sisterhood of Seventh-day Adventists churches and the building up of its spiritual and financial resources."

Beverly Habada: I really think that . . . we're breaking new ground, and I don't think there are any rules of the road on this, I really don't. And if the conference says No, . . . you think strategically: What do you do next? From my position as city manager of the City of Takoma Park, I'm constantly, in the morning, at night, at noon, thinking of ways to position my city to protect it, and I think in this instance, the same applies to this decision. We're not making a decision that's in the norm; it's unusual, and therefore we have to be prepared to take the next step, whatever that is, if it comes. If I was thinking strategically about this, from my position, I would say that we can go ahead and on September 23rd make a symbolic gesture, regardless of what anybody else does, Potomac Conference or Columbia Union. It sounds to me, though, from what Chuck Scriven said, that we have a good chance of getting the support of the Columbia Union. So why not proceed? On the other hand, if we wanted to go beyond the symbolism of what Sligo is going to do, and make a difference for women throughout the country, in other parts of the United States and Canada, I would say that probably a plebiscite of all Sligo members would have a stronger . . . base to say, "2,000 people supported this measure."

However, let me tell you how I am going to vote tonight, if we proceed with this. And nobody has said much about how they're going to vote. I'm going to vote for it, regardless of the strategic element of what happens next and what do we do next. I think we think that through as we proceed, and take it from there. I don't think there are any rules of the road on this; there's no parliamentary procedure written on this, and we're going to have to proceed and hope that we have the support of our sisters—sister congregations and our—the conferences, both the Columbia Union and the Potomac Conference, and quite frankly I think that we need to be thinking strategically beyond what happens here tonight.

Nancy Lamoreaux: Thank you, Beverly, for your comments. I am an employee of the Columbia Union and have worked there for 10 years. I am a director of a department; I direct the computer department—a little unusual for this church. I have consistently been affirmed, backed, and assured of a job in that office. I was hired for my ability as a woman, and for what I could do. Sex played no role in my job at the Columbia Union.

I am very proud of the Columbia Union and of where I work. I am very proud of the way that they affirm women in our office. I believe in my heart that the Columbia Union will stand behind this decision at Sligo church because they have stood behind me for 10 years and helped me to achieve [my] goals and have looked at my ability regardless of my gender.

Karen Simons: I want to validate what the young woman said in the front row here. I don't know what generation I am—somewhere between X and the yuppies—but my family is deeply rooted in the Adventist Church. My great grandfather converted my grandmother, my mother was born and raised an Adventist, and I have been raised in the Adventist Church as well. My grandmother is 88 years old and is disappointed that women do not have a fair opportunity in this church, and actually, if she lived here or were a member here, she would be here tonight, supporting it. She probably wouldn't speak, because she's shy, but she'd be supporting it. And I look at the church and at my future: Were I to have children, would I want to raise my children in an organiza-

tion that openly discriminates against people based on their gender? To be quite frank with you, I would not. While I've been raised an Adventist, and I do think it is the right religion—whatever that means—based on what I've read, I could not, in all good conscience, raise my children in a place where they would be discriminated against based on their gender.

Roy Branson: The parallels between race and this question are dramatic, it seems. The question of equal treatment of people of different races is the same principle as equal treatment of people of different genders. I had a chance to talk to an E. O. Jones who, when I was at Selma, was a pastor of a black church and also a teacher . . . in that area. He led, literally, the first march of teachers in the State of Alabama in a civil rights march, and he did it with two crutches.

I called him when I got back from Utrecht, and I asked him, "What do you think of what Sligo is thinking of doing?" This is what he said I could say. He said, "I don't see how women can be ordained as elders and not ordained as pastors. They shouldn't be treated as half a person, but as full persons. I don't see why we shouldn't go forward. Some group must be a Martin Luther King on this issue; the time is now to get rid of this issue and get on to finishing the Lord's work."

Now I hope that when we vote this, we realize that this is not just a question of policy; it's a question of basic, fundamental principles. And unity that really lasts and that we can be proud of has to be based on fundamental principles—moral principles such as justice.

This is suggesting that, rather than going through the cycle—please, asking, waiting, and then being told No, which has been going on for about 20 years in this church—Sligo church is saying, "We're not going to get away from the request, but we're going to do the one thing that we can do." That will make a statement, and we can, as was said before, invite other churches to join us.

We have to set a date if they are going to take us seriously. So, yes, this says that if the Potomac Conference or the union does not go forward, Sligo church, if there are women who are ready to go forward, willing to go forward, qualified to go forward, *we will go forward*—and also ask.

Patricia Nash: I didn't think this would affect me this way, but I feel very emotional tonight. I'm nervous; I'm excited. I think there's a great sense of feeling like we're finally taking a step forward, so I hope that we do that. As most of you know, my background [is in public relations]. I think we'd make the greatest impact and send the greatest message to people if we knew the Potomac Conference would go for this, that the Columbia Union Conference, that even the women who we're talking about would be willing for this to happen, but I think none of those questions are important. I think it's time to vote what we know is just and right, and I don't think there's a wrong time for that to start.

Bronwyn McQuistan: I speak to you tonight from three different aspects of my life. Number one, as a woman who has spent eight years in ministry in hospital chaplaincy; two, as a woman who was an observer for the past three years of other women in ministry and the dilemma they face due to a power and authority struggle amongst many of our Adventist Church leaders; and number three, I speak tonight as a staff person at the GC Session in Utrecht, where I sat through the three-and-a-half hour discussion.

Where do I find myself after all that? I find myself as part of a church which thrusts me into a religious dichotomy: (a) I learn from my Bible that I am a child of God, a precious jewel, beautiful, a delight, a joy, and that I should celebrate and rejoice in this . . . in God's creation of me as a woman; (b) I learn, from my church, that if I don't have male genitalia, my calling by God to the gospel ministry is not good enough to be affirmed in the same way as the men of my church.

For me, the ordination of women is not just a status symbol, but a recognition of the gift and calling God has given me. Not to ordain women is to betray our church's heritage.

What I saw in Utrecht was a live portrayal of female abuse. One division leader literally pulled his wife out of her seat, to the microphone, and he spoke for her. And as I watched the tears glisten in her eyes on the screen that was right in

Sligo congregation and visitors respond to Senior Pastor Rudy Torres' homily

front of me, I saw the pain, and I wanted to say to him, "If you treat her like this at a General Conference Session, how do you treat her at home?" Actions speak louder than words.

The document presented tonight has helped restore my faith in a world church which, until now, has trivialized ordination and made it a symbol of maleness.

Ralph Thompson: [Unintelligible] by the way, that person was *not* a commissioned leader; he was a layperson from South America. . . .

[End of Cassette No. 1]

. . . to do this; and the Potomac Conference and the Columbia Union Conference were to endorse it, then they will have to be answerable, of course, to the North American Division and the General Conference. But if they don't, Sligo church is saying to whole world body of churches, "We are on our own. We are going to defy every single church manual and working policy of the General Conference that binds the entire world church together." Because this issue you're dealing with is a world issue, laid down in our policies.

I'd like to say I'm a loyal member of Sligo; I'm preaching—speaking as a Sligo member, and I rarely—while I may hold sympathies, and my hope in God for women's ordination—I think this action is premature. I think it is *not* really well thought out as to its ramifications and, down the road, it will be splitting the church that could be held, yes, in rebellion, and then some of us have to make decisions whether or not we belong to a rebellious church—where our membership will go. This thing has further implications than many of us think here, right now, sitting here tonight. So I personally, Brother Chairman, will have to vote against it. I'm in favor of women's ordination, I want you to know. But this procedure, of Sligo by itself—ordination is not a local church thing. It doesn't belong to us. I will have to vote against it on that basis, and I know that this question is going to be something that is going to become quite a challenge, quite a problem, first of all for the conferences and the unions and the North American Division, and of course the General Conference is back there, but first of all its going to be a real division challenge, and I just want to make that statement tonight.

Jonathan Scriven: As a member of the aforementioned Generation X, I know that we oftentimes get a bad rap in the press, et cetera. But whether or not you like our generation, we are the future of this church, and as much as I appreciate the comments from today's leadership, I would like to now just make a comment . . . as someone who could be in the future of the church.

Our generation doesn't understand this concept, because to us equality is something that we just have grown up with—it's something that just comes naturally to us, and while I agree with what Shana said earlier, I appreciate how we are now discussing this, I would just like to add that discussing it is not enough. The generation that I belong to does not have a very strong foundation in this church, and if we want to have a bright future, not only is it important to discuss this, but it is vital that we pass this resolution, if we want this strong future.

Ben Miller: I'd just like to say I'm only 14 but it really saddens me to think that this even has to be an issue. I agree a lot with [Jonathan Scriven] about how our generation has grown up with equality . . . as something in our homes every day. I don't think that whether this ordination of women passes or not will conclude whether I'll leave the church; I mean, I'm going to stay. But I think that one of the main objectives that we stand for in this church is equality, and that we live for the love of Jesus Christ, and do you think even though Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples, do you think he would, you know, stop and not wash the feet of a woman disciple? I mean, which would Jesus choose . . . ? And it's really important to me and I just want you to know that it makes it a whole lot easier to think about revolving my life and my career around the Adventist Church knowing that this is something that is being brought up. So thank you.

Marianne Scriven: You know I'm the choir director here at Sligo, so I bring my handy hymnal wherever I go. But seriously, there's a hymn in here that came to me during dinner tonight and I want to share it with you because it speaks so relevantly to this issue. It's number 606 in your books. I'm sure you all know which one it is. Let me just read part of it:

"Once to every man and nation/ [Once to every congregation]/ Comes the moment to decide,/In the strife of truth with falsehood,/ For the good or evil side;

"Some great cause, God's new Messiah,/Offering each the bloom or blight,/And the choice goes by forever/'Twixt that darkness and that light.

"By the light of burning martyrs,/ Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track,/ Toiling up new Calvarys ever/With the cross that turns not back.

"New occasions teach new duties,/Time makes ancient good uncouth;/They must upward still and onward,/Who would keep abreast of truth."

So, I feel like the decision we're about to make here tonight does not have to do with policy, it does not have to do with politics, it doesn't have to do with prece-

dent—none of those "P" words. It has to do simply with principle. So I hope you'll join with me in voting for the *principle* of justice.

Bert Haloviak: I'd like to speak in favor of the resolution. I would hesitate on the issue were it not for the Ellen White counsel. It was Ellen White that resolved this issue about 100 years ago. Two of her statements are found in the proposed resolution. She also said this: "This issue is not for men to decide; the Lord has decided it. You are to do your duty to the women who labor in the gospel."

Actually, we have a very strong heritage of local action taken to resolve significant issues. In 1855, the Battle Creek local church—*local church*—held Bible studies and concluded that the Sabbath began at sundown, not at 6:00 p.m. as it had been kept for the previous nine years. It's not a light issue that was settled by that Battle Creek church. I have a list of a number of others, similar to that, [but] I'm going to pass them by to get it in two minutes.

In the 1870s, the New York State Conference took it upon itself to license a woman as a minister. Other states soon followed. We've already mentioned the 1881 GC Session where three individuals were wrestling with this question. And then in the 1890s, in the Australasian Union—not a GC Session; the Australasian Union—they decided to ordain women as deaconesses. This was in the aftermath of the Ellen White counsel that's quoted in our resolution.

