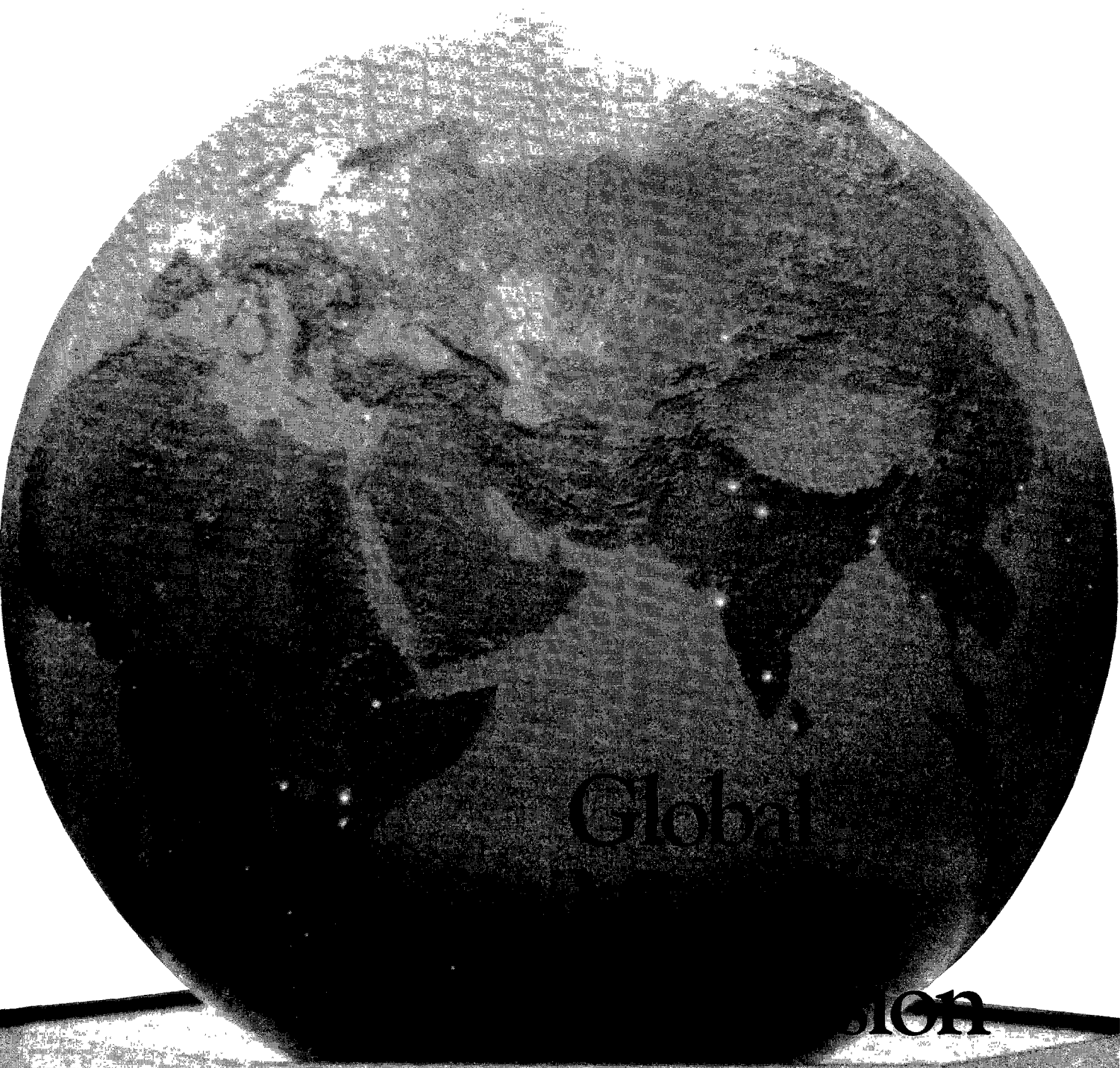


Ministry

International Journal for Clergy

April 1992



Global

sion

Abortion and the church

The abortion issue is real! Pictures of a fetus developing and a fetus being destroyed are nauseatingly real. They evoke outrage and disgust, and demand the elimination of abortion.

This is only one part of the picture. What about our casual attitude toward sex, particularly premarital sex? Often uncontrolled passion is disguised as love and is pressed by the abusive persuasion "If you really love me . . ."

Is it not time for the church to take a firm stand for sexual morality? I am a pastor and a licensed marriage counselor, and I see within the church a very casual attitude toward sex outside of marriage.

Perhaps we need to study and teach 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 in its context. The phrases "temple of the Holy Ghost" and "bought with a price" refer not to vegetarianism but to our sexual bodies! The church would do well to teach God's truth about sex and sexual expression in a positive way, and in that context face the issue of fetal destruction.

This too is a moral responsibility!—Roger H. Ferris, pastor, Renton Seventh-day Adventist Church, Renton, Washington.

■ I am much saddened by George Gainer's article on abortion (August 1991). It is not pleasant to note that for 20 years the overarching ethic that determines policy for our health-care institutions is money. In the for-profit chains that kind of ethic is understood—but we are a church.

As a health-care worker I have worked in a Catholic hospital. Their stand on abortion has been firm all along. They are not going under because of their stand against abortion.

Long ago the servant of the Lord wrote, "The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold" (*Education*, p. 57). It sounds as if the greatest want of the church is not that different from the greatest want of the world.

As a pastor I have counseled women who carried tremendous loads of guilt because of their decision to

abort. It was my privilege to explain to them that abortion is not an unpardonable sin. There is a loving God who forgives and takes our guilt away.

Surely, as a church we carry a great load of guilt for our participation in abortion on demand. For us too it is surely not too late to repent and seek God's forgiveness.—Joseph L. Story, pastor and registered nurse practitioner, Tok, Alaska.

The beast from the earth

Regarding Robert Surridge's suggestion ("The Beast From the Earth," June 1991) that the apostle John resorts to a myth in order to depict a Bible prophecy is absurd, untenable, and makes a mockery of inspiration. Does this mean that if I fail to unearth the appropriate myth (which is likely), I fail to decipher the mysteries of Revelation 13?

Remembering that prophecy is not only prospective (revealing the future) but often retrospective (illuminating the past), history aptly demonstrates the truth of the heretofore Adventist position on Revelation 13.

The earth in verse 11 and the earth in verses 12-14 are at two different stages of growth. The earth (representing the United States) of Revelation 13:11 was unpopulated when John viewed it at the commencement of the judgment period (verse 1), but that same earth will have become a densely populated nation at the fulfillment of this prophecy, though still less populated in comparison with continental Europe. My homeland of Australia, while sparsely populated, doesn't even qualify as a runner-up because of other conditions that must be met.

Please, in our quest for prophetic understanding, let us not belittle the authoritative pen of Ellen White: "But the beast with lamblike horns was seen 'coming up out of the earth.' Instead of overthrowing other powers to establish itself, the nation thus represented must arise in territory previously unoccupied and grow up gradually and peacefully. It could not, then, arise among the crowded and struggling

nationalities of the Old World—that turbulent sea of 'peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues.' It must be sought in the Western Continent" (*The Great Controversy*, p. 440).—Robert H. Granger, Little Creek Academy, Knoxville, Tennessee.

■ In the conclusion of his article, Surridge states that "we [Adventists] ought to abandon our old argument that merely contrasts 'earth' with 'sea.' " At the same time he concludes that "earth" means what we say it means, but uses proof from outside the Bible.

To understand "earth," we must have a correct understanding of "sea." Revelation 17:15 equates "waters" to peoples, multitudes, nations, and tongues (KJV). However, the application is restricted to "where the whore sitteth." In verse 1 the angel came to show John the judgment of the whore that "sitteth upon many waters."

Where was the whore, Babylon the Great, seated when John last saw her? It has to be on the Euphrates in Revelation 16:12. Therefore "sea" would represent the densely populated eastern part of the earth.

To me it would be logical to conclude that "earth," then, would represent a sparsely settled part of the world . . . or the "western" part of the earth. You will also find this interpretation in *The Great Controversy*, page 440.—Woody Oliver, Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Inspiration—casebook or codebook?

For several months I have been watching to see what reactions Alden Thompson's recent book on inspiration would produce. I am pleased to see the reviews, particularly Norman Gulley's, in the December issue of *Ministry*.

Thompson's *Inspiration* contains excellent insights and viewpoints, needed by the Adventist Church. But there is danger that many readers, taken up with the book's good aspects, will become infected with a virus that has a devastating effect on belief and experience. If the casebook aspect is overstressed, how much of the Bible is

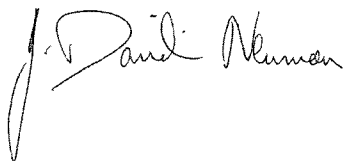
(Continued on page 31)

Two church leaders have decided to speak out concerning the more extreme dissidents in the church. Our church has always tolerated a diversity of opinion; in fact our church was conceived out of discord. But there comes a time when diversity becomes divisive rather than inspiring, dysfunctional rather than functional, destructive rather than productive. And church leaders need to lead.

Thus, **Cyril Miller**, president of the Southwestern Union, and **Douglas Devnich**, president of the Canadian Union, wrote articles in their respective union papers alerting their parishioners to some of the more radical dissidents among us. Some who speak out within the church are sincere individuals, sometimes misguided; others have discovered that this is just another way to fleece naive members and make some easy money.

We reprint these articles so you can share these facts with your church members.

We make no apologies for printing another article on the investigative judgment. Pastor Livingstone clearly demonstrates that there is nothing legalistic or uncaring about a pre-advent judgment. He shows from the Old Testament how no earthly tribunal would execute a sentence without some prior investigation so would we not want God to do the same? God is both just and merciful.



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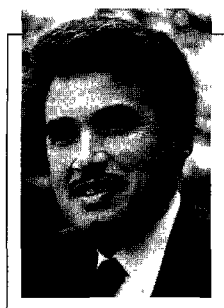
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Volume 65 **Number 4**



The goodness of guilt

Martin Weber

In this age of affirmation, old-fashioned guilt has gotten a bad name. Secular society dismisses it as hazardous to self-esteem.

Many Christians also condemn guilt, considering it a needless assault upon their assurance of salvation. They may not want a Father in heaven but a semisenile grandfather up there who serves as their master of ceremonies, amiably applauding everything they do. "God loves you!" they proclaim. "No need to give in to guilt."

Before we bid goodbye to guilt, however, let's remember that condemnation is scriptural. Understood properly, guilt can be a blessing.

This world would be a better place if those who trample upon God's law in hurting others suffered some guilt. If only Hitler had felt guilty about Auschwitz! Mass murderers ought to feel guilty, along with serial rapists and the drug addict who stole my mother's car radio. Guilt can make us take stock of ourselves as sinners. But too many people have no sense of sinfulness. The carnal mind manages to suppress guilt, deny it, or project it onto others.

In 1983, my family moved to be close to the Adventist Media Center in California. We soon found a house we wanted. To raise the 5 percent down payment, we sold most of what we owned, even my computer and our trusty Mazda GLC. Needing something on wheels beyond my bicycle, I bought an old Rabbit diesel, one of those leftover energy crisis specials with the extra gas tank. If you know anything about diesels, you know they have trouble when they run hot. You had better keep the radiator water level up, or

you risk mechanical disaster.

One morning I had worship at the Pacific Union Conference office. Wanting to get there on time, I drove hard and fast. A red light flashed, indicating a low water level. Running late, I suppressed the warning. It was a \$600 mistake, just in time for Christmas. My failure to heed that little red light brought expensive grief to the Weber family.

Guilt is like that red light. It indicates a problem we need to confront as we speed along the highway to heaven. Without quick action, a spiritual breakdown occurs.

Now, what if you heed the warning and the red light remains on? Determined to have a perfectly running car, you check the cooling system for leaks. The mechanic insists everything is fine, yet that stubborn red light keeps lying to you. Now you've got a different problem: unnecessary harassment, like hyperactive guilt that doesn't go away after you confess and forsake your sins.

Guilt can be good or bad, helpful or harmful. Condemnation is appropriate in a life running low on loyalty to Jesus Christ. Conviction of sin gives us a wake-up call to repent and be cleansed at the cross. Serious problems arise, however, when one who is already faithful in Christ still suffers unresolved guilt. Such spiritual harassment is worse than unnecessary—it's deadly. Ellen White counseled an uncertain believer, "The feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross, or it will poison the springs of life."¹

Feelings often fool us. I remember feeling bad about a scholastic aptitude test I had taken in high school—until I got notice that it had qualified me for a scholarship. Feelings can work the other way, too. My friend down the hall felt

great about his chemistry test until he saw that big red D.

Spiritually as well, feelings often fail to tell the truth. We might feel confident about heaven while yet in an unrepentant, unsaved state. Or we might suffer guilt even after sincerely entrusting ourselves to Christ.

How can we know for sure whether the guilt we suffer is justified or merely imagined? First, we must realize that guilt is more than an unpleasant emotion solved by positive thinking. Guilt is legal condemnation suffered equally by all sinners in the presence of a holy, sin-hating God. There is no distinction among us in our personal righteousness, since "there is none righteous, no, not one." "There is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:10, 22, 23). When you compare our characters with Christ's, none of us have grounds for boasting: "Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (verse 19).

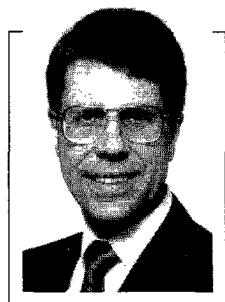
What a terrifying thought: guilty before God! Life's basic problem is not that we need a bigger house or a new job or more friends. It's not even our need of a happy self-image. Our basic problem is guilt before God. And everyone on Planet Earth stands guilty before God. "But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. . . . For all have sinned . . . being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (verses 21-24).

Praise the Lord, Christ's sacrifice on
(Continued on page 18)

Global Mission, my mission

J. David Newman

**Is our church
growth flawed?
Are we preaching
the pure gospel?
Should we revise the
27 fundamental
beliefs?**



J. David Newman, D.Min., is editor of Ministry. This article is an edited version of a devotional given at the 1991 Annual Council in Perth, Australia.

When entering the atrium in the General Conference headquarters building in Silver Spring, Maryland, you immediately notice a huge globe of the world. It is a topographical map turning slowly on its axis, with only the physical features of the world displayed.

Your attention then shifts to several plaques around the base of the globe. They list the names of the division and union offices. But there seems to be no relationship between the globe and the plaques. You do not know that there is supposed to be a light shining at the spot on the globe where each office is located. However, every light ceased functioning some six months ago. I am told that it is difficult to keep the fiber optic bulbs shining without burning out.

However, without the shining lights the globe is nothing more than an art object. I view this sphere each day as I climb the stairs to my office. Watching it spin without any light leaves me wondering about our church. Is it possible that we have a world church that is constantly in motion, but with little light? Could our progress in fulfilling the gospel commission be less than we think?

We have heard exciting reports about the success of our church around the world. We rejoice over every person won to Christ. We look forward to even greater things happening under Global Mission. But is it possible that underneath all the optimism, all the euphoria, all the movement, all might not be as well as we would like? Is it possible that we are making progress without much light? Is it possible that church growth

in the statistical column is not matched by growth in the character department? Is it possible that even our statistics are not as accurate as we would like?

