

# Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

Make  
the **Word**  
**Relevant**

## Toward a workable structure

James Ellithorpe ("Toward a Workable Structure," December 1994) suggests we eliminate local conferences and establish districts of 20 or more churches, with each district served by a pastoral team accountable to the union conference. The team under the leadership of a senior pastor "with gifts and abilities in administration" would consist of pastors specializing "in pastoral care, evangelism, visitation, missing member ministry, youth ministry, etc."

If the makeup of this "district" and its staff sounds familiar, what he's describing is the typical local conference! Ellithorpe's restructuring of the church is nothing more than a call for the elimination of the local pastorate.

Given Ellithorpe's view of ministry, this may make sense; he seems to think pastors should do nothing more than sit in a gadget-filled office and administer programs. It's worth pointing out that the trend in business today is to place as many of your best people as possible in those positions that put them in direct contact with the public. Ellithorpe's plan would do just the opposite. The result would be disaster.—Greg Brothers, Moscow, Idaho.

■ No organizational model will be perfect. However, the following principles are helpful in considering church structure.

1. An organizational structure must, first and foremost, serve and assist the body of Christ to accomplish its mission.

2. It should be based on a biblical foundation.

3. It needs to maximize our financial and human resources.

4. It must maintain and nurture the unity of the worldwide Adventist movement.

5. It should promote governance by committees at every level from the local church upward.

6. It should strive for right balance between the "paid" ministry and the "unpaid" one.

7. Growth, matched by availability of trained leaders and financial viability,

should determine the creation of new institutions.

8. Departments that impact the local church need to be as close as possible to it.

Only when the church uplifts the cross and allows for the mighty ministry of the Holy Spirit will all these be achieved.—F. Edgar Nunes, Durban, South Africa.

## Pastoring in a complex world

The pastor's salary (David E. Thomas, "Pastoring in a Complex World," February 1995) ought to be higher or at least as high as that of the departmental personnel. While they promote various activities, the real responsibility rests on pastors.

The salary differential may not be significant, but if it were in favor of the pastor, it would send a message reverberating throughout our worldwide organization that the pastor is important—really the most important cog in our organization. The whole organization ultimately rests on the pastor. The pastor is the shepherd who nurtures and feeds the sheep. That nurture is an important factor in the financial support of the church.

It's time to give recognition to whom recognition is due.—Arnold V. Wallenkampf, Luray, Virginia.

■ I concur with David Thomas that salary increases for pastors have not kept pace with inflation, putting considerable pressure on them.

However, I can't quite agree with his conclusion that "pastoring is no longer a major concern of the Seventh-day Adventist Church." His arguments to support the statement—percentage of gross tithe income spent on pastoral salaries, resources available to ministers in the field, disparity in salaries between pastors and administrative (or departmental) workers—may be true in North America, and some of these points are also true in Great Britain, however, I think it is taking the argument too far to conclude that pastoring is no longer a high priority.—John Ferguson, Kettering, England.

## Is there a place for Christian drama?

I found John Kendall's article ("Is There a Place for Christian Drama?" February 1995) poorly supported and contrary to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy.

First, the writer assumes that "narrative" and "drama" are the same. The *American Heritage Dictionary* defines narrative as "a narrated account; story . . . or [the] process of narrating." Drama means "a prose or verse composition written for or as if for performance by actors; a play."

Based partly on this definition, I disagree with Kendall. Some of his examples are narrative or poetic (e.g., "Song of Solomon"). Others are actual accounts of what happened (e.g., Job's tragedy). They may have been dramatic, but they are not drama. Ezekiel is one good example of biblical drama, even though he was acting out a real story under direct command from God. Ezekiel also received other commands (such as lying on his side for more than a year) that God does not ask us to do.

Another reason for my disagreement with Kendall is that the Bible and Ellen White are against drama. The "Passion play in the desert" was not an exciting play, but an impressive, solemn ceremony in which the Israelites didn't always want to be (Ex. 20:19).

Ellen White in *The Kress Collection* (p. 159) says, "Has God given you intellect? Is it for you to manage according to your inclinations? Can you glorify God by being educated to represent characters in plays, and to amuse audiences with fables? Has not the Lord given you intellect to be used to His name's glory in proclaiming the gospel of Christ. . . . Satan's ruling passion is to pervert the intellect and cause men to long for shows and theatrical performances. The experience and character of all who engage in this work will be in accordance with the food given to the mind."

I agree with Kendall on the effects of drama. Southern College has an excellent drama team (Destiny Drama Company), and they have moved me. However, I haven't found it to be lasting

*Continued on page 26*

As I compose these paragraphs, I bring greetings to you from Budapest where more than 800 pastors and spouses from 22 countries in the Trans-European Division have gathered for the inaugural session of the World Ministers Council. Similar sessions will be hosted in every division over the next five years.

Rex Edwards, Walter Pearson, Sharon Cress, and I of the Ministerial Association, along with more than a dozen colleagues from various entities, have experienced great blessings as we have joined our efforts with these pastoral families for five days of spiritual and professional growth. A full report of this great event, which culminates on Sabbath with the personal encouragement to pastoral teams by General Conference president Robert S. Folkenberg, will appear in the December issue.

As publisher of *Ministry*, it gives me personal delight to introduce the first editorial by our new editor, Willmore D. Eva. At the heart of his message is the necessity of lifting up Jesus in our preaching and he practices what he writes. Coming directly from serving as pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Kettering, Ohio, Will brings a depth of insight and a broad width of ability to this new assignment. The January 1996 issue will be the first complete issue under Will's direction. In the mid-1980s Will and I coventured the publication of *Praxis*, a journal of pastoral excellence. I look forward to working together again, and anticipate that Will's creative talents will challenge and motivate your pastoral experience.

The best days for Adventist ministry lie just before us. I encourage you to strive for excellence and faithfulness in your service, as we will in ours!



- 2 Letters
- 4 Proclaiming whom we know  
Willmore D. Eva
- 5 Make the Word relevant  
Rex D. Edwards
- 10 Would you worship God in a mosque?  
Boguslav Dabrowski
- 12 The minister: a minister of finance, too?  
Paul J. Sánchez
- 14 Hard hearts, crushed souls  
Carol June Hooker
- 18 Independent ministries: an African speaks out  
Mel H. M. Matinyi
- 20 The intern supervisor training event  
David VanDenburgh
- 23 Team ministry  
James A. Cress
- 24 Training for pastors: a German model  
Ekkehardt Mueller
- 28 Biblio File
- 31 Shop Talk

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# Proclaiming whom we know

Willmore D. Eva

As I write my first words as editor of *Ministry*, I find myself under an unrelated yet familiar deadline. I have not yet left my church in Kettering, Ohio, to join the *Ministry* staff. I must still have a sermon ready for the church family by Friday afternoon at five—my self-imposed deadline for completed sermon preparation.

This will be the next-to-last sermon I will preach after more than five years with people who have become true friends. As their pastor I know that they are busy professionals, many working in the fluctuating, unpredictable world of U.S. health care. As I think of what I want to say to them, I am again humbled into a kind of inner creative preoccupation that swells into a familiar spiritual travail that reaches its height as Friday approaches. Much of that travail arises from my sense of deep-seated joys and sorrows of this congregation and the parallel need for me to share the great themes of Scripture in a way distinctly relevant to the particular setting of their lives.

## Being relevant

The words “creative” and “spiritual travail” are not chosen lightly. We preachers are constrained to be relevant as we open the Bible to God’s people. Sometimes we may think of being “relevant” as easy were it not for this wonderful thing in us: We find ourselves captive to that fabulous revelation of Jesus Christ, the one found in Scripture. Deep in that revelation is found life authentically lived and presented, the

only point of relevance to a humanity increasingly in crisis.

Yet as the world twists and turns into all kinds of new and heretofore unknown shapes, and as people operate from an increasing array of disparate perspectives, being relevant as a Christian minister becomes immensely challenging. Significant sectors of our communities seem to think and feel from reference points that are foreign to any religious perspective, let alone a Christian one. And then, of course, there are those “Christian” populations that have never really known much of Jesus.

Against this context, we struggle to communicate better all the truth that clusters in Christ. In the process we feel the tug of watering down, the pull of trying to please. After all, an inordinate quest for relevancy may too easily cause us to dilute the essence of that which, authentically proclaimed, every soul longs to hear and know.

## Being life-transforming

However, we are sometimes so conservative and so scared of the corruption that may come in the proclamation of something new, or of proclaiming it in a new way, that we practice our preaching constrained by cramping do’s and don’ts. We all know deep in our souls how easy it is to be crippled by the withering criticisms of the “truth mongers” around us (or even in us), especially those with powerful connections. But thank God we also know that if there is anything that kills a living, relevant proclamation of Christ and His truth,

it is succumbing to these pressures.

As Christian ministers, and more particularly as Seventh-day Adventist ministers, we need to ask ourselves how we are to talk to our congregations. Even more challenging is the question: How will we speak to surrounding cultures, nations, tribes, and people so that they will actually listen, and so that what is proclaimed will be genuinely helpful and life-transforming?

## Being experiential

To accomplish this, we usually turn to the guiding principles of the New Testament preachers. There some fundamental principles emerge, and I want to refer to one great principle of New Testament proclamation, usually not cited in reference to relevance in preaching: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard” (1 John 1:1-3, NIV).

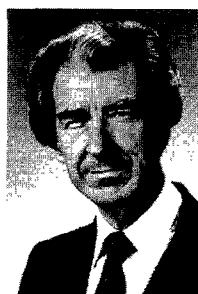
This passage urges me, every time I stand to preach, to go to the absolute Original. Above all else, I must see Jesus. I must hear Him with my own ears, look at Him with my own eyes, touch Him with my own hands. Then I want to covenant with myself that I will proclaim only what I have personally seen and heard. With this

*Continued on page 27*

# Make the Word relevant

Rex D. Edwards

**Know  
the gospel.  
Experience  
the gospel.  
Communicate  
the gospel.**



Rex Edwards, D.Min., is the director of continuing education of the General Conference Ministerial Association, Silver Spring, Maryland.

To speak of God's Word as being "relevant" is almost equal to saying that God may be "useful" to humanity. And to say that preachers can "make" the Word relevant, as if they could "assist" God in making Himself known, is little short of blasphemy. Yet the major problem for preaching today is relevance. If preachers cannot "make" the Word relevant, at least they ought to avoid the sin of making it irrelevant.

Reinhold Niebuhr once said that the problem is no longer whether Christianity is credible or not, but whether it is relevant. Preaching in irrelevant terms is as bad as not preaching at all.

## The problem of relevance

I am concerned with the problem of relevance in three areas as they relate to the Adventist pulpit.

*Mechanical presentation.* First, Adventist preaching has been guilty of a wooden and mechanical presentation of doctrine. Doctrinal to the bone, the sermon is drawn almost exclusively from the Bible, with scarcely an illustration to help the listener discover the hidden riches in those scriptural texts. The tone is sonorous, as if the vocal cords could make intelligible what apparently the mind could not. Such mechanical presentation presupposes, for example, that simply using the phrase "justification by faith" would allow the audience to grasp its meaning.

Doctrinal sermons are needed. But they should have come alive first in the experience of the preacher and then should be communicated in such a way that they come alive in the experience of the listener. "When the theory of the truth is repeated without its sacred in-

fluence being felt upon the soul of the speaker, it has no force upon the hearers, but is rejected as error, the speaker making himself responsible for the loss of souls."<sup>1</sup>

Coupled with this mechanical presentation of doctrine is an absence of authority in the pulpit. The preacher's authority derives from the Word expounded. And our people recognize this to an amazing degree. But that is no reason Adventist preachers should take advantage of it as they often do. Confusing the source of their authority with a mechanical presentation of doctrine and encouraged by a docile and respectful people, all too many Adventist preachers have felt that all that is necessary is to "proclaim" the gospel in theological language, regardless of whether it is intelligible or not.

*Christocentric or theocentric preaching.* A second area in which the Adventist pulpit has opened itself to the charge of irrelevance is in its emphasis on Christocentric preaching to the neglect of theocentric preaching. A perfectly proper and necessary emphasis upon Christ has been so heightened as to result in an improper de-emphasis of God. The net result is preaching that is irrelevant to the gospel. For, after all, the gospel is good news about what God has done through Christ.

