

WOMEN'S ORDINATION: NO!

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

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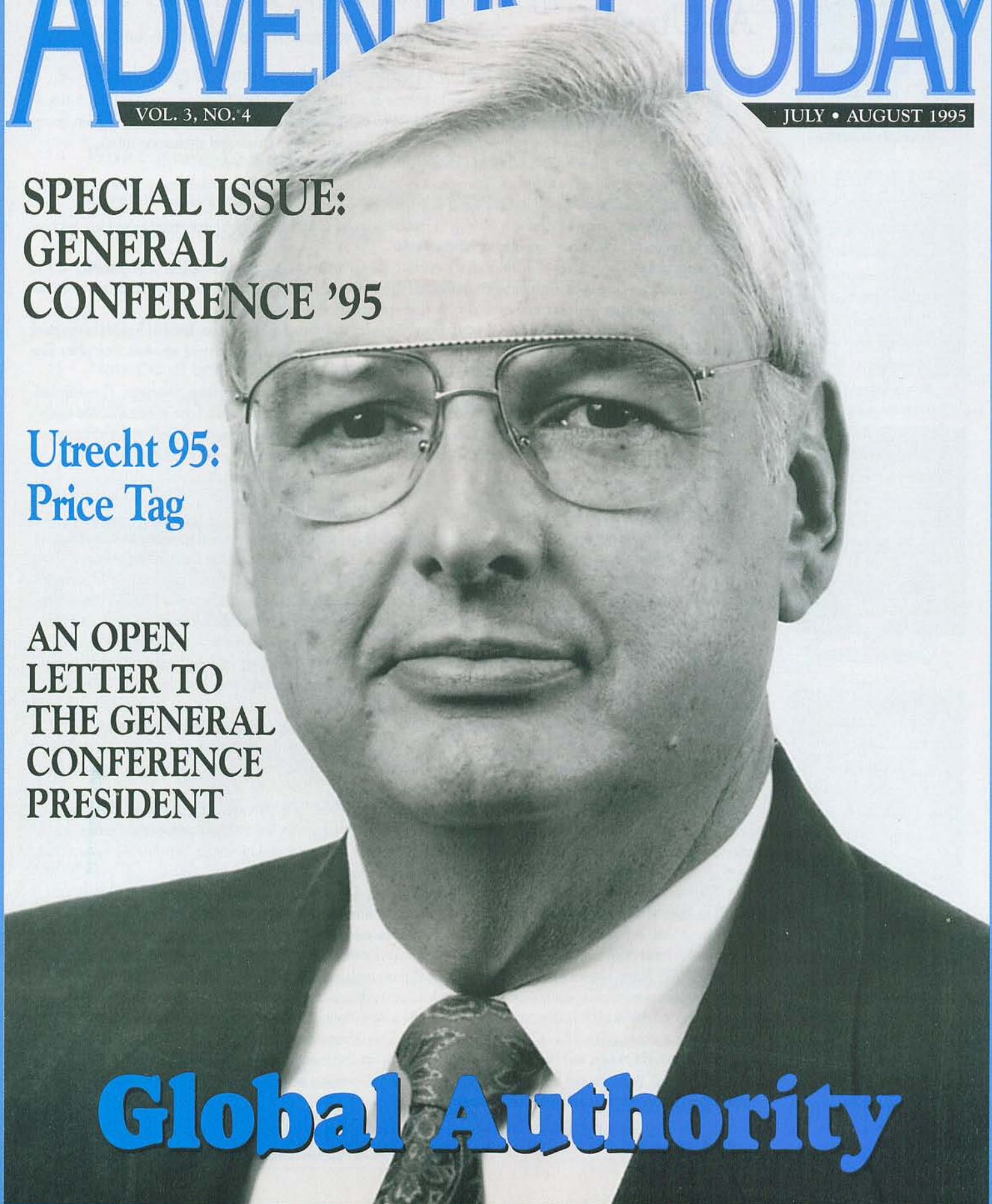
JULY • AUGUST 1995

**SPECIAL ISSUE:
GENERAL
CONFERENCE '95**

**Utrecht 95:
Price Tag**

**AN OPEN
LETTER TO
THE GENERAL
CONFERENCE
PRESIDENT**

Global Authority



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At Utrecht

The 1995 General Conference Session, held June 29 to July 8, at the giant Jaarbeurs complex (Dutch Royal Fairs), was many things: giant Adventist festival, intellectual forum, revival meeting, circus, reunion, camp meeting, very expensive party, ecclesiastical council, political rally, bazaar and affirmation ritual.

One delegate called it a Mecca. "I feel that I have come on a pilgrimage," he intoned.

Anthropologists would call it a "rite of intensification," an occasion for the entire community to come together to celebrate its uniqueness and reaffirm its values and sacred stories.

The church's presentation of itself was a highly complex interplay of 19th century American religious ideology now reaping the results of a missionary impulse to "all the world."

The meticulously choreographed multimedia "Report to the Church" of GC president Robert S. Folkenberg on the opening day, and his closing Sabbath sermon, symbolized the contradictions in contemporary Adventism as it prepares to enter the 21st century while continuing to declare that the end of all things is near.

This GC session was the largest ever—in attendance, diversity and cost. And it may go down in history as the most important one. Utrecht 95 bore the indelible impress of Robert Folkenberg, the GC president who first took office five years ago and is shifting the church into missions overdrive.

This issue of *Adventist Today* is devoted to Utrecht 95, but we cannot do it justice in these few pages. The daily bulletins of the *Adventist Review* and the satellite video available in many Adventist churches have communicated much of the session's richness, and *Spectrum* will provide thoughtful reports and analyses. However, *Adventist Today* attempts to make sense of the session from the American point of view. We address the meaning of Utrecht for the life of today's church.

Utrecht 95 displayed a church that is:

Robust and vital. Dressing in regional garb, singing native scores in lively harmony, and speaking to issues from diverse perspectives, thousands of people from the world's nations crowded into Hall I and surrounding venues.

Relaxed from constraints. If you were reared to prize frugality, stifle emotions and dress conservatively, Utrecht 95 was not for you. The evening division reports were elaborate multimedia productions shown on a \$100,000 big screen. Highly skilled choirs swung to their musical beats, and the church's traditional ban on jewelry was not evident (jade necklaces were sold at a South American church booth).

Ideologically divided. Depending on whether delegates were from the developing or developed world, their speeches during the women's ordination debate (with few exceptions) illustrated a concept from Sociology 101: Cultural norms greatly influence the way church members view their Adventism.

Spiritually alive. Especially in the developing world—be it Latin America, Africa or former Communist countries—millions of people have found a new life in Adventism. It isn't an Adventism of stodgy New England that used to "dot every i and cross every t," but one often communicated by laypersons—mostly women—who preach basic church doctrine and give fervent Advent hope.

Folkenberg's plan for giving much greater voting power to the membership in the developing world passed largely intact. The burgeoning non-North American vote decisively thwarted a push for woman's ordination, and the new organizational structure may be geared to produce additional such conflicts. Our focus on Utrecht 95 includes four major stories:

- The GC Executive Committee—its internationalization and the implications.
- The No vote on women's ordination—why it happened and what it means.
- The man behind the new church order—third-world dreams, first-world ingenuity and drive.
- The diverse Adventists at Utrecht—what provokes their minds and stirs their hearts.

Utrecht 95 was *Adventist Today's* first GC Session. Erv Taylor set up our booth and spoke with scores of interested visitors. He also shared helpful insights with the other authors and drafted news reports. Steve Daily primarily worked as an actor portraying Uriah Smith with a La Sierra University drama troop, but interviewed many delegates and visitors from around the world for his story. When not on the session floor, Jim Walters camped out in the pressroom writing news and analysis. Editors Ray Cottrell, Cherie Rouse, Cheri Lynn Gregory, and Jim Stirling, office manager Hanan Sadek, and Colleen and Richard Tinker teamed up to get this issue to readers ASAP. A big thanks to all.

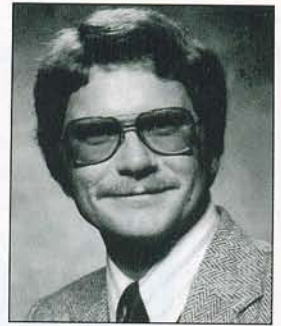
Surely the last word has not been written on this historic GC session; we do attempt to give some credible first impressions. Please write us and share your ideas.

Jim Walters, Ervin Taylor

Cover: Robert S. Folkenberg, reelected General Conference President
Photo: Adventist News Network

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Global Authority

Is Answer for Growing Diversity

One of the biggest bombshells of the General Conference Session was dropped on Day 1. The Folkenberg administration proposed that the composition of the all-powerful General Conference Executive Committee be changed to reflect the geographic distribution of the present church membership; because 90 percent of church members are from other areas than the North American Division (NAD), 90 percent of the committee should be, as well.

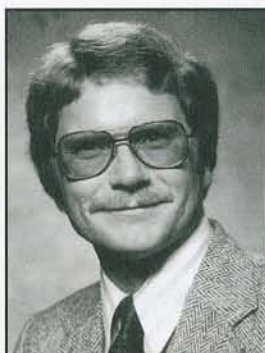
Further, to make the committee more effective, membership would be cut from some 400 to 260. The reduction would be achieved by cutting the number of NAD members. No delegates questioned this move. Also, the church is to drop some departmental members—Sabbath School, Stewardship, etc. This proved quite controversial.

The first two working days of the session were largely devoted to lively debate of this proposed reformulation. Calvin Rock, GC vice president, introduced the discussion, which centered around four themes, detailed below.

All the Union Presidents

According to GC president Robert Folkenberg, it is not fair to the Adventists in the developing countries of the world that the body which sits and makes crucial decisions at Annual Councils is comprised of 70-75 percent North Americans. In the past, all union presidents have been invited to the Annual Councils, but not all have been able to attend because of the costs, in the past borne by the unions. The new proposal calls for the GC to bear all costs of members' attendance. The present 87 union conference presidents would comprise a large block of members.

by Jim Walters



Jim Walters, a professor of ethics at Loma Linda University, is a veteran of numerous Adventist church commissions and task forces concerned with structure, governance, ethics, and the roles of women.

Several African delegates, presumably union presidents, spoke favorably of the proposal. They cited financial and other reasons that they have not been able to attend GC Executive Committee meetings. One suggested that the new structure will help keep church leadership "close to the grass roots."

Selecting the Church's Legislators

Joseph McCoy, president of the South Central Conference headquartered in Nashville, lamented the "shortage of those being served" by the committee. He questioned the composition of the committee, citing the need for more laity.

A layperson from Ohio, Susan Sickler, also questioned how many lay persons are included in the committee membership. Further, she criticized the proposal for mandating that the committee appoint so many of its own members. The proposed constitution calls for the committee or the division committee to appoint the three categories of members who are not ex-officio: laypersons, front line church workers, and 30 members-at-large (see box).