Now, I believe in church growth and evangelism. I am presently preparing to conduct a major evangelistic series in Durban, South Africa. And I am asking some very critical questions about what will happen in those meetings. I do not want them to turn out like some other meetings I have heard about. While baptisms are important, there must be more than baptisms. I want people disciplined for Jesus Christ.

Problems in evangelism

Is our world turning without much light? A close friend of mine who served as ministerial secretary of a union told of one campaign that resulted in 1,000 baptisms. One year later he traveled to that locality to evaluate the long-term results. He found only 57 people out of the more than 1,000 who had been baptized. The other 943 were still listed on the church books—and will probably remain there for years to come.

During Harvest 90 many administrators felt tremendous pressure to meet their goals. One field president experienced difficulty reaching his target. So he talked to a local chief and promised him seven bales of clothing if he could deliver 1,000 people for baptism. By the end of the year his tally of 953 people was close enough to get the clothing. But these people knew little about Adventism and even less about the gospel.

In a recent *Adventist Review*, Editor William Johnsson interviewed David Lin, former secretary of the China Division. Pastor Lin reported on similar pressures to achieve results in the old China Divi-

Is it possible that some of our people, and even some of our pastors and evangelists, are motivated by reasons other than the cross of Christ?

sion. He told of how pastors would invite their friends and relatives to a meeting and then ask them to be baptized. Out of respect for the pastor they would accept, not because they had fallen in love with Jesus and accepted His salvation.

Church membership records are highly inflated in some areas. Eight years ago one conference decided to do something about it and dropped 14,155 people in one year. Instead of being the largest conference in the union it dropped to third largest.

I realize it is quite possible that the examples cited are isolated incidents, small blips on an otherwise successful enterprise (please write and let me know of similar episodes in your area). It is difficult to find out for sure because no one likes to talk about this side of our work. Who wants to be the bearer of bad tidings? It is much more encouraging to praise God for the marvelous things happening in the area that used to make up the Soviet Union, for example, than to deal with problems that develop. But unless we are willing to be honest and candid, we will find that we are moving, spinning, progressing, growing, but with little light.

Laodicean church

We admit that we are the Laodicean church. But we don't like to dwell on being "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17).^{*} We prefer to see ourselves as rich and successful.

Ellen White was extremely positive about our church. Without her counsel our organization would never have grown to be the size it is today. However, we must be careful that we do not fall into the

same trap that the Jews fell into when they declared, "We are Abraham's seed," and then turned around and crucified the Messiah. We can boast that we are the remnant church and at the same time bear false witness to the gospel.

Ellen White prophesied about our church that "in the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence: 'Found wanting.' By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged" (*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 247).

But you say, "Are we not winning many people? We must be doing God's will." Let's pause for a moment. Is it possible that some of our people, and even some of our pastors and evangelists, are motivated by reasons other than the cross of Christ? For example, Jehovah's Witnesses are one of the fastest growing religions in the world, but they have a righteousness-by-works-dominated religion. They know nothing about the cross and the imputed righteousness of Christ, yet their members are going door-to-door, often putting our own members to shame. The Mormons are also one of the fastest growing religions. Many of them sacrifice two years of their life to witness for their faith. They probably cite their figures as proof of God's blessing.

People join religious groups for various reasons. Many feel the need of a structured life: they want boundaries, so they are impressed with a group that has strong beliefs. People would rather join a conservative church than a liberal one—but are they joining for the right reasons?

The Jews of the Old Testament were God's people. God had given them tremendous light, yet Jesus denounced their soul winning in these terms: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are" (Matt. 23:15). So statistical growth in and of itself is no guarantee of truth. In fact, it can easily lull us into a false security.

When I mention the three angels' messages, what is the very first thought that pops into your mind? The mark of

the beast? The Sabbath? The sanctuary doctrine? Or is it the cross of Christ? Is it justification by faith? Ellen White reminds us that "justification by faith . . . is the third angel's message in verity" (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372). But how do our members regard it? Do they see the cross as the essence of Adventism?

The cross the focus

What does it take to make Global Mission my mission? What was so powerful about the early church's witness? They preached Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the only hope of the world.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians saying: "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . .

"But we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1:17, 23).

Then he concludes this opening section of his letter with these powerful words:

"I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Jesus said: "I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32). Peter declared: "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Just a few weeks ago I talked to a lady in one of the area churches. The doctors had discovered a tumor in her abdomen and decided she would have to enter the hospital. Naturally she wondered if it would be cancerous. She told me that she was frightened about the possibility of dying and leaving two small children without a mother. "Can I pray to God to heal me without any conditions? Is it ever God's will that my children should be left without a mother?" she asked.

How would you answer that question? What theological point would you use? Which one of the 27 doctrines would help the most? All I could do was point her to Calvary. I said, "I cannot answer your question, but I can tell you this: God loves you. The cross demonstrates that

fact. God loved us so much that He was willing to come here and become one of His creatures. He died a death that He did not deserve—a cruel and horrible death. If God did not love us, He would not have died on Calvary. Place your faith in Jesus. Don't look within for assurance: look outside yourself. Look at the cross, and God will give you your answer."

All this happened during the break between Sabbath school and church. I made an appointment to see her that next Tuesday night before her operation Friday. Unfortunately, an emergency arose that caused me to fly 500 miles away on the day of her appointment and not return till late that night. When I called to tell her I would miss our meeting, she said:

"It's all right, pastor; I am now at peace. I did what you said. I went to the cross, and now I am content; I know that whatever God wills will be what is best for me and my family."

I visited her Sabbath, the day before leaving for the Annual Council meetings in Australia. A big smile filled her face. The tumor was not malignant. What a time of rejoicing we had together.

What makes the difference?

A "celebration church" has just begun in the Washington, D.C., area. I met for the first time Sabbath, September 26. A core of some 12 families mailed out 300 invitations to their friends and relatives. Three hundred twenty-five adults and children met in that first worship experience. They plan to meet once a month for four months on a trial basis. How many evangelists would be delighted to receive that kind of response from so few mailings!

What made the difference? They made Jesus Christ and Him crucified their mission. They wanted a church service where praising Jesus Christ in word and song consumed their entire attention. People responded to that cross-centered focus. While this new church is springing into being, the Adventist churches surrounding it are barely growing, and there is certainly no motivation for the members of these other churches to invite their friends and neighbors to Sabbath services.

Why not? The answer has grave implications for our church. These people are attempting to rebuild the New

Testament church. They are attempting to recapture the same fire and enthusiasm that shocked the Jewish authorities and the Roman world. And some of their methods shock us, too. They want a church on fire for Jesus Christ; a church that is longing for His soon return.

But there is a danger. When I said a celebration church, I meant it. Today any church that innovates with contemporary music and overheads is tagged a celebration church. Most of these churches are not celebration churches modeled after what is happening in certain other places. There seems (and I stress seems) to be an underlying theology that is at the basis of some of these churches where attendance has mushroomed. This theology some interpret as saying all that matters is Jesus and the cross, and we don't necessarily need all the traditional doctrines and standards of the Adventist Church. These churches are reacting against the legalism and heavy emphasis on doctrine in our church.

One 22-year-old with whom I have been dialoguing quite extensively told me just two weeks ago, "I grew up in the Adventist Church. My parents believed the doctrines and gave Bible studies all the time. But all I remember hearing in the church were the 'don'ts' and the 'musts.' You don't do this on Sabbath. You don't eat this or wear that. You don't go there or watch this. You must live a good life so that your name will not be stricken from the records when Christ comes to your name in the heavenly sanctuary. You must pay your tithe; you must study your Sabbath school lesson; you must go Ingathering. You must . . . You don't. . ."

He told me, "You believe that it is possible to really make the doctrines of the Adventist Church Christ-centered. I and some of the other people starting this new church are beginning to believe that that is not possible. We believe that the Adventist boat is so encrusted with barnacles that it is now impossible to clean them all off. We would rather build a new boat—a boat without some of the distinctives."

If this is the foundation of much of what goes for true "celebration" (and that has not yet been clearly established) then we will find that some of these churches will eventually leave the denomination. The Sabbath is just about the only distinctive they still hold on to. But it is very difficult, if not impossible, to maintain an

Some are afraid that if we dwell too much upon the cross we will minimize victory over sin. But victory comes when we lift up the cross.

independent Sabbathkeeping church.

Justification by faith

Herein lies our church's dilemma or tension. Do we, like Paul, preach Christ and Him crucified as our main message—the message that galvanized the early church, that brought thousands flocking into its ranks? Or do we preach something else?

Some are afraid that if we dwell too much upon the cross we will minimize victory over sin. But victory comes when we lift up the cross. Justification by faith is what God did in Christ 2,000 years ago. It is not first what God does in us, but what He has done for us. Ellen White dealt with this concern when she said: "Some of our brethren have expressed fears that we shall dwell too much upon the subject of justification by faith, but I hope and pray that none will be needlessly alarmed; for there is no danger in presenting this doctrine as it is set forth in the Scriptures. If there had not been a remissness in the past to properly instruct the people of God, there would not now be a necessity of calling a special attention to it. . . . The exceeding great and precious promises given us in the Holy Scriptures have been lost sight of to a great extent, just as the enemy of all righteousness designed that they should be. He has cast his own dark shadow between us and our God, that we may not see the true character of God. The Lord has proclaimed Himself to be 'merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth' " (*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372).

I compare the gospel to a picture and the doctrines of the Adventist Church to a frame. You do not need a frame to show the picture, but a well-chosen frame cer-

When people hear the name Seventh-day Adventist, a picture of the cross should flash through their minds rather than one of our peculiar doctrines.

tainly draws attention to the picture and showcases it beautifully. The problem occurs when the frame becomes so large and so dominant that it overwhelms the picture. Now people notice the frame rather than the picture. That which was intended to enhance now obscures.

Our 27 fundamental doctrines are a case in point. Salvation is listed as one of the 27, but it is more than just one of the 27. Take salvation out of the 27, and it does not matter how well you keep the remaining 26—no one will make it to heaven. But keep salvation and eliminate the 26, and a person can still make it to heaven.** I sometimes tell people that it is harder to get into the Adventist Church than it is to get into heaven. Only one thing is required for heaven—faith—while 27 are required to join our church.

The picture and frame

If we want our people to make Global Mission their mission, we must go to extraordinary lengths to make Jesus prominent to them. We must make it crystal clear that our salvation is based not on what we do, or any change in us, but on what God did in Christ at Calvary. We are saved not because of what we have done, but because of what Jesus has done. Whenever we look within for merit, whenever we emphasize imparted, or infused, righteousness above the imputed righteousness of Christ, we obscure the picture. We begin to enlarge the frame. The solution to humanity's problems is not health reform, the Sabbath, etc., but Jesus.

"I resolved to know nothing while I

was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

That did not mean that Paul did not deal with other issues in his letter to the Corinthians. But it is amazing how little the New Testament says about how to keep the Sabbath, pay tithe, refrain from unclean foods, discard jewelry, and so on. The principles can all be found there, but there is very little emphasis on detail except as it pertained to a specific situation. We tend today to major on application and minor on principle.

How can we help our members recapture the same spirit that existed at Pentecost—the same enthusiasm, the same joy, the same peace? I believe that we need to reconsider how we have written our 27 fundamentals. I would like to see us take the cross, the plan of salvation, out of the 27 and make it first, make it the foundation of our doctrinal statement. Then under this clear emphasis and description of the gospel, show how the following 26 doctrines are the frame that surrounds the gospel without obscuring it.

Or to change the analogy, the 26 are the setting in which the diamond, the gospel, is placed. Every jeweler knows that while the true value resides in the gem itself, its beauty and color can be magnified and improved by the type of setting surrounding it. No one would mistake the setting for the diamond. No one would mistake the frame for the picture. And yet that is exactly what has happened in our church.

I would love to see this voted at our next General Conference session at Utrecht as part of the emphasis of Global Mission being made personal because of a Person, Jesus Christ. (Again, if you like this idea, please let me know.) People should join our church because they love Jesus, not because they are impressed with a logical presentation of doctrine. If we are to turn the world upside down, we have got to let the world know that we preach Christ and Him crucified. When people hear the name Seventh-day Adventist, a picture of the cross should flash through their minds rather than one of our peculiar doctrines.

God has commissioned our church to provide the same function that John the Baptist fulfilled when announcing the first coming of Jesus. We must live the same kind of lifestyle John lived, which gave credence to his message. Godly living is important. Unfortunately our

message concerning lifestyle has degenerated to emphasis on a half-dozen areas where we must be different—and outside of that we apparently think we can live as we please. This has given rise to all kinds of contradictions. It has also caused many of our people to consider giving up even these few standards, because they wonder why they are so important and not the dozens of other areas in which the church has not spoken.

We need to remind ourselves what it means to be a disciple of Christ. The gospel commission is much more than baptizing; it is making disciples of people who are reflecting the character of Jesus.

I hope that by the time I return to the GC, the bulbs will be lit on the globe in the atrium (they were). I hope that as our church makes its plans at this Annual Council we will be interested in more than just numbers, statistics, growth, movement, etc. For we can have all of these without Jesus Christ. I hope that we will look for ways to constantly uplift the cross. While looking forward to His second coming we must be constantly looking backward 2,000 years to His first coming.

When we do that, God will be able to work through us in ways we cannot now imagine. His glory will lighten the earth. Everyone will make his or her decision for or against Jesus. Jesus will come, and our Global Mission will have been completed. We will go home to spend eternity with Him.

As Ellen White so pointedly reminded us: "Christ crucified—talk it, pray it, sing it, and it will break and win hearts. This is the power and wisdom of God to gather souls for Christ" (*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 67).

"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." ■

*Bible texts used in this article are from the New International Version.

**I am not implying that a person can willfully reject the 26 and still make it to heaven. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." It is just that the 26 are never the basis of salvation.

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Adventist youth cry out!

Roger Dudley and Gan-Theow Ng

Young people share their dreams and dilemmas for the church.



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I can sum up the whole problem of keeping the youth in the church with three words: lack of attention! The church has something for every age group except the youth. I think the older members of our churches need to be aware that there are youth and that we are looking to them for leadership. If a person can't find his shoes in one room, he goes to another room to look, right? Well, if young people can't find leadership and guidance from our older church members, then we look for it elsewhere. Hence so many youth are leaving the church. Maybe the church as a denomination should help us youth 'find our shoes.' "

So writes one of our teenage correspondents in the North American Division Youth Retention Study. By now the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America is aware that the division's Education and Church Ministries departments have commissioned the Institute of Church Ministry (ICM) to conduct a 10-year study of Adventist youth with special emphasis on the factors that are related to young people's decisions to drop out of or remain in the Adventist Church. Earlier reports have appeared in the *Adventist Review* (Dec. 15, 1988), *Ministry* (October 1989), and the *Journal of Adventist Education* (April-May 1990).