Ellen White's own son ordained several women as deaconesses. The ordination issue is settled. Ellen White has hundreds of statements approving women as ministers. What logic would say that a woman can be ordained as a deaconess, as an elder, but not as a pastor?

In our own day, a Spring Meeting, in 1975, in violation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, voted to allow for the ordination of women as local elders. That policy was not in harmony with the church manual until the manual was modified in 1990.

I have a nice statement from a Miss Opal Stone. It is very interesting. Poor Miss Stone died before she got to see what she was hoping for. She wrote this to the—to the commission that was studying this question in the 1970s. She wrote this to Gordon Hyde. She said, "The idea is abroad that the Biblical Research Committee believes that little feeling of inequity existed among women until quite recently—that it was possibly sparked by women's lib. If that is correct, the committee has been misinformed.

"In earlier years, women held departmental secretary positions at local conferences; they spoke at the worship hour week after week as they visited churches. True, their reception varied. In four years as a local conference Sabbath school secretary, I learned to expect anything, but for the most part I was accepted.

"I recall one church elder who declined to sit on the same platform, but at the close of the service somewhat gruffly said, 'Too bad you aren't a man. But come again, anyway.'

"The sad part of the inequities is that many well-qualified women have left denominational employ because of it. And some of them kept going all of the way out of the church. Their loss? Yes. But a loss to the church, too.

"God used a woman to guide this denomination, yet women have had a hard time in the church. It seems peculiar.

"I've been retired for some years. I have no bitterness; I was as fairly treated as the rest of the women. But I would like to see the present generation of women workers have a better chance. Please don't believe that women were asleep all the past years, and have suddenly awakened."

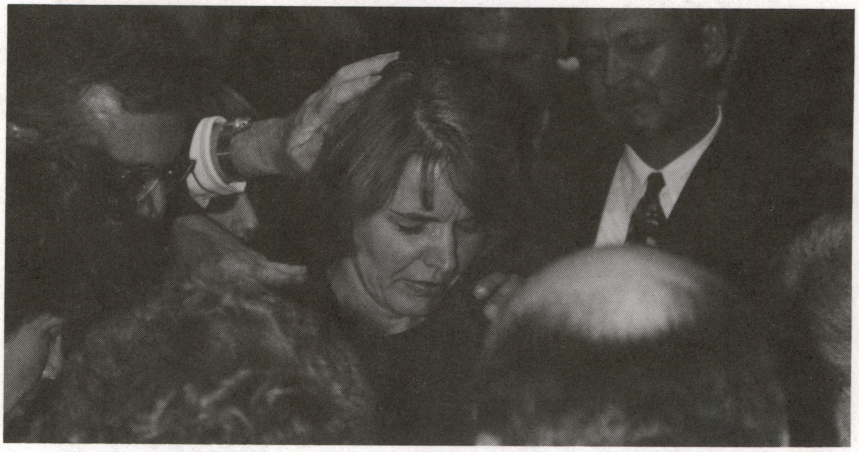
Opal died in 1973, at the age of 79, before her hopes were realized. Thank you.

E. G. Moses: This is my Adventist background, or upbringing. I raise my hand; I wait.

You know, one of the major reasons . . . I am an Adventist, not a Catholic, is because Adventist [members] *can* follow the conviction of their conscience. And tonight, I am glad to hear a church—a vast number of you— . . . speaking with conviction on principles of justice and equality.

Whichever way the vote goes, I intend to remain an Adventist; I intend to pay tithe to this church. But I am glad, finally, that we are beginning to recognize a vote that was really taken at the General

Ordination to gospel ministry of Norma Osborn, associate pastor, Sligo SDA Church



Conference more than 100 years ago. . . . What Sligo church is doing is being faithful to our legacy of our forefathers, and I strongly support this recommendation.

Bryan Zervos: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm reading from Psalm 133, for those of you that have your Bibles with you: "How good and how pleasant it is to live together as brothers in unity. It is like fragrant oil poured on the head and falling over the beard; Aaron's beard, when the oil runs down over the collar of his vestments. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on the mountains of Zion. There the Lord bestows his blessing: life forevermore."

Not a soul in this room denies that unity is a biblical principle. Indeed, unity is an ideal that should be taught and even nurtured. But like everything else that is human, unless unity is undergirded by justice, unless unity is holding the hand of fairness, and unless unity, my dear brothers and sisters, is redeemed, it only becomes an ecclesiastical club by which we bludgeon the members of the body of Christ.

The gospels repudiate this kind of unity. Let's vote Yes this evening in support of this resolution.

Dorita Boulden: I don't want my membership in the church to be discussed tonight. That's not the issue here; the issue is, How can I stand in God's way and prohibit his ordination of whoever he chooses and refuse to recognize, in front of my peers, in front of people I work with, the people that I witness to, the people I'm in church with—do I want to stand before my Father when he comes the second time and say, "The church told me that I couldn't recognize this woman's gift; the church told me that I couldn't do this. An organizational structure stood between me and what I believed. You showed me that this individual, regardless of the color of their skin, regardless of their reproductive organs, regardless of any other reason, you ordained them; you've given them gifts; I recognize them."

That is the *only* issue we are discussing here—the only administrative issue that stands between a woman pastor and whether or not she gets a card, is her eligibility for certain jobs at the General Conference, certain jobs at the union level, and certain jobs at the conference level. I am not willing to stand before my Maker and deny what he puts before me.

Bob Visser: Now, we're going to vote by secret ballot.

. . .

I've been given the results of the vote, and I've been assured that the vote was counted three times by different people to assure accuracy. The vote count is, in favor, 138, and opposed, 21. So, the motion did carry.

McClure Suggests Women Be Commissioned, Not Ordained

August 3, 1995

Church Pastors and Administrators
North American Division

Dear Colleague in Ministry:

Subject: Gender-inclusive Ordination

On July 5 the world church voted on the North American Division proposal that each division be permitted to decide, within its own territory, whether ordination to the gospel ministry could be gender-inclusive. Although I was praying for a positive outcome, as you know, the motion was defeated.

The question I wish to address today is, What now? What should be our reaction to this vote of the world church in session? Please let me set before you some important observations.

1. From the beginning of the discussion, I have said that North America is a loyal part of the world church and that, whatever the outcome of the vote, I would do everything in my power to see that this issue did not compromise that position. I want to invite you to help me honor that commitment because you, too, are part of this world-wide family.

As a spiritual leader in God's church, I want to urge you to do everything in your power to keep us walking together. There may be those who would challenge the session vote, as individuals or as a group, and attempt to move ahead of the world church without its approval. My appeal today is that we exercise all of the Spirit-led persuasiveness at our command so that this does not happen. We are a *world* movement and we must remain so. If not, we will fragment into simply a cluster of national churches or a consortium of loosely knit independent conferences or congregations.

2. We need to keep the issue of biblical ordination in perspective and not make of it more than Scripture does. In his very helpful book (*Myth and Truth*, 1990, LLU Press) V. N. Olsen, former president of Loma Linda University, reminds us that in the Roman Catholic Church those who are ordained "are endowed with supernatural power to administrate the sacraments, which in turn by the very act . . . confers supernatural grace to the recipient . . ." (p. 121). This is not and has never been the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Historically we have

believed that ordination was a denominational recognition of the call to ministry and did not confer any kind of spiritual endowment or quality (to use the term used by Ellen White).

Olsen continues, "For most people ordination by the laying on of hands is taken for granted, and it is therefore a surprise to find that the rite is not so clearly and directly defined in the New Testament as expected. . . . The word 'ordain' does not appear in the Greek New Testament at all for the ministry, and in most recent translations the word 'appoint' is most commonly used" (p. 148).

The King James Version of the Bible translates more than 20 Greek and Hebrew words as "ordain," each of which has its own nuance of meaning. My burden here is that we not elevate ordination to a mystical and non-biblical level.

3. We have agreed throughout our history that ordination to the gospel ministry is part of a process by which the world church acknowledges those who have sensed the calling of God. This process was decided on by the church as a whole. A pastor who has achieved a certain level of training, experience, and effectiveness is examined by local conference administration. That name is then brought to the conference executive committee for recommendation on to the union conference executive committee, where authorization for ordination occurs. Only when these steps are taken does the ordination proceed, and only then is the pastor given the appropriate credentials. As this process is followed, then it can be said that the individual has been ordained to the gospel ministry.

On the other hand, a commissioning or dedicatory service, even with the laying on of hands, is biblical and affirming of the call to ministry (see Acts 13:2-4 and *Review and Herald*, July 9, 1895), yet does not violate the spirit or the letter of the vote of the General Conference session.

If you saw the video report which I sent to all of the churches directly from Utrecht, you know that we are initiating dialog about ways to affirm the women in our division whom God has called to ministry. You will hear more about some specific initiatives after the North American year-end meeting in Battle Creek in a few weeks. Meanwhile, I am asking that you be a bridge builder, that you marshal all of the gifts in your church and focus them on mission, and that you join me in praying that God will help us through this very delicate time. As painful as this issue is to many, we must not allow it to splinter our unity or divert our mission.

Thank you for your faithfulness and your focus.

Very sincerely,

A. C. McClure
President
North American Division

Scriven to Potomac: Prove SDA Passion for What Is Right

August 9, 1995

Elder Herbert H. Broeckel, President
Potomac Conference of SDA

Dear Elder Broeckel:

I am a member of Sligo church and a member, as you know, of the Potomac Conference Committee. I have very strong feelings about the need to prove to energetic Adventists, particularly those of the second and third generation, that our church is fully open to the creative guidance of the Holy Spirit and truly passionate about what is right and true.

I look forward to meeting with you and our other colleagues in late August. Meanwhile, I am thinking long and hard about the proposition from Sligo church that we will be asked to consider. Potentially, there are four candidates for the ordination the congregation is asking us to authorize. They are each friends of mine and each is gifted. Esther Knott and Norma Osborn, pastors at Sligo; Penny Shell, a chaplain at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital; and Kendra Haloviak, a CUC religion teacher, are in my mind and on my heart. Understandably, they each have mixed feelings about everything that is going on. But what they all would love is a public affirmation of their ministry that includes the endorsement of the Potomac and Columbia Union conferences.

Because I want to be a support to them, I am sharing with you a document entitled "The Sligo Action: Talking Points." I've written it just for our committee, although at a later date, perhaps after revisions you may suggest, I will share it more widely.

Let us pray for one another as we approach our meeting at Blue Ridge.

Sincerely,

Chuck Scriven, President
Columbia Union College

Talking Points

Doesn't the Bible itself give women second place to men?

Yes, it does—in places. The Bible is an inspired story, but a story of a people moving forward (and sometimes backward) in the knowledge

of their saving God. This fact means you can quote Scripture to back up slavery, say, or the stoning of rebellious young men. The key to the complex challenge of interpretation is Jesus. Jesus is the one and only "exact imprint of God's very being" (Hebrews 1:1-3). And Jesus' mission, against the spirit of his age, was to obliterate in-group/out-group distinctions. He welcomed women as the full equals of men (Luke 10:38-42).

Wasn't the biblical priesthood limited to men?

