

**THREE MORE WOMEN ORDAINED**

NEWS • ANALYSIS • OPINION

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# ADVENTIST TODAY

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LAY LEADER ABANDONS  
ADVENTIST CHURCH

ADVENTISTS LEARN  
FROM JOHN WESLEY

OPEN SYMPOSIA  
IN AUSTRALIA

A woman with dark, wavy hair and glasses is sitting at a desk in a library, reading a large open book. She is resting her head on her hand. The desk is cluttered with several stacks of books. In the background, there are bookshelves filled with books.

Adventist Dilemma:  
**How to Interpret the Bible**



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## An Open Letter to the *Adventist Review* Editor

I was surprised to read your lead editorial "Time to Cool It" in the *Adventist Review* of November 30: because the issue of women's ordination has become so hot, the time has come to "cool it." Hence, no more discussion of the topic in the *Review* "for a few months."

I hope you will reconsider. Open discussion in our venerable church paper will carry on the Adventist tradition of considering issues openly, demonstrate the *Review's* continued editorial integrity, and demonstrate high standards of Christian journalism.

**Considering issues openly:** Early Adventism was characterized by open discussion. Alternative views on many doctrinal points were published side by side in the early *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*. Adventism, like most organizations, began with a lively spirit that subsequent generations can easily smother in honest efforts to conserve. A general church paper must avoid unwitting control by too careful and zealous conservatism. Now, more than ever, the church needs to project and live out an openness to new ideas and procedures. At the Utrecht GC session, the world church prided itself on our great diversity of cultures. Never before has the membership in North America been so diversified and educated. With such a pluralistic denomination, the only hope for spiritual unity is open discussion of pressing issues such as women in ministry.

The denomination's ValueGenesis research shows that our youth lack intellectual stimulation in their church. When issues heat up and cry out for resolution we cannot call for time out, but must provide even greater opportunity for sisters and brothers to express themselves and listen to each other in a Christlike spirit. According to experienced cooks, when the pot is about to boil over, that is the time to take the lid clear off and stir gently. Can it be that this winter, both the *Review* and the youth no longer discuss women's ordination—one because it's so unsettling an issue, the other because it's so settled?

**Demonstrating editorial integrity:** During the first half of 1995 you published five beautiful covers featuring women in ministry, in addition to several focus sections and numerous articles. Without reading "between the lines" one could see that the *Review* regarded respect for women's gifts and callings to be a pressing moral issue. Now the world church has voted 2:1 against allowing the North American church to ordain its women. In response, three local congregations have ordained their own women pastors (see reports in this issue). Understandably the discussion in the denomination has heated up. I respectfully suggest that especially at this time, it is neither wise nor even possible to "cool it."

You cite the large amount of mail you are getting on ordination and lament that many writers are misinformed and/or angry. "It's time for (us) to put aside anger and seek understanding of each other's views on women in ministry," you editorialize. I would suggest that if church members are ignorant of facts and volatile, this is precisely the time for our general church paper, our good old *Review*, to dispel darkness with light. Let's not repeatedly demonstrate the importance of women in ministry from January through June, and then call off all discussion in November, just when the discussion most urgently calls for wise editorial guidance.

**Demonstrating truly Christian journalism.** Historically Adventism has held up the U.S. Constitution and government because of our staunch support for democracy, separation of powers, and a high view of human freedoms. A free press makes America strong, and a free *Review* makes a maturing Adventism even stronger. The basic point of freedom is recognized by the Associated Church Press's code of ethics:

*Fundamental to any statement of journalistic principles is the concept of freedom of the press. Such freedom is not a privilege of journalists but a need of the community—a need of its leaders as well as of all its members....The religious press endorses the vigorous expression of opinion through published reactions, alternative views, and criticisms, whether in letters-to-the-editor or opinion pieces.*

Adventism is best served if the our church paper is the organ of the people. Let our distinguished *Review* serve, not a few top church leaders, but the whole Adventist church body in all its ethnic, geographic, and theological diversity.

Ironically not only the *Review*, but also the Vatican earlier in 1995, called for a cessation of discussion of women in ministry. However, God's Spirit has been moving throughout this century toward gender justice—not only in society, but now especially in ministry.

The *Adventist Review* has a long and distinguished history. I appeal to you to carry on your historic role as moderator of productive, open discussion in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Jim Walters  
Executive Editor

Cover: Students preparing for ministry face a real problem as they study the Bible. Adventist scholars use several different methods of interpretation. Which is the best? What does the Bible really teach? Photo by Richard Cross.



# ADVENTISTS DISCUSS HOW TO INTERPRET THE BIBLE



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# Adventists Discuss

# How to Interpret the Bible



Ivan Blazen, David Larson, and Leon Mashchak presented the following papers before a standing-room-only audience in the chapel of the Loma Linda University Church late last year. At the seminar, sponsored by **Adventist Today** with other organizations, these writers were invited to present theologically different approaches to understanding the Bible. This is a pressing issue in Adventism since Utrecht, where biblical support was claimed both by speakers against women's ordination and by speakers for women's ordination. We contacted 12 different members of the Adventist Theological Society in a search for someone to present the viewpoint that prevailed at Utrecht, but none could work our date into his schedule.

—the editors.



## What Scripture Meant and Means

**B**iblical interpretation has two main tasks: the historical task of ascertaining what a text meant in its original context, and the theological task of translating or applying its meaning for our contemporary setting. The distinction between what a text meant and what it means is indispensable if the ancient, inspired words of Scripture are to be heard again with full force and relevance in modern times. However, some have insisted that what the text meant is literally in every detail what it always means. Others, seeing broader dimensions to Scripture, believe that while the historical understanding of the text must ever be foundational to, and a control upon, current exposition, the contemporary significance of a text is not always identical with its original meaning.

An example: Paul instructed women to wear veils on their heads. What does this have to do with us today? If we apply the text in an absolutely literal sense, we shall not find the same relevance in our current Western culture as was found in the cultures of the Bible, where, unlike today, veils were mandatory and meant purity and submission. Being unveiled then might have indicated that a woman was a prostitute or that she had rejected her husband's authority.

As one tries to relate biblical statements in their settings to the relevance of these statements in a contemporary setting, one must distinguish between what is *timely* and what is *timeless*, between *policies* and *principles*, between *culture* and *Christ*. Jesus and Paul operated in just this way with certain Old Testament stipulations. For example, Jesus altered the legal permission to divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1 by appealing to the creation narratives in Genesis 1 and 2 (Matt 19:3-9). Paul spiritualized and, for Gentiles, abrogated the biblical requirement of physical circumcision, which, according to Genesis 17:7,12, was the perpetual sign of God's "everlasting covenant" (Rom 2:28,29; Gal 5:2-4). From these illustrations we learn the following: (1) The meaning of one text may supersede the plain sense of another, for one text may contain a timeless significance whereas another text may have only a timely and temporary meaning; (2) There is a hierarchy of meanings and values in Scripture. While everything is valuable, not everything is of equal weight; and (3) The way things were at creation, before sin, is the way they ought to be.

### Divine Treasure in Earthen Vessels

In harmony with scriptural evidence and Spirit of Prophecy testimony, Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God in the words of humans. As such it has a divine and human character, as did our Lord. The divine treasure is found in earthen vessels (2 Cor 4:7). Difficulty arises only when the vessel which houses the divine treasure is confused with the treasure itself. As faith grasps the divinity of the Word, it is essential that faith also confess the human face the Word wears.

Scripture has unquestionably suffered at the hands of destructive critics. However, it may be misused by its friends who give rightful and primary consideration to the divinity of the Word, but do not properly acknowledge the human vessel which contains the Word.

# Women, Culture, and Christ: Hearing Scripture Yesterday and Today

Sometimes the methods Bible writers employ, as when the New Testament quotes the Old noncontextually, are held to be equal to the inspiration of the message itself. But the methods may be quite human and in harmony with methods employed generally at the time, whereas the message conveyed is what is divinely inspired.

### Listening to the Text

The Bible challenges us to let not only its claims to inspiration, but also the multifaceted phenomena contained in it, direct us in coming to proper interpretations. The inductive approach, which takes all the data of Scripture seriously, recommends itself for both understanding inspiration and engaging in interpretation. When this approach is followed, the unity of Scripture will not be merely something assumed or deduced but something investigated and exhibited. The Bible is a unity not only because its inspiration suggests it but because the actual study of Scripture evidences it.

Biblical interpretation is not a matter of personal whim or fancy, individual or corporate self-interest or self-justification, apologetics

by Ivan T. Blazen

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or polemics, creedalism or dogmatism. Rather, it has to do with the objective, Holy Spirit-guided, in-depth study of the Bible as the Word of God with one end in view: The discovery of the pristine historical meaning of the inspired Word in its original time, place, and purpose and how this meaning applies today.

Not *what* Scripture will speak but *that* it will speak is an important presupposition for biblical study. In view of this expectation, the interpreter must come to Scripture openly, humbly, dependently, seeking guidance from God and help from one's peers. The Bible is a communal book, and interpretation is a communal enterprise.

In the believer's approach to the biblical text, after study of the historical circumstances within which the various biblical writings arose and the literary forms and sources through which the Word expressed itself, the believer will study the text contextually, lexically, grammatically and syntactically, in terms of pertinent backgrounds and cultural usage, and in comparison with other texts of Scripture.

Interpreters need to be cautioned, however, against merely choosing texts to make the interpreter's point rather than listening to the texts so as to discover their point. It may be that the Bible will first judge us by its difference from us (our understanding and practice) before it can bless us by its relevance to us.

### The Question of Culture

Especially pertinent to current discussion concerning the ordination of women is the place and significance of the culture of biblical times for the proper interpretation of biblical texts. Those who oppose the ordination of women often insist that those who support it are using cultural considerations to relativize or negate the plain significance of passages of Scripture. As one who has placed his entire reliance upon the Bible and its message, I wish to affirm that this is not the case. Divine revelation is not subservient to culture, but puts culture into the service of communicating the divine Word. The truth of God's revelation does not arise from culture, but is addressed to people in a culture and makes itself heard within the cultural matrix by using the language, oral and literary conventions, and the forms of

***As faith grasps the divinity of the Word, it is essential that faith also confess the human face the Word wears.***

communication and argumentation found in a particular culture.