"The number of the members is not so important as who chooses them," Sickler emphasized. "You say that the unions are the building blocks of the General Conference, and then you ask the divisions to name the other names to the executive committee."

"The 30 members-at-large that the executive committee names are really selected by the GC officers, and the committee just rubber stamps them. Rather, let the unions send you these names," implored Sickler. She concluded with the observation that the GC plays it both ways with the divisions. When it is advantageous, the divisions are genuine regions of the world church; at other times divisions are mere extensions of the GC, since divisions have no member constituencies.

Rock responded, "Amen!"

Anthol Tolhurst, who authored the final draft of the proposed changes, explained that "the General Conference steps into divisions only for the most urgent reasons."

By the time the final vote was taken, the number of laypersons was increased 50 percent. Further, instead of continuing to let the division committees unilaterally appoint pastoral and lay delegates, the final decision was for union committees to nominate individuals from whom the division committee would choose.

Office Boys

Silas McKinney, West Indies Union president, vigorously opposed the proposed changes to the GC Executive Committee. If the departmental leaders are appointed rather than elected they will serve as mere "office boys," and the elected officers will abuse their powers, he asserted. McKinney articulates a widespread feeling in the General Conference building and evidently in division offices as well: The officers sometimes sense an elevated status, and the departmental directors and their associates become mere functionaries. Previous GC president Neal Wilson reflected this concern, saying that he likes the proposal, but wishes to discount the wrong, negative impression of some that "department directors take over GC committees and assert themselves as

"The problem is the whole proposal; I oppose it at every level... This process emasculates the democratic process."

masters." Others pointed out that election to an office for a 5-year term gives more security and status than does appointment to office.

A related objection to appointment, rather than election, concerns auditors. Two auditors spoke. One, from the South Pacific Division, said that appointed auditors would not have the independence to speak directly to administrators. Auditors would fear for their jobs. "I fear for the finances of the church if this passes," he said.

Democratic or Not?

Kenneth Watson, a physician/businessman who sits on the Dutch Union executive committee, believes the proposed changes will diminish the roles of divisions. He notes that we see growing cultural diversity in the church. Divisions are already in place and could serve the members' diverse needs by addressing them in local contexts. The current proposal makes divisions "irrelevant" by gathering union presidents and making all division personnel mere appointees, except for the officers. "If (many) union conference presidents do not go the GC Executive Committee, why not strengthen the divisions and then have a division delegation attend the annual GC Executive Committee?" he queried.

An Indiana layperson said he had been optimistic

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Nominating Committee: Important But Limited Role

Nominating committees at GC sessions are powerful. They select particular people for positions, and usually the delegates on the floor vote positively. But the committee's role is in fact quite limited. First the GC president is nominated and voted early. Then the newly elected president sits with the nominating committee and makes personnel suggestions that are usually accepted. There are sometimes exceptions. Folkenberg desired to name Tom Mostert, Pacific Union Conference president, as a general vice president of the GC. The nominating committee resisted because three of the six vice presidents had already been voted by the session and were North Americans. Only some 20 of the 222 members of the nominating committee were from the US. Several NAD members reported racial or nationalist tension, if not hostility, in respect to the NAD.

Furthermore, the nominating committee often uncritically accepts recommendations from the respective division caucuses. "We don't ask any questions," stated one top NAD administrator on the committee this year. "We just vote on the recommended names and pass them on to the session floor in our name."

Some NAD members have expressed outrage at one example of this in Utrecht: The committee was provided with three names from which to nominate an editor for *Ministry* magazine. They selected one, and it was in due course approved by the general delegates on the floor. Few if any on the committee realized that the name of the popular incumbent editor, J. David Newman, had been left off, and, as blind tools of the administration, they were replacing him.

Sometimes considerable church politics

work under the surface. For example, the Africa-Indian Ocean Division caucus met and chose to recommend incumbent president J.J. Nortey, but only by a one-vote margin. When the nominating committee, as usual, passed Nortey's name on to the session floor, an Africa-Indian Ocean delegate rose and objected. By this bold action he possibly subjected himself to considerable ecclesiastical retaliation should his efforts to dislodge the incumbent fail.

The caucus was forced to meet again. Both the current and previous GC presidents were involved in discussions at crucial points. The upshot was that L. T. Daniel was agreed upon in the caucus, and the nominating committee forwarded his name to the session, which promptly accepted it, with outgoing Nortey praising his successor.

at the GC session five years ago, when the talk was of downsizing and reducing fat. "But now I see it going the other direction—toward hierarchy. This is the wrong way," he objected.

West Indies' McKinney was particularly blunt: "The problem is the whole proposal; I oppose it at every level... This process emasculates the democratic process."

Although some delegates saw the restructuring as undemocratic, the new GC Executive Committee is in reality much more genuinely representative, at least of members' geographic and national distributions. But some saw the broad representation on the GC Executive Committee as pure "majority rule" without provision for regions of the world church to have appropriate jurisdiction over certain affairs that should be constitutionally protected quite aside from majority vote.

No Debate on Larger Issues

After some four hours of rousing discussion, the proposal was sent to the standing Constitution and Bylaws Committee for final modification. That committee, chaired by Rock, convened for seven hours on its first day of work, hearing 50 delegates' concerns. While Rock's committee was meeting, delegate Alvin Kibble, president of the Allegheny East Conference, requested that the full body of delegates discuss the "larger issues" that undergird the 72 explicit constitutional changes being proposed. The request was denied by the chair of the session.

The next day, a number of delegates objected to the chair closing the session early, despite the fact that many delegates desired to speak on various important matters. Matters got tense as the chair tried to adjourn the meeting at 4:20 that afternoon, when he had already stated his intention to reconvene it soon to do other business.

The chair testily stated that no motion was on the floor for discussion. When a member at a mike attempted to make a motion that would have allowed for discussion, he was told to cease. The chair stated that the delegates had agreed at the beginning of the conference that discussion could only pertain to formal agenda items that were before it, and that was not the case at the time.

After final polishing by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, without further discussion on the floor, the delegates finally voted to approve the historic changes.

A Watershed

It is important to note that the GC Executive Committee is the key decision-making body of the

The new structure means the church will be controlled, not by members from developed, industrialized countries, but by members from developing, less-industrialized countries... Thus, the developing world's clout seen at Utrecht will also be seen at Annual Councils.

church. It makes hundreds of decisions at its annual fall meetings and decides what goes to the GC sessions for consideration and likely adoption. This committee is most powerful; membership changes are crucial.

Utrecht 95 will likely go down as a watershed in Adventist history. This is the first world conference of Adventism in a century to deal significantly with structural realignment. It was driven by the phenomenal growth of the church in the developing world. Today, 9 out of 10 members live outside the United States. Clearly something had to be done. It wasn't fair, as GC president Robert Folkenberg accurately emphasized, for North America to have three times the votes of all others attending Annual Councils. The North American Division (NAD) has dominated the decision-making processes and effectively controlled the church.

The church had two options for dealing with this: (1) Restructure to include adequate geographical representation in the central decision-making bodies and processes of the church, or (2) give more responsibility and autonomy to the different geographic regions. The Folkenberg administration chose the first option. This means that the church headquarters in Washington gains greater power. If the church, increasingly diverse in terms of race, culture and wealth, is to remain the tight-knit organization it has been throughout its history, such a vote was inevitable.

The new structure means the church will be controlled, not by members from developed, industrialized countries, but by members from developing, less-industrialized countries. Beginning at this fall's Annual Council, we will see the same proportions of committee members voting important, regular church business that we saw among the Utrecht delegates. Thus, the developing world's clout seen at Utrecht will also be seen at Annual Councils.

Weak Divisions, Strong Central Administration

The new composition of the Executive Committee means the strengthening of the committee and the concomitant weakening of the church's divisions. Division department directors will be serving unions that are privy to ideas and plans to which Division personnel are not. This could be partially remedied by sending minutes of committee meetings to division presidents, as one delegate suggested. But some believe that the divisions have been structurally weakened. As GC-paid trips are made to the annual meetings, the frequency of union leaders getting together within a division may be reduced.

The void created by weakened divisions could be filled by a stronger General Conference that makes

more, and stronger, decisions for the world church. Greater GC importance could result from the increased world representation. Irregular participation from many unions in the past has implicitly meant that regional initiative had to be taken, of necessity. Now, the temptation will be for central leadership to make decisions that might better be made in regional divisions for reaching the church's mission in different cultural contexts.

Few Laypersons

The new committee composition is a first for Adventism in that it divides the church between administrators and all others, heavily favoring administrators. The old GC constitution allowed up to 50 percent of delegates to be administrators and the other half "laypersons, teachers, pastors." The new committee will have only three laypersons per division, or 42 of 260 members, plus any of the 30 members-at-large who are laypersons. By contrast, many Protestant denominations in the US insist on a clear 50/50 split between clergy and laity in their governing bodies.


Dictatorship by the Majority

A major concern, widely expressed by delegates, is that the new realignment and increased centralization of voting power could neglect unique regional needs. This is a concern, of course, in North America, which found the rejection of women's ordi-

nation devastating. Another issue on the horizon is the retirement plan for NAD ministers, which is drastically underfunded. The newly powerful international members of the committee could refuse to increase monies sustaining the plan or could make reductions to it that the NAD would find catastrophic.

Unless the church restricts the reach of its global authority and grants considerable responsibility to its world divisions for their appropriate care of regional affairs, the women's ordination issue may be only the first of many divisive, contentious battles. It is possible that the positive move toward democratic (geographic) representation could have the effect of hindering local initiatives throughout the world church.

More Sensitivity to Diverse Cultures— A Positive Forecast

Some delegates pointed out that in some ways, the new centralized structure may well increase the church's sensitivity to its diverse races and their cultures. Gary Patterson, GC missions awareness director, believes union presidents attending Executive Committee meetings will perhaps come early, caucus, and thus more adequately address their own unique regional needs. An experience giving great courage and hope was the chance to meet the confident, assertive, yet good-natured delegates attending Utrecht 95. Today's Adventist delegates are not cowed by leadership, and this is no surprise, for Adventists are Protestants, believing fervently in the "priesthood of all believers." 

The new committee will have only three lay persons per division... By contrast, many Protestant denominations in the US insist on a clear 50/50 split between clergy and laity in their governing bodies.

New Composition of General Conference Executive Committee:

- General Conference officers
- Division executive officers
- General Conference departmental directors
- General Conference field secretaries
- Representatives of General Conference institutions and others, such as Adventist Development and Relief Agency and Adventist World Radio
- Director of Archives and Statistics
- Past presidents of the General Conference
- Three laypersons from each division, chosen by the division executive committee from lists of candidates recommended by the union executive committees
- Presidents of union conferences and union missions
- One pastor from each division, without regard to membership.
- One additional church pastor or other front-line denominational employee for every 500,000 members or major fraction thereof beyond the first 500,000—these to be chosen by the division executive committees from lists of candidates recommended by the union conference executive committees
- Thirty members-at-large

What Captures Your Adventist Imagination?