ICM has now collected data for the third year of the study. This time we heard from 1,083 young people, 17 or 18 years of age, scattered all over the United States and Canada. While we will be providing statistical information on a regular basis, much can be learned by reading the write-in comments. In addition to

filling out the questionnaire, hundreds of young people took time to pour out their hearts concerning their experience with the Adventist Church. They did it because they sincerely hope the church will listen and then act. They invested their effort on the chance that it might bring about change. While we cannot begin to include all of the comments, we have selected some that we believe to be typical.

Importance placed on youth

Many of the teens told us that they don't believe the church really cares about them. "As I grow older," writes one, "I am beginning to feel that I'm not important to the church. Our Sabbath school is a joke, because it's the department that gets leftovers for teachers. When I'm home from school, I just skip Sabbath school, because it eliminates the frustrations I feel when I try to lead the teacher into topics that really matter, but to no avail. Then when I walk into church, instead of receiving a normal bulletin, the lady reaches into the bottom of the pile and hands me one with no cover on it. The next people (adults) who come in get normal ones. Sometimes I don't get one at all. She says, 'If no more people come in, I'll give you one.' I know this sounds very silly and it is, but it is those little things that add up and make people feel just a little less important. Maybe it is a lot of 'little' reasons that make people want to leave the church. I'm an adult, and I just wish my home church would treat me like one. Is that too much to ask? And is it too much to ask to have a meaningful lesson study?"

Some young people complain that the church talks about the importance of its youth, but that's all it is—just talk. Listen

“You adults out there would be surprised if you knew how much we youth follow your examples.”

to this cry: “The problem with the church is with people. You see, these people are really all for the youth program, but their interest is so artificial, it’s ridiculous. During the program they’ll all be riled up and say, ‘We support our youth.’ But after the meeting we don’t exist at all! We come to them with our problems and they ignore us, or give us the classic line ‘It was a lot harder when I was a kid.’ They couldn’t be more wrong! We youth have so much thrown at us today it’s almost unbearable. Drugs, alcohol, sex, and gangs are just the tip of the iceberg of what we face every day, 365 days a year.”

Many of the young people really do want to be involved and are genuinely concerned for the future of the church. Here’s a typical one: “I see discontent and boredom among those in our age group, and I wish so badly the youth and I could find enthusiasm. But it’s very difficult to want to be involved when our ideas and opinions are considered to be too radical and not important. Everyone tells us we are the church of tomorrow, but millions of others and I are trying to tell you and anyone else who will listen that *there will be no church of tomorrow* if we are not recognized, accepted as *we are*, and allowed to put our youthful energy and new ideas into effect. Time moves forward, not backward, just like science and technology.”

Hypocrisy in the caring church

Many youth are turned off by the hypocrisy they perceive in older church members. Says one: “I think the church is tied up in too much politics. The last SDA school I went to, I was picked on and laughed at, etc., because I wasn’t as well dressed. Almost all the SDA people (adults included) rate other members by

whom they are related to—pastors, school principals, conference officials, etc. If you’re not in tight with these people, you’re either ignored or frowned upon. SDAs are hypocrites, too. That’s why I don’t go to church anymore.”

Hypocrisy is often associated with favoritism. Two young people comment: “Our church is so hypocritical. I feel our church is the most snobbish church I’ve been to. They judge *everyone!* Something needs to be done.” “I feel that Adventists on the whole really turn a lot of people away from God if they don’t have a lot of money. I feel this is wrong, and I’m disappointed because I feel my parents are doing the best they can for me. I think we are well-to-do, but because we are not rich, the other students are not as friendly because I am not in the same class as they are moneywise.”

What the teens are really looking for is evidence of caring. “You adults out there would be surprised if you knew how much we youth follow your examples. So don’t be hypocritical. *Don’t* ignore us when we come to you for help. Don’t treat us like we were unintelligent subhuman life forms. But most of all care. Don’t be afraid to show a little love once in a while.” “I wish that SDAs would love one another for what they are and not destroy their fellow members with hatred and criticism.”

Legalism or Jesus

Adventist young people seem to be reacting against the legalism they have experienced in the church. “I support the SDA Church completely, but I also have some problems with it. I think that the reason the SDA Church loses so many youth is that the youth see the church as not inviting. The reason for this is that they don’t realize that they need to have a relationship with Christ. They see the rules as legalistic and something they have to do instead of realizing that they keep the commandments because of their relationship with Christ, not so that one can be an SDA.”

The subject of rules raises in youth the issue of principles and open-mindedness. Here are two letters: “Our church has so many unnecessary rules. The leaders become so concerned about petty little things. Our religion has become too legalistic!” “Older members of the church tend to blindly follow picky rules, rather than study the underlying principles. This often leads to closed-mindedness and

rigidity. One reason that I am attending a non-Adventist college is that I wanted to be able to think for myself, not be told what to think by someone else. I wish the church were more open and flexible.”

What we have may be good, the youth say, but perhaps we don’t have the emphasis quite right. “The Adventist Church carries its legalistic approach to Christianity a bit too far. All these rules, regulations, and other stuff are good, and yes, they are helpful in life. Being an Adventist all my life, I’ve grown up accepting all these things. But! for that person who is looking for a church home, Seventh-day Adventism can be a very scary ordeal. The first thing he/she learns about our church is not the love of God and how special it is to have a close relationship with Him. No. Instead, he/she hears: ‘Well, we Adventists have 832 rules. We don’t eat all sorts of stuff, we don’t smoke, we don’t drink, we don’t wear jewelry. Oh, I see you’re wearing a ring. Well, you are definitely going to have to take it off forever when you join our church, or else you’ll go straight to hell. Have a happy Sabbath.’ Naturally you know that I’m exaggerating, but it is true that we emphasize our legalism and frown upon anyone who breaks one of the commandments. It’s no wonder that so many people are scared away, not only those who are considering membership but also those already in the church.”

Perhaps what we need is more of an emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus. Says one correspondent: “I believe that the SDA Church is ‘right.’ But it seems that there is a certain element lacking in regard to youth and their interest in the church. I would say a large majority are not interested in church or Christianity. Why? I don’t know why. Maybe there is a problem with church activities, or the lack of interest for the church is just a passing phase in the lives of teens, or maybe it has to do with Adventist thinking in general. I think that just possibly there is too much emphasis placed on doctrines and practices rather than on a personal relationship with Christ.” Writes another: “I feel very confused and frustrated with the SDA Church and my religion right now. I’ve seen, heard, and understood all the whys and hows of our church doctrines all my life. I even agree with 99.9 percent of them. But what is bothering me now is the lack of love, unity, and honest people trying to live like Jesus seven days a week

instead of just on Sabbath. Of what meaning are our doctrines if we don't show God's love unconditionally to *everyone*?"

Trials and temptations

One of the most moving experiences involved in this research is reading the responses of Adventist youth who share the pain of their personal trials and temptations. "I don't quite know what to say, but one thing is for sure: it is getting harder every day to be a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. Other things seem so much more appealing. I pray that the leaders of our church will someday be able to make our religion more attractive than worldly pleasures." "I like the church and I love my Lord. But these days it comes hard for me. I feel I have wandered away from the Lord. I struggle to come back, but I feel lost. None of my friends understand. I have no real friends who attend church. I've talked to my girlfriend, but she doesn't understand how I feel about the Lord. For a while I forget about the Lord, but now I want Him back in my life. I pray to the Lord to show me the way back. I want to serve the Lord and dedicate my life to Him."

With the youth the Christian life often becomes an up-and-down struggle between the desire to do right and the pull of the world. "My relationship with Christ is like this. Jesus is a medicine, and when I get sick I take a dose of this medicine. But as I get better, I feel like I can recuperate the rest of the way on my own and quit taking the medicine for a while. So I end up getting sick again. This is repeated over and over, and I end up never getting well." "I want a good relationship with God—really I do. But I find myself always 'playing with fire.' I seem to test everything, have urges to go out on Sabbaths (to concerts, parties, etc.), and I feel empty. The only way I can fill the emptiness is to accept God as number one in my life. For a while I do, but then some sort of temptation will come along, and God seems to come in second. I don't like putting Him second, but I guess I just don't think. I guess that's only human. I love God. I have every possible reason to love Him. I have so many blessing from Him. I need Him."

In the midst of trials young people look wistfully to the church for understanding and support. Sometimes they are disappointed. "I was kicked out of the Adventist academy I attended and then

from my home. I haven't attended church since then and would like to go back, but I feel the members would make me feel uncomfortable with their churchly concern and questions. I am also worried that my appearance will startle them into thinking that my weight loss and somewhat gaunt appearance suggests drug use instead of truth—stress and little money with which to buy food. With my luck they'll try to put me in some sort of substance-free class that will only make me angry and for which I've no time or need. After I was kicked out of home, not one church member called me or visited me to see if I was OK or to give me any support, not even to baby-sit their children like I always had. Even my academy friends have pulled away from me, probably feeling that they have little in common with me. They are right, I suppose, since my concerns of what to wear to vespers and of being 'put on social' have now been replaced by rent payments and groceries. For now I guess I don't have much need for the church and their social circles, but I still pray often, and God is truly after all my best friend."

Happiness and satisfaction

Not all youth are disappointed. *Some have found their faith to be satisfying and fulfilling.* Here are some comments: "Overall I feel the SDA [faith] is the closest thing to the truth. We are a group of people who have a lot of faith in God. I am happy with my religion and plan to stay with it throughout my education and my life." "I love my church and the fellowship we have." "I am very satisfied with my religion. I want to become so much more in life, for myself and for Christ. I'm fighting to be more like Him for my sake and for His."

Often that satisfaction is related to belonging to a local congregation that is warm and caring. "My church is very interesting. When anyone has problems, everyone helps each other out. They respect everyone. They take everyone for who he or she is. My whole family from both sides goes there." "I was recently rebaptized. I found that I loved the church. Church now is something that I look forward to and enjoy. I have joined the collegiate choir and am also volunteering some time in a youth center, working to set up a program to aid pregnant teenage mothers. Though money is tight and the loss of my mom's job has put pressure on the whole family, I can still

"Church and a new relationship with God have given me a new life, and I am eternally grateful! Our religion is wonderful!"

'turn it over to Jesus' and smile the rest of the day! Church and a new relationship with God have given me a new life, and I am eternally grateful! Our religion is wonderful!"

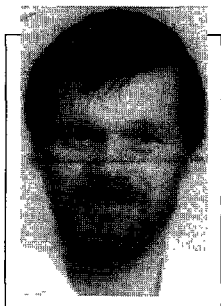
Jesus did not countenance sin, but He loved sinners and drew them to Him. Sometimes a teenager is fortunate enough to find a local congregation that models such an attitude. The effect can be very poignant. "Recently my boyfriend and I had a baby boy. While we love each other very much, I myself don't feel I'm ready for marriage. My boyfriend and I have been together for two years, and I feel we have grown together both mentally and physically. We are giving our baby all the love and security we can until the time comes when we feel we are ready for marriage. While our church does not fully agree with our decision, they are standing beside us and helping us out where they can. It has helped to go to church and still be welcome. Even though I've made a lot of mistakes, I want my little boy to grow up with the knowledge that Jesus is his Saviour too."

We have selected only a sample from our large collection of comments. This sample helps us get a feel of what North American Adventist youth are saying. The cry of youth! A cry for significance, a cry for genuineness, a cry for relationship, a cry for understanding and support. Our young people are at risk. A whole generation could be lost to the church. And yet it is a generation of promise and idealism, a generation that might lead the church on to final victory. The loving, supportive attitudes these youth find in their local congregations could spell the difference between failure or success. ■

Investigative judgment—a scriptural concept

Eric C. Livingston

Investigative judgment does not threaten a believer's assurance, but enhances it.



Eric Livingston is a pastor-evangelist in Emerald, Queensland, Australia.

The Adventist doctrine of a last-day investigative judgment raises a twofold objection from critics. One aspect concerns God's knowledge; the other the believer's assurance. Says Hoekema, a foremost critic of the Adventist position: "The investigative judgment doctrine impugns the sovereignty of God, since it implies that neither God the Father nor Christ knows who are truly God's people until after this examination has been concluded. This distinction between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins which Seventh-day Adventists make jeopardizes the security of the child of God, and makes it impossible for anyone to know, even in the hour of his death, whether he is saved or not."¹

This article seeks to show that the idea of an inquiry stage in God's judgments is explicit from the first sin, and that believers' apprehension of this fact is a basis for present reassurance. It will be shown that this attests the equity of Deity, that it does not deny divine omniscience, and that it has pastoral relevance for the faithful.²

Genesis—the foundation of a historical pattern

From God's handling of the first sin a pattern of (and for) judicial procedure emerges. First comes the inquiry, or investigation: "Where are you?" "Who told you?" "Have you eaten of the tree?"

"What is this that you have done?" (Gen. 3:9-13). It is only after this investigation³ that decisions are announced (verses 14-19) and executed (verse 22ff).

The whole episode portrays, among other things, fair and considered dealing in each case. We find no arbitrariness, as each successive question (naturally) follows the previous question. A willingness to dialogue, probe, and reflect is evident. Investigation suggests deliberation, openness, and equity.

This encounter with sin in Genesis is God's first reaction to an alien principle invading His ordered system of relationships. It sets a pattern, in principle, for future reactions by God to man's sin. As sin multiplied, God's judgments were not portrayed as personal and immediate. Hence the importance to note the principles in their clarity at the outset.

The equitable value of a deliberative, investigative phase of judgment was reinforced in the Cain-Abel-Yahweh episode. "Where is Abel your brother?" "What have you done?" (Gen. 4:9, 10). The same sequence is repeated: sin, investigation, and then the verdict of the Judge.

From the audioevaluation (God asking questions) in Genesis 3 and 4, the Scriptures move to visual evaluations in Genesis 6 (the Flood), 10 (the Tower of Babel), and 18 (Sodom and Gomorrah). Some legal and semilegal language, suggesting judicial inquiry, is used in these accounts,⁴ but the general pictures themselves portray God's thorough investiga-

tion prior to judicial action. We see this in Genesis 11:5-6: "And Yahweh came down to see the city and the tower which the sons of mankind built.

"And Yahweh said, 'Behold, the people are one, and they all have one language, and this they are beginning to do . . .'" Yahweh chooses to picture Himself as one who investigates firsthand, reflects, and then decides.⁵

The divine judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah was an "example," or "pattern" (2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7; cf. Deut. 29:23; Isa. 1:10). The way God depicts His handling of this pattern judgment is significant. Most of Genesis 18 and 19 describes God's deliberations prior to His punitive act. Abraham has loved ones in *Sodom and surrounding cities* (Gen. 13; 14). The patriarch might misunderstand this severe judgment, so Yahweh reveals His intentions beforehand (Gen. 18:16-19).

Abraham was the founding father of a unique nation designed to "keep the way of Yahweh to do righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19). Thus he needed to be inducted into God's open,⁶ deliberative inquiry phase of divine judgment.⁷ Later covenantal legislation reflected this: "The judges shall carefully inquire" (Deut. 19:18); "Then you shall inquire, and make search, and ask diligently" (Deut. 13:14); "and inquired diligently" (Deut. 17:4).

Accordingly, Yahweh gives an anthropomorphic representation of a personal investigation to make His judicial procedure very clear: "And Yahweh said, 'The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah (because it is much) and their sin (because it is great)—I will go down now, and I will see if they have done completely according to its outcry coming to Me, and if not I will know'" (Gen. 18:20, 21).

