Love, Affection, and \$1.60 a Month: Early Attempts to Finance Seventh-day Adventist Church Schools

By Bert Haloviak

W hen, in 1904, a local Seventhday Adventist church in Michigan wanted someone to teach its children, it set forth the following qualifications:

We would like a young lady, not too old and yet old enough not to be foolish, who is thoroughly competent to teach any class up to the tenth grade and can teach music, gardening, sewing, hygienic cookery, and perhaps some other line of manual training. We shall expect her to be superintendent of the Sabbath-school. leader of the missionary society, and as often as called upon lead the prayer meeting. The sister that has been our church clerk for a long time desires a change and we presume that at the next election the teacher will be voted in to be church clerk. We hope the teacher will have had the nurse's course so as to teach healthful living to the parents of the children and if any of them are sick, help to take care of them.¹

All too often, when local churches did find someone with their required qualifications, they lacked the funds to pay the person. One teacher in 1904 reported her salary to be "love and affection, and \$1.60 a month."² This article describes how the wage inequity was resolved.

Ellen White and the Church School Movement

When the SDA Church began its church school system, it inherited a financial structure that was in shambles. By the late 1890s, overexpansion had left each of its four colleges with massive debts. Establishing a major church school system seemed preposterous. Yet that is exactly what Ellen White called upon the church to do. How could the church establish elementary schools wherever there were six or more children? Where were the funds to pay the teachers?

As a new century dawned, Ellen White's son wrote from Australia:

Mother tells me the time has fully come when our people should withdraw their children from the public schools, and that it is the duty of farmers, mechanics, and business men to put their minds, their physical ability, and their capital into the work of making our church-schools a financial success.³

Ellen White urged fresh thinking in the approach to church school finance. "We need now to begin over again," she told the church.⁴

She offered a concrete proposal to place the educational system on a firm financial footing. Mrs. White donated the proceeds of her forthcoming book about the parables of Jesus⁵ toward reducing debts on the educational institutions. She also urged the involvement of the entire church: "The time has come when the Lord will have all the powers of his people brought into exercise to relieve the situation of our schools."6

Ellen White provided the rationale for a fair salary for church school teachers by stressing the importance of their calling. It was unreasonable, she said, for Adventists to give of their means "to advance the cause of Christ among others," and to neglect the nurturing of their own children.⁷ She emphasized that "nothing is of greater importance than the proper education of our children and young people." "The responsibility resting on parents, teachers, the members of the church, is greater than words can express."⁸

Ellen White viewed as evangelistic the work of the church school teacher. "Only the most devout and consecrated" should teach. She urged that only those who saw children as "souls to be saved for the Master" should be employed as teachers.⁹

Ellen White had earlier established a philosophy that kept her from being intimidated by the apparent financial impasse. God had designed, she said, "that the spirit of sacrifice should broaden and deepen for the closing work." It was the privilege of the church to resolve the financial situation. "Angels would gladly do the work that God, in His love, has made it possible" for the church to do, she affirmed.¹⁰

Establishing church schools would provide "a valuable education" for church members. They must learn how to conduct such schools "on a basis of financial success." She challenged them, "For Christ's sake, as the chosen people of God, call yourselves to task and inaugurate a sound financial system in our schools." She was undaunted by past failures. "Opposing circumstances should create a firm determination to overcome them," she advised, as the church wrestled with the problem of financing its church schools.¹¹

Ellen White clearly embraced a corporate approach to educational finance. She outlined this vision in the early 1900s:

In the night season I was in a large company where the subject of education was agitating the minds of all present. Many were bringing up objections to changing the character of the education which has long been in vogue. One who has long been our instructor was speaking to the people. He said: "The subject of education should interest the whole Seventh-day Adventist body. The decisions regarding the character of our schoolwork should not be left wholly to principals and teachers."¹²

The church was embarking upon a new order. It needed the wisdom of all to devise a sound financial plan.