The Delegates Speak!

by Steve Daily

It is a sobering task to take the attitudinal pulse of the most international and diverse Protestant church in the world. Only 100 of the 2,669 General Conference (GC) delegates at Utrecht were questioned or interviewed for this article. But even among these 100, there was amazing diversity. At least seven major themes emerged as they responded to the question, "What captures your Adventist imagination?"

1. A truly unique diversity. No matter how you looked at this remarkable assortment of delegates, ethnically, culturally, socio-economically, educationally or even theologically, the word "diversity" immediately came to mind. "Diversity" was the most popular response coming from delegates who reflected on what "captures" them about the Adventist world today. Chuck Scriven, president of Columbia Union College, said, "I am struck by the luster of the rainbow." There is no other Protestant church that has a "rainbow coalition" like this one. Lawrence Geraty, president of La Sierra University, also contrasted the "tremendous diversity in Adventism" with the relative lack of diversity found in most "American Protestant denominations" today. Even delegates from third world coun-



Steve Daily is campus chaplain at La Sierra University. He has worked with Adventist young people for the last 18 years as a youth pastor, academy Bible teacher, and university assistant professor. He is author of *Adventism for a New Generation*.

tries, such as Seraya Mbangukira (Rwanda), marveled at how "incredibly diverse" this assembly was, and yet so able to tackle "very significant and controversial issues" in a "spirit of Christian love and brotherhood [sic]."

However, many delegates cautioned that for all its beauty, the diversity in our church presents us with struggles, challenges and conflicts that are unprecedented in our history. Many delegates commented that tensions between the developed and undeveloped nations of the world were more pronounced than ever before. According to Robert Folkenberg, many in the developing nations see Adventism in the more developed nations as apathetic, materialistic, worldly, and unspiritual. Those in the more developed nations often dismiss or characterize the evangelistic growth in the developing nations as exaggerated, superficial and lacking in permanence.

Such perceptions were quite pervasive at Utrecht and were reinforced, on the one hand, by a session report stating that a single Adventist laywoman in China had baptized approximately 3,000 people in the space of two years (an average of more than 4 people per day). As one North American delegate put it, "Such reports only serve to demonstrate the highly subjective and emotive nature of Adventism in many of these countries." There is

There is a preoccupation with statistics while massive numbers profess Adventism in name only.

“virtually no commitment to a rational faith that makes a substantive difference in one’s life. There is a preoccupation with statistics while massive numbers profess Adventism in name only.”

Many young people see the SDA church as a sexist, racist organization that obsesses about earrings.”

2. Women in ministry. It didn’t take long at Utrecht to realize that female delegates were a bit of an “endangered species.” Only 300 (11.2 percent) of the 2,669 selected delegates were women. And only 8 (4 percent) of the 200 all-important nominating committee members were female. This is particularly noteworthy when one considers that a strong majority of “active SDA church members” are women. The reason for this inequity becomes clear when one recognizes that the vast majority of GC delegates are ordained denominational employees who generally hold high administrative offices in the church. For example, only 18.2 percent of the delegates at Utrecht were laypeople, and only 3 percent were pastors, teachers or other “front-line workers.” The remaining 78.8 percent come from a large officialdom in the church that is for the most part closed to women.

Yet, in spite of this poor representation, or maybe because of it, the majority of female delegates interviewed seemed spirited and hopeful for the future. Karen Flowers, from the GC, gave a news conference which emphasized the expanding role of women in Adventism. She later commented that “the ordination vote, though disappointing, was only a temporary setback to the full utilization of women’s gifts” that she anticipates in the church. Other delegates, such as Penny Miller, Halley Wilson, and Ruth Cheshire, expressed their excitement and appreciation over the networking opportunities for women at Utrecht, and their concern that “paternalism” in the world church might drive away many young people who favor equality for women. This view was more poignantly stated by Susan Sickler: “Many young people see the SDA church as a sexist, racist organization that obsesses about earrings.”

There was a humor and optimism in the women interviewed that transcended their disappointments and frustra-

On the other hand, the North American pursuit of women’s ordination has been viewed by many delegates from developing nations as a prime example of western Adventism’s preoccupation with secondary, cultural concerns at the expense of proclaiming and spreading the Three Angels’ Messages. “These agendas (to ordain women) are caught up in the material. They are not energetic about the things of the Spirit. We need more emphasis on personal preparation for Christ’s return. That is what Adventism is all about” (Leila Reid, Inter-American Division).

tions. They all saw themselves as part of something bigger than any particular women’s issue, and seemed to realize that the future was on their side; the younger generation at Utrecht did not reflect their parents’ vote against ordination. One secret ballot taken primarily among youth from the developed nations showed 94 percent in favor of women’s ordination. And Jose Rojas, Director of Youth Ministries in North America, stated that approximately 70 percent of the international youth delegation at Utrecht and over 50 percent of the youth from the developing nations were in favor of the motion.

3. Growth, evangelism and global mission. A third theme that continuously popped up among the delegates was excitement over the church’s rapid growth. In the press kit given to reporters at the GC session, the church claims nearly 9 million official members, and some 17 million who consider Adventism to be their church home. It boasts of 1,428 baptisms each day and one every 30 seconds (talk about “numbering Israel”). A majority of the delegates interviewed who were union or division presidents pointed to this growth as their major source of excitement. Many other delegates specifically mentioned the awe and inspiration they received from the reports of the Eastern European churches. The Net 95 project, evangelistic meetings widely broadcast by satellite, was repeatedly referred to as a successful example of how the church is creatively exploring new frontiers in how it does evangelism. And other delegates such as Johnny Manassian (Middle Eastern Union), Donald Yost (GC Archives), and Humberto Rasi (GC Educational Director) expressed their excitement over how the church is rapidly expanding into previously unworked areas of the world. Adventists now have a growing presence in 208 of the world’s 236 countries. We are projecting a world membership of approximately 12 million by the next GC session (Toronto in 2000), and yet 82 percent of the GC budget comes from North America. No wonder so many of our GC leaders have gray hair!

4. A new openness to change. A number of delegates who had attended previous GC sessions commented on what they perceived to be a “new spirit of openness” in the church. Dick Stenbakken (Director of Chaplain’s Ministries) said, “This isn’t your father’s or grandfather’s church anymore. Our doctrines haven’t changed, but the way we do church has changed dramatically.”

NAD President Al McClure also focused his comments on the new ways the church is reaching out to peo-

This isn’t your father’s or grandfather’s church anymore. Our doctrines haven’t changed, but the way we do church has changed dramatically.”

ple, to meet their needs and recognize where they are coming from, in a true spirit of openness.

Yet, other delegates cautioned that the church seems to be more threatened by change than inclined to embrace it. Many North American delegates pointed to the vote against women's ordination and the vote to increase centralized authority and control in the church as clear evidence of this trend.

Others mentioned such developments as a proposed "orthodoxy test" for college teachers, and the removal of progressive *Ministry* editor David Newman, as further evidence that the church isn't as open as it claims.

5. Passion for Jesus and his coming. This theme was clearly the most prominent and heartfelt hope among many of the delegates representing the developing nations of the world. Bernard Kumutu of the Malawi Union said, "Jesus is calling his people now. We are seeing miracles even among the Muslims. These are truly the last days." Ax Pierre, from the Central African Union, argues that "people have no hope today, but Adventism." When we see "what has happened in Somalia and Rwanda there are no human solutions to our problems—only God's solution. His coming brings me great joy."

Such comments were as common among third world delegates as they would have been among North American

delegates not too many decades ago. But there were a few notable exceptions among the North American delegation. Dwight Nelson, pastor of Andrews University church, said, "I sense a certainty of the imminence of Jesus' return everywhere I look. In every language, in every division."

Dick Duerksen (Columbia Union in the NAD) was "overwhelmed by the fervor for Christ and his coming" that he saw "in the words and actions of the international youth who visited Utrecht and spent much of their time doing street evangelism." What will it take to generate this passion in North American youth—a passion that is not generally modeled in the lives of their parents?

Maybe what delegate Gary Swanson, editor of *Collegiate Quarterly*, wished for—"I look forward to seeing our young people assert themselves more." We must empower them to dream beyond their parents, and beyond their church, for Christ. "We need a greater entrepreneurial spirit in our youth."

6. Unity of the Adventist family. This response, maybe more than any other, revealed how different personalities see the church. "When I see this big worldwide Adventist family, I feel tears of joy—it brings me a happiness that I cannot express. I am so grateful to the General

Conference for choosing a place where we could come," said Russian delegate Basilio Zawadzki.

His deep emotional sentiments were echoed from many parts of the globe. "I am overwhelmed by the unity that exists in this church. We have the same Sabbath School lesson, sing the same songs, are the same Adventist family, the whole world around" (Earl Bailey, West Indies Union).

This "sense of family" was also seen as our greatest strength by North American delegates such as Bj Christiansen (president, Southern California Conference) and Dave Faehner (Andrews University).

There were also delegates who felt that truth, honesty, and morality were being sacrificed for the sake of unity. These delegates, though in the minority, spoke out of a deep and genuine pain. As a church, we "value loyalty above justice," said one.

"This church is about control and conformity," said another. Still another said, "One reason we've stayed together so long is that we lie so well." All agreed, however, that Adventists more than any other Protestant church in history, have maintained a remarkable commitment to unity.

7. The General Conference experience itself. Finally, many delegates who had attended GC sessions for decades saw this session as significantly different in its way of doing business. Raoul Dederen, the Andrews theologian who gave the major presentation in favor of women's ordination, emphasized this point: "I have never seen such a weighty session. This was a GC concerned with heavy issues—ordination, church authority, reconfiguring delegations, substantive issues."

Noel Fraser (West Indies) agreed, "I've been to six GC sessions and never seen such important and controversial issues discussed. The participation of the delegates has been impressive—it's difficult, but healthy."

Layman Ellsworth McKee (Southern Union) was impressed with the Christian spirit maintained by "both sides" through the discussion of controversial issues.

But others, such as M. D. Walter (Cambodia) felt that some of the issues were too controversial to bring to the floor for debate.

A former American union president admitted, "I no longer see the GC in session as the voice of God on earth." To some that is heresy, to others it is stating the obvious, which only goes to illustrate the underlying reality behind all these interviews. Even in the world of Adventism there is no monolithic truth; perception is everything.

One reason we've stayed together so long is that we lie so well."

Jesus is calling his people now. We are seeing miracles even among the Muslims. These are truly the last days."

In no longer see the GC in session as the voice of God on earth."

General Conference Delegates Say

NO on Women's Ordination

The result was expected but still bitter for most delegates from the industrialized world. On July 6, at the most divisive and emotional meeting by far, GC delegates voted down women's ordination 1,481 to 673 (69 percent to 31 percent).

