

MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors

June 2005



TENDING
YOUR OWN
SPIRITUAL
FIRE

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DOES THE PROPOSED NEW FUNDAMENTAL BELIEF ATTEMPT TOO MUCH?
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AND THE PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN CULTURES WHERE SPIRITUAL FORCES
CONTINUE TO PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN DAILY LIFE?

New fundamental belief

The June 2004 Ministry article on the "Proposal for a New Fundamental Belief" has many informative facts and detailed justifications for #28. The concern is that the new statement does not go far enough. My experience in soul-winning work among people belonging to the traditional religions in Africa, "Folk-Islamic" Muslims in the Middle East, Hindus in Southern Asia, and Christians in Europe has convinced me that the best way to fill the vacuum we create in calling them to Christ is to explain that "spirits and ancestors" who manifest themselves are the fallen angels in disguise. At the same time we bring their attention to the many incidents in the Bible where God sent His loyal angels to give protection and guidance to His people. These are tangible biblical incidents and will be well understood and accepted by people who live in a world where spirits of all kinds are daily realities.

The article rightly stated that the call for a new fundamental belief came from the 2001 Global Missions Issues committee. It is, however, not mentioned that this committee suggested that the new statement should include *the role of the good and evil angels (spirits) in the life of people.*

In the proposed #28, words such as "forces of evil" and "demonic powers" are used five times. In Adventist understanding, the only power behind these

"evil forces" is Satan (former head of the angelic hosts), who commands the fallen angels. They manifest themselves in all kinds of deceptions in religious experiences. This fundamental biblical fact is completely ignored in the statement. Neither do any of the supporting texts from the Scriptures mention the role of angels in the plan of salvation.

Does the proposed new fundamental belief attempt too much? Does it address the difference between the sophisticated West and the people who live in cultures where spiritual forces continue to play an important role in daily life? Would the exercise be more useful if it were expressed in two statements rather than one, with an alternative highlighting the involvement of angelic agencies in the Christian life?

—Borge Schantz, Ph.D., Denmark.

A struggling pastor

I am deeply touched by the article "Open Letter from a Struggling Pastor" (August 2004). I hope that the conference that initially received this letter responded with truckloads of information, data, and resources. Before I became a pastor, my desire was to develop a center where clergy could come for recovery related to disorders of this kind. Some of us have developed other addictive/compulsive behaviors that seem more acceptable to church and society—workaholicism, perfectionism, rage, control, etc.—that are as

damaging as sexaholicism, alcoholism, drugs, overeating, etc. After reading *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self and Others* by Hands and Fehr, in which the authors draw from more than 10,000 hours of clinical therapy describing disorders that clergy suffer, phases of healing, etc., I learned much about this topic. I attended 12-step programs on codependency for three years, and it is my desire to reach struggling leaders with a message of hope. As a counselor, I have recommended 12-step programs to many people. Many of us struggle with unhealthy coping mechanisms. I hope the person who wrote this letter received information about Sexaholics Anonymous <www.sa.org> and about the SA manual called *The White Book*. I am so glad you published this letter. It is time we address these issues.

—Elizabeth Talbot, associate pastor, Vallejo Drive, Glendale, California.

A favorite publication

Ministry is one of my favorite publications beginning way back in the 1940s, and still is. As a rule I read it from cover to cover including the letters. I realize that it goes also to minister to friends of other denominations. But what troubles me is that well-educated writers who are masters in handling the Word and ideas use references from Karl Barth, Carl Sagen, and so many others.

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Free Subscription

If you're receiving Ministry bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 Ministry has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.

It's not the sermon . . .

Through the preaching of Frank Gonzalez, at a recent General Conference week of prayer, the Spirit touched our souls, mine included (see the ad on page 14.) This is not something that happens automatically, of course, especially among groups of people who have been hearing so much from so many for so long!

Partway through the week, Frank and I had lunch together and, true to form, talked about what preaching is all about and what, in fact, makes any particular preaching event extraordinary. Frank's insights were especially stimulating.

He described the sense he had of how easily preaching can become—and even has become—an end in itself, the fulfillment of an occupational role critical to a pastor's declared job description and contributing to his or her professional career track—a thing we must do because it's the thing that's done.

Most of us preach or speak on spiritual topics a number of times each week. Each time we speak, we have to decide on a topic and search for good material. So we read broadly, combing through familiar and unfamiliar sources, sacred and secular. We settle upon relevant parts of Scripture, exegete the text, and use the classic tools required by our task. We "homiletize" and illustrate, we analyze, organize, and note-take. We think and pray, searching, sometimes a little desperately for ways to make our message worthwhile.

But for what reason?

When we stand up to preach we use voice inflections, pauses, gestures, and

WILL EVA



body language. We quote our sources and cite our authorities. We are sure to say things that are sensitive to the particular intellectual, social, political, and ecclesiological realities that predominate in our congregations. In fact, the unpleasant truth is that a great deal of what drives us in our preaching, and causes us to say this or that in such and such a way and with a particular emphasis, is the strong motivation we all possess to impress the most impressive among our listeners with our preaching skill and homiletical acumen.

All this becomes second nature to us. We do what's expected of us; that which is to be done at the right place, the right time, and in the right way.

But for what reason?

Has preaching—or for that matter, any aspect of our leadership ministry—become an end in itself? In the final analysis, what is supposed to happen when a Christian minister stands up, opens his or her Bible, and begins to speak on Sabbath morning? Most pointedly perhaps, What are we preachers actually expecting, and what specifically are we seeking to accomplish?

John said that he wrote his Gospel "that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:31, NRSV).

It's significant that this verse comes right after a description of the experience of an angry, disillusioned Thomas, who had said that if he did not put his finger into the wounds in Jesus' hands, or his hand into the speared side of the Lord, he would not believe. My guess is that Thomas never thought such a thing would or could actually happen.

But he had no sooner made this rash but hugely significant demand, when Jesus stood before him and told him to do just what he'd said he needed to do. Incredulously, he reached out his hand, felt the configuration of the wounds, believed (verse 29) and cried out, "My Lord and my God."

We preach in order to reach—not just impress—the hearts of agonizing, searching, disillusioned people; that they may put forth their hands, touch the living Christ, believe, and find life in His name. What even we might not expect to happen is always on the cusp of happening anyway, especially if we know why we preach, what we preach and especially who we preach.

It's not just the sermon. . . . It's an immensely significant thing we do as pastors and evangelists. Viewing our preaching and ministry this way will revolutionize the way we view ourselves and our work. It will invest each day with purpose and meaning. ■

Tending our own spiritual fires

Bert B. Beach



Bert B. Beach, Ph.D., is secretary of the Council for Interchurch Relations for the Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

After more than 40 years of meeting with church leaders from many diverse geographic and theological backgrounds, I've come to the view that there are three different classes of people in church leadership: First, there are the traveling bureaucrats, then the status and title monuments, and, finally, the men and women of God who are consistently deeply spiritual and inspiring. It is a privilege to associate with and be blessed by the many leaders I know in this last category. It is my sense that these are the leaders who make it a priority to tend their own spiritual fires.

My personal definition of true spirituality is brief and unpretentious: *Being in harmony with God's will.* This is our daily calling, our lifetime search. I ask God: "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and lead me in a plain path." No need here for theological complexity and sophistication.

My church is a Bible- and Christ-centered church. This must always be preeminent. However, it may surprise some readers to hear that I guide my public life by asking myself four questions of seemingly secular origin, but which have a Christian foundation: (1) Is it the *truth*? (2) Is it *fair* to all concerned? (3) Will it build *goodwill* and better *friendship*? and (4) Will it be *beneficial* to all concerned? This is the 4-way test of Rotary International. I find these questions helpful

in sustaining and guiding me in an ethical and spiritual life.

What is Adventist spirituality?

Adventist spirituality is usually less formally organized than it seems to be in some other communions. We don't follow spiritual exercise books, breviaries, canonical hours, or set daily prayers, or have appointed spiritual advisors.

While such structured approaches may prove helpful to some people, there is an innate risk to this kind of formalism. A mechanical way of praying by rote does not, it seems to me, nourish a living, spiritual relationship with God. On the other hand, the more relaxed, extemporaneous approach may lack system, be less targeted or intentional and thus not lead to where we need to go.