That was the case, on the whole, before Christ. But the journey of the people of God led up to Christ, and after Christ the whole community of believers become priests. That is why Luther, alluding to 1 Peter 2, was so vigorous in affirming "the priesthood of all believers."

Isn't the General Conference God's "highest authority" on earth?

Both the writings of Ellen White and the actions of the General Conference itself declare this to be so. As for Ellen White, however, she, in 1901, clarified her views by saying the General Conference is the voice of God only when its policies agree with Christian principle. It "ought to be" the voice of God, but asserting this when "wrong principles are cherished" is "almost blasphemy" (Ms. 37, 1901, April 1, 1901).

Didn't Ellen White oppose the ordination of women?

She believed that God prepares both women and men to be "pastors to the flock" *(Review and Herald,* January 15, 1901), and said that women who minister should themselves be "set apart" by "prayer and laying on of hands" *(Review and Herald* , July 9, 1895).

Won't ordination cause still further division in the church?

Division is certain and irreparable as long as official policy upholds discrimination against half the human race. Healing of that division is painful, like surgery or strong medicine. But the only hope for healing is that the healing process should begin. The equal and enthusiastic affirmation of women pastors is essential to that beginning.

Wouldn't it be best to wait?

There is no reason to wait and every reason to make haste. Utrecht shattered the hope that church governance at the highest level would affirm Christ's vision of equality. The danger now is, first, that the energy for justice already seeping out of the church will soon stream away in a torrent, and, second, that indifference to the Adventist community itself will mount with every day that passes. More and more people, especially in the second and third generation, and especially among the young, do not care to be part of an organization claiming to be the Remnant yet holding on to a policy of discrimination against women. What the vote in Utrecht revealed is the absolute necessity of grassroots initiative on behalf of women. In the long run this initiative, like yeast in dough, will transform the entire church.

Shouldn't we at least wait until the North American Division year-end meetings in October?

According to policy and tradition, the division has no role whatever in ordaining any pastor, chaplain, or teacher of religion. If the division were to grant "permission" to other bodies to ordain women, that permission would be as dubious, relative to General Conference action, as initiative taken at the grassroots level. But what is more to the point, NAD initiative (NAD "permission") is unlikely. The voted action will hang heavy on division shoulders, in part because the division simply *is* the General Conference in North America. Further, delegates to the year-end meetings, coming from different places with different histories concerning the ministry of women, will likely disagree about solutions.

If neither the Potomac Conference nor the Columbia Union decide to grant a credential for ordained ministry. won't these ordinations be "meaningless"?

To imply that these two church entities will shrink from courageous action is rash. Both executive committees show great interest in equality for women. Both deplore timidity and indecisiveness on matters of Christian principle. What is more, both the Potomac and Columbia Union conferences have leaders who are sensitive to moral initiative and have no interest in climbing the organizational ladder.

Yes, but won't ordination of the proposed women candidates be "meaningless"?

Handwringing de-energizes. If Christ is risen, credentials will come. That being so, our business is to move beyond pessimism by intensifying our advocacy for women and beginning immediately to support and assist members and leaders of the two Executive Committees on their journey to moral courage and right action.

Again, address the question: Won't the ordinations be meaningless without the credential?

Even if this were more than a stalling tactic, it is not persuasive. Would a baptism be "meaningless" if, for political or other reasons, the participants could not receive certificates? The Reformation pioneers who revived biblical practice by undergoing adult baptism got no piece of paper. Nor did the Ethiopian baptized by Philip, yet he "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). The situation for women is as dramatic and revolutionary as the situation for biblical and Reformation Christians. To stifle joy by

telling women, "The service will be nothing without the card," is unbiblical and unadmirable.

Yes, but . . . ?

It's true that despite every effort of persuasion, the Potomac and Columbia Union executive committees could refuse this moment of destiny. But the service at Sligo would still be the *most important and most jubilant ordination in the history of Adventism*. Remember that before American blacks moved up to the country club, they moved up to the front of the bus. Rosa Parks, the woman who took this giant step for her people, was hugely important for civil rights. Those ordained at Sligo will be hugely important for women in ministry. And although the credential matters, and must be fought for, the service of public affirmation matters most. Waiting for the credential may guarantee, after all, that it will never come.

Suppose opponents of the Sligo proposition say, "Don't do this now because we men will soon eliminate the 'ordained minister' credential and take the same credential as you women"?

First, don't bet on "soon." Twenty-five years of dilly-dallying is a fact. And that fact matters because Adventists with leadership ability are, as you read this, slipping out the back door like rush-hour commuters leaving the subway. Second, this would itself challenge the decision--at least, the spirit of the decision--that was made in Utrecht. Relative to General Conference authority, it has no advantage whatever. Third, since the women candidates at Sligo already have the "commissioned minister" credential, if that credential is good enough after all, the whole argument that Sligo's service won't matter without the card simply collapses.

Shouldn't we at the very least—somehow, for some reason—choose some later date than September 23?

Again, why? The Annual Council in October will be, given the changes made in Utrecht, more conservative than ever, and opposition to North Americans living by their consciences will increase, not decrease. What is more, both energy for justice and commitment to Adventism will continue to dissipate in North America unless bold action—taken now, not indefinite months or years from now—ignites new hope. And for that to happen, our witness must be timely as well as courageous. The startling moral valor of the American civil rights movement created a new context. Within that context, the president and the U. S. Congress successfully legislated new levels of justice for Americans. The success came about because Martin Luther King and his colleagues, though facing pressure from every side to "wait . . . wait . . . wait," respectfully persisted. Because the time for Adventist action on behalf of women will never be as ripe as it is right now, we must not dawdle. We must proceed.

Bert Haloviak Insists that Policy Must Not Replace Morality

August 21, 1995

Dear Potomac Conference Committee Member:

Until the recent Sligo business meeting, which I believe was blessed by the Church in heaven, my approach to the ordination of women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been more academic than "evangelistic."

I had done the research on the question both in the 19th-century and 20th-century sources. I had explanations about how lack of ordination of women caused them to lose the leadership positions they had held before the 1920s. I knew how tax questions forced SDA women into a two-track ministerial system in the 1970s. I had studied the issues relating to the Potomac Conference-GC confrontation that led to the Potomac capitulation to GC pressure in the mid-1980s.

Despite the policy manipulations of the 1970s, the evidence from the writings of Ellen White has been so overwhelming that I could hardly consider the issue to be in question. In addition, the evidence from Scripture, when closely analyzed, is even more compelling.

So why am I addressing you now?

Because I as a member of the Sligo Church believe the Sligo action is crucial. In my opinion it offers a biblical solution to this question.

Policy has come to replace morality on this question and this shows how completely nullified Ellen White's ministry has become. Ellen White was fully aware of such a danger.

In 1889 she affirmed, "It has become habit to pass laws that do not always bear the signature of heaven." [Ellen White references will be supplied upon request.]

In 1890, she reflected upon a previous GC session and said, "The enemy took possession of minds and their judgment was worthless, their decisions were evil, for they did not have the mind of Christ."

That same year she also said, "I do not expect to be at your General Conference, I would rather run the other way."

By 1898 she reported that "it has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God."

And in 1901 she observed that

working upon wrong principles nullified the GC as being the voice of God.

I don't believe any administrator who has been in touch with this issue since the 1970s will affirm that it has been handled in harmony with the morality that Ellen White called for.

Given that situation, I firmly believe that the Lord has led us, perhaps against our presuppositions, back to the Scriptures for the local church resolution of the question.

Where in the Scripture does it tell us that the *Church Manual* or *Working Policy* or Conferences or Unions or General Conferences deal with the question of ordination?

In contrast to that position, we can observe many examples where local areas handled such questions in the church of Ellen White's day.

In the 1870s, it was the New York State Conference that took it upon itself to license a woman as a minister. Other states soon followed.

It was in the 1890s within the Australasian Union that SDA women for the first time were ordained to local church offices. That was in the aftermath of the statement of Ellen White that is quoted in the Sligo resolution.

Ellen White's own son, William C. White, ordained several women in that local area and it was apparently the first time in SDA history that anyone had done so. And this was without the approval of a General Conference session action.

Why is not the ordination issue settled? Ellen White has dozens of statements approving women as ministers. What logic would say that a woman can be ordained as a deaconess and elder but not as a pastor?

Ellen White should not be used to resolve questions of doctrine. But this is not a doctrinal question. Throughout Adventist history, Ellen White has had authority in the areas of practical church policy.

As she said in the 1890s concerning equality of salary for women who labored in the gospel, "This question is not for men to settle. The Lord has settled it."

I hope you, as a member of the conference committee, will support the resolution approved by the Sligo church.

Sincerely,

Bert Haloviak

Kendra Haloviak: Equality for Pastors is Equality for Women

August 22, 1995

Dear Potomac Conference Committee Member,

In the past I have hesitated to speak publicly on the ordination of women issue, believing that concentrating on my own ministry would be my best witness. However, I must share a few thoughts at this important time. I share because the very ministry in which I have participated for six years—ministry especially focused on young adults who have been or are part of Adventist communities—is in jeopardy.

Prior to the General Conference Session, I wrote a letter to Elder Folkenberg that included the following: "It is challenging enough to minister to young adults (and adults) who have left our church out of apathy. How do we minister to those who leave out of conviction?" I continue to ask that question. Right now our conference has a chance to offer an answer.

On August 1 Sligo church voted in business session a service that would uphold justice and equality. Such a business session best mirrors the way that the New Testament church operated. I hope that the Potomac Conference sees the wisdom of this approach; that the committee endorse the granting of full ordination credentials to qualified women. Otherwise we are left with a flawed policy for ministerial candidates that has placed women and men on different tracks since the 1970s. Policy must always be secondary to biblical principles.

Young adults are eager to see an end to discrimination and inequality in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The vote at Utrecht was not only a vote against the 34 women pastors in North America who are eligible for ordination, it was a vote against every Adventist woman and girl. Currently our church has a policy that says every woman and girl is unequal to every man and boy. Such a policy must be challenged. Any action that doesn't directly challenge the Utrecht vote is suspect.

Last week I received a note from a young woman currently completing her undergraduate degree from one of our colleges. She is a potential Adventist leader. In many ways, she is already a leader. Committed, energetic, thoughtful, her presence is a gift to our church. After she heard of the Sligo congregation's decision to celebrate the ordination service for qualified women on September 23, she wrote me the following: "I wanted to write again and say how thankful and relieved I am that some Seventh-day Adventist members and leaders have finally found the strength to act upon their convictions. I assume (and hope) you will be flying back home and will be ordained on the 23rd."

Many Adventists have been encouraged by the action voted by

the local church at Sligo. I hope that the Conference Committee affirms the decision; seeing that principles from Scripture are more important than policies.

We who believe that Jesus is coming again can embrace that hope anew. We can make our hope concrete by treating each other equally now.

Prayers are with you on August 27.

Sincerely,

Kendra J. Haloviak

Doing What is Right is Doing What is Wise

August 24, 1995

Dear Potomac Conference Committee Member:

In 1984 the Potomac Conference found itself in a remarkably similar position to the one it faces today. On May 16, 1984, the conference postponed implementation of its own action granting women ministerial licenses "until after Annual Council, 1984," in order, the conference said, "to give the North American Division appropriate time to study Potomac's concern for women in ministry." Three months later, on August 16, the Potomac Conference "tabled" its action granting women the same ministerial licenses then being given to men.