The meeting was chaired by Calvin Rock, who emerged as a most able and graceful GC vice president. The debate concerned North American Division's (NAD's) request that it be allowed to ordain women pastors. First NAD president Al McClure made a strong case for the proposal, then two church theologians gave opposing 20-minute arguments; finally the floor was opened for 1 1/2 hours of debate.

FORMAL ADDRESSES

Rock began with a brief history of women and ordination in Adventism. A GC Session in 1881 voted that "females may with perfect propriety be set apart for ministry" by ordination, although that was never done. The modern discussion began in 1968 when Finland requested permission to ordain women as pastors. A series of study groups examined the issue, beginning with a major conference at Camp Mohaven, Ohio. At the 1990 GC Session, delegates voted 3-1 that women may perform the basic func-

by Jim Walters

"Damsteegt... argued for a headship theology in which man has authority over woman..."

tions of a pastor, but denied them ordination.

McClure's address was widely praised by partisans as very well done. It cogently covered anticipated objections: the request is "not an ultimatum," but a "heartfelt appeal for a ... missiological need." The NAD is loyal and its support of the world church is "not linked in any way to this issue. Many youth could be "disillusioned." It was far from a "feminist" issue; Ellen White herself spoke of certain women being set apart by the laying on of hands. "My fellow believers," McClure implored the delegates, "we must not allow this issue to divide us."

Next, Gerard Damsteegt, professor at Andrews University, opposed the motion. He argued for a headship theology in which man has authority over woman because of selected biblical passages. Damsteegt cited Paul: "I do not permit a woman to have authority over a man. " (1 Tim 2:12 NIV); "The head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is man" (1 Cor 11:3 NIV). Damsteegt resolutely insisted that these statements have "nothing to do with culture." Then he cited Ellen White as saying that the Bible is infallible and should be accepted as it reads (*Great Controversy*, p. 7). Arguing that women's ordination is against three doctrines—those of church, scripture and unity—Damsteegt concluded that the issue is "whether we will follow the Bible or the culture of society."

The proponent for women's ordination, Raoul Dederen, former professor and seminary dean at Andrews University, argued against Damsteegt's literalist view of scripture and advocated a principle-oriented view. A literalist view is untenable, he said. The New Testament says that women are not to teach and that elders are to be husband to one wife. But our church does not ban women from Sabbath School teaching, and the church does not ban single pastors from serving the church, indicated Dederen. At a more abstract level of biblical interpretation, looking at principles, God did a new thing in Christ for all of humankind. In Christ "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female..." Gal. 3:28, N.I.V. Dederen used this text to indicate that all men and all women have been given equality in all respects in Christ, and the church must recognize this reality.

DISCUSSION

Immediately following the presentations, delegates raced to the microphones; during the 1 1/2-hour discussion, the lines behind the two mikes held at 37 to 50 delegates on the pro side, 45 to 64 on the con side. Those speaking against the proposal were predominantly African and South American men. Also in this line were one Australian man and one South American woman. At the other mike, delegates from Western Europe, North America and the Caribbean predominated. Although one Asian man spoke in favor, delegates from Asia and the formerly Communist countries basically sat out this discussion. Delegates were limited to 2 minutes of speaking, and though the comments were spirited, the spirit was civil. Unlike the debate on this topic at the GC Session 5 years ago, the discussion was not as personally insulting to women.

AFTERWARD

After the vote, McClure taped a message to his NAD through the GC media center. He appealed for



Over 100 lined up to speak for or against the issue of ordination of women.

JASON WELLS

church unity: "We do not wish to break ranks with this great global family." But he acknowledged the severe setback: "Let me tell you what I fear. Many, particularly the younger generation, are very sensitized to anything that suggests racism or sexism. The civil rights struggle has made all of us aware of discrimination in any of its ugly forms. Many of us are now looking to the church to see if the inclusiveness and fairness Jesus taught are practiced here. To many, this decision today will come as a serious blow."

The next morning the NAD delegation met to mourn their loss. McClure

mentioned plans to establish a new President's Commission of Women in Ministry and to see the role of women in ministry and church leadership "significantly expanded."

Some NAD delegates said the issue has been adequately studied, and the time for action has arrived. Larry Geraty, president of La Sierra University, suggested to the caucus that ordained ministers might exchange their ordination credentials for the ministerial licenses available to women, to show solidarity with women colleagues. One delegate suggested civil disobedience, a tactic used in the civil rights struggles of the American south.

It seems ironic that the General Conference designates 1995 the "Year of the Adventist Woman," but this year the world delegates say No to allowing women into the ranks of the 12,000 ordained ministers. Many were disappointed. Denominational leaders, with others, had backed ordination with speeches at Annual Council, the speech in Utrecht, and a special strategy committee. The Southeastern California Conference Gender Inclusiveness Commission and others had sent materials to all GC delegates. The *Adventist Review* has run special covers, issues, and features promoting women.

But independent activists distributed materials with a very different message, including Raymond Holmes' *The Tip of an Iceberg*, and Adventists Affirm's book *Searching the Scriptures*. Certain conference, union and division presidents have supported groups opposing women's ordination.

"Many of us are now looking to the church to see if the inclusiveness and fairness Jesus taught are practiced here."

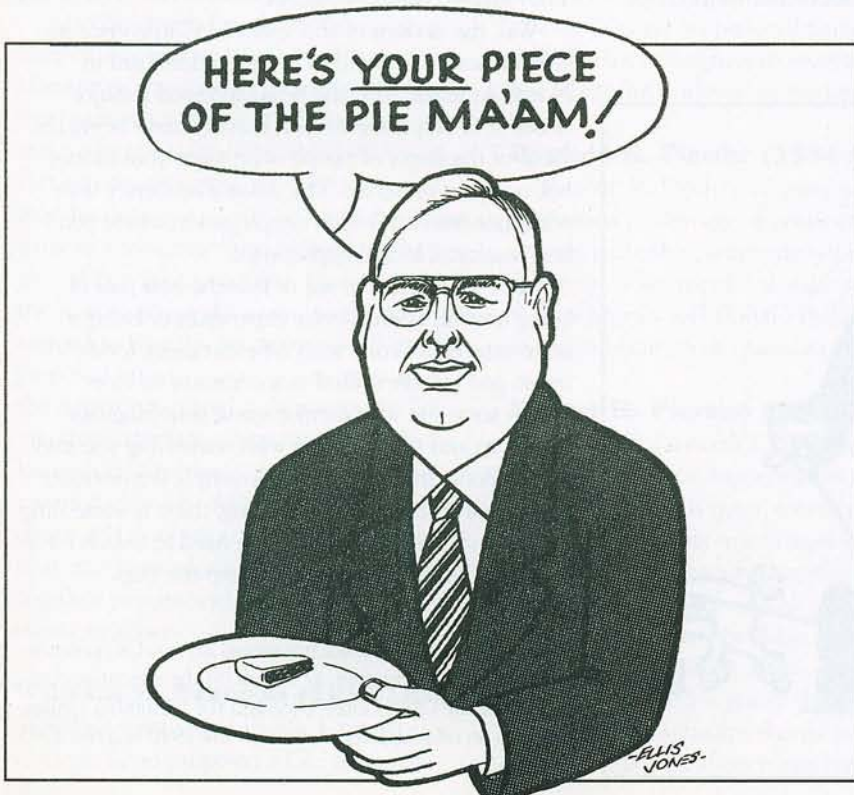
ANALYSIS

Adventist Today asked delegates why the vote was negative. Some said it's a classical conservative versus liberal issue. Others blame the resentment against the NAD, because of its long domination of the world church. Some ordination proponents thought that they might win if they got enough materials to the delegates, but found themselves wrong.

The vote refusing the NAD permission to ordain its women is the real "tip of the iceberg," the iceberg being the clash between scriptural literalism, a view held largely in the developing world—Africa and much of South American and Inter-America, and a principle-based approach to Scripture followed in areas where the church has matured for a century and a half. The headship theology, derived from a literalist reading of passages that clearly reflect the patriarchal nature of ancient society (including the biblical period), still greatly appeals to traditional cultures. See David Newman's analysis on this page.

During the GC debate on the issue, one South American delegate, opposed to women's ordination, illustrated his impassioned point by reaching into a nearby seat, pulling his wife forcibly to his side, enthusiastically hugging her, and publicly professing her equality while she stood silent and compliant. Similarly, many African converts, not far removed from bigamous exploitation of women, are naturally drawn to an interpretation of scripture that affirms a millennia-old sentiment toward women.

...ordained ministers might exchange their ordination credentials for the ministerial licenses available to women.



Stuck in the Concrete

by J. David Newman

The 1995 General Conference will go down in history as the venue for two radically different methods of interpreting Scripture. In the ordination of women debate, Gerard Damsteegt presented the literal approach to understanding Scripture. This method has the advantage of simplicity and easy understanding. What could be simpler than following exactly what Scripture says? This approach is valid if its advocates take everything literally, but they do not. And they have no clear guidelines on how to choose which literal Scriptures to accept and which literal Scriptures to reject. Even they do not accept literally that women cannot teach men, which is what the text says. They do not accept that an elder must be married, which is what the text says.

Raoul Dederen presented a principle approach to understanding Scripture. Behind every admonition there is a principle. Find the principle first, then see if the application given in Scripture is valid today. If it is, follow it. If not, using the same principle, decide what application should be followed. The advantages of this approach are clear. A person does not get caught up in the debate of what literal passage to accept or reject.

The difficulty with this approach is the high level of abstract thinking required. Most people have not learned to reason abstractly. This is why the literal approach is so appealing. Children begin with concrete and literal understandings of life. It is not until around 10 years and older that they can begin to conceptualize and reason in the abstract. If people learn only the proof-text method of Bible study they will never develop a principle-based approach and will always remain children in their understanding.

The method that rules in the coming years will determine whether the Adventist church will continue to grow and mature or whether it will always remain in an infantile state. ☺

J. David Newman has been editor for more than 10 years of *Ministry* magazine, a monthly journal for Adventist clergy.

A Delegate Reflects on Utrecht 95:

Keep the Hugs

by Susan Sickler

The General Conference in session is the only organization on planet Earth that makes the U.S. Congress look efficient. It is 1/4 camp meeting, 1/4 family reunion, 1/4 business session and 1/4 political convention. The miracle is that it does somehow get the job done.

I would suggest that anyone who sat through all of the business sessions in Utrecht has a better understanding of just why no other Protestant church attempts to have a world church structure. Only the Catholics and Adventists have theologies that are congenial with a certain level of submission to hierarchical authority, and thus allow continued operation as world churches.

