

AN ADVENTIST IN EXILE

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

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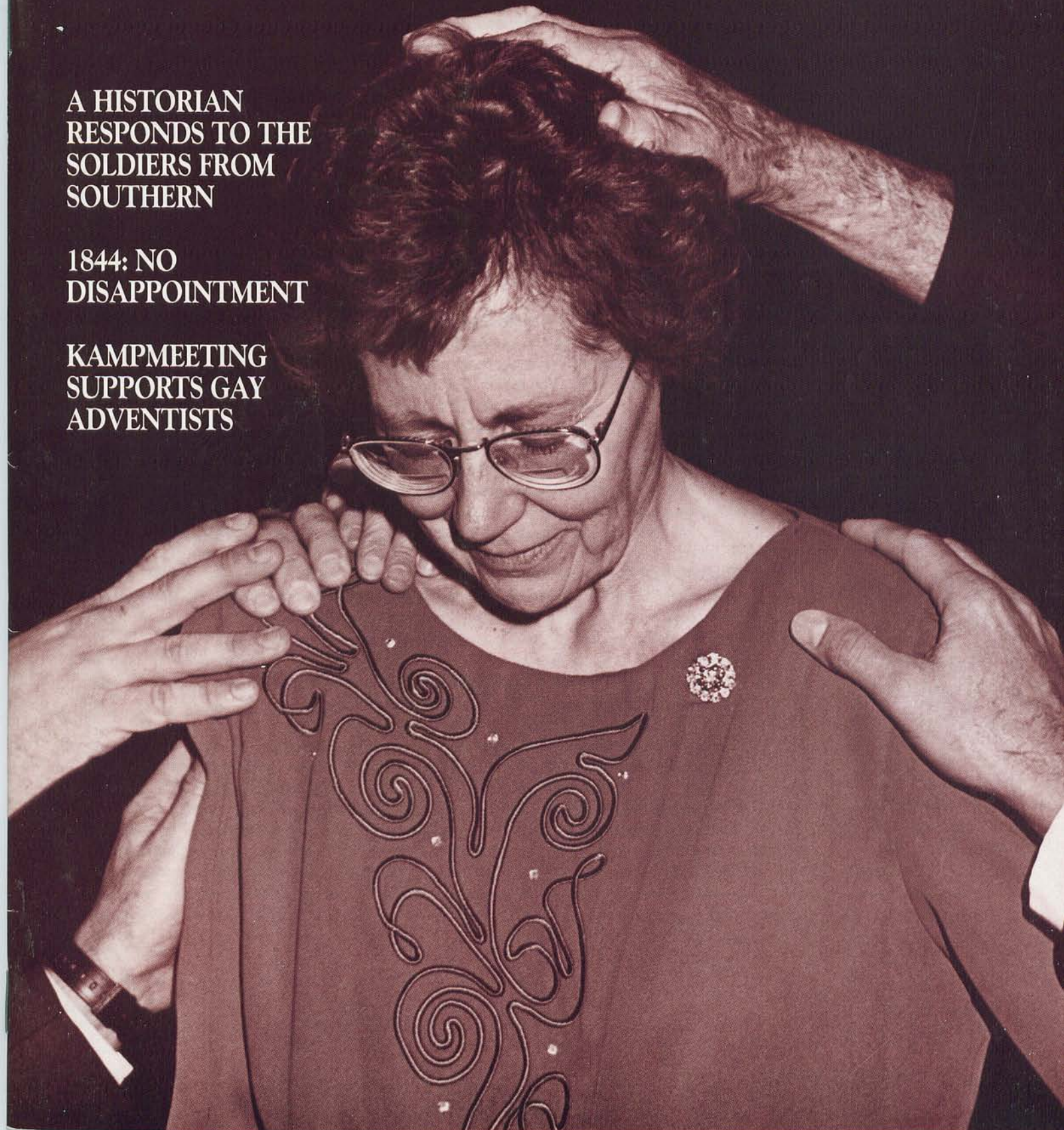
VOL. 3, NO. 6

NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 1995

**A HISTORIAN
RESPONDS TO THE
SOLDIERS FROM
SOUTHERN**

**1844: NO
DISAPPOINTMENT**

**KAMPMEETING
SUPPORTS GAY
ADVENTISTS**



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Wanted: True Conservatives, Like Those at Sligo

Some will view the Sligo ordination as the work of liberals. Another, more accurate characterization: Those at Sligo were progressives reclaiming and conserving the spirit of Adventist pioneers in following religious conscience—despite considerable odds. In this sense the Sligo ordination leaders are the church's true conservatives!

The big question is what the Sligo ordination will mean for the denomination. Is it merely a local church's doing? Or is it the definitive ice-breaker? Much depends on the spin given to it.

I spoke to an *Adventist Review* editor at the ordination service about how his publication would cover the event. He said the *Review* editors had decided "in concept" to cover it, but nothing more. The General Conference communication director attended the ordination and acknowledged the professional standard that one should report controversial events so as to present them in the most favorable light possible. However, what mid-level church staffers actually do on such matters is finally a decision of top leadership in Adventism. Church leaders have often chosen to ignore adverse events, but for credibility with an increasingly educated membership, silence is impossible, especially with the *New York Times* covering such an event. On the day of the ordination, the *Times* ran this headline: "An Adventist Church Breaks Ranks." The story described the event taking place that day in the denomination's "second largest" church, and the tumultuous discussions in the denomination leading up to it.

All ordinations are symbolic, but the Sligo ordination is multiply symbolic because it represents a huge congregation in the North American Division, sitting in the church headquarters' backyard, ordaining its women pastors less than three months after the world church said no on the subject. In the words of Susan Sickler, Columbia Union executive committee member, the ordination represents "the people taking back their church." Historical theology supports Sickler's contention. For the first 20 years after the 1844 disappointment, Adventists refused to formally organize the church, fearing that even an organization of their own devising would later thwart the members' conscientious convictions. How insightful they were! Now it is the organization itself that would stymie conscientious Adventists who see full equality of men and women as present truth.

The Folkenberg administration is calling for conformity to the General Conference ban on women's ordination. But what should members do when they see the ban as immoral? Does policy trump morality? No. Not according to a position voted nearly 120 years ago at the 1877 GC Session:

"The highest authority under God among Seventh-day Adventists is found in the will of the body of that people, as expressed in the decisions of the General Conference...such decisions should be submitted to without exception unless they can be shown to conflict with the word of God and the rights of individual conscience" (*Church Manual*, 1990, p. 17, italics added).

Ellen White was ambivalent about GC authority. In 1898 she reported that "it has been some years since I have considered the General Conference as the voice of God." Eight years earlier she reflected on a previous GC session stating that "the enemy took possession of minds and their judgment was worthless, their decision was evil, for they did not have the mind of Christ."

The Sligo congregation did right on September 23, acting with courage. The La Sierra University church and other congregations will likely follow suit. Meanwhile the North American church leadership is issuing extremely positive statements on women's place in ministry. The statements are similar to Pope John Paul II's recent speech: "I make an appeal today to the entire ecclesiastical community...to favor in every way, in its entire being, feminine participation." While he reiterated that there can be no women priests, he said all non-clerical roles should be open to women. This, according to the pope, "is the path to follow with courage."

God help the church—in Rome and in Silver Spring.

Jim Walters

In the words of Susan Sickler... the ordination represents "the people taking back their church."

Cover: Dr. Penny Shell is ordained to the gospel ministry at the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church on September 23, 1995. Two others were also ordained: Norma Osborn and Kendra Haloviak. Photo by Randall Hull.

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“**T**he future began at Sligo Church in Takoma Park, Maryland, on September 23,” Adventist women are saying. Three women were ordained to the gospel ministry that Sabbath day. The ceremony was

added color and celebration to the sanctuary. Pastor Arthur Torres’s homily was drawn from the joyful promise of an ancient prophet, predicting the very future that was now unfolding. The Spirit would be poured out on God’s sons

and daughters in the end time (Joel 2). was offered by Dr. Louis Venden, professor of theology at Pacific Union College.

“Today,” said Elder Haloviak in her response, “we are more Adventist than we have ever been. Today our heritage as Adventists and our moral convictions are no longer in conflict.”

Elder Haloviak

not called “commissioning” or “dedication” or any other term of compromise. They were ordained by the laying on of hands—and the future of Adventist women began to shine—and the choir sang, “Oh, clap your hands!”

The great crowd clapped, sure enough, and surged up in standing ovations again and again. Sligo’s 2,000-seat capacity was “packed.” Hundreds had flown to Washington from the west coast, the north, the south, from six Adventist colleges, from overseas. Women’s groups were represented. And the *New York Times* was running a story that was a thoughtful evaluation of the importance of it all.

The first ordinand, Kendra Haloviak, was presented by Dr. Charles Scriven, president of Columbia Union College. Haloviak is assistant professor of religion there, currently on leave for doctoral studies.

“I don’t have to receive the ministerial credentials,” said Haloviak, “but it is important that there be a meaningful ordination ceremony.”

And meaningful it was, with the entire Sabbath, including an evening party that ended at midnight, devoted to ordination. As yet the women were not to receive the other half of Seventh-day Adventist ordination protocol: the issuing of ministerial credentials by the local and union conferences. That part is not available to women in ministry because of the negative vote by the recent General Conference Session.

Strangely, the incompleteness of the rite of passage seemed not to cloud the joy of the ceremony. Festive banners

and daughters in the end time (Joel 2).

Dr. Scriven, a key organizer, conducted the ordination. (The church’s educators were proud to point out that church academics led in this ordination.) Scriven continued Torres’s focus on Spirit and the future and added an emphasis on the

Elder Shell

priesthood of all believers. He charged both the ordinands and the congregation to ministry, and they all repeated formal responses. “A torch of justice has been lit by the Spirit,” said Scriven. “Ordination,” he said, “represents no higher status, but is a new infusion of the

Elder Penny Shell told *Adventist Today* that, while the experience was, of course, very personal for her, “it felt as if it was more for the church than for me. It was not a response to the vote at Utrecht; it was a continuation of a purpose that we have pursued for a long time. It would have been nicer if the General Conference could have participated. When we had to give up hope for that, we moved ahead as a local church.”

Conspicuous by her absence from the platform and from the list of ordinands was Kit Watts, assistant editor of the *Adventist Review* and formerly part of the pastoral staff at Sligo. There was pressure, obviously. She had made a hard choice. *Adventist Today* has been told of some *Review* subscriptions that have been cancelled in protest.

On the sdanet, using e-mail, Dr. Penny Miller rejoiced, “The list of courageous actions taken to liberate the gospel message just got longer...A wonderful thing happened at Sligo. Healing has begun...It was

Elder Osborn

Spirit for servanthood.” And “a new world is a-borning!”