As with the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:5), the all-knowing Yahweh has no personal need to "go down" in order to "know," but He thoughtfully accommodates Himself to the needs of His limited creatures. A "public" investigation reassures onlookers. "God chooses this mode of procedure to make apparent the fact that He, as Just Judge of all the earth, does nothing without first being in full possession of all facts."⁸

In sum, it seems quite significant that from the beginning, and in the clearest manner, God would portray Himself as conducting diligent investigation into a case prior to taking decisive action. This

would reassure all onlookers of God's objectivity and impartiality in judgment by making "public" the facts upon which weighty decisions are made. The design is not to deny God's omniscience, but to share it.

Lawsuit and court trial imagery in the prophets

Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, and other prophets make frequent use of language and imagery taken from the law court. Israel and the nations are arrayed before God's judgment bar, facts are stated, inquires are made, and reasoning is invited (e.g., Isa. 1; 43:8-13, 22-28).

In Isaiah 45:19ff the nations "are to present their arguments and state their case in a public examination of the issues involved."⁹ Earlier, Yahweh summons Judah: "Cause Me to remember, let us judge together; you relate [your case], that you may be justified" (Isa. 43:26).¹⁰

The great Judge is willing to be informed or reminded, meaning "you shall have a fair hearing; no evidence shall be suppressed."¹¹

Knowing His innocence, and feeling secure in God as justifier of His people in judgment, the Servant in Isaiah turns the picture around. He challenges any adversary to file a lawsuit (cf. Zech. 3:1), because "near is my Vindicator, who will contend with me? Let us stand together. Who is the master of my judgment? Let him come near to me" (Isa. 50:8).

It is apparent that the "investigative judgment" concept has a variety of presentations. In the patriarchal period the inquiry notion is acted out by Yahweh; in the prophets it is communicated through vivid literary pictures of legal summons and court trials. In the pre-Israelite period God addresses His judicial investigations informally to individuals (Gen. 3; 4) or reports similarly about certain groups of people (Gen. 6; 11; 18). In the prophets, and hence after establishment of the formal Yahweh-Israel covenant (Ex. 24:3-8), a more formal judicial approach is given through court scenes, with a sharp distinction made between Israel and other nations (cf. Isa. 43:8-13 with 22-28).

The important point to note, though, is that throughout the historical variety we see a consistent portrayal of the inquiry phase in God's judicial procedure. This continues through New Testament times,¹² and accordingly should consti-

Throughout the historical variety we see a consistent portrayal of the inquiry phase in God's judicial procedure.

tute part of the biblical prerepresentation of the great final judgment.

The fact that the New Testament projects the Sodom and Gomorrah judgment of eternal fire as a "pattern"¹³ judgment encourages us to view God's handling of the whole event. It is well to remember that the biblical retelling is dominated by Yahweh's prior investigation with its "justice" dialogue (Gen. 18:19).

Now, because there is a consistent portrayal of the inquiry phase in God's judicial process, believers caught in critical situations reacted in a definite way, like the Servant of Isaiah 50 (though not so calmly). This is more frequently seen in the Writings.

The Writings—man's response

It is in the Writings that humanity's response to God is particularly found. The book of Psalms is the heart of this response.

In the Psalms the believer resoundingly and positively echoes the idea of God's judicial investigations. Four times the psalmist cries out, "Judge me" (Ps. 7:8; 26:1; 35:24; 43:1). The contexts indicate that a judicial examination with its consequent verdict of justification (for the faithful) is in view:¹⁴ "Judge me, Yahweh; for, in my integrity, I have walked, and in Yahweh I have trusted; I shall not slide. Examine me, Yahweh, and test me; try my reins and my heart. For Your covenant loyalty is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth" (Ps. 26:1-4).

Many times the psalmist was falsely accused from within the covenant community,¹⁵ leading to relational crises. Even friends the psalmist had helped became

God's omniscience is not threatened by His public or semipublic inquiries into human affairs.

defamers (Ps. 35:11-17).

When human justice failed, the psalmist found refuge in God, who fairly and thoroughly investigates cries for judgment that come before Him. The disclosure of such an inquiry would vindicate the loyal covenant member. Such was David's thought in his perplexing experiences fleeing before Saul:¹⁶

"And David said to Saul, Why do you listen to men's words, saying, Behold, David is seeking to do you evil? Yahweh will be judge, and will judge between me and you. And He will see, and plead my cause (lawsuit), and judicially deliver me from your hand" (1 Sam. 24:9-15).

This hope probably formed the background to more than one psalm of David (cf. superscripts of Psalms 57 and 142). Some commentators see a sacral lawsuit actually acted out at the sanctuary.¹⁷ Consider the following: "If any man trespass against his neighbor, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before Your altar in this house: then hear Thou in heaven and do, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness" (1 Kings 8:31, 32).

The suppliant would bring his case to Yahweh and possibly wait until the morning for a priest to pronounce an oracle of vindication (cf. Ps. 17).

Whether an immediate answer was forthcoming, or whether believers were metaphorically anticipating an ultimate eschatological reality¹⁸ in inviting God's scrutiny, one fact is apparent—a divine investigative judgment was the psalmist's desire in times of false accusation. It was perceived and appropriated as an opportunity for a vindication, both public and authoritative—an arena necessarily beyond that bounded by one's own pri-

vate conscience and the local community.¹⁹

Conclusion

The idea and practice of an investigative phase in God's judgments have appeared consistently through history. It is seen in narrative, legislative, prophetic, and poetic literature of the Torah, Prophets, and Writings. God acts out His investigative judgment to Abraham and has it legislated for judicial dealings within Israel. The prophets use it when proclaiming Yahweh's messages. God's people appeal to it to restore harmony to fragmented community life.

God's omniscience is not threatened by His public or semipublic inquiries into human affairs. Rather, such investigations provide a forum for God to share facts with finite minds, helping them understand His consequent actions. Prejudgment investigation evinces deliberation and equity and an absence of arbitrariness and partiality, speaking eloquently of the ways of God.

Appreciating this does not threaten a believer's assurance, but enhances it. The psalmists found this so. When their personal peace and community harmony were jeopardized, they appealed to God for a judicial examination, believing that a public revelation of the facts would vindicate their cause and restore peace in Israel. The Servant of Isaiah 50 was secure in his Vindicator being near at time of trial.

The same contributions of an "investigative judgment" are for "Israel" today, and for the universe as events lead to the great assize and universal restoration of harmony. ■

¹ Anthony H. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults* (Ann Arbor, Mich., 1963), p. 122, as quoted in Arnold V. Wallenkampf and W. Richard Leshner, eds., *The Sanctuary and the Atonement* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981), p. 595. Similarly W. Martin, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism* (London, Edinburgh: Marshall, Morgan, and Scott, 1960), pp. 179, 182.

² The Scriptures have been selected to cover a range of literature and time. Concentration on some has meant omission of others (including the fruitful field of Job), but the prevalence of the "investigative judgment" theme will be clearly seen. Scriptural passages in this article are from the King James Version or are the writer's own translation.

³ Various referred to as "the trial," "a legal process," "the inquest," "the trial proceedings." See John C. L. Gibson, *Genesis, Vol. 1* (Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press, 1981), p. 133; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis* (London: SCM Press, 1972), p. 91; C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11* (Minneapolis: Augsburg,

1984), p. 253; John Skinner, *Genesis* (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1930), p. 76.

⁴ For example, *s'q*, "cry out" over injustice (Gen. 4:10; 18:21; cf. Ex. 22:23, 27; Judges 4:3; Ps. 107:6, 28; Job 19:7); *mspt* (Gen. 18:19); *sdqh* (18:19). Also, *r' h* "see" is often used in Genesis to convey the idea of understanding and perception through reflection, evaluation, and inquiry (6:5, 11; 11:5; 18:21; 26:28; 27:27; 30:1, 9; 31:50; 37:14; 39:14; 41:33, 41).

⁵ "Jehovah's 'coming down' . . . is an anthropomorphic description of God's interposition in the actions of men, primarily a 'judicial cognizance of the actual fact,' and then, verse 7, a judicial infliction of punishment." C. F. Keil, *Commentary on the OT* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 1:173.

"This shows the patience and long-suffering of God, that He did not immediately proceed against them, and His wisdom and justice in taking cognizance of the affair, and inquiring into it; examining the truth and reality of things before He passed judgment and took measures to hinder them in the execution of their design; all of which must be understood agreeably to the Divine Majesty, and as accommodated to the capacities of men, and as an instruction to them in judging matters they have a concern in." John Gill, *Gill's Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980 reprint), vol. 1, p. 70.

⁶ That is, "open" to key personnel.

⁷ See Skinner and Keil, on Gen. 18:17-19.

⁸ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942), vol. 1, p. 547.

⁹ ———, *Exposition of Isaiah* (London: Evangelical Press, 1968), vol. 2, p. 130.

¹⁰ The verb *sdq* is used three times in law-court imagery in Isaiah: 43:9, 26; 45:25. Each time it appears in the same category or aspect of the Hebrew verb (the simple) as it does in Daniel 8:14, where the context also calls for the restorative work of judgment.

¹¹ Leupold, *Isaiah*, vol. 2, p. 94.

¹² For example, in Christ's parable relating to the examination of the wedding guests prior to the marriage (Matt. 22:11-14); Rev. 11:1; 14:7 (notice the pre-Advent setting of this verse).

¹³ (*Hupo*) *deigma*, 1 Peter 2:6; Jude 7. Cf. usage elsewhere (e.g. Heb. 8:5).

¹⁴ Psalms 42 and 43 are to be linked together.

¹⁵ Psalms 7; 26; 28; 31; 42; 43.

¹⁶ Happily, it is again becoming acceptable to see the life experiences of David as a background to many psalms. Quite a number of the individual laments well reflect the changing fortunes of David.

¹⁷ There have been various modifications of the precise process since Hans Schmidt's popularization of the idea earlier in this century.

¹⁸ This was not unique thinking in the ancient Near East. The Egyptians posited an eschatological examination, by a heavenly tribunal, of candidates hoping to enjoy the bliss of an afterlife. However, the Israelite anticipation was completely different because of the gracious terms of the covenant. The faithful Israelite had good reason to be confident because "He who justifies me is near" (Isa. 50:8).

¹⁹ The bold psalmic statements of self-righteousness and imprecation are often to be understood against this background. While those falsely accused keenly sought personal vindication (hence claims to righteousness or covenant conformity), the thought of treachery to Yahweh and the prized covenant ideal of truth, peace, and justice may have called forth hyperbolic utterances against the enemy (the imprecations). Compare Psalm 139 (especially verses 17-24).

Evangelism and the ecumenical movement

Bert B. Beach

While there are pitfalls in the ecumenical understanding of evangelism, there are enriching dimensions as well.



Bert Beach, Ph.D., is the director of public affairs, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, and a keen student of ecumenical trends.

The 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh may well be considered the foundation stone for the modern ecumenical movement.

That it was a “missionary” conference indicates an early connection between ecumenism and evangelism. In 1921 the Edinburgh Continuation Committee evolved into the International Missionary Council. When the council was founded, many viewed it not only as an instrument to coordinate the evangelistic and missionary activities of various national missionary societies, but also as an agency to unite Christians in the search for justice in international and interracial relationships. This early tendency toward a sociopolitical orientation in mission needs to be remembered for its influence on the World Council of Churches later. In 1961 the International Missionary Council was integrated into the World Council of Churches. The result: the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism. At that time, the advocates of the merger claimed that the integration was being done because the WCC had taken “the missionary task into the very heart of its life.”¹ However, its subsequent history seems to indicate that the WCC has been suffering from evangelistic heart trouble!

Though evangelism played a role during the organization of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948, it was largely lost sight of until 1975, when

the Nairobi assembly reaffirmed its commitment to evangelism. Likewise, the WCC Central Committee meeting in 1982 also issued a declaration on evangelism.

In 1973 the Bangkok meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism called for a moratorium on North Atlantic missionaries. Many perceived this as an ecumenical trend away from traditional missionary work. This step, in fact, followed the Barbados Declaration of 1971, which resulted from a WCC financed symposium on racism. The declaration called for the suspension of “all missionary activity” among South American Indians because evangelization of this native population was considered a spurious religious approach akin to colonialism.²

The next major WCC conference on evangelism was held in Melbourne in 1980. The theme “Your Kingdom Come” did not refer to the Second Advent, but to good news, especially for the poor—*now*. Though the conference affirmed proclamation, it essentially ignored the question of evangelistic proclamation to nonChristians.

In 1989 two major world ecumenical conferences on mission and evangelism took place. The WCC Commission on World Mission and Evangelism met in San Antonio, Texas. A month later the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization held its conference in Manila. There was very little cooperation between the two conferences: the first followed the WCC line: the second the approach of “conservative evangelicals.”

Instead of calling people *out* of the world through conversion, ecumenical evangelism invites people in conversion *into* the world to perform deeds of faith.

As Alan Neeley and James R. Scherer have noted, the two conferences didn't pass each other as ships in the night, but signaled each other as ships passing in the day.

The two conferences stressed clearly two different approaches. The San Antonio meetings emphasized mission in Christ's way by making the *gospel* known in *deed* and word. This emphasis included the new dimension of ecological concerns as part of mission. Evangelism was mentioned only in a perfunctory way, and the hope of the Second Coming escaped all reference. The Manila conference, on the other hand, focused on the theme "Proclaim Christ Until He Comes"—to make *Christ* known in *word* and *deed*. The Manila conference recognized social action as needed, but stressed evangelism as primary.³

So much on historical landmarks; now we turn to specific consideration of the World Council of Churches and evangelism.

WCC and evangelism

The term *evangelism* (and even more so *evangelization*) is hardly seen in WCC documents since the New Delhi assembly in 1961. This has led Priscilla Pope-Levison to state that evangelism is a "suppressed concept in WCC circles."⁴ Among ecumenists, the favored terms are *witness* and *mission*, not evangelism.

Both the New Delhi assembly of the World Council of Churches (1961) and the Mexico City meeting of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism (1963) saw evangelism as the "whole church" presenting "the whole gospel to the whole world." However, it was made

clear that the whole gospel includes not only proclamation of Christ but working for justice and peace, including political action. Instead of calling people *out* of the world through conversion, ecumenical evangelism invites people in conversion *into* the world to perform deeds of faith. The whole gospel, in ecumenical understanding, not only reconciles individuals with God but *structures* them in their work, including the socioeconomic realm. Evangelistic proclamation (Melbourne, 1980), we are told, can never be general ("Jesus saves"), but must be specific and contextual. Especially, it needs to denounce injustices in order to make proclamation both credible and trustworthy.

In 1982 the WCC produced an important document entitled "Mission and Evangelism: An Ecumenical Affirmation." Several concepts emerged from this study:

1. Evangelism and social action go together.

2. Evangelism must make the good news a reality in the life of the poor.

3. Evangelism must encourage personal conversion through accepting the saving lordship of Christ.

4. Evangelism must sow seed locally in order to develop local churches (a rather new evangelistic concept in WCC documents).