To suggest that divine revelation speaks within, from, and to the cultural situation of the people of God means that God's Word focuses upon particular times, places, and problems in the experience of his people. This is the genius of biblical religion. This does not mean, however, that because Scripture aims at problems and needs in particular situations, and uses cultural modes of expression to speak to these needs, that no permanent truth is there revealed. The wonder of Scripture is that, despite the contingencies and relativities of history, it presents principles relevant for all times.

However, in moving from the biblical period to our time we must call upon God's Spirit to help us to properly discriminate between the *local* and the *universal*, the *temporary* and the *timeless*, the *old* and the *new*, *policies* and *principles*, *culture* and *Christ*, the *human vessel* and the *divine treasure*.

### Presumptions or Prescriptions:

#### 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6

Among those opposed to the ordination of women, some misapply 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, texts which speak about qualifications for the office of bishop (equivalent to elder in earliest Christianity). Some claim that these texts positively enjoin that only a man can be a bishop or elder, for it is required in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 that a bishop be not merely a *person* but a *man* (*aner*, meaning man, is used in the original Greek). However, this view does not properly discriminate between what is *presumed* in the text and what is *prescribed*. These passages do presume that men will be bishops. But what the texts prescribe is that the elder be the husband (*aner* may also mean husband, as in the expression "man and wife") of *one* wife. The point is not about *prescribing* men and *proscribing* women but about whether the elder can be married more than once. The presumption of the texts fits well in the social/cultural situation of the time,

where women had almost none of the civil, military or other possibilities of men. However, to make this presumption into a forbidding command valid for all times and places is to be unfair to the nature of divine inspiration and the incarnation of the Word of God in specific situations.

Similarly, we may note that in Ephesians 6:5-9, Paul clearly enjoins that slaves obey their masters. He does not prescribe that there be slaves, but presumes their existence. What he does prescribe is that both slaves and masters treat each other in a way that comports with Christ. Is Paul commanding or condoning slavery? No! He assumes the reality of slavery as part of the old order and then commands how Christians, who are part of the new order of Christ, should act.

### Silence and Status; Deception and Salvation: 1 Timothy 2:11-15

1 Timothy 2:11-15 commands that instead of being permitted to teach or have authority over men, women must remain silent and learn in submissiveness—instruction entirely in harmony with the secular, non-Christian culture of the time. For Paul to speak this way, there must have been a real problem among his Asian readers which needed correction. Textual indicators in 1 and 2 Timothy suggest that women are called upon to be serious, temperate, and faithful instead of being slanderers (1 Tim 3:11). Apparently, certain women in their idle time had gadded about from house to house, becoming gossips and busybodies, telling things they should not. Some had strayed after Satan (1 Tim 5:13,15). Certain unstable women with unruly desires had come under the influence of heretical, male instructors and were disseminating false ideas (2 Tim 3:6-8; 2:17; 1 Tim 1:19-20). One of these false ideas undoubtedly was that marriage in its various aspects was bad (1 Tim 4:3). Such a view, grounded in ascetic tendencies and the budding gnosticism of Asia Minor, helps us understand why Paul would give a promise of women's salvation through childbearing. His point was that sexuality and child-bearing in marriage do not lead away from salvation, as the ascetic teachers might have supposed, but fulfills God's intention in creation and is in harmony with his saving purpose. It seems



clear that 1 Timothy 2:15 is a polemical statement against specific heretical views in Asia Minor.

In the light of all this it is readily apparent why Paul might counsel that women be silent and learn from authorized male teachers rather than heretical male teachers.

Submission, silence, and learning from all males in all times hardly is the point. In other words, the text is timely, but can hardly be said to be timeless in all its details.

A legitimate question can be raised about women not having "authority over a man" (1 Tim 2:12). Richard and Catherine Kroeger, in their book *I Suffer Not a Woman* (1992), show that there is good evidence for translating this "I permit a woman neither to teach nor to proclaim herself originator (authentic source) of man." By saying Adam was created first, as did the rabbis among whom Paul was trained, Paul seeks to refute the currently popular gnostic idea of woman as the source of all life and being.

Genesis 1, in its own context, does not focus at all upon a chronological priority of the male, which would then have significance in terms of woman's subordination. Rather, it proclaims the creation of both male and female in the image of God and with joint dominion over the earth. Thus they were equal partners both in the dignity of their being and in their rule over the world. In Genesis 2, woman is created as the perfect complement to man and is bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, a total equality. Man's rule over woman comes only after the fall. Before this, rulership was not part of their partnership. We must ever return to Genesis 1 and 2 in their original meaning for understanding as to what the ultimate will of God is for the relationship between man and woman.

Another facet of Paul's argument as to why women should keep silence in church and learn from men is that Adam was not deceived, but Eve was. This statement should be seen in the light of Paul's polemic against gnosticizing opponents in 1 Timothy. Gnostic types had argued that Eve, far from being deceived, was the illuminator of Adam. She ate, thus receiving illumination, and then passed this enlightenment on to Adam. To this construction Paul in effect says: "No! This does not accord with the truth of Genesis that the woman was deceived." This should not be

### ***Paul seeks to refute the currently popular gnostic idea of woman as the source of all life and being.***

pushed beyond all limits so as to make all men in all time wise and innocent and all women in every time gullible and deceivable.

Paul's argument must be contextualized, not universalized. Seventh-day Adventists have recognized this, for to what extent in the history of Adventism have we imposed a requirement of silence upon women and deprived them of teaching both men and women in church? That we have not done so is tacit acknowledgment that, while the passage in 1 Timothy had a specific and important function in its time, it does not necessarily continue to have the same practical significance in our time. What it meant in the first century is not what it necessarily means today. The passage does not lose its divinely inspired character on this basis. It continues to speak to us about the necessity of defending truth and working against the dissemination of falsehood in contemporary Christianity. Both men and women are needed for each of these functions. In the struggle for truth, Seventh-day Adventists have enjoyed a special blessing. The ministry of Ellen White is a standing witness to God's call of a woman to speak in and for the church and to instruct men as well as women in truth and against error.

### **Shameful Speaking: 1 Corinthians 14:34,35**

1 Corinthians 14:34,35 teaches that it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. She should remain silent and ask questions of her husband at home. Is this a general ban on women talking in church, or does it refer to a specific kind of speech by women? The answer would be easier if more details were available. But given what we have, the following can be said: First, the subject was of real importance to Paul, as can be seen from his appeal to general church practice, the teaching of the law, agreed-upon proprieties concerning women, and the authority in the church. What practice among women

could have caused Paul to launch such a powerful appeal? Merely a general speaking in church? Note that Paul is discussing public worship and the function of prophecy within it. He is concerned that prophetic utterances be weighed (14:29) and all be done in a decent and orderly manner (14:33,40). Apparently some women were adding to the disorder with uninhibited questions and remarks to husbands who prophesied. Paul, who acknowledged the propriety of women to publicly pray and prophesy (1 Cor 11:5), did not want to see such a freedom disintegrate into a kind of public quarreling, where disorder and noise replaced peace and edification.

### **Conclusion**

The biblical trajectory of God's saving love leads from the perfection of Creation through the imperfection of sin and its resultant curse, to the death and resurrection of Christ. Because he was made sin for us (2 Cor 5:21), the curse is removed (Gal 3:13) and we become part of the new creation, in which the old has passed away (2 Cor 5:17), oneness is achieved (Gal 3:28; Eph 2:14-18) and eternal life is equally bestowed (1 Pet 3:7). Clearly, the forgiveness of sins and newness that Christ brings involves a profound reversal in the position of women, restoring them to the equality of status and function outlined in Genesis 1—bearing the image of God and having dominion over the earth.

Once again the Adventist church has recognized this, and North America, as a center of action, is presently seeking ways to fully implement women's involvement in every phase of ministry. Ordination is a correlate of ministry. In affirming women's ministry, the church by implication affirms women's ordination. The real issue is not whether women's ordination is biblical—ordination is hardly a topic of Scripture—but *whether women's ministry is biblical*. If that is the case, as the Adventist church affirms, ordination must be a vehicle by which the legitimacy of women in ministry is recognized, embraced, and supported.

*This is excerpted from a more extensive paper which is available from Dr. Blazen, Faculty of Religion, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA 92350.*



# God Means What He Says, And He Says What He Means

**T**he method most widely used in the Adventist church is still the most defensible method of biblical interpretation available today. This method has been advocated by such scholars as George E. Ladd of Fuller Seminary, W. Kaiser of Wheaton College, R. Preus of Concordia Seminary and G. Hasel of the Adventist Theological Seminary. Because these scholars use such terms as "historical," "grammatical," and "theological" to describe their approaches to scripture, I will call my preferred method the "historico-grammatico-theological." For the sake of brevity, I will refer to it as the grammatical approach.

## Presuppositions

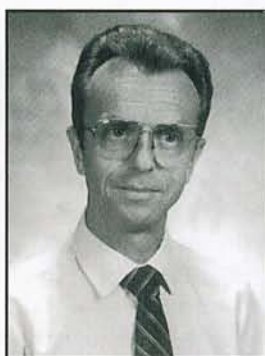
Every method has its presuppositions. The method and its presuppositions are inseparable, for they depend on each other. I have three core presuppositions.

1. The Bible is its own interpreter.
2. The biblical canon includes both Testaments, forming an inseparable unit.
3. God is the author, and inspired people were the writers of the Bible, and therefore:
  - a. The Bible is the inspired Word of God.
  - b. Authority of the Bible is the authority of God.
  - c. The Bible is both human and divine.

## "In My Ears"

In spite of the differences among Adventists in understanding the manner and extent of revelation, most agree that God revealed himself. The next question is: What happened when God revealed himself? Did God share any information? Most will

by *Leon Mashchak*



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agree that God encountered humankind. But was this encounter limited to a meeting with God without providing information or did it include information exchange? Did it have a cognitive dimension? Limiting ourselves to the information found in the Bible, we read that God revealed himself to Moses, the Israelites, Samuel, Solomon, Isaiah, and others. The crucial question is: Did each of these encounters contain specific information?