Adventist spirituality is also less contemplative or mystical. It is more pragmatic and "action" oriented. Thus it aims at authenticity by revealing the observable fruits of the spirit. While there may be no impressive ecstasy in Adventist spirituality, neither should we be lost in constant busyness. The life in Christ should be one of restfulness because there's abiding, peaceful trust. At the heart of things is the simple daily work of simply tending our own spiritual fires.

Like others in a *creation-emphasizing* church, I receive profound spiritual uplift by gazing at the wonders of nature and especially at the stars in a dark night sky that's unaffected by artificial light. The incomprehensible and awesome vastness of the universe puts me in my place. And yet the Almighty Creator God loves and looks after each of us, and we can call Him intimately, "Abba, Father."

No doubt, like most preachers, I receive spiritual nourishment while preparing sermons, and in writing articles. I have a strong suspicion that in this ministry, my soul is more nourished than those who have to listen or, perchance, to read!

There are two little books that have been helpful to me. One is *Ds Nöie Teschtament Bärndütsch*. This is the New Testament in the Swiss Bernese dialect. There is nitty-gritty power in this version. Since this language is usually not written, it is easier to read by talking it silently (or out loud) to oneself. It is so down-to-earth, in some ways the opposite of the glorious majesty of the King James Version. I like to read it before going to sleep.

Key elements nourishing a leader's spiritual life

Then there is that essence of Seventh-day Adventist spirituality—*Steps to Christ* by Ellen G. White. Written well over a century ago, it is simple, demanding, but encouraging. I have distilled for myself some two dozen points or steps, found in that little volume, that are helpful in nourishing our spiritual life. Here are just a few that energize the spiritual vitality of church leaders.

1. We don't need to fear God. He loves us with an everlasting love. It is Satan who lives to cause us to feel hopelessly estranged from God. It is he who delights to picture God as a severe judge, a rigid and demanding accountant and timekeeper, and an exacting creditor.

2. God's love is revealed also in the suffering and difficulties that result from sin. The trials of life—the Genesis thorns and thistles that emerged after the Fall—are appointed for our training and uplifting, not to bring us down into condemnation and sorrow.

3. Education, culture, and willpower all have their place, but “they cannot purify the springs of life.”¹ In themselves they lead to the dead-end of salvation by works. The power is Christ, and His grace alone can quicken our lifeless faculties. He is the only medium of spiritual communication between God and human beings.²

4. When it comes to repentance, an important thought is frequently overlooked: “Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it.” I need to lament the sin, rather than simply the unpleasant consequences of sin.³ David understood this and that is why, despite his shocking sins, God could call him a man after His own heart.

5. The sins that are especially offensive to God are not so much the visible outward acts that we so readily highlight and condemn, but pride,

selfishness, and covetousness, for they are contrary to the very essence and “benevolence of His character.”⁴

6. The rule of God is not based on blind submission, but rather it freely appeals to the intellect and conscience. There is here a great religious liberty principle: God cannot accept a homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. In any relationship, such homage is useless, even harmful. How many foolish crimes have been committed by so-called Christians trying to force people to worship God in certain prescribed ways.

God gives us a wonderful gift—the power of choice—and we can yield our will to Christ and ally ourselves with the power that is above all powers.⁵

7. Here is another hopeful and morale-building statement regarding spiritual growth: Our character is revealed “not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts.”⁶ At the heart of such deeds is the call to consistently tend our own spiritual fires.

8. Ellen White gives us two simple and yet dynamic statements regarding the vitality of prayer. She says that prayer is “opening of the heart to God as to a friend” and that it is a key, that is, our “key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse” of spiritual nourishment.⁷ It is especially arresting for leaders to consider the far-reaching implications in this “storehouse” metaphor: that in prayer we hold the key to such richness!

9. Some mistaken individuals see the pinnacle of spirituality in quiet and permanent retreatlike separation from the world. But God does not expect His disciples to retire from society, their fellow human beings, and the world's responsibilities. He expects Christian leaders to live like Christ, between the mountain and the multitude. A retreat can be spiritually invigorating, but I need to be in social life and involved in meaningful, down-to-earth earnest activity for God and His Church. Otherwise, we can easily lose the subject matter

of prayer, so that our prayers become formal, routine, and selfishly detached from the dynamic realities of life situations.⁸ I need the challenging and sanctifying influence of others; colleagues, friends, spouse, children, and, yes, grandchildren!

10. Jesus says that we should be of “good cheer” for He has overcome the world for us. Nourishment provided by a positive attitude is needed to achieve consistent growth in spiritual stature. Joy and gladness drive spiritual development. A “horse-face” Christian is a contradiction in terms. Gloom and moroseness starve and crush the spirit. We need a sanctified sense of humor.

I do not need extraordinary abilities or great occasions to work for God. Together we need to go forward by faith, step by step, quietly and humbly creating ripples that will swell into waves of divine blessing.

We don't need to weary ourselves with anxiety about success. Spirituality does not “quench the light of joy.”⁹ Christ discerned in every human being infinite growth potentiality. Today, we are still imperfect, but the redeemed will stand “without fault before the great white throne,” every imperfection having been removed by the blood of Christ. The joyous glory of Christ's character is imparted through divine grace.¹⁰

The words of the incomparable hymn writer Isaac Watts summarize the challenge of God's love and our response as we tend our spiritual fires, nourishing our union with Christ: “Were the whole realm of nature mine / That were a tribute far too small / Love so amazing, so divine / Demands my life, my soul, my all.” ■

1 Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1892), 18.

2 *Ibid.*, 20.

3 *Ibid.*, 23.

4 *Ibid.*, 30.

5 *Ibid.*, 48.

6 *Ibid.*, 58.

7 *Ibid.*, 93-95.

8 *Ibid.*, 101.

9 *Ibid.*, 121.

10 *Ibid.*, 126.

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1 Corinthians 9:25

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“In the beginning God . . .”

A historical review of the creation debate among Seventh-day Adventists

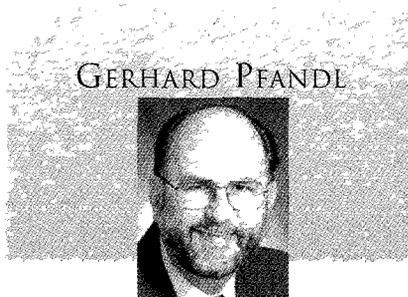
Editorial Note: While this paper, now in article form, is not one that was presented at any of the Faith and Science Conferences convened over the last three years, it is one that was presented in appropriate venues during this time-period and has had its influence on the dialogue. We believe that it contributes to our self-understanding as Seventh-day Adventists when it comes to the issues of creation, evolution, faith, and science. It is therefore included in our Ministry Faith and Science series.

At its 1980 world session in Dallas, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists officially voted the church's statement of faith in terms of 27 fundamental beliefs.

Belief No. 6 states: “God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made ‘the heaven and the earth’ and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week. Thus He established the Sabbath as a perpetual memorial of His completed creative work. The first man and woman were made in the image of God as the crowning work of Creation, given dominion over the world, and charged with responsibility to care for it. When the world was finished it was ‘very good,’ declaring the glory of God. (Gen. 1; 2; Ex. 20:8-11; Ps. 19:1-6; 33:6, 9; 104; Heb. 11:3).”

This statement spells out that Seventh-day Adventists believe (a) that God created heaven and earth and all that is therein in six days, and (b) that the Sabbath is a continual reminder of the six-day creation.

On the basis of biblical chronology and some statements of Ellen White, Seventh-day Adventists have traditionally believed that this creation took place about 6000 years ago.



GERHARD PFANDL

Traditional creation models among Adventists

Two different views in regard to the creation record of Genesis 1 have prevailed in the Adventist Church.