Eleven years later, to the month, women pastors in the Potomac Conference remain unordained and still do not have the same ministerial licenses granted to men. Eleven years later, some members of the Potomac Executive Committee are members of the present executive committee. Eleven years later, Potomac is still being told to wait until after Annual Council and the North American Division's year-end meetings. Why? To give the brethren *more* time to study what to do about women in ministry.

As a member of the board of Sligo Church, a leader—for some 20 years—of an active Sabbath school class, and a member who has been blessed by the ministry of women pastors, I plead with you to complete what the Potomac Conference began over a decade ago: Do the right thing by ordaining women now to the gospel ministry and granting them the same licenses given to male pastors.

At this moment in our church's history, both the creation of a North American Division as a genuine community of conviction, and continued support for the world church depend on the Potomac Conference ordaining women now.

Why so? *Because Utrecht has happened.* The recent vote on ordination of women was the most widely publicized action ever taken at a General Conference Session. For more than 20 years, ordination of women has been discussed and debated by North American members. With this background, the members who provide much of the institutional and lay leadership of the North American church, the professionals who give a great deal of the financial support for the denomination, many of the young adults who comprise the next generation of denominational leaders, all watched what the General Conference would do on this issue of fairness. The action at Utrecht devastated all of these groups, including some of the church's most loyal supporters—those who feel keenly the contrast between the community applauding them for treating women fairly in their offices and denominational leaders preventing them from treating women equally in their church. The vote on ordination of women at this General Conference Session was not simply inconvenient; it was tragic.

Because the basic issues were well known, and the actions of the 1995 General Conference Session publicized as never before, all halfway proposals to avoid ordaining women as ministers of the gospel perpetuates the moral insult inflicted at Utrecht. Maybe a decade ago talk by leaders of the North American Division urging explorations of how to interpret Scripture—instead of actually proceeding to ordain women—could have sounded sincere. Not now; not by a membership that has seen with their own eyes how theologians have managed to argue for two decades over interpretations of scripture relevant to ordination of women. To refuse now to ordain those women who are already qualified, is a little like Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War, refusing to declare slaves to be citizens, equal to their former masters, and instead recommending that it was time to redefine citizenship.

Similarly, talk of reducing ordination from its present "Roman Catholic" understanding to something else, which can then be given to both men and women, might have been persuasive at some initial stage in the discussion. Not now; not after the leaders of the church plunged the denomination into this divisive debate precisely because ordination was too precious to give to women. *Utrecht has happened.* Those who *now* argue that instead of ordaining women, we must adopt new definitions of ordination cannot help but sound as though they have accepted the premise of Utrecht: Full ordination to the gospel ministry is

too important to give to women.

Finally, assurance at this stage—after 20 years of discussion—that some sort of ordination will come "after the year-end meetings," or "maybe in three months," or "after the 1996 year-end meetings," simply rings hollow. *Utrecht has happened.* For the leadership who were a part of bringing about the vote in Utrecht to now say "trust us," simply further undermines their credibility. What is more Roman Catholic—the ordination service, or the refusal to treat women in ministry as equal to men? Will the world church be fooled by any clever new redefinitions not being a violation of actions by the General Conference in session? Is a consensus likely to be achieved among men throughout the North American Division to receive a license or credential that doesn't mean as much as their older colleagues received? Are the Potomac Conference and Columbia Union going to be regarded as significantly more in harmony with the world church if they proceed with some redefinition of ordination than if they proceed to grant women the same licenses and ordination services men now receive?

Unity cannot be forced. Unity is often preserved within complex communities (like the United States and the Seventh-day Adventist Church) by permitting diversity. The General Conference in Session was never asked to vote on whether Europeans could wear rings, on whether Vietnamese could eat shrimp, on whether Germans or Koreans could bear arms, on whether Adventist church school teachers could be paid by African governments. When discussion of ordination of women began more than 20 years ago, some idealistic souls no doubt hoped that the entire world church would treat women equally to men in the gospel ministry. That goal died at the 1990 General Conference in Indianapolis. The hope then shrank to equal treatment within the North American Division. That was crushed at Utrecht. Now, there are those who oppose the Columbia Union, or the Potomac Conference ordaining men and women equally.

Utrecht has happened. Therefore, some say, women pastors should not be treated equally anywhere in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This understanding of unity permits Adventists to kill for conscience, but absolutely prohibits Adventists treating women as equals in ministry. Taking ordination of women to a General Conference Session is the rash and reckless act that has threatened the unity of the church. Unity can only be preserved if those centers that wish to ordain women as gospel ministers are welcome to do so.

Ordination to gospel ministry of Kendra Haloviak, assistant professor of religion, Columbia Union College

An Adventist Church born with a tradition of fair treatment of blacks and whites, leading to full equality among all races within the gospel ministry, must not turn its back on justice, fairness, and equality among men and women. To do so would be to violate who we are as a church.

And why so desperately avoid doing the right thing? Doing what is right is also doing what is wise and practical. If we act as we know we ought to act, and ordain women to the gospel ministry now, we will be astonished at the energy that will be released. At the church business meeting at Sligo, one young person after another said that the resolution revived their faith in the church. A prominent lay person who had just two weeks earlier argued for withholding tithe as a form of protest, made a speech emphasizing that Sligo acting to ordain women meant that he would happily increase his financial support of the Adventist Church. Performing an ordination service at Sligo is the moderate, positive alternative to the radical action of withholding tithe.

After Sligo adopted its resolution, I heard expressions of despair turn to joy. One professor at an Adventist college exclaimed, "I'll be there!" Another said he had already told his son, headed for Yale Law School, about Sligo. "I told him not to give up on the church just yet, there was still hope." A young Adventist lawyer in Boston, who had refused lay leadership roles because he despaired of being able to convince "my generation" to become enthusiastic about the Adventist Church, said, "I'm flying down the 23rd."

Unfortunately, *Utrecht has happened.* More than ever, if we are to have a vibrant Adventist Church in North America, it is imperative that

the Potomac Conference lead by doing the right thing. I plead with you to ordain women now to the gospel ministry and grant them the same license that you give to male pastors. Only through such acts of conviction can North American Adventism continue to attract the morally sensitive; only through such acts of conviction can Adventism radiate what it truly means to be a community of conscience.

Cordially yours,

Roy Branson
Senior Research Fellow
Kennedy Institute of Ethics

Southeastern Women Pastors: Use the Word *Ordination*

August 24, 1995

To the SECC Conference Administration & the Women Pastors in Potomac Conference:

Many have spoken on behalf of women pastors regarding ordination, but with the numerous proposals for ordination currently on the table we feel a need to express ourselves.

After meeting today, although differing in detail, we have reached a consensus on the following points at this time:

1. Each of us feels a commitment to continue in ministry regardless of official ordination. However, ordination supports and acknowledges in a tangible way our ministry to our congregations. In following God's call to ministry, we would hope to have the church's spiritual support of God's gift.

2. Our commitment to ministry mandates our advocating equality—for the sake of our ministry, for the hope of the young people in our churches and to be true to the gospel that Christ modeled.

3. With regard to ordination itself, we feel that the following are important:

a. Something needs to happen very soon. Time is of the essence. Continued postponement is detrimental to us and to the future of our church. The church needs to move forward to other things, and a spark of hope is needed now. The window of opportunity mandates immediate action.

b. The word *ordained* needs to be included in whatever service occurs and credentials issued. Our local congregations and other denominations understand ordination as the official sanction to function in ministry (see attached, points No. 5 & 6).

c. We are open to many proposals currently being discussed, but feel a need to speak to them and be involved in their implementation.

4. Whatever the outcome, we feel a need for officially organized support and prayer.

5. To help in developing proposals, we have attached the following sheet with which we agree.

We will continue to pray that this issue be resolved in a timely and healing manner. We are continually thankful for a conference and leadership that actively supports our ministry. May God grant us courage to move forward.

Ordination? Or "Other" Credentials?

The idea of changing the name of the credentials we give to ordained persons, as a way to respond to the Utrecht vote, may have merits that have not yet been fully explained.

Problems

But, whatever the merits, such a proposal has serious problems to overcome:

1. It could perpetuate inequality for another 50 years.

That is, unless all NAD men who now possess the "ordination" credential gave it up now, we would have a two-tier system until they died.

2. Inequality could be perpetuated for *longer* than 50 years.

If the new credential were not division-wide, and were issued in a few places such as Potomac and SECC, the inequity (two-tier system) could persist longer. That is, if a particular conference continued to *ordain* ministers and did not adopt the *new* credential for another 20 years (until 2015), the inequity between men and women could persist until all these men died.

3. Men may not be satisfied to receive the new credential.

If only issued in a few places (Potomac and SECC) will men think twice about becoming ministers in those conferences? If some conferences ordain and others don't, the inability for men to get a true ordination credential in some places could become a deterrent in attracting them to ministry there.

4. Men possessing the new credential would have options that females would not have.

If the new credential is not universal from the NAD president down, when males with the new credential transfer to another conference—would not they automatically be "upgraded" to "ordained" status? If men can secure ordination credentials by transferring, *women* ultimately would be the only ones *confined* to receiving the other (second-class) credential.

5. To change the word *ordination* for ministers would affect the

terminology of *ordination* for elders and deacons.

To be consistent, we would need to *commission* deacons and elders. The alternative—to leave the word *ordination* as okay for elders and deacons but NOT ministers—is defenseless.

Today, at least, Seventh-day Adventists DO give women true equality by ordaining them as elders and deacons on the same basis as men. To revoke this policy would be a major loss for women.

6. *Ordination* is the term universally understood by professional groups, the government, and other churches in the U.S. and Canada as referring to clergy authorization.

As a church, we can anticipate on-going confusion and resistance from many quarters if we change this.

Objections

Three objections to creating a new word for *ordination*:

A. The word *ordination* has served Seventh-day Adventists well for 150 years. Since 1851-1853, more than a decade before we became an official denomination, ordination as a way to authorize our ministers has been practiced among us.

B. Prior to women's being considered for ordination no one has been worried whether it was "biblical" or whether it was "Catholic."

To study the theology of ordination and perhaps to adopt a new term may be useful. But Adventists should ordain women *first*.

The two issues should not be confused. (1) Equality of men and women authorized as SDA ministers is one issue. (2) The theology of ordination is a separate issue.

C. Changing terminology seems good to some because it could be argued that the Utrecht vote would not apply to it. This appears to be an appeal to the letter of the law (wording) and not the spirit of the law (which was a fundamental objection to women's equality).

Changing terminology (a policy response) seems to sidestep the underlying *moral* issue of moving the church toward the equality of gender. This is an important task, as the apostles learned when moving the early church to accept the equality of Jew and Gentile.

August 7, 1995

Guy Argues Gospel Creates Imperative to Ordain Women

For Seventh-day Adventists, ordaining women in ministry is a moral imperative that arises from the gospel of Christ, the overall teaching of Scripture, and our own Statement of Fundamental Beliefs: "We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation" (paragraph 13). Even with the recent General Conference vote in Utrecht, we must proceed to ordain women in ministry on the same basis we ordain men: their spiritual experience, their knowledge of Scripture, their competence for the tasks of ministry, and the fruitfulness of their ministry.[1] We must publicly affirm and fully authorize their ministry in and for the church. It is the right thing to do, and we must do it without delay. We have waited long enough.

