



Women's Ordination—"My Heart Nearly Leaped Out of My Chest"

My heart nearly leaped out of my chest when I read that Sligo had ordained three women to gospel ministry (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 1). My heart has been yearning for this for years.

I still remember my very first day at an Adventist college back in 1972, hoping to graduate in four years and eventually become an ordained minister of the gospel. I eventually became a minister, but as the years went by I was totally dismayed at the inequality in the church. I am no longer an active minister of the Adventist Church, even though I still preach and still consider myself "in ministry." I work for the government and I am good at what I do. I've been chagrined to see our church treat women like second-rate citizens when it comes to ordination.

I don't know where I've been and how I could have missed such a great event, since I belong to SDAs Online. I live in North Carolina, just five hours away from Washington, D.C., and if I had known that this great celebration was happening, I would have driven to Sligo to be there. I am glad, however, to know that it happened and I want to thank you for starting that discussion in your Sabbath school class back on July 15. I am so elated

as I write, this letter may not be making any sense. But believe me when I tell you that I sense a feeling of deliverance and pride to think that there are still Adventists out there who have what it takes to stand for what is right.

For the past few months I've been really discouraged with the church and even though I am a third-generation Adventist, I've been rethinking my association with it. Reading today's report on what happened at Sligo gives me hope and renewed strength—hope that the future *is* here and that tomorrow will not be like today. The young people who saw this ordination and even those who heard about it know it can happen. If that can happen, other changes can come. Guys like me can stay around a little longer and dare to think big for our church. It's good to know I am not alone anymore.

Thank you for *Spectrum*. I've been receiving it since the mid-'70s, and this is the first time I am writing. I just couldn't keep silent. I am so excited and thrilled. I think I'll take a drive to D.C. soon and worship at Sligo!

Again, thank you and God bless.

Wilny Audain
Nashville, North Carolina

Women's ordination leads to celebration, charges of liberal fanaticism, and the baptism of a new member. Also, Spectrum goes to Sabbath school.

Partisans of Women's Ordination Exude Arrogance, Fanaticism

If *Spectrum* was accurate in reporting the events and statements surrounding the ordination of women at Sligo church (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 1), I have some real concerns—not with the issue itself, but with those most intimately involved in that action.

One of the participants in the Sligo ordination was quoted as saying on the day of the ordination “we are more Adventist than we were last Sabbath” (pp. 33, 59). The message of that statement isn't entirely clear, but taken in one obvious way it seems to contain an element of arrogance, pride, and conceit. Is my church less Adventist than it would be if we ordained a woman minister? These same elements appear under the context of moral high ground—“moral insult inflicted at Utrecht” (p. 49); this issue has not been “handled in harmony with the morality that Ellen White called for” (p. 48); refusing women ordination “is morally wrong” (p. 52). The implication here is that anyone or any church not inclined to concur in Sligo's action is morally deficient. Fritz Guy would apparently brand every Adventist who does not enthusiastically endorse women's ordination as prejudiced and immoral (p. 52).

This attitude is terrifyingly close to my perception of the extreme conservative arm of the church. Each appears to be equally fanatical. In fact, I am as disgusted with the public attempt to sway delegates at the General Conference (p. 20) as I am with the unabashed attempt to sway members of the Potomac Conference Committee members by ordination candidates and their friends

and relatives (p. 45).

This idea of a “grassroots initiative” (pp. 38, 46) also has me bothered. Certainly, truth can be discovered and articulated by laity in the local church, but I would expect such revelation to come from a Sabbath school class engaged in deep Bible study and prayer rather than in a discussion of strategy to circumvent actions taken at the last General Conference (pp. 33, 34). And what would we do with a localized grassroots effort to force the accommodation of polygamy or divorce or drug use?