1. *The Adventist gap theory.* This view understands Genesis 1:1 as a reference to the creation of the universe including the earth in its raw state billions of years ago. Several thousand years ago the Holy Spirit hovered above the waters and the six-day creation took place. This view was predominant among Adventist pioneers. M. C. Wilcox in 1898 wrote, “When did God create, or bring into existence, the heaven and the earth?—‘In the beginning.’ When this ‘beginning’ was, how long a period it covered, it is idle to conjecture; for it is not revealed. That it was a period which antedated the six days’ work is evident.”¹

The same view is found among Adventists today. For example, Clyde Webster, former associate director of the Geo-Science Research Institute, in his book *The Earth* writes, “[T]here is no reference in Scripture within creation week that addresses the creation of water or the mineral content of dry land. . . . *The only reference made to their creation is ‘in the beginning.’* It seems possible then that the elementary inorganic matter is not bound by a limited age as is the living matter.”²

More recently, at the 2002 General Conference-sponsored Faith and

Science Conference, Richard Davidson from Andrews University stated that “[T]he biblical text of Genesis 1 leaves room for either (a) young pre-fossil rock, created as part of the seven days of creation (with apparent old age), or (b) much older pre-fossil earth rock, with a long interval between the creation of the inanimate ‘raw materials’ on earth described in Genesis 1:1, 2 and the seven days of Creation week described in Genesis 1:3ff (which I find the preferable interpretation).”³

Contrary to the gap or ruin-restoration theory of the Scofield Bible, Seventh-day Adventists do not believe that life existed on earth prior to Genesis 1. Only nonfossil bearing rock can be billions of years old. While this is a possibility, Genesis 1:1-3 does not indicate that there is a gap between verses 1 and 2. Furthermore, Exodus 20:11 says “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them.” This text seems to say that within six days God created everything connected with our earth. At any rate, the gap view does not really help us when it comes to the fossil bearing geologic column, since death can have occurred only after the Fall.

2. *The original Creation account.* This view sees the six-day Creation week beginning in verse 1, not in verse 3. In other words, “heaven and earth” in verse 1 refers only to our planetary system or our Milky Way and not to the universe as a whole. The reason is that in Isaiah 65:17 and Revelation 21:1 “heaven and earth” do not refer to a re-creation of the universe but only to that part of the universe contaminated by sin.

This was J. N. Andrews's view. He believed that the universe was created on day one. “If we could be placed back some 6,000 years in the past, and from that point survey the vast abyss of space now studded with the stars of heaven,

what should we behold? Blank nothing. The host of heaven did not then exist. Our earth itself had not risen into being. The vast infinity of space was literally, as Job expresses it, 'the empty place,' and that which filled it was 'nothing' Job 26:7. Utter and profound darkness rested upon the great void. Even the materials which subsequently formed the worlds had no existence."⁴

Ellen White wrote in 1904, in connection with the pantheism crisis, "The theory that God did not create matter when He brought the world into existence is without foundation. In the formation of our world, God was not indebted to pre-existing matter."⁵

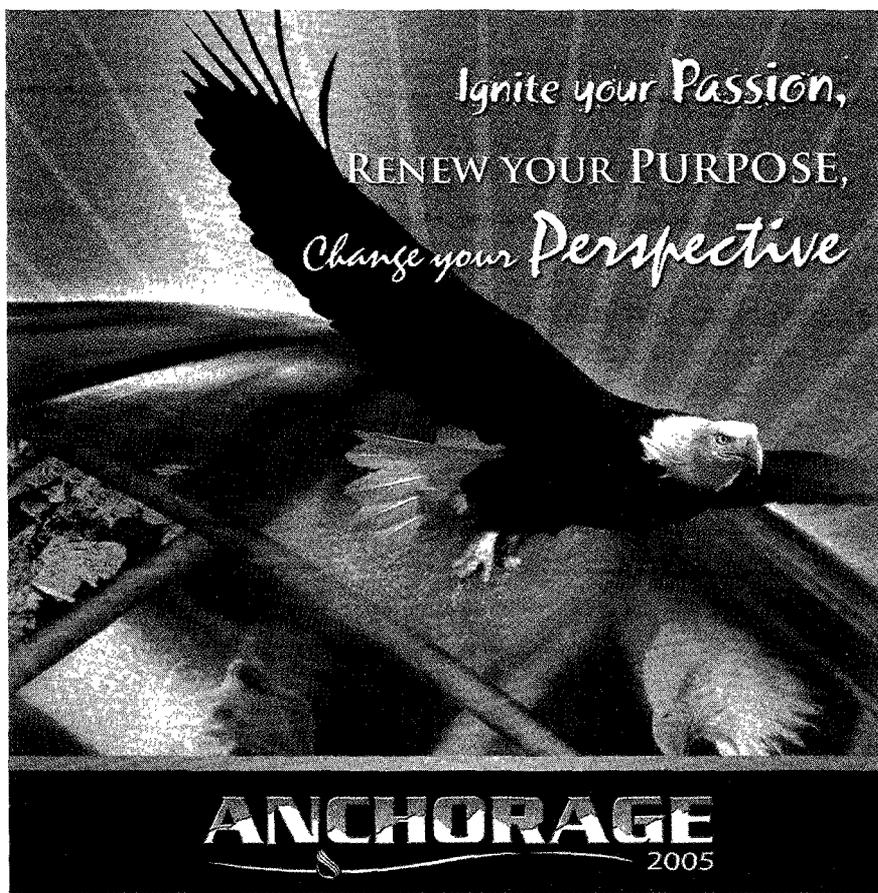
While this statement can be used by both positions, in view of all her other statements on creation, I believe she held the second view. Whatever the case, both positions hold to a six-day Creation and see the Creation account as the basis for the Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20.

Evolution and the Adventist church

Until the 1950s Adventists on the whole accepted one or the other of the two creation models. During the last few decades, however, some Adventists have begun introducing a third creation model—theistic evolution. This is an attempt to harmonize evolutionary biology with the Christian faith.

In 1957 the General Conference established the Geoscience Research Institute, located today on the campus of Loma Linda University in California. "The institute focuses mainly on the biological, geological, and paleontological questions regarding the origin of life and the past history of our planet in the context of the Creation account given in the book of Genesis."⁶

During the first two decades of its work, tensions existed among the scientists of the institute because of different views on how to interpret the past. Some took the statements of Scripture and Ellen White seriously and attempted to interpret the facts of science accordingly. Others were willing to consider seriously "evidence from radioactive



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time clocks that placed 'Creation Week hundreds of millions of years ago' and searched for ways to interpret Scripture in the light of this view.

In time, all the so-called progressive scientists left the institute, and around 1980, when Ariel Roth became director of the institute, only scientists who accepted the Scriptural record as it reads were on the staff. In Adventist schools and universities, however, the picture was different. A number of science teachers tended to lean more and more toward theistic evolution.

The Geoscience Research Institute organized field conferences in North America, Europe, and Australia that informed the leadership of the church, teachers, and ministers about the problems of the evolutionary theory and offered a solution to the geologic column on the basis of the biblical flood.

On one of these tours in 1977 the General Conference president Robert Pierson realized that some of our scientists tended toward theistic evolution. He asked the vice presidents Duncan

Eva, Willis Hackett, and Richard Hammill to formulate two doctrinal points, one about inspiration and the other about creation, which the scientists and Bible teachers in our schools should accept. "Their efforts on behalf of Pierson's 'creedal statement' prompted one campus theologian to confess that he could see no substantive difference between the actions of the General Conference president and those of the pope."⁸

About the same time that Ariel Roth became director of the Geoscience Research Institute, Gerhard Hasel became dean of the theological seminary at Andrews. Through these appointments Elder Pierson hoped to contain the pluralism among the theologians and scientists.

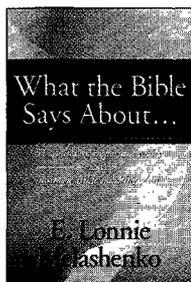
The progressive or more liberal thinking scholars and scientists, however, were frustrated. They turned to Richard Ritland, who had retired in 1982, and asked him to organize a field conference for the Association of Adventist Forums. The conference took place in 1985 with about 100 participants. For ten days they

studied the geological formations in Utah and Wyoming and another five days were spent at a study conference in Yellowstone Park. "Conference presenters dealt with three themes: earth history, the biblical record, and responses by Christians seeking to reconcile their faith with the evidence from science."⁹

A report of this field conference, published in *Spectrum*, stated, "The conference generated some feeling of apprehension, partly because not all the familiar answers seemed adequate to explain what we saw, and because participants were concerned that the issue of origins might be divisive for the Adventist Church."¹⁰

The concern was justified. At a Geoscience field conference in 1991, which newly elected General Conference president Robert Folkenberg attended, Ariel Roth informed the participants that a number of Adventist scientists had become theistic evolutionists. Then in the year 2000, the Association of Adventist Forums published the book *Creation Reconsidered*, which contains

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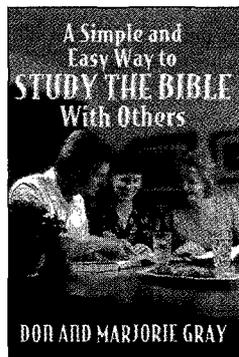
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the 28 lectures given at the 1985 Yellowstone conference. A number of the contributors to this volume advocate theistic evolution.

