

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH:
A STUDY OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

by

RONALD E. KASTENS

REFORMATION OF THE 19TH CENTURY
DR. HENRY E. WEBB
MAY 10, 1989

This project is dedicated to
Ethel Raulston (1922-1979),
who lived her life in humble
service to God and man.

PREFACE

This project has definitely been one of the more challenging tasks I have ever undertaken. It was my goal to examine the current situation regarding the role of women in the church among the churches of the Restoration Movement. It was my intent to be as objective and unbiased as possible. Therefore, I do not endorse any particular opinion contained in this paper. While it is true that I do have an opinion on this matter, as we all do, I tried to totally remove it from this project so I could present an objective view of the roles that women are playing in the Restoration Movement.

Some of the branches of the movement were easier to examine than others. The most difficult branch to examine was the Christian Church. This was due to their independant nature. To assist me in this examination, I conducted a random phone survey. The questions of this survey can be seen in Appendix 5 and Apendix 6. I contacted forty churches across the United States from New York to Alaska. In examining the data, I used the Lotus 1, 2, 3 program. In using this program, I needed to assign a point value to each answer given by those being surveyed. The more a particular answer was seen to reflect a more "liberal" position, the higher the point value it was given. This does not mean that the best churches have the highest point totals, as in basketball or football. Nor does it mean that it is better to

have a lower point total, as in golf. I am not making value judgements based upon the point totals. I am simply using this system to help me analyze what is going on in our churches. The point values can be seen in Appendix 6.

I would like to thank all of the churches who assisted me by participating in the survey. I would also like to thank Mark Matson and Dr. Bert Allen for their suggestions and comments regarding the survey. Mike Smith assisted me in analyzing the data with the Lotus 1, 2, 3 program. My thanks goes out to him. I also need to express my thanks to Tom Barkes for coming to my rescue when I had problems with my computer software. I also need to thank my wonderful wife for her typing and proofreading assistance. This paper could not have been written without the assistance of all these people and I am eternally grateful for them.

Ronald E. Kastens

Milligan College, TN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	ii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction	1
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)	3
Church of Christ (Non-Instrumental)	9
Christian Church (Independent)	14
Conclusion	31
Appendix 1	32
Appendix 2	33
Appendix 3	34
Appendix 4	35
Appendix 5	36
Appendix 6	37
Bibliography	38

INTRODUCTION

The issue of women's role in the church has risen to recent prominence in all of Christendom. Some denominations have discussed and settled this issue in the past. Others did not see the need to deal with it. It is now an issue that all denominations will have to face. Whether the denomination favors the liberal position or the conservative position, it is faced with the dilemma of deciding where they stand. I use the term dilemma because of the extreme polarizing and divisive nature of this issue. The liberal camps view this issue and decide to move toward more involvement and greater equality of women in the life of the church. The conservative parties view this issue and hold fast to the conviction that women are to be silent and submissive. This issue can not be ignored. Both sides, and those in between, must face the issue and make their decision.

Why has the question of women's role in the church become such a prominent issue? The answer to this question could be a paper in itself but I will suggest two basic, and certainly not all inclusive, reasons. The first reason is the emergence and continued importance of higher criticism. Higher criticism has led many scholars to question traditional interpretation of scripture. This has led many of them away from a literalistic approach to the Bible and toward an interpretative view of the Bible. The second reason is the increase of women's activity and involvement in society. In society, women are finding themselves in the same positions, with the same education, and with the same

desires as men. Then they turn to the church and wonder why the same thing is not happening there. Not only are they wondering, they are asking. Because they are asking, denominations are faced with providing the answers.

The branches of the Restoration Movement are not exempt from these questions. They must face the issue of women's role in the church as well. The non-instrumental Churches of Christ have answered the questions. Because of their answers they must now continue to face the issue for some time to come. The Christian Churches are currently wrestling with the questions and probably will be on into the future. The Disciples of Christ seem to have settled the issue among themselves, but they still face problems in the future. This issue is currently being discussed in the Restoration Movement and probably will be on into the future. The purpose of this paper is to examine women's role in the churches of the Restoration Movement as we approach the 1990's.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST)

The Disciples of Christ are probably the most discernable branch of the Restoration Movement in regard to policies of the church. This is due to their highly organized structure. The Disciples have a governing body, called the General Assembly, that decides upon the policies by which the churches are encouraged to operate. In trying to find out the position of the Disciples of Christ on women's role in the church, we must examine the actions of this General Assembly.

The Disciples of Christ are open to women filling an ordained, remunerated position. The Disciples feel that the ministry of Jesus Christ is evidence supporting the position that the church should not be prejudiced against women (Sanders, 155). The fact that the apostle Paul worked with several women during his ministry also gives support to the Disciples' position (Sanders, 155). It is interesting, however, that the report of the General Assembly does not mention anything about the famous "women's passages" contained in Paul's epistles. The Disciples also hold to the fact that since their inception "the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has ordained women to the ministry as missionaries, parish ministers, and to the general ministry of the church ..." (Sanders, 155). The Disciples of Christ feel that "women in the ministry are needed to provide a balance in the appeal and effectiveness of the Gospel..." (Sanders, 155). A good summary of the Disciples' position on paid women in the ministry can be seen in the statement:

. . . that the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Cincinnati, Ohio, October 26 - 31, 1973, affirm the appropriateness of women serving as pastors of churches and in all other staff positions within the institutional churches (Sanders, 157).

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is also open to the full involvement of non-professional women in the life of the church. The Disciples firmly hold that "the clear implications of the Biblical teachings of justice and love are that men and women should be treated equally" (Sanders, 161). Based on that statement, it is not surprising that the General Assembly meeting in 1985 said that, "the New Testament affirms the value of the women serving in leadership within the church" (Cox, 256). The Disciples encourage women to pursue the offices of both elder and deacon. Although the 1973 meeting of the General Assembly concerned itself more with women in the office of deacon than with women in the office of elder, one cannot help but to understand that the Disciples are open to both. That assembly made a declaration to "reaffirm a single order of the diaconate which is representative of both men and women . . . in which all tasks are shared equally by both men and women" (Sanders, 162). It is not difficult to see that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is open to women's involvement in all areas of church life.

The convictions of the leadership, however, do not always match up with the convictions of the followers. This is the problem that is facing the Disciples of Christ. The leaders of

the Disciples of Christ are advocates of women's involvement in the life of the church, but it seems they are having a hard time convincing the churches. At the 1973 meeting of the General Assembly the admittance was made that "women ministers in the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ), have not and do not receive equal treatment with men in recruitment, professional education, parish placement and in general and educational ministry, and in salary provisions" (Sanders, 155). The General Assembly also realized that "there is little evidence to indicate that pulpit committees and their regional advisors have given high priorities to calling women or to aiding in the placement of women" (Sanders, 157). The General Assembly had plenty of evidence to back up its claims. The following statements were made by the General Assembly:

1. Only four per cent of professional church workers listed in the 1973 Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are women.
 2. Less than nine per cent of the persons enrolled in Seminary are women.
 3. Only one region is regarded as having a woman executive minister.
 4. Only one department in the division of homeland ministries has a woman executive (that being the department of church women).
 5. The division of overseas ministries has no women who are executives of departments.
 6. No division of The Church at a general level has a woman as its executive.
- (Sanders, 162).