The 1982 WCC document also challenged member churches to witness to Christ's uniqueness and "cooperate in witnessing to the millions of people who have not yet had an opportunity to respond to the gospel."⁵

In 1989 the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism met in San Antonio. This was a crucial conference for defining the relationship between ecumenism and evangelization. Out of this conference's reports, six concepts relative to evangelism may be noted:

1. The conference saw the just use and distribution of land as an important aspect of fulfilling mission in Christ's way.

2. After hearing reports that some U.S.-based churches, parachurch organizations, and sects supported "ideologies and practices of domination through evangelism and aid programmes that promote and protect U.S. interests," the session called for an end to evangelistic practices that promote U.S. hegemony.⁶ Arie Brouwer, then general secretary of the National Council of the Churches of

Christ in the U.S.A., went so far as to denounce the "pernicious" connection between national power and conservative evangelical foreign mission enterprises.⁷

3. The conference declared that "material" and "spiritual" gospel must be one.⁸

4. The conference endorsed the idea that the mission of WCC involves participation in struggle and suffering. This includes the *use of power* in violent action where nonviolent means "have been tried and crushed."⁹ All this was seen as part of the missionary task working for justice.

5. San Antonio saw an "inextricable relationship" between ecumenism and evangelization, and postulated that working the way of Christ requires that churches "necessarily join their actions where possible."¹⁰

6. Eugene Stockwell, the retiring director (1984-1989) of the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism, spoke on the topic "Mission Issues for Today and Tomorrow." What were the issues? He talked about foreign debt; global annihilation; the pain of war, torture, hunger, poverty, and divisions. He said nothing about the problem and pain of billions lost in sin without salvation. For him, apparently, this was not one of the mission issues for today and tomorrow.

Evangelistic issues in the setting of ecumenism

Evangelism and social responsibility. As we have already indicated, the mainline ecumenical movement has emphasized socioeconomic and political involvement to the neglect of proclamation evangelism. In San Antonio, not surprisingly, the emphasis was on *doing* evangelism by defending the needy and the oppressed, denouncing racism, classism, sexism, and even nationalism.

We can agree that the gospel must be both *heard* and *seen*, and that gospel *deeds* must accompany gospel *words*. We need good news and good works, but the overarching responsibility must be evangelism.

It is interesting to note that conservative evangelicals have moved toward social concern as part of Christian mission. However, they still give evangelistic proclamation priority. For example, the "Grand Rapids Report—Evangelism and Social Responsibility" of June 1982 proposed three proper relationships be-

tween evangelism and social responsibility:

1. Social action is a consequence of evangelism (evangelism precedes).

2. Social action can be a bridge to evangelism (evangelism follows).

3. Social action accompanies evangelism (evangelism accompanies).

John Stott is right: social action is not evangelism, and mission must include both evangelism and service. Social action is part of our Christian service responsibility. It is a thrust parallel with evangelism, but not evangelism.

Evangelism and proselytism. The mainline ecumenical movement has condemned "proselytism." But what is proselytism? There are two basic definitions. First, the dictionary definition that refers to converting a person from one belief to another—and this has been the traditional understanding of evangelism since the days of Paul. Second, the ecumenical definition that refers to "corrupt witness," using wrong methods, such as offering material inducements, making false statements regarding other churches, playing on the ignorance of people.

Increasingly, proselytism is seen as evangelizing the wrong address! San Antonio declared: "Active proselytism aimed at gaining members from another Christian church is contrary to the spirit of Christ." But San Antonio went even further: Evangelism that does not promote good relationships with other Christians "must inevitably be called into question"¹¹

How much good relationships can evangelism really promote when members leave one church to join another? Little, if any. The result of following that dictum would be no evangelism among those who already have church membership, even if in name only. Apparently this is what the WCC and most ecumenists would like to see.

Another aspect of evangelism, seen as corrupt witness and proselytic in nature, is "programmes for denominational aggrandizement."¹² Furthermore, San Antonio declared that witness deteriorates into counterwitness when there is a denial of "the authenticity of the faith experience of other Christians. All unhealthy competition in mission work should be avoided as constituting a distorted form of mission,"¹³ and therefore being proselytism. It should be noted, in passing, that the Manila conference of con-

servative evangelicals (1989) also indicated that churches and mission agencies should cooperate in evangelism and repudiate "competition" and "duplication."

In theory, San Antonio recognized that Christian churches can become "ingrown," "stagnant," not involved in evangelism. In such cases, Christians should not try to evangelize other groups with a view to drawing them away from their traditional churches, but rather "play a catalytic role in renewal for mission" and identify with the local faith community.¹⁴ In practice, this approach would make Seventh-day Adventist evangelism almost impossible in a country like Greece.

Ecumenism, evangelism, and non-Christian faiths. Dealing with non-Christian religions is certainly an important aspect of evangelism. How does ecumenism view the Christian relationship to other great religions? The traditional evangelical position has been that salvation is only through Christ and that the gospel must go to all. The ecumenical position is much more open and sees salvation in other religions. The Vancouver assembly (1983) stated that in all great religions there is a true search for God (but it didn't actually say that this search could find God!).

The San Antonio conference stated that it is the Christian task to invite others to accept the lordship of Christ. On the other hand, Christians must also recognize that they can never claim to have a full understanding of truth, and that they "cannot set limits to the saving power of God." As Christians we can testify that Christ is *our* salvation, but San Antonio did not say Christians can testify that Christ is also *their* (non-Christians') salvation. Christians are to be witnesses, not judges of others; they can be "missionary" and "nonaggressive" at the same time.¹⁵ "Jesus is not the only way" if this means that one has to "name Jesus" to be saved. We need to be open to "God's gifts of grace so evident" in many other religions.¹⁶ Emilio Castro, the WCC general secretary, stated at the San Antonio conference that the "cause of God's kingdom has other advocates" outside the Christian church and that "others are engaged in God's mission even without knowing the name of Jesus." Such others include those fighting for freedom and justice.¹⁷

These statements are somewhat ambiguous. There is in WCC circles an unresolved tension between the evangelistic commission and the concept that

As Seventh-day Adventists we believe that this church has a special task to proclaim the message of salvation in its end-time setting.

"God is present in and at work in people of other faiths." In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, there is a similar polarity between the urgency of the missionary task of preaching the gospel in preparation for the promised return of the soon-coming Lord and the assurance that God is mighty to save even outside organized Christianity.

However, as Seventh-day Adventists we believe that this church has a special task to proclaim the message of salvation in its end-time setting. We also know that God's saving action reaches out beyond the borders of our church and even beyond other Christian churches to those within non-Christian religions or those with no religion (Rom. 2:14, 15). But we also know that Christian evangelization cannot relinquish or relativize the truth—including "present truth"—in a current defensive or apologetic reaction to past Christian arrogance and the sins of Western colonialism. There is, indeed, "no other name" (Acts 4:12, NKJV). However, if our evangelization is to be credible and successful, then we ourselves as its agents must not obscure the good news by sloppy biblical understanding, isolationism, divisions, self-seeking material greed, and unjust practices within the church.

Evangelism and dialogue. The ecumenical movement has long advocated dialogue and has been involved in it, including bilateral and multilateral dialogues with "living faiths." Some see dialogue as a form of evangelism, but many ecumenists view dialogue as something different from evangelism. The

Roman Catholic Church, more than any other, is involved in ecumenical dialogue. Pope John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptoris Missio* makes it clear that "dialogue does not dispense from evangelization."¹⁸ Though dialogue and evangelism are connected, they are not identical, and those involved in dialogue must be "consistent" with their own religious beliefs, with no "abandonment of principles."¹⁹ I would fully agree. In dialogue you need what Hans Küng has called *standhaftigkeit*, that is, the courage and resistance of standing fast and firm.

The San Antonio conference stated that witness, far from precluding dialogue, invites dialogue. Dialogue "extends and deepens" witness. True dialogue does not water down Christian commitment, but is rather an "encounter of commitments."²⁰ In dialoguing with others, Christians are to discern the unsearchable riches of God.²¹ However, dialogue must always be conducted on the basis of equality, one-to-one—otherwise there is really no dialogue.

Contributions and pitfalls

To be fair, we must acknowledge several insights that the ecumenical movement (WCC) has given to theological understanding, with implications for evangelism. Such understandings should lead us to affirm that:

- sin is not limited to personal life, but includes collective life.
- the gospel is not to be equated with or obscured by a given culture.
- the gospel has a justice dimension that requires Christian involvement.
- evangelism/mission has a special option for the poor.
- worship of success becomes idol worship.
- institutional aggrandizement must not be equated with gospel advance.
- mission includes stewardship of the earth's resources.
- the sin of discrimination (race, sex, language, culture) denies the gospel.
- evangelization is the primary responsibility of the local congregations.
- evangelization with domination is wrong.

We live in an ecumenical age. We need to be aware of evangelistic dimensions and pitfalls that ecumenism brings with it. While our commitment to proclamation of the gospel must ever remain paramount, our methods and strategies

should take into account these principles:

- We must be committed to social responsibility, including standing for justice and peace.

- Our evangelistic strategies should be sensitive to the values of divergent peoples, and we should not seek cultural domination.

- Impure motives and unworthy methods such as concern for declining membership, subtle political agendas, and rivalry with others have no place in evangelistic endeavors.

- We must maintain a constant vigil against secularism (absence of ultimate, theocentric meaning) infiltrating our churches and ministry. Interestingly enough, San Antonio suggested a way to combat this peril: not succumb to the spirit of the age nor withdraw into a "ghetto existence," but adopt a simple lifestyle "in which sharing and solidarity have priority over possession and individualism."²² Simple lifestyle is certainly in harmony with vintage Adventism.

- Evangelism must acknowledge and promote the role of the laity, both men and women.

- We may use dialogue with appropriate parameters.

- We must promote human rights and religious liberty because it is right to do so, not because we will benefit as individuals or as a church.

- Evangelism must avoid narrow, exclusivistic, introverted approaches. We should not ignore what other Christians are doing, and should acknowledge that all agencies that lift up Christ are part of the divine plan for the evangelization of the world.²³

- In all that we do, we need to be faithful to the golden rule and deal fairly and honestly with other people, churches, and religions. We need to abide by the scriptural principle of always being ready to give a reason for our faith, but doing it with humility, respect, and honesty (1 Peter 3:15, 16). ■

¹ *The New Delhi Report*, ed. W. A. Visser 't Hooft (London: S.C.M. Press, 1962), pp. 249, 250.

² See Bert B. Beach, *Ecumenism: Boon or Bane?* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1974), p. 183.

³ Alan Neeley and James R. Scherer, *Missiology*, April 1990.

⁴ Priscilla Pope-Levison, "Evangelism in the World Council of Churches, Part One: From New Delhi to Vancouver," *International Review of Mission* 80 (1991): 242.

⁵ *International Review of Mission* 71 (1982):

427-451.

⁶ *The San Antonio Report*, ed. Frederick R. Wilson (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1990), p. 51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 28.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 75, 29.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 127.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

¹⁸ *Redemptoris Missio*, encyclical letter of John Paul II (Vatican City: Libearia Editrice Vaticana, December 1990), p. 95.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

²⁰ *The San Antonio Report*, pp. 32, 33.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 32.

²³ See *Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1990-1991), pp. 371-373.

The goodness of guilt

From page 4

the cross enables Him to accept us and adopt us into His family. When we exchange what the world offers for what Christ offers, we stand clean before the law, just as if we'd never done wrong—in fact, just as if we'd always done everything the law requires.

Many Adventists imagine themselves under the partial curse of God. If they get grouchy, they feel 5 percent condemned; when they lose their temper, perhaps 20 or 30 percent under condemnation. But either we are outside of Christ and 100 percent guilty before God, or we are safely in Christ with no guilt. "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1). No condemnation in Christ—zero guilt before God's holy law.

Balanced Christianity honors both law and grace. The law keeps us humble, and grace keeps us happy. Humble and happy—that's the way we ought to live. ■

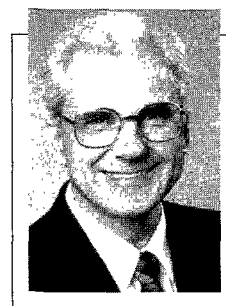
* All Bible passages in this article are from The New King James Version.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, Calif., Pacific Press Pub. Assn.), p. 518.

Look and learn

Ronald Stradowsky

How we change through observation learning



Ronald Stradowsky, Ph.D., is director of education and family life for the Euro-Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

A

German pastor nearing retirement had been overweight for several years. His doctor was worried, and so was his family. A chorus of well-meaning voices urged, "You ought to do something about exercising."

The pastor shared their concern. He was particularly worried about his heart condition, a serious threat for a man almost 60. Nevertheless, the daily pastoral routine continued to prevail over his good intentions to get going with an exercise program.

Then suddenly he changed. A new, active lifestyle emerged from his attendance at a pastoral retreat. A psychologist there showed a film about a San Francisco waiter jogging to and from work every day—at the age of 104. The man's wrinkled face radiated health and satisfaction.

Viewing this remarkable model created a desire in the pastor to go and do likewise. He started to jog, even inviting houseguests along on his daily run through Black Forest trails.

One morning as he and I stumbled over roots and rocks, I personally got the impact of the health promotion film he had seen. Although my knowledge of that San Francisco waiter was second-hand, I nevertheless felt challenged by his example. And I received new insight into a process called "change through beholding," more often known as "observation learning."

Attitudes are caught

Children imitate parents. Most of our values and attitudes are learned from

persons whom we grow up watching. A toddler takes pride in sweeping the kitchen just like her mother. Even teenagers who insist upon independent values still tend to reflect those of their family.

In a study of values, Adventist researcher Roger Dudley found that children from conservative homes showed greater conformity with their parents' convictions than did their peers with a less distinctive value orientation.¹ Dudley's study of teenagers in the United States did not suggest they were carbon copies of their parents, but it cast doubt upon the common wisdom that strict parenting causes children to revolt against the family's lifestyle. It seems that parents who talk about their faith in order to "pass on the torch" enjoy success toward that end.

The past 20 years have seen increasing interest among social psychologists in the study of attitudes. Experimental research in the area of traffic education confirms that human modeling is the best method in bringing about attitudinal change.² Students exposed to rational argumentation and pictures of traffic accidents did not register attitude transformation as much as those who were exposed to the testimonies and advice of a selected group of safe and considerate drivers.³

Not all are equally good models

Much research has gone into learning which factors make some "human models" more successful than others. As ministers know so well, not everyone responds positively to a given person. We need to select an appropriate model to whichever target group we want to reach.

Some general principles are apparent

from television commercials. People who display what we value most, what we dream of, exert the strongest appeal upon us. It is no surprise, therefore, to see featured predominantly young and healthy actors with clear skin and white teeth. We wonder if a film on jogging promotion featuring a 104-year-old would be effective with all age groups.

Advertising psychology involves not only the choice of a suitable model but also the linking of two sets of impressions: (1) someone is seen doing something; and (2) he or she enjoys doing it and thus gains some advantage or reward. Often we find some absurd associations and combinations. Think of the rugged man in his cowboy hat amid untamed

nature, enjoying a certain brand of cigarette. His suntanned appearance and powerful posture suggest that strength and independence go with smoking.