Two views in the church today

Based on recent publications of Adventist theologians and scientists in regard to creation we can say that today there are basically two views in the Adventist Church. One sees creation extending over millions of years; the other holds to a six-day Creation several thousand years ago.

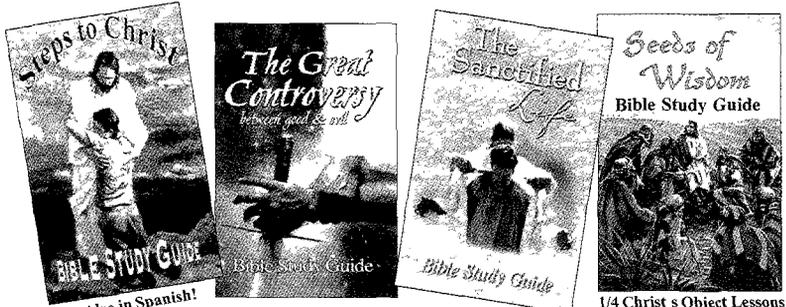
Representatives of theistic evolution.

Richard M. Ritland (a retired biologist who taught at Loma Linda and Andrews). At the field conference in 1985, in his lecture on the geologic column, which seems to indicate that life on earth existed millions of years ago, he traced the development and the evidences for the geologic column. He concluded by saying, "Like a clock for organizing the day, the geologic column has become like a calendar for relating and organizing the vast body of information and theories that has become the essential core to which the records of earth history relate. It has become an indispensable tool, not only for general studies but also for those special areas related to the flow of energy and life throughout time, to origins, to time, to evolutionary change—all of immediate concern to those probing the meaning of life, existence, and the governance of the cosmos."¹¹

Richard J. Bottomley (a geophysicist at the Canadian University College). At the same conference, he dealt with the topic of dating the rocks. After explaining the radioactive dating methods, he showed that fossil-bearing rocks have a certain sequence—the bottom rock must have been laid down before the younger rock on top of it. Since the dates for the individual layers are spread over hundreds of millions of years, he concluded that the layers of rock "do represent long intervals of time and that the rocks involved could not have been deposited over a short period of time,"¹² as most Adventists believe happened during the Flood.

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Richard L. Hammill (former president of Andrews, General Conference vice president). After his retirement, Dr. Hammill studied scientific theories (plate tectonics, fossils, radioactive dating, etc.). After nine years of study he came to the conclusion that "animals were living on the earth . . . millions of years ago before these [continental] plates separated. And, moreover, as I got to looking into the geologic column, I had to recognize . . . that the geologic column is valid, that some forms of life were extinct before other forms of life came into existence. . . . The steadily accumulating evidence in the natural world has forced a reevaluation in the way I look and understand and interpret parts of the Bible."¹³ He called himself a progressive creationist.

Fritz Guy (a theologian at La Sierra University). At the Faith and Science Conference in 2002, Dr. Guy presented a lecture, "Interpreting Genesis One in the Twenty-First Century," that was later published in *Spectrum*. He interprets Genesis 1 theologically, i.e., he sees Genesis 1 "not as a literalistic description of a process, but as 'a spiritual interpretation of the universe's origin, nature, and destiny.'"¹⁴ That means "read theologically, the explanation of creation in Genesis 1 is complementary also to a sci-

entific explanation of the history of the cosmos, the earth, life, and humanity. Taking the two explanations together 'yields an intellectually satisfying and spiritually illuminating account of creation.'"¹⁵ As far as Ellen White is concerned, he believes that if she were living now, knowing what we know today about natural history, "she would undoubtedly avoid making a divisive issue of the interpretation of Genesis 1."¹⁶

Representatives of a six-day Creation.

Jim Gibson (biologist and director of the Geoscience Research Institute). In 1998, at the European Geoscience field conference Jim Gibson stated that "the long-age viewpoint makes certain unfavorable implications about the character of God and the reliability of the Bible. Since I give epistemological primacy to the Scriptures, I accept the Genesis record as a matter of faith. Having adopted that position, I am encouraged that much of the evidence claimed to support long ages can be reinterpreted in the context of a short chronology."¹⁷

Randall Younker (archaeologist at Andrews University with a background in biology). At Andrews University, he and John Baldwin teach the course "Issues in Origin" in which they present the traditional creationist viewpoint.

Cycle of Life

“Sometimes you have to face harsh realities before you know what’s right.”

*Pastor Minervino (Minner) and Evelyn Labrador
Clearwater, Florida*



The first question our financial advisor asked us about retirement was: Do you have a will and other estate planning documents? We didn't. Within weeks, two tragedies in our church showed

us how important estate planning can be. A beloved deacon suffered a serious stroke. Machines kept him alive, but he could no longer communicate. Loving relatives found themselves in a painful argument – a conflict that could have been avoided, if only our church member had signed an advance medical directive. Then, a young couple related to a church member died in a car accident, leaving two young children. Because there was neither a will nor

guardianship papers, the family had no way of knowing what the parents' wishes were for their children. Before the issue was resolved peaceably, probate costs had significantly reduced the children's insur-

ance benefits and inheritance. When we thought about our own family, we knew we couldn't live with uncertainty. We had to fulfill our obligations as parents, as pastors of the flock and as responsible stewards of God's goods. Now that we have wills we are so relieved. We know that if anything happens to us, our sons will be raised in a home we've chosen for them.



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Yunker wrote the Sabbath School quarterly on creation for the fourth quarter of 1999. In the introduction to the lesson he states, "Seventh-day Adventists take Genesis 1-11 as an accurate historical account of origins of life on earth. We accept the biblical account's straightforward testimony that the creation of life on this planet and its various habitats occurred in six literal, 24-hour days. Based on the available biblical data, we also believe that the period of time since the Creation has been a short chronology of a few thousand years, as opposed to millions of years required by the general theory of evolution."¹⁸

Leonard Brand (biologist at Loma Linda University). In the introduction to his book *Faith, Reason, and Earth History* he writes that "a central thesis of this book is that a creationist can indeed be an effective scientist."¹⁹ He champions interventionism, a view of history that recognizes the important role of intelligent intervention in history. In the chapter on faith and science he says in regard to geology, "Science has proposed a theory that fossil-bearing geologic deposits have accumulated over hundreds of millions of years. . . . I conclude that the Bible indicates that current geological theory, in certain respects, is an incorrect interpretation of the data. Our task is to go back to the research lab and develop a more correct theory."²⁰

Richard Davidson (theologian at Andrews University). Davidson is a proponent of the Adventist gap theory, i.e., Genesis 1:1 speaks about the creation of the universe; only from verse 3 on is the creation week in view. In regard to the interpretation of Genesis 1 he says, "Based upon the testimony of the Genesis account and later intertextual allusions to this account, I must affirm the literal, historical nature of Genesis 1 and 2, with a literal Creation week consisting of six consecutive, contiguous, creative, natural 24-hour days, followed immediately by a literal 24-hour seventh day, during which God rested, blessed, and sanctified the Sabbath as a memorial of creation."²¹

The view of Jack Provonsha. In the

face of scientific facts, a six-day Creation a few thousand years ago is no longer acceptable to many Adventist scholars and scientists. On the other hand, conservative Adventist scholars cannot accept any view that posits death before human beings lived on the earth, because Paul in Romans 5:12 says, "Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned" (NKJV).