Ordaining women in ministry is required first of all by Jesus' instruction that we treat others as we want to be treated—a principle of mutuality and respect which "is the law and the prophets," belonging to the very essence of God's will for human relationships (Matt. 7:12). Ordaining women is required secondly by the New Testament principle of spiritual equality in Christ; a person's value, role, or function is not defined by gender any more than it is by socioeconomic status or race (Gal. 3:28). And ordaining women is required thirdly by the leading of the Spirit, calling both women and men to ministry in the church (Acts 2:17, 18).[2]

On the other hand, refusing to ordain a whole group of persons solely because they are not male, and without regard to their calling, ability, experience, and effectiveness, contradicts the inclusiveness of the gospel and expresses a gender prejudice that is morally wrong. Make maleness a prerequisite for ordination is the same kind of moral issue that slavery was a century and a half ago and that racial discrimination was a generation ago. Would it not be a moral issue if the church were to refuse to ordain ministers who were not Caucasian?

Whatever spin is put on it, whatever rationalizing is done to explain it, whatever narrow reading of Scripture is alleged to support it, restricting ordination to men constitutes a public declaration that women ministers are unworthy of ordination, simply and solely because they are women.[3] This is wrong not only in the light of Scripture and of morality, but also in the light of Adventist history, which includes in addition to the extraordinary role of Ellen White in Adventist theology, piety, and mission, the notable contributions that have been made since the 1860s by women evangelists, editors, missionaries, Biblical scholars, teachers, pastors, chaplains, and administrators.[4] And it is wrong in the light of theology, because it turns ordination into a symbol of maleness.[5]

We are becoming increasingly aware that ordination to ministry as a life-long, world-wide vocation and status is biblically and theologically problematic.[6] But this observation should not be used as yet another justification for failing to ordain women. The formal ordination of ministers is the historic and universally-recognized practice of Christian churches, and it has been the consistent practice of Seventh-day Adventists since the 1850s (before there were any organized conferences to authorize it). Until Adventist women in ministry were being considered for ordination, there was no objection to ordination as "unbiblical" or "Catholic." The two issues—the ordination of women in ministry, and the theology and vocabulary of ordination—are related; but they are separate issues, and they should not be confused. We do need to develop our theology of ordination, and we may eventually decide to use different language in a symbolism that better expresses what we mean. But first of all we must ordain the women whose lives and service demonstrate the genuineness of their calling and leading of the Holy Spirit. We must give them the same affirmation, validation, and authorization we have given men in ministry for 140 years. This is the immediate moral imperative for Seventh-day Adventists.

It might seem that by using alternative language such as "dedication," "consecration," or "commissioning," and making corresponding changes in the constitutional documents of various church entities, we could establish the full equality of women and men in ministry without placing ourselves in direct opposition to the General Conference vote in Utrecht. But this strategy has several weaknesses. In the first place, it depends on the same sort of literalism that is used by many to justify their continuing discrimination against women; in the second place, it could easily be regarded as an obvious attempt to evade the spirit of the General Conference decision while complying with its letter; and, in the third place, it fails to confront the moral issue, which lies not in the specific language of the vote in Utrecht but in its fundamental meaning. It was a vote to perpetuate the ecclesiastical superiority of men—a relic of medieval Christian prejudice still venerated by some Adventists, a relic we could and should have discarded 114 years ago, or at least 22 years ago.[7]

The vote in Utrecht against allowing equality for Adventist women in ministry was a grievous error. It constitutes a blot on the history and character of Adventism, and it must be rectified as early, as clearly, and as widely as possible. A proper response to this vote must address its meaning; to try merely to circumvent it verbally and procedurally is to ignore the stark reality that it was morally wrong. What we need to be doing now is not finding ways to affirm women without ordaining them, but finding ways to ordain them without resulting in too much turmoil.

Some practices and structures (such as the distribution of tithe funds, the organization of conferences, and the use of various communication media) are matters of church policy, and they can be settled by a majority vote according to practical and cultural considerations. In such cases we accept decisions even if we disagree with them. But the full equality of women and men in ministry is a matter of moral, spiritual, and theological integrity, in which we must be guided by the teaching of the whole Word of God and the spirit of the gospel of Christ. While we have great respect for a vote of a General Conference session because it is the broadest representation of the community of faith that is our spiritual home,[8] we must live in accordance with the Word and the gospel.[9]

We are painfully aware that in response to the vote in Utrecht, any action in opposition, or even any statement of dissent, may be misinterpreted as disloyalty to the church as a whole. This causes us great personal and spiritual sorrow; but we must live with integrity, motivated by an even higher loyalty to the principles of truth and love on which the church itself is founded. Opposing an action of the General Conference on moral grounds is a far more authentic expression of loyalty to and love for the church than is passive or grumbling compliance. For it is from the church that we have learned to "call sin by its right name" and to "stand for the right though the heavens fall."[10] In obedience to conscience we cannot, by failure to speak or act, participate in the continuing discrimination against Adventist women in ministry.

Since the General Conference Session failed to recognize the moral imperative of ordaining women in ministry, the responsibility for doing so now rests on others, beginning with the largest and most comprehensive organizational structures. The mission of the church will be best served if this responsibility is accepted by the North American Division. If the division fails to accept the responsibility, it will pass to the union and local conferences. If these organizations fail to accept it, the responsibility for ordaining women will pass to the congregations served by women ministers.

Adventist women in ministry are not on trial; they have recognized the leading of the Holy Spirit and demonstrated the reality of their calling. It is the rest of us Advent-

ists—members, men in ministry, church officials, and various committees—who are on trial. Our actions, or our refusal to act, will show whether we too are willing to follow this leading of the Spirit.[11] Ordaining women in ministry is a moral imperative that we must obey without any further delay.

Fritz Guy
La Sierra University
August 1995

1. *Seventh-day Adventists Minister's Manual* (Silver Spring: General Conference Ministerial Association, 1992), pp. 77, 78.

2. The role of women as spiritual leaders and active participants in the communication of the gospel is well attested in the New Testament (Luke 8:1-3; 24:10; Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:1-4, 6, 7, 12; 1 Cor. 16:19; Phil. 4:3). This evidence is part of the overall movement of the New Testament toward gender equality and inclusiveness. It is this trajectory that provides the context within which the theological and practical significance of the well-known Pauline restrictions on the behavior of women (1 Cor. 14:34, 35; 1 Tim. 2:11, 12) are to be determined. As it was in the case of slavery, it is wrong here to make a particular practice into a prescription for every time and place. Nor have these Pauline restrictions been generally interpreted by Adventists as absolute and universal; such an interpretation would, among other things, logically undermine the ministry of Ellen White.

3. No one claims that women are identical to men. There is a wide array of anatomical, physiological, and psychosocial differences that contribute to a person's identity as female or male. The question is whether any of these differences, or all of them combined, in any way justify a refusal of full recognition and affirmation of the Spirit-led ministry of women. The answer is obviously and emphatically no. On the contrary, the differences between women and men show that the fullness of humanity created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) exists in the complementarity of female and male humanness—a complementarity that is essential to the fullness of ministry in the name of God and that can be adequately expressed only by the ordination of women as well as men in ministry.

4. For names and identification, see "Selected List of 150 Adventist Women in Ministry, 1844-1944," compiled by Kit Watts and published in *The Welcome Table: Setting a Place for Ordained Women*, Patricia A. Habada and Rebecca Frost Brillhart, eds. (Langley Park, Md.: TEAM Press, 1995), pp. 359-81.

5. The imagery of "headship" (Eph. 5:23, 24) has no relevance at all to the ministry of women in the church. This metaphor occurs in a discussion of household relationships, not the church. The same passage says explicitly that it is Christ who is the head of the church. In Scripture, ordination to ministry is a recognition of God's call to service and servanthood (Mark 10:42-45), not a conferral of status or authority. Just as "headship" has nothing to do with the church, so ministry has nothing to do with "headship."

6. See, for example, V. Norskov Olsen, *Myth and Truth About Church, Priesthood and Ordination* (Riverside: Loma Linda University Press, 1990), pp. 121-125.

7. At the General Conference session of 1881 a resolution "that females possessing the necessary qualifications to fill that position may, with perfect propriety, be set apart by ordination to the work of the Christian ministry" was introduced, discussed by eight speakers, and then referred to the General Conference Committee (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 20, 1881, p. 392; see also *Signs of the Times*, Jan. 5, 1882, p. 8, which includes this item "among the resolutions adopted," but seems to be mistaken in this regard). Unfortunately, the resolution was never heard of again. Ninety-two years later, in 1973, a conference of scholars appointed by the General Conference was convened at Camp Mohaven in Ohio and concluded that there were no theological obstacles to the ordination of women. But again there was no action. The fact that, so far as is known, no Adventist woman in ministry has ever been formally ordained is a result of the dominance of narrow Biblical exegesis, ecclesiastical tradition, and cultural influence over the truth of the gospel and the spiritual dynamic of Adventist belief.

8. See Ellen White's 1875 description of the General Conference as "the highest authority that God has upon the earth" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 492), as well as her 1909 statement: "When, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body" (ibid., vol. 9, p. 260). The current issue, however, is not a matter of "private independence and private judgment"; it involves decisions of the Southeastern California Conference constituency, the Pacific Union Conference executive committee, and the North American Division.

9. See the resolution adopted by the General Conference session of 1877, reprinted in the most recent (1990) edition of the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, p. 17: "*Resolved*, that the highest authority under God among Seventh-day Adventists is found in the will of the body of that people, as expressed in the decisions of the General Conference when acting within its proper jurisdiction; and that such decisions should be submitted to by all without exception, unless they can be shown to conflict with the word of God and rights of individual conscience." The vote against allowing equality for women in ministry can indeed "be shown to conflict with the word of God and the rights of individual conscience."

10. Ellen G. White, *Education* (Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1903), p. 57.

11. Adventists have long been aware that revelation is progressive, leading to an expanding understanding of spiritual truth (John 16:13). See, for example, Ellen G. White's ringing statement: "Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. . . . This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the

end" (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 706). This progressive understanding of truth was evident in Adventist opposition to the practice of slavery in spite of the fact that there was no clear opposition to slavery in Scripture. It is likewise evident in the growing Adventist recognition that God's Spirit calls, leads, and blesses women in ministry.

Ellen White's Changing Views On GC Session as Voice of God

"I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered" (3T, 492 [1875]).

At the 1888 General Conference Session, an improper spirit nullified the GC as being the voice of God: "I was then informed that at this time it would be useless to make any decision as to positions on doctrinal points, as to what is truth, or to expect any spirit of fair investigation, because there was a confederacy formed to allow of no change of ideas on any point or position they had received any more than did the Jews" (EGW to "My Dear Brethren," c April 1889, B85-1889).

In 1889, Ellen White focused upon the virtue of localized resolution of issues and observed that, at times, GC sessions passed actions not bearing the "signature of heaven": "The question of the great need of the soul deserves in these meetings of the [General] Conference far more attention, and many questions that are tossed into the Conference should never appear, but be worked out in your State Conferences. It has become habit to pass laws that do not always bear the signature of heaven" (EGW, Nov. 4, 1889, Ms. 6-1889).

