

The Reformation Herald

October–December 2003

Vol. XLIV, NO. 4

SPECIAL REPORT

19th General Conference Delegation Session

IN ITU, SP, BRAZIL

"Christ in You, the Hope of Glory"



The Reformation Herald

GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST REFORM MOVEMENT OCTOBER–DECEMBER 2003, VOL. XLIV, NO. 4

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“The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to cooperate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God.”

—The Acts of the Apostles, p. 164.

the Reformation Herald

Official Church Publication of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement

“The age in which we live calls for reformatory action.”
—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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Subscription rates are as follows:
United States US \$ 6.95
Foreign (surface mail) US \$11.00
Foreign (air mail) US \$15.00
Single issue US \$ 3.50

THE REFORMATION HERALD® (ISSN 0482-0843) features articles on Bible doctrine that will enrich the spiritual life of those who seek to know more about God. It is published quarterly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, P. O. Box 7240, Roanoke, VA 24019-0240, U.S.A.
Web: <http://www.sdarm.org>
e-mail: gc@sdarm.org
It is printed and distributed by Reformation

Herald Publishing Association. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscriptions, payments, and donations should be mailed to the address below. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: The Reformation Herald, P. O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019.
Photos by Photodisc © 2002, except where specified.

Order and Organization

Order is the law of heaven. The holy angels are well organized and follow complete order and discipline. We read about them:

“There is perfect order and harmony in the Holy City. All the angels that are commissioned to visit the earth hold a golden card, which they present to the angels at the gates of the city as they pass in and out. Heaven is a good place.”¹

“Angels work harmoniously. Perfect order characterizes all their movements. The more closely we imitate the harmony and order of the angelic host, the more successful will be the efforts of these heavenly agents in our behalf. If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization.”²

God desires that everything connected with His work on earth should be done properly, following the order which He has established. The Lord instituted that the representatives of His church should meet together in a general assembly to make plans for the advancement of His cause.

“God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.”³

The spirit of independence, disorder and disorganization which is prevalent everywhere should not exist among God’s people. The idea of pulling alone, or being self-sent messengers, is not according to the plan of God. Let all be submissive,

respectful, and follow system, order and organization which was established with great sacrifice, after much prayer, study and diligent effort.

“Let none entertain the thought that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study and many prayers for wisdom, that we know God has answered, to erect this structure. It has been built up by His direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord I declare to you that it is to stand, strengthened, established, and settled. At God’s command, ‘Go forward,’ we advanced when the difficulties to be surmounted made the advance seem impossible. We know how much it has cost to work out God’s plans in the past, which have made us as a people what we are. Then let everyone be exceedingly careful not to unsettle minds in regard to those things that God has ordained for our prosperity and success in advancing His cause.”⁴

“Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and to say what plans shall be followed. But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered.”⁵

“Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union con-

ferences, and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference.”⁶

In obedience to this principle established by God, the representatives of our church from all parts of the world meet together every four years to consider the most advantageous ways of organizing the work, and to select the most qualified officers to carry the heaviest responsibilities.

In this issue of *The Reformation Herald* we wish to inform all our brethren of what transpired during the General Conference session along with the spiritual convention, held in Brazil, from September 2–28, 2003. As you read the reports of the various departments you will be able to see what the Lord has done through His servants. You will also be informed of who will bear the heaviest responsibilities in His cause for the next four years. Please, continue supporting the new officers with your prayers, your respect, and your cooperation. God will bless all those who are willing to unite their efforts with the ministers, workers, and church officers in the work of saving souls, thus not only awaiting but hastening the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. R

References:

- ¹ *Early Writings*, p. 39.
- ² *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 649.
- ³ *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 261.
- ⁴ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 27, 28.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 260.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 236, 237.

Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference

*Opening address of the president, Brother A. C. Sas, at the 19th
General Conference held in Brazil, September 2-23, 2003.*

My beloved brethren, representatives of God's church:

Those that are here in this morning, please keep in mind the verses in

Ephesians 4:11-16:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

Jesus Christ organized His church. He established different offices, as the Bible verse reads: Some apostles, some prophets, teachers, pastors, and others. A long list of officers in the church. Why is God's church organized, and responsibilities shared among these various officers? The Bible verse is clear. The reason given in Ephesians 4:12 is:



A. C. Sas
GC President
1995-2003

1. "For the perfecting of the saints." The members of God's church in the Bible are often called saints. They must be perfect in order to be fitted for the kingdom of God.

2. "For the work of the ministry." When we speak of the ministry we should understand that not all must be ordained ministers to do Bible work. The work of a minister is to serve, and for service the church was organized. Some servants may have greater responsibilities than others, but all members are expected to help and serve others, and fulfill these duties faithfully.

3. For "the edifying of the body of Christ," and the body is His church. He is the head and the church is the body with many different members as God disposed, and this body should be edified. What is the meaning of the word "edify"? It means to construct or to build up, so that the church may reach perfection.

We must continue cooperating with the body, and build it up for the perfection of the saints, until we reach unity of the faith, and we know who Jesus Christ is. Until we

come to "the knowledge of the Son of God."

To know Jesus Christ is not only to know that He came from heaven to this world, to be acquainted with the history of His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and His intercession for us before the Father! These things are important to know; but to know Jesus Christ implies more than that. It is to have Him as our best friend, the first and the last, and the only one in whom we can trust fully. We should have a personal experience with Jesus, not simply to know who He was and what He is doing. Why is it important to "reach perfection"? Without it no one will be fitted for the kingdom.

The apostle Paul explains why these things must be followed, so that we should not be children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. If there was ever a time when new doctrines have come, it is now! This is why the church is organized, so that we may not be deceived. This was the concern of the apostle Paul. We should be united, and speak the same things, so that there may be no divisions among us.

True unity does not mean conformity with everything. Every person has his or her own thoughts and opinions, and there is a diversity of gifts in the church, but we still can have unity in this diversity. It was

not only Paul's concern that unity should exist among the believers.

"That union and love might exist among His disciples was the burden of our Saviour's last prayer for them prior to His crucifixion. With the agony of the cross before Him, His solicitude was not for Himself, but for those whom He should leave to carry forward His work in the earth. The severest trials awaited them, but Jesus saw that their greatest danger would be from a spirit of bitterness and division."¹

We all know the prayer of Jesus found in John 17, especially verse 20. Jesus prayed not only for the disciples, but for them also which would believe on His name through them, that they may all be one.

"Union is strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence. Satan well understands this. Never was he more determined than now to make of none effect the truth of God by causing bitterness and dissension among the Lord's people."²

Satan understands that when the people of God are united they are strong and if there is division, that constitutes weakness. For this reason he is determined to cause division. The Spirit of Prophecy says:

"The world is against us, the popular churches are against us, the laws of the land will soon be against us. If there was ever a time when people of God should press together, it is now."³

Whenever there are difficulties and differences, what should be our duty?

"Upon the occurrence of trials in the church let every member examine his own heart to see if the cause of trouble does not exist within."⁴

Many times we have trials, and the worse meeting in any committee is to solve problems. The instruction from the Spirit of Prophecy is: Let everyone examine himself or herself if he or she is not the problem! Sometimes the very one causing problems does not realize that he or she is the cause of the problem.

"Those who are truly converted will press together in Christian unity. . . . The meekness of Christ is to appear in all that is said and done."

What are the causes of problems in the church? The Spirit of Prophecy enumerates them:

1. "Spiritual pride!" Does this spirit exist? Yes, otherwise the Spirit of Prophecy would not have written about it!

2. "A desire to dictate." If there is any point above all that I have been striving to correct, it has been to eliminate from any level of our church the spirit of dictatorship, because that can cause great problems.