Of course, the debate will not end with this issue of *Spectrum* or with the action taken at Sligo and La Sierra. The conservative side of Adventism is already sputtering over the “apostasy” evidenced by rejection of the Utrecht vote (for example, see *Our Firm Foundation* [November 1995]). And I suspect those now demanding ordination of women will not be satisfied until credentials are granted in their conference, and then in their union,

Beyond Reporting and Analysis, A “Luminous Moral Passion”

For the past 25 years, I have relied on *Spectrum* for scholarly analysis and insightful reporting of the Adventist community. The September 1995 issue (Vol. 25, No. 1), with its account of the Sligo ordinations, combined these qualities with a luminous moral passion. I read all the articles at one sitting and when I was done, I didn't know whether to cry or stand up and cheer.

and then . . .

So my objection to this whole business—and to a lot of other issues we seem to so gleefully embrace—is the attitude of the participants and the inordinate amount of energy and time we devote to it. The issue has been debated; the vote taken. It's time for Branson to spend more time studying the Word and consulting the Spirit in preparation for his Sabbath school class. It's time for Chuck Scriven to direct his passion and intelligence toward improving his college. It's time to quit acting like defiant children whose mother just said “No.” It's time for *me* to be out sharing a truthful picture of our God. If Sligo, La Sierra, any other church, or even a conference wants to ordain women, fine. But let them do it without the arrogance and attitude of superiority apparent at both Sligo and La Sierra.

I cannot close this letter without adding a compliment on the June 1995 issue. The articles on David Dennis and Russell Hustwaite were exceptional; we got the information without any author bias. And Crews' article on repressed memory was superb.

John A. Johnson
Boulder City, Nevada

I admired the thoughtfulness of the Sligo debate portrayed in your pages. But more importantly, I salute the courage of the church and the three newly-ordained women to end that debate—and simply act. Their action reminds us that issues of social and economic justice are not distractions or diversions from the gospel message but an integral part of that message.

I only hope that this rekindled sense of justice will not stop at the church's doors but will extend, invigorated, to the larger community that desperately needs the

church to bear witness to this principle.

Joe Mesar
Harrison, New Jersey

Who Understands the Terms of This "Ordination Question"?

Is there anyone who *understands* the terms of this "ordination question" (*Spectrum*, Vol. 25, No. 1)? Please radio in. Unenlightened confusion can quickly turn, and *has* turned in some cases, to incredible anger and prejudice. What's been missing from many ordination discussions, it seems, has been the other party—the part of our world church that is *not* North America. Glossing over key information must obscure the real debate, must contribute to confusion. Can we really look at North American women's needs without looking at African women's needs, or South American women's needs, and not only the women, but the men's and children's needs? We cannot—if we are to remain true to the mandate that God lays on us: a mandate not only to proselytize in all the world, but rather to fulfill one aim which the enormous and multiple layers of international Adventist agency and department must boil down to—loving our neighbor.

If we see that ordination is a *world* calling, can we, merely at Sligo, really rush to cover each other with approval and confirmation, while pushing further into shadow the specter of an international brotherhood whose needs and issues we do not fully understand? To carry out an individual action that flies in the face of a decision made together seems insensitive at the least. Sligo's ordination ceremony seems like such an action.

There hasn't been much dia-

logue about or with the non-American church communities, to even begin to understand their gender struggles which, like ours in

America, remain fraught. It isn't clear what *their* women feel and do, how their hierarchies work—who these communities *are*. We can begin to bring these real pastors and people out of our own shadows. We don't know, there may be a part we can play in helping to heal *their* problems, by acknowledging the impact their actions have in our lives and reaching out to them in unconditional love.

Michelle Anderson
Takoma Park, Maryland

Has *Spectrum* Stopped Being a Place to Speak the Unspeakable?

As a *Spectrum* subscriber for many years, I have been pleased to see the multiple viewpoints brought out in many subjects which the *Adventist Review* would never have published. I have admired the unadulterated truth in the many varied and interesting articles. Lately, I see letters, an editorial, and several articles regarding the ordination of women to the ministry. I did not see any article or report from the viewpoint of the *two-thirds* of the delegates to the General Conference who voted against that issue. Also, at least 35 percent of North American Adventists have yet to be convinced that the North American Division should vote for the issue.