Dr. Larry Geraty, president of La Sierra University, presented Norma Osborn, associate pastor at Sligo. Dr. Penny Shell, chief of chaplaincy service at Shady Grove Adventist Hospital, was introduced by Dr. Fritz Guy, professor of theology at LSU. The ordination prayer

an inspired service—just the antidote to the toxic Utrecht experience.” (We’re savoring the medical spin coming out of the school of nursing at Loma Linda.) Penny ended her online rhapsody with gratitude: “Thank you, Sligo, for being the ones who have helped restore our faith!”

Haloviak pointed out that it’s a new day and the future has begun, when “every little girl will realize she can be called by God to grow up and be a minister, just like the little boys she’s in school with. This is for all Adventist women!”

by Maryan Stirling and Jim Walters

Southeastern Committee Refers Ordination Decision to '96 Constituency Session

The Southeastern California Conference's executive committee voted on September 21 to reject the Conference's Gender Inclusiveness Commission's (GIC's) unanimously voted action that "urges the Southeastern California Conference to affirm by ordination the divine call of women to the ministry in this conference without further delay."

Representing the GIC at the September 21 executive committee meeting, Larry Geraty, president of La Sierra University, declared:

"Without grass-roots action, women already in ministry could continue to suffer gross discrimination and even abuse. To refuse to ordain a person as a minister of the gospel because she is not male, even though she successfully does the work of a minister, is undisguised gender discrimination."

The executive committee defeated the GIC's motion to ordain women now (12 yes to 14 no), but approved the action "that the Southeastern California Conference Executive Committee will recommend to the next scheduled constituency meeting (October 27, 1996) ordination of women pastors in the Southeastern California Conference and issue them the ordained ministers credential" (13 yes to 12 no).

The committee also voted, "that we recognize, have a service and credentials for men and women to be on an equal basis until the ordination issue is decided at the next scheduled constituency meeting. This does not apply to previously ordained pastors" (14 yes to 9 no). A straw vote revealed that when disregarding the political aspects and the decisions of the General Conference, 23 believed that ordaining women is the right thing to do, while 2 did not.

Two executive committee members commented on the meeting. David VanDenburgh, senior pastor of the Loma Linda Campus Hill Church, described the mood as "tense" with "much passion" expressed. "Most of the committee," he said,

by Larry Christoffel

"are clear that the ordination of women is the right thing to do. The only question is when and how, and who has the authority to make the decision."

Hallie Wilson, an associate pastor of the La Sierra University Church, responded to recent events: "I walked away from the Conference Committee last time fighting tears. Again we voted a compromise! Where is the theory that if we do what is morally right, God will bless? Is it incorrect? Does God also bless a compromise? I have a great respect for this Conference Committee and our ability to work on issues honestly and with spiritual integrity. This issue has become so tangled and huge! Pray that God's people, in local congregations, will have the courage to do that which 'The System' seems unable to do."

Southeastern's decisions followed the Pacific Union Conference's August 30, 1995, action that it "is still committed to the ordination of women to the gospel ministry and to working toward the day when it will happen." The union's voted plan contains many recommendations favorable to women ministers, and calls for the church to clarify the theology of ordination, and to address the biblical interpretation issues. But it also contains a final statement objectionable to some: "In the interest of giving this process the best possibility of succeeding, it is urged that all entities stay united and resist unilateral action while working together for justice, in unity and in harmony with biblical principles and the Seventh-day Adventist fundamental beliefs." While the Pacific Union proposal as a whole passed, a motion to eliminate the idea, "it is urged that all entities...resist unilateral action," was defeated by a vote of 15 yes to 19 no.

Fritz Guy, religion professor from La Sierra University and member of Southeastern's GIC, articulates the thinking of many

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

Women pastors in Southeastern, in an August 24, 1995, letter to the conference administration, stated that "the word 'ordained' needs to be included in whatever service occurs and credentials issued." Judging from this statement, we might surmise that women pastors in Southeastern will be less than enthusiastic about the conference's interim plan.

Although Southeastern's decision on ordination must await next year's constituency meeting, the La Sierra University Church is considering ordaining one of its women pastors and thereby following the example of the Sligo Church in Washington, D.C., which ordained three women pastors on September 23.

Larry Christoffel, a church pastor, serves on both the Gender Inclusiveness Commission of SE California Conference and on the executive committee of the Pacific Union. He also teaches courses on Daniel and Revelation at Loma Linda University.



AN ADVENTIST

by Jerry Gladson



Jerry A. Gladson holds a PhD degree from Vanderbilt University. Formerly pastor (Southern Union) and religion teacher (Southern College), Gladson is now pastor of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Southern California and adjunct professor of religion at Chapman University.

All I ever wanted to be was an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister. I consider myself an Adventist in exile. Today I am an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, and I am the serving the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Garden Grove, California, as senior minister. In those statements are embodied 15 years of struggle that have led to the place where I am now. Today I live and work outside the Adventist community because I cannot endure the conditions that exist within the church. I am one of the persons who was eliminated in what I now call the Southern College "Holocaust." I use that term advisedly because of the large number of people affected and the number of careers permanently damaged by what can only be described as unfounded rumors, rumors that were manipulated by church administrators. The hidden agenda, we now see, was the "purification" of Southern College.

But long before the crisis at Southern College, I struggled inwardly with certain theological issues. I struggled with them as a pastor, a doctoral student and a teacher at Southern College. Some of these issues surfaced in the church and were actively debated publicly at the college. I once contemplated writing a doctoral dissertation on Daniel 8, but gave up the idea as unsafe for an Adventist scholar. I later ended up writing my dissertation on wisdom literature, an area about which Adventists say very little and, consequently, a safe one. Even though the administration at Southern College was unable to pinpoint any "error" in my teaching or in my life style, they felt that I should leave the college and began to pressure me to do so. I left voluntarily.

In 1987, I became dean of the Psychological Studies Institute in Atlanta, a job which was split between administration and teaching, and which I held for five years. It was hard for me to come to the place where, after a lifetime career in the Adventist organization, I would choose to seek other employment. But I felt I had to do that if I were to survive psychologically. I made the decision with the idea that it would give me time to reconsider things more

objectively without economic pressure. At the Psychological Studies Institute I taught religion, did administrative work, and used the time for objective reassessment. I had hoped to create a niche in the Adventist community where I could live, function and contribute. But I discovered, to my dismay, that the Atlanta Adventist community was even more conservative than the one at Collegedale. I suddenly found myself marginalized everywhere I went, tainted with the brush of heresy. Eventually I was unofficially banned from Adventist pulpits in Atlanta. I did find refuge in a couple of small country parishes that occasionally invited me to preach.

The theological problems with which I had struggled at Southern College and all through my ministry resurfaced. I seriously questioned how I could maintain my integrity and continue. It wasn't that I disagreed with peripheral elements of Adventist theology; I found myself in disagreement over core issues—remnant theology, investigative judgment, the inconsistency of Ellen White's writings, etc.

IN EXILE

I remember walking through a shopping mall one day in Atlanta, feeling the rage because of what had happened. The religion faculty had gone through about 10 years of struggle at Southern College in which we never knew, from day to day, if we would be in the classroom on Monday morning. Every time contracts came up for renegotiation, all of our experience (tenure) was thrown out the window. We were literally as good as our answer to the last student question in class. One faculty member even banned all questions in his classroom, feeling that was the safest way to proceed.

Things came to a head when the Institute wanted me to continue to carry a credential as an ordained minister from an accepted denomination. My Adventist credentials were expiring, so I set out a kind of "fleece." I decided that I would ask the church to renew my credentials when they expired, and to allow me to remain at the Institute to teach religion while functioning as an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister. It may come as a

surprise to many that the Adventist denomination had no provision for this sort of thing.

Knowing that this was untried territory, I began the process. I started at the Union and was referred to the General Conference, and the General Conference handed me over to the North American Division. The Division wanted to handle this from within its chaplaincy office. Two years passed as we went through the various steps of this process, with proposals and counter-proposals. Finally the North American Division worked up a document to take to the 1990 General Conference Session, later to be approved by the Union. It looked like a green light.

Two things occurred at the 1990 General Conference that were to doom my appeal. First, the ordination of women was voted down 3-to-1. Second, the Southern Union president, Al McClure, became the North American Division president. McClure, in the opinion of many, manipulated the rumors at Southern College for a hidden agenda. I was told that McClure's promotion probably doomed my request for continuation of my credentials. At any rate, I was turned down in the fall of 1990.

Refusing to take no as an answer, I appealed directly to the panel of union presidents. In December of 1990, I was told by the North American Division office that I would have to wait until the end of February, when this group would meet, for a final decision. So on the first of March, I took a deep breath, picked up the telephone, called the North American Division office, and asked to speak with Elder McClure. Instead I got his assistant, so I asked what had happened to the appeal. And here, almost word for word is his answer (I copied it down shortly afterward): "I'm afraid I have bad news. Your appeal has been turned down. You might as well quit trying. Action on your behalf is completely dead. You should look elsewhere!"

He went on to elaborate on the decision to exclude women from the ordained ministry. I had long been a public advocate of the ordination of women. After the denomination voted down women's ordination at the General Conference Session in 1990, I decided to write a letter protesting this action. So here I was in this debate over my own over credentials, wondering, If I do receive them, if I have the card in my hand, can I use this card when I know it is the badge of a privileged group that excludes women who are equally competent, gifted and called? The assistant to the president told me that the letter I had written was a key factor in the decision on my credentials. He told me: No one speaks that way to a North American Division president. No one dares challenge that office in this way. At that moment I knew my letter had finished it all.

I sat there in thought for a moment. I remained

motionless, almost stunned to think that after a 26-year career, my church of origin was slamming the ministerial door in my face. I could continue without standing. According to the Adventist minister's manual that means one is rendered virtually impotent in terms of ministerial functions. I couldn't celebrate communion, for example. I couldn't perform a wedding. I felt like my whole life's work was collapsing and I seemed to be in a dark room alone, utterly alone.

I let several days go by before I tried to do anything, and then I did the only thing I knew how in order to be true to my calling. I called the local conference of the United Church of Christ. I had gotten to know the president of that organization through some other contacts, and I said, "Roger [Knight], does your church have room for a refugee?" He said, "We certainly do!" And we started the process of transferring ordination. It took several months, as there were examinations and interviews. In November, 1991, I received full ordained standing with the United Church of Christ and became officially an Adventist in exile! That same month, in connection with the crisis rooted at Southern College, my wife of 26 years left me. She could not bear the thought of being associated with another religious organization. She was burned out by the experience at Southern College, and she left to live a secular life.

I'm often asked the question, "Is there life after Adventism?" Some people look at me and wonder. They are not quite sure how to relate to what I've done. However, I have found, since I've been in exile, wondrous freedom. I'm free to do research, interpret, and reach my own conclusions. They can be my own conclusions, for no one is sitting in judgment on them. I have felt myself identifying much more with the great stream of the Christian tradition. Working in this framework gives me unbelievable exhilaration. To use the Christian lectionary in the church year has been a thrill beyond description, something most Adventists have missed. Every day is now a delight.