3. "Ambition." Those that aspire for positions do not understand the responsibility of holding a position. If they did, they would not have any desire to be there.

4. "Lack of self-control and indulgence of passion and prejudice, instability, and lack of discernment." If we want to be united and to have no problems in our church, let us avoid spiritual pride, a desire to dictate, seeking positions, lack of self-control, prejudice, instability, and lack of judgment, and let us pray that these things may be eliminated from among us.

From the same page, in volume five, we read further:

"Difficulties are often caused by the vendors of gossip, whose whispered hints and suggestions poison unsuspecting minds and separate the closest friends. Mischief-makers are seconded in their evil work by the many who stand with open ears and evil heart, saying: 'Report, . . . and we will report it.' This sin should not be tolerated among the followers of Christ. . . .

"Christians should regard it as a religious duty to repress a spirit of envy or emulation. They should rejoice in the superior reputation or prosperity of their brethren, even when their own character or achievements seem to be cast in the shade."⁵

"Those who are truly converted will press together in Christian unity. Let there be no division in the church of God, no unwise authority exercised over those who accept the truth. The meekness of Christ is to appear in all that is said and done."⁶

I wish to thank God for the cooperation of all ministers and workers that stood united in our church, the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. We praise God because of your presence here. We should take to heart the counsels read in the Spirit of Prophecy and the Word of God. During this session, in the morning and evening, in our rooms, let us focus on the prayer of Jesus Christ, that "we all may be one." In spite of our varied characteristics, we still can reach unity of action.

It is my desire and prayer that the Lord may bless us all during this Session, so that the spirit of unity may prevail—from the beginning to the end. This is my wish and prayer! R

References:

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 236.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 241, 242.

⁶ *Gospel Workers*, p. 485.

Delegation Session

God would have His people an understanding people. He has so arranged matters that chosen men shall go as delegates to our conferences. These men are to be tried and proved. They are to be trustworthy men. The choosing of delegates to attend our conferences is an important matter. These men are to lay the plans that shall be followed in the advancement of the work; and therefore they are to be men of understanding, able to reason from cause to effect.”¹

In harmony with the above instruction, after several months of careful preparation, the 19th Delegation Session of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference was held near the headquarters of the South Brazilian Union, in Itu, SP, Brazil.

Prior to the session, the General Conference Council met for three days to review the most important points of the agenda and make arrangements for the session.

On September 2, 2003, the 19th delegation session was opened by the

president, Brother Alfredo Carlos Sas, in company with the members of the Executive Committee. A short address was presented to the delegates by the president, urging the importance of unity among God’s people, based on the Bible verses in Ephesians 4:11–16. This was followed by a season of prayers offered to the throne of grace, in many different languages.

It was announced that 172 delegates should be present, representing 111 countries and territories, with a worldwide membership of 30,204. Of these delegates 168 were able to come, although a few of them arrived one or two days after the opening of the session. The 19th session of the General Conference was the largest ever held by the Reform Movement.

New Unions, Fields, and Missions

Since the time of the 1999 delegation session, new unions, fields, and missions were organized and approved by the General Conference

Council. Now these were to be recognized by the delegation session. They are as follows:

- a) Moldova Union
- b) Western North American Union
- c) North India Union
- d) Mexican Union
- e) Spanish Mission promoted to be the Spanish Field
- f) Guyana Mission
- g) West Congo Mission
- h) Mongolian Mission
- i) Israeli Mission
- j) Pakistani Mission
- k) Vietnamese Mission
- l) Eastern Nigerian Mission
- m) Dindigul Mission (India)
- n) Haitian Mission
- o) Saint Lucian Mission

Since there was quorum, with more than the minimum number of representatives present, the legal requirements were met. A unanimous vote declared us qualified to function officially.



The President

The president, Brother A. C. Sas, presented his report. It was noted that during the quadrennium, the work expanded to new fields. This kept the regional secretaries busy. It was mentioned also that the various departments of the General Conference were functioning normally, and their secretaries were able to visit different parts of the world to promote the spiritual growth of the church. It was stated that in the administration the General Conference officers worked in cooperation with the Executive Committee and the Council. It was also mentioned that they endeavored to eradicate from among the brethren the spirit of dictatorship, any desire to command, and the ambition for high positions. During the quadrennium the webpage of our organization was updated. One important project which was accomplished was the publication of our hymn book, the *Reformation Hymnal*, containing 700 hymns. For all that had been done the president thanked God for His guidance, and also thanked the coworkers for their cooperation.

Vice Presidents

The vice presidents, Brethren D. Sureshkumar and B. Jaksic, also presented their reports, in which it was noted how God had helped them under different circumstances, hardships and persecution, and delivered them from the hands of

the enemy. The vice presidents were assisted by the regional secretaries and the local leaders. For all that God accomplished through them, may His name be praised.

Secretary

Since the elected secretary in 1999, Brother J. Garbi, was laid to rest during the quadrennium, Brother B. Burec was appointed by the General Conference Council to act temporarily as the secretary. In his report it was seen that during the quadrennium there was a net increase of 2,364 souls. It was sadly reported also that during the quadrennium the following brethren were laid to rest in the Lord: Juracy J. Barrozo, Paulo Tuleu, Edgar Carlos Luup, Vicente de Oliveira (Brazil), Victor Muresan, Gavrilă Bora, Dinitoiu Ion, Stefan Ungureanu (Romania), Marten Kaiembe Cabangu (Belgium); John Garbi (USA); Alex Lunckutoy (Indonesia); Anton Omondi Oboga (Kenya); Henry Steemers (Holland), Griffiths Koopedi (South Africa).

Auditor

The auditor, Brother Ruffo Lopez, presented his report in conjunction with the Stewardship Department. He urged all to ensure accuracy in issuing receipts, in keeping in an orderly manner all documents, receipts and vouchers, and to keep in



mind the need of auditing the treasury in every level of the church.

Treasurer

The treasurer, Brother Roberto Martins Duarte, presented his report of the financial situation of the General Conference, as of December 31, 2002. It was noticed that in spite of the fact that new missions were opened which demanded great financial assistance, and the currency has been devalued in many countries, the Lord helped us to be able to meet the expenses. He thanked the unions and fields for their cooperation, and we are thankful to every one of God's children for their faithfulness and liberality.

Regional secretaries

The regional secretaries presented their reports, in the following order:

- a) African Region: D. Samy Doss
- b) Asian Region: D. Sureshkumar; Assistant: M. Natarajan
- c) Central American Region: E. Lainez
- d) European Region: M. Barbu
- e) North American Region: D. P. Silva
- f) Pacific Region: B. Jaksic
- g) South American Region: M. S. Silva

Doctrinal Committee

The Doctrinal Standing Committee, presented the report of the material prepared during the quadrennium.





The following departments presented their reports, in the following order:

Editorial Department

Brother A. C. Sas presented the report of the Editorial Department. *The Reformation Herald* magazine, the official church paper, was published regularly, every quarter, in addition to the readings for the Week of Prayer, which was issued yearly. He worked on nine new tracts written during the quadrennium. He translated eight tracts into the Spanish language, and six to the Portuguese. Altogether 23 new publications were prepared. One of the important publications was the so-

long-awaited and needed hymn book, the *Reformation Hymnal*. It is now available. It is suggested that from the beginning of the year 2004, the *Reformation Hymnal* should be used as our official hymn book in every English-speaking church in the world.

Colporteur and Missionary Department

The Colporteur and Missionary Department secretary, Brother R. C. Dumaguit, showed that during the quadrennium the Colporteur Department functioned, being organized in twelve countries. Over US \$400,000.00 worth of books were sold.