The essence of power in attitude change is best summed up in Albert Bandura's concept of "vicarious reinforcement."⁴ We observe an admirable person receiving a reward (reinforcement) for doing something good. Just the sight of someone else being rewarded produces much the same effect as if we ourselves had been rewarded. In this vicarious process we bask in the glow of another's accomplishments. Among other things, this implies that we need not always learn through personal experiences, since we can thus participate in those of others.

The best model

The best model is obviously the visibly rewarded individual: a pastor who radiates joy and success tends to attract young people into the ministry; the housewife who testifies to answered prayer in front of the assembled church influences some listeners to change their attitude toward prayer. Research indicates that effective human models appeal to our inmost yearnings. Argumentation also has an influence; no doubt, our values and attitudes are a mix of intellectual and emotional ingredients. But with many, the door to attitude change is primarily the appeal to emotions that comes from witnessing others who are rewarded and fulfilled.

We Christians claim Jesus as our supreme example. Our sermons and songs suggest that we become changed by beholding Him. Is this "beholding" the same as observation learning?

The Gospels show Jesus as a powerful presence, a vibrant force of attraction that won Him a harvest of followers. He often promised them rewards, a fact overlooked by some squeamish altruists. The truth is that Jesus Himself has already been rewarded, as if to show us "what's in it" for us. He who conquered death has received a seat of honor at the right hand of God.




While we marvel at the modeling power of Jesus while on this earth, we wonder how effective He is today as an invisible model. Is the visibility of being rewarded essential?

Visibility through faith

It is indeed a miracle of faith to know Jesus in the way one can experience a


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close friend. This requires an inner vision comparable to that of Elisha's servant, who suddenly perceived what had been hidden from his normal sight: the presence of God's power around a besieged town in Samaria (see 2 Kings 6:17).

How much of this inner vision is available to us through the Holy Spirit? Is there anything we can do to improve our ability to see Jesus?

The beloved song says:

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face;
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace."

The apostle Paul never met Jesus personally, but he did see Him in vision, and that gave him power to proclaim the

living Christ. How can we behold Jesus for ourselves? Should we spend hours inwardly visualizing His death, as did Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits? Ellen White has the answer in *The Desire of Ages*. She recommends that we "spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ" (p. 83).

No doubt, the talent of "seeing" the invisible Christ is not shared equally by all believers. In fact, we wonder if perhaps our power of inspired imagining has been dwarfed by disuse. At best, our vision of Christ will be somewhat secondhand. We read in the Gospels what others have seen—and even they were not always eyewitnesses. Thus, what we are able to perceive now is as through a glass, darkly" (1 Cor. 13:12).

Perhaps here again we find the paradox of the "mustard seed" principle. God

seems to prefer small and unassuming models that call for our faith. After ages of limited visibility in Old Testament times, a young Carpenter provided a compelling vision of God's love. Jesus did not leave enough of a biography to give even the most spiritual believer more than "just a glimpse." And yet this glimpse—perhaps against some laws of communication and advertising—translates into a powerful live model. ■

¹ Janet Leigh Kangas and Roger L. Dudley, "How Adventist Teenagers Perceive Their Church," *Ministry*, October 1989. Also, Roger Dudley, *Passing On the Torch* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1986).

² Robert M. Gagne, *Conditions of Learning* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1977).

³ *Ibid.*, p. 248.

⁴ Albert Bandura, *Principles of Behavior Modification* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1969).

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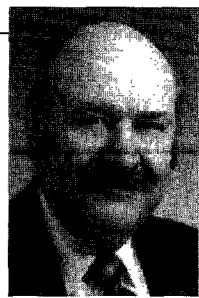
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Sending tithe to independent ministries

Cyril Miller

A Union president shares his views on independent ministries, tithes sent to them, the rumor mills, and how they affect the ministry of the church.



Cyril Miller is the president of Southwestern Union Conference, Burlison, Texas. Reprinted with slight editorial changes from the January 1992 Southwestern Union Record.

Most independent ministries are not ministries at all. They are private organizations!

That's right! They are *private organizations* owned and operated by a few private incorporators who primarily advance their own personal views and interests.

Also, a number of these private organizations circulate publications that criticize the church and malign its leaders with a barrage of false, misleading, or even lying accusations.

Why? Some think it is for the sole purpose of generating tithe and offering support from our members whose love, confidence, and loyalty for the church are strained. Others say not so; but it is happening anyhow.

Is the church at war?

Yes, many of the so-called independent ministries do nothing but attack and harass our pastors or conference leaders and depreciate our educational and medical institutions.

Recently one very loyal and loving pastor confessed that both his congregations had several independent ministry supporters, and they were depressing him and making him physically ill.

He said, "The pressure is too great! Their attitudes produce tension and strife, and they in turn give our church very little financial support." He sounded like he wanted to leave and find a better place to serve.

How many independent ministries are there?

The General Conference has identified nearly 800 private organizations, most of which seek our members' finan-

cial support. I sincerely wonder why some of our good church members send them God's tithe and do not support their local church and conference. It is almost like a conspiracy.

Again, most of the so-called independent ministries are not ministries at all. True gospel ministry extends loving care to heal the hurts of people. However, most of these private-interest organizations do not!

What do they do for you?

Almost nothing! Do they call when you are discouraged? No! Do they visit when you are sick? No! Do they support your Pathfinders or youth camp? No! Do they subsidize your church school? No! Do they pay your pastor's salary? No! Do they support your academies and college? No!

They won't even be around to conduct your funeral when you die! Well... what do they do, anyway?

How much tithe do private organizations receive each year?

Enough for the General Conference to cut back its home and overseas budgets \$8 million this year and call home some missionaries.

In addition, North American conferences have been forced to cut back their budgets and reduce pastors and teachers drastically. One local field has reduced one third of its workers during the past three or four years. The church is suffering.

Last year alone, one private organization received \$1.6 million. Yet it spent \$1.8 million. So, they face grave financial problems and are intensifying their publications of outlandish criticisms of the church to raise more tithe and offerings from our members.

Obviously, the more sensational their charges, such as pastors using hypnotism

in the pulpit, the more money they seem to raise. This is the same method used by certain radio-TV evangelists.

They are using the church and its leaders as a whipping post to stir up our people emotionally and draw increased financial support. When we respond to such tactics, we become pawns in their hands to be manipulated and misled. All this undermines the church.

Someone must speak out.

Yes, I know these are strong statements, but someone must speak out. Someone must help our members think it through for themselves. Why? Because the future of our church and many precious souls are seriously in peril.

Another former pastor who challenged our denomination's doctrinal teachings and the gift of prophecy received more than \$5 million in tithes and offerings during one calendar year. That's a lot more than many conferences receive annually and enough to live in luxury for a lifetime.

Another group, which regularly mails its two-color publication to our homes, was taking in \$200,000 to \$300,000 just a few years ago. And today I am sure the figure is considerably higher, because the group is very aggressive and is attracting more attention.

What do private organizations do with God's holy tithe?

We do not know, but U.S. federal law requires private nonprofit corporations to file annual 990 IRS forms to report their financial operations. I also believe donors have a right to know.

Again, how much tithe do the nearly 800 private organizations receive each year? No one but God and the IRS actually knows. Obviously, some research could reveal the facts. I think it would be good to know. Don't you?

Could it be that some may be personally profiting and perhaps becoming rich as their private organizations take multiplied millions away from God's storehouse each year? Many think this is possible.

What difference does it make?

Some members, standing on the sidelines, may say, "What difference does it make?" But those who love the church say, "It makes a lot of difference." Our already overworked pastors must now serve additional churches, and that's not

all.

Conference subsidies to our church schools, academies, and colleges are not able to keep pace with our higher than national inflation rate in the field of education. As a result, tuition must be raised disproportionately each year, and it is pricing Christian education out of reach.

What can we do?

First, when others approach you personally or by mail with the latest rumor or scandal about your church, beware. They are spreading deadly poison that is destroying your church. And I fear many who are being shaken out of the church will eventually lose their souls.

Second, when you ask, "Have you heard?" or "What about this or that?" recognize the "stirring the pot," and the possibility that you are a partner with them in creating suspicion and loss of credibility.

Third, and most important, please join those of us who are praying that God will lift us out of this tragic rut and move us forward to fulfill our mission to prepare for the coming of Jesus.

My greatest concern is for the newly baptized members and our youth, who are easy targets for the deceitful and devastating attacks of certain private organizations that destroy confidence in the church and its leadership.

Private organizations challenge God's remnant church.

Let me share an experience that illustrates their bold, determined efforts to secure God's tithe. One leader of a private organization came to my office to protest one of my articles that stated that all of God's tithe should be placed in God's storehouse through the local church treasury.

I asked him why he believed his and other private organizations should benefit from God's tithe. He answered, "Because our conferences are using it incorrectly." I asked, "What do you mean?" He said, "Davenport."

Knowing it wasn't so, I asked, "Can you name a conference that has used tithe for Davenport investments?" It soon became obvious that he could not name a single one, because conferences don't use tithe that way.

Then I responded with concern, "Is it honest to say that Davenport is a reason for not returning tithe to the conference when you cannot name even one confer-

My greatest concern is for the newly baptized members and our youth, who are easy targets for the attacks of certain private organizations.

ence that has used God's tithe for that purpose?" He didn't answer.

Then I said, "What else? What other reason do you have for our members not returning tithe to the conference storehouse?" He said, "Ford preachers in your pulpits." Again I asked, "Can you name any?" He couldn't identify one, not even one.

So I asked again, "Is that honest?" Again, he did not answer. Then I said, "I do not understand how you can say there are 'new theology' pastors in our pulpits when you cannot name any."

Strangely enough, this didn't seem to alter his opinion. And so it is, religious bigotry and fanaticism always believes what it wants to believe regardless of the truth.

And now I ask you, how can you or anyone else believe such things when they obviously are not true? Could it be, as the Bible says, some will be given over to strong delusions so they will actually believe lies? I hope not!

What about celebration churches?

I have encountered similar experiences with criticisms against celebration churches and charges that our pastors are using hypnotism in the pulpit because they received Lab I and II training for winning souls and reclaiming backsliders. Needless to say, this hypnotism allegation is utterly ridiculous.

Actually, I know of only four true self-proclaimed celebration churches in all the North America Division, one on the East Coast and three out West.

Yet the rumor mongers make it sound like celebration churches are spreading

like a plague and have become a major problem to Adventism.

I personally attended the most castigated celebration church in California and found it considerably different from what all the misleading critics claimed was happening. Still some believe what they want to believe, even when it isn't true.

A retired pastor and his wife said to me, "We draw the line when it comes to dancing in the aisles." I answered, "That isn't happening." Yet they were strongly aroused and resisted my statement. Later they attended this famous celebration church, saw for themselves that dancing in the aisles did not occur, and changed their minds.

Also, a leading layman met me in the church lobby one Sabbath to ask, "What has happened to . . . ? When he was our pastor he did not even lean toward celebration worship."

I replied, "Do not believe what you read in the independent publications. They are very misleading." Then I suggested, "The next time you visit out there, go and see for yourself."

Later, when I met him at camp meeting, he said, "Brother Miller, the celebration church wasn't anything like they said it was." So I said, "You need to help others understand and expose the false fund-raising propaganda coming from certain independent organizations."

Do pastors practice mind control?

It is grossly misleading and downright sinful to say that our pastors are practicing hypnotism and mind control from their pulpits. Our dedicated pastors who received Lab I and II training were not taught these things at all. May God help all of us to be factual and honest.

If you meet someone who believes these absurd allegations against our pastors, why not ask this person, "Can you name any?" His/her answer will be either silence or no! Then ask, "Is it honest for you or anyone else to repeat such nonsense just because you read it in a very unreliable independent publication?"

Friends, when we meet people who deliberately raise serious questions about such nonsense, it is a dead giveaway that they are being adversely influenced by those seeking financial support for their private organizations.

You see, leaders of independent ministries have discovered that the more they condemn the church, the more money

they receive. And today they are straining hard, even to the point of absurdity, to cook up new and more sensational issues to harp on! So please be careful, and do not be fooled by the deceptions of their psychological onslaughts.

All of us should earnestly ask God to help us keep our beautiful love relationship with Jesus Christ and His wonderful church. Some obviously are being shaken out of the church by these extremists operating outside the church.

True or false shepherds?

Are you aware that the speakers, writers, and leaders of the so-called independent ministries are not currently licensed or credentialed ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Also, some very prominent ones have been removed from church membership! They are certainly not role models or safe leaders to follow.

You see, the General Conference does not allow anyone not employed by the church to be licensed to preach or teach in our churches and schools. (This does not include local church elders.) So you can understand why some are so adamant against our pastors and denominational leaders.

Yes, they are on the outside by choice. Yet if they have a valid ministry, they should come inside to give support and not war against the church.

Private organizations do not give financial reports to donors.

Are you aware that these private organizations, previously called independent ministries, are not audited by the General Conference Auditing Service, as all of our conferences and their educational and other institutions are?

They probably are not even audited by an outside auditing firm as required for our Adventist health-care institutions. May I ask, is it safe to give your tithe and offerings to private organizations that operate totally in the dark?

You see, none of these so-called independent ministries reveal how much they pay themselves and their associates, as our conferences do! Who knows what they are doing with the millions of tithe dollars they receive?

The church is an open book.

By contrast, our conferences give monthly annual financial reports so that elected people from our churches and conferences may know and understand

everything that happens and give reports to the churches when needed.

Our conferences also disclose how much money each employee receives for salary, educational, health benefits, and travel expenses.

We are fully open and transparent. This gives our members confidence in the credibility of our duly constituted church organizations. Truly, we are accountable to our members and conference organizations.

Checks and balances.

What controls do independent ministries have to keep self-serving and other financial abuses from developing in their private organizations? How do you know such things are not already occurring? They are accountable to no one!

Does God approve of His tithe being given to a few pious, extremely critical, and divisive persons who operate independently and totally on their own judgment without accountability? No, of course not!

Neither should anyone with sound judgment take such a position. Such a course would not be safe, and furthermore it would not be right. God doesn't work that way. He never has, and never will.

The Sabbath and tithing are a test for God's people.

Do you think God is pleased when we knowingly misdirect our worship to some other day than His holy Sabbath? All true Seventh-day Adventists will give only one answer—no! The Sabbath is a test of our loyalty to God.

Likewise, do you think God is pleased when we as Seventh-day Adventists knowingly misdirect the use of His holy tithe to any other place than His divinely appointed conference storehouse? Again, all true Seventh-day Adventists will give only one answer—no! Tithing is a test of our honesty as God's stewards.

What about Ellen White?

Didn't Ellen White regularly give her tithe to independent ministries? No! Neither did she advocate it. Read the article on Ellen White and her tithe published in the *Adventist Review*, November 7, 1991, and you will discover the truth on this subject.

Please do not be misled by just part of the story. You must have the whole picture to understand it fully. ■

Dissident groups: the threat and the truth

D. Douglas Devnich

The leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada offers important counsel beneficial to members around the world.



D. Douglas Devnich is president of the SDA Church in Canada, Oshawa, Ontario. Reprinted with slight editorial changes from the December Canadian Union Messenger.