As I look at Adventism, I realize that several changes need to be made if the church is to be a safe place for thinking individuals. First, I believe the denomination should decentralize, abandon its hierarchy, perhaps replacing it with some kind of congregational church government. This could be a modified congregationalism, but it must be something which returns the power to the people.

Second, the denomination must be willing to revise its theological commitment and boil its doc-

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trines down to a bare minimum. I suggest that the church take another look at the simple New Testament declaration of faith that Jesus Christ is Lord. That's how it was in New Testament times: Belief in Jesus Christ was the single criterion.

Third, perhaps most difficult of all, the denomination should officially adopt some form of theological diversity. Adventism should allow people the freedom to understand and interpret things.

What have I learned from all this? I read a book recently entitled *Toxic Faith* (Steven Arterburn and Jack Felton, Thomas Nelson, 1991), and have, like some of you, become familiar with Anne Wilson Schaefer's work (with Diane Fassel): *The Addictive Organization* (Harper and Row, 1988). Both these books look at the psychology of what happens when a system becomes dysfunctional and adversely affects people. Such literature has been very helpful to me because I realize that I have been a victim of toxic faith. I have difficulty, even after all this time, getting through the anger and

the hurt that I still have. But on the positive side, I realize that although my experience was painful, I have grown a great deal and am a stronger person in my faith. I have a deeper spiritual experience and can say that life is wonderful. I had not been able to say that since at least 1981, but I can say it now. Life is wonderful, God is good, and God is present.

Never again will I bring to a church organization the commitment that I gave to the Adventist organization. I'll put God and family before church. One must live a life of integrity, no matter what.

My hope is that Adventism will someday move beyond its preoccupation with itself, begin to focus upon what God is doing in a larger context, and enter into a new era of the exultation of our Lord. Adventists must enter into a partnership with other denominations who are proclaiming the same Lord and take their place among Christians of all ages who are celebrating Jesus Christ. That is my prayer for Adventism.

This account was transcribed, with permission, from Gladson's May, 1993, presentation to the San Diego chapter of Adventist Forums.

Male Clergy Reject Exclusive Credential

Some ordained Adventist clergymen have tried to return to the church the ministerial credential they have held which is not available to women clergy, and have asked for authorization and papers that are the same as those held by women clergy, *Adventist Today* has learned. There are probably others about whom we've not heard.

The men from whom we have heard are: Darold Bigger, John Brunt, Ernest Bursey, Douglas Clark, Lawrence Geraty, Glen Greenwalt, Bruce Johanson, Ronald Jolliffe, John Jones, David Larson, Pedrito Maynard-Reid, Charles Scriven, Alden Thompson, Louis Venden, Larry Veverka, James Walters, and Gerald Winslow.

Adventist Today heard from several clergymen with long records of support for gender equality in the church. One, undoubtedly representative of many, said that while fully agreeing that women should have "identical empowerment from the church for their ministry," he had not had a chance to consider all the ramifications, practical, theological, and otherwise, of turning in one's credentials, and was taking time to consider this step carefully.

Geraty said he wouldn't belong to a

club that excluded people on the basis of gender. He pointed out that his constituency comprises intelligent and well-educated teachers and students, and as a university president, he has to model a way to be a loyal church member and also deal with ethically troublesome issues. In July, 1995, after the negative vote on women's ordination at the GC, Geraty mailed his ministerial credential card to Thomas Mostert, president of the Pacific Union.

Louis Venden also wrote to Mostert in July, wanting to surrender any exclusive credentials he might have, but then discovered he didn't have any current credentials. "I have nothing to burn," he told *Adventist Today* with a rueful laugh. Venden stated that the difference between being "commissioned" (available to women) and "credentialed" (available only to men) is the difference between being a mistress and being a wife.

According to Douglas Clark, the Walla Walla College theology faculty as a group raised this issue during their annual fall meeting with NPUC officers and conference presidents in 1993. The administrators were sympathetic and recognized the principle involved, but had no policy

mechanism for changing the teachers' credentials.

Winslow suggested that Galatians 3:28 describes three steps in a historical sequence toward recognition of full human rights. The equality of Jews and Greeks was recognized in Paul's day, and equality of the races in the 1800s; now is the time to recognize the full equality, in Jesus, of men and women.

Mostert told *Adventist Today* that there are only four things an ordained and credentialed minister may do which a commissioned or licensed minister may not: hold the office of conference, union, division or General Conference president; organize and disband churches; ordain local elders and deacons; and baptize and marry outside one's own district. He said no committee memberships would change as a result of a credential change; the pay is the same for ordained and commissioned ministers, 7 percent less for licensed ministers.

Three of the men listed above carry credentials from the Pacific Union. Their requests will be considered at the November 29 meeting of the union's executive committee.

Difficult Times and Enormous Loss:

THE CASE OF JERRY GLADSON

by Gary Patterson

The departure of Dr. Jerry Gladson from the teaching and pastoral ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church was not only the loss of one of our most outstanding Bible scholars, but a personal sorrow to me. Jerry's encyclopedic knowledge of scripture and his understanding of Old Testament times is truly phenomenal. I first came to know Jerry when I served as his pastor at the Collegedale Church and as a colleague in teaching. We were both working on doctoral studies at Vanderbilt University and frequently traveled together the 150 miles to Nashville for classes.

Later I served as president of the Georgia-Cumberland Conference during the difficult times and departure of Southern College faculty to which Jerry refers in his article. Indeed, I departed from the administration of the conference during that same era under much of the same pressure of events to which he refers. The potential for misunderstanding on all sides in these matters is enormous. This being the case, I do not think it is helpful to engage in speculative second guessing of events based on rumor, as appears to be the case in the reference made to reasons for the appointment of Gordon Hyde in 1984 and his instructions from Al McClure.

I do know of matters which transpired while I was serving as administrative assistant to the NAD president. In 1989, Jerry's request for chaplain's credentials came to C. E. Bradford, then NAD president. Such matters routinely fell under my jurisdiction. But due to the unusual nature of this request, and being cognizant of events in the Southern Union relating to Jerry's departure, I counseled extensively with Elder Bradford on the matter. It was determined that as established in policy for the issuing of such credentials, we would process the request through the Office of Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries. Such requests have in recent years become rather common as more and more clergy professionals are entering areas of ministerial service in military, hospital, prison and educational chaplaincy.

Formerly, ministerial credentials had been issued only to employees of the church. But the need and opportunities for ministry outside this traditional structure gave rise to a chaplain's credential. Though issued from the NAD, this credential requires the support and approval of both the local and union conference in which the chaplain is working, for the obvious reason that it is not possible from the distant NAD office to properly observe the validity of such credentialing.

Given the difficulties and accusations surrounding Jerry's departure from church employment, his request was obviously a delicate matter. In the months leading up to the 1990

General Conference Session, we were working carefully on the matter with all the entities involved, which included both the Southern Union and the Georgia-Cumberland Conference. Time overtook us, however, and the matter was not settled before the session. A. C. McClure was elected NAD president. He requested that I continue to process Jerry's request for credentials.

Following the General Conference Session, Jerry wrote again to the NAD president's office expressing his views on the ordination of women, as well as on other matters of Adventist doctrine and biblical interpretation. It was not, however, his views on ordination which caused concern, but his expression of views on the Investigative Judgment and the ministry of Ellen White that ultimately blocked the credentialing process. (McClure had strongly advocated the ordination of women in North America.)

With regret I finally had to inform Jerry of the decisions made by the various committees not to grant the credentials; it was not only a personal loss to me, but the loss of a greatly able scholar to our church as well. Yet it was not all as it appeared to Jerry. In our church, ordination allows for the performance of such ministerial services as marriages, baptisms, and the celebration of communion; Jerry's ordination had not been revoked. Only his credentials had expired—which in actual fact had occurred when he ceased to be denominationally employed, even prior to the date listed on the credential card he had been using in his employment at the Psychological Studies Institute. This is a technical matter, and one not always understood by church employees. But credentials, by policy, extend to cover either the term of their issuance, or to the termination of employment for whatever reason.

The pain of these events is yet strong with me, as it is with Jerry and with Elders Bradford and McClure. These were difficult times. It is my desire and prayer that we all—the church, the accusers, the accused, and those who were wounded merely as innocent bystanders—may learn from the tragedy and losses we have experienced and return to the wholeness of community in Christ.

Gary B. Patterson, reelected in July as one of four general field secretaries of the General Conference, serves specifically as director of missions awareness.

Observations of a **P**RESIDENT, **P**PASTOR, **P**ROFESSOR, **E**NTREPRENEUR

Frank Knittel is a man of diverse careers. He has been a college president; now he is an English professor, a church pastor, and a business owner. He told James Walters about some of his observations that resulted from these years of diverse experiences.

ADVENTIST COLLEGES

Donning your educational hat, what do you make of the challenges that face our colleges?

I think they are unprecedented. Now, in addition to the question of whether there is enough money to run a specific college, there is the further and larger question of how many colleges we need.

Ideally, how many universities and colleges should the North American Division have?

The absolute maximum would be two universities, or perhaps a college and a university. The percentage of Mormon young people attending Brigham Young University, their only university in the United States, is greater than the percentage of Seventh-day Adventist students attending our various colleges. And the one reason, of course, is the very low tuition at BYU.

If we had a single Adventist university, do you think Adventist young people would choose to attend in the percentages that Mormons attend BYU?

I think there is a very good likelihood they would. If we had one school, we could do things with that school that would make it intellectually, academically, and socially attractive

enough so young people would want to attend. They could thus get a better education than a spread of schools all struggling to stay alive.

Adventist educator Richard Hammill has suggested that he does not see church leadership as particularly interested in intellectually credible universities.

He is absolutely right. Church leadership, during my lifetime, with very few exceptions, has not held up intellectual achievement as one of the primary goals of the church.

Is it likely that we could develop such a university or a small cluster of colleges that would attract the increasingly sophisticated Adventist membership?

Not in the near future. I do not see that within the lifetime of my children.

NAD CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH

As a pastor, can you generalize about the health of our congregations as you know them in this conference, perhaps across the country?

There are some congregations that are in a good, healthy situation, but in general the issues facing our denomination have caused our churches to be less than healthy. There are several factors. One is a decreasing confidence in overall church leadership, on just about every level. We have a top-heavy hierarchy which is draining the church very seriously in terms of personnel and money. There is also the real concern among church members that the mission of the church is somewhat clouded. Aside from general clichés, the mission has not really been clearly articulated to our membership.



Frank Knittel, formerly president of Southern College, teaches English at La Sierra University, pastors a church, and runs a large motorcycle dealership.



Jim Walters teaches Christian ethics at Loma Linda University. He is executive editor of *Adventist Today*.

Do you think central leadership is less competent than it used to be, or is the membership more sophisticated?

I don't think leadership is less qualified; however, my own personal evaluation is that we have suffered because a great many people will almost sell their souls for upward mobility.

That is a new development?