Also, according to General Assembly, too few congregations were electing women elders (Sanders, 162). Many churches who had elected women deacons were continuing "separate boards of deacons and deaconesses" (Sanders, 162).

Therefore, the Disciple leadership aspired to convince the churches to follow their suggestions. The main focus of the rulings of the General Assembly was not to defend their position, but to persuade churches to go along with their position. The following are statements made by the General Assembly to encourage churches to put their decisions into practice:

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly call on our Educational Institutions, General Ministers, Regional Ministers, Pulpit Committees and members of local congregations to give equal consideration to women as pastors in the "filling of pulpits", the staffing of general, education, and regional offices, and in making other ministerial appointments throughout the church (Sanders, 156).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Assembly call upon all units of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to practice equity in the appointment of women ministers to govern boards, committees, commissions, and to the offices of regional and General Assemblies of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) (Sanders, 156).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the General Assembly recommend that congregations affirm the right of both men and women to serve in equal ways (Sanders, 162).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that until such time as executive level positions reflect a more equal employment of women, those persons responsible for the calling of executive level persons to fill vacancies in regional and general staffs be urged to call men to fill such positions only when competent women cannot be found (Sanders, 162).

These are but a few evidences of the frustration of the Disciple leadership as they sought to increase the acceptance of women's involvement in all areas of service within the church.

In 1985, the General Assembly gathered in Des Moines, Iowa. One of the resolutions discussed had to do with the involvement of women in the life of the church. This discussion noted that although some progress had been made regarding women's role in the church, more needed to be done in the advancement of equality. The resolution stated that "there has been a slight increase in the representation of women in executive positions of the regional and general manifestations of the church" (Cox, 255). The General Assembly then mentioned that "In 1973 one woman was the chief administrative officer of a region and in 1985 one woman is serving as a regional co-minister" (Cox, 255). The Disciple leadership also saw minor growth in the fact:

Between 1973 and 1985 two women have been added to the executive staff of the Division of Homeland Ministries and three women have been added to the executive staff of the Division of Overseas Ministries for a total of three in each (Cox, 255).

The General Assembly also noted the percentage increase of clergywomen and women seminarians:

WHEREAS, professional church women listed in the Yearbook of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), have increased from 4% to 12% over the past 12 years and women seminarians have increased from 9% to approximately 37% in the past 12 years (Cox, 255).

A significant increase is seen in the percentage of women seminarians. If, however, the Disciple leadership does not do a better job in convincing the churches to support their position, these women seminarians will have a hard time finding a place to minister.

The important thing to notice from this resolution is that

although some progress has been made, the Disciple leadership is not satisfied with the current situation. They are continuing to encourage churches to be more open to the involvement of women in the service of the church:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Assembly . . . commends the general units, regions and congregations for their openness to the professional leadership of clergy and lay women and for the increased participation of women in their boards (Cox, 255).

But, the General Assembly continued by stating:

that in the spirit and intent of Resolution 7342 the Assembly encourages all manifestations of the church to practice inclusive leadership as they call to service and employment clergywomen and laywomen (Cox, 255).

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) faces an interesting division of doctrine and practice. The leadership is open and willing for women to assume all types of leadership positions within the church. The churches, on the other hand, appear to be reluctant in totally putting the position of the leadership into practice. This should make for an interesting future for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

CHURCH OF CHRIST (NON-INSTRUMENTAL)

Whereas the Disciples of Christ are on the left side of the theological spectrum, the Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental) are on the right side. Since their official separation in 1909, the Churches of Christ have upheld traditionally conservative positions. The role of women in the church is no exception.

Due to the recent interest in the role of women in the church, however, they are being forced to re-evaluate their position. The Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, Tennessee, used the 1977 W. B. West Lectures for the Advancement of Christian Scholarship to examine the role of women in the church. The Gospel Advocate has featured many articles recently on the role of women in the church. In one of these articles, Joyce Hardin noted that as society is changing, the church must re-examine its position regarding the role of women (13). I recently received a letter and an advertisement from Steve Sandifer. Mr. Sandifer was encouraging Christian book dealers to order copies of his new book entitled Deacons: Male and Female?. Mr. Sandifer also mentioned that the content of his new book will be the topic of a lectureship at Pepperdine University. I did not have time to secure a copy of this work, but the mere fact that more is being said and written about this topic shows the continued increase of interest in this subject. Doyle Kee summarized the current situation of the Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental) on the subject of the role of women when he wrote, "The brotherhood, however, is feeling pressure for such

involvement" (16).

Up to this point, the Churches of Christ remain conservative in their stand regarding women's roles within the church. Mr. Kee wrote, "This movement to use women in public assembly leadership roles is not yet characteristic among Non-Instrumental Churches of Christ" (16). These leadership positions are seen to belong only to males. Mr. Kee also wrote that "The Biblical models in God's leadership plan for the Body were males" (17). David Tarbet agreed when he wrote, "Leadership in the public worship is the role of the male. This is explicitly and implicitly taught in the New Testament by direct command from the Lord . . ." (53). According to this view, women are to be silent in the churches and they are not to have authority over a man. They should be submissive. Joyce Hardin stated that "In circumstances involving public worship, men are to have the authority and women are to keep silent" (14). Recently there has been a movement within the Churches of Christ to allow women to serve communion. It is felt that they can pass out the emblems and still keep their silence. Mr. Tarbet is opposed to this practice primarily due to the "slippery slope" argument (54).

If women's roles in the churches are so restricted, what can women do? F. Furman Kearley suggests that women do not need to be ordained because they have already been ordained by God (18). He reminds the readers that the Biblical view of ordination is to appoint or command (Kearley, 18). Therefore he concludes that women have been ordained both generally and specifically. He

feels that women have been ordained by God to live their lives as Christians. This type of ordination is common to all Christians.

This involves:

. . . They are to believe in God and Christ, to repent of sins, to confess faith, to be buried in baptism to rise to walk in a new life, to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world, to minister to the needy, to seek and save the lost, and all of the rest of the things that every person is expected of God to do in general obedience to His commands (Kearley, 18).

This should give women so much to do that they will not have the desire to assume leadership positions. Mr. Kearley writes, "Having been so ordained, women have so much to do that they need not worry about attaining to specific positions of power and prestige" (18).

Mr. Kearley also believes that women have been specifically ordained. He refers to some specific tasks which only women can do. First, he says that a woman "is ordained to be a faithful, helpful, submissive wife to her husband" (Kearley, 19). Woman is also ordained for procreation. Mr. Kearley continues, "Woman is uniquely designed and ordained to bear children" (19). The woman's task is not finished simply with childbearing, however. He also states that "Women are ordained to be mothers in the total sense of the word from childbearing to child rearing" (Kearley, 19). Mr. Kearley places extreme importance on the role of the mother "to train children in the right ways of the Lord" (19). Another interesting quote from Mr. Kearley needs to be noted

here, "When a woman has mastered her ordination as a mother and grandmother, she then can be concerned about ordination to positions of authority in the public world" (19). According to Mr. Kearley, women should find this ordination a "rewarding challenge without seeking to be ordained to the 'clergy'" (19).