Educational Department

The Educational Department secretary, Brother M. Natarajan, showed by his report that in our worldwide church organization there are seven missionary schools, and twenty three elementary schools,

having a combined total of 13,400 students at the end of 2002.

Health and Welfare Department

The Health and Welfare Department secretary, Brother J. Tuleu, reported that he was able to visit nineteen countries to help establish the welfare work.

Publishing Department

The Publishing Department secretary, Brother D. Dumitru, explained that through the launching of the a new books for the colporteur work in Spanish, the department was benefitted financially while also providing new incentive to the colporteurs in different countries. Besides these, the regular publications, the *Sabbath Bible Lessons*, *Reformation Herald*, and *Youth Messenger*, were issued regularly.

Sabbath School Department

The Sabbath School Department secretary, Brother D. Zic, was able to report that during the quadrennium the total students of our *Sabbath Bible Lessons* were 64,311, in an organized and non-organized capacity. Sabbath school seminars were held in eleven places. Besides the seminars, a bulletin was issued every week, by e-mail.

Youth Department

The Youth Department secretary, Brother I. Raducu, reported that he was able to be present at twenty-four youth conventions around the world. He was able also to keep up the editorial work of the *Youth Messenger*.

To close the presentation of the reports, the General Conference quartet offered an item, "Take Time to Be Holy," as a thanksgiving to God for the achievement of the past administration. For everything that the Lord has done for His people and His servants we praise His name. R

References:

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 262.





C O U N T R I E S A N D T E R R I T O R I E S W I T H S D A R M M E M B E R S

African Region

Angola
Botswana
Congo
Ghana
Kenya
Mozambique
Namibia
Nigeria
Seychelles
South Africa
Swaziland
Tanzania
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Asian Region

Bangladesh
Bhutan
India
Indonesia
Malaysia
Myanmar (Burma)
Nepal
Oman

Pakistan
Philippines
Qatar
Singapore
Saudi Arabia
Sri Lanka
Thailand
United Arab Emirates

Central American Region

Belize
Costa Rica
Dominican Republic
El Salvador
Guadeloupe (Fr)
Guatemala
Haiti
Honduras
Martinique (Fr)
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama
Puerto Rico
St. Lucia

Eurasian Region

Belarus
Czech Republic
Estonia
Finland
Israel
Kazakhstan
Latvia
Lithuania
Moldova
Poland
Russia
Slovakia
Turkey
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
Uzbekistan

European Region

Austria
Belgium
Bosnia-Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Denmark
France

Germany
Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Macedonia
Netherlands
Portugal
Romania
Serbia-Montenegro
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
United Kingdom

North American Region

Canada
U. S. A.

Pacific Region

American Samoa (USA)
Australia
China
Fiji

French Polynesia (Fr)
Japan
Mongolia
New Caledonia (Fr)
New Zealand
Papua New Guinea
South Korea
Vanuatu
Vietnam
Western Samoa

South American Region

Argentina
Aruba
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Ecuador
Guyana
Netherlands Antilles
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay
Venezuela

Newly Elected General Conference Officers



Duraisamy Sureshkumar
President



Davi Paes Silva
Vice President/Welfare



Branislav Jaksic
Vice President/Pacific



David Zic
Secretary/Sabbath School



Roberto Martins Duarte
Treasurer/Stewardship



Rolly Dumaguit
Colporteur Department



Muthukaruppan Natarajan
Education Dept./Regional
Secretary—Asia



Daniel S. Lee
Publishing Department

President: Duraisamy Sureshkumar

Vice Presidents:

Branislav Jaksic

Davi Paes Silva

Secretary: David Zic

Treasurer: Roberto Martins Duarte

Board of Directors:

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David Zic

Roberto Martins Duarte

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Daniel S. Lee

Homero Paredes

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David Zic

Roberto Martins Duarte

Daniel S. Lee

Homero Paredes

Muthukaruppan Natarajan

Rolly Dumaguit

Liviu Tudoroiu

Ionita Raducu

D. Samy Doss

Simeon Karvatskii

Matheus Souza Silva

Eduardo Lainez

Marin Barbu

Ljuban Vukotic

REGIONS

African Region

Secretary: Samy Doss

Assistant: Newton Kakonko

Asian Region

Secretary: Muthukaruppan

Natarajan

Assistant: Alwyn Vedhasingh

European Region

Secretary: Marin Barbu

Eurasian Region

Secretary: Simeon Karvatskii

Pacific Region

Secretary: Branislav Jaksic

Assistant: Nehemiah Chang

North American Region

Secretary: Homero Paredes

Central American Region

Secretary: Eduardo Lainez

South American Region

Secretary: Matheus Souza Silva

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Secretary: Rolly Dumaguit

at the 19th General Conference Session

Education and Family Department

Secretary: Muthukaruppan Natarajan

Sabbath School Department

Secretary: David Zic

Young People's Department

Secretary: Ionita Raducu

Publishing Department

Secretary: Daniel S. Lee

Missionary and Health Department

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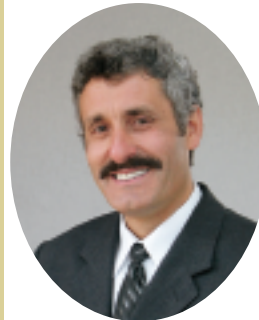
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African Region



South American Region

D E L E G A T E S



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Pacific Region



Central American Region



European Region

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Benjamin Burec
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Dominican Republic



Felix S. M. Padilla
El Salvador



Asunción F. Flores
Honduras



Brenda Francis
Martinique



Daniel A. Avelar
Mexico



Juan Resendiz
Mexico

South America



Cipriano D. Moreyra
Argentina



Miguel A. D. Gonzalez
Argentina



Constantino Gonzales
Bolivia



Eduardo Cruz
Bolivia



Franz Burgos Terceros
Bolivia



Adelaide Rodrigues da Rocha
Brazil



Admir Ribeiro dos Prazeres
Brazil



Anicésio Rodrigues de Oliveira
Brazil



Antonio Machado de Souza
Brazil



Ari Gonçalves da Silva
Brazil



Artur Gessner
Brazil

South America—continued



Caetano Verto Sink
Brazil



Cicero José de Almeida
Brazil



Daniel Duarte Carneiro
Brazil



Delvacir Dias Preto
Brazil



Demerval Santos Ferreira
Brazil



Durval Bispo dos Santos
Brazil



Edson de Oliveira Custódio
Brazil



Elias de Souza
Brazil



Emilson Motta
Brazil



Erotildes José de Almeida
Brazil



Gerson Simões de Barros
Brazil



João Moreno
Brazil



Joel Peres Nunes
Brazil

D E L E G A T E S



Joel Ramos da Silva
Brazil



José de Liborio
Brazil



José de Oliveira Lima
Brazil



José Pereira de Souza
Brazil



Josias Tavares de Almeida
Brazil



Josif Tuleu
Brazil



Josimar Ribeiro Cardoso
de Oliveira
Brazil



Josué Devai
Brazil



Lourival José de Santana
Brazil



Luis Carlos de Melo
Brazil



Marcelo de Araujo Silva
Brazil



Marcos Wagner Rodrigues Vaz
Brazil



Matheus Souza Silva
Brazil

South America—continued



Olmício Nascimento Freitas
Brazil



Otávio Nascimento Freitas
Brazil



Paulo Cesar Bento
Brazil



Rômulo Pereira Borges
Brazil



Samuel Alves Monteiro
Brazil



Sansão Lopes
Brazil



Joel M. Morales
Chile



Segundo Daniel Guzman
Chile



Angel A. S. Jacome
Colombia



Hermenciano O. Guiza
Colombia



Jose E. G. Rivera
Colombia



José Angel Goes Usuga
Ecuador



Victor Hugo Tumbaco Tomalá
Ecuador

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Peru



Jorge V. Garrayar
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Jose A. Campos
Peru