It is a rather newly emerging development. A second problem is that our church, especially in North America, is becoming more sophisticated relative to how a church should be run and how the business management of the church ought to be handled.

Your congregation here at the Riverside church has grown greatly. What is the recipe for your success here in this congregation?

People are happy with what is going on in their church, therefore they are enthusiastic about the church.

What is going on in your congregation?

We have just done our very best to make people feel wanted when they come to church, and feel happy after church that they have come. We do this by trying to have stimulating Sabbath school classes, by eliminating that which is merely traditional and putting something vibrant in its place, and by preaching in terms of what people sense are their needs. People stop going to church of any kind, including those who stopped coming to the Riverside Adventist church, because Sabbath after Sabbath after Sabbath they came to feel that the church is not dealing with their personal spiritual needs.

CHURCH BUSINESS

As a businessperson, what do you view as the structural strengths and weaknesses of our denomination?

One of our great structural strengths is the rather tightly knit organization, which has been the key to success of both the Mormon church and the Adventist church. The second is the strong educational program on the collegiate level for both the Mormons and the Adventists. I think our biggest weakness in terms of organization and administration is that we have never dealt with the very serious topic of the difference of administration when dealing with spiritual needs and when dealing with business needs. We have tried to handle church business with theological premises, and that just does not work. Much activity in the church is not religious but secular.

So, are you suggesting that we ought to turn over management of our hospitals and industries to Adventist businesspeople, and give them relatively free reign, and have the church administrators stick to running churches?

Yes, that would be the practical implication. For

example, I think the General Conference ought to get out of trying to run Loma Linda University. I think the GC as an entity should not be in the posture of having the ultimate word about the hospitals. Now, I know this sort of comment scares people; the fear is that if the GC does not keep hold of things, then we'll run amok. When corporate church leadership declares a lack of confidence in the individual members we are in serious trouble. Frankly, I think that the president of our conference ought to be a layperson. As a matter of fact, the chief officers of the GC ought to be lay people; the president of the GC ought to be a lay person.

Is that the case in some other churches—the chief officer being a layperson?

Yes, it is. And it certainly can work with Seventh-day Adventists. But there is no chance in the next ten generations that this going to take place in the Adventist church.

CHURCH GROWTH

Why do you think it is that Adventism baptizes so many converts in the underdeveloped world, and so few in developed nations?

In the underdeveloped world the people have a very minimal way of life. Anything that offers them a glimmer of hope for something better is attractive. A person living in a mud hut somewhere is going to feel pretty happy about the possibility of living in mansions in heaven.

Statistics suggest that in four or five years the Caucasians will be a minority in the North American Division. What can we do to retain the graduates of our higher educational system and get other educated people interested in joining our church?

We are going to have to demonstrate to the public that our church wants to make this world a better place. And up until now, that has not been the mission of the Adventist church. The mission of the Seventh-day Adventist church has been theological proselytizing, and that just does not grab the world anymore. Now, that does not mean that churches have failed, but we have not learned that theology is secondary to people dealing with people.

SABBATH ISSUES

You are a co-owner of a large motorcycle dealership in Riverside that is open seven days a week, and Adventism has long emphasized theologically the ces-

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sation of business activity on Sabbath. What is your view, as a pastor, of Sabbath and its role in our lives?

Adventists have long held that we should cease business activities on Sabbath except in the case of Seventh-day Adventist institutions. We have police forces working seven days a week, 24 hours a day, at church institutions. We have held, of course, that as long as the entity is owned by the church, then of course it is God's work, and God's work demands seven days a week, 24 hours a day in terms of the operation's supervision.

When I acquired the business here in Riverside, I made it very, very clear to my group that I did not work Friday evening sundown till Saturday evening sundown. However, as part of my operation of that business I do give the workers a certain amount of responsibility. If there are people that want to come on Saturday and do their work, I have not deprived them of that opportunity, although I make no assignments for Saturday and our service department is not open.

Another factor is that when I obtained the business, there were some workers that had contracts which gave them the prerogative of choosing whatever day they want during the weekend to work. I could perhaps have insisted that if they work during the weekend they should work on Sundays. That would put me in the position of saying my Sabbath is better than yours, and you can't work on mine but you must work on yours. There are some entities owned by Adventists that will not hire people unless they agree to work on Sundays, and to me that type of spirituality is immoral.

Traditionally Sabbath has been defined more in terms of what Adventists "don't do" than what they "do." It this posture conducive for Adventists to be a vibrant presence in the modern world?

Well, I think Seventh-day Adventists have the obligation to live up to their belief relative to the Sabbath, but I think we can do that without taking a legalistic

approach. By a legalistic approach I mean saying, "I am doing it this way, and this is the right way, and if you are not doing it my way, you are doing it the wrong way." An interesting thing about the church is that we can get upset with an individual who goes to an insurance office and works on Sabbath; but we then don't really care to spend time even discussing what a person is doing on Sabbath if not going to the insurance office to work. I think the whole approach to Sabbath is very, very personal. This is something that people have to work out in their own minds. While I believe very firmly in the seventh-day Sabbath, there are those who don't believe as rigidly about it as I do and I give them that right to disagree with me.

THE FUTURE OF NAD ADVENTISM

Overall, are you optimistic about the future of the Adventist church in North America?

Not the present structure and operation of it. I think if the church is going to survive there are going to have to be some cataclysmic changes.

At minimum, what would those be?

It is just mandatory that we cut our administrating staff in half. I can't express my concern strongly enough to convey my feelings about the recent employment of a husband and wife team who now have the responsibility for presenting mission awareness to the church here in North America. This simply constitutes nothing but having them spend half their time visiting mission fields and the other half coming back home to America and telling us all about missions. And we are talking about many, many thousands of dollars every year.

On the issue of church unity, what do you think about the growing disparity between educated Adventists in North America and the millions that are joining overseas? Can we stay together as a denomination?

If we do, it will be a miracle, because we don't seem to be taking the right steps to avert a real separation down the line. Our attempt to produce unity has been a call to conformity and a call to agreement. It has not really been a call to a conceptual framework. For example, in a recent issue of the *Adventist Review*, I read of six or seven problems facing the church. Two of the most serious problems weren't even addressed: one is our utilization of Ellen White, and the other is lack of confidence in church leadership. Those two weren't even identified, and they probably are as serious as any other problem that faces our church.

What is the challenge of Ellen White for the modern church in North America?

Well, more and more the church membership is becoming aware that the official position of the church is that Ellen White is not an infallible source of truth; and yet the church membership is seeing Ellen White still being used that way, even by church leadership. Virtually everything that comes out in the *Review* is braced up by Ellen White's comments. Ellen White is still used as a measure of control, and people are rejecting this approach, as well as they ought to. Unless our church takes a very formal and considered approach to deal with the problem, the difficulty will become more pronounced. A statement in *The Desire of Ages* is vital:

"In the story of the good Samaritan, Christ illustrates the nature of true religion. He shows that it consists not in systems, creeds or rites, but in the performance of loving deeds, in bringing the greatest good to others, in genuine goodness" (page 497).

That should be the mission of our church, and it is not.

I think if the church is going to survive there are going to have to be some cataclysmic changes.

A Historian Responds to the

Soldiers FROM Southern

by Ben McArthur

Academic fights are so bitter, Henry Kissinger once observed, precisely because so little is at stake.

Southern College certainly knew its share of bitterness in the 1980s, but quite a lot was at stake, both for the institution and for individual careers. Frank Knittel was the president who hired me, Gary Patterson served as my conference president, and Jerry Gladson was a faculty colleague and good friend. But I will strive here to avoid partisanship and suggest a context as well as comment on Gladson's and Knittel's suggestions for change.

The contention at Southern (and PUC) in the 1980s occurred against the backdrop of culture wars within American Adventism. These generally centered on theology and scriptural interpretation, but also reflected varying ideas about lifestyle, openness to change, and trust in the competence and integrity of church leadership. Similar conflicts embroiling other conservative groups, such as Southern Baptists or Missouri Synod Lutherans, offered us small comfort. Southern, long priding itself as heir of historic Adventism, was bewildered to find its credentials suddenly questioned by "truer believers." That such critics were frequently of a know-nothing variety made their censure even harder to swallow. And that such external attacks coincided with a sudden downturn in enrollment made corrective action seem imperative. The upshot was a school more committed than ever to posturing itself as the conservative alternative within the Adventist system. This commitment ran across the board.

The approach has been successful, largely because a large number still desire a traditionally Adventist education for their children. But Gladson and Knittel question the adequacy of traditional thinking. Gladson asks if our conventional approach is intellectually honest. Knittel wonders whether our institutional framework and sense of mission are attuned to contemporary needs.

The correctives suggested by both men appear attractive, even necessary. But ostensibly desirable changes may bring their own

An unhappy truth for intellectuals (for whom the play of ideas and tentativeness of conclusions are axiomatic), is that a certain doctrinal insistence seems to correlate with church growth.

complexities. Jerry has found exhilarating intellectual freedom in his new church home and commends its theological diversity to Adventism. But there are no free lunches. The toleration that gives the United Church of Christ its open quality has also contributed to its suffering among the most serious declines of membership of any major Christian denomination. An unhappy truth for intellectuals (for whom the play of ideas and tentativeness of conclusions are axiomatic), is that a certain doctrinal insistence seems to correlate with church growth. Most people, finally, desire the security of firm theological propositions. This is not to say that Adventism must not constantly scrutinize, refine, or even occasionally overhaul certain tenets. If we fail to do so, we risk ultimately becoming another religious museum piece, devoid even of the appealing quaintness of the Amish.

Yet, in fact, we have quietly altered our teachings and practice (though we rarely admit such changes). Our understanding of Ellen White's prophetic gifts has evolved considerably. Likewise, gospel teaching has overtaken our previous works orientation. And despite the defeat of women's ordination, the liturgical role of women in the Adventist church has changed drastically.

Both Gladson and Knittel call for administrative retrenchment and decentralization, and hold up congregationalism as the antidote for the lassitude of North American

Adventism. North Americans' discomfiture with decisions of the world church only adds to the desire for local autonomy. But this presents a real dilemma, for the church's highly structured organization appears to work well in the world arena. What obligations do we have to the broader church? Has not a world vision been our peculiar strength? Congregationalism, rather than a panacea, seems to me a counsel of despair, the final stage of a movement no longer sure of what it believes.

The exchange between Jerry Gladson and Gary Patterson over the former's ministerial credentials illustrates what historians have long known: things are usually more complex than they appear at first glance. Whatever the actual reasons for the church's refusal to renew his credentials, the matter brought an unhappy end to events beginning at Southern nearly a decade before. It would be nice to safely relegate such incidents to our past. However, any movement that embraces Truth will be subject to periodic witch hunts. The Walla Walla College religion department went through a similar purge in the 1930s, and there are doubtless other examples.