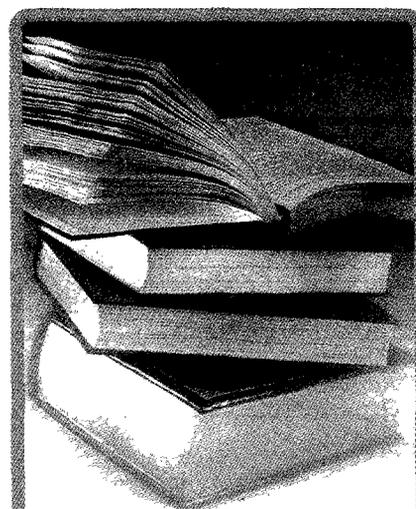
The Loma Linda physician and theologian Jack Provonsha, therefore, has proposed a different solution. He has suggested that Adventists consider the ruin-restoration theory as propounded by the Scofield Bible. According to this view, when Lucifer was cast out of heaven to the earth he was given a long time to work out his principles. "This included genetic experimentation resulting in the evolutionary process which ultimately led to the development of humanlike apes. At some more recent time, Provonsha suggested, God stepped in and created the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve."²²

Although this view combines the conservative view with the scientific data of death before Adam, it has received little support from either side.

Recent faith and science conferences

At the Annual Council in 2001 the General Conference Executive Committee organized a series of conferences on faith and science during the years 2002-2004. The first one in 2002 was an international conference in Ogden, Utah. More than 80 scientists, theologians, and church administrators from different parts of the world began discussing the interrelationship between faith and science. Topics ranged from the hominid fossil record to Ellen White's view of science. The conference revealed the seriousness and breadth of differences concerning questions of origin that are present in the Adventist community today.

During 2003 and the first half of 2004 most divisions held similar faith and science conferences in their territories. The



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formal discussions came to an end in August 2004 at the second international conference in Denver, Colorado. "The new element in this conference was a discussion on the ethics of dissent dealing with the ethical responsibility of those who differ in significant ways from the biblical position of the church on the topic of creation. The discussion was open, candid, and highly professional. It was obvious that a small number of individuals—scientists and theologians—did not support or felt uncomfortable with the biblical doctrine of creation in six literal, consecutive days as clearly revealed in Genesis 1."²³

There was no attempt on the part of church leaders to modify or change our fundamental belief on Creation. This was clearly stated by Elder Jan Paulsen, the General Conference president, before the discussions were initiated. However, such discussions cannot be avoided because the theory of evolution and the Adventist doctrine of creation represent two antagonistic and fundamentally diverse worldviews. Unfortunately, theistic evolution is one view that is being held and taught by a number of Seventh-day Adventists today.

Secondly, it is important for the church to be aware that neither evolutionists nor creationists have all the answers in the debate. These conferences provided a proper environment to discuss these questions while at the same time holding to our faith commitment.

The report of the International Faith and Science Conference Organizing Committee to the 2004 Autumn Council of the General Conference stated that while there is widespread affirmation of the Church's position on Creation, "[W]e recognize that some among us interpret the biblical record in ways that lead to sharply different conclusions."²⁴

The Annual Council, after careful discussion, produced a response to the report in which the Council strongly endorsed the Church's historic, biblical position of belief in a literal, recent, six-day creation. "We reaffirm the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the historicity of Genesis 1–11: that the seven days of the Creation account were

literal 24-hour days forming a week identical in time to what we now experience as a week; and that the Flood was global in nature.”²⁵ The response also called upon all boards and teachers at our schools to uphold and advocate the Church’s position on origins.

Conclusion

The last few years have shown that there are a number of views on creation within the Adventist Church. Not all of them can be right. Should theistic evolution become more and more accepted, we will be in danger of losing the biblical foundation for the Sabbath and our understanding of salvation.

Without the Creation week the Sabbath becomes a Jewish institution, and if death existed long before the appearance of man, there was no Fall in Eden and therefore there is no need for salvation. Then Paul was in error when he wrote: “Through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned” (Rom. 5:12). ❏

Gerhard Pfandl, Ph.D., is an associate director of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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Letters *continued from page 3*

Is it because there is no prophet in Israel? Are Ellen White’s writings irrelevant to our age?

—Jeremia Florea, retired minister, Spring Lake, Michigan

Editor’s response: *The writings of Ellen White are basic and ultimately important to Ministry, and the journal’s articles refer to these as and when needed. However, biblical scholarship and ministerial concerns expect us to be aware of the excellent work done in these fields by other authors whose commitment to the Word of God and to the mission of Christ challenge and encourage us to be better ministers. We believe Ellen White herself would endorse this approach.* ❏

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Modern versus postmodern Adventism: The ultimate divide?

Reinder Bruinsma



Reinder Bruinsma, Ph.D., is president of the Netherlands Union Conference, Hoevelaken, Netherlands.

When did modernism give way to postmodernism? It is impossible to pinpoint the beginning and the end of any era in a precise manner. Just as it was not immediately clear when the “Middle Ages” ended and the “modern” period began, so it is with the far-reaching transitions and thought trends of our time. Only the perspective of history can provide a reasonably clear picture of such megatrends. So the fuller picture of what is now happening to our world will become clear only gradually, but that something is happening and that the world is in major transition is beyond any doubt.

Modernity

When we use the word “modern” or its derivatives to refer to the period that followed the Middle Ages, we do so in a particular way. It is a label for the Enlightenment Project that got underway when people began to think differently, as the Cartesian approach to philosophy began to sink in.

Descartes’ famous dictum “I think therefore I am” became the foundation for a new way of looking at humans and God. The autonomous human, endowed with reason, and soon also fortified by the new scientific method that was developed by Francis Bacon and Isaac Newton, became the measure of all things.

The human was going to solve the world’s

problems. God was at a distance, while the recently discovered laws of nature kept the universe going in an orderly manner. The future would be marked by continuous progress, as the enormous resources of this planet were increasingly exploited to human benefit.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century, the Enlightenment Project was beginning to run out of steam, as Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud came on the scene. New philosophical approaches that focused on language and the interpretation of texts began to blossom. They began to deliver a message of relativism, uncertainty, and even pessimism. The Holocaust, if anything, made it impossible for life to continue as before.

Philosophers in Europe and in the United States began to emphasize that the time of such *grand narratives* as Marxism, Communism, and Christianity had been eclipsed. They declared that there were no longer any all-encompassing schemes that offer a comprehensive explanation of life. Instead, they said, there are only fragmented and contradictory *smaller stories* of individuals and groups in all their diversity. *All is difference*, they proclaimed. And all judgment needs to be *deferred!* There are no absolutes; *Truth* has been replaced by *truths*.

From the 1970s onward the term *postmodernism* came into use to describe the changes that became more and more apparent in the arts and in architecture, and then also in philosophy and even theology. Today the term has become a catch-all label that can be attached to almost anything.

But though, admittedly, the term is imprecise and postmodernity means different things to different people, it cannot be denied that something is going on, particularly in the Western world. The Enlightenment era has come, or is rapidly coming, to an end, and we participate, whether we want to or not, in a momentous process of change.

The postmodern person

What is a postmodern person? What does he or she think? What do they do? Where are they to be found?

There is no shortage of books that list the main characteristics of the postmodern man and woman. Most authors will indicate that there is a superficial kind of postmodernism, which is almost synonymous with con-

sumerism and hedonism, and which allows its adherents to live most of their lives in a virtual world.

But there is more to it than that, and in most cases this description would be unfair.

Rather than describing the average postmodern person as a gadget-happy, amusement-seeking, shallow individual, metaphors like *nomad* or *flaneur* might be more apt. It should also be said that there is often an interesting mix of modernity and postmodernity in one person.

Below are some of the most noticeable characteristics of the postmodern approach to life.

These are given in an abbreviated, summary form, and the list is by no means exhaustive, even though it is helpful in understanding or recognizing postmodern trends.

1. The postmodern person does not believe that everything will become better and better. The idea of progress is largely abandoned. Science is not seen to be the unconditional blessing it once was thought to be.

2. There are no absolutes. We all have our own private truths. Communities and cultures have their own language games. What they talk about and believe in does not necessarily relate to any one particular reality. Everything is subjective, relative, uncertain, contingent, and ambiguous.

3. The metanarratives (grand stories) and the grand ideals have disappeared.

4. Postmodern people like a juxtaposition of incompatible elements. In art we find a great interest in collation, mixing of artistic styles, a blurring of the lines between real life and fiction, the real and the virtual.