We find that in each case the revelation is indeed of God himself (self-disclosure), but always combined with a cognitive dimension—God always shared information and ideas. Moses received specific instructions regarding the building of the sanctuary during his encounters with God. Similarly, when God revealed himself to Samuel in Shilo, he gave Samuel very specific information about the house of Eli. In the case of Solomon, God also gave him propositional information and verbal promises. In the writings of the prophets we repeatedly read statements like "thus says the Lord," "God revealed Himself in my ears," "the word of the Lord came unto me," "hear the word of the Lord," and "the hand of the Lord was upon me," to mention the most common ones.

From these few statements it is evident that the revelation of God is both an encounter and a communication, first a meeting and then a knowing. This revelation and propositional disclosure of God's will was occasioned by divine purpose and invariably connected to humankind's need. Before the Fall, God communicated with humans to warn them of the dangers of sin, and after the Fall to facilitate their redemption. In other words, it was always an encounter with a purpose. Christianity is a



"revealed" religion for the purpose of redemption. This includes salvation from sin, equipment for holiness, and provision for life in communion with God.

### Revelation and Inspiration

While "revelation" may be described as the message, the control over the transmission of this message is described in the Bible as the "inspiration." The recipients of God's revelation were entrusted with the task of delivering the revealed information to the rest of humankind. We read in Ezekiel, "Son of man, go, get you to the house of Israel and speak with my words to them" (Ezek 3:4). We also read that God would be with Moses' mouth (Ex 4:15), and that he would put his words in Jeremiah's mouth (Jer 1:9). These statements imply that God himself would empower and enable his spokespersons to transmit his message faithfully. This process is the work of the Holy Spirit, and we refer to it as the work of "inspiration." (1 Sam 10:6; Isa 42:1; Hos 9:7; Zech 7:12; Neh 9:30; 2 Tim 3:16)

We are reminded that "no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man" but that humans spoke for God, "being carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet 2:20-21). Based on Peter's observation, we are correct in stating that prophetic messages were not the result of the prophet's own meditation, nor of the prophet's later reflection on an encounter with God in which he only saw, heard, and felt God's presence, but were actual information provided by God. Inspiration is described as the power of the Holy Spirit that takes control of men and women with their varied backgrounds, abilities and sinful tendencies, and instructs and empowers them to transmit God's redemptive message in a trustworthy and authoritative manner. According to the apostle Peter, God does not allow the prophets to treat his messages according to their own preferences and interpret it according to their own pre-understandings and goals.

### Revelation versus Inspiration

Some scholars demand a separation between biblical revelation and inspiration. Some assert that while revelation, being the product of God, is very reliable and authoritative, inspiration is more or less reliable in controlling material and consequently is less authoritative. This reasoning is based on the fact that the Holy Spirit, who is infallible, employs humans who are sinful and fallible.

However, the Bible is treated by biblical writers as an inseparable mixture of divine revelation and human transmission. Similarly, we received the ultimate revelation of God in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, an inseparable mixture of divine and human. The product of inspiration is what we call

ACCORDING TO  
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AND INTERPRET  
IT ACCORDING  
TO THEIR OWN  
PRE-UNDER-  
STANDINGS AND  
GOALS.

the Word of God. Even the revelation of God through Jesus the Christ comes to us today through the Bible. We do not know what Jesus said or did, except through the Bible. The same is true of God's revelation in the Old Testament. We may know it only through the writings of God's men and women.

Someone may ask: How do we balance the divine and the human factors in the Bible? The answer is we do not balance these factors, for they are inseparable. They became one under the power of the Holy Spirit. No one would ask us to describe the words and actions of Jesus the Christ and distinguish between those of Jesus the man and Jesus the God.

### Authority

The most important argument for the authority of Scripture is its own claim for itself. When we review the teachings of Jesus, the New Testament view of the Old, and the authority of the apostles, it is clear that they all unite in proclaiming the authority of the Bible. When biblical writers refer to any passage of the Scriptures they treat it as the Word of God, equal to the authority of God.

The quest and pride of this century has been freedom from external authority. This tendency, however, has produced a large crop of theological reconstructions, with the result that everyone is their own master, and right is what one thinks is right. This became popular even within our church through the influence of the work of Joseph Fletcher, author of *Situation Ethics*. The authority of the Bible has been replaced by the subjective standard of "love."

### Knowing and Obeying

In formulating our view of the authority of the Bible, we must remind ourselves that there is no knowledge of the authority of God without a revelation. However, God did not reveal himself to humankind only to be known in a cognitive sense, but to be obeyed. This process of knowing and obeying is possible only through the work of the Holy Spirit. God revealed his authority through the writings of the apostles and the prophets, and supremely through Jesus the Christ. Thus, God's authority is presented and interpreted to us through his chosen media. The writers of the Bible were God's chosen and providential personalities. These writers were not "corrupters" of the self-disclosure of God (through and in Jesus the Christ). They were its transmitters. These writers did not intrude upon God's revelation, for they were a part of the scheme of revelation. To deny supreme authority to the Bible is to deny that God revealed himself, oversaw the process of inscripturation (through the Holy Spirit), and modeled his self-disclosure in the person of Jesus the Christ.



## The Grammatical Method

The grammatical method of interpreting the Bible may be summarized by the following six guidelines:

1. Choose the most accurate text. For those who know the original languages in which the Bible was written, the text should be based on the best critical edition. For those who do not know the original languages of the Bible it is best to choose a translation made by a group or team in preference to a translation made by just one person. It is good to make use of more than one translation for comparison.

2. Analyze the historical setting of a passage. It is beneficial to know who wrote it, to whom it was written, and in what historical setting the message was delivered. To this should be added the analysis of the culture, customs, and beliefs of the people addressed by the passage. This analysis is much different from historico-critical analysis of history, because that method wrongly ignores to a large degree the information found in the text and instead hypothetically "reconstructs" the historical setting of the text in agreement with the method's own godless presuppositions.

3. Analyze the literary setting of the text. The text came to us in literary forms such as prose, poetry, letters, legal documents and business records. In addition, it is well to identify such literary forms as: prayers, songs of praise, dirges, lamentations, proverbs, sayings, allegories, love songs, or gospels. We should be aware of the existence of idioms and the use of parallelism, stylistic envelopes and similar literary conventions. We should keep in mind that literary analysis has little in common with what is known as literary criticism, which is based on hypothetical reconstruction of the life setting of the text.

4. Analyze the words, sentences, and units. Words in a passage are bound by grammatical form and syntax. There is great difference between the syntax of the Hebrew (and Aramaic) and Greek languages, and both differ from modern languages. The basic (root) meaning of a word is affected by its grammatical form and its connection to other words in the sentence. While knowledge of the same words in cognate languages is very useful, we must keep in mind that priority must be given to the meaning of a word within the biblical context. The term "biblical context" of a word includes its setting in a sentence, in a unit, in a chapter, in a book, and finally in the whole Bible.

5. Our understanding of a given passage gleaned by following the first four steps should now be compared with most, if not all, passages in the Bible dealing with a similar topic. Our own interpretation of a passage should not contradict God's will stated in other passages. There may be a case where we

will not be able to completely understand a given passage. In those cases we do well to remember that there is wisdom in admitting our limitations. Some passages of the Bible are more difficult to understand than others. Those who wrest the scriptures that are difficult do so at the risk of their own condemnation.

6. Often the most elusive part of biblical interpretation is personal application. How should we read and understand the Bible? This part is impossible to accomplish without the influence of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps a good rule to follow would be to refrain from imposing our own understanding of a passage upon others in the community of faith. We could present our findings to others without encroaching upon their freedom of searching for themselves.

## Women's Ordination

The reason for studying a passage such as 1 Timothy 2:10-12 is to find out what the Apostle Paul had to say about women. We are presently interested in this topic because in recent months it was discussed by the General Conference in session, where a vote was taken denying the rite of ordination to women. Both proponents and opponents of women's ordination claimed that their position was supported by the teaching of the Bible. No one wants to admit that his or her method of interpretation is wrong. Even though I am convinced that there are proper and improper methods of studying the Bible, the problem arose when we started to "proof-text" from the Bible, thus advancing our own ideas about women's ordination.

I conclude with five points of analysis of the 1 Timothy passage:

1. Most references to the role of women in life and in the church deal with what women could or could not do. There are no statements as to what women could or could not be or become.

2. None of the few references to women's activities addresses the issue of their ordination.

3. The basic meaning of the word "ordination" deals with "appointment" and only secondarily may refer to the "rite" that accompanies, or should accompany, any appointment. There are examples in the Bible of women appointed to the highest positions in the nation of Israel in the areas of leadership and teaching (theology). We need only to recall the names of Deborah and Hulda.

4. The denomination's policy dealing with the appointment and the rite of ordination to the gospel ministry has, in my opinion, little or no connection to the biblical teaching on the subject.

5. Ordination is the "task" performed by the church, and it is not something a man or a woman should or should not do.

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# What Adventists Can Learn from John Wesley

by David R. Larson

## The Wesleyan Quadrilateral

Even though John Wesley never used the term, he is credited with a distinctive way of thinking about controversial issues called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. This term honors the way Wesley did his theological work as leader of the Methodist revivals and spiritual grandfather of Adventism. It is a method that formulates Christian views and values by interweaving interpreted lines of evidence from four sources: Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience.

Instead of basing his convictions on any one of these, Wesley interpreted and drew on evidence from all four. I believe we Adventists should do the same.

This method presupposes that God, though greater than the whole universe, is omnipresent. We can therefore learn about our Creator from Scripture and from other sources as well. Wesley's method also presupposes that humans are finite and fallible. We therefore need a system of checks and balances to keep us from going astray. The Wesleyan

Quadrilateral invites us to follow truth about God and about ourselves wherever we find it. It also reminds us that, if they are all valid, our various interpretations will converge and cohere in mutually reinforcing ways.

One possible objection is that the Wesleyan Quadrilateral undercuts the authority of Scripture. But John Wesley insisted that the Bible is the Christian's primary source of truth and value, as do all others who use his method properly. This method does not invite us to integrate Scripture, tradition, reason and experience, but rather to form our own interpretations of the evidence gathered from each of them. This point is as straightforward as it is significant: if our interpretations of Scripture are sound, they will dovetail with our interpretations of tradition, reason and experience. Likewise, if our interpretations of

tradition, reason and experience are sound, they will fit with our interpretations of Scripture. This is what happens when things are going well.