Joyce Hardin offers many suggestions as to what women can do in the life of the church. Women need to study (Hardin, 15). Ms. Hardin mentions that more women need to involve themselves in an in-depth study of the Bible. She also notes that women can be involved in a ministry system where, "The emphasis is on service rather than an office" (Hardin, 15). Ms. Hardin also states that "Women need to be encouraged to develop themselves as writers, speakers, and musicians" (15). This, of course, would have to be in accordance with Biblical precedent. Ms. Hardin also encourages women to "teach younger women; evangelize; pray; get involved in the community; recognize visitors; be hospitable; peer counseling; giving; and worship" (15). Ms. Hardin wants all women to develop themselves to the fullest, within the limits set by God.

This is currently the position of the Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental). There are many members of the Churches of Christ who hold to this tradition. The February issue of the Gospel Advocate contained a few letters containing subscribers' comments regarding the December 1988 issue which dealt with women's role in the church. Elizabeth Barker wrote, "Thank you for printing the article by Joyce Hardin about 'Women's Role in

the Church'. It is scriptural, timely and long overdue" (Barker, 6). A letter written by Dan Williams needs to be printed in full:

To the Editor: My thanks for the three timely, balanced and biblical articles about "Women's Role in the Church" in the December 1988 Gospel Advocate. This is indeed an area that needs to be re-examined from a scriptural perspective, and if we continue to ignore it, we will be unprepared to counter the increasingly unbiblical perspectives so common in the religious world. Articles like this make me glad I renewed my subscription (Williams, 6).

Although most members of the Church of Christ (Non-Instrumental) hold to this conservative view, there are a few others who would like to see greater liberality in the roles that women are allowed to play in the life of the congregation. This issue is far from being solved among the Churches of Christ (Non-Instrumental).

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (INDEPENDENT)

The issue of the role of women in the church was placed on the program of the 1988 Open Forum at the Chapel Rock Christian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. Four men each discussed one passage dealing with the role of women in the church. Two of the men, Tom Thurman and Ronald Fisher, supported views that are seen as conservative. The other two men, Joe Webb and David Root, supported views that are seen as liberal. That situation gives a brief overview of the issue of the role of women in the church, according to the Christian Church. First, the issue was seen as important enough to be included on the program. The Forum organizers realized that this issue is one that is receiving a great deal of attention within (and without) the Christian Church. Second, the opinions of the four men were from both ends of the theological spectrum. Many different churches take many different stands on this issue. It seems to me that the Christian Churches are more loosely connected than either the Disciples of Christ, who are connected organizationally, or the Churches of Christ, who are connected ideologically. Therefore, one should expect a plethora of opinions on the issue of the role of women in the church. Sam E. Stone, editor of the Christian Standard, beautifully showed the interest level of the Christian Church on the issue of the role of women in the church when he wrote:

Few topics evoke as much immediate interest as the role of a Christian woman. This issue has been addressed often within our journal in the past, and undoubtedly will be in the future (3)!

At this point it is necessary to examine some of the recent contributions to this subject by different members of the Christian Church. It is hoped that such an examination will provide a glimpse of some of the opinions regarding this issue. In the October 11, 1987 issue of the Christian Standard, Terri Turner wrote an article entitled "The Unanswered Question." In this article Ms. Turner briefly examined the history of the role of women within the Christian Churches. She found some very interesting things. She wrote, "Records throughout the Christian Standard show that women have held major leadership roles in the church for more than a century" (Turner, 11). Ms. Turner's article showed that although there were some people who were against the involvement of women in the leadership of the church, there were others who were proponents of the idea. Ms. Turner also stated that:

The earlier issues often praised women who were teachers and leaders in the church. More recent issues of Christian Standard, however, show that women have a more difficult time receiving acceptance as church leaders (Turner, 12).

This seems to show a shift in opinion within the Christian Churches over the years.

Also in the October 11, 1987 issue of the Christian Standard was an article written by Deborah Sue Brunsman. Her article was entitled, "Restoration: Recapturing New Testament Ministries for Women and Men." Ms. Brunsman began her article by encouraging a restoration of the Biblical concept of leadership. She placed servanthood at the core of this concept. Ms. Brunsman wrote,

"In the New Testament, Biblical headship in leadership was relational, focusing on serving . . . not to manage, much less manipulate, the church" (1). Ms. Brunsman also saw the need to restore a Biblical concept of relationships. Before she began this section she warned of the danger in basing one's position upon things other than the Bible. She wrote:

Unfortunately, many in the church are approaching the topic of relationships and women's roles in the kingdom by making theology fit our modern life-styles, by bending the Scriptures to the world spirit of our age, and by conforming ministry practice to the culture (Brunsman, 4).

When one bases his or her position on the Bible, according to Ms. Brunsman, one should come to the conclusion that males are to be in the leadership position. If we desire to get back to the Biblical concept of relationships, we must come to "the realization that God's design is for male leadership and headship within the home and within the church" (Brunsman, 4).

Ms. Brunsman also stressed the need for a proper understanding of the "be silent" passages found in I Timothy and I Corinthians. According to Ms. Brunsman, it does not mean that women are not allowed to speak. Rather,

Paul's caution to women to "be silent" . . . refers more appropriately to a disposition and spirit which does not create disturbances and which manifests itself in calm, nondisruptive conduct (Brunsman, 5).

Another term which needs to be Biblically defined is the word "submission." Defined by Ms. Brunsman,

submission is a voluntary act of the will which surrenders self-interest, yields personal rights, and gives deference to others and to God-given

leadership for the sake of God (5).

Once submission is understood and everyone realizes that we are supposed to submit to one another, there will no longer be any reason for one person to dominate another. When this happens in the church, "a powerful model of unity is presented to a world in chaos" (Brunsman, 5).

Ms. Brunsman then turned her attention to discussing what women could do in the life of the church. Women are not to be elders because this is the responsibility of the males (Brunsman, 6). Ms. Brunsman began this section in this way because it is, "Within the context of a . . . Biblical male eldership . . . women should be free to exercise . . . their gifts and abilities" (6). Other than the office of elder, Ms. Brunsman is quite open to women filling many positions within the life of the church. Some of the roles mentioned by Ms. Brunsman were:

Women disciplined other women; women taught women and men; women prayed and prophesied in the assembly; women . . . ministered to the physical needs of others, both in individual acts of charity and as recognized deacons or servants of the church; women . . . nurtured children; bore witness of the gospel; participated in the founding of new churches; faithfully labored in the church's work (6).

Reviewing these roles, it seems that there are not very many things that Ms. Brunsman would withhold from female involvement. For Ms. Brunsman, these guidelines are set forth in Scripture and should be followed by a church who is seeking to restore New Testament Christianity.

