



SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

— A Profile —

Jan Paulsen

President, General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church,
Silver Spring, Maryland, March 1999 -

PERSONAL:

Jan Paulsen's *curriculum vitae* reveals his life-long connection to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. One of four children born of Adventist parents on January 5, 1935, in Narvik, Norway, he was baptized as a Seventh-day Adventist at the young age of 14. He married Kari Trykkerud in 1955, and they have one daughter, Laila (born in 1961; she is married to Vladimir Becejac; they live in England), and two sons, Jan-Rune (born in 1963; living in Oslo, Norway), and Rein Andre (born in 1970; living and working in South Africa).

EDUCATION:

After completing his early education in Narvik, Norway, Paulsen attended the Danish Junior College, Vejleford, where he received ministerial training between 1952-1954. In 1957 he earned a BA at Emmanuel Missionary College, now Andrews University. After completing his MA studies at the Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. in 1958, he earned a Bachelor of Divinity in 1962 from the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, newly relocated at Andrews University. In June, 1972, Paulsen completed his graduate studies at the Tubingen University in Germany. He was the first Adventist to earn a Doctor in Theology from the Protestant faculty of any German university. His dissertation research was illustrative of how historic Christianity settles into a primal religion culture.

DENOMINATIONAL SERVICE:

Following completion of a ministerial internship in the West Norwegian Conference in 1955, Paulsen served that conference as a church pastor until he became active in Adventist education. In 1962 the Paulsens embarked on their overseas missionary service. From 1962 to 1964 he was a Bible teacher and campus pastor for the Seventh-day Adventist Teacher Training College in Bekwai, Ghana.

During this time, in 1963 he was ordained as a minister. Paulsen was instrumental in setting up the first education degree program in sub-Sahara Africa, at the Adventist College of West Africa in Nigeria, where he first served as head of the Theology Department and between 1967-1968 became its principal.

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Following his return to Europe, between 1968 and 1976 Paulsen headed the Theology Department at Newbold College, and subsequently served as principal until 1980, when he was appointed as General Secretary and Education director of the Trans-European (then Northern European) Division, with headquarters in St. Albans, Hertfordshire, England.

In 1983 he was chosen to serve as president of the Trans-European Division and was the longest-serving president in the history of this Division. He was elected as general vice president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at the World Session in 1995 in Utrecht, the Netherlands. During his Division presidency, Dr. Paulsen was influential in strengthening and expanding considerably the Adventist work in several countries of Eastern Europe after the collapse of communism, and assisted in establishing church organization in Albania which, until 1990, was closed to all religions.

Over the years Paulsen has served on or chaired many denominational boards, including the Adventist Development and Relief Agency. Just prior to the Utrecht World Church Session, in recognition of meritorious service to the Seventh-day Adventist Church and excellence in Adventist education, the faculty of Andrews University presented Jan Paulsen with a Doctor of Divinity degree (*honoris causa*). He also received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree from Southwestern Adventist University, May 5, 2001, and a Doctor of Divinity degree (*honoris causa*) from La Sierra University, June 17, 2001.

Interests and Achievements:

Dr. Paulsen is recognized as an eminent scholar in the field of theology. Over the years he published numerous articles and papers that have been prepared for commissions and/or conference publications. He is the author of two books: *When the Spirit Descends*, and *Let Your Light So Shine*.