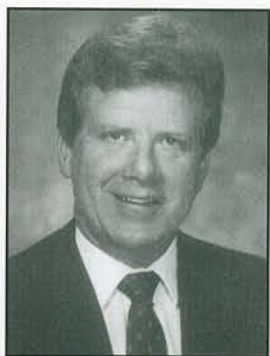
But things do not always go well. Sometimes our interpretations of the evidence from the various sources do not cohere; sometimes they do not converge but diverge instead. When this happens with respect to an important matter, we must reconsider everything to see where we have made our mistake. Perhaps we have misinterpreted evidence from tradition, reason or experience. Or perhaps we have misunderstood evidence from Scripture. Or perhaps we have made more than one error. Because we cannot know in advance where we made our error, we must be willing to review and, where necessary, revise all of our interpretations of all the evidence from all of our sources, biblical and nonbiblical alike. This can make us uncomfortable, especially if we have grown accustomed to looking at things in a particular fashion. But there is no other way to seek and find the truth. Once again, whenever our interpretations do not converge and cohere, the difficulty is not with Scripture, tradition, reason or experience themselves, but with our own appropriations and applications of the evidence we acquire from each of them.

There can be a proper difference between what a portion of Scripture once meant and what it ought to mean for us today. For this reason, it is not correct to state that interpretations of the Bible are to be based on nothing but the Bible, either as a description of how Wesley studied Scripture or as a prescription of how we should do so. Other interpreted evidence also counts. To take just one example, we know that the continuation of human life on

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David Larson, Ph.D., Professor of Christian Ethics, teaches religion courses for health professions students and for graduate students in Christian ethics. He also serves as one of the teachers of a Sabbath School class at the LLU Church.



this planet depends in part on our recognizing that the Bible's command to "be fruitful and multiply" meant something different to those who first heard it than it must mean for us today. And we know this, not only by studying Scripture, but also by pondering the density of the human population in our world. As this illustration indicates, an understanding of both contexts, that of the text and that of our own lives, is essential for interpretation.

We must encourage our interpretations of evidence from Scripture to correct and inform our interpretations of evidence from tradition, reason and experience. We must also encourage our interpretations of evidence from each of them to correct and inform our interpretations of Scripture. This interchange, this give and take among our various interpretations, must continue until we reach an appropriate equilibrium that does as much justice as possible, for now, to all the relevant considerations.

As this suggests, the Wesleyan Quadrilateral provides a wholistic method of studying Scripture. Wesley's approach applies to the vexing issue of women's ordination facing the Seventh-day Adventists, Wesley's spiritual children, today.

"Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church." (1 Cor 14:34,35 NRSV)

"Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent." (1 Tim 2: 11,12 NRSV)

In view of these verses, would we let Ellen White deliver a sermon in our church on Sabbath morning if she were alive today? I certainly hope so! After all, at least four lines of evidence suggest that we would do well to listen to her, or to any other qualified woman, even at church on Sabbath morning. Taken together, these four considerations lead to the conclusion that the Bible's occasional injunctions against allowing women to speak in church should be applied locally, not universally.

No one alive today knows precisely and completely why women in the congregations to which these ancient letters were first addressed were advised to keep silent. Some make reasonable conjectures about the matter, just as all of us can imagine circumstances today in which to would be best for women not to speak in church until conditions improved. But it would be a mistake to make such accommodations to human difficulties the standard by which everything must always be measured. To make that error would be to confuse the eternal with the temporary, the universal with the local, the ideal with an effort at attainment.

## Bible

We learn from Scripture that some groups of people are not more human or more valuable than others. The creation stories of the Bible, unlike those found elsewhere, declare that all groups of humans are created out of the same dust of the ground and that men and women, as symbolized by the rib of Adam out of which Eve was fashioned, are composed of the same material. Neither is intrinsically superior to the other. Instead, men and women are created in the divine image as equal partners.

The Bible recognizes, of course, that men and women both sin and that their faithlessness toward God results in a disruption of their own relationships. In this disordered state of affairs, men often become more and more tyrannical. In the same sinful state, women often become ever more skillful in the arts of devious manipulation. The whole of Scripture traces this accelerating cycle of mutual abuse with stark and painful clarity. Although it is not pretty, this picture of things is true to life.

The good news is that this is not the end of the story. God is actively at work in every moment of every life seeking to bring about healing and reconciliation. The biblical story of God's attempts to heal the wounds caused by sin between men and women is not one of steady progress. It writhes with twists and turns, ups and downs, starts and stops. But God will not rest until all humans have had an opportunity to be reconciled with their Maker and with each other. This reconciliation will establish mutually beneficial relationships between men and women. It will enable them at long last to interact like the equal partners God intends them to be.

The high point of this biblical drama so far occurred in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, the One who most clearly revealed what God is like and what we can become. The stories Jesus told, the friends Jesus enjoyed, the supporters Jesus appreciated, and the disciples to whom Jesus appeared after his resurrection all included women in surprising and soothing ways. For Jesus, healing the wounds caused by sin between men and women was a very high priority.

## Christian History

Unfortunately, this was not always the case for all of those who were disciples of Jesus in subsequent generations. Some historians have found that, already in the first century, it is possible to trace the origins of struggle between an impulse to prolong and extend the healing gestures of Jesus toward women and the contrary impulse to keep women in subservient roles as long as possible. These conflicting impulses probably produced much controversy in the early church, which might help explain the range of statements we now find in the oldest Christian literature.

When we consider the history of Christianity over the centuries, we see a similar pattern. On the one hand, there is the impulse to heal, liberate and empower women for their own sakes and for the sakes of those whom they

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can then serve more effectively. On the other, there is the contrary impulse to restrain and restrict women from developing all their gifts, and to produce theological justifications for doing so. It is difficult to imagine, for instance, attitudes toward women more hostile than those of Tertullian in the 3rd century or more ignorant than those of Thomas Aquinas in the 13th. And yet there are occasions, as in some of the sermons to women by Martin Luther in the 16th century and in some of the remarks about marriage by Jeremy Taylor in the 17th, in which the healing impulse emerges, even if only in partial and painful ways. It is not difficult to discern which of these impulses, the healing or the hurtful, is more harmonious with the life and ministry of Jesus, something that should make us exceedingly reluctant to do anything today that might place us on the wrong side of this ongoing and sometimes difficult struggle.

### Reason

We come to the same conclusion when we consider the matter from the perspective of that form of human reason we call moral philosophy. One of the basic rules of moral thought is that "equals in equal circumstances ought to be treated equally." This rule, which is so congruent with human reason that virtually no one contests it, does not deny that people differ and that these variations, if pertinent to the issue at hand, can justify treating people in alternative ways. It insists, however, that the differences that are supposed to legitimate such discrimination be clearly relevant. All can agree, for example, that it is not necessary to be able to see in order to have a successful career as a singer, but that it is necessary to have good vision in order to be a skilled surgeon. For this reason, we are justified in excluding persons who cannot see from surgical specialties, but not warranted in denying them singing careers if they can truly perform. Likewise, differences in gender, though in some contexts they justify treating men and women differently, appear irrelevant to questions about an individual's qualifications for speaking at church. The burden of proof in this matter clearly rests upon us who assert otherwise. We must be able to show why the gender of a woman necessarily and automatically disqualifies her from being an effective speaker. We dare not discriminate against women in this regard unless we have sound reasons for doing so. We must not allow irrelevant, and therefore irrational, considerations to determine our choices on such an important matter.

### Experience

We can learn what we ought to do from our own experience as well. Jesus said that we can distinguish true from false spokespersons for God, not by their race, nationality, economic class or gender, but by the harvest of their lives and words. "You will know them by their fruits," he said. "Are grapes gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad

tree bears bad fruit....Thus you will know them by their fruits." (Mat 7:16-20 NRSV)

This is a most important test. An individual's qualifications for speaking in church on Sabbath morning rest, in large measure, on the results, good or bad, of allowing him or her to do so. If there is serious doubt about the matter, there is no substitute for giving the individual an opportunity to be heard, albeit at first in contexts where his or her capacity to do damage is limited even if things don't go well. Only in this way can we avoid the twin errors of including people who are not qualified and excluding them for the wrong reasons. What Gamaliel, who was "respected by all the people," said of Peter and other friends of Jesus applies here as well: "If this plan or this undertaking is of human origin, it will fail; but if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them—in that case you may even be found fighting against God!" (Acts 5: 38, 39 NRSV)

The various lines of interpreted evidence we have considered—Bible, Christian history, reason and experience—all lead to the same conclusion: When it comes to deciding who will be permitted to speak in our churches on Sabbath morning, our guiding phrase must be "gifts, not gender." This outcome is so compelling, all things considered, that if we resist it we often feel a need to introduce distinctions that soften our conclusions. One of these is the distinction between allowing women to speak in church, which can be permitted, and allowing them to do so in ways that challenge the authority of the male leaders of the congregation, which cannot be permitted. But the very fact that we feel a need to introduce this distinction, which is not explicitly announced in the New Testament, demonstrates how difficult it is for all of us, no matter who we are, to apply the Bible's rare prohibitions of allowing women to speak in church both literally and universally. If we apply these verses literally, we do not apply them universally. If we apply them universally, we do not do so literally, but introduce distinctions that qualify their plain meaning. I find it more faithful to Scripture, Christian tradition, human reason, and our own experience, to interpret these verses as they read, but to apply them only where they fit local needs.

As these considerations suggest, I am convinced the Wesleyan Quadrilateral enables us to think about the roles and places of men and women in the church in helpful ways. I am also convinced, however, that this method of studying the Bible is very fruitful no matter what the topic. Besides, as spiritual grandchildren of John Wesley, we Adventists will do well to preserve and promote this valuable treasure from our own past.

When it comes to deciding who will be permitted to speak in our churches on Sabbath morning, our guiding phrase must be "gifts, not gender."

*This paper is an abridgement of a longer and more detailed study of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral. For a complimentary copy, please write to David Larson, Faculty of Religion, LLU, Loma Linda, CA 92350.*



## A Response to Blazen, Larson, and Mashchak:

# Toward “Diversity in Cooperation”



Wilma Zalabak, M.Div., has worked as a church pastor and is now a freelance writer and speaker in Atlanta. She is particularly interested in literary analysis of the Bible, believing that to interpret the Bible, one must understand the art of the Bible.

by Wilma Zalabak

Ivan Blazen, David Larson, and Leon Mashchak are to be commended for each giving a thorough, but not cookie-cuttered, analysis of biblical interpretation.