In its zeal to affirm God's redemptive activity in Christ, the Adventist pulpit has moved unconsciously toward a Christocentric emphasis. Consequently the preacher constantly beseeches the person in the pew to trust Christ, believe in Christ, accept Christ. Implicit in the appeal, from the preacher's point of view, is the thought of the God we

know, accept, and trust in Christ. But the implication is not explicitly set forth to enable the hearer to connect what the preacher is saying about Christ with the group of associations that go with the word "God." The result is that even well-informed listeners may be living in a world with two Deities: the Lord Jesus Christ, who redeems and saves, whom they love and trust, and the God of creation and judgment, whom they respect and fear.

The Christocentric emphasis in Adventist preaching gets so twisted out of proportion, albeit unintentionally, that the essential gospel of the revelation and redemption of God in Christ gets all but lost. To "accept Christ as my personal Saviour" apparently has little or nothing to do with God. And such preaching is simply irrelevant to the Word of God.

*Neglect of social context.* A third area in which the Adventist pulpit is charged with irrelevance is its emphasis upon personal salvation to the neglect of social context. Lest I be misunderstood, let me state that the emphasis upon personal salvation—to bring a person to repentance and faith—is the primary object of preaching. But such preaching must also recognize that no individual can be cut off from relationships with others. After all, each person is a part of the whole social fabric of the church and society. And it is this recognition that is so frequently lacking in Adventist pulpits.

The reasons for this exclusive emphasis upon "personal salvation" are not difficult to trace. For one thing, there is an eternal and unchangeable message to be preached. The gospel is the same gospel in the twentieth century as it was in the first. And then, too, there are certain unchanging circumstances in which people find themselves: death and bereavement, suffering and loneliness, sin and guilt. Moreover, a person's relationship to

a neighbor or a family member is not markedly different today than it was a century ago. A message that deals with such unchanging elements of life is presumed to be not only safe but adequate.

Further, the exclusive emphasis on personal relations can be traced to a felt danger of "social gospel," with its

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**"A living God can only come to men by living men. It was by men that God gave Himself to men, till, in the fullness of time, He came, for good and all, in the God-man Christ, the living Word."**

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programs, policies, and pronouncements that quickly leave the gospel behind and usurp the place of the living Word.

Adventist pulpits, for the most part, have avoided the irrelevance of the social gospel. But have they been conscious of the need for social context in preaching? Preaching that shuts its eyes to the world in which the congregation lives is in danger of becoming irrelevant for two reasons.

First, such preaching presents the gospel as an escape from the harsh and bitter realities of life. Escapist preaching hawks the gospel for the good it will do for one's headaches, insomnia, and neuroses. Preaching needs to deal realistically with people in their social context, relating personal salvation both to the present and to the future.

Second, preaching that is silent on the social concerns of our times confirms from the pulpit the tragic compartmentalization of modern life. Family life is here in the second drawer. Business is in the top drawer, center. International problems lie on the surface of the newspaper on top of the desk. Religious life is tucked away in the bottom drawer, left—to

be opened on Sabbath morning.

To be relevant, preaching needs to address the whole person in the totality of relationships. Preachers need to take these charges of irrelevance seriously. Each charge hinges upon a distortion of a perfectly valid and indispensable emphasis in preaching. Indeed, these are precisely the emphases that have been the strong points of Adventist preaching: doctrinal, Christocentric, and evangelical. But the distortion of these valid and indispensable emphases is not surprising since the devil attacks at the point where we presume ourselves to be the strongest.

#### **Making the Word relevant**

How, then, can the Word be made relevant? Three principles would help.

*Know the gospel.* To begin with there must be recognition of the nature of the gospel itself, for the preaching of the gospel cannot be divorced from the content of the gospel. When we say that the gospel (or the Word of God) is God's self-disclosure, we refer to God's revelation in history. "But revelation is the self-bestowal of the living God, his self limitation in the interest of grace. It is the living God in the act of imparting Himself to living souls. It is God Himself drawing ever more near and arrived at last. And a living God can only come to men by living men. . . . It was by men that God gave Himself to men, till, in the fullness of time, He came, for good and all, in the God-man Christ, the living Word; in whom God was present, reconciling the world unto Himself, not merely acting through Him but present in Him, reconciling and not speaking of reconciliation, or merely offering it to us."<sup>2</sup>

The content of the gospel is an event: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, NKJV),\* Christ lived, suffered, died, and rose again—a once-and-for-all act of God. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19).

Recognition of God's activity in Christ will save preaching from the irrelevance of a Christocentricity at the neglect of God.

A frequent criticism of sermons is that the name "Christ" is never mentioned. Without fully endorsing the principle that the word must be mentioned before a sermon can be evangelical, I should like to ask whether a sermon can be evangelical if Christ is mentioned but God is not? The gospel is good news not about Christ but about God. The need for such a distinction is that the word "God" carries a number of associations: power, prayer, nature, death; and the word "Christ" carries other associations: cross, shepherd, love, miracle. All too often the two groups of associations are almost complete strangers to each other, underlining the necessity for preaching to be explicit in witnessing to an event that is an act of God.

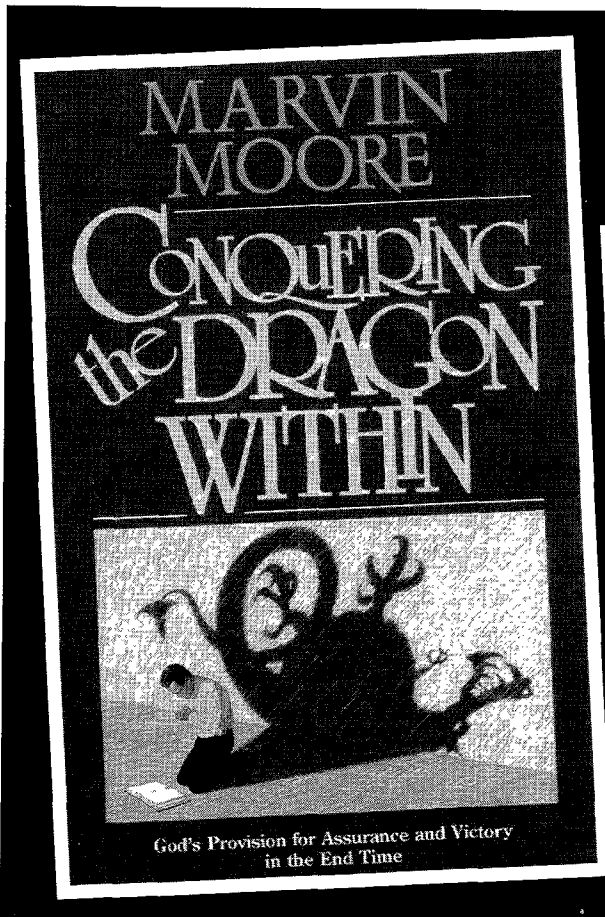
But the divine event, though once

for all, is also "prolonged" (to use Forsyth's word) in the witness to it. Our preaching is rooted in the witness to the event as preserved in the Scriptures. It is the preaching of the event itself. Paul preached, and we have the record of it in the epistles. The early church preached, and we have the record of it in the Acts. Thus the New Testament is more than simply an account or even a primary witness to what happened once. We do not tell people to read the New Testament because they will find there a record of what happened once to some people 2,000 years ago. We tell them to read it because there, in the witness to the event, the event itself is prolonged. There is to be found the living Word of God, not in any pedestrian or mechanical sense, but in the very disclosure by God of Himself.

If preaching is to be relevant today, it must be biblical. It must witness to an event to which the Bible bears witness—a witness that is forever rooted

and tested by the biblical witness. The divine event must be prolonged in preaching today. Preaching therefore is more than something said; it is something done! God is disclosing Himself again to us with His demand and His promise.

*Experience the gospel.* A second principle in facing the problem of irrelevance in preaching relates to the person of the preacher. Preachers must be men and women of God; they must have experienced the event, and like the excited band of disciples on Easter dawn should be able to exclaim, "It happened to us." To be sure, preachers speak out of more than individual experience; they speak out of the context of the whole witnessing community, the church. And their authority, therefore, rests upon both these facts: the prolongation of the divine event in their own experience, and the commission laid upon them by the church to witness to the event. Let either of these get out of balance,



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and you get, on the one hand, a distorted individualism, and on the other, an irrelevant authoritarianism. And it is the latter danger that Adventist preaching is facing today.

Only as the content of faith passes through the mind and experience of preachers can they witness it, not as a theological concept, but as a living deed that they have experienced. "The gospel of Christ becomes personality in those who believe, and makes them living epistles."<sup>3</sup> Here lies the difference between preaching with an "air" of authority, which is irrelevant; and preaching with the "note" of authority, which is indeed a witness to the prolonged event.

Therefore the walk and conversation of preachers must reflect their personal experience of the saving power of the gospel. How often a pastor's life stands in the way of the spoken word from reaching its objective! Richard Baxter appeals: "Take heed to yourselves lest you be void of that saving grace of God which you offer to others and be strangers to the effectual working of that gospel which you preach; and lest while you proclaim the necessity of a Saviour to the world your own heart should neglect Him and His saving benefits."<sup>4</sup> The most convincing evidence of our authority as preachers springs from the certain knowledge that of all the sinners to whom we preach, we are the chief.

*Communicate the gospel.* Beyond the fact that preachers can say "It happened to us," they must be able to articulate this experience in terms that are meaningful to the congregation. Preaching is not preaching unless it strikes home. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us. So with preaching. Its message must come to dwell in the minds and lives of the people so that something happens—not in the pulpit but in the pew. This is not to say that the message will always be received well. The message may well be rejected, for the gospel is still a stumbling block! But it must be presented in such a way that the listener knows a

response is demanded: a yes or a no.

Here we face the problem of communication. Words are symbols; and speech is nothing more than a "highly complex and refined way of signaling to one another." If there is to be communication, therefore, the signals must mean the same thing both to preacher and listener. Words like sin, grace, faith, love may mean one thing to the preacher but quite another to the listener. By sin, for example, the preacher may mean the soul's rebellion against God; but a listener may take it to mean the little white lie he told his wife over the breakfast table. There may have been a time preachers could take for granted that the primary signals used in the Christian pulpit were understood in the same sense by the congregation. Today no such assumption can be made.

Thus for preaching to be relevant, preachers should know their audience: the way they think, the language they use, the aspirations and frustrations they experience. Walter Russell Bowie suggests: "It is well that at some time he [the preacher] should go into the church and kneel there in one of the pews and remember those who will be sitting there. Here in one place will be a business man, burdened and often bewildered by the difficulty of keeping his business from being a failure and at the same time keeping himself a Christian. Here will be a woman bringing in her heart some secret wound of domestic wretchedness. Here will be a young man undecided whether to resist or welcome some hot temptation. Here, seated side by side, will be two who have fallen in love and before whom life seems to be opening into the wonder of new romance. Here they are, these different personalities with their different joys and sorrows, their opportunities and their needs. What can the message he plans to preach on Sunday be made to mean to them?"<sup>5</sup>

Without this journey into the lives of those to whom we preach, our

word is a dead word.

Thus preaching that is concerned solely with the salvation of individuals apart from their social, political, and economic concerns is preaching in a vacuum, and is little better than escapist preaching. For example, preaching on sin that speaks only of a person's pride and selfishness with respect to family, friends, and business relationships, but does not lead that person to face the problem of national pride and international relationships has not really spoken about the total meaning of sin. Preaching on loving our neighbor that does not go beyond the immediate personal relationships and make its claim upon the suffering Somalians or the dispossessed Bosnians has not begun to present the claim of Christian love upon the congregation.

This is not to suggest that we shall preach programs, policies, and pronouncements. As Hugh Thomson Kerr reminds us: "We are sent not to preach sociology but salvation; not economics but evangelism; not reform but redemption; not culture but conversion; not progress but pardon; not the new social order but the new birth; not revolution but regeneration; not renovation but revival; not resuscitation but resurrection; not a new organization but a new creation; not democracy but the gospel; not civilization but Christ. We are ambassadors, not diplomats."<sup>6</sup> ■

\* Texts credited to NKJV are from The New King James Version. Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc., Publishers.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1915), p. 253.

<sup>2</sup> P. T. Forsyth, *Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn.), p. 200.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*, Classics of Faith and Devotion Series (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1982), p. 27.