Julio L. Duire
Peru



Manuel J. Rodriguez
Peru



Mario Alvarado
Peru



Roman Ayala
Peru



Samuel D. Vergara Diaz
Peru



Ysaac Quintana Chichipe
Peru



Nelson O. Castillo
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Oscar O. Rangel
Venezuela

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Hungary



Francisc Mátyás
Hungary



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Italy



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Adrian Tudorel
Romania



David Muresan
Romania



Dumitru Ardeleanu
Romania



Eugen Pascotescu
Romania



Ioan Cociuba
Romania



Ion Tomoiaga
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Josif Arpad Siko
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Romania



Marin Barbu
Romania



Marius Daniel Stroia
Romania



Nelu Iancu
Romania



Paul Petcu
Romania



Piste Florin
Romania



Raducu Ionita
Romania



Simion Muresan
Romania



Traian Cracea
Romania



Valerica Constantin Raileanu
Romania



Valerica Iamandei
Romania



Vasile Buftea
Romania



Ion Adrian Fanaru
Spain



José Sinfiriano Romero
Spain



Danilo Zic
Yugoslavia

D E L E G A T E S

Europe—continued



Djordje Bosanac
Yugoslavia



Dragan Ivanov
Yugoslavia



Boris Gurduiala
Moldova



Gheorghe Dovbenko
Moldova



Jacov Costas
Moldova



Petru Mangul
Moldova



Alexander Volgin
Russia



Anatoli Bogatov
Ukraine



Mykola Fedina
Ukraine



Olexandr Menovshchikov
Ukraine



Petro Stratan
Ukraine



Simeon Karvatskii
Ukraine



Vasyl Olah
Ukraine



Viktor Pysanyuk
Ukraine



Vyacheslav Melnychuk
Ukraine

Africa



Lázaro Augusto
Angola



Moisés Fernandes
Angola



Vicente Antonio
Angola



Samuel Caba Kalende
Congo



Benedictor A. Nyaboga
Kenya



Aaron T. Mkhwanazi
South Africa



D. Samy Doss
South Africa



Johannes Mhlanga
South Africa



Isaac Daka
Zambia



Justin Chewes Kambe
Zambia



Newton Kakonko
Zambia



Harvest Ndlovu
Zimbabwe



Mendrew Mpofu
Zimbabwe

Asia



Alwyn Vedhasingh
India



Jaya Singh
India



Muthukaruppan Natarajan
India



S. Murugesan
India



Soundrapandian Pitchmuthu
India



Benyamin Linga
Indonesia



Wilson Arthur Wauran
Indonesia



H. M. Williams
Pakistan



Carlos O. Estrera
Philippines



Fely Elaydo Inojales
Philippines



James P. Mendoza
Philippines



Peter C. Cay-ohen
Philippines



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Pacific



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English, German,
Portuguese, French



Jovica Mladenovic
English, German,
Serbo-croatian



Gennadiy Melnychuk
English, Russian
Ukrainian



Elsa Burec
Assistant Secretary
during the session

“CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY”



PROGRAM

Thursday, September 25, 2003

07:30—09:00 p.m.

Opening of the Conference

(The president and secretary of the GC)

Friday, September 26, 2003

06:30—07:00 a.m.

Morning Devotion: *Who Is Jesus Christ?*

(I. Raducu)

08:30—10:00 a.m.

Sermon: *What Shall I Do With Jesus?*

(A. G. Silva)

10:30—12:00 noon

Sermon: *Our Greatest Hope* (D. Dumitru)

06:00—06:30 p.m.

Opening of the Sabbath: *Our Best*

Friend: Jesus (V. T. Liviu)

(continued on p. 30)

The business aspect of the delegation session was over; 21 solid days of official meetings had been conducted. Now it was time for the glorious “dessert”—the greatest blessing of all—the spiritual gathering.

In the state of São Paulo, in a beautiful plain out in the countryside about 6 kilometers from the city of Sumaré is the *Estancia Árvore da Vida* (Tree of Life Retreat). For four delightful days, beginning September 25, 2003, a large convention was held here. Buses and cars began to arrive from all parts of Brazil and South America, bringing people to attend the spiritual meetings of the 19th session of the General Conference.

Brethren and friends poured in from many parts of the world, representing about 111 countries and ter-

ritories. On the Sabbath day, when most were present, there was an estimated number of over 9,600 people.

A meaningful theme

The theme of the convention was, “Christ In You, the Hope of Glory.” Why was this topic chosen? After deep thought and prayer, the 2002 GC Council had decided this uplifting theme would be most appropriate for such a memorable event so near the close of earth’s history.

Under the inspiration of God, the apostle Paul refers to a great mystery—“the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach,

warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily” (Colossians 1:26–29). Likewise in our day, “we need a power to come upon us now and stir us up to diligence and earnest faith. Then, baptized with the Holy Spirit, we shall have Christ formed within, the hope of glory. Then we will exhibit Christ as the divine object of our faith and our love. We will talk of Christ, we will pray to Christ and about Christ. We will praise His holy name. We will present before the people His miracles, His self-denial, His self-sacrifice, His sufferings, and His crucifixion, His resurrection and triumphant ascension. These are the inspiring themes of the gospel, to awaken love and intense fervor in every heart. Here are the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, a fountain inexhaustible. The more you seek of this experience, the greater will be the value of your life.”¹¹

“If the heart is reformed, it will be seen in the outward appearance.



If Christ be in us the hope of glory, we shall discover such matchless charms in Him that the soul will be enamored. It will cleave to Him, choose to love Him, and in admiration of Him, self will be forgotten. Jesus will be magnified and adored, and self abased and humbled.”¹²

“Let Christians reveal to every son and daughter of Adam the fact that they are more anxious to practice the good works of Christ in this world, and to be numbered as God’s

chosen ones, than to be seeking for riches. Let your words and your example be a continual sermon, making manifest the fact that you are laying up your treasure above, that your life is hid with Christ in God, and that it is your hope to appear with Christ, who is your life, when He shall appear in glory.”¹³

“The gospel of Christ is truly believed only when it is practiced. Faith is justified by works. Self must be hid; Christ must appear as the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. When an unreserved surrender of the powers of body, mind, and soul is made to the Saviour, self no longer strives for the mastery. What man needs today is the crucifixion of self and the revelation in his life of Christ, the hope of glory. Then will be fulfilled the word, ‘Ye are the light of the world’ (Matthew 5:14). Then will be answered the prayer, ‘That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us’ (John 17:21). In thought, word, and action, Christ’s followers will be an exemplification of godliness. An atmosphere of peace will surround them.”¹⁴



(continued from p. 28)

07:00—08:30 p.m.

Sermon: Jesus Lives in Me (D. S. Doss)

Sabbath, September 27, 2003

07:00—07:30 a.m.

Morning Devotion: The Keynote of the Scriptures (M. Natarajan)

09:00—10:30 a.m.

Sabbath School (D. Zic)

11:00—12:00 noon

Divine Service: "Christ in You, the Hope of Glory" (A. C. Sas)

03:00—04:30 p.m.

Experiences and Praises.
(M. S. Silva, R. Borges)

05:00—06:00 p.m.

Experiences and Praises.
(M. S. Silva, R. Borges)

06:00—06:30 p.m.