The genius of *Spectrum* when it

was born was that it offered a place to speak the unspeakable, to think aloud, to argue, to report—all without orchestration by a liberal or conservative agenda. It never seemed to be an official or unofficial organ of a particular Adventist group.

May it never be said of *Spectrum* that it has lost its goal, as stated on the inside of its front cover: "... to encourage Seventh-day Adventist participation in the discussion of contemporary issues from a Christian viewpoint, to look without prejudice at all sides of a subject, to evaluate the merits of diverse views, and to foster Christian intellectual and cultural growth."

Danny Oh
Dayton, Ohio

Mormon Joins Denomination That Ordains Women

The experience of someone who recently became a Seventh-day Adventist shows how important women's ordination can be for Adventist witness and evangelism. My wife and I had the joy of seeing a good friend of ours join our

church the same day Madelynn Haldeman and Halcyon Wilson were ordained. Judith Jenson was baptized in the La Sierra University church on December 2, a few hours before the ordination service.

It was the culmination of a long

spiritual quest. Judith became acquainted with Seventh-day Adventists in 1982, when she joined the outpatient medical office in the Department of Pediatrics at Loma Linda University Medical Center. A pediatric nurse practitioner, she is now clinical supervisor for homecare nursing. She grew up the oldest of seven children in the home of a prominent surgeon who put a high priority on education. One sister is an attorney; her other brothers and sisters are all physicians. Besides a degree in nursing from the University of Utah, she pursued graduate study at Yale and Harvard Universities, and plans to complete a doctoral program at Loma Linda University. She was raised in a religious home, but one of the things that increasingly disturbed her about the church of her childhood was the way it subordinated women to men and excluded women from ministry.

Judith's quest for a spiritual home led her to attend the La Sierra University church one Sabbath last spring. During that first visit, she and her two children all had the strong conviction that they had found what they were looking for. They became regular visitors and although she had discussed Adventism with many people over the years, her interest in Adventist beliefs and practices intensified. She had serious conversations with several Adventist pastors and religion teachers and twice read through a textbook on Adventist doctrines.

Judith was attracted to Adventism by the spirit of openness she found and especially by the way Adventists affirmed women and gave them an active role in ministry. One Sabbath we sat together through a sermon that raised some searching questions about the present state of the church. I knew she was thinking about possible membership, and I wondered if she would be put off by the

preacher's comments. To the contrary, she turned to me when it was over and said, "That was fantastic. I want to belong to a church where people can be so open about their questions and convictions." She personally congratulated the speaker and sent five tapes of the sermon to friends around the country. She also made a point of attending the church business meeting reported in the last issue of *Spectrum*, when the La Sierra church voted to proceed with the ordination of two women to gospel ministry.

Judith's baptism was scheduled for a time that tragically coincided with her father's last illness. But she left his bedside and made a 12-hour drive alone to keep her appointment the next day. Dr. Wilber Alexander, professor of religion at

Loma Linda University, and I officiated at her baptism during the morning worship service. Later that afternoon she attended the women's ordination with some non-Adventist friends who spent the day with her. Like everyone present, she was deeply moved by the experience. Toward the end of the program, Halcyon Wilson explained what it meant to her to be ordained to the gospel ministry. She said, "Now I can tell my granddaughter that she belongs to a church that ordains women." Judith turned to the friends sitting beside her and said, "And so can I."

Richard Rice
Professor of Theology
La Sierra University

Ten Good Reasons Why Men Should Not Be Ordained

I would like to thank you for the thoughtful and insightful articles and discussions provided in *Spectrum*. I appreciate being able to read differing points of view and not always the party line.

I have enclosed a paper a friend faxed to me not long ago.