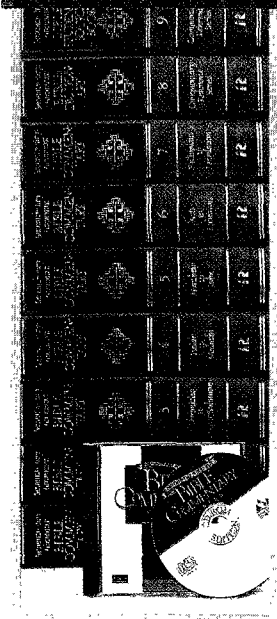
<sup>5</sup> (Source unknown).

<sup>6</sup> Hugh Thomson Kerr, quoted in R. A. Anderson, *The Shepherd-Evangelist*, (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1950) p. 393.



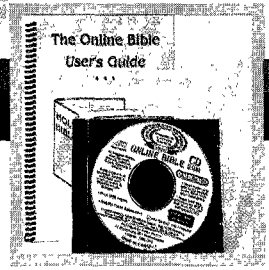
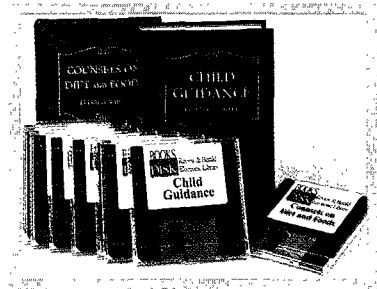


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# Would you worship God in a mosque?

**Boguslav Dabrowski**

## How does Adventist contextualization work in Arab countries?



*Boguslav Dabrowski is the director of Adventist Theological Seminary, Podkowa Lesna, Poland.*

**C**ontextualization is now a household word among theologian and pastors. We agree that Christian mission succeeds where there is proper understanding and acceptance of the culture of the target people. We also agree that if cultural customs do not go against God's eternal principles, they should be considered as acceptable in the lives of Christ's followers in order to identify with the people with whom we work. We also seem to recognize that the worldwide Adventist Church should not become a worldwide Adventist subculture or ghetto, closed to itself, isolated from local customs.

How does Adventist contextualization work in Arab countries? During my visits to predominantly Muslim countries, in which small Adventist communities exist, I have made some subjective but honest observations on how our missionaries and local believers relate to the cultures in which they live. I have noticed that Adventist communities existing in Muslim countries have real problems identifying themselves with local cultures. They do not distinguish between Muslim customs and religious practices, and they are afraid of the overwhelming Muslim culture. Instead of appreciating it, they hide themselves behind a Westernized lifestyle.

The promotion of Western culture and lifestyle in nationalistic Muslim countries is a serious burden for the few Christians living there. Adventists who tend to emphasize their American roots are not any different. They are considered a foreign element in the midst of an anti-American Muslim environment. So they do not feel comfortable, and are one of the first to emigrate.

This shows that adequate contextualization has not taken place in the church's work in Muslim cultures.

### **Arab-Adventist worship style**

For example, consider the Western influence on Arab-Adventist worship. Throughout the world Adventists have a more or less uniform worship style. This applies to Arab churches as well. Adventists outside of America tend to be more conservative than American Adventists. They conform to traditional patterns as though they want to prove their loyalty to the "big brother." Any changes are considered unorthodox, if they do not come from headquarters.

So Sabbath worship consists of the same components as almost everywhere else. They study the same Sabbath school lessons, sing the same Western songs in translation, and use organs and pianos. They build churches according to Western architecture: inside, pews face bastion-like pulpits. They wear suits and ties. Very few, if any, wear the common national dress. I have not seen pastors behind the pulpits in typical Arab clothes.

None of these may be wrong in themselves. But a varied culture calls for different approaches if our message is to be contextualized.

### **What are the remedies?**

To begin with, Christianity is not Western. Since its roots are Semitic, how appropriate it is for Christianity to return to territories where the Semitic culture is predominant and distinctly retained. The American roots of the Adventist Church, however proud one may be of them, need neither exposure nor emphasis in cultures that are not American. We do not preach

the history or geography of where the church originated, but Christ and His gospel. The church needs to address the needs of people within the context of their culture. We must accept people with their acceptable customs, lifestyles, patterns of thinking, and needs, and we must preach the gospel of Christ in this context. We must show them real love, not self-interested love. Such an approach will result in proper differentiation between appropriate and improper practices, acceptable and unacceptable customs.

As to worship style we first have to realize that we cannot treat the effects but the causes. The causes lie, it seems to me, in the syndrome that the church is not a reformable structure. Such a mentality assumes that keeping worldwide unity means keeping worldwide uniformity. At times we give the impression that the Adventist Church values uniformity and denominational exclusiveness over the essentials of the gospel and its mission. That attitude has nothing to do with Christ's teachings. If the gospel mission is to succeed, such positions need radical reformation.

A reformation of that magnitude will lead to transforming changes in Arab churches and in other cultures as well. These changes will include:

1. Local color will be brought into worship style, perhaps even to such an extent that the traditional Western worship style will totally disappear.

2. Sabbath School lessons will deal with local problems. This may mean an end or modification of uniform worldwide Sabbath school lessons. Yes, we treat these lessons as a means of keeping the church's oneness, and we look suspiciously at those who use their own materials. What would be wrong if Sabbath school lessons were prepared at division or country levels so that they could address the issues with which that church is struggling? One might argue that Sabbath School teachers should accommodate the lessons to the needs of the class members. But that's easier said than done, for in many places appropriate study of assigned lessons is treated as a sign of loyalty to the church. If worldwide uniformity of Sabbath school lessons is needed to keep the family together, perhaps they can be limited to a broader outline and scriptural themes,

with local administrative units having freedom to work on them in the context of their respective cultures, values, concerns, and struggles.

3. Music and musical instruments will be appropriate to local traditions. Arabs and other nations of Islamic tradition have their own way of singing, totally different from that of the West. Their instruments are definitely not big pianos and organs, but rather strings and drums. They are still used in their social and religious activities. To consider them as inappropriate is to show contempt to a culture cherished by millions.

4. Church architecture will undergo change. Muslims have a long tradition of sacral architecture. There is nothing wrong in the mosque's development and its function to embrace the believers. Synagogues and churches of the past have had similar patterns. The house of prayer, its inner and outer apparel, should always be derived from the local people's understanding of sacrum. I am sure western Asia Adventists would feel comfortable in churches with no pews, kneeling on a corporate carpet. Shoes could be left in the vestibule. After all, standing barefoot in God's presence has been an ancient Semitic idea since the days of Moses and Joshua (Ex. 3:5; Joshua 5:15).

5. Personal dress and adornment may need reexamination. Arab society considers jewelry an integral part of a woman's apparel. Modesty is not seen in terms of wearing or not wearing jewelry. Appropriate dress need not mean Western dress. Our books, Picture Rolls, and slides seem to portray suit and tie as appropriate attire for greeting our returning Lord. Such art gives a wrong picture of our message to the people to whom we witness.

### Conclusion

The provocative question in the title is not intended to force the church to accept any customs; rather it is to challenge our attitude and mentality. We must look at the issues with a wider perspective. We were not called to destroy people's national and cultural identity or to superimpose the Western Adventist logic and lifestyle.

Different trends ought to be allowed in the church at different levels. Unity is a necessity; uniformity is not. ■

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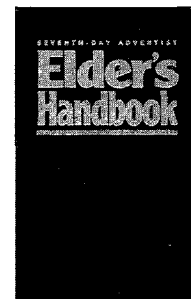
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# The minister: a minister of finance, too?

Paul J. Sánchez

**Pastors who acquire a basic and practical knowledge in principles of finance will greatly enhance their influence on the financial affairs of the church.**



*Paul J. Sánchez is stewardship pastor, Pioneer Memorial church, Berrien Springs, Michigan.*

A pastor wears many hats: shepherd, preacher, teacher, counselor, etc. But one function that is seldom considered as belonging to the pastor is that of a financier. Often regarded as inexperienced or disinterested in finance, ministers are either shunted off or voluntarily relinquish that role. For some pastors the thought of being money-minded or materialistic is just too much to bear. They would rather let someone else handle the finances of the church.

Yet if the church today is to fulfill God's mission, it needs to be financially healthy, and pastors have a pivotal role in achieving this. Sooner or later the pastor will have to face the question: "Am I also the 'minister of finance' of my church? If so, what should my role be in that capacity? How much involvement should I have in this aspect of ministry?"

Jesus has a lot to say about money. About half of His 40 parables use money or possessions to illustrate the lessons He sought to teach. One of the most poignant acts of self-abnegation recorded, one that He Himself called attention to in the Gospels, involved a widow in the act of giving all she had (Luke 21:1-4). Then at the other end of the spectrum there is the story of the wealthy young ruler. He was singled out because, having had the opportunity of becoming a disciple, he was unwilling to dispose of his great wealth, give the proceeds to the poor, and then follow Him (Matt. 19:16-22). Thus, Christ was not reluctant or afraid to deal with the topic of finances, nor

call as disciples men who were engaged in that field (Luke 5:27-29). Then should His ministers today be reluctant to get directly involved in promoting the financial health of their churches?

If they should assume such a responsibility, what kind of and how much involvement should that be? Here are some practical suggestions.

■ **Preach and teach systematic stewardship.** "We are already doing this," some would say. But unfortunately many stop there. We need to do much more. Most pastors would agree that a right stewardship relation to God is vital to the believers' and the church body's spiritual growth. But when stewardship preaching is limited to appeals for faithful tithing and liberal offerings, then the pastoral role and influence in this area will begin to diminish; it could even become counterproductive. On the other hand, when pastors emphasize that God's love for us and our continuing love response to Him form the basis for the broad biblical concept of our accountability to God as stewards, of both tangible and intangible possessions, then the pastoral effectiveness and responsibility in this area would be better fulfilled.

■ **Create the right climate.** Preaching stewardship is not enough. Pastors must themselves practice stewardship faithfully and lead out in encouraging a positive attitude toward giving, toward the church's financial needs, and toward those who are responsible to care for the financial affairs of the

church (2 Cor. 8; 9).

For example, pastors can encourage personal testimonies of members who faithfully adhere to the tithing plan and who have felt especially blessed by the Lord for doing so. They can have the church treasurer offer the main prayer during church services. And what about children's participation? Special tithe and offering envelopes can be prepared for them at the same time that they are taught the simple biblical principles of receiving and giving. Children could also be encouraged to go throughout the congregation and collect offerings for special projects, then deposit them in a special place (small replica of the new building, basket, etc.) at the front of the church. Children's participation can help create a positive climate toward giving.

■ **Know and be interested in church finances.** Pastors who acquire a basic and practical knowledge in principles of finance and accounting and show genuine interest in the financial affairs of the church will greatly enhance their influence on the financial affairs of the church. When they speak on the subject, people will listen.

For example, ministers should understand such basic financial concepts and items as: (a) risk vs. return—the higher the risk involved in an investment opportunity, the higher the return expected (its implication is most important: a much higher yield [e.g., a higher interest rate] always carries with it an implied higher risk and loss potential); (b) the difference between a budget and a cash-flow projection; (c) depreciation as an expense; (d) financial report terminology; (e) cash basis versus accrual basis of accounting; and (f) the detection of financial strengths and weaknesses through the use of financial statements.

Even if they know these, a responsible pastor will sit down at least once a month with the church treasurer and go over the financial statements,

asking questions, and assessing the financial condition of the church.

■ **Provide leadership during financial crises.** A church will sooner or later face at least one major financial crisis. Often this is the time pastors wake up in the middle of the night with such thoughts racing through their mind as "What will happen if we are not able to pay . . . ?" Pastors who have conscientiously worked on items 1-3 above should be able to rally the church both from the pulpit and in committee meetings to support whatever alternative the church decides it must take to surmount the crisis. Sometimes a proposed solution may not be easy to carry out. But the members will listen to what the pastor has to say about the finances of the church, and very likely be more inclined to support that proposal because by precept, example, and knowledge the pastor has won their confidence. Knowing that God can

bless those who have diligently sought to do their best can help pastors maintain their confidence in divine assistance and their courage during a time of crisis.