We need to maximize the advantages of world church structure while minimizing the disadvantages. Certainly the future trend will be toward choosing to agree on fewer items and moving more of the decision making to lower levels. Nowhere will this be more true than in North America. We learned some lessons at this session that we perhaps should have learned sooner:

1. If you have a problem, solve it at the lowest level possible—don't pass it up the hierarchy. North American problems must remain North American problems. Don't ask for help; you probably won't like what you get.

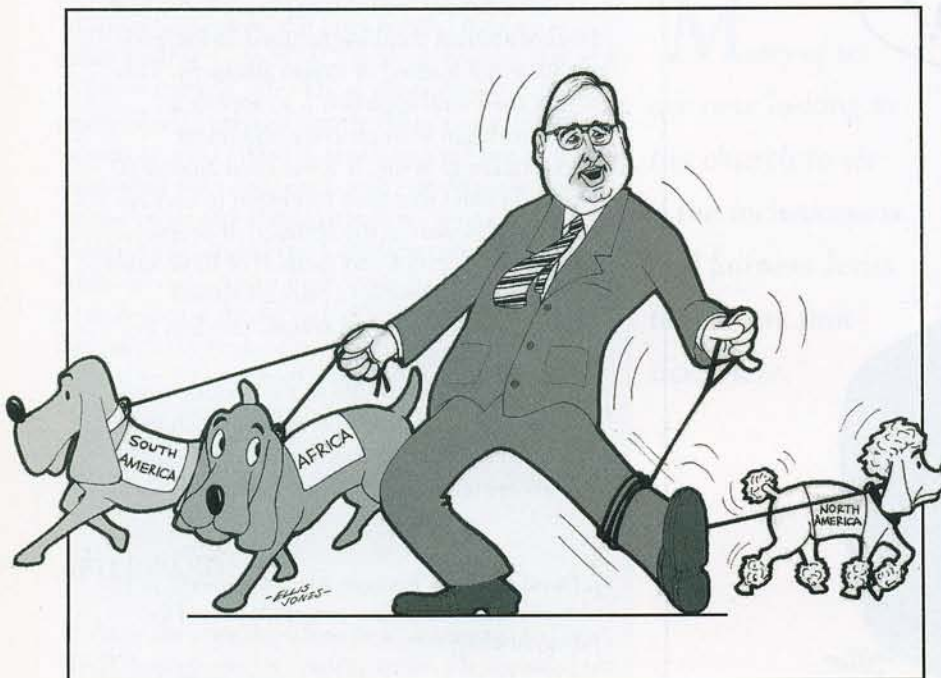
2. This church has a major Bible interpretation problem that needs immediate attention, starting yesterday. If we don't solve this, the church will ultimately split.

3. We need to begin an educational process in the world field to separate what is General Conference and what is North American Division (NAD). In the perception of most delegates, these two are combined, and as a result, there is an incredible amount of anger and resentment directed towards us in North America. The truth is that NAD doesn't have enough votes to elect anyone to be a dog catcher. If the delegates from the world church don't like the actions of certain former North Americans of the GC, they should vote them out, and not blame us. They elected them, we didn't.

Will the actions of this General Conference session increase the trend to congregationalism in North America? Yes, the trend received a major boost. It is very hard to spend several days being the focus of the anger of people who want your money but not your presence. The natural tendency is to withdraw into one's own congregation where you feel comfortable and appreciated.

Yet I would hate to see us lose the best part of being a world church—the experience of being a huge extended family with different dress, foods, music and culture united in a common mission. When someone who cannot speak your language comes up and tries to agree with something you said on the floor, and lacking words, simply throws their arms around you in a big bear hug, there is something very special that takes place. We need to search for a way to reduce the tension and keep the hugs.

Susan Sickler, from Ohio, has served on two GC commissions on church structure, as well as on the executive committees of the Ohio Conference and the Columbia Union. She was an official delegate to both the 1990 and the 1995 GC sessions.





Vignettes of SEVEN GENERAL CONFERENCE PRESIDENTS

Raymond F. Cottrell

I have been privileged to serve the church under seven General Conference (GC) presidents during 65 years, 47 before retirement and 18 since. For my last 25 active years, I was an editor with the Review and Herald Publishing Association, adjoining the GC in Takoma Park. I served on every GC committee concerned with the Bible, theology, and doctrine. These committees, plus my editorial duties, often brought me into personal working contact with the GC presidents.

Charles H. Watson (1930-1936)

My service to the church began in 1930, the same year that C. H. Watson became GC president. He had been called from Australia to lead the church through difficult depression years, and it grew in numbers from little more than 300,000 to well over 400,000.

James L. McElhaney (1936-1950)

My first chance to observe a GC president closely was with J. L. McElhaney in a committee considering problems relating to the Medical Cadet Corps. A sensitive issue was under consideration, and sharply conflicting opinions were expressed. As chairman he provided for full and free discussion, without saying anything himself on the subject. When all had spoken, he summarized the reasons pro and con and suggested what seemed to him the best solution. Someone proposed his suggestion as a motion, and the committee voted it unanimously. For me, that experience demonstrated able leadership—openness, command of relevant information, skill in weighing the evidence and drawing an appropriate conclusion, and particularly, the ability to bring together persons with diverse views and strong opinions.

William H. Branson (1950-1954)

While teaching at Pacific Union College, I had proposed a GC office for

Bible research and a permanent Bible research committee; both proposals were voted in 1952, and I moved to Takoma Park to edit the SDA Bible Commentary and serve on the new Biblical Research Committee.

For the committee I prepared a formal statement of Bible interpretation principles and procedures generally followed by Adventist Bible scholars—qualifications for research-level Bible study, and the importance of such elements as context, language, historical setting, salvation history perspective, and objectivity.

Reviewing the document, Elder Branson objected vigorously, primarily because, as he said, he would not be qualified to do research-level Bible study. Curiously, Ellen White had advocated every specific point to which he took exception. Accordingly, I added brief quotations from her writings to substantiate each point, and with these additions he tacitly approved the document.

This incident demonstrated an administrator's limited perspective and expertise on matters beyond his personal competence, and also his willingness to reverse his opinion when the evidence so required.

Reuben R. Figuhr (1954-1966)

Reuben R. Figuhr's 12 years as GC president was a golden age of openness and wise church leadership, amply demonstrated in the series of doctrinal discussions with Walter Martin and Donald Barnhouse and in the publication of *Questions on Doctrine*.

Robert H. Pierson (1966-1979)

Robert H. Pierson's 13 years as president marked a dramatic reorientation of church policy. Pierson was quiet, friendly, and deeply spiritual. He ruled the church with the sincere, unquestioned conviction that God had commissioned him to do so.

Convinced that the Bible scholars of the church were leading it astray, Pierson repeatedly stated his policy that administrators, not Bible scholars, should conduct the church's theological-doctrinal business. He

persuaded the 1969 Spring GC Meeting to remove the Bible scholars en masse from the Biblical Research Committee. Then, after protest by seminary teachers, he retained the scholars but stacked the committee with administrators and other non-scholars. He also placed administrators with no training or experience in Bible research in charge of the Biblical Research Committee.

A quarter of a century later the theological climate that resulted from Pierson's policy still prevails in the church. This climate was directly responsible for transmuting Desmond Ford's October 27, 1979, address into a theological fire storm that engulfed the Adventist world.

Neal C. Wilson (1979-1990)

The theological climate of Pierson's administration continued throughout Wilson's 11 years as president. To many, it also seemed that his administrative style was politically motivated, and that he usually required an unreasonably long time to express his opinion on a given subject. Wilson became known as the church's ambassador to the world and was very influential in cultivating public relations with politically important figures.

Robert S. Folkenberg (1990-)

Robert Folkenberg's first term as president of the GC perpetuated the theological-doctrinal climate of Pierson's administration, and he has shown discomfort, like Pierson and Wilson, with professional Bible scholars. Nevertheless, under his leading, the church has attained a world membership approaching nine million.

Elsewhere in this issue, James Walters and Herman Bauman evaluate Folkenberg's first term as president.

Raymond Cottrell is a veteran Adventist leader and scholar. Of his extensive scholarly and administrative contributions, that most often praised by our readers is his article in the *SDA Bible Commentary*: "The Role of Israel in Old Testament Prophecy," (Vol 4, pg 25-38).

An open letter to Robert Folkenberg, president, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

From Herman Bauman, president of the Arizona Conference

July, 1995

Dear Bob,

Someone once noted that it's good to have friends in high places. Well then, I must be very fortunate, for I have a special friend in the highest earthly position, president of God's church.

Who could have thought way back in 1961, Bob, that one day the burden for leadership of this great church would rest on your shoulders? Surely you remember that time as well as I do. I was conference evangelist for the Wisconsin Conference. Bruce Johnston, from Andrews University, asked me to come and assist him and Steve Vitrano with an evangelism field school in Appleton, Wisconsin, on behalf of the seminary. Among the seminary students participating was one Robert S. Folkenberg. I was already an established conference worker. You were a seminary student. Why, come to think of it, I must have had a part in helping to train you for your present responsible position. We even did some group singing together and, as I recall, played in a trombone trio together. It seems in retrospect that we had some other things in common. Aren't you an alumnus of Atlantic Union College? I served on the theology faculty there for seven years and was also chairman of the department. Bob, it is no wonder you have turned out so well.

The truth is that when your name came to the floor at the 1990 GC session to be elected as president, it was a bit of a shock to many of us. It was not that we questioned your qualifications, but we hadn't thought of a local conference president being elected to that very important position. However, I, along with many others, was very excited about your nomination and quick to give you support. Bob, God has blessed you with incredible abilities and gifts for the important task you hold. You are blessed with great intelligence. You are open-minded, always ready to consider new ideas and new ways. You seem to always be on the cutting edge of new techniques, theories and philosophies. You are blessed with amazing stamina, energy, and the ability to get enormous work done in less time than most of us would even think about. You had worked overseas as well as in the United States. As a bilingual person, you obviously had great expertise and confidence in not only speaking to, but working with, people of different languages and cultures. You were indeed the ideal and right choice. In my corner, Bob, there was great rejoicing over your election.

You got off to a great start in your presidency. The whole world field seemed to respond to your leadership and rejoice that the Lord had brought you to that position for such a time as this.

Many of us who strongly believe in the gospel, and in the need to emphasize it in our church, were ecstatic as you began to emphasize the gospel in your preaching and writing. You seemed very supportive of *Ministry* magazine in its solid emphasis and concentration on Jesus and the centrality of the message of "righteousness by faith." The *Adventist Review* also reflected your clear emphasis on Jesus Christ and his righteousness. Many of us were absolutely thrilled beyond words.

When the OnLine video came out emphasizing assurance in Jesus, your interview with Bill Johnsson was so encouraging—you showed amazing courage and commitment in taking a stand for the message of assurance in Jesus. And then you described how you had been able to minister to your very own daughter, who had just returned from a mission appointment, about the wonderful assurance that is available for us in Jesus. You told how she was able to understand it fully for the first time. Our tears flowed and our hearts rejoiced with you.