Another interesting article published in the Christian Standard recently was "Woman - Where's She Going Today?" by Lewis Foster. Dr. Foster began his two part article by showing that the issue of the role of women in church is a very important one. He then asks a series of questions that he promises to answer at the end of his article. The bulk of Dr. Foster's first section deals with being careful about the way we set out to answer these questions. One needs to be aware of "distorted pictures of ancient culture" (Foster, 9). Dr. Foster also warns against "eisogesis." He writes, "Beware of interpreting Scripture in such a way to fit your own theory rather than to fit the context" (Foster, 10). One also should make sure that he is measuring this issue by the standard of the Bible rather than one's own culture (Foster, 11).

In the second part of his article Dr. Foster noted that one must use the Bible as a guide to answer the questions relating to the role of women. Dr. Foster then relied upon several passages of Scripture to pave the way to the answers he was seeking. Regarding Genesis 1:26-31; 2:18-25; and 3:1-24 Dr. Foster mentioned that, "Nothing is said about the superiority or inferiority of either [Adam or Eve], but in the job description, Eve was the helper" (9). It can also be seen that in Genesis 3:16 God told Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you." Dr. Foster then chose Matthew 19:3-12; Luke 8:2, 3; and 10:42 to examine the role of women from the teachings of Jesus. Dr. Foster did not say very much in this section.

Luke 8:2, 3 mentions the women who travel with Jesus. Commenting on this text Dr. Foster writes, "From this, we can conclude that the cultural status of women was not so low but that such independence was enjoyed to allow this" (9).

Dr. Foster then turns his attention to four Pauline passages, notably Galatians 3:28; I Corinthians 11:13-16; 14:33-35; and I Timothy 2:9-15. Regarding Galatians 3:28, Dr. Foster writes that, "this does not mean He [God] has done away with man as man and woman as woman. He wanted to break down the barriers between them, but this did not make them identical" (10). In dealing with the Corinthian passages, Dr. Foster mentions that Paul was calling for order in the life of the church. By coming to the assembly improperly dressed and by speaking out of turn in a disagreeable fashion, the Corinthian women were neglecting the orderliness of both their families and the church (Foster, 10). In commenting on I Timothy 2:9-15, Dr. Foster lists "the qualities of the Christian woman. Quietness and full submission lead the way and a prohibition against teaching when it assumes authority that is not rightfully hers" (11). Dr. Foster also notes that Peter repeats many of Paul's teaching on the Christian woman (11).

Dr. Foster then discussed the matter of expediency and command. He noted that there are things in the Christian faith that are commanded and there are things that are left up to individual opinion. It is Dr. Foster's opinion that the role of women is a matter of expedience (11). He cautioned, however,

that Christianity is not totally left up to the individual. Dr. Foster states that there is

a type of boundary laid down by one's own culture or one's own congregation or where one lives or works. Decisions along this line are not binding as a part of God's universal plan, but it is a matter of expedience in performing a way that the most can be accomplished for the Lord under the circumstances. This is the confining factor upon all Christians, men or women, and will vary in application with the locale of the congregation (12).

With this understanding in place, Dr. Foster proceeded to answer the questions that he posed at the beginning of his article. It is acceptable for a woman to teach men, as long as she does so under the authority of the elders. It is also permissible for a woman to be a deaconess, but Dr. Foster points out that "there is no evidence earlier than the 'Didascalia' (third century) that there was such an office in the early church" (12). A woman is not to hold the position of either an elder or an evangelist or preacher. In regards to the evangelist or preacher, Dr. Foster commented that women should "not [be] in the position of authority which went with the office; but the right to speak was not diminished as long as it was in order and with the authority of the leadership" (12). A woman could also be ordained if the church saw it to be necessary, but "Ordination is neither commanded nor forbidden" (Foster, 12). Except for the positions of the eldership and the preacher, Dr. Foster is quite open to women serving in any capacity within the church as long as they do so under the authority of the church leadership.

Another significant work that needs to be examined is S. Scott Bartchy's essay in Essays on New Testament Christianity. Published in 1978, Dr. Bartchy's essay is entitled "Power, Submission, and Sexual Identity Among the Early Christians." Dr. Bartchy begins his essay by stating that we must realize the tremendous influence that our culture has had on us. Not that this is simply pressure from our peers to accept a certain value structure, but it is the signals that we have been receiving from our years as infants. Dr. Bartchy writes:

This is not just the current controversy and confusion associated with the "women's liberation movement"; it is more especially the ideas and actions we have learned and seen as little children. These have shaped our feelings about which activities, ambitions, and attitudes are appropriate for males and which are appropriate for females (52).

One must be careful, therefore, and approach this topic with as much objectivity as possible, realizing our cultural presuppositions. Dr. Bartchy also believes that the characteristics and attributes of males are looked upon more highly than those of the females. He writes, "that which is perceived to be masculine is usually valued more highly and rewarded more obviously than that which is feminine" (Bartchy, 54). One must realize culture's affect on this issue and be ready to stand against this culture as Jesus stood against his culture (Bartchy, 54-55). As we have seen, many people use the argument of Adam and Eve, and Genesis 3:16 for proof that the man should be dominant over the woman. Commenting on this, Dr. Bartchy writes:

If the words of Genesis 3:16 should be used to describe the results of both the male and the female having disobeyed God, then the question still remains: How much of this estrangement and of this permission for males to rule is overcome by the words, deeds, and sacrifice of Jesus and by God's confirmation of all this through Jesus' resurrection (56)?

Jesus is truly a transformer of culture and because of him all of our "norms" should be called into question.

Dr. Bartchy then turns his attention to examining various passages of Scripture that deal with the topic of women. He breaks these passages into three categories: Normative Texts, Descriptive Texts, and Problematic Texts. Dr. Bartchy describes the Normative Texts as "those which declare 'the way things are to be' in the New Covenant without reference to any particular problem or misunderstanding within the Christian community" (57). Those passages Dr. Bartchy placed in this category are Acts 2:17, 18; Galatians 3:28; I Corinthians 7:4, 5; I Corinthians 7:7; and I Corinthians 11:11, 12. Dr. Bartchy defines the Descriptive Texts as "those which report the activities of Christian women, without making any comment for or against these activities" (57). The passages that fall in this category are Matthew 28:9, 10; Mark 16:7, 9-11; Luke 24:10, 11; John 20:14-18; I Corinthians 11:4, 5; Acts 21:8, 9; Philippians 4:2, 3; Romans 16:1, 2; and Romans 16:3, 4. Problematic Texts are defined by Dr. Bartchy as "those dealing with special problems within the Christian communities, which were caused by the misunderstanding among the Christian women of the nature and limits of freedom in Christ"

(57). The passages that merited this category are I Corinthians 14:34, 35 and I Timothy 2:11-15.