But we need not wait until that crisis. Now is the time for ministers to prepare not only to relate successfully to times of financial crisis, but to understand the day-to-day financial affairs of his church. A pastor need not become a financial expert, but he or she is the "minister of finance" of the congregation, the one to whom the congregation looks to bring a spiritual dimension and balance to the financial affairs of the church.

While pastors are not to encumber themselves with the more mechanical and detailed aspects of church accounting and finances, they need, nevertheless, to learn, encourage, and bring balance and spiritual tone to this very important area of ecclesiastical endeavors, thus giving overall pastoral financial leadership to the church. ■

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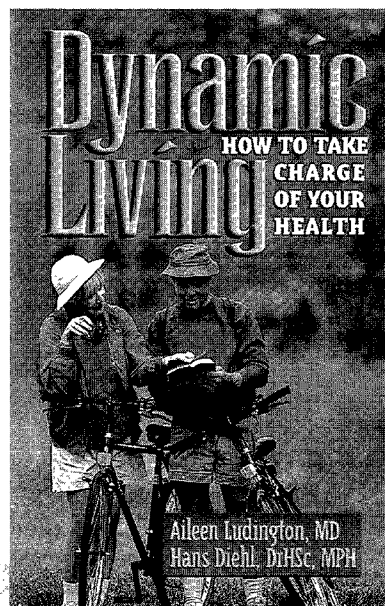
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# Hard hearts, crushed souls

**Carol June Hooker**

**How to prepare  
minds so the seed  
can grow and  
bear fruit.**



*Carol June Hooker, a nurse and a clinical specialist in community health, teaches at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.*

**T**he parable of the sower and the field tells of a farmer who flings seed on the ground. Some seed falls on a path, and birds gather for a picnic. Some seed falls on rocks, sprouts, and dries up. Some seed falls amid weeds that crowd out the growing plants. Some seed falls into loose loam and grows well.

The parable is not an efficiency lesson in agriculture or in preaching of the gospel. This parable describes churches. Churches contain hard-packed path people who cannot grow because they are violent and/or they have been treated with violence. Churches contain people who are trying to grow but are crushed by the heavy rocks of addictions and false realities. Churches contain people whose growth is choked by fear, anxiety, and depression. And churches contain people who are prepared to grow, and do grow into healthy, happy followers of God. Pastors and other church leaders fling God's word (Luke 8:11) at their congregations, visitors, and other listeners each week. Since preaching and Bible classes are corporate rather than personal activities, God's word regularly lands on people mentally unprepared to grow.

The parable of the sower also suggests ways to welcome back and help people who have left church overtly (membership officially dropped) and covertly (membership weakened and tested by crises, but still officially in place). People who have left church may have growing problems, too, some of which may have contributed to leaving church.

Churches can be interdependent

communities of people who learn to trust God individually and together. Paul advises Christians to become interdependent progressively (see 1 Thess. 5:9-22). Paul's advice enlarges two principles. First, people in church are responsible for each other. Second, people in church can help each other prepare mentally to grow in God's Word. The effort of helping each other grow includes reclaiming as family people the church might wish to forget about because they were uncomfortable to be with. The effort of returning as a growing person includes reclaiming as family a church full of people the returning person might wish to forget about because they were uncomfortable to be with.

## **Interference in growth**

Developing trust in God is necessary for a healthy church. But violence, addictions, false realities, fear, anxieties, and depression interfere with growth in trusting God, just as hard-packed paths, rocks, and weeds interfere with seed growth. Even normal spiritual growth occurs through crisis periods of testing trust in God, just as plants grow during the crises of sprouting, flowering, and fruiting.

Growth and change happen at the boundaries of churches.<sup>1</sup> As people leave church, whether overtly or covertly, they test the church's response to their leaving. As people consider returning to church, they test the church's response to their return. Activities located at the boundaries of churches are key locations for testing responses to members leaving or returning. Some of those activities include: pastoral

counseling, potluck dinners, greeting guests and members at the church door, social activities, church assistance to members and other persons in trouble, visiting the sick, visiting prisons, evangelistic activities, camp meetings, church school programs, and Bible schools.

### Helping people in crisis

How can church leaders and pastors help churches when members meet interference to spiritual growth? How can churches help members during crises of normal spiritual growth?

Jesus said the seed that fell on the hard-packed path was stepped on or eaten by birds before even sprouting (Luke 8:5). Jesus explained hard-packed path people as "those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that

they may not believe and be saved" (Luke 8:12).<sup>\*</sup> Violence, whether overt (physical or emotional abuse) or covert (noninvolvement when obvious violence occurs), is an escape from being responsible for other people. The choice to be responsible for other people is the precursor<sup>2</sup> to trusting God in mature faith rather than unquestioned, uncommitted belief. Violence thus interferes with the interdependence and trust in God needed for a healthy church. Violence is a collection of antisocial behaviors that respond poorly to treatment, ranging from hatred to intentional infliction of pain.<sup>3</sup>

Violence is not limited to individuals; nearly entire churches can be violent. Church leaders and pastors feel responsible for providing safe growing conditions for both individ-

uals and the church. Violence, whether by individual against individual, individual against group, group against group, or group against individual must be stopped. But God allows violence to occur every day; God does not promise to stop violence or its effects yet. God partially resolves the paradox by being present with hurtful and hurting people, helping and changing them. Churches can copy what God does: love both the hurtful and the hurting (sometimes both in the same person), show better ways of acting, share God's longing to end violence soon, and pray with each person.

### Approaches in therapy

Current therapy in treatment of violence involves three approaches, according to Cynthia Anderson, director of the abused persons program in Montgomery County, Maryland.

*The first approach* is to educate the violent person in alternate ways of expressing anger. Teach how to communicate effectively. Show how violence makes others feel and respond. This first approach has been effective with persons whose violent acts result from lack of understanding of other people and who are motivated to change.

*The second approach* is "shedding a little sunshine." Because violence flourishes in an atmosphere of secrecy and fear, this strategy dispels the "darkness" of secrecy and fear. How do we do this? For one thing, make sure the violent person knows that intended victims will be protected and that untargeted people know about the violence already committed. This approach is effective with violent persons who respond to shame.

*The third approach* is separation of the violent person from victims and the rest of society, usually for a short time. This approach often is effective only the first time it is used.<sup>4</sup>

These three approaches closely parallel those God used with Cain, the first violent person, before, during, and after Cain's murder of his

Comparison of Alcoholics Anonymous 12 Steps with Steps to Christ	God's Love for Man
We admitted we were powerless over alcohol, that our lives had become unmanageable.	Sinner's Need of Christ
We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.	Repentance
We made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of GOD as we understood Him.	Confession
We made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.	Consecration
We admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.	Faith and Acceptance
We were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.	The Test of Discipleship
We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.	Growing Up Into Christ
We made a list of all persons we have harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.	The Work and the Life
We made direct amends to such people wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.	A Knowledge of God
We continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.	The Privilege of Prayer
We sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.	What To Do With Doubt
Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.	Rejoicing in the Lord

# Seasoned with Love

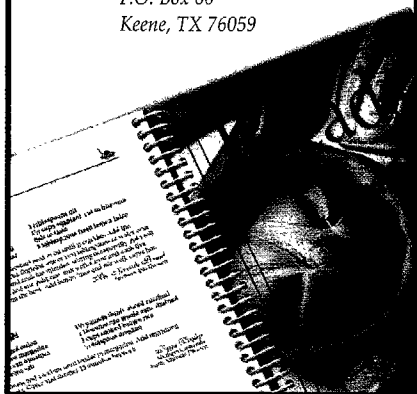
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brother Abel (see Gen. 4:5-16). First, God warned Cain that his face showed a loss of control. Second, God asked Cain where Abel was, making Cain aware that an untargeted person knew all about his violent act. Third, God cursed Cain, preventing him from continuing easily with his occupation of farming, and marked Cain in some way, leading to his banishment from his home society, while keeping others from killing Cain.

### Assisting the victim

Victims of violence also need assistance. Standard treatment includes counseling regarding codependency; protection; understanding of the symptoms that follow violent experiences; and support during recovery. Church members frequently experience an additional trauma after violent experiences: a belief that God abandoned them and allowed their hurt because of some fault of their own. This belief is fed in our earliest experiences, even in children's songs, such as "Jesus can keep little children good all the day if they pray." Church leaders and pastors can counter this belief that God abandons people in crisis. They can explain and show that even in the worst situations God is with us. He may temporarily allow violence even against good people, but His plans include stopping violence permanently—soon.

Overcoming addictions and false realities is not a one-person job. Programs of mutual assistance such as Alcoholics Anonymous guide participants through 12 steps in a continuous lifestyle of overcoming addiction. (It's interesting to note that the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous strongly resemble<sup>5</sup> the chapters of White's *Steps to Christ* [see table].)<sup>6</sup> There are thousands of support groups in North America, many modeled on the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous.<sup>7</sup> Both the United States and Canada have national resource telephone services that pastors can use to refer church members needing assistance.<sup>8</sup>

### Facing false realities

False realities include such ideas as "Those people [anyone who is different] will hurt me." "If I don't lose weight [height-to-weight ratios are irrelevant], no one will love me." "I can stop [the offending action] any time." "I have committed the unpardonable sin." "I am [a powerful and respected other person]." "God protects real Christians from all harm and danger." Treatment for false realities involves listening kindly without telling your opinion. You may share your thoughts after the need which the false belief fulfills is met in another way. If the false belief involves violence toward others or self, treatment under medical supervision may be required to reduce anxiety and breakthrough the false beliefs.<sup>9</sup>

Pastors and church leaders can help church members with the stony problems of addictions and false realities. These problems are recurrent, just as new rocks rise to the surface of a field each year. Supporting church members during treatment, whether in a hospital or a support group, means reminding them of their value to God and to the church, even in their weakness. Praying with such persons during difficult times and sharing the gladness of healthy times show them their value.

### Toward a caring fellowship

Fear, anxiety, and depression sap strength from churches just as weeds suck food and water away from crops, then crowd them until they grow pale from lack of sunlight and die. Because fear, anxiety, and depression are all contagious, rapid pastoral care is needed. Usually there is a factual basis for such problems as fear of death, fear of rejection or loss of love, financial need, lack of groceries, fear of injury, time pressures, exhaustion from overwork.

Churches can use natural remedies<sup>10</sup> and the laws of the mind<sup>11</sup> to educate their members in facing fear, anxiety, and depression. People who are afraid, anxious, or sad can feel better when



walking outside in fresh air and sunlight, with friends who listen and help them remember times when God felt close.

Churches can help in other ways as well. They can share food with hungry members, help exhausted members rest and sleep, comfort the grieving, and visit the lonely. Pastors and church leaders can show church members how to love others in these ways. Pastors can team up with medical professionals, thus providing not only needed medical treatment but also spiritual support. When fears, anxieties, or depression become so intense that the person thinks of suicide as a reasonable option, professional intervention, including medical treatment, may become necessary. Interruption of painful thoughts through professional assistance can help the person relearn healthy ways of thinking.<sup>12</sup>

Perry,<sup>13</sup> using colleges as examples of caring communities, suggests that alienation from and recovery into a caring community is part of normal growth. The community's problem "is therefore certainly not to prevent alienation, or even to make that option less available," but to provide for "the sustenance of care." "The community's substantive provision of worthwhile things to care about is not enough."

That means expecting church members to care about what the church cares about is not enough. The growing church member is best sustained "in the risks of caring." Pastors and church leaders can help members grow through the crises of growing through several ways. They can tell them their courage in growing is noticed. They can affirm them as church members even as they re-examine everything they have believed in for its continued value and as they deepen in commitment to God and church community.

Seed sowers—pastors, church leaders—can help prepare people to receive the gospel. Heart-to-heart personal work takes more time than

preaching sermons, but conveys God's love in ways that can break up hard-packed hearts, haul away rocks from crushed hearts, dig up weeds from choked hearts, and support growing hearts.<sup>14</sup> ■

\* All Scripture passages are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

<sup>1</sup> See Mary Ann Walsh Eells, *Case Studies in Home Health: Problem Families, Problem Agencies* (Baltimore: Williams & Wilkins, 1989), pp. 100, 101, 208-217.

<sup>2</sup> William G. Perry, Jr, *Forms of Intellectual and Ethical Development in the College Years: A Scheme* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc., 1968, 1970), foldout chart of development endpaper, pp. 130, 131, 134, 135.