There are many of us who believe, as Ellen White stated, that "the message of righteousness by faith is the third angels' message in verity," and we thought, hoped, and prayed that this might indeed be the beginning of the last, great, rapid movements, when the church would embrace the message of Christ and his righteousness in its fullness. Thus God would be able to entrust us with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the spreading of the message would indeed be finished soon, and we could go home to that better land with Jesus. It was a time of great rejoicing for many of us. Could it be that God would do for us in this generation what he seemingly had hoped to do for the church following the 1888 General Conference, to lead us joyously into the kingdom, trusting his grace? We hoped so.

But now, Bob, some of us are at least a bit concerned. It almost seems that there is a bit of backing away from some of the original resolve and a bit of cooling of the early gospel fire. Is it possible that you are yielding to some of the pressure from the very conservative forces of the church, both in the United States and abroad? We don't seem to be getting quite the same emphasis on the gospel and Jesus' righteousness in our magazines that we were getting before. Nor are we hearing it quite as much in your sermons or reading it in your writings. Please, Bob, don't yield to any such pressures. Uphold Jesus and his glorious robe of righteousness. That's the only basis for our hope. Continue to lead us out of the hopeless darkness of legalism that seems to have been prevalent for so long in so many places.

You have done a wonderful job of promoting, encouraging, and emphasizing evangelism throughout the world. This church has experienced unbelievable growth through your leadership, and all of us rejoice. Even North America has responded to that emphasis, with programs like Net 95. Soul winning is moving forward apace. But, Bob, don't forget the need for nurture within our churches, to our members. So many

of those who came into the church in years past, as well as those who are coming in right now, are, or will be, out of the church because they have not received the love, nurture, acceptance, and forgiveness they need. Sadly, many have been met by a judgmental spirit on the part of many members. They have not been taken into the sometimes closed circles of friendship. They have not been given opportunities to be involved in the services and mission of the church, and many of them have made their way back outside. Soul winning is important, Bob, but soul keeping is every bit as vital. Let's give emphasis to the nurture as well.

Your emphasis on the worldwide mission of this church, Bob, has been remarkably effective and exciting. Many areas have become available for and receptive to the proclamation of the Adventist message. Such places as the countries of the former Soviet Union and Albania have been exciting. You have done a tremendous job of helping to focus the attention of the worldwide church on some of these places, and great things have been accomplished for the Lord. Thousands upon thousands of people rejoice in the Adventist message today because of these open doors and your encouragement to us to move through them. Many of us individually and in our fields of labor have done much to help encourage ministry in these various places by sharing our resources and our personnel.

But Bob, you have seemed to chide us for not doing more. At our last Annual Council, you gave some interesting and disturbing statistics. You reminded us that back about 65 years ago, for every tithe dollar given, Adventists gave 56 cents for missions, and then you stated that now, for every tithe dollar given, Adventists in North America give 4 cents for missions.

Now, I don't know if these statistics used for both years represented the same factors or not, but I do know this: You and your administration have been giving very strong emphasis to "project giving," and you did not make this clear: In that very same year you referred to, when North American Adventist gave only 4 cents per tithe dollar to regular missions, in fact \$23 million were given via "project giving." It seems to me that the North American Division is still very generous and committed to its mission outreach. I would appreciate your making that fact a little more clear in your presentations. You also didn't mention that although the percentage of mission giving as compared to tithe has decreased significantly, the actual amount of mission giving in regular offerings has increased about 15 times. You are president of the whole world field, Bob. That includes North America. Don't mistreat us or misrepresent us.

You have always been very open and progressive in your thinking. I hoped you would take a stronger position on the issue of women's ordination. I am sure you actually believe it is in harmony with biblical teaching as well as Christian principles of fairness and equality. I am sorry that at the GC session, you did not give your support to the proposal that would allow each division to authorize the ordination, without regard to gender, of individuals within its territory. It is really time to move into the 21st century and to support clearly established Christian principles.

Bob, the area in which I am most greatly concerned about your leadership has to do with the thing you call "linkage." I fully agree that it is necessary for us to do everything we can to hold our church together very strongly and unitedly. There are many issues, political, national, doctrinal, theological, philosophical, etc., that would tend to pull our church apart. I believe, however, that Jesus is the only thing that will hold us together. Making strong rules and policies that require unity are probably only going to arouse opposition rather than a sense of togetherness.

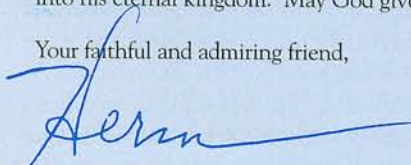
I was really troubled with the proposal that the next higher organization in the structure of the church should issue credentials to the executive officers of the level directly below it. Thankfully, that was voted down at the 1993 Annual Council.

However, many things were still voted to bring about linkage. A very troubling thing was the provision for the next higher organization to deal with executive officers whose integrity is questioned in regard to moral or professional standing, doctrinal positions, loyalty, etc. The policy provides that when the conference employing the individual fails to deal with him, then the next higher organization has the authority, no, the "duty" to remove him from office.

Although you refer to these policies as increasing the "LINKAGE," I still say, as I did on the floor at the Annual Council, LINKAGE is spelled C-O-N-T-R-O-L. The trend troubles me greatly. Some have suggested that this may be an indication of the return to the "kingly power" that Ellen White spoke so strongly against. I sincerely hope that is not the case. I pray that it isn't.

Overall, I look back over these first five years of your leadership, Bob, I certainly have a very positive evaluation of what has happened and the way you have led our church. I still want to believe that you are God's personal choice to lead this great Seventh-day Adventist family into his eternal kingdom. May God give you the grace, the wisdom, the courage, and the faith and trust in Jesus to be that leader.

Your faithful and admiring friend,



Herman Bauman



The President

ROBERT FOLKENBERG,

Entrepreneur Evangelist

by Jim Walters

Robert S. Folkenberg is a complex General Conference (GC) president with a simple vision: to see increased multitudes converted to Adventism. And to make sure evangelism remains the driving passion of a diverse Adventism, a president of great skill is needed. Folkenberg is such a man.

Folkenberg is innovative, energetic, quick, articulate. He spends church money freely, but inspires liberality. He talks of balance, but tends to be strongly conservative. He seems self-confident and open, but doesn't like disagreement, and did nothing to prevent the recent replacement of J. David Newman, the candid editor of *Ministry* magazine. He is great on organization, but short on creative vision.

Several important characteristics have made Folkenberg, so far, very successful in pursuing his goals.

Entrepreneurial in Evangelism. A forty-something conference president in the Carolinas when called to head the GC, Folkenberg is now 54. Born of missionary parents in Puerto Rico, he spent a formative 20 years as pastor and administrator in Central America; he comes by his missions interests naturally. In the Inter-American Division he was most innovative with mission projects: building and/or fund raising for a hospital, a school, an office complex, two orphanages, and several radio stations. Now he has raised millions of dollars for innovative missions programs even as traditional channels of giving are diminishing. Funds for the new Global Mission, and a presidential fund that can be drawn on for special projects, raise treasurers' and

auditors' eyebrows. But with such resources, Folkenberg can more easily implement fresh ideas.

Iconoclastic in Worship. In Adventism it is easier for a minister to "preach false doctrine than change the order of service," stated the president at a GC session press conference. Asked about some Adventists in Europe who are reportedly speaking in tongues, Folkenberg took the opportunity to speak of the need to "experience the relational joys...of family. We walk as isolated and lonely people." He suggested that traditionalists should not engage in "confrontation" with demonstrative and celebrative worshipers, but should receive an injection of their spirit.

Theologically conservative. Although Folkenberg holds an M.A. in New Testament studies, theology is not his forte. His experience is elsewhere. But documents that have come out of his administration suggest a very conservative position. For example, at Utrecht, the leading study document, "The Authority of Scripture," discussed by delegates in the largest hall, represented the most conservative of North American viewpoints. An absolutist view of Scripture was advocated, with science and culture largely dismissed as threats to a correct understanding. The last page discussed church discipline, mentioning "submission to confessional creeds." Further, "Church discipline is simply the right of self-preservation."

Politically astute. The president's report to the delegates was masterful. The \$45,000 multimedia production was fully scripted, with big screen video alone, video with live talk-over, videoed missionaries on location yielding to live interview, and a 3-minute satellite hookup between Folkenberg and a

Cambodian missionary couple. The high point was colorful footage of an energetic South African choir on video, yielding to the final verse of their anthem being sung live without missing a beat as the spotlights identified them on the opposite end of the 200-foot stage.

The hour-plus presentation was ostensibly about the administration's four themes: Assurance in Christ, Church Governance, Global Mission and Youth. However, the program quickly moved to popular mission themes, with much time devoted to the combining of the black and white unions in South Africa. Six times the delegates applauded spontaneously. The report ended with the president singing "Stars of His Crown" in beautiful Spanish harmony with a little girl. The performance was moving, both in technique and popular spirituality. The audience clapped loud and long. One delegate saw "raw politics" at work. A missions specialist said the report lacked any sign of "humility or challenge." But if the president's reelection the following morning had been in any doubt, the momentum from this presentation didn't hurt.

Thoroughly pragmatic. One of the reasons that Folkenberg's predecessor, Neal C. Wilson, was not reelected was his openness to giving women pastors authority to perform basic ministerial functions. Folkenberg is staying above the fray. At the press conference in Utrecht, a Dutch journalist asked him whether he was happy about the delegates' decision to turn down women's ordination. He replied that he'd been under pressure from both sides to take leadership: "It is more important that I stay above this battle to lead the troops to win the war of the broader issues of what this church is about."

Profound Christian Love

by the editors

Finally, what does Utrecht mean? What does it tell us about our church today and what does it suggest about tomorrow's church? The answer is, plenty. General Conference (GC) sessions reveal realities and trends that are not otherwise evident.

Utrecht 95's theme was "United in Christ."

"That's all we are," intoned one visitor, noting the obvious cultural and theological diversity at the session. But being "in Christ" is the core of Christianity, and it has profound spiritual meaning. To unite in Christ at Utrecht with more than 35,000 Adventists from around the globe was a spiritual high, regardless of one's Adventist perspective. Indeed, this core unity is even more beautiful in light of the cultural and spiritual diversity among us.

Cultural diversity. It's here. And we don't criticize it. Remarkably, today mainstream Adventism, coming out of culturally staid New England, embraces broad cultural diversity—if Utrecht 95 is any indication. An exquisite choir of mandolins and women from the Ukraine performed the last Friday night of the session, replete with colorful national costumes and each woman tastefully wearing several necklaces. In the crowded Jaarbeurs central hallway, a Madagascar group performed an indigenous dance, singing in their native tongue, like something found on a National Geographic TV special. When one

of the performers was asked whether the dance/song was specially Christian or just national, the distinction did not appear important to him.