Ellen White provided the rationale for a fair salary for church school teachers by stressing the importance of their calling.

Most delegates at the 1899 General Conference session were surprised when the major business item centered upon Seventh-day Adventist education.¹³ Edward Sutherland, president of Battle Creek College, considered it providential, since he believed the "educational work lies at the foundation of our religious work."

The financial question quickly assumed prominence in the discussions. The four colleges were now more than \$273,000 in debt.¹⁴ One delegate illustrated the dilemma by his experience as a youth when he became the champion stilt walker in his neighborhood. While many were able to walk on stilts 4-5 feet high, young Rufus Underwood could walk on 9-foot stilts. He could do so, however, only because he got on them from the roof of his shed. If he should leave that area, he had no way of getting back down. Underwood made his point. Adventist education had risen to artificial heights in its initial rapid growth. It now needed to establish a sound financial base for supporting the system.

How, the delegates wondered, could the church establish elementary schools wherever there were six or more children as Ellen White had urged? Where were the funds to pay the teachers?

Irwin Evans, General Conference treasurer, proposed a concept that would become fundamental to the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of paying its teachers. He suggested that the financial burdens of education "ought to be divided up and fall equally upon all." Teacher salaries ought to rest upon as secure a foundation as that of the ministry. The church, at the 1899 General Conference session agreed, but devised no way to implement the idea.

Writing from Australia, Ellen White issued a number of specific counsels to the delegates. Wherever there was a company of believers "church schools should be established." God wanted "every child of tender age to be his child, to be adopted into his family." Children were indeed "members of the household of faith."

Problems of Localized Church Control of Elementary Schools

The 50 or so church schools established during the 1890s existed strictly as local church enterprises. General Conference Educational Secretary W. W. Prescott presented the following resolution to the 1889 General Conference session, where it was approved:

The expense of maintaining the [church] school should be provided for wholly by the church where the school is held, by tuition and donations from any source expressly for this purpose.¹⁵

Under that system, teacher salaries varied according to local circumstances. In poor communities, the teacher was lucky to receive a room with a family and perhaps some vegetables in return for teaching. It thus became increasingly difficult for poorer churches to retain teachers. Local schools opened and closed haphazardly.

Members were often forced to move away from the smaller churches to larger congregations that could afford church schools. Often the smaller churches closed and the larger became overcrowded. The early history of the Seventh-day Adventist church school movement clearly demonstrates the failure of attempts to finance schools solely within the local congregational setting.

In July 1901, Percy Magan, General Conference educational secretary, succinctly outlined the history of the church school movement to Ellen White when seeking her counsel. He noticed that several hundred church schools had sprung up throughout the United States. Yet, the situation was untenable "from the standpoint of organization and finance." Local schools maintained "no real vital organic connection" to the conferences.¹⁶

Magan depicted the plight of the teachers:

These church school teachers have for the most part worked for from \$10 to \$15 per month and their board. [Licensed ministers at that time received about \$30 per month.] They have had no regular boarding place, but have boarded around at the homes of the brethren, staying a week or two in one place, and a week or two in another. You will readily see from this that the salary they have received has

The 50 or so church schools established during the 1890s existed strictly as local church enterprises.

been very small indeed. They are the most self-sacrificing workers among us.... Their work has been most arduous, as they generally have a considerable number of students of all sizes, ages, and grades. Our people, on the whole, are somewhat exacting, and with an entirely new system to work out, the lot of our church school teachers has been far from easy.... Since they draw their pay from the local churches, and take just what the local church has a mind to give, they are entirely dependent upon the whim and caprice and feeling of local church members.¹⁷

In early 1903, the editors of the *Advocate of Christian Education* enumerated the problems that resulted from entirely localized support of the church schools:

1. Schools would open for one year and then close the next when funds were low. Both Adventist and non-Adventist students thus would be forced back to the public school.