Closing of the Sabbath: Abide With and in Me (J. Ciric)

Sunday, September 28, 2003

06:30—07:00 a.m.

Morning Devotion: Reflecting Christ's Character (F. Devai)

08:30—10:00 a.m.

Sermon: Signs of Jesus' Soon Coming
(D. Sureshkumar)

10:30—12:00 p.m.

Sermon: God's People Are Delivered
(P. D. Lausevic)

02:00—03:00 p.m.

Sermon: Our Hope Fulfilled (D. P. Silva)

03:30—04:30 p.m.

Sermon: The Most Glorious Event
(B. Jaksic)

07:00—08:00 p.m.

Close of the Conference (The president and the secretary of the GC)



All praise and honor to God

Among the important features of this wonderful event was the general choir, made up of different choirs from all over Brazil. It was estimated that there were about 700 singers, standing behind the platform. The choir was accompanied by a brass band and an orchestra. Some people said that they felt as if they were hearing a heavenly choir. It was impressive, extraordinary, and beautiful.

The messages presented were timely, and well received by the people. Most of the sermons were presented in English, translated into the Portuguese language. When the speaker was not able to speak in English, he had a translator into English.

Most of the meetings were transmitted though the Internet, and many saw and heard the message in numerous countries of the world.



At the close of the convention, the outgoing president, Brother A. C. Sas, introduced the newly elected president, Brother D. Sureshkumar, to the assembly. The new president then introduced to the congregation the rest of the General Conference officers, and requested the congregation to support the new officers with their prayers and their help in every way possible. For the closing last items the choir sang three hymns: “Praise God, O Jerusalem,” the “Hallelujah Chorus” of Handel, and “The Lord’s Prayer.” Then the whole congregation united their voices with the choir in singing the hymn: “God Be With You Till We Meet Again,” and Bro. A. C. Sas pronounced the benediction. The unforgettable conference reached its end, and those who had attended were spiritually enriched and energized with new vigor from on high. **R**

References:

- ¹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 186, 187.
- ² *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 162, 163.
- ³ *The Review and Herald*, January 22, 1895.
- ⁴ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 146.



Left. The vast congregation assembled from around the world delighted in feasting on the spiritual food.

Right top. In the dining area mealtimes provided lots of great opportunities for fellowship.

Right middle. The magnificent choir bids farewell to the happy congregation.

Right bottom. Some of the brethren from Romania

Seventy-eight Years of Struggles and Victories

BY A. BALBACH

History has a tendency to repeat itself. We read, for example, that the great reformation of the sixteenth century was the continuation of the work started much earlier by the Waldenses in France and Italy, by Wycliffe in England, and by Huss and Jerome in Bohemia.¹ In a similar way, this last work of reformation, represented by the SDA Reform Movement which came into existence during World War I, actually had its embryonic beginning in 1888. That is when God sent a message of reformation to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones.

“This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God.”²

Unfortunately, the reception of that message was very limited, both among the leadership and the people.³ The servant of the Lord lamented that fact as follows:

“Never before have I seen among our people such firm self-complacency and unwillingness to accept and acknowledge light as was manifested at Minneapolis. . . . The Lord desired

to come near to them, to bless them and heal them of their backslidings, but they would not hearken. They were actuated by the same spirit that inspired Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

. . . When I purposed to leave Minneapolis, the angel of the Lord stood by me and said: ‘Not so; God has a work for you to do in this place. . . . It is not you they are despising, but the messengers and the message I send to My people. They have shown contempt for the word of the Lord. Satan has blinded their eyes and perverted their judgment; and unless every soul shall repent of this their sin, this unsanctified independence that is doing insult to the Spirit of God, they will walk in darkness. I will remove the candlestick out of his place except they repent and be converted, that I should heal them.’”⁴

“The influence that grew out of the resistance of light and truth at Minneapolis tended to make of no effect the light God had given to His people through the Testimonies.”⁵

Although the message was rejected in 1888, we have the assurance that it cannot be stopped.

“Satan has laid every measure possible that nothing shall come among us as a people to reprove and rebuke us, and exhort us to put away our errors. But there is a people who will bear the ark of God. . . . They will proclaim the word of the Lord; they will lift up their voice like a

trumpet. The truth will not be diminished or lose its power in their hands. They will show the people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins.”⁶

Isaiah 58:1, 8–14 points out our great responsibility in this work of reformation.

“Our work is now to rouse the people. Satan with all his angels has come down with great power, to work with every conceivable deception to counterwork the work of God. The Lord has a message for His people. This message will be borne, whether men will accept or reject it.”⁷

“Though they are called the people of God, the house of Jacob, though they profess to be linked with God in obedience and fellowship, they are far from Him. Wonderful privileges and promises have been given to them, but they have betrayed their trust. With no words of flattery must the message be given them. ‘*Show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*’ (Isaiah 58:1). Show them where they are making a mistake. Set their danger before them. Tell them of the sins they are committing, while at the same time they pride themselves on their righteousness. Apparently seeking God, they are forgetting Him, forgetting that He is a God of love and compassion, long-suffering and goodness, dealing justly and loving mercy. Wordly policy has come into their business and religious life. Their hearts are not purified through the truth. God looks on their outward ceremonies of humility as a solemn mockery. He regards all religious sham as an insult to Himself.”⁸



Bro. A. Balbach
was editor of the
Reformation Herald from
1967–1991.

“Here are given the characteristics of those who shall be reformers, who will bear the banner of the third angel’s message, those who avow themselves God’s commandment-keeping people, and who honor God, and are earnestly engaged, in the sight of all the universe, in building up the old waste places. Who is it that calls them, The repairers of the breach, The restorers of paths to dwell in? It is God. Their names are registered in heaven as reformers, restorers, as raising the foundations of many generations.”⁹

The development of two distinct classes of Adventist believers under the message of 1888 brings an unavoidable separation in the church, which is also predicted in Isaiah 8:11–16.

“Here are plainly represented two distinct parties, formed from a company that was once united. The members of one of these parties are in resistance to the will of God. They have taken themselves from the side of the loyal and true, and are now resisting the warnings of the Spirit of God. To the obedient the Lord will be ‘for a sanctuary: but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.’ Every professed believer in Christ will be tempted by Satan. ‘And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared [mark that word], and be taken. Notwithstanding all their knowledge of the Word of God, all their light, and their position as expositors of Bible truth, many shall ‘stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken.’ The ruin of this class is certain.”¹⁰

“The separation causes pain and bitterness to both parties. It is the variance which Christ declares that He came to bring. But the converted will feel a continual longing desire that their friends shall forsake all for Christ, knowing that, unless they do, there will be a final and eternal separation.”¹¹

“He [Christ] will take His Holy Spirit from the church, and give it to others who will appreciate it.”¹²

In the fulfillment of these predictions, the following dates should be borne in mind:

- **1888:** A message of reformation, coming through Waggoner and Jones, marked the beginning of a reformatory movement among the Advent people.
- **1913:** The call for a reformation was once more repeated by the Lord through the living prophet, who saw that this call would be heeded by some.¹³
- **1914–1918:** World War I precipitated the predicted crisis, bringing the prophesied reformatory movement into the open.
- **1925:** After all our efforts toward a reunification with the Adventist mother church had failed, because the apostasy was allowed to remain and grow, our pioneers organized the SDA

Reform Movement officially, on a definite basis, at our first General Conference session of delegates in 1925.