Blazen returns often to underlining the need for interpretation, for discriminating between the timely/temporary and the timeless, between policies and principles, culture and Christ, what it meant and what it means, human and divine, local and universal, and presumed and prescribed, and he finds deductive human logic, without an inductive approach, incompetent to deal with Scripture. He points the aim of interpretation back toward what the text meant.

Blazen recommends investigating (1) historical circumstances, (2) literary forms and sources, and (3) text in its context—linguistics, grammar and syntax. He says these are elements required in interpretation. He makes no ordered list of how-to's. Rather, he deals thoroughly with several important related issues: concern for context, a present context which includes one's own presuppositions as well as the input of peers, and a past context which includes both canonical and cultural issues.

As a point of definition, if biblical interpretation includes getting from what it meant to what it

means, this seems to me to require more than Dr. Blazen describes. Further, I wonder what the differences are between interpretation on an institutional level and interpretation on an individual level. How does a church come to a collective, or even authoritative, interpretation of the Bible? Then, how shall the individual relate to that interpretation? Is it authoritative as from God? Or simply requiring concession for church membership? Or is this perhaps the place for that “diversity in cooperation” mentioned by Blazen?

Larson's breath-of-fresh-air introduction of the Wesleyan Quadrilateral (Scripture, tradition/history, reason, and experience) reminds me of Ellen White's listing of four lesson books, Scripture, nature, work, and experience (*Education*, p. 77). I wonder if Ellen White was influenced by Wesley in this matter.

Dr. Larson makes a strong point that we seek here to integrate not just the four sources but our interpretation of them, conceding that each does require interpretation. Larson's method, then, would seem to be a means of auditing interpretations, rather than a method of interpretation. Also, regarding the quadrilateral, it seems to me that reason is so strongly influenced by either the presence or the lack of the other legs of the quadrilateral that the four are hardly



equal. I would ask just what proportional weight did each of these four carry with Wesley? I found in Dr. Larson's article no suggestions or instructions as to *how* to interpret any of the four sources, except a welcome call to willingness to review and revise our interpretations.

It is left for Mashchak to give the list of how-to's for biblical interpretation including (1) textual, (2) historical, (3) literary, (4) word, (5) canonical, and (6) application analyses. I appreciate his disclaimers to differentiate between his "analysis" and the "criticism" widely used in this century. Also well done is his inclusion of both encounter and proposition in his view of revelation. I would like to hear more in our circles about how to gain and interpret the encounter side of revelation.

**B**lazen and Mashchak offer somewhat similar steps or methods of interpretation, with varying kinds of detail, while Larson moves on into the next step of reviewing the already-derived interpretation.

Now let me propose a further procedure for biblical interpretation. First I do analyses as Mashchak lists them: (1) textual, (2) historical, (3) literary, and (4) word. These steps can be done well with deductive logic, leaning heavily on received knowledge, something passed on like the ABCs (the alphas, betas, and gammas, the declensions and the parsings). These steps often lead to an application carrying the sense of a proposition proved and written in a precise and dogmatic document, ready for the arena of attack.

In my study, I must go farther before application, farther into encounter as well as proposition, into intuitive as well as received knowledge, into inductive as well as deductive logic. These are my further steps:

(5) Word analysis II: I read and reread, immersing myself in the words of the passage, noticing word frequencies, forms and tenses, synonyms, antonyms, and phonetic families. I let key words and syntax define the passage.

(6) Literary analysis II: I immerse myself in the passage and those surrounding it, noticing parallels in words, structures, or themes. I create an outline for the book.

(7) Theological analysis II: I immerse myself in the book and its contextual books within the canon, noticing similarities and differences among authors. I come to a sense of this author's theology.

(8) Historical analysis II: I immerse myself in the entire canon of Scripture, noticing contemporary, earlier, and later writings and how they precipitated

or appropriated the words, structure, or theme of the chosen passage.

(9) Application: Having discovered proposition and encounter, having listened to received and intuitive knowledge, and having used deductive as well as inductive logic, I am in a better position to seek application than had I gained only one or the other. I bridge from what it meant to what it means by realizing the foundational principles of that passage and then asking how those principles might apply today.

I readily recognize and admit that the document produced by this method is not complete, not confirmed, and not conforming to all the laws of linear logic. It is intended for an arena of affirmation and developing dialogue. As Ivan Blazen says, "The interpreter must come openly, humbly, dependently, seeking guidance from God and help from one's peers."

Actually, I need that arena of affirmation and developing dialogue increasingly as I move through my latter steps of biblical interpretation. I crave the opportunity to move about in a church where encounter, intuition, and induction are group phenomena and shared with energy and joy. I believe a group operating in an arena of affirmation for both proposition and encounter will come to a definition of truth and standards which will be much more efficient and effective than we get by propositional stands alone. I cannot promise such group definition will be easy or cookie-cuttered or conforming, but perhaps then we can have "diversity in cooperation" as Dr. Blazen defined "unity."

**I** affirm *Adventist Today* and Ivan Blazen, David Larson, and Leon Mashchak for entering openly into this discussion. I hope we will continue to reach out of our box, out of our paradigm, to ask questions that have not normally been asked and to welcome answers to questions we had never thought of asking.

*I hope we will continue to reach out of our box, out of our paradigm, to ask questions that have not normally been asked and to welcome answers to questions we had never thought of asking.*



## In the Aftermath of Utrecht:

# Lay Leader Glenn Coe Leaves Church, Cites Ordination Vote

**G**lenn E. Coe, an Adventist attorney in Hartford, Connecticut, has been a member of the Atlantic Union Conference Executive Committee, a delegate to the Utrecht General Conference Session, a long-time leader of the Association of Adventist Forums, an *Adventist Today* editorial consultant, and an active member of his home church for 25 years. Coe told *Adventist Today* he was deeply disappointed by the July 5 Utrecht vote rejecting the North American Division's request that the question of ordaining women to the gospel ministry be dealt with independently by each of the world divisions.

On August 6 Coe addressed a letter to his pastor, Elder David Dennis, and to presidents of the Southern New England Conference, the Atlantic Union Conference, and the North American Division,

expressing his deep concern over the Utrecht vote and his tentative decision to withdraw his church membership as a result of the vote. He invited their counsel as to why he should not do so. These church officials replied: Coe's pastor, David Dennis; Ralph Martin, President of the Columbia Union; and Fritz Guy, Professor at La Sierra University.

On November 15 Coe again wrote his pastor, asking to withdraw his church membership and explaining the reasons for this request. The church board met December 11 to consider the request but could not bring themselves to accept his withdrawal or to recommend it to the church.

*Adventist Today* has chosen to print some excerpts from Coe's two letters and the letter to him by Fritz Guy of La Sierra University, with the writers' permissions.

### Glenn E. Coe

August 6, 1995

Dear Pastor  
Members of the Local Church Board  
Members of the Conference, Union and Division Executive Committees:

I seek your counsel as to what I should do with respect to my church membership in light of the action taken by the General Conference at Utrecht, on July 5, 1995, regarding the ordination of women. **I wish to act with that personal integrity Adventism has instilled in me to regard all of God's children equally and none as inferior to others.** The following considerations will heavily influence the decision I must make:

[Twenty-one detailed questions follow, here greatly condensed because of space limitations, but preserving the author's words and phraseology.]

The church's literalistic abuse of Scripture was responsible for the July 5, 1995, Utrecht vote forbidding the world divisions of the church to decide the ordination issue for themselves, on a regional basis. This vote was immoral and unjust because it treats some of God's children as inferior as a result of the way He created them—over which they have no control. This sexual discrimination cloaked in the garb of scriptural fidelity reveals hypocrisy on the part of the church. It elevates "unity" above conscience and principle, and differs in no way from (1) treating Hispanics, blacks, and Asians as inferior, or from (2) the way Scripture has been used to defend slavery, discrimination, segregation, and Nazism. How can I be member of a church whose official policy is to discriminate against women, or support it financially, when I would not be a member of a secular organization that discriminates against minorities?

The questions above reveal the depths of my personal turmoil over this issue. Never before have I found myself in such conflict with my church. **I have tried to witness to thoughtful, educated, successful individuals as well as others.** This has included a seminar on "Religion for the Thoughtful Mind," with up to 20

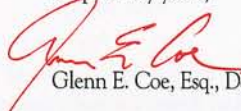


non-Adventist professionals and others attending. This crisis comes at a particularly difficult time because of the Bible studies and discussions in which I am presently involved with persons who have or are soon to receive graduate and professional degrees from Yale and Harvard universities. Others in my Sabbath School class have ongoing Bible studies with professional and business persons in their communities. I do not want my dilemma to adversely affect their keen interest in Adventism as they have come to understand it through our study. And yet, I do not see how I can continue to encourage them to think seriously of joining my church when, because of matters of integrity and justice, I have such fundamental questions that may affect my future relationship with the church.

**Also, I am deeply concerned that my children and their generation will view this action as the proverbial last straw**, persuading them that Adventism is morally, ethically, and spiritually lacking; that it fails to inspire; that it is obscure, anachronistic and incapable of speaking meaningfully to issues of significance; and that it is hopelessly mired down in an ideology and theology that had meaning for a time now past but not for the present or the future. The exodus of our bright, motivated, idealistic, and principled young people, I fear, will now become an unstoppable flood.

Before taking such a drastic step, I seek counsel from you and other fellow believers whose opinion I respect and value, knowing that the North American Division will have its next meeting in October, 1995. I will give you and others until November 15 to respond. By that date, I intend to decide whether I can, with good moral conscience, remain a part of this church. Since this issue has been discussed recently by the church for more than 20 years, and given the size of the vote at Utrecht, quite frankly I see little reasonable expectation in the foreseeable future for change in the church's official position with respect to women's ordination. Therefore, the argument to stay within the church to push for change seems hollow and unconvincing. **Also, I find myself growing weary of the fight and am about ready to concede that the prospects for change are so remote as not to warrant my continued involvement. Please persuade me that I am wrong.**

Respectfully yours,



Glenn E. Coe, Esq., Delegate, 1995 GC

**Fritz Guy, Ph.D**

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY • LA SIERRA UNIVERSITY • RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA

Dear Glenn,

Your August 6 open letter is a powerful statement that deserves to be taken very seriously.