2. School terms became irregular, often cut short because of lack of funds.

3. Unreasonable demands were placed upon the teacher to provide the greatest amount of service for very minimal pay.

4. Each locality developed independently rather than from a systematic cooperative approach to the development of the school system.

5. Teachers frequently left or were replaced.

6. The system produced poorly qualified teachers since the support was insufficient to enable them to take additional training.

The editors urged that support from a common fund "to which all contribute" would still allow necessary local responsibility. This would also resolve the central issue of the base of support.¹⁸

The 1901 General Conference reorganization greatly benefited the church school movement. The localized decision-making authority provided a framework for solving the financial dilemma of the church schools. This, coupled with the departmental structure, allowed all aspects of church work to be unified and extended. Local conferences began to appoint educational secretaries who solidified the work in their area. Soon conferences took over the expenses of conducting institutes and summer classes for teachers. They also supervised examinations for teachers and issued teaching licenses and credentials. Conferences, not just individual churches, wrestled with the question of funding teachers' salaries.

Second Tithe Plan

In the church's collective effort to resolve the financial question, it adopted a methodology that had proved successful in the past. Many previous crises had been resolved by studying the Scriptures. Perhaps the Bible had something more to say about church finance than Seventhday Adventists had yet discovered.

As early as the 1900 teachers' conference, Harry Washburn, a 27-yearold academy principal from Illinois, offered a "systematic" financial plan designed to "meet all needs." Washburn interpreted from Deuteronomy 14 a provision for a second tithe designed for those Levites who taught in Israel. That second tithe also served as a fund for the needy and for other deeds of charity. Said Washburn:

The payment of a second tithe would provide a fund in every church from which the deficit above the tuition in the church school could be met, the poor relieved in their church and neighborhood, and would provide liberal contributions to a conference fund whereby poor churches elsewinere could be assisted to establish schools. By such a system, each one would be giving according to the Bible rule,—"as God has prospered him." Such a plan of systematic benevolence would certainly react to the advantage of all other departments of God's needy cause...

With the plan of charging a tuition, varying according to the grade of work done by the student, and paid as the ability of the parents of the pupil may permit, with the balance taken from a general fund supplied by the payment of a second tithe, I believe our church schools will have proper financial support.¹⁹

The delegates agreed and passed the following resolution:

Whereas, In ancient Israel the Lord called upon the people to assist the Levites and the poor by the second tithe and various offerings; therefore,

In poor communities, the teacher was lucky to receive a room with a family and perhaps some vegetables in return for teaching.

Resolved, That the teachers encourage the people among whom they labor, to provide by this means for the support of educational and benevolent work.²⁰

A Scriptural Rationale

Adventists had intently studied the scriptural rationale for the tithing system they had embraced in 1878. The church had not looked as carefully at the offering phase of church finance. It now discovered that it was possible to rob God both in tithes *and* in offerings. At that same conference, the Illinois Conference president, Nelson Kauble, suggested that "teachers should be conference laborers, and that their accounts should be audited as those of any other conference laborer."²¹

Magan wrote Ellen White that the second tithe plan would bring church school teachers into the conference fold. The conference would become the storehouse for the second tithe funds, which would then be used to pay the teachers. Magan observed, "the money would thus be under the direction and control of the conference committee, and our church school teachers would become conference laborers." This system, he affirmed, "would give stability and organization to the work." Magan continued:

Bro. Spicer and our Foreign Mission Board brethren feel strongly that this is the plan that we must have, a general treasury in each conference for the church school work, that we must urge our brethren and sisters everywhere to pay their money to this treasury, and then let the conference take the direction of the teachers and their work and their pay.²²

A Centralized System

Magan pointed to the organizational failures of the 1890s as another reason for advocating conference involvement in the church schools. Conferences had refused John Harvey Kellogg's pleas to involve themselves in the medical work within their territories. Kellogg then established a monolithic medical organization that became the rival of the conferences. Magan applied the lesson of history:

Unless our conferences, as such, take hold of this church school work, organize, direct, and finance it, out of some fund which may be created, the time will come when we shall all see a separate organization managing the educational work.²³

He also outlined for Ellen White the arguments of those who favored a more congregational system of church school finance:

Some of our brethren contend that it would not be best to place the money in a general treasury. They feel that it is far better to have each little church manage its church school matters entirely by itself, with no organic or vital relationship to the conference. They feel that it is better to have each one of these little churches hire whomsoever they desire for a teacher, rather than have teachers thoroughly prepared in our training schools and sent out to work under the auspices and direction of our local conferences. They seem to feel that to do otherwise than as their plan suggests would take away the independence of our little churches.24

Edward Sutherland, the major pioneer of the church school movement, made a telling point concerning teachers being independent of local church influence:

Teachers should feel that they are associated with the conferences and are not entirely dependent upon the local churches for support and management of the school. For instance, local churches sometimes wish our teachers to teach practically a public school. Teachers are put into very hard places sometimes by such demands. But I believe that our teachers should be just as free to teach the truth and carry on the work along right lines as the minister is when he goes into a church. There was a time when the minister depended upon his congregation for his support, but the Lord gave us the tithing system, and it makes the minister strong and independent of the local church.²⁵

The next year, Percy Magan summarized the state of the church school movement. By 1902 the church had established nearly 300 The Southern California Conference developed an innovative local approach to the general plan. Conference delegates recommended that one-third of the second tithe remain at the home church. The remaining two-thirds would go to the confer-

A 1903 educational convention concluded that the salary of the teacher and the expenses of the school should come from four sources: (1) tuition from parents; (2) gifts from church members; (3) appropriations from the conference church school funds; and (4) the second tithe.

church schools, trained a corps of "consecrated, God-fearing teachers, who, working for a mere pittance, had given their lives for the salvation of Seventh-day Adventist children."

Achieving Permanence

It was decision time for that system, however, if it was to achieve permanence. Ellen White's call to teachers demanded a lifetime commitment. Yet local conditions prevented the church from offering its teachers "fair remuneration."²⁶

Ellen White reacted positively to the second tithe proposal. She urged

The church eventually voted to pay its teachers at the rate of the licensed ministry.

members to give "liberally to sustain the teachers."²⁷ She declared that the second tithe could be used for "no better purpose" than "for the support of the church school work."²⁸

The idea moved forward in 1902. Delegates to the educational conference held at Berrien Springs approved the "Bible plan for the maintenance of an educational system." They saw it as a system that would gain for teachers "the recognition accorded other evangelical laborers."²⁹ ence treasurer to pay the church school teachers.³⁰ This fund, then, would cover the needs of the churches, the conference, and the schools.

The more successful local applications to the second tithe idea stressed its voluntary nature. It became a type of combined giving plan or offering.

By the 1903 General Conference session, all the elements were in place for a successful church school financing scheme. Church school teachers were accepted as gospel workers who should receive their support from the local conferences, not from the individual churches. Children from the less affluent churches should not have to forfeit educational opportunities. The members would collectively assume responsibility for fostering the education of all the children in the conference. The 1903 General Conference session delegates referred the following to the forthcoming educational council:

Whereas, The church-school teachers are gospel workers; and,—Whereas, There is need of establishing schools in places where the churches are weak; therefore,—We recommend, That donations for the church-school work be gathered throughout the conference into the State conference treasury, and that the churchschool teachers receive their support from the conference, the same as other conference laborers.³¹

The 150 Seventh-day Adventist educators, ministers, Bible workers, and teachers who attended the 1903 educational convention at College View, Nebraska, concluded that the support of church-school teachers should come under conference jurisdiction. The salary of the teacher and the expenses of the school would come from four sources: (1) tuition from parents: (2) gifts from church members; (3) appropriations from the conference church school funds; and (4) the second tithe. The delegates followed the rationale that responsibility for educating children rested initially upon the parents; next upon the local church, and third upon the conference.³²

While the second tithe idea proved impermanent, it performed a vital function at a crucial period in the history of the church. Its very nature demanded that it transcend the local congregation. That acceptance of conference guidance provided Seventh-day Adventists with a permanent church school system.