Although I have reservations concerning particular recommendations of Gladson and Knittel, I concur that the time is overdue for fundamental rethinking about the basic mission of the Adventist church. Such rethinking must not be viewed as part of a "liberal" agenda. Trends in North American membership, Adventist school attendance, and financial support demand that Adventists of all persuasions set aside traditional suspicions and begin asking what Seventh-day Adventism in 21st century North America should mean.

Ben McArthur has taught history at Southern College since 1979. He holds a PhD from the University of Chicago and has pursued a scholarly interest in American cultural history.



I Am Not the Parenthesis of My Husband!

Is our church truly ours, or is it just an “old boys’ club?” When I was young, I believed the Seventh-day Adventist Church was mine. I was a joiner, and I belonged. I was the youngest member of our Dorcas Club. I faithfully attended each meeting. During the week, I baked bread to give to my neighbors so I could raise my hand when the leader asked who had given away food baskets that week.

I even shocked the lady next door when I tried to sell her a copy of *My Little Friend* and she thought I was talking about the neighbor girl. I was only trying to raise money for the “missionaries and colporteurs across the sea,” but somewhere along the way I became disillusioned. The church no longer feels like home.

The first feeling of alienation came when I picked up a copy of our new church directory. I opened it to make sure our number was listed correctly. What I found shocked me. The compiler chose to list our names as, “Ojeda, Mr. Pedro (Anita).” If a family had children, their names were listed off to the side.

When I called the compiler and informed him that I am not the parenthesis of my husband, he laughed. He said it was “just a way” to list everyone. He informed me that since no one else volunteered to do the job, no one had the right to complain about his methods of making the directory. He was right. I hadn’t volunteered to do the job. However, even the phone book recognizes my personhood and separate identity from my husband!

According to the *American Heritage Dictionary*, a parenthesis is a “curved line used to mark off explanatory or qualifying remarks.” In other words, “Pedro Ojeda is a church member (and oh, yes, he has a wife named Anita).” The compiler, a retired

Anita Strawn de Ojeda



Anita Strawn de Ojeda, elementary-school ESL coordinator, attends an Adventist church in Nevada. Her husband, a household executive, and her two young daughters worship with her. She hasn’t lived in her new town long enough to get her name in the church directory.

pastor and elder in our church, seemed to be making a statement about women by the way he listed them, suggesting we are somehow less valuable to our church than the men.

Some other things give the same impression. Each time the *Adventist Review* or the *Pacific Union Recorder* arrives, I notice that the address label directs it to “Pedro Ojeda,” not to “The Ojeda Family” nor to “Anita and Pedro Ojeda,” not even to “Mr. and Mrs. Ojeda.” We are both church members. Why doesn’t the magazine come to both of us?

My husband hates to look through mail, and he rarely opens a magazine unless I tell him about a good article. Inside the *Recorder* and *Review*, I find articles that pertain to women, children and men. If they are family magazines, why aren’t they addressed to the family?

How someone chooses to label a publication isn’t the real issue, but how people in position choose to value the members of the organization that supports them is important. My husband and I are members of the San Diego Zoological Society. We pay \$48 a year (a mere pittance compared to the amount of tithe we return to the church) for unlimited entrance to the Zoo and Wild Animal Park and a year-long subscription to *Zoonooz*. The Zoological Society addresses all of its correspondence to “Mr. Pedro Ojeda and Mrs. Anita Ojeda.” I feel valued, a part of their organization.

When the church addresses its publications to only the male in each household, it is sending a message to the women: “You aren’t as valuable to our organization as your husband is.” The message is based on the unity myth, which implies that when a woman marries, she becomes one with her husband. This is true, but her personhood remains separate. She is a valuable member of society apart from her

husband. There is nothing mystical that happens during the wedding ceremony to cause a woman to become subordinate, not only to her husband, but to every man in the congregation.

How many times have notices appeared in church publications saying "Pastor So-and-So was ordained and is now serving at Such-and-Such church. He is joined in the ministry by his wife." If I join the military, I get paid for my services. How many ministers' wives get paid for the untold number of tasks they perform under the guise of "joined in the ministry?" If the minister's wife is unpaid by the church, she isn't joining him. She is simply providing spousal support, just like any other executive's spouse. If a school hires a female teacher, she is never "joined in the teaching" by her husband.

A friend told me about her experience with "the myth" during a Sabbath School discussion. The teacher, a minister and former school superintendent, asked my friend a seemingly innocent question: "Who are you?"

"A teacher?" she hesitantly replied—not quite sure what answer he was fishing for since they were colleagues and he obviously knew her name.

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"No, who are you?" he demanded.

"A child of God!" my friend replied with confidence, relieved to have the right answer.

"No! No, no!" the teacher exclaimed. "You are Mrs. Harold Wright. You get your identity from your husband."

What a sad state of affairs when a minister thinks a woman gets her identity from her husband, and not from God. I am who I am because of God, not because I happen to be married. The myth implies that a woman's value and identity come through her husband. The myth is not scripturally sound. Jesus valued women. He hung out with prostitutes and housewives. He treated women as valued members of society in an age and culture that regarded women as chattel. The world is starting to accept women as equally valuable members of society, but the church should be the leader in the revolution.

By choosing to exclude women from decision-making and leadership positions, and yes, even mailing lists, the church appears more and more like an old boys' club. The church is no longer mine. No matter what the setting, I don't like being where I feel I'm not valued.

What if? FROM A CHURCH DIRECTORY IN A MATRIARCHAL SOCIETY

ADDRESSES

- ADAMS, Ms. Abigail (John). 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC 54321. 987/654-3210
BONAPARTE, Ms. Josephine (Napoleon). 21 Rue de Triste, Paris, France. 65.43.21
COTTRELL Ms. Elizabeth (Raymond). 54321 Assistentia Ln., Beachtown, California 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
EINSTEIN, Ms. Elsa (Albert). 54321 Pensee Street, Princeton, New Jersey, 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
FOLKENBERG, Ms. Anita (Robert). 21 Auxiliary Avenue, Hidden Valley, Maryland 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
GARDENER, Ms. Eve (Adam). 21 Weedy Lane, Baghdad, Iraq. 65.43.21
GERATY, Ms. Gillian (Larry). 21 Sunny Lane, Smogville, California 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
ISRAEL, Ms. Zipporah (Moses). 321 Cactus Lane, Sinai, Egypt. 65.43.21
JOHANSSON, Ms. Noelene (Bill). 21 Adventist Way, Hidden Valley, Maryland 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
MCCLURE, Ms. Frances (Al). 21 Division Drive, Hidden Valley, Maryland 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
ROOSEVELT, Ms. Eleanor (Franklin). 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, DC, USA. 987/65/4321
ROUSE, Ms. Cherie (Glenn). 21 Logos Avenue, Loma Linda, California 54321. USA. 987/65/4321
SCRIVEN, Ms. Marianne (Chuck). 321 Sonata Street, Hidden Valley, Maryland 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
SHEPHERD, Ms. Sarah (Abraham). 321 Country Lane, Oasis, Palestine. 65.43.21
STIRLING, Ms. Maryan (Jim). 21 La Plume, Mountain Heights, California 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
STRAWN-OJEDA, Ms. Anita (Pedro). 21 Cattle Drive, Badlands, Nevada 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
TAYLOR, Ms. Marilyn (Erv). 321 Hill Street, Hidden Valley, California 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
TINKER, Ms. Colleen Moore (Richard). 21 Mocha Circle, Hidden Valley, California 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
VAN RIJN, Ms. Saskia (Rembrandt). 21 Brush Lane, Amsterdam, Netherlands. 65.43.21
WALTERS, Ms. Priscilla (Jim). 21 Grapevine Avenue, Hidden Valley, California 54321. USA. 987/654-3210
YORK, Sgt. Margaret (Lance Ito). 21 Lonely Road, Beverly Hills, California 54321. USA. 987/654-3210

Kampmeeting Supports Gay Adventists

“**M**y family threw me out.”
“After I confided in my pastor, he told the entire church board.”
“I tried to kill myself.”

“I tried for years to change. I prayed and prayed and prayed for God to not make me this way. It just didn’t happen.”

These are some of the real-life experiences shared by a number of the attendees at Kampmeeting, a recent week-long retreat hosted by Seventh-day Adventist Kinship International, a gay and lesbian organization. Not everyone had such negative experiences to share, but the few who did found support from the Kampmeeting attendees. According to Darin Olson, the group’s president, that is why SDA Kinship exists.

Entitled “Kampmeeting—A Family Reunion,” this gathering last August of over 100 gay and lesbian Adventists and their friends provided time for the attendees to share their life stories, attend sessions and generally support one another amidst the beautiful scenery of the Columbia Gorge outside Portland, Oregon. A number of Adventist teachers and counselors came to provide information to the attendees and to learn from them.

The topics on the program covered many issues important to 90s Adventists: What can one do to support people living with AIDS? What is the latest research on the transmission and prevention of that disease? What are the contributing factors to sexual orientation? What about creation and evolution? What do Genesis 1 and 2 really say? What about sexual ethics? Fostering relationships? Personal finance? The Internet? What happened at the Utrecht General Conference this summer?

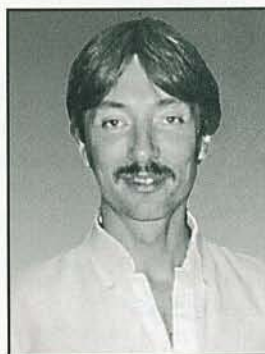
There were many serious, tear-filled moments during the week. Among them:

A Friday evening memorial service commemorating those Kinship members who have died of AIDS (more than 56), followed by the sharing of communion. There were many in attendance who had lost life partners or friends. Two people were mentioned who had died in the previous few weeks.

A first-day sharing of personal stories in which

by *Bob Bouchard*
and *Harvey Elder*

Harvey A. Elder, M.D., Chief of Infectious Diseases at the VA Hospital in Loma Linda, California, and professor, LLU School of Medicine, has made a special study of HIV/AIDS. He likes to think and talk about how Jesus would relate to people with HIV.



Bob Bouchard is an attorney in New York City. He served as president of SDA Kinship from 1982 to 1988. Bouchard recently learned to water-ski.

over 20 new attendees described the process by which they learned that they were gay or lesbian and experienced the response, sometimes negative, sometimes not, of the significant people in their lives.

One presentation was by a mother, Kate McLaughlin, who has written a book for Pacific Press, *My Son, Beloved Stranger*, in which she movingly describes her son’s coming to grips with his homosexuality and how she and her family came to terms with it. It also describes how those outside the family responded, including the very negative reactions of his local Adventist church. The son eventually left the Adventist church and joined a “liturgical church.”

The conference also included many fun-filled moments. Almost every session had a song service, and special music drew on the talents of 20 or more musicians. There were evening games, a talent show, and movies. There was also a day-trip to Mt. Hood and daily use of the pool.

But the point of the retreat was to provide community, a “family reunion,” for many who face ostracism and discrimination in their daily lives—a chance to open up and be supported by other understanding gay people and heterosexuals.