<sup>3</sup> David A. Kaplan, "The Incurables," *Newsweek*, Jan. 18, 1993, pp. 48-50.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Addiction, Victim & Mental Health Services, Montgomery County, *Partners for Change: You and the Courts. A Guidebook for Victims of Domestic Violence* (Bethesda, Maryland: Summer 1992), pp. 3-8, 26-28. Personal communication with Cynthia Anderson, director of abused persons program, March 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Marge Woodruff, in Rose Otis, ed., *Among Friends: A Daily Devotional for Women by Wom-*

*en* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1992), p.111.

<sup>6</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc., 1973).

<sup>7</sup> Charles Leerhsen, "Unite and Conquer," *Newsweek*, Feb. 5, 1990, pp. 50-55.

<sup>8</sup> National Self Help Clearinghouse: (212) 642-2944 (New York). American Self-Help Clearinghouse: (201) 625-8848 (New Jersey). Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse: 112 Kent Street, Suite 480 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1P5P2. Phone: (613) 235-4048.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel X. Freedman & Jarl E. Dyrud, eds., *American Handbook of Psychiatry* Vol.5, 2nd ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1975), Vol. 5, pp. 580, 589.

<sup>10</sup> "Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power—these are the true remedies."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), p. 127.

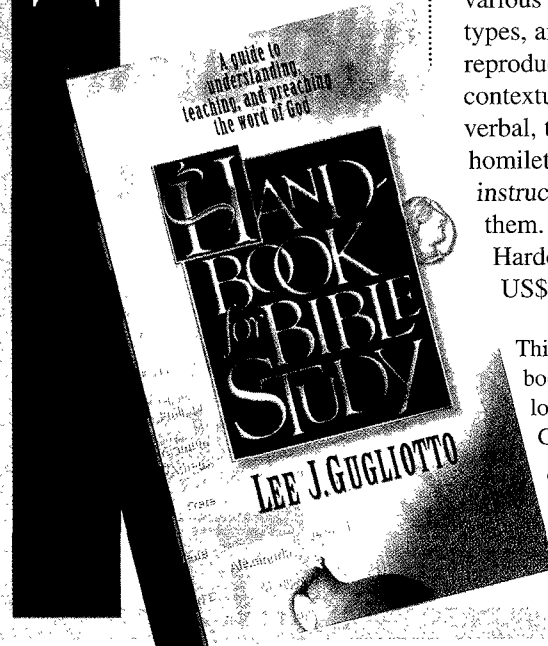
<sup>11</sup> For a good description of these laws and how they work, see Ellen G. White, *Mind, Character, and Personality: Guidelines to Mental and Spiritual Health* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1977), vol. 2, pp. 415, 422.

<sup>12</sup> Freedman & Dyrud, pp. 581, 582.

<sup>13</sup> Perry, p. 200.

<sup>14</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Highways to Heaven* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941, 1952), pp. 40, 41.

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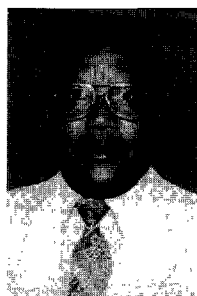
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# Independent ministries: an African speaks out

Mel H. M. Matinyi

**We need to project an image of Adventism, rooted in the Word, sure of its history, mission, and destiny.**



Mel H. M. Matinyi, a former evangelist, is currently a translator at Tanzania Adventist Press, Morogoro, Tanzania.

**B**eginning in the late 1960s Africa has been flooded with one person crusades, representing unofficial Adventist groups from North America, Australia, and Germany. These groups claim to be faithful to historic truth and to uphold the writings of Ellen G. White. Most claim to speak as Seventh-day Adventists, but work under their own particular brand name.<sup>1</sup> They believe themselves to be messengers of special light to the church. Africa and Asia have become their mission fields. They send thousands of free cassettes, pamphlets, magazines, and books to pastors and believers in this part of the world.<sup>2</sup> Unsuspecting laity and clergy receive these materials, read them, and even preach from them. They unwittingly believe these messages are “present truth” or “historic Adventism.” What’s more, Adventists cannot afford and rarely receive official Adventist publications from our publishing houses. The only literature many a pastor receives is from these independent groups.

The authors of these publications are usually introduced as ordained, credentialed ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, deeply concerned about issues presently affecting the church. They claim to have carefully studied our landmark beliefs. The printed material and cassettes are filled with quotations from Ellen White with a few biblical texts scattered here and there.

The church members in Africa are not fully aware of what transpires in the council halls of the General Conference. Nor are they fully acquainted

with our church history and its development. This makes them easy prey to these messengers of confusion.

## How they operate

Usually someone from these independent ministries offers to study the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy with a targeted individual or individuals in their home. The meetings are held in private. The leader will often tell the members that the church leaders would not be happy with such meetings, and if discovered, they may be dealt with harshly because the church does not want them to learn “the truth.”

The studies usually involve quotations from Ellen White, selectively chosen and interpreted to suit the group’s particular doctrinal position. References to such quotations are manuscripts or letters that members have no easy access to and cannot check for themselves. By the time the local church and pastor become aware of what is happening, weeks have gone by, and the seed of division is on its way to full growth. The affected church members become hostile and combative.

These independent groups select a narrow list of topics and present their interpretation as “historic truth.” And the litmus test for salvation is the acceptance of their version of historic Adventism. They tell members this is what will prepare them to receive the latter rain, stand in the time of trouble, and grant them translation. And who would want to miss such an easy opportunity of making it to heaven with a ready-made syllabus of do’s

and don'ts? Therefore, honest yet deceived church members study until their faith in God's church and mission is destroyed. They replace their faith with a religion of works and newfound zeal. Even when they are later shown their error, human pride makes it difficult for many to return to the fold of Christ.

### How to deal with the problem

The local church does take measures to combat the problem, and this often includes the threat of being disfellowshipped. Thus, the local church confirms what the members have been told—that they will be harshly treated for studying “the truth.”

How is the church dealing with these independent ministries? Not very well. Let me personally offer what I perceive as our weaknesses.

### First, an issue of how much we care.

Often we give the impression of indifference bordering on neglect. Although these groups have been around since at least 1914,<sup>3</sup> the church has not adequately answered their charges nor dealt with the groups. The handling has been left to unprepared local church leadership.

Our communication system does not adequately pass on information to the field concerning these groups. An example is a recent action by the North American Division and General Conference officers against Hope International and Hartland Institute. By the time the field churches became aware of this action, students from Hartland were conducting evangelistic crusades in Africa with a previously church-granted clearance. The groups have already established a firm footing in Africa, with followers that include church members, pastors, and even a few sympathizers on the administrative level. If the General Conference action was communicated to the world field widely and in time, we could have prevented much damage. In a world with modern communication technology, what is the reason for this lapse?

### Second, a problem of education and training.

Those behind the independent ministries operating in Africa are usually people of experience and better education than either the local pastor or conference official. The group's local

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## Each time we face a doctrinal crisis, we tend to redefine our beliefs, tightening here and revising there, to meet the crisis. But in the process we create new problems.

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worker is often an ex-SDA who knows the terrain very well. In view of this, we need to develop a well-trained pastoral force that can understand and impart the theological and historical heritage of Adventism. Right now our junior ministerial and college courses in Adventist history are completely outdated. Course contents cover little in the area of offshoots and present no exhaustive history of the church—past or present. Textbooks are grossly out-of-date. Thus seminary and college graduates are ill-equipped to deal with the problem of offshoots. Perhaps the White Estate needs to establish more research centers in developing countries to deal with the use and abuse of Ellen White's writings. The issue of her authority is not a problem at this time, but the way she is used to support sundry teachings is.

Another educational factor is that church members involved with offshoot groups are better educated and can easily consume the load of English publications and cassettes. They may have traveled outside the continent and returned with a booty of “present truth” messages, which are then distributed to the local churches who study them, praising their spiritual contents. This is how some of the “messages” of self-proclaimed prophets got into so many churches in Tanzania. Such infiltration becomes even easier when pastors have

to care for 10 or more churches, leaving them with little time for nurturing and shepherding.

### Third, a question of values.

The church often ignores these independent ministries until it finds they are accepting tithe money, thus raising the issue of the church's values versus the independent ministries.

Further, although the offshoots may carry misinformation, at times they do break real news. It would be helpful if the *Adventist Review* or *Ministry* would notify the membership of unpleasant events instead of leaving it to the independents.

While I commend some recent articles on the issue in the *Adventist Review*, we have unwittingly provided offshoots material for their busy printing mills. Obviously the church has made shifts in its beliefs since 1863, for truth is progressive. But attempts at accommodating divergent views may be counterproductive. Each time we face a doctrinal crisis, we tend to redefine our beliefs, tightening here and revising there, to meet the crisis. But in the process we create new problems. Others take on these changes as a cause. We need to project an image of Adventism, rooted in the Word, sure of its history, mission, and destiny. ■

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<sup>1</sup> Such as Morningstar Ministries, Historic Truth Publications, Hope International, Light-bearers, Independent Non-Conformist SDA Church, Bible Revelations, the SDA Reform Movement, and the SDA Reform Movement International Missionary Society. The list is not complete.

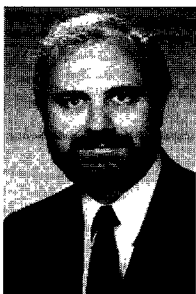
<sup>2</sup> Publications include *Waymarks of Adventism*, *The Law of Life in Justification by Faith*, *The Third Angel's Message of Righteousness by Faith and Its Present Rejection*, *Keepers of the Faith*, *Adventism Challenged*, *Adventism Proclaimed*, *The Gospel of the Four Angels*, *Youth Do You Dare*, *Adventism Jeopardized*, *Adventism Vindicated*, *Adventism Unveiled*, *Adventism Imperiled*, etc. The most widely circulated is *Our Firm Foundation*.

<sup>3</sup> *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1976), pp. 1332, 1333.

# The intern supervisor training event

David VanDenburgh

A fresh approach from the Pacific Union



David VanDenburgh is senior pastor of the Campus Hill church in Loma Linda, California.

An effective pastorate is crucial to the mission of the church. An effective training program for young pastors is crucial to the pastorate. An effective internship is crucial to pastoral training.

Does that sequence of statements seem plausible? Then keep reading as we evaluate the training program of pastoral interns.

It takes about 10 years to train and equip a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. The process begins with four years of college as a theology major earning a bachelor's degree, typically followed by a year or two of field experience before the aspiring pastor goes off to seminary. There he or she spends the equivalent of three years (nine quarters) at the graduate level learning theology, church leadership, preaching, worship, counseling, and many of the other specialties of the modern pastor. Upon receiving the master's degree, a graduate enters internship. This is where theology and life meet, as classroom learning is applied in serving the needs of people.

Pastoral training has strong analogies to medical education, during which for six years (four years of college and the first two years of medical school) the prospective physician learns the theory that undergirds the practice of medicine. Then in the last two years of medical school and the year of internship he or she increasingly engages in the craft of medicine under the supervision of experienced physicians. In both pastoral ministry and medicine, internship is critical. Here the future physicians, whether of the soul or the body, learn to care for people and then apply what they have learned, as the theoretical and the practical come together.

## Don't bother me?

An internship is only as good as the intern supervisor(s), and all too often that isn't good enough. Again and again our Pacific Union ministerial training review committee hears young pastors report that their internship was of little value. While some got an excellent introduction with supervising pastors who thoroughly taught and demonstrated the practice of ministry, other interns spent their time painting the church, doing secretarial work, or simply doing their own thing, without coherent supervision. The motto of the supervisor was, in effect, "Just don't bother me."

All told, too often internship training seems an unpredictable proposition. The General Conference Ministerial Association has recognized the need for improvement in the quality of internships. Former association secretary Floyd Bresee was the guiding light behind the production of the *Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Interns and Intern Supervisors*, prepared in 1990 by the Ministerial Training Advisory Committee and the General Conference Ministerial Association. The 116-page manual is intended to regularize and improve the internship experience for the intern by covering 50 ministerial skills/functions in a supervisory setting. When they all have been signed off by the supervisor, the intern has received a general introduction to the tasks of ministry.