We can gain a great deal of understanding, in regards to Dr. Bartchy's position on the role of women in the church by noticing which passages he places in which categories. There are specific passages which he sees to be the norm in any and every situation where the people are under the New Covenant established by Jesus Christ. These passages show that males and females are equal. Each person has their own individual gifts and these should be used in harmony with each other. Christians should mutually respect each other because Jesus died for each of them. Other passages are seen as descriptive because they simply state what was going on, with no attempt to commend or condemn what was going on. As Dr. Bartchy writes, "Such activities had clearly become sufficiently common that no special comment was needed in these contexts" (62). These passages deal with the fact that women proclaimed good news and prophesied. Women served as co-workers with Paul. Phoebe served as a deacon or minister, however one chooses to translate diakonos. These passages show that women had prominent roles and that these roles were accepted by the early Christian communities. The Problematic Texts addressed a specific problem, at a specific time, at a specific place. In these passages women were asked to be silent, not to teach, to be submissive, and not to have authority over men. According to Dr. Bartchy's Problematic Text theory, Paul did not place these restrictions on them simply because they were women.

Paul placed these restrictions upon them because they were being un-orderly in this new found freedom in Christ. They were overstepping the limits for all Christians. These texts, therefore, would not apply to women in the church today unless they too were over stepping these limits.

Dr. Bartchy sees the problem of the role of women in the church primarily due to culture, both the culture of the first century, and our own culture today. He sees the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as the transforming agent that can establish human relationships as they are supposed to be. He goes on to show, by way of his textual categories, what the freedoms and limitations of women should be. Scott Bartchy is representative of those in the Christian Churches who are totally open to women filling all roles within the life of the church.

Another article that will prove to be important in stirring the waters of debate is "Where Is the Command to Silence?" This article, written by Joseph M. Webb, will be published in the May 21, 1989 issue of the Christian Standard. It is a two part article which will conclude in the May 28 issue. I was not able to get a copy of the second part of the article, but there are some interesting points in the first article that need our attention. Dr. Webb's article focuses on I Timothy 2:11-15. He centers his argument on the Greek terms located within this controversial passage. The first term he mentions is the term hasukia, which in many versions of the Bible is translated "silence". Dr. Webb argues that the term does not mean

"silence", but that it means "peaceably". Dr. Webb writes, "The term means 'peaceable,' a state of quietness and restfulness" (4). That being the case, "There is no command here to silence" (Webb, 4).

The second word that Dr. Webb discusses is didaskein, the infinitive form of didasko. He feels that didasko emphasizes the content of what is being taught. Dr. Webb wonders why Paul did not use a word which specifically referred to teaching. Such a word is didascalía. Dr. Webb writes, "didascalía refers specifically to the 'call of teaching,' or to the act or the process of teaching in general" (5). Paul, therefore, seems to be more concerned with what the women teach, than with the fact that they are teaching.

Dr. Webb feels that women are to be peaceful in nature, not necessarily silent. He also feels that women should not be barred from teaching, but, like all Christians, they should be careful of what they teach. According to the editor of the Christian Standard, his interpretation of this passage seems to quite revolutionary within the Christian Church. In his editorial, Sam Stone mentions that, "Brother Webb suggests an interpretation of I Timothy 2:11-15 that differs from what most of us have believed" (3). The issue of expediency is brought up again, however, as Mr. Stone states that, "While we are not yet convinced that his [Dr. Webb] interpretation is the best one, we nevertheless feel that his viewpoint deserves a fair hearing" (3).

It is quite evident, after an examination of these articles, that there are many opinions as to just what the role of women in the church should be. This is exactly the situation in which the Christian Churches find themselves. Since each congregation is totally independent, one can find many opinions spread throughout the denomination. These articles, however, have shown us only theoretical ideas of some authors. We are still left wondering what is happening in the Christian Churches regarding the role of women in the church. What is going on?

To answer these questions I conducted a random phone survey. (Mechanics of this survey can be seen in the Preface.) I spoke with representatives from forty Christian Churches across the country, from New York to California, to Alaska. I asked each of them the same questions regarding the role of women in the church (the questions can be seen in Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). The following is what I found out.

Twelve out of the forty churches contacted (30%) have women on their paid staff. Only two out of the twelve, however, are called "minister". The other ten churches call their women staff persons "director". None of the churches have a woman serving as an elder. One of the churches, however, is currently studying the possibility of this. Two out of the forty churches (5%) have women serving as deacons. Five of the forty churches (12.5%) have women serving as deaconesses. Twenty per cent of the churches surveyed (8 out of 40) said that they had a policy that saw women in the positions of elder or deacon to be unscriptural.

All forty of the churches have women teaching Sunday School. Also, all forty churches have women teaching in the children's department. Thirty-three of the churches (82.5%) have women teaching in the youth department. Only five of the forty churches (12.5%) had women teaching a "women only" class. Thirteen of the forty churches (32.5%) have women teaching mixed adult classes. Thirty-seven of the forty churches (92.5%) have ladies circles or ladies fellowship groups. As might be expected, there is a tremendous amount of variety regarding the names of these groups. Only two out of the forty churches had policies as to what roles, in general, women were allowed to fill within the life of the congregation. I feel two lessons can be learned from all this information. First, there is no set doctrine on the role of women in the church. The second is a continuation of the first. There are many different viewpoints regarding what roles are permissible for women in the life of the church.

Using this survey we can also examine the sociological side of this issue within the Christian Churches. We can examine the Church Information questions, found in Appendix 5, to see if the above statistics are the result of some sociological phenomenon. In examining the size of the congregation (Sunday morning worship attendance) we can see that the point total generally decreases as the size decreases. I say generally because, as one can see in Appendix One, this is not always the case. Therefore, in general, the larger the congregation, the more open they are to

the involvement of women in the life of the church. The above observation is definitely not a hard, fast rule, but is a very general observation. In examining the location factor we can also learn some very interesting things. The urban churches average a higher point total than the suburban churches and the suburban churches average a higher point total than the rural churches. This can be seen in Appendix Two. We must be very careful in assessing this information, however, because of two reasons: One, the point total does not even drop five points between the urban churches and the rural churches; and two, most of the samples fell within the suburban range so there are not that many samples in the extreme categories. Realizing this, we can say that the general trend is for the point total to drop as you move from urban to suburban to rural. Therefore, the urban churches tend to be more open to the involvement of women than the suburban churches, who tend to be more open than the rural churches.

There are three categories in the section of Educational Background. The first category is "Attended High School With Some High School Graduates". None of the church representatives placed their congregation in this category. The second category is "Most High School Graduates With Some College Graduates". There are twenty-five churches that chose this category. The last category is "Most College Graduates With Some Graduate School". Fifteen church representatives placed their congregations in this category. Those churches in this last

category tended to have higher point totals than the second grouping. Therefore, the more educated churches tend to be a little more open to the involvement of women. I use the term "little" because one can notice by examining Appendix Three that the point total drops only a little over two points.

The last sociological examination deals with average family income. This can be seen in Appendix Four. It seems at first glance that those with the greater average income have a higher point total. We must understand, however, that the extremes on both ends have a very small sampling in their groups. When one looks at where the majority of the samples are, one can see that there is not very much difference in their point totals. We can see from this that the majority of the samples fall in the middle class range. This backs up the belief that the Christian Church is primarily a middle class denomination.

These sociological examinations do not furnish enough convincing evidence to make any dogmatic conclusions about the sociological factors involved in the issue of the role of women in the church. Only general trends can be noted and one should not rely too heavily upon these. In general we can say that the larger the attendance, the more urban the church, the more educated the members, the higher the income, then the more open the church is to the involvement of women in the life of the congregation.