Seventh-day Adventist Kinship, International, Inc. was formed after the first Kampmeeting held in Arizona in 1980. At that first gathering two Adventist pastors and three seminary professors attended as official delegates of the General Conference. The two pastors, both familiar with the pain and isolation felt by homosexual members of their congregations, emphasized the need for the church to make a greater effort to understand gay people before judging the quality of their Christianity. The three professors were scholars of the Old Testament, the New Testament and theology, respectively. They concluded that the Lord’s will for persons with a homosexual orientation could not be determined from the few scriptural references to homosexual acts.

SDA Kinship’s goal is to reach out and provide support for gay, lesbian and bisexual Seventh-day

The debate over women's ordination at the 1995 SDA General Conference in Utrecht pitted a literalistic application of scripture (no ordination of women in the Bible, none now) against a principle-based application (scriptural principles underlying early church practice permits

and may even require it). But for me the difficulties posed by absolutist literalism go well beyond Christian practices, such as the laying on of hands, to various Christian beliefs.

Take the timing of the Second Coming of Christ, for example. When I was six years old in San Antonio, Texas, I remember being terrified by sunlight streaming down through an open space in the clouds. I ran into the house screaming, "Jesus is coming!" I wasn't ready. I was going to be killed by "the brightness of his coming." Must I maintain that same "on the edge" mentality today?

Now I realize that while we Adventists think the Second Coming has been "imminent" for 1.5 centuries, most Christians think it has been "imminent" for 20 centuries! How do they deal with this "imminence"? And can I learn anything from them?

Spiritual Reality Permits Serenity

Though I am a born-and-raised, third-generation, seminary-trained Adventist whose father, the late A.K. Phillips, was an evangelist and pastor, I have never been able to make sense of Daniel 8:14 as a 2300-days-equal-2300-years time prophecy. Though as a child I accompanied Dad on the sawdust trail in southern Texas as he preached it, illustrated with all the frightful beasts in his numerous "efforts," though I studied it in seminary, though I prayed and wept, the truth remains: It has simply never made sense.

For most of my life I was "lost in literality." I felt like little Virginia O'Hanlon, who wrote a letter to the editor of her local newspaper asking if there really was a Santa Claus. The editor, Francis Church, answered her letter in a highly affirming editorial titled "Is There a Santa Claus?" which appeared in the September 21, 1897, issue of the *New York Sun*. Church carefully crafted his answer

1844: No Disappointment

to lead the awakening young mind from naive literality to the spiritual reality that is represented by the cultural symbol Santa Claus.*

Following his lead, I have slowly realized a spiritual reality that makes sense to me and permits a serenity generated from the knowledge that God is indeed in charge. The following is what I have come to believe.

"This Generation Will Not Pass"

In a single voice the New Testament anticipates an almost-immediate, it-could-happen-at-any-hour Second Coming of Jesus. For example, at the end of his gospel, John touchingly recounts:

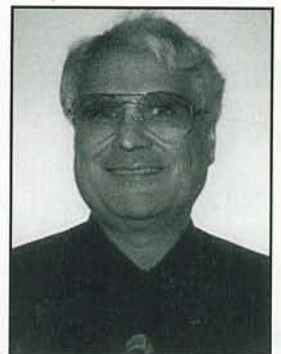
"Jesus said to [Peter], 'If it is my will that [John] remain until I come, what is that to you? Follow me!' The saying spread abroad among the brethren that this disciple was not to die: yet Jesus did not say to him that he was not to die, but, 'If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you?'" (John 21:22-23, RSV).

Earlier, on the Mount of Olives, his disciples had asked Jesus, "Tell us, when will [the destruction of the temple] be, and what will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?"

Jesus responded with a long list, including the coming of antichrists, the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom throughout the whole world, the darkening of the sun and moon, the falling of the stars, and the coming of the Son of man on the clouds of heaven. Then he added: "Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away till all these things take place" (Matt 24:34, RSV).

Years later, in a letter to believers who are anxiously awaiting Christ's return, as were many Millerites many centuries later, John writes, "Children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many

Max Gordon Phillips



Max Phillips is a third-generation Adventist. A graduate of Andrews U. Seminary, Phillips once worked as book editor at Pacific Press, where he was a material witness in the lawsuit which gained equal pay for equal work for Adventist women employees.

No record exists that the early church went through any period of disappointment like the one endured by Millerites after October 22, 1844. This ought to tell us something.

antichrists have come; therefore we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18, RSV).

And yet Jesus literally did not come. But (the key for me) there is no hint of disappointment that he hadn't yet come by the time the last of the New Testament was written down many years later. In truth, of disappointment in any perceived failure to return on the part of Jesus, the New Testament knows absolutely nothing. This ought to tell us something.

No record exists that the early church went through any period of disappointment like the one endured by Millerites after October 22, 1844. This ought to tell us something.

Nor does the New Testament, or indeed the early church, know anything of an Old Testament 2300-year prophecy that would serve to preclude fulfillment of Jesus' Mount-of-Olives prophecy, "This generation shall not pass," or nullify the beloved disciple's plea, "We know that it is the last hour." And this ought to tell us something as well.

Might this realization have quietly accounted for some of the resistance that biblical scholars of the time exhibited toward Miller's arguments and time settings?

Daniel 1, Jesus 0?

One could argue that God kept his son, Jesus, and all the New Testament writers in the dark about the coded plans he had secretly revealed to Daniel centuries earlier. But I have never heard such an argument raised in Adventism, and the implications and ramifications of raising it seem intimidating to say the least. Such an argument, for instance, not only unnecessarily sets Daniel's prophecy (2300 years will pass first) against that of Jesus ("this generation will not pass"), but does so in such a way that Daniel triumphs over Jesus.

Conceivably, one could even argue that despite the silence of the record, there were two disappointments: One in the first century and one (two?) in the 1840s. Such an argument could conclude: Since the first-century Christians were also disappointed, then the disappointment of the 19th century Christians, which continued into the 20th century and appears headed into the 21st (!), benefits from this strong biblical precedent and is thus legitimized. The difficulty with this syllogism lies in the premise: No one has established that the apostles and the rest of the first-century Christians were ever disappointed.

Furthermore, even if an archaeological-historical juggernaut could establish such a first-century

disappointment, nothing would be gained and much would be put at risk. For instance, critics would argue, "There have been many such disappointments down through the ages. What about all the other apocalyptic groups for whom Jesus did not appear as hoped? What makes your disappointment so special?"

New Testament Powerful Medicine

Personally, I would rather take the powerful medicine of the New Testament and the early church: No disappointment!

How can I do that? Let me illustrate: in the 1980s in California I was acquainted with a learned and saintly Presbyterian minister known as Pastor Scotty. I asked him once what he told his parishioners when they asked whether Jesus was coming or not. He said he always replied, "Jesus has come in your hearts."

This is no pussy-footing evasion. This is mighty-fortress, "no disappointment," New Testament faith in action. The Second Coming can be accepted as symbolic or typical of the consummation of your religious experience, an event judging and justifying your spiritual connection with God. You may or may not choose to deal with the question of literality. But in spite of everything, you can maintain your spiritual existence, which, I submit, is far more vital than settling any questions of literality!

A symbolic interpretation allows one to assert that, yes, Jesus, John, and the rest (James 5:8, etc.) were right! Indeed, the generation did not pass before apocalyptic changes, still being felt, attributable to a symbolic first-century Second Coming, began to shake the then-known world.

Once the principle of symbolic interpretation is accepted, one can see many Second Comings, rather than many disappointments. Americans view the Civil War, for example, as a type of Second Coming, as documented by our shameless national love for Julia Ward Howe's apocalyptic song:

Battle Hymn of the Republic

*Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord;
He is trampling out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored;
He hath loosed the fateful lightning of His terrible swift sword:
His truth is marching on.*

*I have seen Him in the watch-fires of a hundred circling camps,
They have builded Him an altar in the evening dews and damps;
I can read His righteous sentence by the dim and flaring lamps:*

His day is marching on.
I have read a fiery gospel writ in burnished rows of steel:
"As ye deal with my contemners, so with you my grace shall deal;
Let the Hero, born of woman, crush the serpent with his heel,
Since God is marching on!"

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment seat.
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! Be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea,
With a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me;
As he died to make men holy, let us die to make men free,
While God is marching on.

The "spiritual Second Coming" principle can also apply—not to the date October 22, 1844—but to the Advent movement itself, or rather to the spiritual event which characterized the divinely sparked successes of "the little flock" and its progeny. Only thus can the successes (justification or vindication) of the Adventist church be rightly paralleled to the successes (justification or vindication) of the early church.

The "disappointment mentality," on the other hand, can never admit of the divine triumph that only a Second Coming can entail. The "disappointment mentality" prevents Adventists from joyfully acknowledging that we have indeed par-


ticipated in a Second Coming! Instead, it locks us into a self-defeating, depressing mind set that in effect says, "Not only has he not come, but it must be our fault that he hasn't!"

The "disappointment mentality" is not and has never been necessary. For neither the Christian church in general nor the Adventist denomination in particular has a call or need to indulge 150 or 200 or 2,000 years awash in the tears of unbiblical disappointment.

"No Santa Claus?" wrote editor Church. "Thank God, he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood."

Yes, Virginia, there is a Second Coming . . . many Second Comings . . . with many more to come. . . all building altars in the evening dews and damps. . . all trampling out the vintage. . . all sifting out the hearts of men and women . . . all vindicating the righteous. . . all writing fiery gospels in burnished rows of steel . . . all judging the wicked. . . all crushing the serpent. . . all sounding forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat. . .

Make no mistake, his truth is marching on.

*Some may feel discomfiture at finding the Second Coming compared to Santa Claus, even as some may have felt discomfiture in Christ's day at hearing him compare himself to a snake (John )

What about all
the other
apocalyptic
groups for
whom Jesus did
not appear as
hoped? What
makes your
disappointment
so special?

Kampmeeting Supports Gay Adventists

From page 16

Adventists and their friends and families. This is done through a newsletter, a telephone information line (714-248-1299), media advertising, local chapter meetings, annual Kampmeetings, and written information. Additionally Kinship has provided informational packets to pastors, counselors, teachers, deans and others.

The organization has survived at least two major crises: a schism in the early 1980s (the breakoff group is now defunct); and a trademark infringement lawsuit filed by the General Conference against SDA Kinship over use of the name "Seventh-day Adventist." Kinship won and the US District Court Judge ruled

"the terms 'Seventh-day Adventist' and 'SDA,' as used by SDA Kinship, are generic." (CV 87-8113, Central Dist. Calif., Oct.1991).

The organization remains healthy today, according to Olson. The number of paid memberships has varied over the years from 200 to 900. While the current membership is in the lower end (about 400), there are 2,000-3,000 other people who have asked for information, attended meetings, called the information line or donated money. The health of the organization is also dependent on the willingness of members to donate time and energy to the organization's various projects. The willingness continues year after year, says Olson. The enthusiasm generated by Kampmeeting is a major source of energy for the organization.