An Evangelizing Agency

The new Seventh-day Adventist church schools caught the attention of nonmembers as well as members. Conferences regularly reported a high percentage of non-Adventists attending their church schools. By

SDAs adopted the philosophy that church school teachers deserved moral and financial support just as did ministers.

1904, more than 39 percent of the elementary school students came from non-Adventist homes.

The church school system had established its role as an evangelizing agency within the church and began to be treated as such. General Conference president Arthur Daniells wrote that "our teachers in our schools are supported and sustained and cheered on the same as ministers and Bible workers."³³

Ellen White also provided the rationale for unity of the church school system at the conference level. Since "our conferences look to the schools for educated and well-trained laborers," they "should give the schools a most hearty and intelligent support."³⁴ The schools "where children and youth are to be trained for God, are a very important part of His *Continued on page 80* Union: to improve its classroom buildings.

- 3. Collège Adventiste de Rwanakeri, Rwanda Union: to complete construction on the men's dormitory.
- 4. Institut de Bandal, Kinshasa. Zaire Union: to remodel its classroom building.
- 5. Togo Mission, Togo, Sahel Union: to begin plans for a new secondary school in Lome, Togo.

During the past quinquennium, the education work in the Africa-Indian Ocean Division has expanded and consolidated. Many of our schools have so excelled that they received monetary rewards from their governments. Spiritually, our schools have become more aware of their role as Christian institutions in the church and the community. Throughout the division teachers and administrators have achieved a growing appreciation of the raison d'etre of our school system. We praise the Lord for His guidance. \Box

EASTERN AFRICA DIVISION

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English, math, biology, industrial technology, and nursing. Except for nursing, all are affiliated with Andrews University. Again with the exception of Zimbabwe, all degree majors offered at UEA are recognized in the countries of Eastern Africa. According to the Kenva Daily National, Friday, September 22, 1989, The UEA was included in the list of recognized private universities in Kenva. The university is therefore seriously seeking a charter from the Kenvan Government.

New buildings

Construction of a large three-level administration building, made possible by a donation from National Cash Register Corporation, is the most visible evidence of the collegiate atmosphere of the Solusi College campus. Exelev Hall, named in honor of the chairman of the board of National Cash Register, provides spacious accommodation for administrative offices, a computer center, an assembly hall, and a temporary recreation center. Several apartments for married students have also been built during this same period from the Thirteenth Sabbath Overflow Offering.

Spiritual activities

Nearly all school campusesprimary, secondary, college/univer-

sity-have been actively involved in off-campus evangelistic activities involving students, faculty, and staff. These activities include a weekly prison ministry, local evangelistic crusades, and supervised involvement in the practical life of neighboring churches. On-campus ministries feature an annual Week of Prayer conducted by a guest speaker, a vearly student Week of Praver, and active prayer bands. As a result, a number of non-Adventist students have been baptized during their study in our schools.

Conclusion

Our schools in the Eastern Africa Division have identified reforms that will help our teachers provide meaningful learning activities to meet the needs of students and communities.

We seek to personalize Seventhday Adventist education, and will make serious efforts to draw educational strength from the needs and ideas of teachers, local education secretaries, students, and communities. We will encourage every worker to invest time, energy, and imagination to achieve greater productivity. This will help our students achieve their goals and prepare them to meet our soon-returning Saviour.

LOVE, AFFECTION, AND \$1.60 A MONTH

Continued from page 10 great plan."35

Equity for Teachers

The church's response brought equity to church school teachers. As full-fledged denominational workers, they were soon salaried at the rate of the licensed ministry. Adventists had adopted the philosophy that church school teachers deserved moral and financial support just as did ministers. It was as important to instruct the church's children in scriptural principles as to teach those doctrines to adults.