T

here are times when one must be totally frank. For some time I have hesitated to write on a certain subject that some have urged upon me.

Recently, however, my participation in a weekend of spiritual emphasis convinced me it is time to address a problem that is tearing out the heart of Adventism and its mission. The local church where I was speaking—and others as well—are being scandalized by dissident “ministries” whose leaders claim that “mainstream” Adventism is in apostasy. These “masquerading ministries” assert themselves as the only ones who still give the “straight testimony,” the only remaining representatives of the “True Witness.”

Consider, for example, this quotation from the journal *Our Firm Foundation* (*OFF*): “What a shaking we face with 6 million members, the majority of whom do not understand the three angels’ messages and the message of the cleansing of the sanctuary” (November 1991).

Even though I admit that we who preach and teach could do better at preaching Jesus Christ in the context of the three angels’ messages and of the sanctuary doctrine, it is irresponsible to allege that the majority of today’s Adventists do not understand this matter of great importance. The implication is that the editorial staff of *OFF* enjoys superior understanding and if anyone wishes to have that esoteric knowledge, he or she must read the journal and give financial support to the *OFF* organization.

Before I go on to share with you some important information about several dissident “splinter groups” that now plague the church, may I give you my personal reasons for having hesitated to address this issue?

1. Gamaliel (Acts 5:34-39), a wise man, suggests that if a cause is of men it will fail, but if it is of God, one would not want to be found opposing it or God.

2. The apostle Paul (Phil. 1:15-18), a spiritual man, advises that if Christ is preached, even from wrong motives, we ought to rejoice.

Now, however, the evidence is clear that several of the leaders of such groups and the writings or tapes they produce do not measure up to the standards of 1 and 2 above. So I choose now to follow Paul’s challenge, as stated in 1 Corinthians 14:7, 8: “If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will any one know what is played? And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle?” (RSV).

As a leader it is my duty to inform the members of our church in Canada of what is causing confusion today in the same way the “speaking in tongues” (babbling) confused the church in Paul’s day.

Many pages could be filled with compelling information that would help Adventists who personally know Jesus Christ to see the importance of dissociating from the dissident leaders and organizations that position themselves as the “true” and the “faithful” guardians of historic Adventism. However, the constraints of space limit me to making only

passing reference to some, while placing emphasis on others.

For your information, Charles Wheeling, who has promoted private teachings and programs, is no longer a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Fellow members of his own local church voted to drop his name from the members' list. The Bible teaches us that the body of believers is able to discern what is true from what is false. I would suggest that Wheeling's former congregation acted prudently.

There is documented evidence that the Prophecy Countdown program directed by John Osborne is a controvertible operation. Documentation indicates serious allegations against the operation and its director. John Osborne was disfellowshipped from the Florida Conference membership for his "apostasy."

I wish now to return to a discussion about the content and methods of the Firm Foundation organization. The September issue of *OFF* carried an article from Ralph Larson entitled "The Tithe Problem—Who Is Responsible?" Careful readers recognized many half-truths therein. Typical of many articles in the *OFF* magazine, it distorts the writings of Ellen G. White to make her say what the *OFF* authors want her to say. On several occasions I have cross-checked the Spirit of Prophecy references with the original text and have found gross misquotations drawn out of context. (This is a phenomenon not limited to dissidents, unfortunately.)

The Ralph Larson article leaves the false impression that E. G. White would approve of individual church members withholding tithe from the local church treasury, preventing it from passing through denominational channels. The Larson article further emphasizes that because of the "unsanctified attitudes" of ministers in the church, members should exercise their individual choice of which ministries they should support with their tithe and offerings. Those ministries are supposedly outside of the organized church.

Now, here is the real tragedy. That article is only a sample of how deceptive *OFF* writings are quite regularly. Unless the readers of *OFF* are vigilant, they will miss the deception. I refer you to the following quotation in full as given in the Larson article:

"God desires to bring men into direct relation with Himself. . . . Every man has

been made a steward of sacred trusts; each is to discharge his trust according to the direction of the Giver; and by each an account of his stewardship must be rendered to God. . . . We are responsible to invest this means ourselves" (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, pp. 176, 177).

If you actually go to volume 7 of the *Testimonies* and read that passage you will find that Ellen G. White does not even use the word "tithe" in her article. The testimony, entitled "The Author" (pp. 176-181), addresses the issue of whether denominational publishing houses should pay royalties to authors of published books and articles. Ellen White's point is that authors should be allowed "to hold the stewardship of their own works."

Larson's use of ellipses (. . .) pulls together sentences that are not connected in the original source. He applies the words "we are responsible to invest this means ourselves" to make Ellen White address the issue of tithe, when in fact she addresses altogether a different issue—that of investing the returns or profits from authorship. In fact, Ellen White doesn't deal with the tithe question at all in that section of the *Testimonies*. So much for the "straight testimony" of *OFF* writers.

Dear brothers and sisters in the church, may I plead with you to consider how serious is the willful intent to mislead on the part of unscrupulous writers and speakers who sanctimoniously criticize others of falsity and apostasy. The very things they accuse others of doing are clearly things they themselves have problems with. Let us be more discerning about who we follow or what we proclaim to be special "light" for this time. Too frequently these merchants of dissension use a veneer of supposed late-breaking prophetic fulfillments to appeal to Adventists to give support to their causes. Repeatedly, fanciful reports of prophecies fulfilled have proved to be hoaxes.

For example, several years ago Jan Marcussen declared with certainty that he had inside information that President Reagan at that moment had on his desk a decree to sign that would enforce a national Sunday law. Church leaders at the General Conference found that to be a false claim, and of course to this day no decree has been signed by either President Reagan or Bush.

In discussing these problems of dissident independent groups, I in no way

claim that the organized church is without fault. I myself do not possess flawless judgment or deportment. However, I know that in this age of confusing, dissident voices it is far safer to commit my resources to God's service when it is directed by councils of trusted men and women, rather than to give support to individual operators who shun accountability to authorized boards and committees.

May God be with us as a church. Shall we not press together and help one another toward the kingdom of heaven? When we know Christ, we can trust that He will lead us personally and help His church to fulfill its divinely ordained purpose. ■

The case of John Osborne has caused much perplexity. He has become famous or notorious for his videos on celebration worship and supposed New Age infiltration into the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He has never been ordained as a minister and neither was the Rolling Hills group an organized church.

The Rolling Hills Company was organized in 1987 with John Osborne as lay leader. In June of 1990 the Florida Conference Executive Committee removed Osborne as the lay leader because of his "recent public activity . . . that we feel does not correctly represent the Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists."

Conference administration was then given written notice that John Osborne and the Rolling Hills Company refused to accept the committee action. Conference leaders continued to work with this group but found them unyielding. Thus, on November 29, 1990, the Florida Conference Executive Committee disbanded the Rolling Hills Company.

Then on September 29, 1991, the same committee dropped John Osborne from membership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church for apostasy. It also voted "to accept the request of Dianne Osborne and Johnny Osborne to be dropped from the Florida Conference Church subject to verification by the conference officers that this is indeed their wish."

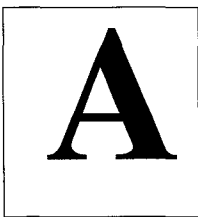
So John Osborne was disfellowshipped but his wife and son were kept on the records for the time being. In the meantime the Troy church in Montana voted in all three as members on profession of faith. Montana Conference leaders are now working to rectify that situation.

We will keep you informed as church leaders wrestle with the sometimes difficult task of keeping the balance between diversity and conformity.—Editors.



Sermon resources—IV: your people

Floyd Bresee



sign in the window of a variety store read "Dry goods and notions." I always loathed the possibility that it might fit over my pulpit. Dry goods—interesting and inspiring to nobody. Notions—shallow ideas spoken willy-nilly off the top of my head with no valuable insight, no spiritual depth.

Where does the preacher go to find something worth saying? We've looked at four sermon resources: your Bible, yourself (your personal relationship with Christ), your library, and your file. We conclude with another important resource: your people.

Know your people's problems

All preachers should study their Bibles. But the best preachers will also study their people. What are their needs? Where are they hurting?

The later years in pastoral ministry are dangerous years. Having once known the questions people wanted answered, we think we know now. But meanwhile the questions have shifted, and we end up answering questions only the older members are asking.

How do you learn your people's problems?

Visit. One member complained about her pastor, "He won't visit and he can't preach." The distinct possibility exists that he can't preach because he won't visit. Pastoral visitation is important to preaching. It protects us from the tendency to see our people as they look during the couple hours they spend in church rather than the way they live the

other 166 hours of the week.

Listen. The preacher's calling is to articulate the faith. We make our living by talking. No wonder one of the hardest things for us to do is listen. Yet we learn most when we're listening, and least when we're talking. We mustn't be too quick to offer solutions to people's problems. Even the balm of Gilead doesn't do much good if we start applying it before finding out where the pain is.

Seek spiritual solutions

Preachers are out of place and ineffective when their sermons give only human answers to human needs. We are not called to be amateur psychologists or off-the-cuff sociologists. Most needs preachers deal with are basically spiritual. The best answers to the problems of life are found in Christian theology, not in human sociology.

Too many modern preachers, in their commendable desire to meet people's needs, do not provide spiritual solutions. As Luccock illustrates: "This modern *Pilgrim's Progress* is not a journey to the celestial City of God, beginning with a load of sin falling from the back, and continuing in a life-and-death struggle with sin, but a pleasant little ramble to self-expression and success."

Paul warned, "For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Tim. 4:3, NIV). We must be wise enough to separate our listeners' wants from their needs. They may want us to help them *feel* good. But what they most need is a way to help

them *be* good. And that way is inevitably Godward.

Listening to your members not only helps you understand their needs, but can also help you find spiritual solutions. Some ministers meet with sermon committees to obtain spiritual insights on Bible texts and receive suggestions on problems to be addressed in upcoming sermons. Other preachers use a midweek service to give a brief biblical exegesis on the passage to be used in the next worship service sermon, then ask the group how the passage applies to life as they live it. The best ideas are included in the sermon being prepared.

Wed divine truth and human need

An intellectual may love truth and use people. A pastor must love people and use truth. For truth is of value only as it helps people. This is why pastors are in a position to be the best theologians, wedding divine truth and human need.

This was one secret of the Protestant Reformation's success. Look at three reformers whom we might call first, second, and third John: John Calvin was pastor of the central church in Geneva. He used his sermons to explore the basic issues of the Reformation. John Knox led the Scottish Reformation from the pulpit of his church in Edinburgh. John Wesley preached to the people of England three and four times a day, and his theology is found almost exclusively in his sermons.

Today is another time of radical change. It's a time for doing theology close to the people. Coffin said, "Preaching is putting the hands of the people into the hand of God." To accomplish that you must have hold of both hands. ■

The Jesus Style

Gayle D. Erwin. *Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1988, 185 pages, \$8.99. Reviewed by Chad McComas, pastor, Corvallis, Oregon.*

After reading numerous books on leadership principles and theory, I find this one of the best.

I appreciate Erwin's short, concise chapters on Christ's philosophy and style of leadership. Erwin, writing particularly for church leaders, bridges the centuries to draw contemporary applications from our Lord's teachings.

Erwin grabs the attention of self-assured leaders and brings them to their knees. Many leadership principles that society stresses as vital for success the author crushes under the heel of Jesus, whose pure motives in service confused even His friends. Jesus had nothing of a selfish nature to prove, and that freed Him for ministry.

The author helps us understand the process of the Jesus style of leadership.

Necessary to this process is assurance that we have a place in the kingdom of God. When we recognize God's love for us in spite of our shortcomings, then we become free to serve. How much we accomplish becomes less important than how we accomplish it.

I have been using material from *The Jesus Style* in my sermons. This small book becomes large in importance for me as it clarifies the principles and priorities needed in my local church.

The Coming Economic Earthquake

Larry Burkett, *Moody Press, Chicago, 1990, 230 pages, \$14.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Jerry Lastine, director of planned giving, Columbia Union Conference, Columbia, Maryland.*

"Signs throughout the United States economy are pointing to an impending economic collapse," declares Burkett, director of Christian Financial Concepts, in his latest book on stewardship.

The author gives an insightful analysis of the world's economic situation. He discusses the Depression years, gold and silver standards, fractional banking, inflation, spending patterns of elected officials, and crisis indicators. Burkett describes what 1999 could be like—a cashless society and a one-world system. He provides possible solutions for Christians to consider now before the crisis erupts.

The importance of Christian stewardship is evident after reading this book.

The Subtle Power of Spiritual Abuse: Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church

David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen, *Bethany House, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1991, 235 pages, \$7.95, paper. Reviewed by Wayne Willey, pastor, Bentonville, Arkansas.*

Some books merely give information, while others challenge our thinking. A few books make us look deep within ourselves and ask, "Lord, is it I?" This is one of them.

The authors identify spiritually abusive religious systems and provide a list of their characteristics. These include: (1) power posturing, where leaders are obsessed with their own authority and constantly remind others of it; (2) preoccupation with the performance of members, with emphasis on obedience and submission; (3) control by unwritten rules that are stated openly only after they have been violated; (4) an unbalanced approach to Christian obedience; (5) a fortress mentality in which paranoia causes one to hide the truth from the "evil, dangerous, or unspiritual people outside of the system who are trying to weaken or destroy us"; (6) a misplaced sense of loyalty to an organization, church, or leader rather than to Christ; (7) secretiveness where inappropriate behavior protects an image.

The authors define the results of spiritually abusive behavior, which include: (1) development of a distorted image of God; (2) preoccupation with spiritual performance, resulting either in self-righteousness or shame; (3) a skewed, usually negative self-identity; (4) development of behavior to prevent future abuse—either compliance with or defiance of spiritual authority; (5) difficulty accepting the free gift of God's grace; (6) difficulty admitting that abuse has taken place; (7) difficulty trusting any spiritual system again.

The case studies and applications made me aware of how easy it is for Christian leaders to cross the line into spiritually abusive behavior. At times the line between strong, dynamic leadership and abuse can be imperceptible.

Anyone holding a leadership role should read this book. Leaders need to

become more sensitive about the possibility of spiritual abuse.

Sundown Surprises

Pam Davis, *Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1990, 96 pages, \$6.95, paper. Reviewed by Rick Ferrett, pastor, Pitcairn Island, South Pacific.*

Have you been looking for creative ways to begin the Sabbath? Davis provides families with practical and enjoyable ideas for every Friday evening of the year. Much research and experience have gone into her books. Easy to read, simple to follow, *Sundown Surprises* fosters family interaction at its spiritual best.

Recently Noted

Overcoming Anxiety, Archibald D. Hart, Word Publishing, Dallas, 1989, 224 pages, \$14.99, hardcover.

The author gears his self-help approach to benefit the one out of every six persons who suffer from significant anxiety. Hart, dean of the Graduate School of Psychology and professor of psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary, provides information on preventing anxiety in our children, recognizing it in ourselves, and then controlling and treating it. Hart explains how professional help can benefit the sufferer and describes various anti-anxiety medications.