When asked what he thought were the major issues confronting SDA Kinship

today, Ron Lawson, Kinship's church liaison, stated: "AIDS is the overwhelming concern facing any gay group today—how best to educate gay Adventists and the church in general and also how to really be there for those members who become sick. We also need to help the church itself, through our example, to learn how to provide a better ministry to Adventists with AIDS." The group also needs to continually improve its ability to find the people who need its support. According to Mike McLaughlin, a former president of Kinship, "There will always be a need for the organization because there is a continuing flow of men and women, particularly in Adventist colleges but really of all ages, who are going through the pain of discovering their innate, and unchangeable, orientation in a church and larger society that is not supportive. We want to be there to provide that support." 

STAYING IN THE CHURCH AND LEAVING IT

The candor of expression by *Adventist Today* is indeed appreciated. There is much ferment within our church today that needs to be addressed. Other journals lack considerably in this regard. . . .

A response to fellow physician Dr. Walter Fahlsing [*Adventist Today* March-April 1995] is certainly indicated. I think his comments reflect honesty of opinion. Furthermore, I believe that he is indeed a Christian. . . .

Dr. Fahlsing is not alone with certain of his concerns. . . . The self-adulation or puffery advanced by our church as being the final authority of what is truth, we are the remnant church, indications that Ellen G. White and her prolific writings are absolutely free of any error, the investigative judgment, and ritual prohibitions regarding dress and diet with the advancement of a monastic life style were enumerated. Our concern and advancement of these have unfortunately all too often eclipsed the centrality of the gospel. I am encouraged with the present emphasis on making Jesus Christ and what he accomplished at Calvary our main thrust. . . .

Paul W. Jackson, MD
Chester, Pennsylvania

[Walter Fahlsing] says that "Ellen White was a pious fraud and a liar." They are harsh words and accusations for anyone to utter. In the article by Clela Fuller her experience is not a model for anyone who is in our church to pattern his or her life after.

There are always some who are on the fringe [who think] that all it takes [is] for them to say "Well that is about the way I feel" and then drop out themselves. Don't be a party [to] making that happen to anyone!

I hate to think of being party to pushing anyone out of the faith. I am sure that is not your purpose. However, I am sure that such articles will confirm the feelings of some who are weak in the faith.

Alten A. Bringle
Lakewood, Colorado

PROOF TEXTS

I need answers. I trust that you can help.

1. What is the reason for not using proof texts to define our SDA faith?

2. What is used instead of proof texts to explain to others what we SDAs believe in?

I really do need to know the answers.
Mrs. D. R. Cunningham
Forbestown, California

Editorial Note: There are good reasons, and there is a better way. In a forthcoming issue of AT there will be a focus section on ways to study the Bible and present its truths without resorting to proof texts.

DENNIS CONTROVERSY

I wish the church could take the high road and say, "Mr. Dennis is wrong about his charges. We know this because we retained the services of totally independent investigators. They have delved into the matter and find . . . It is our intent to make the following corrections. . . . We pray Mr. Dennis will take the same approach in his life and make whatever changes are needed. God loves us all and wants all of us in the kingdom of heaven. He and his family have our support and love."

For the church to counter Elder Dennis's charges with other charges that he is a sinner is unimportant to me. It means that I will have to hold my judgments about Dennis until God reveals to me the truth in his case, if ever. In the meantime, I am constrained by God's love to treat him with love and respect, since I too am a sinner.

On the other hand, Elder Dennis's charges against the church are serious but secular in nature. If his charges have substance, organizational changes can correct the problem. His charges can and should be investigated. Unfortunately for the church, when observers withhold judgment of Dennis until truth is demonstrated, there is little harm done him since the harm has already occurred and he is work-

ing out new directions for his life. Healing is in progress.

However, to wait for the truth relative to the charges leveled by Dennis does the church great ongoing and continuous harm. This harm is manifested by a reduction in the commitment of the members and loss of financial support—all made worse as time progresses.

Many of us are suspicious of the church. This suspicion is based either on personal experience or the knowledge that large organizations naturally tend to "drift" away from stated goals. To fight this natural drifting process, organizations must allow painful examinations to occur. Because of a healthy suspicion of human nature, the same internal auditing is required of our private lives.

The fact that the church is not rushing to obtain independent proof—that the charges leveled by the ex-chief auditor are wrong—is very troubling. It may mean this drift has already occurred and the church is trying to hide it. In fact, there may be more than a drift. It may be that a total change in course has occurred. Without quality checks and balances, drifting and course changes are certain to occur.

I wish church officials would see that smearing the reputation of another to take the heat away from them is a poor way to respond. We all are turned off by the way American politics avoids the crucial issues when Democrats slander Republicans and vice versa for no other purpose than to damage credibility.

If we accept that the church's charges against Elder Dennis could be correct, then we must also accept that his charges could also be correct. Since the church accepts their position as leaders in morality, they must first prove their innocence before displaying Dennis's guilt. It may well be that the church can still be a force in Dennis's salvation and the salvation of all of us—if needed. But this can only happen if the church shows the way by saving itself.

Richard L. Sheldon, MD
Loma Linda, CA

BALANCED PICTURE OF ADVENTISM

You are doing a great job in getting balanced coverage of critical issues that need to be addressed in the church today. However, I do have a concern. The overall impact of AT is negative and discouraging. A new or potential Adventist, upon reading it, might very well ask, "Why should I cast in my lot with a church like this?" A positive decision would have to be based upon a list of "in spite of's" instead of "because of's."

I have pondered what to do. I think the Cambodian ambassador to Japan has the right philosophy. We knew him as a young church member in Phnom Penh in the early sixties. He has since had a phenomenal career, including years as Chief of Cabinet for King Norodom Sihanouk. When Ralph recounted to him a long list of the ills of Cambodia, he said, "Stop. Don't curse the darkness. Turn on the light!" During our evening with him he found good to say of everyone except Pol Pot!

There are two ways to correct behavior. One is to punish or denounce wrong practices. The other is to reward or applaud right action—not to condemn but inspire. What AT needs is inspirational articles. Maybe the negative ones are necessary, but there should be some deeply spiritual and inspiring ones along with [them] to give a balanced picture of Adventism.

The fact of the matter is, God is actively working in marvelous ways in the Adventist Church today. . . . What's being done right in the church? Maybe this approach would also expand *Adventist Today's* circulation.

Beatrice Neall
Lincoln, Nebraska

UTRECHT '95

At the General Conference at Utrecht I heard presenters who stressed dogma and organizational control. Others focused on salvation by grace reflected in Christian love. During the entire session there was great emphasis on evangelism and the thousands being converted to the church in countries experiencing cultural and economic turmoil. Repeatedly I encountered

delegates from these countries in the hallways, lunch line, dining area, and the exhibits. They talked to me about how many hundreds and in one case the thousands they individually had brought into the church. The public reports of the world divisions also emphasized numbers and showcased evangelists with large numbers of baptisms.

Exhibits at the session included a great variety of ways of presenting Adventist doctrines. A portable life-size Daniel 2 image was on display at the entrance of a large shopping mall in Utrecht with Adventists explaining the meaning to passersby.

While evangelism based on doctrine and prophecy may increase membership in some places, other aspects of the gospel may be neglected. For example, I heard no reference to one of the most important Ellen White statements related to evangelism, declaring that the strongest argument in favor of Christianity is a loving and lovable Christian (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 470). This suggests to me that the concept of righteousness by faith presented to the 1888 General Conference has yet to be fully integrated into Seventh-day Adventist attitudes and values.

For the gospel to be effective in the Adventist church, could it be that all of us—men, women, and youth in all parts of the world—need to experience the unconditional love and kindness of Jesus as reflected in the lives and homes of our fellow believers and leaders? Is it possible that we are so proud of being right about our doctrines that at times we forget to be kind and consider the needs and viewpoint of others? Is it not time for us to prioritize "the strongest argument"? Is the church still more preoccupied with when Jesus is supposed to come than in preparing for the new earth experience where the lambs of this church will have no need to fear the lions?

Glenn Henriksen
Sylmar, California

Thanks so much for the informative reporting and analysis on the Utrecht GC Session. Some of the observations made and issues raised in your articles bear more in-depth examination. I think an issue devoted

to an examination of what it means to be a world church might be very timely. What are the advantages and disadvantages of our world structure as it is now set up? What kind of structure might allow for greater autonomy in decision-making in the various divisions while still preserving some sense of unity and shared mission? How does our structure compare to Catholic and other Protestant structural models?

Another issue that also needs closer examination and analysis is the current trend toward greater control and uniformity in theological belief and the discouragement of open debate and questioning of church policies, operations, or beliefs. Elder Folkenberg's recent discussion of the use of scripture and church authority in the *Adventist Review* included many disturbing statements. The trend is especially disturbing in light of the early history of the Adventist church, which placed great emphasis on convictions gained through personal Bible study, and strongly resisted detailed corporate statements of belief. We praise the minority groups throughout history (Anabaptists, Waldenses, early Protestant reformers) who placed personal convictions of scriptural interpretation ahead of erroneous corporate beliefs. Our whole sense of identity as the remnant church is built on the presupposition that a minority can have a clearer and more correct understanding of God's will than a majority. And yet, despite this historic praise of and identification with minority interpretations of scripture, we now appear to be creating an atmosphere that not only stifles discussion but condemns and rejects individual convictions that differ from the majority or official view! Is there any possibility for continued growth and development in an organization that discourages the sort of questioning and discussion that gave birth to it in the first place?

Michelle Rider
Internet

Letters to the Editor

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NAD Leaders Discuss Finances and Structural Changes

CONTINUED FROM BACK PAGE

The unions and conferences are feeling the money crunch. "Economies of conferences are now so tight that many operate with skeleton staffs," said Ralph Martin, president of the Columbia Union, addressing the assembly. "Only a few can now provide a full complement of departmental leaders to train the church members and are working hard to provide training in new ways." Martin proposed some solutions, including televised training via satellite, and pastors presenting successful programs on the congregational level.

Restructuring Suggested

To mixed reviews, Alfred C. McClure, president of the NAD, reported the recommendations of the Commission on Mission and Organization, which had worked for the past one and a half years. He suggested that the unions and local conferences examine their operations and initiate creative restructuring in order to work more efficiently.

"We have been in the same organizational structure since 1903," he said, opening the meeting in the Battle Creek Tabernacle Seventh-day Adventist Church, site of origin of the present conference system. "Now instant travel and communication, CompuServe, and video conferencing have produced a different environment. We don't want to change for change's sake but should periodically examine the way we do business." Whereas the denomination formerly took considerable pride in its structural uniformity at all levels, now experiments in organizational downsizing are encouraged at the union and conference levels.