**No one should act contrary to personal conviction in order to comply with an official position of the General Conference—especially if, as is the case in the refusal to allow women in ministry to be treated equally with men, the General Conference position is scripturally, theologically, ethically, and historically defective.** Such a position has no claim on anyone's conscience. The July 5 vote in Utrecht should be recognized for what it was: a moral error, a repudiation of our history, and a contradiction of our Statement of Fundamental Beliefs: "We are all equal in Christ . . . We are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation."

The literalist approach to Scripture evident in Utrecht is indeed the same one used to justify slavery in the 19th century and racial apparition and persecution in the 20th. The consistent use of Scriptural literalism not only would have the local consequences you identify, but would also effectively neutralize the ministry and influence of Ellen White, since she would have nothing of significance to say to men.

What is unfortunately weakened by the refusal to ordain women is the moral credibility of the General Conference. The error at Utrecht lay not in regarding the ordination of women as a theological issue, but in willingly following ill-informed, misguided theology. **What the church needs at this time is a vigorous "loyal opposition," and some members are already beginning to fill that need.** Others are choosing to become Adventist "alumni." Whatever you do, no one else has any right to define your personal responsibility or to second-guess your decision.

Whether you should withdraw your membership is something only you can decide. I choose to remain in the church and to be part of the "loyal opposition." I could not remain in the church without opposing, in every way I can, the General Conference refusal to allow equality for women in ministry.

**It is both theologically and spiritually important not to identify the General Conference with "the church."** The General Conference, even in its quinquennial sessions, is not the church; indeed it is different from the church in many ways. For example, well over half of the members of the church are women, but only 11 percent of the delegates to the General Conference session in Utrecht were women. Only 1.6 percent of the members are church-employees, but in Utrecht more than 81 percent were church employees (78 percent were church officials and 3 percent pastors and teachers).

You may have noted that I have avoided the term "church leaders." The refusal of church officials for 22 years and at every level (conference, union, division, and General Conference) to eliminate biological maleness as a necessary qualification for ordination as a minister is in itself persuasive evidence that in regard to this issue at least they are not leaders. Never in the 43 years since I began my career in the church have I been more disillusioned by the almost total absence of moral courage. As one conference president said, **the idea of "standing for the right though the heavens fall" has been replaced by "standing for the right so long as it won't endanger my career" or "standing for the right as long as there are enough votes."**

No, the church is not the General Conference; and the church is not God, either. This is another theologically and spiritually crucial distinction. At its best, the church speaks for God, but the church is not God speaking. **Members serve the church best when they serve God first.**

I am grateful for the honesty, loyalty, and concern reflected in your letter; you have given many of us an incentive to think once again about what it means to be Adventist after the General Conference session in Utrecht.

Shalom,



Fritz Guy



## Glenn E. Coe

November 15, 1995

Dear Pastor Dennis:

Thank you for your moving letter. It exemplified in every way the concern of a pastor genuinely interested in the spiritual welfare of a member. In addition to yours, others wrote letters much appreciated for their thoughtful and caring approach to the issues with which I am struggling. This letter will respond not only to yours, but to theirs, also.

You know, as do others, how difficult this decision is for me. It is not easy to leave the church in which I have spent my life and raised my family. However, that is the decision I have made. Two reasons have led me to this point.

First, **I now realize that the Adventism of my convictions is not that of the church.** Utrecht brought this fact into sharper relief than ever before. For me, belief in progressive revelation has given life and vitality to my faith. It is what excites me when I open God's word and try to find harmony, meaning and understanding within and through God's various revelations. The literalism of Adventism kills that spirit of inquiry that gives life to my spiritual journey. A church that does not accept progressive revelation is a church that can be blinded to the immorality and injustice of a decision to treat women as inferior to men because, it is argued, a literalistic reading of Scripture requires such a decision. Literalism can blind the church to the leading of God, bind it to the past and prevent it from handling responsibly, under the leading of the Spirit, the present and the future. The Utrecht decision not only was morally wrong, it revealed a foundation cornerstone of Adventism that, if accepted, would destroy something more precious to me than church membership. **To the extent that my life has been a witness for Adventism, I have misrepresented the real nature of Adventism. I do not feel comfortable doing so or being in that position any longer.**

The second reason flows from the first. **Literalism builds into itself so many protective barriers that the prospect for change becomes virtually non-existent. If I believed it was otherwise, I would stay.** This is the saddest conclusion to which I have come. For the past 30-plus years I, with others, sought to further along constructive change from within the church. I genuinely believed that change would come over time. I no longer believe that is true and so I will leave.


Be assured that I harbor no ill-will towards any within the local congregation or the church. The Utrecht delegates, I now realize, were simply voting and speaking as the church had taught them over many, many years to think and reason. The same is true of those within local churches and schools who seek to impose literalism on other members and students, repressing in the process spiritual growth and creativity, and insisting on conformity to literalistic based standards while being blind to issues of justice and true morality. Our leaders are also captives of literalistic thinking and reasoning and seem committed to remaining so. Furthermore, the history of other denominations suggests the improbability of a literalistic church moving beyond literalism to acceptance of God's progressive revelation for the present and the future despite abundant evidence of God's progressive revelation throughout history. That no church leader responded to my August 6th letter is, I accept, tacit acknowledgment of this reality.

Equally disappointing is abandoning my personal dream of a dynamic local community of believers excited by their spiritual journey, participating in creative worship that quickens and stimulates the mind, increasing daily their understanding of the Almighty and living lives of commitment to a thoughtful fellowship of service. **While such dynamic and engaging communities can and will be established within Adventism (and, hopefully, in our local church as well), these will be oases in an increasingly literalistic and rigid denomination.**

I want to assure my many friends within the church that this action does not diminish to any extent my affection for each of you and my appreciation for your friendship which I hope will continue. To the extent that my assistance would be viewed as helpful to the church, I leave open that possibility. I will pray continually that our church will prove me wrong sometime in the near future and in my lifetime.

I ask that you not oppose this withdrawal of my membership from the Seventh-day Adventist church, but rather that you respect it as an action based on principle, personal integrity and conviction. It does not reflect any lessening of my personal religious convictions. In fact, I must do so for my spiritual journey to continue. I sincerely pray that it will not lead anyone to abandon their faith in God nor their commitment to live lives that exemplify what Christianity and Adventism ought to be.

Respectfully yours,



Glenn E. Coe

cc: Members of the Church Board

Elder Charles C. Case

Elder Theodore T. Jones

Elder Alfred C. McClure

Those who responded to my August 6, 1995, open letter



# La Sierra Church Brings Closure to Debate, Celebrates Special Ordination

by Steve Daily

**L**a Sierra University and its University Church ordained two women to the gospel ministry on December 2, 1995. Madelynn Jones Haldeman and Halcyon Westphal Wilson, two long-time members of the La Sierra community, were ordained together in a 4:00 p.m. service that filled the University Church.

The service featured several high points in a liturgy designed by LSU Professor of Religion and Society, Charles Teel, Jr. Five different music groups, the LSU Church choir, LSU Chamber Singers, La Sierra Academy choir, Loma Linda University Church choir and LSU Brass Quintet, combined to fill the platform and choir loft. The celebratory music gave a powerful sense of grandeur to the processional with its hand-crafted liturgical banners, imported from the Sligo ordination service, that provided a colorful backdrop for the proceedings.

University President Lawrence Geraty drew extended applause when he acknowledged and affirmed Haldeman for her decades of service and ministry in the "back of the Adventist bus." He also drew applause and laughter when he made the tongue-in-cheek comment that, "We have tried to ordain our men when they are young, before they make mistakes."

Senior Pastor Dan Smith, who presented the homily, received a strong ovation when he stated, "Our staff has made this decision [to ordain] not because of pressures or demands, but because God has put it in [our hearts] to share equality together as staff members."

Pastor Wilson, herself, also drew enthusiastic applause when she spoke to the young women in attendance and looked into the future, saying, "You now belong to a church that will ordain you if you are called by God."

The ordination of the candidates also included a candle lighting ceremony where members of the LSU pastoral staff each held a candle and jointly lit Wilson's candle, and members of the LSU School

of Religion did the same for Haldeman's. The tone of the service was spiritual and joyous.

The ordinations of Wilson and Haldeman closed a process that officially began on July 7, the day after the General Conference voted against women's ordination at its world session in Utrecht. La Sierra took pains to ensure that its decision to ordain was voted at each level of local church government. Immediately following the General Conference vote, the La Sierra Church Board met July 7, 1995, recommending that the Pacific Union Conference and Southeastern California Conference authorize women's ordination by November 1, 1995. This action was supported in a church business meeting on July 15, 1995, by a vote of 108 yes and 5 no.

However, when neither the union nor conference saw fit to move ahead with this recommendation by the November date, the

church called a historic business session on November 11, 1995, to determine its course of action. This meeting was attended by more than 500 people, including 348 voting members. After a worship service and brief statements from Smith and head elder Steve Blue, the meeting began under the leadership of church board chair Dr. Cliff Reeves. Microphones were provided on the floor and 31 different church members addressed the issue; 26 of the speeches from the floor were in favor of women's ordination and 5 were opposed. When the discussion ceased a secret ballot vote was taken and the decision to proceed with the December 2 service passed by a count of 275 yes to 73 no.

A La Sierra church official pointed out that the local congregation was willing to vote its convictions on an issue like this by nearly an 80 percent margin, in spite of the world church's differing position. He said, "This provides hope that the priesthood of all believers is not dead in Adventism." Many other local churches are currently considering the ordination question at this time and it appears that action will be taken on a congregation-by-congregation basis.

## Loma Linda Victoria Church Ordains Woman Pastor

**S**heryll Prinz-McMillan, pastor of the Victoria Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda, was ordained to the gospel ministry in her church on Sabbath, December 2. Jerry Davis, director of chaplaincy at the Loma Linda University Medical Center, delivered the sermon, reminding the ordinand that she is a needed flute in a band of loud trombones. Fritz Guy, professor of theology at La Sierra University, played a key role in organizing this ordination, and he offered the ordination prayer. Prinz-McMillan responded to her ordination by inviting all to live by the Spirit in lifting one another up for the common task of ministry.