Theological Diversity. It's here. Many have known this for a long time, but it was rarely acknowledged in public and never displayed front and center at a GC session, as it was in the women's ordination debate. (See the full report and the note by David Newman in these pages.) The Folkenberg administration is leery of theological diversity. "The Authority of Scripture," a study document discussed at Utrecht 95, has a most conservative tone and speaks positively of "submission to confessional statements of faith." But given the theological diversity exemplified at Utrecht, which side would write the confessional statements?

In response to theological diversity and other issues, Folkenberg emphasized that "God has given authority to His church," citing Matthew 16:19: "I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven..." (See "The Church—Authority and Responsibility," *Adventist Review*, May, 1995). Such a use of this text is unheard of in Adventist circles. Our traditional evangelists fault the Roman Catholic attempts to make this text justify their case for apostolic succession. Following Folkenberg's reasoning, the newly constituted GC Executive Committee may vote far-reaching

theological statements in the name of God and church. No holy pronouncements, however, are going to reverse conscientiously held individual religious positions—and they shouldn't.

Of course, the church must hold to its formative doctrines such as Sabbath rest, Advent hope and divine creation, but the personal meaning of these beliefs will necessarily vary among ethnic, national, and socioeconomic groups.

Institutional Diversity. It's not here, but it's coming in some form. One thing is clear: a GC session is not going to vote Yes on women's ordination in our lifetimes. One vice president of the GC acknowledged as much. It's also clear that North American Adventists are not going to wait, but will follow what for them is "present truth" on this matter. Not just North American, but African and South American Adventists must have structures that allow them to live an Adventism that is authentic in their own time and culture. The new international order of the GC session and the GC Executive Committee are wonderful, but for the essential integrity of our diverse church, the regional divisions must be strengthened. This development will come; it is inevitable.

World president Folkenberg had it right in his final Sabbath sermon at Utrecht: The unity we have in Christ is in profound Christian love.

CREATIONISM

I suspect that the G.R.I. [Geoscience Research Institute] is essentially "reinventing the wheel" with respect to seeking ways to reconcile the Bible with science. Hugh Ross, Ph.D. established a ministry called "Reasons to Believe" in Pasadena years ago and has done a wonderful job of dispelling the myth that science defies scripture. He is, of course, nondenominational in order to maintain his ability to think freely. I could never comprehend the SDA logic that "nature is God's second book" and yet watch Adventists flee the scene whenever scientific views regarding that same "nature" were discussed.

Vernon P. Wagner
Huntington Beach, CA

CRITICIZING THE PRESIDENT

Recently someone gave me two copies of *Adventist Today*, which I read with some interest and some disgust.

I have read many articles by you in the past and always had a good opinion of what you wrote. However, I was really disappointed by some of the articles you chose to include in these two issues of your magazine.

I am aware that everyone is entitled to his opinion about things but believe that where our church is concerned, that we do not do well when we allow public criticism of our leaders, our methods, etc. No doubt, many mistakes are made by our leaders, as they are human even as you and I and prone to errors. Criticizing our General Conference president does not assist him in making correct decisions. We need to uphold him even as Moses needed to have his arms upheld, and assist him in every way we can rather than tear him down. Criticism does no one any good—the criticized or the criticizer.

Another item that disappointed me was the "garbage" about the age of the earth, etc. The anthropologist who wrote about that needs to get his head on straight and do more study and read-

ing of Mrs. White and others or else find another church to mislead!

Marian Orser
Ceres, California

Editor's Note: You refer, no doubt, to the lead article "Folkenberg Criticizes Nurturers and Revisionists" on the back page of our January-February, 1995 issue. Note that a third of the article is a direct quotation of what Folkenberg said, and the other two thirds a report of what took place and the response of those who heard him speak. This is a news story in which Adventist Today expresses no opinion of its own. It is Folkenberg who is criticizing people. The article might also have pointed out that his criticism inadvertently applies also to a majority of the Bible teachers in our colleges and universities today—and they are as dedicated and loyal to the church as he is!

Ideally, the church is a community of people who have individually entered into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter (1 Peter 2:9) speaks of them as "priests," that is, junior partners with their great High Priest, in service. They do not "belong" to the church (Catholic model); they are the church (New Testament model).

STAYING IN AND LEAVING THE CHURCH

As a former SDA (local elder, youth leader, SS leader, etc.) and a subscriber to *Adventist Today* I found John Martin's "Real Reason People Quit the Church" sadly out of place in your otherwise well-balanced issue dealing with member retention. As a Revelation warrior out there on the front line, his hard line attitude toward hard-won followers who break ranks is understandable.

What I can't fathom is why his simplistic views and limited experience were packaged as some sort of scientific survey and paraded in a feature article like the last word on the subject, case closed. "Let the dead bury the dead!"

His conclusions apparently found agreement among the majority of your

editorial review committee. I am surprised, but then again, not really.

James L. Strawn, D.D.S.
Fort Pierce, Florida

It seems we are being instructed by a "self-styled" judge in Adventism. Our John Martin seems to know all there is to being the cause of people leaving the Seventh-day Adventist body of communicants. (March-April, 1995).

I am in full agreement with Dr. Walter Fahlsing, whose confession is being an "unchurched Christian". Now the rejection of Adventist teachings as were referred to by the Doctor, I am sure many more will also follow this rejection of Ellen White.

My release from White came when I deliberately turned to the Scriptures, "as they read," (EGW) and so established the gospel foundation to which Paul was the recipient by none other but the Lord Jesus.

I am now relieved by what is now coming to pass that I, as a layman, have also seen the "good" in her writings were not original, and the "original" was not good. What Adventism needs is to heed Paul's warning to the Galatians.

I wish also to thank *Adventist Today* for the forthright honesty shown the recipients of this most enlightening work by a most honest publication.

William Ritz
Walla Walla, Washington

I just read from cover to cover the March-April issue, and found many interesting things about the Worldwide Church of God's doctrinal revisions and financial woes, issues of women in the church, creation questions, Branch Davidians and Waco, AIDS in Africa, etc. The articles on Staying and Leaving the Church were outstanding, and I read them with interest.

"Why I Left the Seventh-day Adventist Church," by Clela Fuller, is a thorough-going application of reason to the issue, and her bottom line of defining morality based on the basic relation-

ships between human beings as formulated in the Golden Rule could have been based on 1 John 4:12, 20. I found this article perhaps closer to my own experience than any of the others.

Walter Fahlsing's Letter and later Reflections also uses Reason, with the exception of his two non-negotiable a priori presumptive "statements." His second statement, "that the Bible, when read by a believer who is led by the Holy Spirit, contains the truth about salvation," is quite interesting. One wonders if two or more such believers will necessarily agree, or does the Spirit give different strokes to different folks, recognizing individuality as a prime directive?

Rosalie Anderson's "Coming Back to Family" is well titled: family ties, feelings and emotions seem to play a dominant role in her thinking. I wonder if she reaffirmed belief in the 27 points of doctrine when she returned to membership, or does she consider them irrelevant? She says she read the NIV "not to figure out doctrine, but to discover the God behind the Bible." Before joining a group, would it not be wise to find out what they believe?

I must admit Maryan Stirling's "Treasure (and a Few Other Things) Hid in a Field" left me baffled. Her use of the loaded word "aberrations" at the beginning caught my eye. But her metaphoric definition of the field as the church seemed to have no basis at all, and contradicts the usage in Matt. 13:38, just prior to the treasure in vs. 44. Her candlesticks and seven churches metaphor, coupled with her statement that "Nearly any kind of a church does wonderful things for families that worship in it," left me wondering about Great Babylon and her daughters and their wine that corrupts the whole earth. But no worry: "The seven churches don't have perfect theology. It's not required. Whether ultimately all our 27 doctrines wash or not, I think I'll stay." Her Cocoon and Dry Bones metaphors only underlined my conclusion that metaphors offer a very flimsy basis for making decisions that affect eternal interests.

David J. Entz writes: "I Am an

Adventist," but after reading his statement, I wondered. The fact that he is "active in various ministries independent of the Adventist denomination," is not a ground for questions per se, but it does seem significant when coupled with the fact that he cannot identify with the Millerites, or with anyone who invents a complicated scenario of final events. It seems he would find it hard to identify with Ellen White, or a majority of traditional Adventists, past or present.

Richard Bates' article was full of interesting and stimulating gems, but his bottom line reason for remaining in the church was hardly convincing: "I am still a member because there are people within the church who are filled with the Spirit of God. They are friends." A member of any one of the hundreds of Christian denominations could say the same thing.

Then came John Testerman's "Stages of Faith," based upon James Fowler's thesis. It contains a lot of good material. It helped place each of the above-mentioned writers, as well as myself, in a broader perspective. I am presently reading Daniel Liderbach's *The Numinous Universe* (New York, Paulist Press, 1989), along with David Foster's *The Philosophical Scientists* (New York, Dorset Press, 1985), and so I noted with special interest Testerman's Stage V, "Numinous Universe." Also his mention of Albert Schweitzer as one example of the rare Stage VI caught my eye, since I have been reading Schweitzer's last (posthumous) work, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity* (New York, Seabury Press, 1968). Stage VI "Selfless Service" individuals do not necessarily hold traditional faith, but tend to be on the cutting edge of avant-garde searching. Witness Jesus in his generation. I am not convinced that Fowler's views are sound in all respects. When the rational constructs of Stage IV are seen to be inadequate, various people may react in different ways. For example, a return to Stage I may be a return to the simple faith of childhood, or it may sometimes be a form of intellectual second childhood that flees from cognitive dissonance

rather than facing it. Others may simply be resigned to their finite state and cease searching for finality in this life.

Testerman's final section on "Coexistence" is worthy of careful consideration by everyone. "But knowing about stages of faith can help us understand how tradition and continuity, as well as new ideas and diversity in the church, are inevitable and necessary. All the stages are important and valid expressions of faith, and people in all stages have a right to serve and be served by the church." This insight, if practiced by the church, would literally be Heaven on Earth! If this is what Maryan Stirling's metaphor of the Cocoon means, then I could also be metaphoric!

Thanks for the stimulating reading. This one issue was worth the \$18 renewal price!

Arlin Baldwin
Coarsegold, California

TRUTH, NOT TASTE

Please discontinue sending the *Adventist Today*. I have never seen a paper so full of opinions, and so lacking on facts and uninformed. And I don't like the Catholic Adventist articles either. This paper does not contribute to salvation.

Your place must be full of new theology people, and maybe Catholics. Since when are Adventists to celebrate Christian "holy days" so called, such as Easter, Lent, this is all Catholic instituted "holy days." . . . You say you are striving for good taste. Your paper may appear in good taste to some, but I am only interested in truth, not taste.