The Christian Church faces an interesting future. Regarding the issue of the role of women in the church, it finds itself

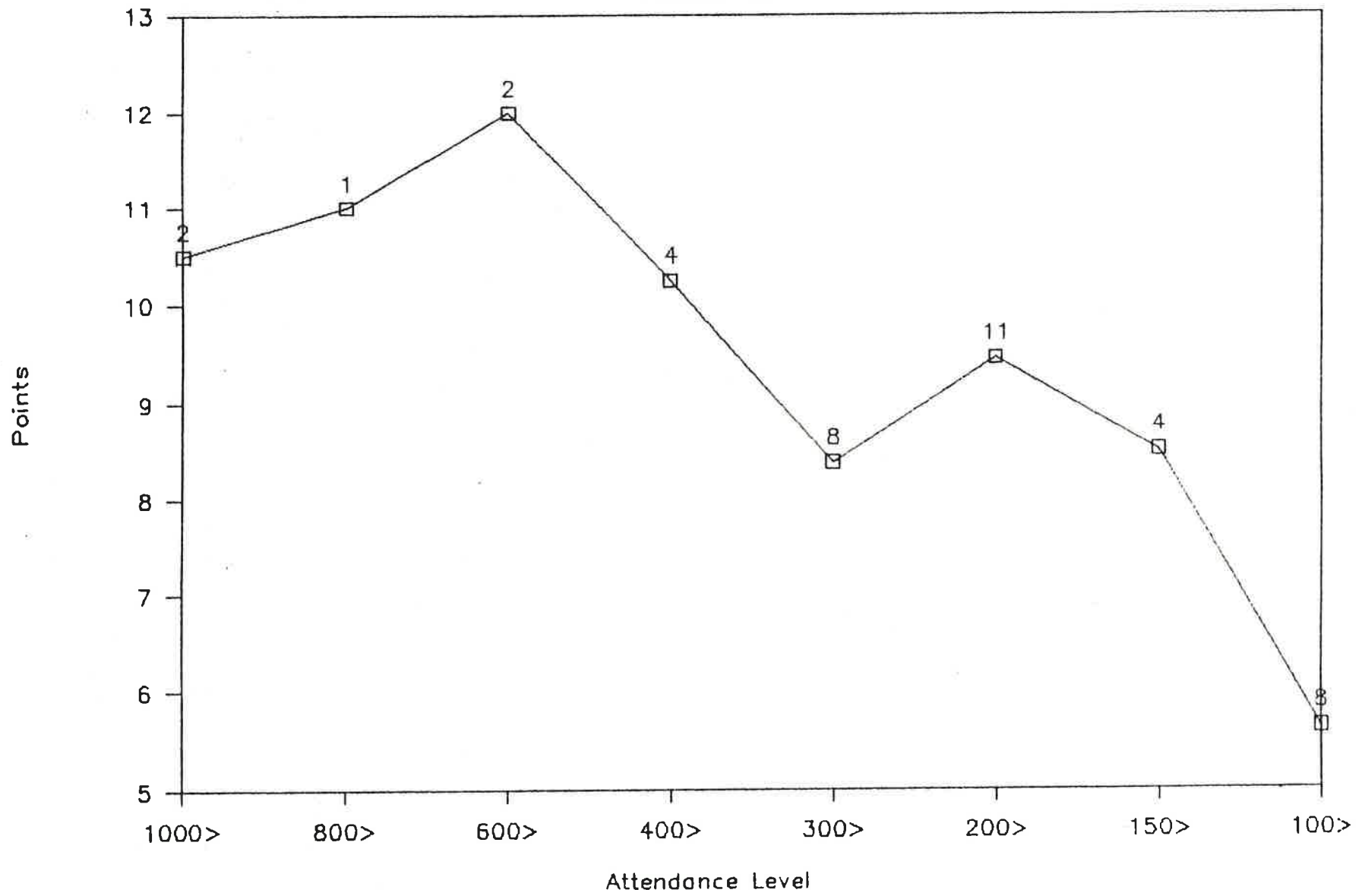
containing churches that agree with the position of the Disciples of Christ as well as those that agree with the position of the Church of Christ. It also finds itself containing churches that are everywhere in between the two. Words that describe the position of the Christian Church on the role of women in the church are "various" and "diverse". It will be interesting to see what will happen in the future. With no central structure and loosely connected congregations, change will rest primarily upon the hermeneutics of individual congregations. The past is past, but the future is wide open.

CONCLUSION

The role of women in the branches of the Restoration Movement is extremely diverse. The Disciples of Christ are extremely open to the involvement of women in every aspect of the church. They face an interesting future as they continue to make the efforts to synthesize the position of the leadership with the position of the membership. The Church of Christ refrains from allowing women to be involved in any kind of leadership position. They face almost certain struggles as most of society is moving the other direction. The Christian Church contains congregations who represent both previous opinions and all of the opinions in between. It will be interesting to see which positions the congregations will adopt and adapt to as the future unfolds. The history of the role of women in the church has not been without dialogue and controversy. Looking ahead, there does not seem to be an end in the near future.

