



## Winter issue prompts research, reminiscing

### “TOSC Struggles Reading the Bible”

I greatly appreciated Bonnie Dwyer’s evenhanded attempts to present the information from the January meetings of TOSC fairly. After reading through the reports on TOSC in the latest issue of *Spectrum*, I went to the GC Archives and actually looked up and read all of the condensed reports from each of the world divisions. I came to some different conclusions than Bonnie did, and thought I would briefly go over those, and also point out something I noticed that has not been mentioned by any other writers that I have seen, either in *Spectrum* or on the web responses I have seen so far. I will admit I have not followed the blogs, so may have missed something there, but I find the blogs rapidly degenerate into personality attacks from both sides on this issue, for which I have no stomach. There is not much in the way of respectful dialogue.

I am not as sanguine as Bonnie about the willingness of the divisions to tolerate women’s ordination (WO). Each of the divisions that posted took a strong position either for or against, with one notable exception: Southern Asia Division (SAD). SAD’s presentation was the shortest, most succinct presentation in which I saw the most honesty of any of the divisions. They stated that they could find no clear mandate for either position, and would abide by the world church decision in 2015. The rest of the divisions took clear positions, though several that were strongly opposed stated that in the interest of unity they would abide by the world church decision in 2015. I noticed that Bonnie stated only one division was strongly opposed. I disagree with her here—I think most were strongly opposed, but willing for the sake of unity to abide by the voted outcome—knowing, in my opinion, that the world majority would still hold to a “No” vote, so this becomes mere lip service. What Bonnie failed to mention is that the division that was strongly opposed was actually retro-opposed. What I mean here is that they want the church to eliminate all ordination of women to any office in

the church. I believe after reading Sakae Kubo’s position that he would find this is a far more consistent position given their “headship theology,” though if I read him right, he does not believe “headship theology” to be biblical.

Now to the point I really wanted to make, that I think all others have missed. I am going to make some generalizations here, recognizing clearly that within each division (on both sides) there are pockets of people who do not fit the generalization, but recognizing that the division-presented position is presented as the majority position. All of the divisions that favored WO belong to socio-cultural areas of the world that are no longer predominantly patriarchal in social structure, while all the divisions that opposed WO belong to areas of the world that are still strongly patriarchal in social structure. My point is that this is *not* really a theological/biblical conundrum; it is a socio/political one.

I also want to state clearly that I agree with George Tichy (on the blogs) about one thing: this is a *moral* issue! I take the position that “this church will” *not* “triumph” (to misquote EGW) until it gets beyond this issue. Until we as a church are known by how we love each other, we are *not* the people of the kingdom. I don’t have to agree with anyone’s theology, but I do have a mandate from heaven to love them into the kingdom. There is only one mark of true discipleship that Jesus lists in the Gospels: “Everyone will know you are my disciples by how you love each other” (my free paraphrase).

Finally, I think we are consistently asking the wrong question, which is why we keep butting heads on this issue. The TOSC is absolutely correct about one overriding principle: *it is God who calls*. Ordination is merely the body of Christ recognizing God’s call. If we truly believe that Jesus is God, then Jesus is the final arbiter of our theology, of our praxis, and of our truth, *not* Paul. So Jesus’ call to pre-fall theology is normative for his church: “. . . from the beginning it was *not* so. . .” (emphasis mine). But the one statement we consistently over-

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look of Jesus' that is definitive here is this: "Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come" (Matt. 12:30–32, NIV). So as a church, and as a people, if we do not recognize the call of the Holy Spirit, we are in grave danger of committing the unpardonable sin. Do we as a church and as a people really want to go on record as telling God who he can and who he cannot call? Whoa, that is not a process I want any part of.

I am praying for my church that we will move beyond this, and learn to recognize the work of the Holy Spirit in those called by the Holy Spirit.

DAVE REYNOLDS [Brother to Edwin Reynolds, who was listed as a co-defendant of the "headship theology" position at TOSC, and with whom I respectfully disagree. The point being that even within families, not all see this the same. I believe between my brothers and I it is 2 to 1 against WO, and I still love them dearly.]

*Dwyer responds: Thank you Dave for going to the original papers to learn more.*

*In my report I quoted one of the TOSC members about the positions of the Divisions. Since he was there I felt his reading not only of the documents but also bearing the way in which they were presented trumped my reading of the Division reports.*

## "The 1960s Crisis at the Seminary"

I joined the Seminary student body in 1965 following a two-year break after graduation from Pacific Union College, and completed my work on the Bachelor of Divinity degree in December of 1967. So, I experienced the turmoil and challenges to my faith that Dr. Weiss mentions in his article.

To me the greatest challenge was the "Introduction to the New Testament" class taught by Drs. Sakae Kubo, Earle Hilgert and Herold Weiss.

My degree from PUC had been in religion rather than theology. Perhaps this had not given me the background that others had for this class. In any case, I was challenged in regard to the authority and function of the Bible in ways that I had not imagined possible. The reality of the manuscripts that formed the basis of the biblical text today was shocking. I was forced to confront the fact that some of my ideas were not truth.

My college experience had given me a commitment to follow truth wherever it led, as opposed to the idea of some that one should follow truth as it supported the previous understanding of God and the Bible. I came to realize that God had more to teach me than I understood. The question I faced was, was I going to allow God to lead me in my spiritual development, or was I going to close my mind to anything outside of previously-defined boundaries? The result of my decision to follow truth wherever it led was that I came out of this class with a reaffirmed understanding to the authority and function of the Bible in my life today. My faith in the leading of God in the doctrinal development of the SDA denomination was intact.

The lessons that I learned in this class were invaluable in my later success as a clergyperson working outside of the SDA denomination along with clergy from other denominations. Following seven and a half years serving as a pastor in the Potomac Conference, I served for the next eighteen years as a U.S. Army chaplain, endorsed by Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries. This included three years on the teaching faculty of the Army Chaplain School. It was my prior background from the Seminary that allowed me to be seen by the students as a moderate bridge between the fundamentalists and the liberals.

Following my retirement from the Army, I became a chaplain for the Department of Veterans Affairs at the Eastern Colorado Health Care system in Denver. In February I retired as a VA chaplain with twenty years of service credit. It was the training that I received from the Seminary that gave me the background I needed to

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