Ten Reasons Why Men Should Not Be Ordained

1. Their physical build indicates that men are more suited to tasks such as picking turnips or dehorning cattle. It would indeed be "unnatural" for them to do other forms of work. How can we argue with the intended order that is instituted and enforced by nature?
2. If men have children, their duties as ministers might detract from their responsibilities as parents. Instead of teaching their

children important life skills like how to make a wiener roasting stick, they would be off at some committee meeting or preparing a sermon. Thus, these unfortunate children of ordained men would almost certainly receive less attention from their male parent. Some couples might even go so far as to put their children into secular day care centers to permit the man to fulfill his duties as a minister.

3. According to the Genesis account, men were created before women as a prototype. It is thus obvious that men represent an experiment rather than the crowning achievement of creation.
4. Men are overly prone to violence. They are responsible for the vast majority of crimes in our country, especially violent crime. Thus they would be poor role

- models, as well as being dangerously unstable in positions of leadership.
5. In the New Testament account, the person who betrayed Jesus was a man. Thus, his lack of faith and ensuing punishment stands as a symbol of the subordinate position that all men should take.
 6. The story of Gethsemane also illustrates the natural tendency of men to be either unable or unwilling to take a stand. Men always hide behind committees. It is expected that even ordained men would still embarrass themselves with their natural tendency toward a pack mentality.
 7. If men got ordained, they would not be satisfied with that; they would want more and more power. Next thing, most of the Conference leaders would be men and then where would we be? No, the line must be drawn clearly now before it is too late.
 8. Many if not most men who seek to be ordained have been influenced by the radical "men's movement" or "masculist movement." How can they be good leaders? Their loyalties are divided between leading a church and championing the masculist drive for men's rights. The tract writers haven't pronounced on it yet, but the masculist movement is probably profoundly un-Christian!
 9. To be an ordained pastor is to nurture and strengthen a whole congregation. But these are not

traditional male roles. Rather, throughout the history of Christianity, women have been considered to be not only more skilled than men at nurturing, but also more fervently attracted to it. Women, the myth goes, are fulfilled and completed only by their service to others. This makes them the obvious choice for ordination. But if men try to fit into this nurturing role, our young people might grow up with Role Confusion Syndrome, which could lead to such terrible traumas as the Questioning Tradition Syndrome.

10. Men can still be involved in

worthy Church activities, without having to be ordained. They can still take up the offering, shovel the sidewalks and maybe even lead the singing on Father's Day. In other words, by confining themselves to such traditional male roles, they can still be vitally important in the life of the Church. Why should they feel left out? (Adapted from the "Mennonite Report," by Ivan Emile.)

Sometimes it's easier to laugh than cry.

Keep up the good work.

Judi L. Baker
Petaluma, California

Spectrum Goes to Sabbath School

The report on the withdrawal of the July 1994 issue of *Ministry* from circulation (*Spectrum*, Vol. 24, No. 2) provided an unusual and striking example for a Fresno Sabbath school class.

The Sabbath school lessons for the fourth quarter of 1994 dealt with the Three Angels' Messages. As a teacher, I had struggled with a universal theme that would make the lessons relevant for today. In that context, I was shocked on reading the *Spectrum* news update that the entire issue of *Ministry* was withdrawn from circulation because of the honest and open admission of David and LaVonne Neff that they had withdrawn from the Adventist church because of a lack of an "experience of the awe and majesty of God," the very theme that I was trying to emphasize! The censored paragraph strikingly and beautifully fit with the lesson. Ad-

ditional impact was provided by the title of the censored article, coincidentally emblazoned on the beautiful banner at the front of the church in celebration of the Thanksgiving season—"Make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise"—and because of my personal acquaintance with David and LaVonne Neff, when they were at Andrews University. We concluded the study with the words of that great hymn, "Worthy, Worthy Is the Lamb."

The church is to be a forum not just for smooth talk but for painful and unsettling messages. Thanks to *Spectrum* for openly reporting on censorship that, in an unexpected and roundabout way, was to become such a powerful message for a Fresno Sabbath school class.

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