5. Scientists are becoming more modest in their claims and confess that they often see what they want to see, and that many of the so-called foundations of science may not be so certain after all.

6. People know they live in a global village. The computer—a symbol of postmodernity—gives them instant access to the world. Yet, at the same

time, global strategies and alliances are under suspicion and there is a strong interest in regional and local issues.

7. The postmodern person has a strong dislike for religious institutions but is open to spirituality. In fact, some advocate a re-enchantment of the world. Mystery is OK. The nonrational, new age-type approach to the questions of life is popular.

The impact of postmodernism

Once we become aware of the main characteristics of the postmodern mindset, we see the impact of postmodern thinking everywhere. Look at some recent buildings in western cities: no longer the modern boxlike monotonous structures of concrete, steel, and glass. Ornamentation is coming back and styles from different periods are combined, so that postmodern buildings can tell their own story.

It is easy to detect the postmodern trends in many recent novels that blend stories from different periods; in films that leave a person wondering where the historical ends and the fiction begins. This is seen, for example in the "infotainment" and "docusoaps" of the latest television productions.

We also find postmodern ambiguity in the political arena, as, for instance, in parts of Europe where a majority of the people support the idea of a European unity but at the same time will do anything to protect a local dialect.

Further, one quickly detects the postmodern approach of many Western people to religion and to the church. Religion is *in*, but the institutional church is *out*. Experience and emotion are OK, but doctrines are considered largely irrelevant. Absolute, propositional truth is replaced by *what works for me*, and there are as many legitimate ways to interpret the Bible as there are readers.

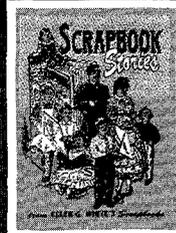
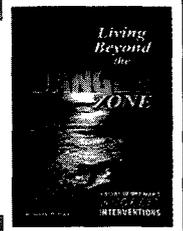
Christianity is one religious option among a series of world religions—all are equally valid, historically and culturally conditioned responses of

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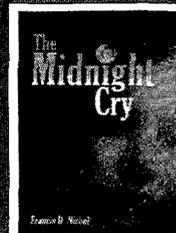
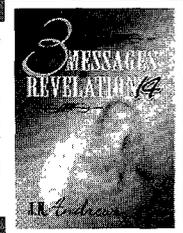
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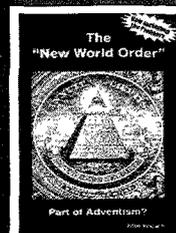
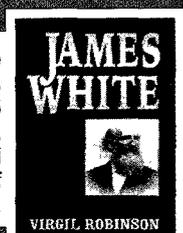
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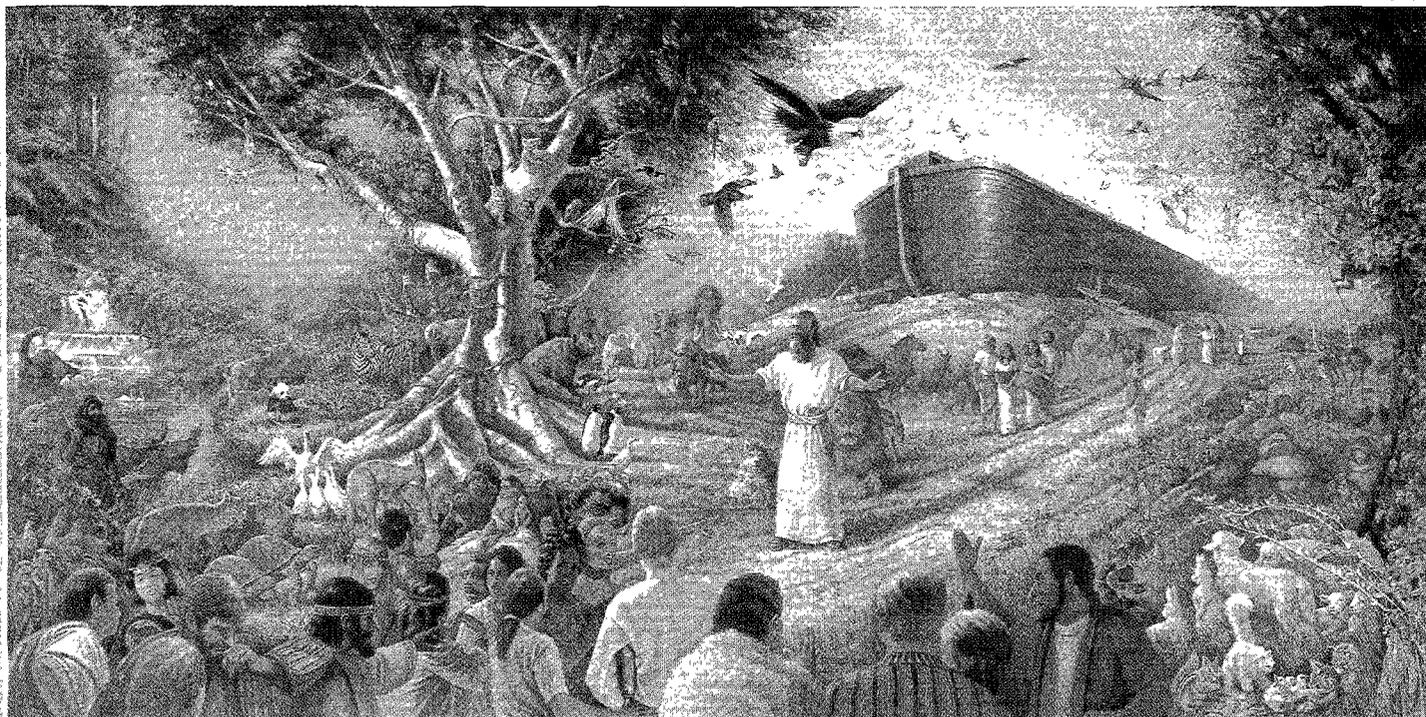


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the human self to the "Beyond." Sin has been reduced to a sense of regret that things have not gone as expected, with little or no place for something like atonement, where Someone steps in on my behalf.

More often than not, those who do turn toward Christianity want to pick and choose as to which teachings they are willing to accept, and will often be reluctant when it comes to manifesting full and permanent commitment.

Postmodernity and the Adventist Church

The postmodernism wave has not bypassed the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many of the issues and concerns, particularly in the Western sectors of the church, are directly related to postmodern influences.

Clearly, for a growing number of Adventist believers in the West the metanarrative of Adventism as a worldwide, divinely ordained movement, united by one theology and one organizational model, with uniform programs and resources, has outlived its sell-by date. More and more church members tend to think and act locally. They have little or no interest in the church's hierarchy and are suspicious of centralized institutional structures.

Many are increasingly weary of doctrinal fine print and establish their own truth, largely, but not exclusively, within the framework of Adventist tradition. They tend to regard Adventism as one option among other options and are not so sure that their traditions are the one and only true church.

Worship styles have significantly changed, with an increasing emphasis on experience, and on contemporary music, drama, and informal small-group meetings. Traditional church discipline has lost much of its corrective power, and an increasing amount of spiritual cross-border shopping takes place.

It has often—justifiably, I think—been noted that Adventism has an

underdeveloped ecclesiology. This fact will increasingly haunt us, as this happens to be the arena where many of the postmodern questions of our church members are asked. What is the church? Is it the *church universal*? Is it the visible, historic, institutional church, or the invisible church of all ages? Or is it a small remnant, with a message that changes in emphasis and focus as one Christian era gives way to the next?

All these questions are directly related to our Adventist identity. Is the Seventh-day Adventist Church the only true church and are all other Christian organizations to be labeled as *Babylon*? Or is Adventism simply one option beside a whole gamut of other Christian options, which may be just as valid? Or perhaps Adventism, it may be thought, represents something special, an option that offers a series of insights not readily available elsewhere?

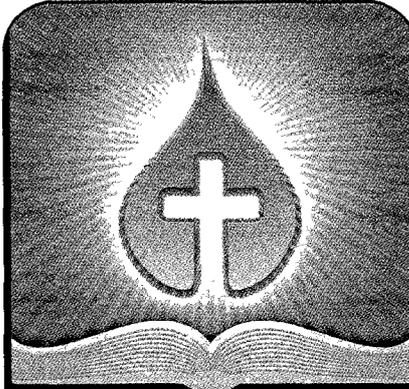
The question for some influenced by postmodernism may be, Does Adventism possess the absolute truth in all areas of theology, or should we be a little more modest and claim at most that our church makes a significant contribution to the rich diversity of Christianity?