Since the beginning, we have seen the hand of God in this work of reformation; and today, during our 19th Delegation Session (2003), we thank Him again for His guidance, His protection, His mercy toward us, His people, and for all the victories that He has granted us in our effort to contend for the faith that was once delivered unto the saints. **R**

References:

- ¹ See *The Great Controversy*, pp. 78, 79, 97.
- ² *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92.
- ³ See *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 79, 80, 401, 402.
- ⁴ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 3, p. 191.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 15, p. 305.
- ⁶ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 411.
- ⁷ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1149.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 1151.
- ¹⁰ *The Review and Herald*, July 18, 1907.
- ¹¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 83.
- ¹² *The Review and Herald*, July 16, 1895.
- ¹³ See *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 514, 515.

Presidents of the General Conference:

Names	Year	Session	Place
Otto Welp	1925	1st session	Gotha, Germany
Otto Welp	1928	2nd session	Inserhagen, Germany
Otto Welp	1931	3rd session	Inserhagen, Germany
Wilhelm Maas	1934	4th session	Budapest, Hungary
Carlos Kozel	1948	5th session	The Hague, Holland
Dumitru Nicolici	1951	6th session	Zeist, Holland
Dumitru Nicolici	1955	7th session	São Paulo, Brazil
André Lavrik	1959	8th session	São Paulo, Brazil
Clyde Thomas Stewart	1963	9th session	Gross Gerau, Germany
Francisco Devai L.	1967	10th session	São Paulo, Brazil
Francisco Devai L.	1971	11th session	Brasilia, Brazil
Francisco Devai L.	1975	12th session	Brasilia, Brazil
Wilhelm Volpp	1979	13th session	Bushkill, PA, U.S.A.
João Moreno	1983	14th session	Toronto, ON, Canada
João Moreno	1987	15th session	Bragança, SP, Brazil
Neville Stuart Brittain	1991	16th session	Breuberg, Germany
Alfredo Carlos Sas	1995	17th session	Voineasa, Romania
Alfredo Carlos Sas	1999	18th session	Itu, SP, Brazil
Duraisamy Sureshkumar	2003	19th session	Itu, SP, Brazil

On the Threshold of Eternity

BY DAVID ZIC

The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis.²¹



Bro. David Zic
*is the newly elected GC
secretary*

During this time of great upheaval, God has a people preparing themselves for the soon coming of their Saviour. This month of September the representatives of God's church from around the world met for their 19th quadrennial delegation session. The Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement has been blessed for the first time to receive nearly all of the legally seated delegates. The Lord opened the way for delegates to come for the first time from countries that have restricted access.

These delegates represented a worldwide membership of 30,204 (as

of December 31, 2002), These members were organized into 72 Units attached to the General Conference (unions, fields, mission fields and missions). These Units span every inhabited continent. Of course there is still a great work to do in spreading the message to every island of the world.

“God's faithful messengers are to go steadily forward with their work. Clothed with the panoply of heaven, they are to advance fearlessly and victoriously, never ceasing their warfare until every soul within their reach shall have received the message of truth for this time.”²²

The ten largest countries of the Reform Movement by membership are (as of December 31, 2002):

8,506	Brazil
4,000	Romania
2,428	Peru
1,728	Philippines
1,418	Ukraine
1,200	China
913	Angola
849	Moldova
753	United States of America
665	India



The Sabbath School Department reported to the session that at the end of 2002 there were 64,311 students studying the Sabbath Bible Lessons around the world. The actual number of students is much higher, but this number are registered students of an organized Sabbath school.

The secretaries of the various departments reported that during

the past quadrennium, seminars and conventions for their respective departments were held around the world. Many of the departments collaborated on activities to ensure their success. Among the most beneficial projects was the creation of the Youth Building Program. This program takes young people from around the world to an impoverished country to assist in building church facilities for the members there as well as doing evangelism amongst the indigenous population. Haiti was benefitted in 2002 by young people coming from six wealthy nations. Next year, young people will be traveling to the Pacific islands for the same type of project.

Looking ahead

The delegation has now been making plans for the future advancement of the work. Seeing the great needs of the work ahead of us, the delegates have divided one Region in two and created new departments at the General Conference level. In addition, the delegates have been making missionary plans and decisions on various points of administration and doctrine.

The units of the General Conference will now be divided into eight regions (previously seven): African, Asian, Central American, Eurasian, European, North American, Pacific, and South American Regions. The new Eurasian Region will take care of the spreading of the gospel in the former Soviet countries as well as Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. In addition to this new region, three Regions have been given assistant regional secretaries to enhance the mission work. These are the African, Asian and Pacific Regions.

The number of

departments has also been expanded. You can now expect visits and programs from the following departments: Colporteur, Education, Family Ministry, Health, Missionary, Publishing, Sabbath School, Stewardship, Welfare, and Youth.

In order for these departments to function at maximum efficiency, your help is needed. When the call comes to contribute means for the cause, please remember to give generously. Your assistance makes possible the great evangelistic work done by these departments.

“Well, says one, the calls keep coming to give to the cause; I am weary of giving. Are you? Then let me ask: Are you weary of receiving from God’s beneficent hand? Not until He ceases to bless you will you cease to be under bonds to return to Him the portion He claims. He blesses you that it may be in your power to bless others. When you are weary of receiving, then you may say: I am weary of so many calls to give.”³

With the work of organization, administration and planning now completed, the new officers and delegates return home to begin anew their work.

“The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant. . . .

“And still our General, who never makes a mistake, says to us, ‘Advance; enter new territory; lift the standard in every land. “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”’

“The time has come when through God’s messengers the scroll is being unrolled to the world. The truth contained in the first, second, and third angels’ messages must go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; it must lighten the darkness of every continent, and extend to the islands of the sea. There must be no delay in this work. Our watchword is to be, Onward, ever onward! Angels of heaven will go before us to prepare the way. Our burden for the regions beyond can never be laid down till the whole earth is lightened with the glory of the Lord.”⁴

References:

- ¹ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 537.
- ² *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 220.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 150.
- ⁴ *Evangelism*, p. 707.



The Youth Building Program at work in 2002—constructing a chapel in Haiti.

The Need of the Hour

Beloved Brethren and Sisters,

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28). The Lord declares, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).

We are entering an important period of time. We are to work as we have never worked before. We are to seek every opportunity of drawing souls to Christ.

Our appreciation

We take the opportunity to thank the Lord and the senior brethren for their untiring labor in building God’s church and guarding its foundation thus far. We also thank the fields, missions and unions for their support and the individuals who have wholeheartedly dedicated their prayers, their time and their means. We shall continue appreciating your cooperation in all respects and at all times.

Our pledge

It is both a privilege and honor to serve our Lord in the church. God is the One who has called us and sustains us. I will, by God’s grace, do my best, together with the entire team of officers, to discharge the duties and responsibilities which have been placed on our shoulders. We will try to do everything, with Christ our Saviour, for the cause of God, to glorify His name. It gave me strength when I saw our brethren at the GC session, raising their hands to declare that they will support our whole team of officers and would continue remembering us in their prayers encourages us greatly.



D. Sureshkumar
GC President

Without your prayers and cooperation, it would be impossible to move forward towards the goal set before us.

As a church, our beliefs have a strong future component, and we look forward to the future with confidence as we place all our plans and proposals in the hands of God who leads His church.

The responsibility which binds us to place our name on the church roll holds us accountable to work to the maximum of our ability for God. He calls us for the undivided service and the unconditional commitment of heart, soul, mind and strength.

Our vision

Our vision of the church should be that we are God’s remnant in these last days. This Movement is a soul-seeking and Word-sharing community. We should bring to the

world the Word of God, focusing on Christ as our personal Saviour, Friend, and soon-coming Lord. We should see the Reform Movement as one united family in which the blend of all cultures and races enriches our quality of life. Our Movement is a mission instrument for God with the gospel commission, working in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. We should pledge to do what we can to make our church a loving society in which we support each other, and if needed, carry each other. We should lift up our Lord and seek to live our lives in obedience to Him. Let us arrange our lives, values and choices personally and in the church, accordingly.