## Pacific Union training workshop

The Pacific Union, in revising the 10-year plan for pastoral training, has created a workshop to train and credential intern supervisors. Conference presidents selected pastors from their

fields to train as supervisors, sending them for four days to Pine Springs Ranch in California's San Bernardino Mountains. The training program was created and conducted by a subcommittee of the Pacific Union ministerial training review committee and consisted of three ministerial directors: Lynn Mallery (now president of the Southeastern California Conference), Lloyd Wyman (now coordinator of the Adventist Evangelistic Association), and Hubert Cisneros (Arizona Conference); along with Jerry Davis (clinical pastoral education supervisor from Loma Linda University Medical Center), David Taylor (now president of the Atlantic Union), and pastors Louis Venden and David VanDenburgh. The keynote speaker was Allen Stones, until recently director of the field education program for Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California.

The focus of the workshop was not on developing skills, but on developing *persons*, both the person of the intern and the person of the supervisor. Another goal was to enable a growth-promoting relationship between intern and supervisor. By means of presentations on and participation in story listening, supervisory conversations, verbatims, role playing, and theological reflection, participants enhanced their abilities to help a younger colleague gain competency in pastoral ministry.

The business of "equipping saints for ministry" is complex, requiring a variety of well-developed skills in wise and capable pastors who train interns. The workshop aimed at fostering a supervisory relationship that could best be characterized as a combination of mentoring, spiritual friendship, and teaching. We sought to enhance authentic relationships by storytelling. Participants learned how to conduct a supervisory conversation, beginning with some critical incident and moving through the description of what really happened, the analysis of the problem, the exploration of options, theological reflection on the meaning of the incident, and finally the choosing of a ministry response. Through the use of verbatims and role playing, we explored the dynamics of

ministry incidents and creative ways to handle them. The one "lecture" of the week was on pastoral theology and its foundational importance to our role and goals as pastors.

Perhaps the most significant event at the workshop was the interaction among the pastors. Over dinner, between sessions, and in question-and-answer opportunities during the sessions, years of experience contributed wisdom and insight that was as helpful as anything planned by the presenters. I think that a group of the right pastors brought together in an open and honest setting, thinking and talking about an issue of ministry, can generate material more valuable than any teacher or teachers could bring. I was tremendously impressed by the choices made by the conferences when they sent this particular collection of pastors to our workshop. With such people in the pastorate, we truly are blessed.

#### **Credentials and Communion**

On the last day participants received certificates credentialing them as licensed intern supervisors. The plan is that conferences will assign interns only to credentialed supervisors, either as part of their staff (in larger churches) or in separate churches where the intern may serve as the sole or associate pastor under the ongoing supervision of one of these credentialed supervisors. One conference already has followed up with a workshop for supervisors and interns, yielding good results. Perhaps other conferences will keep the flame burning.

In recognition of the high level of fellowship and love experienced during the workshop, a spontaneous Communion service was proposed by one of the pastors. With canned grape juice and crackers we remembered the life and death of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He means in our own lives and ministries. We felt a sense of continuity with those who for 20 centuries have proclaimed the gospel and sought to nurture saints for Christ, and we each vowed to do our utmost to transmit faithfully the call and the craft to future generations. ■

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## Pastor's Wife Uses DISCOVER Course to Prepare Former Model for Baptism

Victoria VanHager had everything—a brilliant husband, two wonderful children, a professional modeling career.

Then things fell apart. Her home broke up, she left her lucrative job, and stress created health problems.

She wasn't yet homeless, but she feared she soon would be. When she heard about Adventist Community Services in Ventura, California, she went to check it out one Saturday morning in July 1994.

She had no idea there would be a worship service going on, and when the deacon on duty invited her in, she was sure her casual clothes were inappropriate. But he insisted she was more than welcome, and after one service, she couldn't stay away.

Joyce Mulligan, the pastor's wife, had asked the Lord to lead someone to her with whom she could share Bible studies. Yet she nearly panicked when Victoria accepted her offer of personal study.

Joyce phoned Jeannie Melashenko at the Voice of Prophecy to request any helps she could use.

"Our new DISCOVER guides are ideal," declared Jeannie. "They make Bible truth so easy to understand, and they include neat stories to illustrate



Joyce Mulligan (left) was the first person to use the Voice of Prophecy's new DISCOVER guides in one-on-one Bible study. Her student, Victoria VanHager, became the first graduate.

each point. They make Jesus approachable."

As each new guide came off the press in late 1994, Joyce was waiting for copies. She and Victoria completed the series together in December. Victoria became the first DISCOVER graduate, Joyce the first instructor.

The joy of knowing Jesus as her personal Savior brought a new sparkle to Victoria's eyes as she was baptized, and Joyce's heart overflowed with the joy of leading someone to Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Victoria says, "All I wanted that day when I went to Community Services was food for a meal, but I found spiritual food as well. God gave me everything!" Yes, much more than she could have imagined—she and the head deacon who welcomed her the first day began dating, and they were married on February 12, 1995. Now she is Victoria Rawlings.

## DISCOVER Lessons From VOP Are Basis for Family Home Bible Study Group

"I selected the DISCOVER guides from the VOP for a weekly home Bible study because of their flexibility and comprehensive explanation of Adventist doctrines," says Dan Savino, Jr., associate pastor at Simi Valley, California.

The young pastor and three generations of a local family meet at the home of church elder Bob Donesky and his wife, Martha, each Wednesday for a meal followed by Bible study. While Dan and Bob guide the parents



Lina Sanchez, former supervisor of the Voice of Prophecy Bible School, presents a diploma to one of the 75 persons who graduated from the DISCOVER course at the closing meeting of an evangelistic seminar at the La Mesa Seventh-day Adventist Church.

## Crusade Topics Keyed to DISCOVER

A "Discover the Joy of Life" seminar at the La Mesa SDA Church in Southeastern California used the DISCOVER Bible guides to accompany each topic.

The evangelistic series concluded with a graduation service for 75 persons who completed all 26 guides.

One man laughed at the doctrines being presented during the early meetings, but later became more interested. He was especially impressed by the graduation service, which included a baptism and communion. The next morning, he and his wife requested baptism.

Two dozen persons were baptized as a result of the crusade.

and their grown children through DISCOVER, Martha uses the "Good News for Today" series with the three grandsons.

"Everyone seems to enjoy getting together and studying," says Savino, "and the three boys are having a blast!"

The weekly study was begun after Donesky shared his faith with a co-worker at Ventura Estates, an Adventist retirement home near the VOP offices.



Victoria VanHager was baptized December 17, 1994 by Pastor Keith Mulligan of the Ventura SDA church. She was the first graduate of the DISCOVER course from the Voice of Prophecy.

**For more information on how you can use the DISCOVER lessons in your local church outreach, write: Bible School, Voice of Prophecy, Box 2525, Newbury Park, CA 91319.**



## Team ministry

James A. Cress

*"The Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two" (Luke 10:1).*

When Jesus sent His disciples out two by two, His pairing of partners was more intentional than accidental. "None were sent forth alone, but brother was associated with brother, friend with friend. Thus they could help and encourage each other, counseling and praying together, each one's strength supplementing the other's weakness . . . It was the Saviour's purpose that the messengers of the gospel should be associated in this way. In our own time evangelistic work would be far more successful if this example were more closely followed."\*

Seventh-day Adventists have historically applied this partnership principle in public evangelism. Also, large congregations are served by a senior pastor and a staff of associate specialists who form a team to provide pastoral care and leadership. However, economic constraints have virtually eliminated the teams of those golden years of public evangelism. Today, most congregations are part of multiple-church districts in which one full-time employee leads several different and separated congregations.

### Who forms today's pastoral team?

In a time of team-worker shortages it is vital to focus on God's original human team. "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. . . . And they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:18-24). The answer was right there in Scripture all along: man and woman, called together and serving

together to hasten Jesus' coming. The two becoming one in flesh as well as in ministry.

This utilization of both halves of the whole seems to be God's plan from Creation: man and woman mutually sharing the responsibilities and privileges of ministering. A summary of Adam and Eve's status before the Fall states, "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" (Gen. 5:2). Not only were man and woman described as "one"; they were even called by one name! So total and complete was their partnership that the matter of position was never an issue. Authority was mutual more than equal. *Co-equal* might be a better term in view of humanity being made in the image of the eternal Godhead.

We cannot construe God's intent to be subordination even when He declares He will make a help meet for Adam. The "help" was a completing partner, making the other half of the whole. The "meet" was a creature appropriate in design and potential, a completing partner.

Only after the Fall is woman viewed as a separate identity from man. The post-Fall situation brought a tragic division between God and humanity, and between man and woman. The curse of sin emphasized these differences.

What, then, is team ministry? Frankly, it will be different for every pastoral couple, just as every pastoral couple is unique and unlike any other. Some observe that team ministry is what we have always had all along—that it has been both expected and necessary to even survive. Others point to the reality that two incomes are demanded for survival in the

economic environment of many countries today. From another viewpoint too many pastoral families enter ministry today with a view of ministry that suggests that his career and her career impact each other only insofar as the two individuals happen to be spouses.

Therefore, we suggest a developing definition of team ministry that, rather than legislating its parameters, explores the possibilities. Please read with your spouse the following four points of this developing definition. Then, if you will, share your reactions with us.

### Team ministry: a developing definition

*Team ministry is the combining in service for Christ of the best skills, gifts, and strengths of two very different personalities so that each brings out the best in the other and together they provide a stronger "servant leadership" than either could if they acted alone.*

*Team ministry will be different for each pastoral couple because it emphasizes their own unique talents, capabilities and interests. It will involve shared responsibilities in serving the church and in managing the home in such a way that neither spouse will despair from lack of support.*

*Team ministry is a decision.* It is a choice or commitment more than it is a job description or an employment opportunity. For the present, it offers less in financial remuneration possibilities and more in spiritual, psychological, and nurture support for pastoral families.

*Team ministry recognizes that both spouses are called by God for service and presupposes both are equally dedicated to the ministry of proclaiming the good news of salvation and hastening the return of Jesus Christ. From this commitment grows a concept of "family ministry" that ultimately becomes the model for the congregation to become the caring church that ministers to the larger community.*

In short, team ministry is the present-day experience of Christ's intention when He sent out His disciples two by two. ■

\*Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 350.

## Ministry Reports

# Training for pastors: a German model

Ekkehardt Mueller

The climate of a congregation and its growth depend largely on the spirituality, skills, and leadership of its pastor. Thus, the leadership of the South German Union is determined to provide the best possible education for future ministers. Effective pastoral training includes both theory and practical work. Students must be acquainted with all aspects of ministry to prepare themselves for coping with difficult issues and situations.

### The theological seminary

In Germany the educational level of the general population is constantly increasing, and this is reflected in our churches. In large cities about 30 percent of Adventist young people are pursuing at least a master's degree. We are thankful that our seminary has earned official recognition as a university, offering two different theological graduate degrees. These are comparable to a M.Div. degree in the U.S. educational system.

### Practical work

Since the importance of academic education is easily overestimated, we seek a balance between theory and practical work. Seminary students are introduced to the different tasks of the ministry. Their first 10 trimesters are invested in practical work with a nearby church, doing everything from conducting Bible studies to leading the Pathfinders.

### Initial internship

During their second year seminary students engage in several weeks of initial internship. In consultation with the

theological seminary the various conferences select district pastors to supervise the interns. Each intern lives with one appointed district pastor, observing both ministry and family relationships, and fulfills certain tasks assigned at the seminary. Thus students get an insight into what ministry is all about and are evaluated by the district pastor.

### Main internship

During the last year of studies, seminary students apply for employment as regular interns. Once they are accepted by a conference, an internship of one full year begins immediately upon graduation. Interns serve with experienced ordained pastors who expose them to all facets of pastoring. The manual for interns and their supervisors serves as an outline and provides structure for their mutual work.

First the pastor and intern discuss a particular task. Then the pastor demonstrates how to do it, while the intern observes. An evaluation takes place. Later the intern tries it himself/herself and is again evaluated. In this way the intern can move from theory to practice. The manual for interns and their supervisors contains 50 topics covering different aspects of pastoral service. Half of these topics are covered during the year of internship, with the remainder accomplished by the time of ordination.