As a result of the church's ongoing decisions and actions relating to education, Adventists became committed to corporate support of church schools and equitable pay for teachers

During this period the philosophy prevailed that church school teachers performed a ministry similar in importance to that of the minister. Indeed, Ellen White had emphasized, "The work of God in all its wide extent is one."36 That philosophy continues to this day. The Autumn Council of 1913 formalized the financial implications of that philosophy:

We believe that the remuneration of all should be equitable and just to all; that there should be no discrimination in favor of a certain class, nor against those whose line of work does not vield large direct returns in money. Faithful, painstaking, efficient workers in every part of the world, and in every line of work should receive a remuneration that will be fair and equitable.37 □

Bert Haloviak is Assistant Director, Office of Archives and Statistics, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Marvland.

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³ W. C. White letter, October 23, 1899, quoted by William Covert, "Testimonies Concerning the Support of Church Schools," Wisconsin Reporter (November 2, 1904).

+ Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 142. While the church thus is ever to be innovative, it can benefit from some of the useful concepts that were considered in the early years of the 20th century as it embarked upon a wide-scale church school movement.

Soon to be entitled Christ's Object Lessons. ⁶ Ellen White statement, January 23, 1900, published in Advocate of Christian Education (April 1900).

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¹⁴ Considering that the total tithe income for the church that year was \$490,000, the enormity of the educational debt can be seen in per-

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ROLE OF ADVENTIST EDUCATION IN GLOBAL STRATEGY

Continued from page 13

objectives.

C. *Training qualified personnel* to reach the unreached and to expand our current presence.

D. Being involved in actual outreach and penetration of unentered territories and population segments.

Cooperating With Adventist Global Strategy

The charts on pages 12 and 13 offer specifics on these four areas of education's involvement with Adventist Global Strategy in terms of the three levels of schooling (tertiary, secondary, and primary), while suggesting specific activities.

In the last book of the Bible, John recorded a moving vision of the final triumph of Christ and His followers at the end of time. "Before me," he wrote, "was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9). This glorious projection assures us that God's global strategy will be successfully accomplished and that countless millions, representing all peoples of the world, will be saved for eternity.

As educators catch the vision of the vast multitudes of unreached peoples and engage the talents of our youth in the exciting prospects of global mission, God will bless our efforts. As we pray, plan, teach, study, and work we can rely on His promise that through the Holy Spirit He will be with us "always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). □

Dr. Humberto M. Rasi is Associate Director, Department of Education, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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⁺ All Bible texts in this article are taken from the New International Version. From *Holy Bible: New International Version.* Copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

² For a broader look at the challenge of world evangelization, see Humberto M. Rasi and Charles R. Taylor, "Adventist Global Strategy," *College and University Dialogue*, 1:2 (1989), pp. 5-8, 24.

⁴ Two books may be useful: *Getting Excited About Global Mission*, ed. by Dorothy Watts (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald, 1990) includes many ideas on projects for Adventist churches and Sabbath schools. Patrick Johnstone, *Operation World: A Day-to-Day Guide to Praying for the World* (Waynesboro, Ga.: STL Books, 1986) contains a country-by-country summary of opportunities and challenges for Christian mission.

⁴ The GSC has recommended the establishment of a not-for-profit corporation to operate a Center for International Relations. The center will encourage Seventh-day Adventist members and institutions to make contacts and set up exchanges with non-Adventist populations and institutions in unentered areas of the world.

⁵ Readers interested in obtaining more information about this ministry and in receiving a sample copy of the journal *College and University Dialogue* may write to Israel Leito or Humberto M, Rasi at the General Conference of SDA, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, U.S.A.

⁶ See Davton Chong, "Adventist International Friendship Ministry," *College and University Dialogue*, 2:1 (1990), pp. 24-26.

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