There is much confusion and disagreement about the answers to be given, and the response one gives is largely determined by whether one is a *modern* or *postmodern* Adventist!

The modern versus the postmodern Adventist

Categorizing people is dangerous. Most people simply do not fit neatly into any one category. This is also true when we try to separate *modern* from *postmodern* Adventists. So, we must remember that the profiles given below are inexact and are, at least to some extent, caricatures. But, nonetheless, they are basically true in outline.

The *modern* Adventists are in the majority, and will be for some time to come. They are found wherever there are Seventh-day Adventists. They are



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the *traditional* Adventists, mostly conservative in their beliefs and in the way they view their church and the surrounding world.

They believe in the grand story (the “metanarrative”) of Adventism as God’s “remnant church,” with its worldwide mission mandate, called forth by God at the appointed time and assured of its ultimate success.

Modern Adventists believe in absolutes. They dislike questions that may undermine the certainties of the believers. They defend the historical positions of the church with regard to doctrine, organizational structure, worship, and ethics. They welcome a strong emphasis on eschatology and are staunchly anti-ecumenical. They hold a very “high” view of inspiration, both with regard to the Bible and Ellen G. White. They are strong on policy and on the church manual. They want their church to remain united and believe that this unity is fostered by uniform programs and a solid central system of governance.

But *postmodern* Adventists are a growing minority, in particular in Western countries: the United States and large parts of Europe and Australia, with smaller groups in other parts of the world. They tend to

be well educated and tend to be in more affluent areas. They do not have the same interest in the metanarrative of Adventism as their “modern” brothers and sisters.

Their focus is much more regional or local. They are often suspicious of the church’s hierarchy and, as previously mentioned, are simply not interested in the upper layers of the church’s organizational structure. They are weary of ecclesial authority and do not unduly worry about church discipline, policy, or the church manual.

They tend to allow for diversity in doctrine, and want to pick and choose which of the 27 fundamental beliefs of the Church they will embrace. Their religion is much less rational than traditional Adventism. Experience, celebration, praise, and Holy Spirit are the catchwords for the way many of them want to “do” church.

They are open to outside influences, even tend to engage in some cross-border shopping, for they usually view other, in particular evangelical, Christians in a much more positive light than *modern* Adventists do. The postmodern Adventist will often tend to postpone or have reservations about making a total commit-

ment to the church and its message.

Challenges

Postmodernism in and outside the church confronts the church with a set of tremendous challenges. How does the church stay together when people operate on sharply differing premises and no longer see eye to eye regarding the identity and mission of the church? How do Church leaders relate to those who have different ideas about the importance of doctrine as such, and with regard to particular fundamental beliefs? How will the institutional church worldwide be affected by the growing disinterest in the church’s organizational structure and global programs among a relatively affluent segment of the church?

Must these trends be judiciously welcomed, or must they be strongly rejected and fought tooth and nail? Or is there some middle road?

I would suggest that we should not come to hasty conclusions. Both modernism and postmodernism have facets that are in tension with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The old question of the relationship between culture and gospel has reappeared in a new garb. It is, of course, important that the gospel address the issues raised by postmodern people and that those who proclaim the gospel are sensitive to the ways in which people think, feel, and react.

At the same time, every culture—including postmodernism—must be judged by the biblical gospel. We need not and we must not uncritically accept the pluralism and relativism of postmodernity. The claim that all “grand stories” have been eclipsed cannot deter us from proclaiming the metanarrative of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Postmodernity has facets that dangerously undermine the core of the biblical message and the certainty of salvation, but it also offers great opportunities. Because of the basic attitudes that are part and parcel of postmodernity, once again it is all right to talk about religion. There is a new thirst for spirituality and a

remarkable openness to the supernatural. There is more willingness than in recent decades to listen to the small stories of those who have encountered Jesus Christ.

A crucial question is, How can modern and postmodern Adventists stay together, dialogue together and grow together, and worry together about the essential content of the biblical message rather than about the cultural forms in which the gospel message is preached and in which the institutional church operates? Will church leadership allow for such dialogue, or even encourage it? Or will it try to protect its "modern" achievements at any cost?

The Truth is only in Christ Jesus. But could it be that there are modern as well as postmodern *truths* that may help us to discover ever more of the *Truth*? Only as we learn to listen to one another, as we understand that we live in a time of transition (or is it the time of the end?), and as we continue to seek answers that are relevant to our contemporaries through an open-minded and Spirit-directed reading of the revealed Word—only then, I believe, will we be able to nur-

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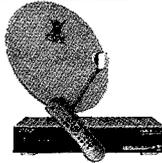


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Many of us differentiate between conservative and liberal Adventists. That may, however, turn out *not* to be the most significant classification.

Modern versus postmodern may well be the most challenging division among us.

May God make us wise and determined to stay together, as He shows us the way to create reliable bridges across this new and challenging divide. ■

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Pastors and sexual misconduct:

A response to Miroslav Kis

Mark Carr

Editorial Note: During the publication of the recent series of eight articles by Dr. Miroslav Kis in *Ministry*, it became increasingly clear that alternative ways of viewing some of what was presented in his articles was present among the Ministry reader family. The following article is gladly presented as a critique of Dr. Kis's series, and as an exposition of possible alternative ways of viewing and dealing with matters basic to this challenging topic, especially the matter of whether or not pastors who have "fallen" morally should or should not be reinstated.

There are a number of matters raised by Dr. Miroslav Kis in his 2004, eight-part series of articles on pastoral infidelity that call for response and critique. Two areas I hope will get future, more widespread attention are first, an overdependence upon the priestly model of clergy and second, his explicit ranking of sins.

My main emphasis in this article, however, is to offer a critique and analysis on the question of whether or not fallen clergy who have been through a rehabilitation period may or may not be rehired as pastors. I believe the most significant impact of Dr. Kis's articles will be the effect of his position on this question. When it comes to this matter, Dr. Kis's bottom line is forthrightly stated in the seventh of his eight essays (*Ministry's* January 2005 issue): "In my view, the pastor who loses his credentials

due to adultery remains a former pastor for the rest of his life."¹

Which policy?

I would argue against this position for at least two reasons. First, it is inconsistent with past and present realities in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, even though it is true that Dr. Kis's position regarding reinstatement to pastoral ministry is consistent with current North American Division and General Conference Working Policy.

With only minor differences from the General Conference policy, the North American policy reads, "A minister who experiences a moral fall . . . shall be ineligible for future employment as a Seventh-day Adventist minister" (L 70 20 #2 *NAD Working Policy*). This policy goes on to state in subsection L 70 20 #4 that "for the sake of the good name of the Church and the maintaining of moral standards," the fallen pastor "must plan to devote his/her life to employment other than that of the ordained/commissioned ministry, the teaching ministry, or other denominational leadership."

Effectively speaking and in reality, this policy is routinely ignored when various arms of church employment, most significantly local and union conference presidents, hire ministers and issue credentials for rehabilitated, fallen pastors. Ironically, the breaking of, or noncompliance with regard to current policy and the rehiring that occur, is more consistent with our past than is the policy itself or what Dr. Kis advocates.

When it comes to present realities in the field, I personally know of at least a half a dozen relatively recent cases in which fallen—and rehabilitated—pastors have been placed in churches by conference administration. In many cases these pastors come back at the request of conference leadership. No doubt the reader can name an equal number of cases in which healthy pastoral leadership is the result.

The point is that rehabilitation and reinstatement of fallen but rehabilitated (What constitutes rehabilitation needs to be clearly defined; see below) and reinstated pastors has happened in the past, it happens presently, and it will probably continue to happen in the future, regardless of what the Church's Working Policy allows for.

This is not necessarily bad or morally irresponsible. While it is obvious that these



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practices must not be the sole reason to justify a change in policy, we should take it as a serious challenge to the basic effectiveness and character of the policy when the field leadership routinely ignores such policy. It may be a reason for revisiting and reformulating our policies.

