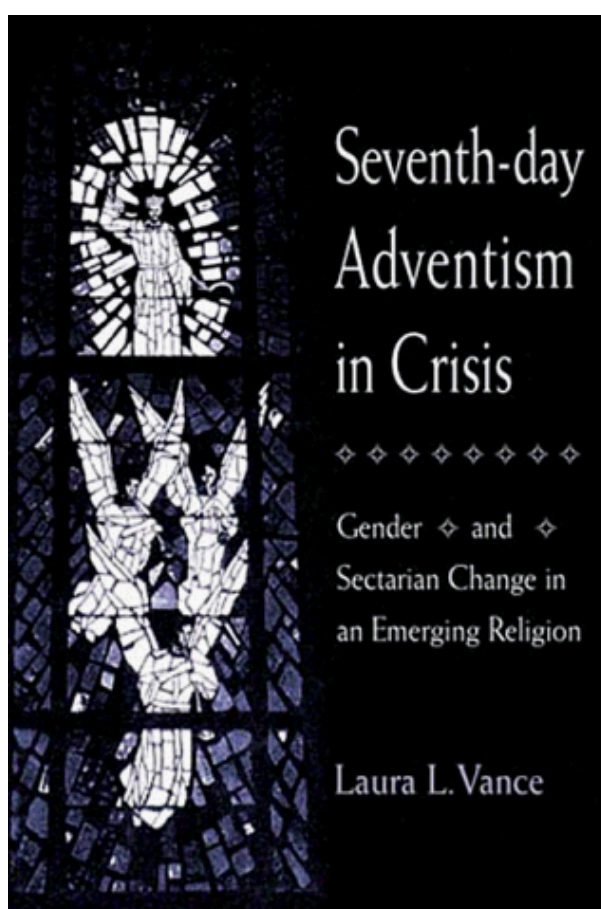
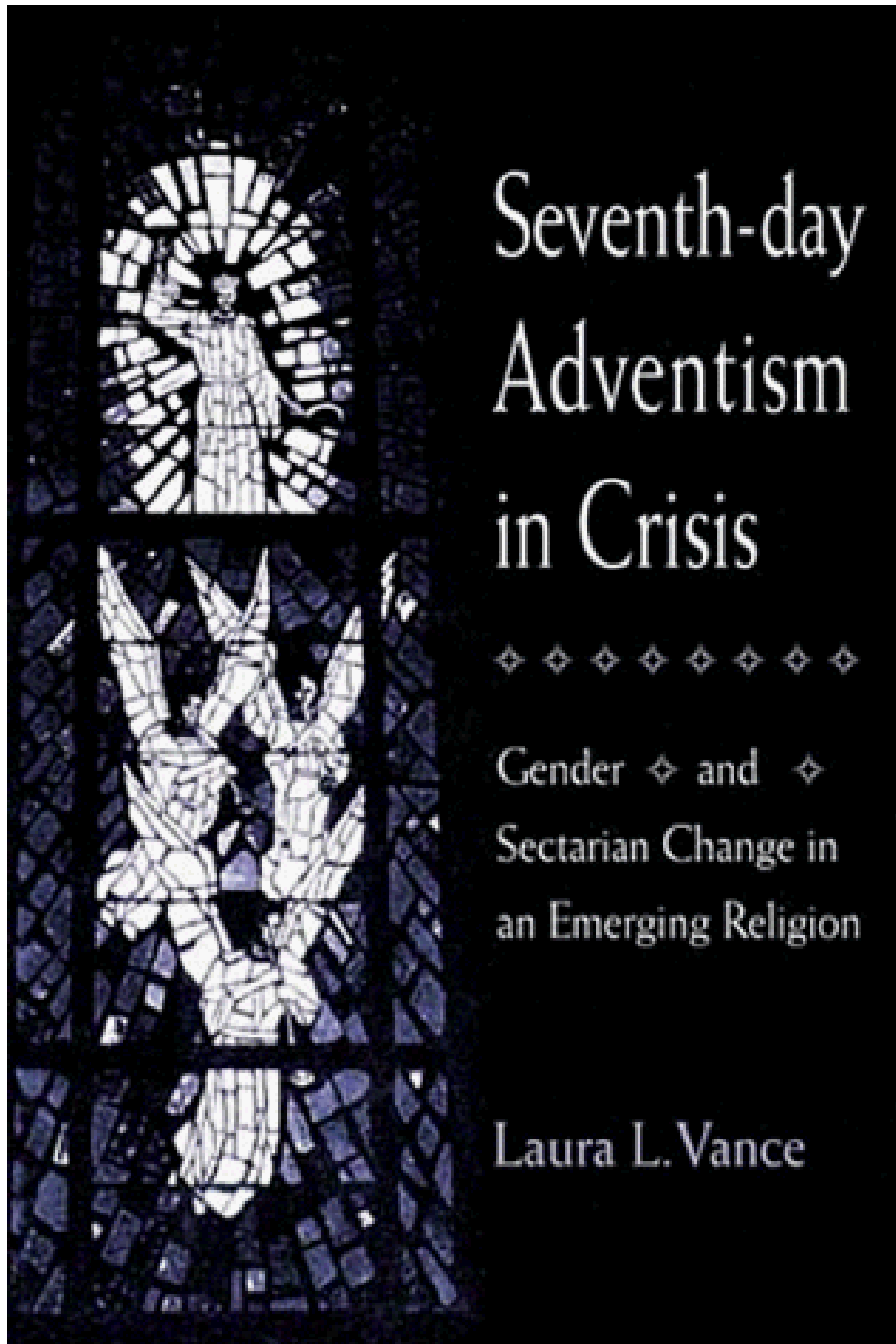