That next year, Ellen White reflected upon the 1888 GC Session and even allowed the possibility that GC Session decisions could be "evil": [At the 1888 GC Session] "the opinion of men was looked to as the voice of God. The enemy took possession of minds and their judgment was worthless, their decisions were evil, for they did not have the mind of Christ. They were doing continual injustice to the persons they talked about, and they had a demoralizing effect upon the conference" (EGW, "Light in God's Word," Feb. 1890, Ms. 37-1990).

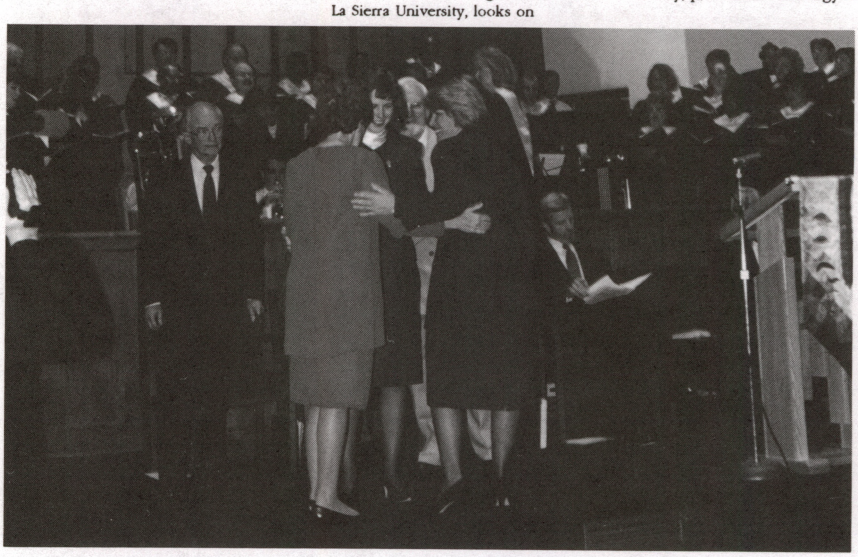
That same year, Ellen White, far from considering GC Session actions to inherently reflect the wish of God, wrote the GC president: "I do not expect to be at your General Conference. I would rather run the other way" (Ellen White to O. A. Olsen, May 8, 1890, O46-1990).

In 1898 she wrote, "It has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God" (EGW, Aug. 26, 1898 in 1899 GC Bulletin, p. 74).

Indeed, in 1901 she emphasized that working upon wrong principles nullified the GC as being the voice of God: "It is working upon wrong principles that has brought the cause of God into its present embarrassment. The people have lost confidence in those who have the management of the work. Yet we hear that the voice of the Conference is the voice of God. Every time I have heard this, I have thought it was almost blasphemy. The voice of the Conference ought to be the voice of God, but it is not, because some in connection with it are not men of faith and prayer, they are not men of elevated principle" (EGW, April 1, 1901, Ms. 37-1901).

Ellen White stated this in 1909: "When, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered. Never should a laborer regard as a virtue the persistent maintenance of his position of independence, contrary to the decision of the general body" (EGW, 9T, p. 260 [1909]).

Penny Shell, Kendra Haloviak, and Norma Osborn embrace following their ordination. Fritz Guy, professor of theology at La Sierra University, looks on



Arthur Torres' Ordination Homily: The Future Is Now

It was approximately 12 years ago that my little daughter first expressed her desire to drive an automobile. How can I ever forget the occasion? We were driving down the Santa Monica Freeway at 75 miles an hour, the busiest highway system in the entire world, and she looks at me and she says, "Dad, one of these days," she says, "I am going to drive and then you can be my passenger in the back seat, and read."

I managed to say a "Good!" half-heartedly, between "Gulp! Gulp!"

To be frank with you, I could not visualize the point in time when my five-year-old daughter, Allison, would be big enough to see over the dashboard, to say nothing of being able to negotiate the busy highway systems of Southern California with the expertise needed to jockey wherever she wanted to go.

What was fantasy for me was vision for Allison. For me it was fantasy to think that I, Rudy Torres, would come to the point in time when my nerves would be so calm that I would be able to sit in the back seat and read Kafka and leave the driving to her. What was fantasy for me was vision for Allison.

The prophet Joel, too, saw a vision—not of what might be but of what would be. What I love about prophets is that prophets are never limited by the paradigm of the present; they are not limited by what is. They are able to take the present very seriously albeit: They understand historical and cultural limitations; they understand difficulties; they understand some of the hurdles that have to be negotiated and overcome, but they never allow the present to define their future. They live with their feet firmly planted in *terra firma*. And yet they don't see *terra firma* as a destination or even a final resting place. They do not ascribe to *terra firma* eternal qualities. They see it as a steppingstone to the stars.

Prophets: They live in the present, but they see a glorious future. Now Joel's present was fraught with tragedy. A religious male hierarchy of priests had not provided the spiritual leadership needed to keep Judah from immorality and apostasy. It saw God's grace as very limited. I see this as a paradigm of scarcity. This hierarchy of male priests guarded the grace of God like beefeaters guard the crown jewels: you can see from a distance, but don't touch, and absolutely never wear.

And there they were, dispensing God's grace by pipette. And if I correctly remember my pipette days, pipette measure in thousandths of milliliters—that's *millionths* of liters. You talk about scarcity. You talk about spiritual scarcity. You can take it to the bank: When there is a scarcity of God's grace there is immorality, and where there is immorality there is apostasy.

And this is precisely the situation that prevailed, and here they were, measuring out God's grace by pipette. It became a precious commodity—a commodity that was so limited, that when it came time for individuals to be counted for God, there was nothing but apostasy and immorality. But the prophet wasn't limited by that situation.

Now as if to highlight the scarcity—the spiritual scarcity—it became accompanied by a material scarcity: the locusts moved in. And if God's grace, according to the paradigm, was limited, the locusts were unlimited. They came by the billions, and they marched across the landscape and the vegetation, they ate the crops, and they left the landscape like the surface of the moon.

Now you might have thought that the prophet would have said, "Ah, what's the use? Let's go to Bali."

Not so the prophet. The prophet sees a glorious future. The prophet is able to look at the situation, to read the nuances of the times and interpret it, not in terms of temporal implications, but in terms of eternal implications. And he saw this as God's judgment upon the people, not to punish them, but to lead them to repentance. But alas, a bankrupt priesthood did not have the spirituality needed to lead a nation into corporate repentance.

He saw a glorious future. He saw a time when the paradigm would not be defined by scarcity, but the paradigm would be defined by abundance. He understood the situation as being very dire, but he understood the future as being very glorious, and he penned these words—Joel, the second chapter, verses 28 and 29—"Then afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy"—Kendra, Norma, Penny, thank you very much; it's prophesied. It's the Word of God; and what the Word of God predicts, let no one put asunder—"Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days, I will pour out my spirit."

That is abundance, not by pipette, but by monsoon.

For Sligo, that future has begun. Now, let's not take upon ourselves any credit, because that future began at the cross. *At the cross.* Jesus didn't tire of telling the people, "*The future is coming and now is. The Kingdom of God is coming and*

now is." And he would look at the people and he would say, "You have eyes, but you can't see. Open your eyes; look at the situation spiritually. Look on the fields: can't you see that they're ripe, ready for the harvest? Pray therefore, the Lord of the harvest, and he will send reapers, male and female."

The age of the Holy Spirit begins at the cross and it is carried forward in the Resurrection and in Pentecost. And so Sligo is a Johnny-come-lately. But the important thing is, *we are a Johnny-come-lately.* And it's OK; it's OK to be late, as long as we aren't *too* late, and we're not.

For Sligo, the future has begun. We have seen it begin in your ministries—and now I'm going to get very personal—we've seen it in your ministries.

Norma, I have seen your face light up when you talk about children. You come to staff, and your face just lights up. You talk about an individual, a little child, that you have led to Jesus Christ. I have seen you get down on children's level, and see them eye to eye. I have experienced your calling.

Kendra, your calling came when you saw Desmond Ford under attack. You saw an individual who was so willing to stand up for the gospel that you said, "I, too, need a cause that is worth living for, and dying for," and you have found that cause in Jesus Christ.

How can we say any other, that you, Norma, and you, Kendra, have been appointed and ordained by the Holy Spirit?

And Penny, you experienced your calling after you had been a successful English teacher. And I'm quoting you: You heard a woman chaplain express what she did in the course of a day, and you scratched your professor head, and you said, "I didn't know women could do that. That's who I am." And the rest is history.

You have been appointed by God, not only by your calling, but you have been empowered to do your work. I have seen you baptize. You have won individuals to Jesus Christ. There are people here who can testify to the power of your ministry, and they are right here. You have been empowered by the Holy Spirit. The future has indeed begun. You have also been called to ministry because you understand that ministry is not a status, but servanthood.

Where in the world we got the idea that ministry, that ordination, is to some kind of a post, I'll never understand. But the Holy Spirit unctionizes us; the Holy Spirit is calling us to servanthood. Tell me, some Friday night, at two and three o'clock in the morning, when I am struggling with the sermon and asking for the Holy Spirit to give me enlightenment, when I understand that my feet are clay and my knees are quaking, that pastoral ministry is a status symbol.

And tell me, when I get another poison letter . . .

"So send I you, to labor unrewarded. Ministry is servanthood. We're all ministers; we have all been called of God. When Joel talks about the Holy Spirit falling on all of us, and commissioning all of us, and appointing all of us to do ministry, he is talking about the priesthood of all believers; the priesthood of all believers would supersede the male hierarchy of priesthood that never worked.

We are living in the age of the Holy Spirit; the function of pastors is that we are servants to the servants. And where we ever got this idea that ordination to gospel ministry is a status symbol—now please don't misunderstand me; I wouldn't trade it for anything. But I always did enjoy being a servant. It's my role; it's my calling. I love to study hard, and study deep. And what gives me a tremendous satisfaction is for something that I say—that you say, right? We know what we're talking about, where all of a sudden you'll just see somebody's eyes, like you expressed it, Kendra, you said you were talking to an individual who wasn't understanding the gospel and all of a sudden he understood the gospel, and you could see it in his eyes, and in his motions, and from that time on he was a different person—that we are called to servanthood.

Our ministry is not status, but servanthood. And Joel saw this vision.

Last week, my daughter, Allison, called me on the telephone, and she says, "Dad," she says, "I passed my driver's test." And I went, "Gulp!"

Do you see why we need a new generation? Do you see why we need a new vision? A new vision that is not limited to the old paradigm. A vision that doesn't see God's grace as precious commodity that is limited, and meted out by pipette, but a worldview, a paradigm, that sees the Spirit of God falling on his people—and by his people I mean every man, woman, and child who lives in the world. The Holy Spirit falling upon his people in such a powerful way and calling them to ministry. We need that kind of a vision. And Allison saw that kind of a vision in a small way, and led her dad to finally be able to visualize the possibility that he could, in fact, sit in the back seat of an automobile going down the Santa Monica Freeway with his lovely 17-year-old daughter chauffeuring him from the steering wheel of an automobile and reading Kafka, and enjoying it.

That's vision. That's vision.