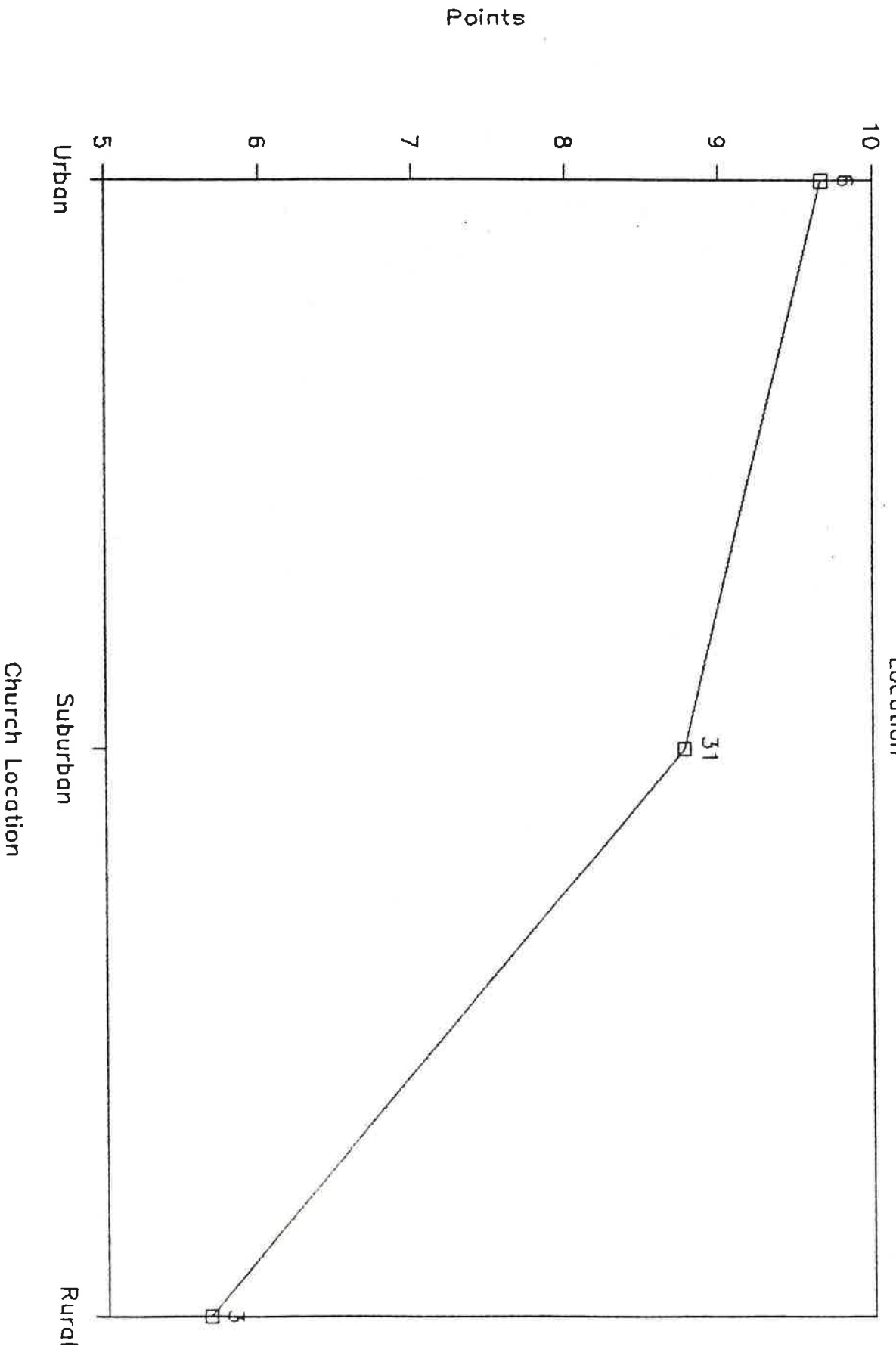
Appendix 1

Attendance



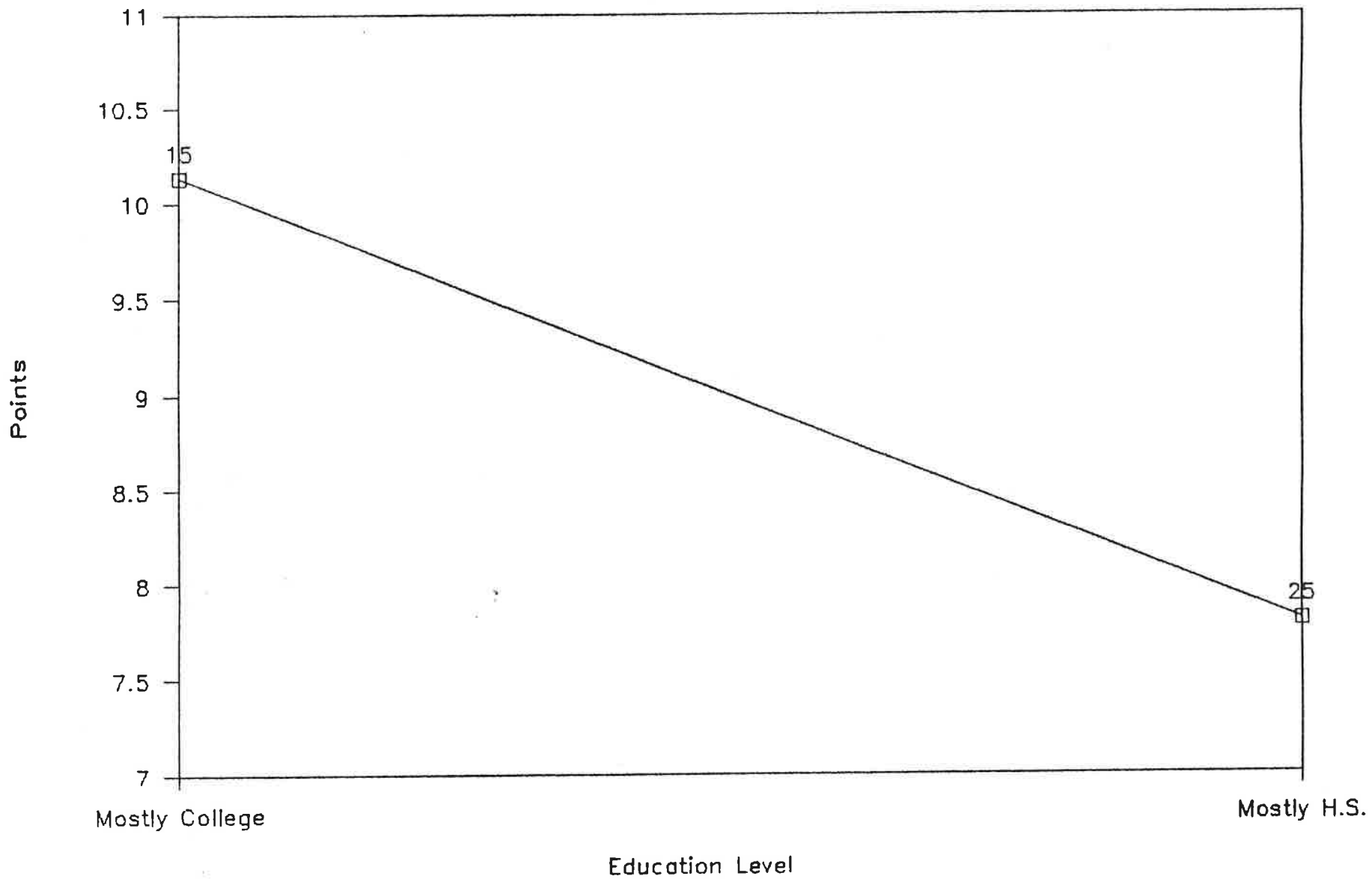
Appendix 2

Location



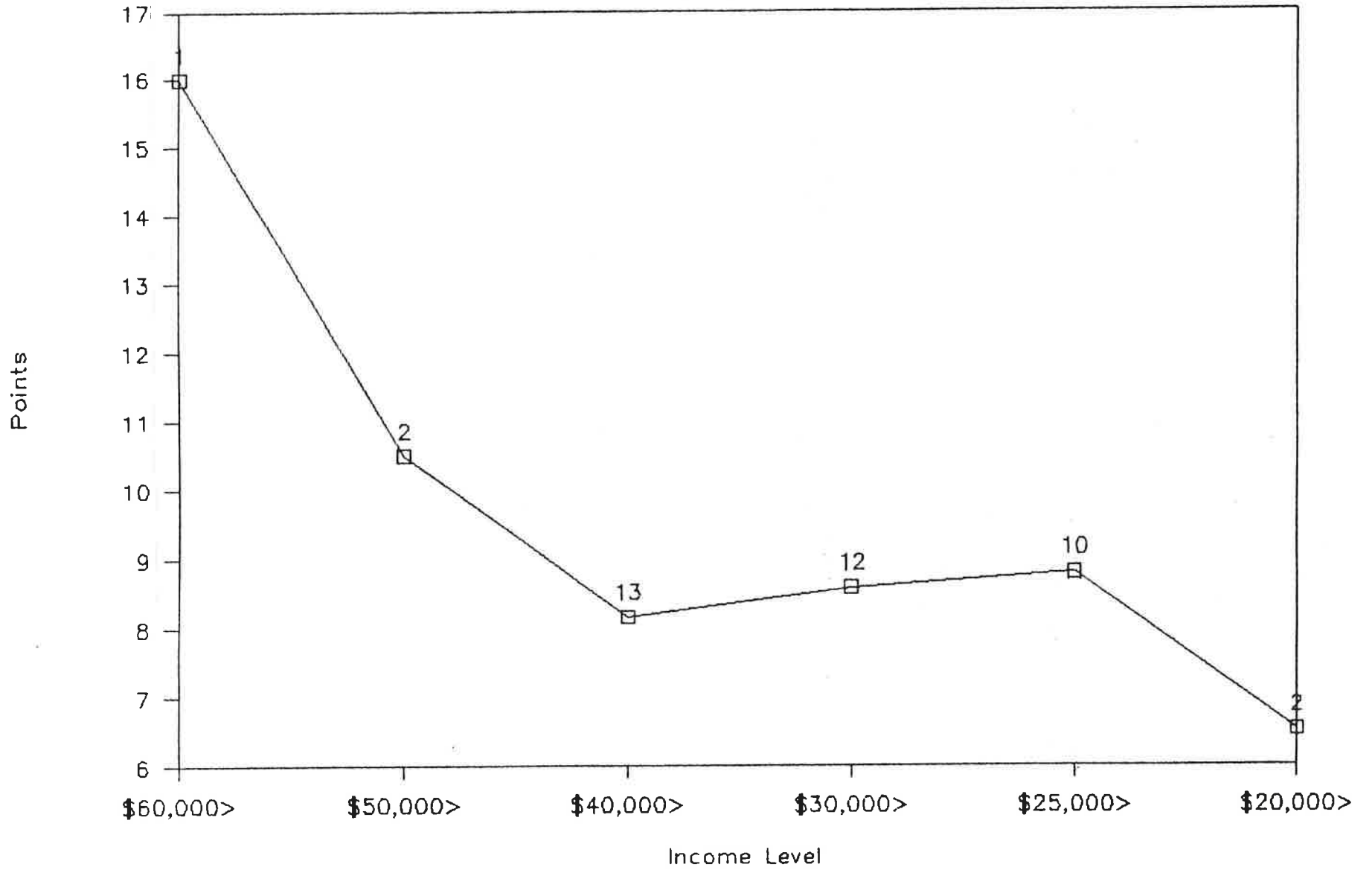
Appendix 3

Education



Appendix 4

Income



**APPENDIX 5
CHURCH INFORMATION**

1. WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

BELOW 50 _____
50 - 100 _____
100 - 150 _____
150 - 200 _____
200 - 300 _____
300 - 400 _____
400 - 600 _____
600 - 800 _____
800 - 1000 _____
1000 - 2000 _____
2000 & UP _____

2. TYPE OF CHURCH

URBAN _____ SUBURBAN _____
RURAL _____

3. EDUCATION

ATTENDED H.S. WITH SOME H.S. GRADUATES _____
MOST H.S. GRADUATES WITH SOME COLLEGE GRADUATES / _____
MOST COLLEGE GRADUATES WITH SOME GRADUATE SCHOOL _____

4. AVERAGE INCOME OF CHURCH MEMBERS

10,000 AND DOWN _____	30,000 - 40,000 _____
10,000 - 15,000 _____	40,000 - 50,000 _____
15,000 - 20,000 _____	50,000 - 60,000 _____
20,000 - 25,000 _____	60,000 - 75,000 _____
25,000 - 30,000 _____	75,000 & UP _____

APPENDIX 6

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH

1. Do you currently have a woman on staff at your church besides the secretary? YES or NO (circle one). [1 point yes, 0 points no]
If so, what is her/their title?
Minister _____ [5 points]
Pastor _____ [5 points]
Director _____ [4 points]
Other _____ [4 points]
2. Do you currently have a woman/women serving as:
 - a. an elder? YES or NO (circle one). [7 points yes, 0 points no]
 - b. a deacon? YES or NO (circle one). [6 points yes, 0 points no]
 - c. a deaconess? YES or NO (circle one). [4 points yes, 0 points no]If no, is there a policy at your church that sees women in these positions as unscriptural? YES or NO (circle one). [0 points yes, 1 point no]
3. Do you currently have a woman/women teaching a Sunday School class? YES or NO (circle one). [1 point yes, 0 points no]
If yes, which groups do they teach?
Children _____ [1 point]
Youth _____ [1 point]
Adults (females only) _____ [1 point]
Adults (both sexes) _____ [4 points]
All ages _____ [4 points]
Other _____
4. Is there an active ladies circle or ladies fellowship at your church? YES or NO (circle one). [1 point yes, 0 points no]