The Commission's recommendations centered around three related moves: (1) dissolving all conference departments except youth and education, (2) eliminating duplication of departments at conference, union, division, and general conference levels by having the division office serve all churches with an 800 call-in number, and (3) organizing churches in the same area into a district and designating one of the pastors a district leader. The commission, chaired by McClure, specifically recommended dissolving smaller confer-

ences into districts, giving the leader the title of conference vice president. Some delegates saw the addition of cluster-church pastors as another level of administration. The recommendations drew mixed reviews from the pastors, conference presidents and lay people in attendance.

"This is a recommendation only," McClure said. "The Commission had no mandate to do anything. This body will not impose change. We are just encouraging each organization to do a self-evaluation to see if its structure is most efficient for today's environment."

"This is so confusing that we can't get our work finished till Jesus comes," said Robert Lister, president of the Southwest Regional Conference.

"Don't insult the intelligence of people by saying this is not adding another level to conference structure," said Susan Sickler of Ohio. "Most Adventists love their conference, don't care about the union, and don't know the division exists."

Michigan Conference President Jay Gallimore said his pastors had been in clusters for years and experienced some wonderful results. He had just organized a new church in Grand Rapids through the efforts of local churches working together. "But it has worked well because the district superintendent is a peer," Gallimore said. "Pastors don't want another layer of administration. In order to accomplish our mission, we must be careful to not move towards congregationalism despite the pressure."

The attendees never discussed the possibility of conference mergers, another commission recommendation, nor how to keep money from going up the structure and then back down as subsidies. The Commission agreed that the church should continue its black regional conferences, which are already rather large geographically, and felt the division could provide adequate church support services through a centralized 800-number.

Evangelism

Division officers have already raised \$1.2 million to fund Net '96, division-wide evangelistic meetings via satellite in 2,000 local churches, and also transmission to Europe, beginning Oct. 5, 1996. Preparation will include Bible studies with one million peo-

ple plus three uplinked training seminars. Mark Finley, speaker/director of It Is Written, will conduct the meetings originating in the Forest Lake Academy auditorium in Orlando, Florida.

Black evangelists in the regional conferences, as well as Hispanic and Asian evangelists, reported large numbers of baptisms and big soul-winning plans for 1996.

Retirement Fund

The Seventh-day Adventist Hospital Retirement Plan, operated for denominational health-care retirees, lost more than \$44 million in bad investments in 1994 but rebounded in 1995 with a \$64 million net gain. Net assets as of September 30, 1995, amounted to nearly \$653 million. The revamping of the NAD retirement plan, originally planned for presentation to the 1995 year-end meeting of the NAD (see Sept./Oct, 1995, issue of AT) is undergoing further study for presentation at the 1996 meeting.

Higher Education

The North American Division Committee (NADCOM) voted to replace the Board of Higher Education, whose coordinating role had been lessened by college boards becoming autonomous, with a Higher Education Cabinet of all Adventist college presidents, to meet once or twice a year in an advisory capacity. The NAD president will chair the cabinet, a college president will be vice-chair, and the newly elected NAD VP for education, Richard Osborn, formerly Columbia Union education director, will serve as secretary. Osborn will represent NAD educational interests before the General Conference.

Vice President for Global Mission

Despite complaints of adding more people at the top, NAD President Alfred McClure recommended the addition of a vice president for evangelism and global mission to the division staff. "Our church has been going through an adjustment; but, remember, our objective is not simply downsizing but doing what is needed for the accomplishment of our mission," McClure said. The nominating committee subsequently chose Cyril Miller for this position. It also filled 21 other positions at division headquarters.

He's Born in a Stable

With the holiday season upon us again we are reminded that more and more businesses live or die depending on their sales in November and December. The "commercialization of the Christ" seems to know no limits these days. Store advertisements, sales flyers and catalogs fill our mail boxes even in October as marketers encourage us unblushingly to "beat the Christmas rush." With our hectic schedules it becomes increasingly difficult to reflect on the reason behind the season as we add Christmas shopping to our ever growing lists of things to do.

Adventists may be caught up in this dilemma more than the public in general, for we are the most "upwardly mobile" Christian church in America today (Crider and Kistler, *The Adventist Family*, 1979). People who convert to Adventism move up the socioeconomic ladder into professionalism more quickly than do those in any other denomination. We are a church with more than our share of Marthas, achievers, or type A personalities, who are more comfortable with doing than with being. There is something deep in the Adventist psyche that equates busyness with holiness and, like Martha, looks critically at the modern Marys who choose meditation over madness.

Paradoxically, the emotions that should most naturally be generated in connection with Thanksgiving and Christmas—gratitude and wonder—are often the first to be victimized during this hectic time of the year. The busier we get the harder it is to take the time to express our thanks and gratitude to the people (and the God) to whom we are indebted. And if like the nine lepers, we are too caught up in our own lives to say "Thank you," the odds are even greater that we will be too preoccupied to focus, reflect, and meditate on the mystery and majesty of God and the wonder-full gifts He/She has given us.

But the greatest of these gifts, the most wonderful of them all, is the gift of the Christ child, the incarnation—a gift of God—too often crowded out by consumerism and commercialism, but longing to be the center of our celebration, especially during this season of the year. Yet, to really celebrate the incarnation we ought to turn our traditional holiday season on its head. We need to

by Steve Daily

Yet, to really celebrate the incarnation we ought to turn our traditional holiday season on its head.



Steve Daily, chaplain at La Sierra University, founded and directed Riverside's Community Service Day. He coordinates LSU's famous resurrection pageant and LSU's soon-to-be-inaugurated Celebration of Light (nativity pageant).

go back to Bethlehem with Joseph and Mary and be amazed by what we see.

My family collects nativity scenes. These scenes all share at least one thing in common—they are neat and clean. The manger is spotless, the blanket covering the infant king looks freshly washed. Even the people and animals look well groomed and refreshed—to say nothing of Jesus, who looks like one of the cutest babies you'll ever see.

But what was it really like? The incarnation wasn't pretty. It involved two dead-tired travelers who were exhausted and frustrated from their failure to find lodging. Stables were stench-filled caves in ancient Israel, covered with manure and filth. The manger was uncomfortable and degrading. The whole scene was one of revulsion and humiliation for any newborn, much more so the Son of God.

On top of it all, Jesus wasn't a Gerber baby. Isaiah tells us, "He had no beauty to attract us to him and nothing in his appearance that we should desire him." He was "like one from whom men hide their faces" (Isa 53:2,3). Does that sound ugly to you? It does to me. The more you think about the incarnation the more mind-boggling it gets. In the words of Ellen White (*Desire of Ages* 48,49): "The story of Bethlehem is an exhaustless theme. In it is hidden 'the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God'" (Rom 11:33).

By his genealogy—by his birth—by his childhood—by his youth—by his life—and by his death—he was despised and rejected.

We esteemed him ... NOT. And the point of the story is that the same is still true today. He still comes to us in swaddling clothes. He is still a newborn in the stable. He is still rejected by the wise and the strong and the powerful, today. And he still rejoices that he is embraced by the weak, the dependent, the foolish, the hurting and the helpless (Luke 10:21). Freud said that religion is a crutch for the emotionally weak. I agree with him; the problem is with those of us who don't realize how weak we are.

During this holiday season may God's strength be made perfect in our weakness (2 Cor 12:9) as we remember that He is still, like an infant in the stable, waiting to be born in our hearts.

Creationism Dialogue Explores Alternatives

“**C**elebration of Creation,” a discussion held August 11-13, 1995, at Rosario Beach, the biology field station of Walla Walla College, provided a chance for about 50 Adventist scholars to explore perspectives on origins. Participants told *Adventist Today* that an important purpose of the Rosario Beach meeting was to explore ways in which the church can enlarge its perspective and look openly at various alternative models of creation, such as those discussed at the Cambridge '94 conference (see Karlow's and Gibson's articles in *Adventist Today*, September/October, 1995). One attendee suggested that the traditional, apologetic solutions which Adventists have advocated in the past no longer work for many educated, scientific-

ly-informed members. Another proposed that in current discussions, “theistic evolution” is not a useful term. It would be more helpful to talk about various types of creationism: “quick creationism” (young earth), “progressive creationism” (God periodically intervenes), and “gradual creationism” (God constantly intervenes).

The Sabbath afternoon session was devoted to a discussion of the “Big Bang” cosmological model.

A number of questions were considered: Does it make sense for all Adventists to support a single model of creation? What are the theological consequences of a long chronology? With what sets of glasses do the biblical writers approach the topic of creation? Are their concerns the same as

ours? What are the major issues that will challenge the church in the next five years with regard to creation? What concrete proposals can the church's theologians and scientists make in order to promote an open and productive dialogue on the issue of creation in our classrooms and in the larger church community?

In his report on the 1994 Cambridge conference in the last *Adventist Today*, Edwin Karlow noted that the “diversity of belief among scholars within our own fellowship regarding the creation and subsequent development of the earth and life on it is sufficiently varied that no single opinion predominates . . . Not only have we kept to ourselves in the creation conversation, we are loath to let any conversation among ourselves occur at all.” The Rosario Beach meeting may indicate that this is changing.

NAD Leaders Discuss Finances and Structural Changes

by Albert Dittes

The Adventist church has been compared to an overweight person carrying too many packages (Monte Sahlin, *Review*). Creative restructuring for greater efficiency, and evangelism, were the main topics pursued at the October year-end meeting of the North American Division.

Money Crunch

Attendees were reminded that serving 800,000 members plus unbaptized children in 4,600 congregations, with thousands of employees and hundreds of institutions and offices, takes lots of money. In the first presentation of the day-and-a-half session, Bill Cash, new director of the GC Office of Archives and Statistics, showed that during the past five years, tithe per capita had

increased 7.59 percent since 1990 while the Disposable Personal Income, or available spending money, had gone up 17.27 percent. According to Cash, if the tithe had

kept pace, the division would have collected \$40 million more than it did during 1994.

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Cultural Tensions Cripple AUC

All three vice presidents of Atlantic Union College submitted their resignations in October. Carol Allen, chief officer for academic affairs, David Rawson, finance, and Ciro Sepulveda, student affairs, are resigning because they perceive a lack of leadership by the college president and board. When contacted by *Adventist Today*, President James Londis refused to comment, saying only that the resignations were sent to the board chair, Ted Jones.

Aside from the resignations, AUC is thriving in spirit and intellect. The faculty's morale is surprisingly good, and the student body of more than 460 possesses an excellent spirit. This cooperative attitude

on campus contrasts markedly with racial tensions in the Atlantic Union that are at the root of the current administrative crisis.

The Atlantic Union has predominantly black members, with a significant Hispanic membership in New York City and a relatively small but affluent white minority mostly in New England. Tensions among these groups render the board ineffective, and Londis reportedly feels that his hands are tied. The college president, known for effective leadership in the past, has appeared paralyzed for the past year, according to one knowledgeable source. “The faculty are not very happy with the administrators, who seem to be burned out,” said one faculty member who requested anonymity. A special joint college and union constituency meeting has been called for December 3, 1995, to deal with the crisis.