Our mission

We, as a church, must remember our commission to spread the gospel, facing individuals with God’s gift of salvation. We also need to look at ourselves and make sure that the church is a place to feel at home and be a fortress of refuge—a warm and friendly society of faith. We, as a people, should cultivate the elements that unite us and should work to uphold the life-giving principles and outreaching mission, not bureaucratic structures or chains of hierarchical command.

The Gospel Commission is indeed the mission of our church. We are not involved in some sort of spectator sport nor called to be cheerleaders. This mission is the life of the church—that’s why we are here. Our mission in this Movement is an initiative which is driven by a fervent love to take the message of salvation of Jesus Christ to the entire world according to the gospel com-

mission given to us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Now, let us hold our hands firmly—let us “press together”—as we move forward to finish the journey! Reach the unreached. Share with those who have never heard.

Our challenges

The great challenges our church faces today are the rapid membership growth and opening up of the work in new, unentered territories. Accommodating the dramatic growth and expansion of the Lord’s work, as well as the organization, support and sustenance of new fields and missions, are major tasks for this administration. With twenty plus new missions joining in just the past four years or so is a real challenge for the church—in terms of providing spiritual nurture, pastoral support, ministerial leadership, administrative counsels, financial assistance, and places of worship. In addition to these, there is a need to maintain the togetherness of this wider family of faith around the world, with all its cultural diversity brought together in the unity of spiritual development. Above all, we need a spirit of clear discernment in the face of various cultural trends in modern society which challenge the principles of our faith.

The increase of our numbers and the enlargement of our facilities cannot accomplish this great mission. It calls for a total consecration and a thorough devotedness. God has no place in His work for half-hearted men and women. To those who are half-devoted, half-converted, Christ says, “I will spue thee out of my mouth.” God calls for men who are wholehearted with entire devotion—total commitment to the cause.

Our church: A living organism, not merely an organization

We are not an organization directed by managers but a living organism founded by God Himself. We are children of God; a community of faith; a family of believers; one in Christ Jesus. Our mission, our goal, is to spread the good news and

invite all who will to come into God’s family and eagerly await His return.

It is important for the church to remember that we should not exalt ourselves or feel self-sufficient in religious matters. Our church needs to communicate that truth, by words and deeds to the world. It is this world of fallen sinful people that God loves and needs the most. “The burning, consuming love of Christ for perishing souls is the life of the whole system of Christianity.”¹

The people of the world are looking to us to see what our faith is doing for our characters and lives. They are watching to see if it is having a sanctifying effect on our hearts; to see if we are becoming changed into the likeness of Christ. It is not the opposition of the world that will put us in danger, but rather any evil cherished right in our own midst that can become our greatest peril.

I appeal to you all, brethren and sisters, to consider the character and life of Christ our Saviour. He is our example. His life was marked with disinterested benevolence. Together with Peter, the apostle, I wish to emphasize, “Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous” (1 Peter 3:8). “There is no surer way of weakening ourselves in spiritual things than to be envious, suspicious of one another, full of faultfinding and evil surmising.”²

We must remember the words of Isaiah, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee” (Isaiah 60:1). The heavenly agencies are waiting to cooperate with us in the grand work of reflecting light to the world. And our Lord and Saviour said, “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).

My fellow workers in the Lord’s vineyard, we, who are holding very responsible positions at the heart of the work, should neither sleep nor

act with slackness. Satan is trying to paralyze many in order that God’s plans and devices may not be discerned. He is active to ensnare, deceive, and destroy the Lord’s work and the workers.

We all should realize that there is a great work to be done quickly. We cannot, as a people, allow things to go on in their way. We should strive to place ourselves where we can come in direct contact with those who need our help. We should not keep our light hidden under a bushel. It would be better if we do that which the Lord has distinctly indicated us to do. Let us make up our minds now that we will give up our own inclinations, our own ways, and that we will obey His voice.

Our position and responsibility

We, who are given responsibilities and occupy positions of trust in the work of God, should always bear in mind that these positions involve great responsibility as well. The right performance of the sincere work for this time depends upon our own spiritual condition. We should cultivate a great sense of our accountability.

Please do not leave any work undone which needs to be done, because it appears to your judgment to be small and insignificant. Do not permit any differences or dissensions to exist in our church. Now is the time for us to take up the duties that lie near us. We should be faithful in little things. “By the simplest means character is often tested. Those who in time of peril were intent upon supplying their own wants were not the men to be trusted in an emergency. The Lord has no place in His work for the indolent and self-indulgent.”³

We should never become self-sufficient or self-exalted. Self should not be attached to God’s work. Our destiny is determined by the spirit we attach importance to self. If self is attached, it is like the offering of strange fire in the place of the sacred and will bring upon us the displeasure of the Lord. We should make a distinction between sacred vs. com-

mon fire. We cannot regard ourselves as the final authority and express our opinions and pass resolutions about matters of which we have but limited experimental knowledge.

We must show ourselves to be His disciples, not only by our precepts but also by our practice. We should remember that if we are united to Christ, we shall be united to one another. "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another," says our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We need trained workers and ministers in every field and mission. We need missionaries. We need a work force. We need a youth force rightly trained to do the work of the Lord. Therefore, we need to make provision for a trained work force.

Our youth

"We have an army of youth today who can do much if they are properly directed and encouraged."⁴ The need of the hour is preparation of our youth for the Master's service. Keeping this vision in mind, I urge upon you all that programs should be made for the training of youth through missionary schools, seminar programs, workshops, and outreach, that they may take up the future leadership.

As we are at the brink of eternity let us work to prepare ourselves as good soldiers, along with the next generation as an "army of youth," that together we may raise the cry of Caleb, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant.

We have a great number of youth today who can do much if they are properly directed and encouraged. We want our children to believe the truth. We want them to be blessed of God. We want them to act a part in well-organized plans for helping other youth. Let all our youth be so trained that they may

rightly represent the truth, giving reason of their hope that is within them, and honoring God in any branch of work where they are qualified to labor.

Our enemy and his weapons

Are we aware of the different weapons that Satan can use to destroy us? Are there things that now threaten our very existence? We should carefully examine the things that can jeopardize any congregation of God's people as a church. While there might be more ways by which Satan may try to kill a church, these five are certainly effective: 1) Persecution, 2) False Teaching, 3) Worldliness, 4) Indifference, and 5) Lovelessness.

When persecution comes to a church, some react positively (they rejoice—Acts 5:40, 41) and the others negatively (they are silenced—John 12:42, 43). When we resist persecution, the enemy of souls will often seek to destroy us through other means such as false doctrine. False doctrine is one of the satanic influences that work in the church, and brings into it those who are unsettled (2 Timothy 4:3). A little leaven of false doctrine, under the inspiration of satanic agencies, may work much harm to those who are not rooted, grounded, and unmovable in the present truth. No one can be safe now unless riveted to the eternal Rock.

Christ warns His followers, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly they are ravening wolves (Matthew 7:15)." He exhorts us not to be deceived when false shepherds present their doctrines. There is hard work to be done in dislodging error and false doctrine from the mind, that Bible truth and Bible religion may find a place in the heart. John counsels us not to accept false doctrines (2 John 9). "Paul could not, by silence, allow himself to be driven from the field by false teachers—teachers who would introduce false sentiments and theories that might lead honest souls away from

the truth. The churches must be guarded. Christ gave Himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. His church must be kept free from all false doctrine."⁵

In the days in which we live, we hear from different corners of the world, teachings of new ideas, new theology, new doctrines, and new interpretations trying to read between the lines. We, who occupy the position of watchmen to warn the people of danger, cannot give up our watch and recline at ease. We must be faithful sentinels. We must remain active. We should see the cause and sound an alarm. We cannot take it for granted that everything is going well. We should see the necessity of raising the faithful trumpet notes of warning by the plain testimonies of God. It is active labor, toil, and unceasing vigilance are needed for this hour.