Ray Falconer
Winston, Oregon

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Utrecht 95 Price Tag

by Ervin Taylor and Jim Walters

How much did this giant church festival cost? "No one really knows," says Karl Bahr, manager of Utrecht 95. However, a conservative estimate puts the cost to the church organization at some \$25 million. Expenditures by nondelegates bring the total for Adventists (denomination's expense plus attendees') close to \$50 million.

Dutch commerce officials estimate that with 10,000 attending on weekdays and 35,000 on weekends, this convention pumped about \$1.7 million into the national economy per weekday and \$7.5 million on weekends. The total was a whopping \$26 million.

Although the General Conference originally budgeted \$4 million for direct costs such as rental of the Jaarbeurs complex, a more realistic figure is \$8 million, according to one GC official. The salaries of the GC staff for time devoted to the session were not calculated into the convention budget.

The major expenditures, however, are transportation and housing. For example, the South Pacific Division voted more than \$8,000 per delegate; for its 120 delegates, this was nearly \$1 million. For all 2,650 delegates attending, the expenditure could thus total \$21 million for the divisions. However, not all divisions are so generous. Robert Folkenberg, GC president, estimates the expenditure for delegates and spouses at \$15 million.

A major multimedia presentation staged in the evening by a major division cost about

\$120,000. (One GC official says the divisions seemed to compete, and there should be curbs.) If 10,000 attendees view the presentation, a generous estimate, the cost is \$12 per person.

One GC leader suggested that the \$8 million spent by the GC in direct costs was only \$1 per member in the 8-million-member denomination. This official thinks the intangible but real benefits far outweigh the costs.

Surely many attendees relished the grand spiritual experience of Utrecht 95, made possible because of the diversion of church funds that usually go into brick and mortar. However, the spiritual high is appropriately moderated by knowledge of the financial cost. As GC president Robert Folkenberg, told delegates, the cost of sending one African delegate exceeded that of building many single church structures on that continent.

General Conference Panelists Debate Approach to Scripture

by Ervin Taylor

Before the General Conference session, six "discussion papers" were distributed to delegates. These papers became the basis of panel discussions at "breakout groups" where any delegate or GC attendee could make comments and ask questions.

Three of these papers dealt with areas where the church can make strong positive contributions in the larger public arena: religious liberty, tobacco use, and means of reducing family violence.

A generally well received paper on "Relationships Among the Community of Believers" observed that "theology most often is not really a root cause of troubled relationships [such as struggles between 'conservatives' and 'liberals'], but an evidence that something more basic [factors such as personality, culture, traditions, expectations, values, and ignorance] is really at the heart of the matter. In fact, many times theological struggles are the arenas in which we struggle over interpersonal differences...loving relationships do not rule out diversity and difference."

By contrast, the two papers on "The Authority of Scripture" and "The Use of Scripture in the Life of the SDA Church" became the subjects of debate and disagreement at many points. Objections from panel members or comments from the floor included observations that both papers were polemical, poorly written, tended to employ a "key text" approach, and fostered an "us versus them" mentality. One delegate noted that the attitude toward science exhibited in the "Authority" paper was not helpful in resolving the current problems the church has in understanding the nature of the Genesis account of Creation. In answer to a question from the floor, the chair of the session considering this paper offered the observation that its current text was "going nowhere."

All but one of the sessions were poorly attended. Only 20-30 individuals attended "The Use of Scripture" session. The number attending "The Authority of Scripture" was significantly larger, 300 to 400 people, but this may have been partly due to the fact that it was held in the hall where the business sessions were also held. The only session with a full room was that addressing family violence.

New GC "Rules of Order"


CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

sets forth its own specialized rules by which its business is conducted in conclaves of various types.

The General Conference session in Utrecht operated under a new 18-page "General Conference Rules of Order." The committee that prepared the document determined to prepare "rules of order for the church which are in harmony with Spirit of Prophecy instruction and Seventh-day

Adventist polity." The committee observed that when it meets to conduct business, the church is "not a parliamentary body [or] political forum." In fact, "when [Adventists] meet to transact the business of the Church, they are meeting with God. . . The overarching concern of church sessions . . . is to discover . . . God's will [and] the object of rules of order is to facilitate accomplishing the will of God." Quoting Ellen White, they are "legislating for God."

The sections that address the duties of the chair and how to deal with various types of motions appear not to differ materi-

ally from other standard parliamentary manuals. The specialized rules which codify Adventist ecclesiastical practice deal with elections. The most important feature is that all nominations for office or membership on an executive committee must be made by a nominating committee. Only one name can be presented to the floor by a nominating committee for each position to be filled, and a nominating committee meeting must be closed. The only exception to the last feature is that "officers of higher church organization" may be invited to sit as "counselors with the committee." 

Putting Your Hoover Button in the Drawer and Going Forward

First word I ever learned to spell was "Hoover." That's about all I remember from the 1928 election campaign. I was four. Getting Herbert Hoover reelected in 1932 was a big deal in the little farm community where the depression had sent us. When he spoke, he could count on my family to tune to KPO, turn up the volume, and SIT STILL. Somebody coughed and Daddy said "Tsh! Tsh!"

Well, Hoover had a plan to get us out of the depression and Mama and Daddy were pretty sure it was a better plan than the Democrats had. They didn't trust Franklin D. Roosevelt with his long, cocky cigarette holder. They wanted serious hope. But Roosevelt won and we quit wearing our "Hoover" buttons to school. It hurt. Oh, it hurt a lot.

It turned out that the cocky cigarette holder was just what the country needed. That and legal beer and a much catchier song than the Republicans produced—"Happy days are here again! Skies above are clear again!" And the NRA and the WPA and the PWA and "Fireside Chats" over the radio from the White House (we could cough) and FDR's optimism. "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

That's the story of how I learned about politics. Agony, ecstasy and the blahs.

Church politics came later. I've won; I've lost. I've said I'd never care again, and then I've cared again.

There are a couple of paragraphs that tell me Ellen White found a way to heal the hurts she felt when her side lost. She was sure it was God's side that had lost, and she was probably right. But she still could write a message of hope. It may have been about the time of the 1888 General Conference session. After the brethren rejected the message of righteousness by faith at this session, Ellen White immediately joined Jones and Waggoner in going out to energetically preach the truth.

Her message in the face of loss appears on the last two pages of Volume 5 of the *Testimonies*. It's

by Maryan Stirling

Spiritual growth

sometimes

demand a step-

ping out of the

usual order to obey

God rather than

men.



Maryan Stirling, charter member of the Gender Inclusiveness Commission of the Southeastern California Conference beginning in 1989, wore a pink equality button at the 1990 GC session. Our readers name her a favorite writer and preacher, equal (or superior) to the best men.

not mealy-mouth, and she doesn't say that what happened was fine and dandy. She just gave us a message that's full of an energy that lifts you right up. I asked the editor to let me share it with you.

The Majesty of heaven has the destiny of nations, as well as the concerns of his church in his own charge. We permit ourselves to feel altogether too much care, trouble, and perplexity in the Lord's work. Finite men are not left to carry the burden of responsibility. We need to trust in God, believe in him, and go forward [as Ellen White did in the face of their wrong choices]. God's hand is guiding the wheel within a wheel....

Brethren [and sisters], it is no time now for mourning and despair, no time to yield to doubt and unbelief. Christ is not now a Saviour in Joseph's new tomb, closed with a great stone and sealed with the Roman seal; we have a risen Savior. He is the King, the Lord of hosts; ...and amid the strife and tumult of nations he guards his people still. He who ruleth in the heavens is our Saviour...His people will be safe in his hands." (*Testimonies* Vol 5, p. 753-4)

"Trust in God and go forward!"

We may never get human permission to do what integrity urges. All right. Spiritual growth sometimes demands a stepping out of the usual order to obey God rather than men.

We have, in reality, a risen Saviour. Ellen White was truly inspired when she wrote, "We need to trust in God and go forward." Perhaps we need this growth experience, and that is the reason God presents us with the necessity. I hope we may go forward with great grace, affirming the liberty of the Lord of hosts to call whom he will to the gospel ministry!

La Sierra Church Urges Conference to Ordain Women

by Raymond Cottrell

In business session on July 15, the La Sierra University Church, Riverside, California, voted the following:

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

Commission, on the question of women's ordination,

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

On July 5, the Adventist church's General Conference world session in Utrecht, the Netherlands, rejected, by a 2-to-1 vote, the

North American Division's request to ordain women in its territory to the gospel ministry. On July 7, the board of the La Sierra Church voted the above motion as a recommendation to the church's business session. Adding the preamble, the business session adopted the board's recommendation.

The question of women's ordination is of major importance to the La Sierra Church because one of its pastors is a woman that members would like ordained. Members told *Adventist Today* that for nearly 15 years, Halcyon Wilson has served as a highly respected pastor. Her ministry is greatly appreciated, and she is fully qualified in every respect.

Chairman of the church board Clifton Reeves also chaired the business meeting, with senior pastor, Dan Smith, and pastor for administration, Bradley Whited.

General Conference Travelers Defrauded

by Steve Daily

For many Adventists traveling to Utrecht for the General Conference session or heading overseas for mission or ADRA service, the news came as a shocking nightmare: "Yes, you have paid for your overseas ticket, but your travel agent has defrauded you." Worse—the travel agent was a pious Adventist who had been recommended by the General Conference and Southern College. He even kept his office on the Southern College campus, and was known to answer his phone, "Southern College, George Miller speaking."

George J. Miller, president of World Missions International, recently filed for bankruptcy, just four years after his travel agent wife, Shelby, also filed for bankruptcy. His petition has been denied on grounds that the case is being pursued as criminal fraud by Southern College attorney Mike Jennings. Jennings confirms that Southern

College lost \$90,000 to Miller, and ADRA director Ted Wick has reported losses of approximately \$28,000. Many other Adventist colleges and individuals have lost undisclosed amounts which a church official estimates at close to \$1 million.

In his dealings with Adventist institutions Miller has been known to insist on vegetarian meals for travelers, meticulously guard the edges of Sabbath, and

use his Adventist membership and relationship to the Southern College chaplain's office to secure inappropriate prepayments on ticket purchases. The worst of the tragedy is that he has apparently attempted to defraud some of the most committed and idealistic youth of the church.

Miller is returning no phone calls and cannot be reached for comment.

New General Conference "Rules of Order"

by Ervin Taylor

Modern business and professional organizations often employ standardized "rules of order" to conduct various types of formal meetings. Atypical or specialized rules often exist because organizations with long histories maintain unique rules and procedures developed in a prior

period and hesitate to make changes that may upset some long-established political or power relationships.

For example, the Roman Catholic Church has a body of customary tradition governing the conduct of papal elections which goes back into the Middle Ages. Some of the procedures are not formally codified but are enforced by ecclesiastical authority. The same process has occurred in most churches with a lengthy history. In 1995, the Seventh-day Adventist Church joined its older ecclesiastical brothers and sisters in promulgating a document that

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