This, too, is vision. "Then afterward"—after what? You know, we church people have a difficult time seeing the point in time when prophecy becomes present tense, right? We're always looking for the

grandeur to come, maybe—no. *Afterward*; after Pentecost. That happened almost 2,000 years ago.

"Afterward I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves"—that's pastors; that's pastors—"Even on the male and female slaves in those days I will pour out my Spirit."

We have seen that the future has begun. We've seen it in your ministry, Norma, Kendra, Penny. You have ministered to us. I have been led to the throne of grace by your prayers, and by your funerals, Penny. I have been led to the throne of grace by your Scripture reading, and that sermon you preached here last December I will never forget. I have been led to the throne of grace by your beautiful ability to nurture, and to come up to me, when I was pretty low, you know, about three weeks ago, you didn't know it, but you said, "You are terrific," and I felt terrific.

Let the future begin.

Charles Scriven's Charge to the Newly Ordained Women Pastors

Who today can doubt that Christ is risen?

We have been wandering between two worlds: In one, men seize advantage over women and hold their advantage sacred, and in the other, all God's children share. Each serves, and each is served, without partiality or reservation.

We know that the former world is dying, yet the latter, though heralded by Jesus' resurrection, seems powerless to be born.

Today, the new world is aborning.

So this is a moment of joy, not only for you, the newly ordained pastors, but also for you, the people of God who have come here to attest and celebrate their calling.

As for you, Kendra Haloviak, Norma Osborn, and Penny Shell, this day, in this place, the body of Christ has, by the laying on of hands, set you apart for leadership in the church's ministry of reconciliation. Your ordination brings you no higher status before God, nor any blessing of the Spirit denied to others. But it does give you a new infusion of that Spirit and it does confirm, on earth as in heaven, your calling as a pastor, and it does authorize you to practice your calling wherever you are needed.

In that light I now charge you to embrace your work in the gospel ministry—in *pastoral* ministry—with all your hearts and souls and minds.

You are called to teach. I therefore charge you to enhance understanding of the gospel wherever you can. Teach honestly, teach creatively, teach courageously.

You are called to preach. I therefore charge you to summon all who will listen to the table of fellowship and the pathway of service. Make disciples; expand the circle of compassion by your proclamation of the gospel.

You are called to care. I therefore charge you to offer yourselves as a bridge for others. Stay by human need; listen and assist; counsel and console as Jesus did.

You are called to organize. I therefore charge you to awaken and guide the church's energy. By your gifts of administration and by the grace of God, shape the community of Christ to faithful, effective mission.

You are called to preside in worship. I therefore charge you to make Christian gatherings into celebrations. Through the praise and prayer you lead, keep joy and generosity alive; help those you serve look ever backward with thanks and ever forward with hope.

I charge you to embrace these responsibilities—teaching, preaching, caring, organizing, and presiding in worship—and to seek, each day, through prayer and meditation, the renewal of heart and soul and mind that your work of ministry demands.

If you give your assent, then, before God and before this congregation, repeat after me these words: "By God's grace, we accept our ordination."

[Ordinands respond]

Amen. Amen.

As for you, the people of God: This day, in this place, each member of Christ's body is honored, and each uplifted, by the presence of God. Each of you is God's partner in creation, and each, through baptism, is set apart for ministry.

You, too, have responsibilities in the community of Christ, but your daily work and witness take you often where Christ is unknown or unappreciated, and if the church's mission is to serve and change the world, you are the vanguard.

You are Christ's vanguard in the surrounding workplaces, playgrounds, and neighborhoods, and in that light I charge you to renew your vows of ministry today. Celebrate the calling of these women, but celebrate as well your own calling, for we are, all of us, blessed by God in order to be a blessing to others.

So renew your welcome of God's blessing, and renew your passion for God's mission.

And as for the torch of justice lit today by the Spirit through this

church and these women, bear that torch far and bear it wide.

I so charge you.

Hearing this charge, if you will now go forth as ministers of Christ, then, before God and before one another, repeat after me these words: "By God's grace, we will."

[Audience responds]

And all the people said, "Amen."

The Women Pastors Respond: Haloviak, Shell, and Osborn

Kendra Haloviak

The first time I ever stood on this Sligo Church platform was the spring of 1970. I was three-and-a-half. My brother, who was just a few months old, was being dedicated, and I remember my parents making it very clear that I was to quietly stand right beside them during the dedication service.

It was Sabbath. It was Sligo. There were smiling faces looking at us. There were tears of joy. There was a prayer.

Some moments live in your mind forever. Some moments are sacred moments.

Twenty years later, I looked up at this Sligo platform with wonder. It was Thanksgiving Sabbath and Sligo was celebrating its annual Festival of Praise. My eyes felt too small to take in all that was happening before me.

Gorgeous banners decorated the front and sides of the sanctuary. Musicians filled the choir loft with color and joyful sound. People of all ages stood, weaving themselves from the back and the balcony to the front, food in their arms, singing, giving, praising, placing their gifts in a huge collection of food covering the whole platform

It was Sabbath. It was Sligo. And it was a sacred moment.

That Sabbath at Sligo was the best image I have of what the celebration of Israel's Sabbath, Jubilee year, must have been.

I am the Lord your God; on that day, "you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants."

Society's arbitrary labels for people were destroyed. Demolished was any hierarchy of humans. People treated people as God treats people: debts forgiven, slaves set free, the fear of hunger eliminated. Jubilee.

Sligo's Adventist hope and belief in a world without hunger transformed bags of canned goods into the Messianic banquet for all nations. In that sacred moment, Sligo members and friends were drawing the future into the present. In that sacred moment, we were truly being Adventist. For Adventists believe that the Second Advent of Jesus Christ will make tangible the realities of his First Advent: peace, justice, equality, wholeness, holiness.

What could be more Adventist than experiencing a bit of that future in the present?

"Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. . . .

"And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with them as their God; they will be God's people, and God will be with them."

On Sabbath, September 23, 1995, I knelt on this platform, surrounded by this church family, our friends, and Adventists from around the world. This Sabbath is a sacred moment—for me, for Sligo, for the entire Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Today we let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Today we are more Adventist than we were last Sabbath, because today we draw the future into the present.

Today we proclaim that there does not exist a hierarchy of human worth before God or before us.

Today our love of the Adventist Church and our moral convictions of equality are *not* in conflict.

Today immoral policies cannot be upheld, or we would cease being Adventist.

Today we do justly, love mercy, and we walk humbly with our God.

Today we stand and proclaim that our vision of the world to come shapes how we live in the present—a vision that is at the heart of Sligo's history; a vision that is at the very heart of our Adventist heritage; a vision that is the reason for our worship and our witness.

A vision that makes this moment a sacred moment.

Penny Shell

I think only those who are women in ministry without ordination have any idea what's involved in that, when you are in a public ministry where ordination is expected. I'm not going to detail that before you, but I'll tell you, even more difficult than not being ordained when it's expected is to belong to a church that will not ordain women.

I no longer belong to such a church, and it's a great joy.

I want to give my special love to my sisters who are in ministry and who are still waiting and longing;

the *now* and the *not yet* are both here together today. And particularly, I want to remember a dear friend, a creative, bright person, who is not here at all because she was killed this summer in Greece, and that's Gayle Saxby.

Gayle is a beautiful spirit who kindly and firmly called her church to account on this issue. Ah, Gayle, I wish you were here today.

Norma Osborn

A year ago, we gathered together in this church for another celebration, and the Scripture we read at that time was very, very powerful, and I'd just like to read a short selection from that Scripture, found in 2 Corinthians, chapter 5: "We are always full of courage. . . . For our life is a matter of faith, not of sight. . . . We know what it means to fear the Lord, and so we try to persuade others. God knows us completely, and I hope that in your hearts, you know us well.

If we are out of our mind, it is for the sake of God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for him who died for them, and was raised again.

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation; everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!"

The *New York Times*: "Adventists Break Ranks, Ordain Women"

Two decades after some major Protestant denominations began ordaining women as clergy members, the presence of a woman serving as a pastor of a Protestant church has become progressively less remarkable.

Yet barriers to women in the clergy remain. Some are firmly fixed, some more symbolic.

For the latter, one could look to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, one of whose founders was a woman, Ellen White. The denomination, best known for its extensive hospital system and its Saturday worship, allows seminary-trained women to do just about everything one would expect of a minister: they can baptize, perform marriage and burial ceremonies and serve as pastors.

But they cannot be ordained. In Adventist tradition, only men can take part in the spiritually significant ceremony in which a minister kneels in the front of the church, while other ministers lay their hands on his head and shoulders, thereby symbolically endowing him with his authority.

Today, the second-largest Adventist congregation in the country will challenge that rule. Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church in Takoma Park, Md., a congregation of more than 3,000 members, will hold an ordination service for three women, a ceremony whose organizers say will be otherwise no different from the ones held for men.

"I do think it's a historic event for the church," said Kendra Haloviak, assistant professor of religion at Columbia Union College, a church-affiliated institution in Takoma Park. Historic, too, for her, as she is one of the three women who will take part.

Ms. Haloviak, a sixth-generation Adventist who traces her family's religious roots to the denomination's 1863 founding, added: "I don't know if there are words that can adequately express how thrilled I am."

The Sligo Church decided to perform the ceremony in direct response to a closely watched vote by delegates to the Seventh-day Adventist' World Congress on July 5, who solidly rejected a move to allow women's ordination.

Although the Seventh-day Adventist Church was founded in the United States in 1863, its growth overseas in this century has far outstripped membership in this country. Worldwide, there are more than 8 million Seventh-day Adventists: Fewer than 10 percent of that number live in the United States and Canada, the nations that make up the worldwide church's North American Division.

At the World Congress, held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, officials of the North American Division asked that decisions on whether to ordain women be left to each of the worldwide church's 11 divisions. According to a church news report, Alfred C. McClure, president of the church in North America, urged the delegates to vote yes, saying that younger members of the church in the United States and Canada favored women's ordination and would be "seriously disillusioned by a negative vote."

Monte Sahlin, an assistant to the church president, said the request ran aground on cultural divisions within the church. "We're very, very multicultural," he said. While Americans, Canadians and many Europeans saw women's ordination as a matter of "social justice," he said, other members of the

Gustav Niebuhr is religion editor of the New York Times. *Reprinted from the Saturday, September 23, 1995, edition of the* New York Times. *(Copyright © 1995 by the New York Times Company. Reprinted by permission.)*

church did not. "In many parts of the world, I have heard people express a fear that it undermines traditional family values and structures," Mr. Sahlin said.

Less than a month after the vote, the Sligo Church voted to hold Saturday's service. "Sligo has a long history of utilizing women in ministry," said Robert Visser, a member of the church who has helped plan the service. He said the church has two women on a six-person ministerial staff. Saturday's service is intended to "affirm women in ministry," he said.

Another member of Sligo Church, Roy Branson, predicted that the service would set a precedent that could be followed by smaller, like-minded congregations throughout the denomination. Other congregations "could say, 'Well, Sligo did it.'" said Mr. Branson, who is also editor of *Spectrum*, an independent Adventist magazine.

Ms. Haloviak saw another result growing from the service: a chance to build support for women's ordination among a new generation of Seventh-day Adventists. She spoke about how she thought the service would look through the eyes of children and teen-agers in the congregation.