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How can a movement founded on the prophecies and visions of one woman, and reliant in its early stages on the pastoral leadership, teaching, and proselytizing of many others, come to define women's roles in ways that exclude them from active public participation and leadership in the church?

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By Green Lake

Social science Professor Laura Vance tells the amazing story how Seventh-day Adventism, which was founded by Ellen Harmon White, the most prolific woman writer and preacher of the nineteenth-century, moved in 100 years from an egalitarian social ethic to the almost total exclusion of women from its administration. Since White's death, Adventism has moved toward the mainstream of American religion, adopting the social conservatism as well as the theological positions of evangelicalism, and systematically excluding women from leadership positions. In contrast to the early Adventist pioneers, who favored various reform movements such as anti-slavery and women's health issues, American church bureaucrats have narrowed their social gaze and moved to the right in their implicit political stance. This trend, which actively favored public evangelism over social reform and suppressed women's participation in leadership, has since the late 1970's been challenged by new voices calling for the ordination of women to the gospel ministry and other leadership positions in the SDA church. In addition, the international growth of the membership of the SDA church, adding millions of members in countries where patriarchalism and traditional power structures favor men has helped keep women out of power. The answer, says Vance, is not for Adventist leaders to imagine they are fighting a battle against feminism or liberalism but to embrace once again the diversity and openness of its early history, an Edenic time when women and men sang and preached side-by-side, when the male leaders were not afraid of the visionary power of women but practiced a co-operative type of gender equality.

Vance's book comes as the fourth in a series of comprehensive non-denominational interpretations of Adventism which began in the 1980's with Ron Numbers and Jonathan Butler, "The Disappointed: Millerism and Millenarianism in the Nineteenth-Century" (Indiana University Press, 1989, Malcom Bull and Keith Lockhart's "Seeking a Sanctuary: Seventh-day Adventism and the American Dream" (Harper and Row, 1989) and Michael Pearson, Millennial Dreams and Moral Dilemmas: Seventh-day Adventists and Contemporary Ethics" (Cambridge University Press, 1990). Vance's book, written largely from the perspective of gender issues, gathers from a hundred years of the "Adventist Review" and from more recent publications such as "Spectrum".

The style of Professor Vance's book, written after extensive field research in actual Adventist congregations and at Walla Walla College, will appeal to both social scientists studying the religious phenomenon of Adventism, and to SDA members, clergy and teachers who wish to view themselves in the words of an

intelligent and sympathetic outsider. Teachers of American religious movements will find this book the best general introduction to Adventism for students who are also interested in women's issues, social science theory and religion. Highly recommended.

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