Before district pastors and interns work together, the ministerial secretary meets with them, setting guidelines for the sake of creating a climate of acceptance, trust, and personal growth. Both parties need to know their responsibilities

Ekkehardt Mueller, D.Min., Th.D., is the ministerial director of the Euro-Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

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Attendees at the ministerial advisory council of the Euro-Africa Division in Krattigen, Switzerland, are pictured with James and Sharon Cress (far left) of the General Conference Ministerial Association. This article was presented as a report at the council.

ties as well as their privileges, so that interns are not overloaded on one hand or underestimated on the other.

During the internship year interns send in special monthly reports beyond those that all pastors, including interns, turn in to the conference. These internship reports are more detailed, specifying areas of study and observation, plus allowing for practical and theological questions. Both the conference president and the ministerial secretary read them and respond at their discretion.

#### Additional training during the time of internship

Interns and licensed pastors meet once a year for a special training session lasting two to four days. This event is organized by the respective union conference. Topics include how to conduct special services, such as the Lord's Supper, baptism, and wedding ceremonies, as well as working for youth.

Toward the end of internship, the union conference organizes another training event lasting two weeks. This time, however, licensed ministers do not participate. Lecturers are specialists in different fields, addressing pastoral ethics, personal spirituality, leadership, church growth and mission, training laity, counseling, and working with young people. Since most interns graduated at the same time from the same seminary, their former tutor meets with them, discusses their experience in the ministry, and solicits an

evaluation of their formal education at the seminary.

#### Employment as pastors

After internship is successfully accomplished, the intern is employed as a licensed minister. Normally ordination follows three to four years later. As indicated above, attending an annual special training event is required for all licensed ministers. Beyond this they may attend continuing education events with their ordained colleagues.

#### Continuing education

Pastors in Germany are required to take six continuing education units (CEUs) within three years. The courses normally last from Sunday evening to Monday morning and provide one or two CEUs each. Pastors choose from a variety of topics that include both theory and practice, along with theological issues. Beyond the continuing education courses offered by the union conference, there are other possible ways to obtain CEUs, such as the continuing education curriculum from the General Conference.

In conclusion, we believe in good education and training for our pastors. There remains much room for improvement, but we also have made some progress. Of course, education itself is not the ultimate goal. The aim of a better education is to serve our Lord more effectively and to perform our ministry with joy and with the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. ■

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or to draw me closer to God. Perhaps God can use drama, just as He used David in spite of his polygamy. Why should we use drama for evangelism, though, when God has given us much better ways—such as narrative?—Homer Trecartin, Jr., theology major, Southern College, Collegedale, Tennessee.

■ Speaking of theater going, Kendall correctly states that “much of what captivates them is no doubt from the devil,” but incorrectly states that people “can learn spiritual lessons in the process.” People do not go to movies for the same reason they go to church—to find meaning in life. They go to the movies to escape the realities of life! Satan has twisted the indulgence of theatergoing into a “bewitching pleasure that will banish Christ from the mind” (*Messages to Young People*, p. 398).

Surely we cannot draw a parallel

between the movies and the sanctuary. God said, “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Ex. 25:8). I do not think that God would be seen sitting in a theater or among cinema goers! God loves to dwell among His people, but not by way of theatrics.

William G. Johnsson (*Adventist Review*, Sept. 8, 1994) has got it right: “As followers of Jesus, children of the light, we cannot, we must not, take our values from the world around us. We must not be seduced by the entertainment industry: Hollywood isn’t in business to build up the kingdom of God. Only by a daily personal relationship with Jesus can we keep on track.”—Ken Davey, Adventist Retirement Village, Queensland, Australia.

■ Drama is becoming a divisive issue in the church today. The Seventh-day Adventist Church uses both the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy for teach-

ing and for correction. It is in this regard that I disagree with some portions of Kendall’s article.

Kendall says, “Much is gained by reclaiming the dramatic arts for Christ. People go to movies for the same reason they go to church: to find meaning in life. That is certainly a worthy goal, and Christian drama is a powerful tool in attaining it.” The Spirit of Prophecy, however, suggests otherwise: “Ministers are not to preach men’s opinions, not to relate anecdotes, get up theatrical performances, not to exhibit self; but as though they were in the presence of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are to preach the Word. Let them not bring levity into the work of the ministry, but let them preach the Word in a manner that will leave a most solemn impression upon those who hear” (*Evangelism*, p. 207).

If introduced in the church, drama or theatrical performance will appear

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good for just a short time. As people get used to it in the church, the good that had originally been intended by engaging such theatrical performances will be compromised.—Thabologo Gabasiane, University of Botswana, Botswana, Africa.

### Spiritually healthy churches

While Speegle ("Spiritually Healthy Churches," February 1995) detailed several marks of a spiritually healthy church, he left out one: the message. This message is of first importance (1 Cor. 15): that Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised again. Without this truth at the center, we are dead in sin and trespasses, no matter how much we structure our churches around these other factors that Speegle discussed. This sums up the whole problem with the "church growth" movement that emphasizes the medium rather than the message.—Ron Thomsen, Houston, Texas.

### When you're undereducated

I would like to express my appreciation for the timely article written by Martin Weber (January 1995). In a time when much emphasis is placed on formal education, it gave me the assurance that God can still use humble, teachable men and women.

Recently I was given the opportunity to continue my education by attending seminary. I would love to attend the seminary, but because of my family and financial obligations, it was prohibitive. As the result of passing up the offer, I began to feel inadequate and limited in my ministry for Christ. I forgot that "even the finest scholars have just islands of expertise amid oceans of ignorance."

Don't get me wrong, I think that seminary training is valuable. All, who can, should go for it. But remember there are those of us, for one reason or another, who can't attend seminaries, who are still called of

God. He is the author and disseminator of truth! God still teaches through His Word, His Spirit, and human experiences. So to those like myself I say, "Remember God is faithful and He will finish the work that He began in you" (Phil. 1:6). —Lou Fitting, Lamar, Colorado.

### Proclaiming whom we know

*Continued from page 4*

I will be closer to genuineness and authenticity, and so to the essence of being truly relevant.

Here's to a new era in Adventist ministry of digging down to know for ourselves personally and experientially what we presently tend to know only theologically. Here's to a new era in Adventist ministry in which we come back with heart and soul to the basics of being relevant proclaimers of what really matters. ■

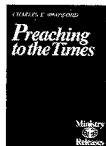
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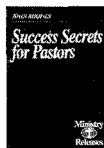
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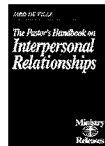
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## Beyond Belief

*Jack Sequeira, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1993, 188 pages, paper, \$11.95. Reviewed by Richard A. Mark-er, J.D., Ph.D., pastor, Southern California Conference.*

Since it came off the press, this book has sparked both rejoicing and controversy. Conservative, traditional, evangelical, and liberal Christians alike have joined in either praising or denouncing the book. This is largely because many Christians today fall into either functional legalism or antinomianism, and Sequeira impeaches the false premises upon which their thinking rests.

In his preface Sequeira pleads with the reader "to put aside all preconceived ideas in order to appreciate" the plan of salvation that he proposes to present "in a new light."

What he presents is a gospel with a beautiful balance. The reader will find *both* assurance of salvation and victory over sin in Christ Jesus.

Sequeira's basic premise is the new covenant. Each chapter follows a natural progression of thought and lays the ground for the next. Readers and small groups will be delighted with the "Key Points," which summarize the material at the end of each chapter.

In the first three chapters dealing with sin, God's love, and a definition of the gospel, the author expels some false concepts and sets the stage for his main presentation. His "Christ Our Substitute" discussion argues that the word "substitute" does not mean "instead of" but should be understood in the context of solidarity.

That sets the stage for the next two chapters on the two Adams and the "in-Christ" motif. The three chapters on the cross are uniquely Seventh-day Adventist theology. The depth and freshness of Sequeira's description of the meaning of the cross will heighten the readers' appreciation for Jesus as never before. It will set the stage for an understanding of the next section on righteousness by faith. Sequeira sees the sanctification process as entirely Christocentric and without human works.

One word of warning—this book could change your life. You may never be the same again.

## When Time Shall be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture

*Paul Boyer, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1992, 512 pages, US\$29.95, hardcover. Reviewed*

*by Charles H. Betz, retired pastor.*

Prophecy "has remained a bedrock of American popular religion," believes Paul Boyer, professor of history at the University of Wisconsin. The author also believes that this interest in prophecy has never been greater than at the present time. According to pollsters, 40 to 60 percent of Americans give attention to Bible prophecy, and 62 percent have no doubts that Jesus will come back to earth again.

In this book the author attempts to show how the proclamation of Bible prophecy has influenced and shaped American society, politics, and foreign policy—especially our relations with Israel during the Reagan years. This scholarly yet fascinating book is the fruitage of four years of intensive research. *U.S. News & World Report* gave it extensive review.

Much of the book is focused on the teaching of Bible prophecy during the past 75 years. It is the author's belief that prophecy endures because it is one way of making sense of the world. He makes a distinction between respected biblical scholars and the "prophecy popularizers such as Hal Lindsey, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson. Boyer faults those who use the latest headlines to identify the antichrist, the king of the north, the mark of the beast, etc.

Boyer deals with the Millerite movement and Seventh-day Adventists in an evenhanded way. He refers to many conversions resulting from Miller's preaching. He concludes by saying, "The conviction that God's plan for human history lays encrypted in an-

cient biblical texts remains very much alive as the century draws to a close. From pulpits, cassette tapes, orbiting communication satellites, and the pages of millions of paperbacks, the ancient cry rings out as it has for hundreds of years: 'He is coming soon.'"

This book gives us a new appreciation of the place and power of Bible prophecy throughout the Christian Era. We get to know the prophetic movement through the eyes of a contemporary historian with no apparent sectarian bias.

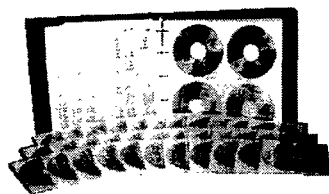
## Lifestyle Discipleship

*Jim Petersen, Navpress, Colorado Springs, Colorado, 1993, 192 pages, paperback, \$10.00. Reviewed by L. C. Cooper, associate secretary, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

*Lifestyle Discipleship* addresses the challenge of discipling people within the context of a rapidly changing society. Many of those, even in the Christian world, do not have the advantage of a deep-rooted Christian heritage. Jim Petersen is well qualified to write on the topic. He has more than 30 years of experience in discipling ministry. He and his wife, Marge, pioneered the Navigator work in Brazil among unchurched university students. His two earlier works *Living Proof* and *Church Without Walls* began the idea that he has now developed to its maturity.

This book is written for Christians (Petersen calls them "insiders") who want to understand how to help other people find and

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
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follow Jesus Christ. It is more of a conceptual framework for discipling than a how-to manual. Yet there are very practical suggestions to be found throughout the book. The text is very readable, and the language easy to understand.

Petersen's ideas are built around three basic knowledge components required by the successful discipler: an understanding of the gospel, an understanding of the people that one intends to work with, and an understanding of the spiritual growth process. What happens and what doesn't happen at conversion? What is involved in the process of spiritual transformation? Where does behavior change come into the picture? Says the author: "There must be cause and effect between truth and behavior . . . . So often, as we attempt to help others in the Christian life, we get these things turned around. We focus on behavior rather than on transformation of the heart . . . . Discipling that is performance-oriented will often eventually lead either to rebellion or bondage."

Christians, whose view of discipleship is inextricably bound up with denominational identity, will be challenged by the chapters entitled "New Creations in Christ" and "True Spiritual Transformation." Petersen argues from Scripture and a thorough understanding of human nature. The section dealing with seven elements of spiritual transformation is a practical combination of theory and experience.

This volume, 192 pages, deserves a place on the pastor's desk, not just in the library. It is a basic instrument for understanding the goals of discipling and spiritual growth.

#### Whatever It Takes Praying

Joe Engelkemier, Hart Research Center, Fallbrook, California, 1993, 206 pages, paperback, \$9.95. Reviewed by Brian Jones, Frametown, West Virginia.

Engelkemier, an experienced writer and teacher, has given to youth and young adults perhaps the best book currently available on prayer.

This work examines the whole field of prayer, not in labored academic terms, but in a conversational way. He takes Scripture, especially the Psalms, as the chief vehicle for teaching the reader how to pray and how to recognize and claim Bible promises.

The author sees prayer as a call to committed discipleship through knowing, loving, and serving Christ. He presents being in partnership with Christ as the chief actuator of a dynamic, productive prayer life.