If yes, what is the name/names of the group? _____

5. Does your church have a policy or statement as to what roles, in general, women are allowed to fill? YES or NO (circle one). [0 points yes, 1 point no]

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barker, Elizabeth. "Letters." Gospel Advocate February 1989: 6.
- Bartchy, S. Scott. "Power, Submission, and Sexual Identity Among the Early Christians." Essays on New Testament Christianity. Ed. C. Robert Wetzel. Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1978, 50-80.
- Brunsmann, Deborah Sue. "Restoration: Recapturing New Testament Ministries for Women and Men." Christian Standard 11 October 1987: 1, 4-7.
- Cox, Shirley L., ed. Yearbook and Directory 1986 Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Indianapolis: The Office of the General Minister and President, 1986.
- Foster, Lewis. "Woman - Where's She Going Today? (Part One)" Christian Standard 18 December 1988: 8-11.
- Foster, Lewis. "Woman - Where's She Going Today? (Part Two)" Christian Standard 11 October 1987: 3.
- Hamilton, Betty H., ed. Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Indianapolis: The General Office of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1978.
- Hardin, Joyce. "Women's Role in the Church." Gospel Advocate December 1988: 18-21.
- Kearley, F. Furman. "Women Are Ordained Already." Gospel Advocate December 1988: 18-21.
- Kee, Doyle. "Male/Female Partnership in Ministry." Gospel Advocate December 1988: 16, 17.
- Sanders, Betty H., ed. 1974 Yearbook and Directory of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Indianapolis: The General Office of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1974.
- Stone, Sam E. "The Christian Woman's Role." Christian Standard 11 October 1987: 3.
- Stone, Sam E. "When We Disagree." Christian Standard 21 May 1989: 3.
- Tarbet, David. "Should Women Serve Communion?" Gospel Advocate March 1989: 53, 54.

Turner, Terri. "The Unanswered Question." Christian Standard
11 October 1987: 11, 12.

Webb, Joseph M. "Where is the Command to Silence? (Part One)."
Christian Standard 21 May 1989: 4-6.

Williams, Dan. "Letters." Gospel Advocate February 1989: 6.