"Every single little girl will realize she can be called by God to grow up and be a minister, just like the little boys she's in school with," Ms. Haloviak said. "This is for all Adventist women."

"An ordination service in and of itself is not a defiant act," he said, noting that 100 women in the American church have been ordained as "local elders" to assist pastors.

Columbia Union [College] President Charles Scriven, in charging the women to teach, preach, organize, lead worship, pray and do acts of caring, said the ceremony "does authorize you to practice your calling wherever you are needed."

The Rev. Arthur Torres, pastor of the 3,200-member Sligo church and a leader of the ordination, said he expects it will have a ripple effect and knows of a few American churches that may follow suit.

"The priesthood of all believers supersedes the monopoly of the male priesthood," Mr. Torres said in his sermon.

The North American church had made motions at the 1990 and 1995 world assemblies to allow women's ordination. The recent failure prompted Sligo's "grassroots initiative," said a congregation vote.

Though the church was founded in North America, only 10 percent of its 8.5 million membership now live here. Most are in Africa, Asia or Latin America, where women as church leaders are culturally less acceptable, some Adventists say.

Ronald Ninala, a native of India and head elder of the Takoma Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, attended the ceremony out of friendship, though he opposed the action.

"We could misguide people," said Mr. Ninala, whose father was an Adventist minister in India, where his mother often preached in the pulpit. "We don't believe in splinters," he said, arguing that the move to women's ordination should be made by the whole church.

At the ordination service, the sermon, reflections and prayers were about the equal calling of men and women, control by the

The *Washington Times*: "Sligo Rebels, Goes Against Vote"

A Seventh-day Adventist church in Takoma Park yesterday broke ranks with its world fellowship and ordained three women, the first such act since prophetess Ellen G. White founded the group in 1863.

Amid hundreds of friends and supporters gathered at Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, the faith's second-largest congregation in the country, ordained clergy laid hands on the women in prayer to transmit the divine call.

"We are convicted, O God, that you have called and ordained them today," said the Rev. Louis Venden in the prayer of ordination.

The ordinands were Kendra Haloviak, a religion teacher at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park; Norma Osborn, associate pastor at Sligo church; and Penny Shell, a chaplain and manager of pastoral care at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital in Rockville.

In unison, the three women said, "By God's grace we accept our ordination."

A vote by the July assembly of the world church, held in Utrecht, the Netherlands, rejected a motion to allow the nine geographic divisions to decide on allowing women's ordination.

And the regional body governing Sligo church, the Potomac Conference, will not issue the women ordination credentials.

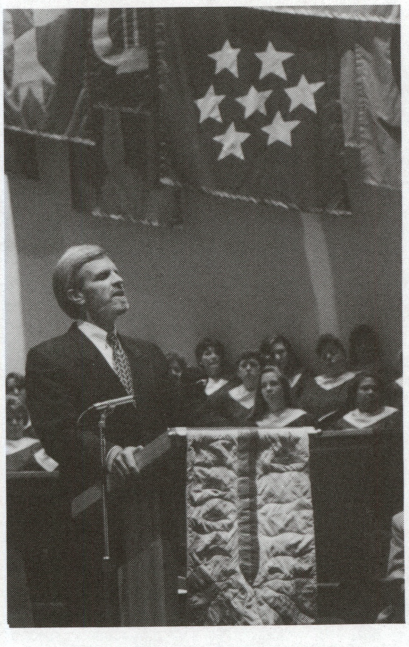
Leaders of the ordination "are at peace with the fact that the Potomac Conference will not issue credentials to these women," said Monte Sahlin, assistant to the president of the North American church.

Larry Witham is a religion reporter for the Washington Times. *Reprinted from the Sunday, September 24, 1995, edition of the* Washington Times. *(Copyright © 1995, the Washington Times. Reprinted by permission.)*

"male hierarchy" and the liberating work of the Holy Spirit in the latter days.

"Today we let justice roll down like mighty waters," said Ms. Haloviak. "Today we are more Adventist than we were last Sabbath."

Penny Shell, director of pastoral ministries at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, responds to ordination charge: ". . . It's a great joy."



Charles Scriven, president of Columbia Union College, delivers the ordination charge: "Bear the torch of justice far and bear it wide."

Ms. Shell said it was hard being a chaplain and not ordained, but harder still was "belonging to a church that will not ordain women." Now it does, she said.

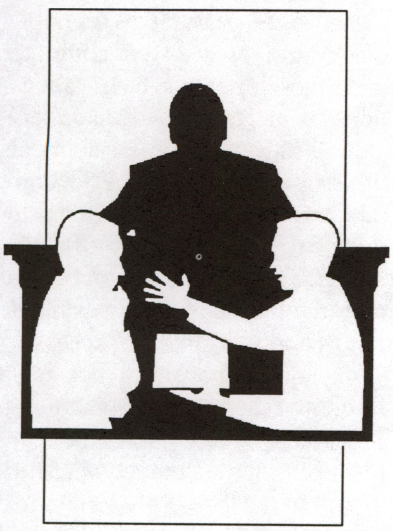
While each Protestant denomination has a history of the battle to ordain women, the Adventists—much as the Southern Baptists—are a conservative church trying to adhere strictly to biblical precepts. Adventists emphasize Saturday worship, health and the imminent return of Christ.

The more liberal mainline Protestant denominations began ordaining women in the 1970s. Their seminaries now report from a third to a half female enrollment.

But recent studies have shown a drop in women seeking ordination in those denominations, often because they can't gain leadership of big churches.

Surveys also have shown that the emphasis on feminist studies at seminaries has made female clergy almost uniformly liberal on social, doctrinal and moral issues.

"I don't see that kind of liberalization taking place" among Adventists, said the Rev. Mike Stevenson, associate pastor at Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church. "But this event would be viewed by some as liberal and even rebellious."



David Dennis vs. the General Conference: Round Two

by Sharise Esh

The Montgomery County Circuit Court of Maryland, on July 27, 1995, dismissed without recourse of appeal the first of the three counts in David Dennis' suit against the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and others for unlawful discharge and breach of contract. The second count, of defamation of character, was also dismissed, although Dennis was allowed to file an amended complaint solely against the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The court also dismissed the third count of Dennis' suit, defamation of character, but permitted an "amended complaint." Dennis filed his complaint on August 15, 1995. Counsel for the plaintiff and defendants have since met and decided on September 25, 1995, as the deadline for the defendants to file a response to Dennis' amended complaint.

David Dennis has his day in court, and the court dismisses one count outright, much of the second count, and permits an amended complaint on the third count—defamation of character.

David Dennis, former director of internal auditing for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, had filed the suit against four high-ranking officials at the General Conference, the General Conference itself, and the General Conference Corporation, after removal from his position December 29, 1994, for alleged sexual misconduct. Dennis claimed that he was never a party to the sexual misconduct and that his removal from office and defamation of character took place due to his efforts to uncover improper financial dealings by prominent General Conference officials (see "The Auditor vs. Church Leaders," *Spectrum*, Vol. 24, No. 5, pp. 23-29).

In his July 27 order, Judge William P. Turner dismissed Dennis' complaint "with prejudice" of unlawful discharge due to Dennis' ambiguity about his employment contract and his inability to establish a clear cause for unlawful discharge. The judge's order states, "It is alleged that the plaintiff was elected to five year terms, and alternatively alleged that he had a specific employment contract. The Appellate Courts of this State have indicated that the cause of action is defined 'as an action in which the employee may recover damages arising from the employee's discharge under circumstances violating a clear mandate of public policy. The public policy could derive from statute, judicial decision, administrative regulation, or from any other appropriate source.' . . . A complete review of all the facts alleged in this Complaint do not establish a cause of action or wrongful discharge."

Judge Turner also dismissed "with prejudice" (except for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists) Dennis' second complaint of breach of contract due to ambiguity in regard to Dennis' employment contract.

"There is no representation that

any of the other mentioned defendants have any contractual obligation to the plaintiff and therefore, Count II [breach of contract] will be dismissed as to all defendants except the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists."

On the third complaint by Dennis of defamation of character, Judge Turner acknowledged the relevance of more clarification. "The Court will also treat the Motion to Dismiss as a Motion for More Definite Statement of Facts and grant the Dismissal without prejudice and further grant leave to the plaintiff to file an Amended Complaint within 30 days giving a more definitive statement of facts."

On August 18, 1995, Dennis filed his amended complaint on the breach of contract and on the defamation counts. To clarify the question of his employment contract, Dennis states, "Plaintiff was elected and re-elected to his position by the members of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists for periods of 5 years. He was last elected in 1990, therefore his term would have expired in July 1995. However, re-election was routinely granted and, but for his termination and destruction of his personal reputation, he had an expectation of continuing his service until age sixty-two when he would be eligible for full retirement benefits."

In regard to the defamation count, Dennis concentrates most of his amended statement on remarks made by defendants Walter E. Carson from the office of general counsel at the General Conference; Kenneth J. Mittleider, a vice president at the General Conference; and E.A., the unnamed woman defendant who brought forward the charges of sexual misconduct.

Dennis claims that in investigative hearings held at the General Conference prior to his removal, Carson, Mittleider, and E.A. stated that the plaintiff was sexually abusing defendant E.A., that Dennis had a long history of sexual misconduct, and that Dennis was lying about these events. Carson and Mittleider are also credited with sharing information about a series of letters Dennis allegedly sent to females other than his wife, which demonstrated he had adulterous affairs with these women. Carson and Mittleider also allegedly stated that "eight more women had come forward," implying that these women had also been involved in sexual relations with Dennis. Finally, Dennis states that Carson and Mittleider claimed he had defrauded the church by accepting a salary when he was actually working in an outside business. Dennis further asserts that Carson and Mittleider made these statements under the direction and control of General Conference President Robert Folkenberg.

Other statements made by Dennis focus on activities by these General Conference officials following his removal. Dennis states that beginning in January 1995, under the direction of Folkenberg, Mittleider, and Carson, E.A.'s statement describing Dennis' alleged sexual misconduct was made available to anyone wanting to read it at the General Conference headquarters. As a result, Dennis says, numerous people have read this document and have copies of it.

Dennis also states that, under the direction of these same General Conference officials, employees at the General Conference disseminated written statements for public disclosure, as well as computer messages repeating E.A.'s allegations of molestation and adultery. Dennis says that these statements were disseminated to the Seventh-day Adventist Church on a worldwide basis. In addition, the full text of E.A.'s statement was published on the Internet, making it available to anyone with Internet access.

Dennis further states that, again under the direction of Folkenberg, Mittleider, and Carson, the contents of E.A.'s statement were provided to all General Conference employees, and Mittleider and Carson are continuing to make speaking appointments across the country to share these charges.

Finally, Dennis states that under the direction of Folkenberg, Mittleider repeated allegations to at least four other people, implying that Dennis had molested his own son and daughter.

In his prayer for relief, Dennis seeks judgment against the defendants with regard to all of the claims; compensatory damages against defendants jointly and severally in the amount of $1 million, plus interest; and punitive damages against the defendants jointly and severally in the amount of $3 million, plus interest.

Sharise Esh, a graduate of Columbia Union College and a former Spectrum *editorial assistant, is manager of serial publications for Special Libraries Association, Washington, D.C.*

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