At the end of 18 chapters, Engelkemier distills his practical points into a summary of "Usable Ideas," drawing candidly from his own prayer experiences and from biblical, historical, and contemporary examples of effectively praying people.

The author deals competently not only with aids to prayer, but also with obstacles. He does not diminish any points of truth to make his book more palatable to jaded readers. For example, he recommends the elimination of trashy reading and entertainment, if the heart's highway is to be cleared for effective prayer and communion with the Lord.

This book would be good not only for individual reading but also for youth group discussions.

#### The American Religion, the Emergence of the Post-Christian Nation

Harold Bloom. Simon and Schuster, New York, 1993, paperback, 288 pages, \$12.00. Reviewed by R. H. Brown, Yucaipa, California.

The author describes himself as "an unbelieving Jew of strong Gnostic tendencies, . . . a literacy critic by profession" (p. 30), "a Gnostic without hope" (p. 257). *The American Religion* is his twentieth book.

In this book Bloom argues "that the American Religion . . . masks itself as Protestant Christianity, yet has ceased to be Christian" (p. 32) and is pervasively Gnostic (p. 26), that "the American Christ is more American than he is Christ" (p. 25); yet he sees American society as "religion-soaked, even

religion-mad" (p. 35, also p. 22)—a society in which "we think we are Christian, but we are not" (p. 37). We are actually "post-Protestant, . . . [living] a persuasive redefinition of Christianity" (p. 45). The current situation in America, according to Bloom, brings to the individual "the immense difficulty of becoming a [true] Christian in any society ostensibly Christian" (p. 23).

In chapter-by-chapter treatment of what he considers to be the authentic American religion, Bloom focuses on five indigenous sects that he sees as "indelible strands of the American Religion: Mormonism, Christian Science, Seventh-day Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostalism" (p. 31). He also devotes three chapters to the Southern Baptist Convention. Many members of these groups and many outside observers will take exception to Bloom's treatment. Nevertheless, what he says as a specialist in comparative religion and as a keen analyst of modern American society must be recognized, since this book will be widely read and will strongly influence the attitudes of a large number of people.

Bloom is deeply fascinated by Mormonism and devotes three chapters to its treatment. "The two crucial branches of the American Religion, in . . . [his] judgment, are the Mormons and the Southern Baptists, violent opponents of one another, yet each American to the core and neither [?] having anything accurately in common with what historically has been considered Christianity" (p. 81).

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Less controversial than this categorization of Southern Baptists is Bloom's observation that "Catholics and Protestants alike joined the rabbinical sages in offering definitive interpretations that displaced Scripture" (p. 81). He predicts that Mormonism will become the dominant religion in the western United States (p. 263), as the consequence of its emphasis on family values, hard work, church discipline, evangelism, and a high birth rate (pp. 93, 113, 118).

Regarding the Seventh-day Adventist church, Bloom believes that "little of the earlier Adventism survives today" (p. 149) and that "doctors [are exalted] beyond ministers in the Adventist hierarchy" (p. 152). "It is an American religion of health, crossed with the postapocalyptic dream of an end-time never to be" (p. 154), and is "in danger of becoming just another Protestant denomination, or just another shade or variety of Fundamentalism" (p. 148), principally distinguished as a cult emphasizing health (pp. 151, 157).

In the three chapters on Southern Bap-

tists, Fundamentalists are described as having an "almost lunatic resentment of mind" (p. 195), conducting "a drive against thought itself" (p. 197), having "a restrictive interpretation . . . [which has] not the slightest relation to the Bible's actual text" (p. 221), and promoting "a frightening and degrading betrayal of the seventeenth-century Baptist dream of human dignity and freedom in fellowship with Jesus" (pp. 221, 222).

In his final chapter Bloom makes a significant statement: "Large unconscious assumptions have far more to do with belief than do overt doctrinal teachings" (p. 267). The author concludes that in America "politics and religion increasingly refuse separation from one another" (p. 247), and predicts "the twenty-first century will mark a full-scale return to wars of religion" (p. 265).

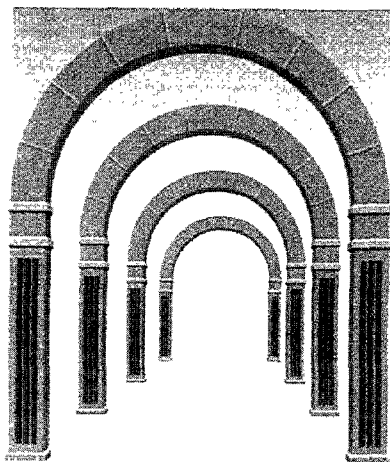
#### Recently noted

*John*, Jon Paulien, Pacific Press Pub. Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1994, 288 pages, paper, \$12.95, cloth \$17.95.

As part of the Abundant Life Bible Amplifier Series, *John* introduces us to a Creator driven by an indescribable love to save those He had created. Jon Paulien, a committed Christian, scholar, and teacher, locates in the fourth Gospel insights to challenge Christians to come up higher and see in person the Logos who came down to transform the human soul. The scholarly and the personal aspects of the book are gripping.

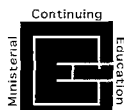
*If My People Pray*, Randy Maxwell, Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1994, 192 pages, paper, \$10.95.

Who knows the power of prayer? Only those who have experienced it. What would happen in our lives, homes, churches, and communities, if we followed the counsel of 2 Chronicles 7:14, humbled ourselves, and prayed? This book is not a how-to-pray handbook, but a call to prayer and revival. Its practical suggestions for personal, group, intercessory, corporate, Spirit-led prayer can change your prayer life, and set you on the high road of celestial discovery.



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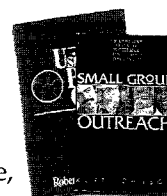
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## Funneling

When in board and business meetings we need to share information promptly and coherently. I facilitate this with "funneling," a brainstorming technique from the business world. This involves 30 minutes of discussing, listing, and prioritizing ideas, concerns, needs, and options on the issue at hand.

To do "funneling," choose a topic and enlist your members' help in brainstorming. Organize them into groups of two to seven, with one member taking notes. Allow five to seven minutes for brainstorming as many thoughts as possible without taking time to analyze or scrutinize. Then announce an additional three or four minutes to select from their list what they consider their best three or four ideas. Finally, bring everyone together in a circle and have each group in turn share one idea. Proceed around again until all ideas have been aired. Record everything on a flip-chart and establish priorities.—Lynell LaMountain, Calhoun, Georgia.

## Parsonage hospitality

To facilitate pastoral hospitality for our members, we invite two or three couples together for dinner once a month. By year's end we have entertained everyone in our small district. One blessing from these evenings is that during these informal dinners people relax and "let down their hair" so we could truly say at year's end no brother, nor sister in the church remained a stranger. Additionally, others often commented on the joy of getting to know each other, and some even adopted their own hospitality program.—Lee Cenkus, Prospect, Connecticut.

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## Church talking paper

New ministers often find themselves with a lack of direction, bouncing from Sabbath to Sabbath without really accomplishing anything. The best solution I have found is to have pastor and members compile an idea list of goals and objectives, including activities such as evangelistic meetings; seminars; church finances; new small groups, etc. These ideas should be put together into a "talking paper" and be presented to the church board for discussion. After church board acceptance, this "talking paper" outlining the goals for the next few years should be dis-

tributed to the members at large.—Carl P. Cosaert, Albert Lea, Minnesota.

## Master church program

Following church elections toward the end of each year the pastor can ask newly formed departments to meet and plan their programs, with goals to be achieved for the entire year. Participants should include local church elders, who assist the pastor in planning everything, even the preaching roster and specific dates for visitation. This simplifies the pastor's work as facilitator of the church program.—Eustace Williams, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

## Power on the hour

The ordinary wristwatch can help you be a "watchman" for the Lord. I have set my watch to chime on the hour, every hour, for the purpose of praying for the Holy Spirit whenever I hear the chime. This has reminded me to seek the Spirit's counsel in the middle of daily events, whether

I'm on the phone, in a counseling situation, or am having a friendly conversation in a store. At the sound of the chime I immediately "flash" a Holy Spirit prayer for the person I am talking with. If I am working on a project by myself, I invite the Spirit to give me increased enthusiasm and creativity.—Byard W. Parks (no address given).

## National theme banquet

Plan a yearly church banquet with a different national theme. One year it could be a Dutch-style banquet; another, an Egyptian style, and so on. Strive for authenticity.—Shirley A. McGarrell, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad.

## Sabbath bulletins

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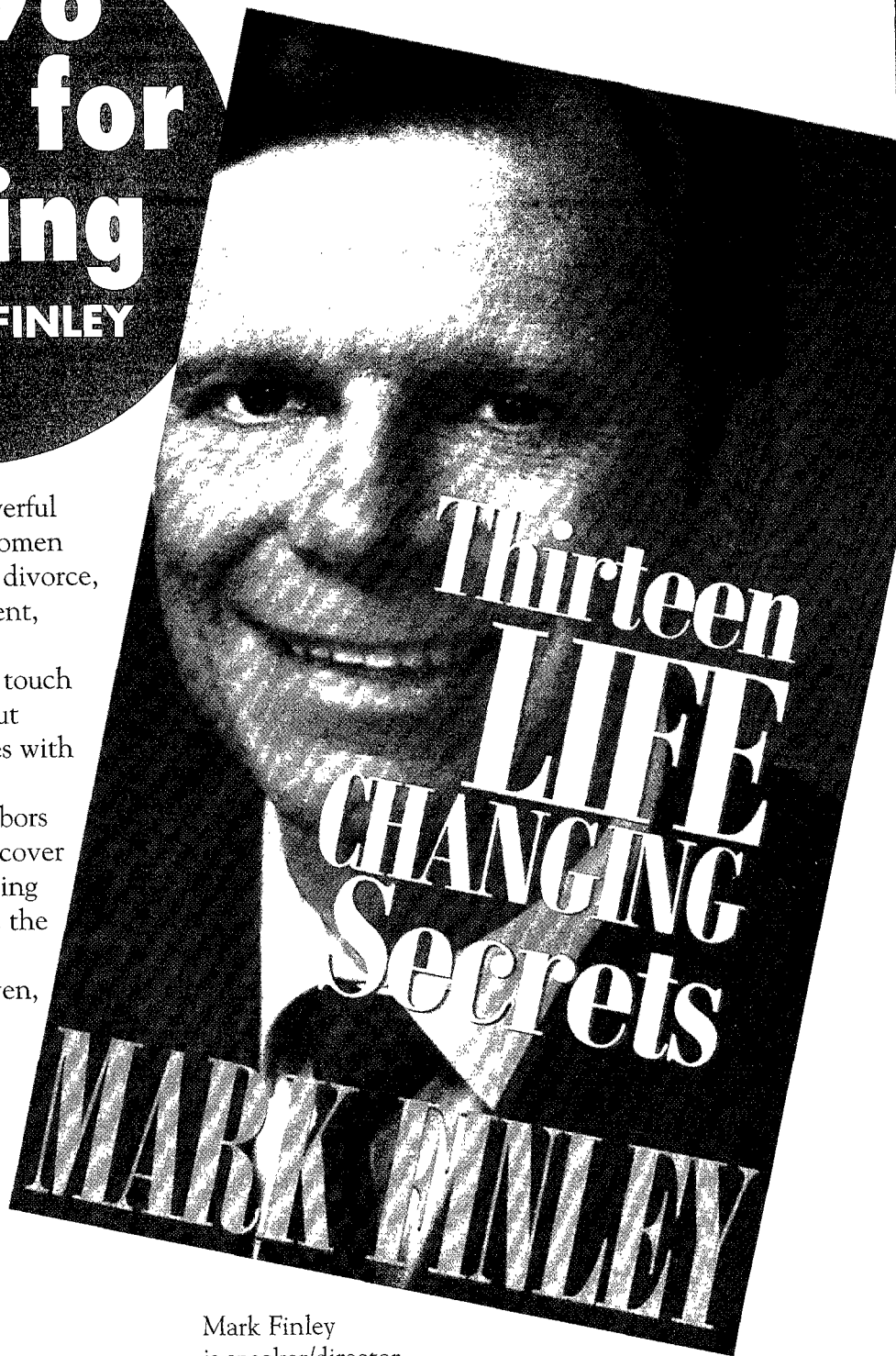
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