"In a sense this ordination is more significant than those at Sligo and La Sierra in that it represents a small, predominantly working class church choosing to ordain its woman pastor," commented La Sierra University church historian Paul Landa. The sanctuary, which seats only 125 comfortably, had twice that number in attendance, with little standing room. The three women ministers recently ordained at the Sligo Church in Maryland were present, as well as many visitors and some 25 ordained ministers who joined in the laying-on-of-hands in ordination.

According to Steve Daily, chaplain at La Sierra, these two local ordination services on December 2, at La Sierra and at the Victoria church, have been in the planning stages for several months, and were not intended to defy the world church. Rather, like the Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church ordination which preceded them, they were meant to recognize the calls to ministry received by the women who were ordained until those calls are acknowledged by the world church.



### Developing Nations and Decision Making

In his report on the session in Utrecht, Jim Walters makes an issue of the "less-industrialized" status of the nations newly gaining authority in the General Conference. He sounds an almost ominous note at the prospect of the "developing world's [new] clout" at future Annual Councils. One would think the church is about to go to the barbarians.

But if their success in soul-winning is any indication, the developing nations will probably do better at directing the church than North America has been doing. Indeed, considering the present state of the church in North America, one wonders if they could do much worse.

As for Jim Walters (along with many others), he seems to make no connection between faithfulness in evangelism and fitness for world leadership. It never occurs to him that success in spreading the gospel might actually be an important qualification for sitting at the decision-making

table of the world church. But then again, perhaps I expect too much of him. He's only North American.

**John Nixon**  
South Lancaster, MA

### Retirement Plan

Jim Walters' article, "Global Authority Is Answer for Growing Diversity" (July-August 1995), looks at possible effects of the realignment of voting power on the GC Executive Committee. One which he cites is "the retirement plan for NAD ministers, which is drastically underfunded." He fears that the new international members of the committee could refuse to increase monies sustaining the plan.

I wonder what figures he is using to support this statement. The GC Bulletin which carried the financial reports listed more than \$800 million in reserves to support the retirement plan, with recent income exceeding expenses. As I remember, this fund had the largest reserves of any in the GC treasury.

On the other hand, I wonder why the reserves are held by the GC if the plan is for NAD ministers. And if the plan is indeed for the NAD, how could new international votes on the GC committee affect it? If the NAD is not yet free of its "special relationship" to the GC, then it is high time it became so.

**Ralph Neall**  
Lincoln, Nebraska

### Women's Ordination

*Adventist Today* just arrived, and we thank you for publishing some of these issues, even though, in this case, it comes baptized in women's ordination comments, and greatly soft-pedals any opposing sentiments. For instance, along with Gerard Damsteegt's comments, it would have been fair to mention that several major Christian churches have turned the issue down on the basis of Scripture. This even includes the Catholic Church.... Christian churches have split wide open over ordination of women, not for cultural reasons but for Scriptural reasons.

Raul Dederen was dead wrong in saying that Scripture says nothing about ordination. Scripture clearly portrays ordination as Scriptural; following God's commands as transmitted through His messengers. Korah's rebellion was precisely the same demand which is now being trumpeted by women's ordination proponents, namely: "Forget God's command through Moses, designating Aaron's lineage as priests, and ordain us, who are prepared, and feel God's call to the priesthood."

Here we have leaders condemning Moses and other leaders, and sensing a "call" to the priesthood, demanding ordination, and that in counter to God's declared will. Fourteen thousand souls lost their lives before this disastrous rebellion was finally quelled. Scripture and Christ's example must be the key to settle the ordination question. Paul says—"husband of one wife—" and Christ ordained no women!

One other matter disturbs me. How did our pioneers reach these doctrinal conclusions? Was it by "principle-oriented views," or "thus saith the Scripture"? Perhaps we

### Reader: Don't Show the Warts

*Adventist Today* leaves an unpleasant taste. I think I'll be happier ignorant. I know the warts are there; I'd rather not hear about them.

**William Iles**  
Longwood, Florida

### An Editor's Reply: "A Better Idea"

I can't believe I read a letter from you that said you would rather be ignorant because ignorance is more comfortable. Surely not Bill Iles! Plenty of other people seem to feel that way, although not many admit it.

Most of my friends have heard me say, "Well, according to Bill Iles, if you're running a French restaurant, you've got to have French cooks. You can't have somebody out in back dishing up chop suey!"

That makes sense. It's a valid viewpoint on doctrinal diversity. And, delivered with good timing, it always gets a laugh. It's a great quote.

Now this?

We don't want to lose you from our list of subscribers. There are going to be some more uncomfortable truths, but we'll try to set them forth with gentle candor. We know *Adventist Today* isn't for everyone. It's for the open-minded, the curious. We can print some things the *Review* can't touch.

I've got a better idea for you than canceling: Help us! Write for us! Say it the way you think it ought to be said. Be the reasonable voice. Make us more credible.

And you may notice, down the road a few years, that the church didn't split—it hatched. When we see the wonderful, living thing it has become, we may not want to stuff it back into the eggshell—although there may be some who will try earnestly.

With all best wishes,

**Maryan (Wilkinson at Southern in '78) Stirling**



older folk need a clearer explanation of this adroit switch from "thus saith" to "cultural aspects."

This whole ordination issue is a shameful departure from honest, ethical activity on the part of some leaders. . . .

Thank you for listening. Let's keep seeing these things from unbiased points of view.

**Earl Meyer**  
Oakhurst, California

*Editor's note: When critics refer to the Korah, Dathan etc. incident they fail to recognize that the people who press for equality in Adventist ministry are men and women in the church at large who have more regard for ethics and principle than for personal gain.*

### More on Ordination of Women

I have just finished reading the July/August 1995 issue of *Adventist Today*.... I wish to thank you for reporting on the many different issues that will help many determine what directions different leaders are taking today.

I wish to make a brief comment on the article you wrote, "La Sierra Church Urges Conference to Ordain Women." This action by La Sierra will prove to be a very interesting and revealing case. I have known many who have been kicked out of the organization for standing by the old waymarks of established truth against their local "leadership." The "official" charge for their disfellowshipping was "not recognizing properly constituted church authority," which can be found in the church manual....

If any conference allows any church to ordain women, including La Sierra, without disciplinary actions, then the conference leadership will be telling the rest of the world that they are hypocrites and don't intend to follow what they have told us and what they have done when it suited their purpose by severely disciplining others. The vote by La Sierra (July 15), after the vote had been taken by the world field (July 5), is enough to raise serious concerns for this church and reason for preliminary investigation and counsel to avert more serious problems that certainly are on the horizon in Southern California.

In any case, the world is much smaller than it was a hundred years ago and the world field watches on to determine who God's leaders are and who they are not.

Two thousand years ago leaders tried to enforce their dogmas, which were outside of inspiration, on a church that Christ came to save. As a result Christ went to the "plow" and found leaders that would lead. God changes not. Can we expect the same results if the "leaders" of today follow those of days gone by? For those of us who hold the Spirit of Prophecy dear not only as inspired but a vital part of the map that leads to heaven, the answer is not only clear, but prophetic. True Seventh-day Adventist Christians do not look to their leaders with rose colored glasses on. Neither can they afford to. Jesus said if they be of Abraham's seed then they will do the works of Abraham. True Adventism, which is a great and high privilege, follows man so far as leadership follows Christ, but only this far. To support man as a leader who does not follow Christ would be to stop following Christ, placing man in his stead, at which point it would cease to be Adventism.

**Terry S. Ross, Pastor**  
Tangerine, Florida

### Bauman's Open Letter

Herman Bauman's open letter to Elder Folkenberg in the July-August 1995 issue came across as being somewhat incongruous. An open letter in the very nature of things is confrontational. Hardly the way to appeal to an old friend!

It is apparent that a high percentage of our worldwide church membership see women's ordination as a doctrinal issue. But Bauman, epitomizing many favoring women's ordination, would castigate those not agreeing with him as opposing the Christian principles of fairness and equality.

Robert Spangler outlined 27 doctrines of the SDA church. If we are to add a 28th, would it not be wise to first bring about denominational unity on the subject? I, for one, do not wish to see the church that I love fragmented over the issue of women's ordination.

There is an important role which *Adventist Today* can play as an ancillary

organization—promotion of more scholarly biblical study, bridging the gap between clergy and laity, improving efficiency in the operation of conferences and other denominational units, etc.

Some concerns are deep and troubling. The church is in disarray in a number of areas. Some question the wisdom of airing our dirty linen for all the world to behold. While not denying the necessity that certain problems need to be addressed, would it not be better on the printed page to focus more attention on the pure and lovely Jesus rather than the mistakes and failings of some of our leaders?

**Erwin Hodde**  
Greenville, Tennessee

### Nonpolitical Information

*Adventist Today* is such a blessing to our home! We finally have some nonpolitical information about what is going on in our church. We have enjoyed the magazine so much, that as to date, I believe we have encouraged about ten people to subscribe, which they have done! Thank you so much for keeping us informed, and keep up the good work!

**Beverly and Bernie Stacy**  
Spokane, Washington

### Mockery

Through the years I have appreciated your magazine, but my husband and I were deeply saddened by the open mockery of our General Conference President pictured in your last issue. If you believe as we do that he was chosen by God to lead his people, how could you ridicule him in this manner? We will not be renewing our subscription.

**Dr. and Mrs. Brennwald**  
Luray, Virginia

*Editor's note: The cartoons to which you refer were intended to illustrate problems faced by the General Conference, of which the president is a representative.*

### Letters to the Editor

*Adventist Today*, P.O. Box 1220  
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## Adventist Religion Scholars Meet

**N**early 125 Adventist religion scholars attended annual meetings in late November in Philadelphia, though they met in two separate locations. One was the Adventist Society of Religious Studies (ASRS) and the other the Adventist Theological Society (ATS).

The ASRS, composed of scholars from all of the Adventist colleges in the U.S., as well as from several foreign colleges, met in the downtown Marriott Hotel. The ASRS has a membership of 135, of whom approximately 100 attended the Philadelphia meetings. The ASRS meetings are recognized as preliminary sessions attached to the annual American Academy of Religion/Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting that draws 6,000 to 7,000 religion professors.