When a church stands strong against persecution and false doctrine, that is certainly a good sign; but that does not mean Satan cannot yet attack it. Many strong churches have been destroyed by one or two or more tools used by Satan. A church that is "very strong" on certain issues can still be a dead or dying church if worldliness is allowed to infect its members. Satan can use this spiritual malady to destroy churches in many parts of the world. "A half service, loving the world, loving self, loving frivolous amusements, makes a timid, cowardly servant; he follows Christ a great way off. A hearty, willing service to Jesus produces a sunny religion. . . . We need more Christ and less worldliness, more Christ and less selfishness."⁶

"God desires His people to show by their lives the advantage of Christianity over worldliness, to show that they are working on a high, holy plane."⁷

"When we voluntarily place ourselves in an atmosphere of worldliness and unbelief, we displease God, and drive holy angels from our homes."⁸

“The Lord calls upon His people to put away indolence and indifference, and to act like converted men and women.”⁹ Follow no one’s example or custom in dress or in actions, if such lead to indifference and worldliness. Do not express vanity in dress, but dress modestly, neatly; seek earnestly to be meek and lowly of heart and be obtaining a rich experience in the things of God. We cannot endorse an attitude of being cold and formal.

Symptoms and Remedy

Being or becoming cold and formal can systematically kill the church. Consider some of these symptoms and the step by step declension of spiritual conditions that would place us in great danger.

Distance from Jesus—That would lead us to disconnect from Jesus, then to lose sight of Him.

Once His love is lost, it also makes the distance from our fellowmen too far.

Then there is a looking for of defects in one another, a dwelling upon others’ mistakes, and involvement in unkind criticism. There is then a tendency to become strict in regard to outward ceremonies.

When persons fall into this trap, they become more particular about the theory of faith and become even more severe in criticisms. Then they develop a zeal to condemn others. And in their zeal to condemn others, they soon forget their own errors.

They forget the lessons of brotherly love that Christ has taught and become unconscious of their loss. They thus invite another Jesus, another spirit and another gospel into their lives. 2 Corinthians 11:4.

Our immediate need is to take these remedial steps and corrective measures:

1. Connect with Jesus and connect with one another. Abide in Christ.

2. Love God and our fellowmen. 1 John 3:23; 4:7, 11, 12. Enhance love among the brethren, as the Lord bids us (John 13:34, 35).

3. Love one another (John 15:12, 17). He that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Romans 13:10. Love one another with a pure heart fervently: 1 Peter 1:22. This is the message that we heard from the beginning. 1 John 3:11, 2 John 5.

4. Be a working and moving church.

Our evaluation

We need to examine and evaluate and ask ourselves if Satan is making any progress in destroying us. We might be free from physical persecution, and be known as a “sound” or “strong” church. But is worldliness or indifference taking its toll? To be forewarned is to be forearmed. We need to be honest with ourselves—are we vulnerable in some areas? Don’t let the great deceiver succeed in deceiving us! There is a great necessity for close self-examination in the light of God’s Word; let us raise the inquiry: “Am I sound, or am I rotten at heart? Am I renewed in Christ, or still carnal at heart, with a new dress put on the outside?”


At this time we should not let the church be diverted from the main object of vital interest, to things that will not bring health, courage, faith, or strength. We must see and by our actions testify that the gospel is aggressive. We, as watchmen on the walls of Zion, are to be vigilant, and should not sleep on our post. We cannot give an uncertain sound. Brethren, God calls upon us, both ministers and faithful members, to listen to His voice. Let the distinct message for this time be sent. It is the duty of the church to let her light shine. I have great confidence that together we can rise to the call of the hour.

“Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

My beloved brethren and sisters, I make my appeal to you: Consider what practical Christian life signifies. What does it mean to be a

Christian? It means to be Christlike. Cooperate with God by working in harmony with Him. As we have received increased light, there should be a decided change in the spirit and character of the work among us. We are to be self-denying missionaries, men and women of thought and men and women who will pray for divine enlightenment. We should be faithful and true to our responsibilities. We should sit at the feet of Jesus and learn His will. We should exercise zealous activity. We should not teach our own ideas, our own plans, our own notions, but should teach the word of the Lord. In our work, we should not try to meet a human standard, but the standard of God’s Word. If we do not do this, we are disqualifying ourselves for the work.

Our Action

Now is God’s time, and His time is our time. It is time that our youth be put to work where their capabilities will be used to the best account. It is time for us to put on the armor of light. It is time that we fight the good fight of faith, refusing to think or to talk unbelief. It is time for the world to hear the last warning message. It is time that we comprehend our duty to the world at this stage of its history. It is time that we arm ourselves for protection against the attack of the enemy. It is time that we as Christians lift up and reach a higher standard and hold fast the sound words and the good things which were committed unto us. Then we can say, “The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Psalm 126:3). Amen. 

References:

¹ *Lift Him Up*, p. 134.

² *That I May Know Him*, p. 153.

³ *Conflict and Courage*, p. 128.

⁴ *Christian Service*, p. 30.

⁵ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1083.

⁶ *The Adventist Home*, p. 431.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 520.

⁸ *Christian Education*, p. 225.

⁹ *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 398.

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A Time of Transition

BY B. MONTEIRO

Every SDA Reform Movement delegation session brings development and change, and the recent 19th session was no exception. This year, one change which occurred was that the one who has been entrusted with the GC Editorial Department since 1991, Brother A. C. Sas, announced his plans to retire at the end of 2003.

We have all been blessed by the various articles and regular series which Brother Sas has presented in *The Reformation Herald* during the past twelve years on themes such as “A Prophet Among You,” “Historic Adventism,” “The Sealing of God’s People,” and “Christ Our Righteousness.”

We will surely miss Brother Sas, and are glad to hear that although he intends to retire from weighty responsibilities, he is not retiring from work itself. By God’s grace, at 71 years of age, he still enjoys good health, and in fact, he foresees writing as one of the major ways he

*“Let us run with patience
the race that is set before us,
looking unto Jesus the author
and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:1, 2).*



intends to utilize his energies during this new phase in his life. We certainly look forward to seeing more from his active pen—articles, tracts, and books that are always timely as they strongly uplift the present truth for these last days.

With this change, we also welcome Brother D. Sureshkumar to the helm of the GC Editorial Department. Brother Sureshkumar is no stranger to the world of writing. He has extensive experience in this area and, like his predecessor, will surely bring insights gleaned from his busy travels on the frontlines as a GC president.

Our prayers go with Brother Sas as he and his wife depart for Australia to be with their children and grandchildren, and with Brother Sureshkumar as he takes on this important responsibility. “Let us seek that God shall be honored, and His name glorified in all that appears in our periodicals. Let them not be devoted to the publication of the ideas of education held by the wise men of the world. Our work is to educate those who shall carry the light of truth to men, seeking to prepare a people for the second appearing of Christ in the clouds of heaven.”¹ This is the aim and goal of the publishers of *The Reformation Herald* magazine as in all the materials produced by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. Even in a time of transition, our mottos continue to stand and remain, “To the law and to the testimony” (Isaiah 8:20) and “the age in which we live calls for reformatory action.”²

R

References:

¹ *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 117.

² *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