Reports indicate that baby boomers are increasingly becoming victims of panic disorder, phobias, and other forms of anxiety. Most pastors will have contact with parishioners suffering these conditions. One of the most comprehensive volumes available, written from a Christian perspective, *Overcoming Anxiety* will prove invaluable personally and in counseling.

The Power of Optimism: Your Action Plan to Bring Out the Best in Yourself, Take Charge of Your Life, Build Love Into Your Life, Keep Enthusiasm High, Alan Loy McGinnis, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1990, 163 pages, \$16.95, hardcover.

In this motivational book McGinnis, a Christian therapist, outlines techniques for incorporating an upbeat attitude through the stresses of life.

How to Preach: A Practical Guide to Better Sermons, Steven P. Vitrano, Ph.D., Review and Herald Publishing Associa-

tion, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1991, 93 pages, US\$7.95, Cdn\$9.95, paper.

Sermon preparation and delivery becomes easier for the lay preacher after reading this practical how-to book. *How to Preach* will also prove an invaluable tool for seminary students and seasoned ministers. Now professor emeritus at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, Vitrano taught preaching, worship, and evangelism for 30 years.

Sabbath School Program Planner, Book 2, *Dorothy Eaton Watts, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990, 107 pages, US\$7.95, Cdn\$9.95, paper.*

In volume 2 the author gives Sabbath school leaders all they need to present programs for holidays and special occasions. The book includes 14 proven programs complete with scripts, prayer suggestions, readings, special music, and congregational songs.

The Money Makeover: How to Get Control of Your Money and Your Life, *Rosemarie F. Patterson, Here's Life Publishers, San Bernardino, California, 1991, 271 pages, \$9.95, paper.*

A financial attorney specializing in bankruptcy, Patterson outlines 12 steps to manage money and avoid financial disaster. The author, writing from a Christian perspective, probes the source of money problems—personality, goals, and financial perceptions.

Love Broke Through, *Tom Stribling with Verne Becker, Zondervan Books, Grand Rapids, 1990, 200 pages, \$8.95, paper.*

A powerful story of a minister who, after struggling with homosexual urges, leaves his family and church. Twenty years later he faces the specter of AIDS. Only then does love break through for Stribling, and he devotes the rest of his short life to sharing God's love with other sufferers.

Before the Setting Sun: Twenty-Minute Worship Services for Residents of Health-Care Centers and Retirement Homes, *Roger and Shirley Prescott, C.S.S. Publishing Company, Lima, Ohio, 1990, \$4.75, paper.*

This small book will prove helpful for pastors and elders in giving short devotions in health-care facilities.

Spiritual Grandparenting: Bringing Our

Grandchildren to God, *Therese M. Boucher, Crossroad Publishing Company, New York, 1991, \$14.95, hardcover.*

Children today live in a world quite different from what their grandparents experienced. This book shows how to build communication bridges between these two worlds and how grandparents can pass on the torch of their spiritual heritage.

Slaying Your Dragons: How to Conquer Your Hang-ups, *Len D. McMillan, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1990, 95 pages, \$6.95, paper.*

The author tells how to do battle with our personal dragons, such as apathy, inadequacy, fear, obstacles, circumstances, success, and selfishness.

Working at Home: The Dream That's Becoming a Trend, *Lindsey O'Connor, Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, 1990, 220 pages, \$6.95, paper.*

O'Connor, owner of her own home business, gives tips on how others can do likewise. This could be a worthwhile book for pastors' wives desiring to work at home.

Getting Excited About Global Mission, *Dorothy Eaton Watts, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1989, 103 pages, \$6.95, paper.*

Part of the North American Division Ministries Series, this book suggests practical and workable ideas for getting your church involved in foreign mission.

Loving Again, *Joseph A. Ryan, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1991, 160 pages, \$7.95, paper.*

Ryan gives practical guidance for widowed persons considering dating and remarriage. The book is also a useful resource for families of widowed persons, and their pastors and counselors.

Pastoral Ethics: Professional Responsibilities of the Clergy, *Gaylord Noyce, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1988, 220 pages, \$13.95, paper.*

This second printing of a professional ethics manual for pastors discusses a framework for ethics. Noyce addresses occupational concerns such as leadership, preaching and teaching, pastoral care, financing ministry, relating to other clergy, public relations, evangelism,

The line between strong, dynamic leadership and spiritual abuse can be imperceptible.

church growth, and the pastor's personal life.

Ethics in Ministry: A Guide for the Professional, *Walter E. Wiest, and Elwyn A. Smith, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1990, 200 pages, \$12.95, paper.* The authors write for women and men in the full range of professional ministry. They deal frankly with conflict, tension, and ambiguity in ministry and parish life, and help develop skills and principles rather than rules and protocol.

The Myths of Sex Education, *Josh McDowell, Here's Life Publishers, San Bernardino, California, 1990, 302 pages, \$10.95, paper.*

McDowell details the current value-free presentation of sexuality in public schools. He gives research and statistics that shoot down the usual rationalizations about sex in today's society. He also suggests positive alternatives in resolving the teen sexuality crisis.

This book provides an informed basis for proposing abstinence as an intelligent choice, and is a must for anyone involved in teenage ministry as well as parenting.

Discussion Guides

Redeeming Time, *Ted W. Engstrom with Robert C. Larsen.*

Wholly Single, *Julia Duin.*

Tending Creation, *Dale and Sandy Larsen.*

Fulfilling Work, *R. Paul Stevens and Gerry Schoberg.*

Harold Shaw Publishers, Wheaton, Illinois, 1991, 48 pages, \$3.50 each, paper.

At a time when small groups are flourishing, Harold Shaw Publishers gives us a series that combines Bible study with real-life issues. Each book has eight studies that members of home and church groups can complete in 30 to 40 minutes.



Elders in the Trans-European Division

David Currie

They belong to the ranks of businesspersons, farmers, doctors, teachers, engineers, homemakers, and many other occupations. They have also been elected to the office of elder in their local church. The majority take their responsibilities seriously, yet often find themselves "hamstrung" in performing their duties. Causes for this frustration include a lack of communication, a lack of understanding as to what their real responsibilities are, and in some cases a lack of delegated work assigned to them.

In our division, local elders come from the Third World country of Pakistan to Eastern European Poland; from Sweden's sophistication to the war-stricken areas of Yugoslavia; from Iceland to Israel; from the British Isles to Finland; from the Netherlands to Hungary; and from Denmark to Greece. Everywhere local elders are needed, yet they must often work under severe strictures. Each country has its own diversity of challenges, resources needed, and services to be rendered by these lay servants of the church.

With an increasing shortage of salaried ministers, the Adventist Church today welcomes the strengths and talents of its elders as never before. This may be an indictment on previously held positions, but there is always room for improvement. The questions are: How we can do

David Currie, ministerial secretary for the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, writes from St. Albans, England.

better with what we already have in place? How can our division ministerial associations and church ministries departments equip local church elders to more effectively serve their congregations?

One immediate challenge is to bring together elders from a conference or union at least once a year to discuss ideas. The church in Poland took a big step forward by planning such a nationwide retreat. Elders will spend the weekend discussing the needs of local churches and what they can do about them. The program will be conducted by the Polish Union, assisted by the division church ministries director, James Huzzey, along with David Currie, division ministerial secretary.

Our presentations will include:

- format and styles of liturgy, such as singing, prayer, and Scripture reading, and their effect on worship.
- the preaching plan for the year.
- types of sermons that feed the membership.
- the places to get sermon resources.
- ways to visit members.

When local elders and pastors are equipped with adequate training and resources, the church benefits greatly.

- ways to plan for church growth.
- the function of local church committees.
- drawing up an agenda for board of elders meetings.

In division-wide ministers' meetings, we are also discussing, at length, the role that local elders should have in assisting the pastor, and also as leaders in their own right.

Often elders see the need for constructive change but are not sure exactly what should be done to remedy the situation. Further, even with ideas in hand, the challenge remains of how to implement them.

Among the most serious problems everywhere is the disappearance of members. This includes youth in particular, but also older persons who do not find their church spiritually vibrant and sufficiently friendly. The church cannot imagine that "everything is all right and the problem is with those who no longer worship with us." As society is constantly updating its methods (though not always for the best), so the church must look for ways to improve performance.

Remember that you, as a local church elder, are a key person in achieving the goals of your church. Although a crowded schedule may hamper you from doing much of what you want to do to help, keep looking for opportunities to share your creative ideas and practical talents. When local elders and pastors are equipped with adequate training and resources, the church benefits greatly. A more informed leadership can wisely implement changes. The monthly Elders' Page in *Ministry* will help in this. ■

Letters

From page 2

to be taken as a casebook account of legend from primitive times? How much is fanciful, how much is adornment of limited data concerning actual events, and how much is bedtime-style stories God has used for the development of a relationship with Him until people were supposedly capable of understanding or appreciating the actual historical details?

There is much benefit to be derived from considering the Bible as both a casebook and a codebook.—Robert H. Brown, Yucaipa, California.

Worship

I appreciate the airing of various views on celebration worship in *Ministry*. Our church is in need of changes. However, I believe the issue raises some questions that require careful consideration:

Have we discovered in drama and theatrics a more powerful and impressive way to reach hearts than in the Word of God?

Is there any danger that the stage is crowding out the pulpit?

Should we be training better scriptwriters and actors?

Is there any danger that we might denigrate the Bible?

Is our religion more the nature of a stimulus than an abiding faith?

Is it possible that our religious exercises might have too much of self and too little of Jesus?

Is celebration worship in character with the most solemn message ever committed to mortals?

Is the world separating into two classes—those who can't live with the Bible, those who can't live without it?—Trevor Hoover, pastor, Apison Seventh-day Adventist Church, Apison, Tennessee.

■ I read all the articles in the October issue of *Ministry* on worship. Some arguments advanced for a more expressive type of worship are not sound. There is a difference between cheering fellow human beings at a ball game and praising a holy God in His house of worship. Angels veil their faces and fall prostrate in adoration

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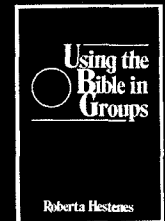
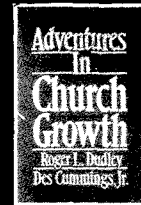
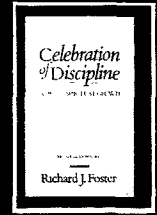
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before a holy God and in awe cry "Holy, holy, holy." Isaiah's response to this was one of reverential awe—"Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips . . . : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts" (Isa. 6:5-7; cf. Rev. 7:9-12).

I attended a celebration church. I could see some good in it, but I was uncomfortable there. The music to me

was incompatible with worship. The handclapping also had a negative impact on me. If we were to go to the original biblical languages, we would be hard pressed to find the clapping of hands as a form of worship. In every case in the original where clapping of hands is involved in worship, the "hands" are in the singular.—G. L. Burton, Shattuck, Oklahoma.



Intensive care center

Each Sabbath our deacons on a rotating basis set up a table at which members can sign greeting cards for those who are absent or ill. Deacons then send or deliver the cards on their way home from church.

I've seen that our people really do care about one another. Having these cards available offers them opportunity to express their concern. During my visitation I often hear how the many expressions of personal greeting can boost the spirits of a member in need.—Pastor Don Maddox, Sherman Oaks, California.

Lower stress, better results

Here are my suggestions for pastors to make their work less taxing and more effective:

1. *Delegate authority.* Pastors cannot be experts in every other aspect of church life such as finances, administration, music, etc.

2. *Don't play God.* Forget the illusion of perfection. There has been only one absolutely perfect person in history. Admit that you can make mistakes.

3. *Don't blame yourself* when problems are not your fault. The situation often improves when you learn to relax.

4. *Take an hour off* for daily exercise. Let your church board know of your plans, and be flexible in times of crisis.—David F. Conrad, Oneonta, Alabama

Camera ministry

You probably know someone in your church who enjoys photography. This talent can become an effective ministry. A volunteer church photographer can serve according to

the following job description:

1. Bring your camera to all church services and functions.

2. Take individual pictures for everyone involved in special events such as infant dedications and baptismal services.

3. A month before the end of each church year, take a picture of various individuals functioning in their places of service. The pastor can include these photos in thank-you letters to the organist and pianist, choir director and members, Sunday school teachers, board members, ushers, and greeters.

4. Take pictures of church events for publicity purposes, such as the newsletter, posters, and fliers.

5. Be willing to take slides for programs such as Vacation Bible School, Christmas and Easter, baby day, and children's day.

Some church photographers may want to fund their ministry personally. Perhaps it will be necessary for the church to budget this important expenditure.—Betty B. Robertson, Bethany, Oklahoma.

Evangelism sermons manual

W. C. Scales has come up with another dynamic soul-winning tool. The *Practical Evangelism Sermons Manual* features the word-for-word manuscripts of 21 powerful, Bible-based, field-tested sermons. Also included are tips on leading students through the valley of decision to accept Christ and be baptized. Available for US\$29.95 postpaid through Creation Enterprises International, P.O. Box 274,

Siloam Springs, Arkansas 72761. International orders add \$3. In the United States, phone your order toll-free: 1/800/522-4CEI.

SDA periodical index

Would you like to keep track of what Adventist magazines are publishing, but you don't have time to read them all (except *Ministry*, of course)? The *SDA Periodical Index* keeps you up to date with all the information in 35 Adventist journals. Listings are categorized by topic, Bible texts, and author. All this and more comes to you for \$20 per year. Back issues are also available. Order from Del Webb Library, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA 92350 or phone 714/824-4581.

Science sermons

Use the wonder of science to illustrate the gospel to the children in your audience. For example, a simple electromagnet reveals the importance of a faith connection with Christ in attracting others to know Him too. When we connect the wires to battery terminals, paper clips cling to the bolt at the core of the magnet. Paper clips share the magnetism with others to form a chain, illustrating our unity in the body of Christ.

Another science lesson comes from invisible ink. You can use a fountain pen filled with milk or lemon juice to write on blank paper. In contact with a heat source such as an iron, your written words previously unseen, will be revealed. Likewise, the warmth of the Holy Spirit reveals the hidden messages of the Scriptures.

One more science

illustration: drop a few iodine crystals into a glass of water. Soon it has a dirty brown color, representing guilt from our sinfulness. Now add a few hypo crystals, or drops of photographic fixer, and the water instantly returns to being crystal-clear. Even so, when we accept Jesus He clears away our sinfulness.—Steward Sutton, Mullumbimby, Australia.

Wanted: 20th Century Bible Correspondence Course

I am in desperate need of the old 20th Century Bible Correspondence Course by H.M.S. Richards, with film strips, tape and script.

If anyone has these lessons, please write. I would be happy to pay a reasonable price.—E. H. Langley, 20 Chevin Gardens, Top Valley Estate, Nottingham NGS93S, England.

Tape ministry phone number

A number of pastors expressed interest in the *Truth for Today* tapes for door-to-door witnessing which were featured in last December's Shop Talk. Some could not get through. Try this number: 317/497-2293. Pastor Bob Forss says that the cost of the 14 tapes remains US\$65, postpaid in the United States.

1991 Ministry index

Last year's subject and author index has now been prepared by Del Webb Library at Loma Linda University. You may receive copies at no charge by sending a self-addressed envelope to *Ministry*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.