This year the ASRS theme was the theological roots of Adventism. Wesleyan, Reformation and Radical (such as

Anabaptist) roots of Adventism were explored by scholars whose presentations were seen as some of the best in years. *Spectrum* editor Roy Branson presided as president of the ASRS for 1995.

The other group of Adventist religionists, the ATS, met in the Boulevard Adventist church. For their Philadelphia meetings, the ATS teamed up with the denomination's Biblical Research Institute to conduct a three-day seminar on the book of Daniel. The Pennsylvania conference invited all its pastors, and ATS invited its local members. Over 125 persons participated in the seminar.

The ATS membership is limited to people each of whom is sponsored by a present member and approved by the executive committee, and they must sign an oath of loyalty to traditional church doctrines, some of which are now under dispute. ATS

religion scholars are predominantly from the Adventist Theological Seminary, Southern College and the denomination's Biblical Research Institute, plus some 1,700 lay persons.

The ATS has been criticized as a group of mostly lay persons posing as a scholarly society. However, the president of ATS, Ed Zinke, explains that ATS views theology as a discipline that is responsible to and done by lay persons; hence the push for a broad membership. The ATS was formed eight years ago when some in the ASRS became concerned that it was too liberal to suit them.

Trying to foster fellowship, the ASRS extended the hand of friendship and was invited to attend the Sabbath services at the Boulevard Church where ATS was concluding its seminar. Next year's ASRS and ATS meetings will be held in New Orleans. The ASRS sessions will explore cross-cultural religious issues under the leadership of Jon Dybdahl, professor of missions at the Adventist Seminary.

## Australians Air Major Issues at Open Symposia

**C**oncerned to prevent division caused by varying viewpoints, and present a united witness, Australian church leaders have organized a symposium each year for the past three years to promote open dialogue on pressing issues on which there has been lively debate. The initial meeting, a small, trial conference, was organized for two full days, May 26-28, 1993, in the Sanitarium Health Food Company Conference Room, in the South Pacific Division headquarters in Sydney. Coordinator Graeme S. Bradford, ministerial secretary, Trans-Tasman Conference, invited 60 administrators, theologians, and historians. Papers and discussions focused on aspects of the nature of Christ, sinless perfection, the inspiration and authority of Ellen White, relevant life-style, Bible prophecy, and true, historic Adventism. Attendees praised the open exchange of ideas and proclaimed the meetings a success.

Therefore, Bradford was asked to organize another symposium for April 10 and 11, 1994,

in a larger site across the road, the Wahroonga Activities Center, in the Sydney Hospital Complex. The invitees numbered 120, including some pastors and lay members. Each presenter was followed by a respondent and then discussion. The theme was "Maintaining Our Roots While Producing Relevant Fruit." Topics included: differences between the world of early Adventist pioneers and late-20th-century Australia, what the core beliefs of Adventism are and what is peripheral, contemporary relevance of Ellen White, role and function of the gift of prophecy, and current relevance of the traditional Adventist life-style, prophetic messages, and evangelistic methods. Three top administrators presented and discussed "My Vision of the SDA Church of the Future."

A subsequent flood of letters commended the meetings, called for more, and asked for open circulation of the papers and recordings of the meetings. Last spring's symposium, April 29-30, 1995, was open to all who wished to attend and was scheduled for Sabbath and Sunday to facilitate lay participation; 120 people came. This time, all presentations were videotaped so that local churches could show them and hold their own discussions.

The 1995 theme was "Being an Authentic SDA in the 1990s." Presenters took up the following questions: What have SDAs learned from other churches? What has Seventh-day Adventism got to offer the rest of the Christian world? How should we use Ellen White's writings? Busters, boomers, survivors—can they coexist? Why has Jesus not returned?

Australian Adventists have requested that the presentations from the symposia be published in book form, and this is under consideration.

Bradford told *Adventist Today*, "When people hear how others think, they will find the differences are not as deep as once thought. Most people, if given a fair hearing, can give a reasonable defense of how they see things. This is recapturing the early spirit of Adventism as expressed during the early Sabbath Bible Conferences." He pointed out that Christians who "rest confidently in assurance of salvation" are not so easily upset or threatened when someone else presents a different point of view.

Bradford concluded that "the church grows in its understandings not so much because a committee decrees some new insights, but rather as people with differing views meet together to hear each other."



# A Stranger *Among Us*

**I**t was obvious she didn't belong. Her faded jeans and T shirt were not appropriate church attire. Heads turned and whispers rippled through the congregation as she self-consciously walked down the aisle and then slipped into a pew.

Marie sat behind her watching. Why had the stranger come to church? What was her story? Music, scripture, then sermon; the weekly ritual played out. Yet the stranger held her attention. Marie made a decision. She'd welcome her afterward.

The mighty Casavant organ raised its voice in postlude. Friends greeted friends. A joyful hubbub separated Marie from the stranger. Once, then a second time, she caught a glimpse of the unconventional figure. Then the woman was gone. Sadness came over Marie. The feeling was vague yet persistent, like homesickness.

Suddenly weary, Marie sat on a bench near the

---

*Her faded jeans and T shirt were not appropriate church attire.*

---

by Leigh Anderson



Fellowship Hall. She thought again about the stranger. Fitting the mold? Belonging? How did they describe Jesus two thousand years ago?

Someone sat beside Marie. She felt warmed by the presence. A loving arm circled her shoulder. With lowered eyes she sought to learn the source of this kindness. Firmly planted on the sidewalk beside her were a pair of sandled feet ringed by faded jeans.

---

**Leigh Anderson**, educated in nursing and management, is a medical administrator and consultant who enjoys traveling in connection with medical outreaches and cross-cultural medical practice. She writes frequently on devotional and inspirational topics.

## THE FIFTH NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ASSOCIATION OF ADVENTIST FORUMS

# Adventism on the Eve of the Twenty-First Century

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**Speakers and responders will include** such thought leaders as Roy Branson, Jack Cassell, Gary Chartier, Steve Daily, Spencer Downing, Edward Gaustad, Larry Geraty, Bailey Gillespie, Fritz Guy, Madelynn-Jones Haldeman, Frank Knittel, David Larson, Ron Lawson, Sheryll Prinz-McMillan, David Newman, Caleb Rosado, Adam Rose, Susan Sickler, Charles Teel, Smuts Van Rooyen, Harold Weiss, and more.



## Hegstad to Edit New Conservative Theological Digest

**P**erspectives—A Digest of Biblical Theology, a new popular journal of conservative Adventist theology, is due to hit the mails later this first quarter of 1996. Roland Hegstad, longtime editor of *Liberty* magazine and now retired, will edit this quarterly digest. The publisher, the Adventist Theological Society, aims to reach a broader audience than those who receive the 10,000 copies of its scholarly *Journal*—the great majority of which are distributed gratis.

*Perspectives* will popularize many of the articles appearing in ATS's *Journal* and also publish original material. Although there will be some overlap between ATS's two publications, *Perspectives* will also run a number of regular departments that deal with such areas as biblical word studies, sermons of theological importance, and notes on science, history and religion.

The cost of this 64-80-page publication is projected to be \$12.00 a year, but the editor

expects a circulation at least double that of the *Journal*. A mass circulation of some 25,000 copies of the inaugural issue is planned. ATS president Ed Zinke predicts that *Perspectives* will be self-supporting after the inaugural issue, but chooses not to reveal his financial sponsors. "Initial financial backing will come from a number of sources," said Zinke.

Editor Hegstad will be joined by the leadership of ATS in determining editorial policy, and Biblical Research Institute director George Reid and BRI associate Angel Rodriquez will serve on the editorial board. Hegstad says his digest will be "centrist" in theology and "proactive" in that it will avoid negative criticism.

## Former Minister Again Charged with Homosexual Conduct

**C**olin Cook, a former Adventist minister who once led a denominationally-funded change ministry for homosexual Christians, is back in the news. The *Denver Post* late last year ran a major investigative article on Cook, who says he has overcome his own homosexuality and is now in Colorado conducting sexual reorientation seminars. However, two young men recently counseled by Cook charge that he had hours of "phone sex" with them instead of counseling with them. One of the men taped the conversations and gave the tapes to the *Post* which reviewed them.

Cook claims he has been freed by God from his previous homosexuality since 1986. However, some counselors contacted by the *Post* contradict Cook. "Sex is sex," says Boulder psychiatrist Marjorie Leidig in the *Post* article. "It doesn't matter if it's in person or on the phone. Therapists aren't to have a dual relationship with patients." When the *Post* asked Cook to discuss his "counseling techniques" he refused.

Cook has friends in Colorado, including the Colorado for Family Values organization, which successfully pushed through Amendment 2, seeking to bar local laws offering anti-discrimination protection for gays. Family Values continues to back Cook as an exhibit of its beliefs, despite the charges of homosexual and unprofessional conduct. The group's spokesman said of Cook, "We have every confidence in him. He's very open about (his past)."

In 1974 Cook was removed from his Adventist ministry after it was discovered that he was having sex with a man at the New York evangelistic center. In the mid-80's Cook had General Conference backing and much publicity for his "change

ministry" Quest Learning Center in Reading, Pennsylvania. Quest closed when Cook admitted that he had had sexual encounters with several counselees.

Contacted by the *Denver Post*, the General Conference said the Seventh-day Adventist church has no connection with Cook, and that the church has twice ended its relationship with him. However, the Adventist Church received considerable attention in the article because almost all the counselees interviewed by the *Post*, including the two recent ones, are Adventists. The memory of the earlier favorable publicity given Cook by such Adventist periodicals as *Ministry* and *Insight* lingers in the church, for it has not been retracted.

## AUC Postpones Constituency Meeting

**A**tlantic Union College postponed its mega-constituency meeting from December 3 to sometime early this year. The meeting was called to deal with a crisis of leadership at AUC that involved resignation of three vice presidents (see *Adventist Today*, Nov./Dec. issue, p. 24).

The new team of administrators assembled by President James Londs felt that it needed more time to prepare for a meaningful meeting of the college and union constituencies. One hopeful sign is that the college board held a profitable weekend retreat in early November led by Don McAdams, education consultant and former Adventist college president. The board publicly admitted its partial blame in the crisis, although no underlying problems have been remedied as yet.