The Casuist tradition in Seventh-day Adventism

The second reason for arguing against an inflexible policy on this question has to do with moral decision making in the church. I wish to assert that the method with which Adventists have traditionally dealt with such matters is a blend of rigidity and flexibility. We have, throughout our history, developed and held fast to rigid principles and policies, while at the same time we have remained flexible toward the details of the particular matter in question.

My area of academic expertise is in bioethics. In bioethics we spend significant time examining how humans make moral decisions in situations of intense moral importance. Typically these situations involve clinical health-care teams, patients, and family members. For decades, bioethicists have argued about whether we should shape moral decision making from the top down or from the bottom up.

Those who argue for a top down approach, or for deductive reasoning in moral decision making, insist that we bring to any given situation a number of moral duties in the form of principles (or in the case of institutions, policies that have been shaped by underlying principles).

So, for instance, on the basis of principles we glean from Scripture, the church has developed policy when it comes to moral issues such as divorce, remarriage, family and sexual abuse, extortion, abortion, and euthanasia.

When a principlist faces a moral quandary, she brings to the case these principles and applies them in an effort to resolve the conflict. If, for example, the principle of not killing applies to aborting fetuses, it matters not who the

patient is or what her circumstances are. The principle simply insists that the abortion not be performed, period.

On the other hand, the bottom up, or inductive, thinkers insist that the primary point of concern for resolving any given case is the detail of the case. Principles might become important later and certainly have their place, but in an effort to resolve a particular case, those involved in decision making must focus attention on the details.

Casuists, as these bottom up proponents are commonly called in bioethics, argue that human beings are guided in their thinking on such matters by prior cases that have analogical application in the present case. Such "paradigm" cases can help set the pattern for any given current case. So, if we again take abortion as our example case, if we have seen fit to offer abortions for anyone in the past, we should consider it for the present case also. The specific nature of the details of the case should be weighty enough to shape our moral decision making in a certain direction.

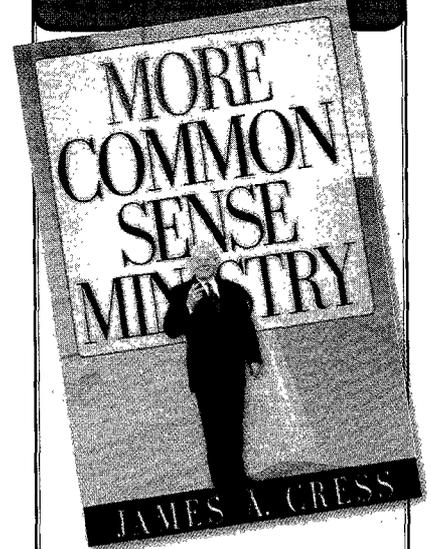
This back and forth debate about how humans reason their way through moral difficulties is not new.

Peacemakers in this debate argue for a third, moderating position. They assert that human moral reasoning is a blending of principles and case details. Faced with any given moral quandary we begin reasoning from either principles or case details, and eventually include the other perspective.

In this way, established principles or policies are more finely interpreted and understood because of the details of each subsequent case. Likewise each case we encounter is placed in its broader context through consideration of the overarching principles.

Working Policy is very important to us; it always has been. *Working Policy*, we must assume, is that to which God has led us. Yet, it is not fixed in stone as if it were written by God's own hand. Of equal importance is a consideration of the details of any given moral quandary. Jesus himself modeled for us the importance of focusing

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on persons struggling with specific issues in the face of the application of some current policy. Examples of this in His ministry are plentiful.

It is in the blending of the concerns of both approaches that we find the preponderance of lived reality. This is true of Scripture and it is true of the experience of our church. I'll cite just two examples.

From Scripture

First, consider the day Jesus was walking through the grain fields on the Sabbath with His disciples. In their hunger they began to pick and eat heads of ripened grain. When the religious leaders of Jesus' time saw this, they said to Him, "Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath." But He said to them, "Have you not read what David did when he became hungry, he and his companions, how he entered the house of God, and they ate the consecrated bread, which was not lawful for him to eat nor for those with him, but for the priests alone? Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple break the Sabbath and are innocent? But I say to you that something greater than the temple is here" (Matt. 12:1-8, NASB.)

The policies that had developed around Sabbath-keeping were good, though strict and rigid. They involved the application of one of the Ten Commandments—honoring the Sabbath. However, the overreliance on this sort of policy had shifted the attention of church leadership away from the Sabbath's essential meaning.

The point is that just as the Sabbath is greater than the policies developed by the Church leaders of Jesus' day to protect the sanctity of the Sabbath, so also is the pastoral ministry in our church greater than the policies we have developed to protect it. When we come to the case where a fallen and rehabilitated pastor is called once again to the ministry, we should not allow policy to restrict the blessing of pastoral ministry in the church.

From the annals of Adventist church history

A story that emerges from the days of Ellen G. White is a fascinating one and constitutes the second example of more effective casuistic moral thinking. This example revolves around the dispute of an Elmshaven church school board's policy regarding the age children should be before they may be admitted into a kindergarten educational program.

Ellen White had written that it was not good to allow children under seven years old to enter formal school programs. In this case, the school board was determined to maintain this policy even if constituent parents wanted exceptions made. The school was able to invite Mrs. White to a meeting of the board, convened in part to resolve this quandary.

Mrs. White was not impressed with the decision making of the board in this matter. She actually mocked their rigid adherence to what she had written. Among other things she said that night was the following comment that was recorded in the minutes of this school's board meeting:

"Why, sister White has said so and so, and sister White has said so and so; and therefore we are going right up to it."

"God wants us all to have common sense, and he wants us to reason from common sense. Circumstances alter conditions. Circumstances change the relation of things."¹

Her words are consistent with the casuist focus on moral decision making, namely, case details must shape our resolution of any given moral quandary.

Some recommendations

Given the disjunction we have pointed out between what is happening in the field and what is stated in the Working Policy, and given the allowance for casuist moral decision making in Seventh-day Adventism, I would urge the reshaping of current Working Policy. The policy could be written with an effort to build into it

this blend of principles and case details; rigid rules and flexible response to persons. As well as we can shape it, our policy should reflect the best of what happens in the field. Currently, this is not happening.

Let me suggest three things:

1. Develop an international committee/task force to re-examine current policy, including in it the possibility of rehiring those fallen pastors who have in fact been rehabilitated. The goal of this committee would be to bring about a change in Working

Policy when it comes to this matter.

2. A detailed procedure needs to be developed (perhaps by the above task force or another) outlining the particular characteristics necessary in the spiritual, personal, and professional rehabilitation of fallen pastors who desire such help. The group designing this procedure might recommend the development of an office or official within the Ministerial Association at General Conference, division, and union levels that would oversee this process. This developed procedure

should include both relevant ministerial and lay persons.

3. In addition to the focus on the effort to rehabilitate pastors, concomitant study needs to be given to finding specific ways of actually helping victims of pastoral sexual misconduct. Dr. Kis's articles point out the difficulties of the person who has been the object of pastoral misconduct, and these victims must get help from the church.

It would be unacceptable to reintegrate
continued on page 29

Adventist world church brings hope for big cities

Over the next few years, Adventists will make a special effort to establish congregations in large cities around the world. Over the next few years, Adventists will make a special effort to establish congregations in large cities around the world. A *Hope for Big Cities* offering will be collected in Adventist churches around the world on July 9 to provide seed money for every region of the world church to focus on long-term plans to establish and nurture new congregations in major cities.

According to some estimates, in five years time half the world's population will be living in urban areas. In 1950, only 18 percent of people in developing countries lived in cities. In 2000 that had risen to nearly half the population. While there has been outstanding church growth in many parts of the world in recent years, growth in the cities has been slow. The Adventist Church has always been a rural church—it just has not done well in big cities.

Most of the big cities in North America are largely untouched by the Adventist Church. More than 80 percent of Americans live in metropolitan areas, but most Adventists don't. Only one in three Adventist congregations is located in the cities. "When it comes to

the segments where the vast bulk of Americans are demographically located, we are baptizing only a comparative handful," says Monte Sahlin, vice-president of Creative Ministries for the Columbia Union Conference and author of *Adventist Congregations Today*. "The encouraging thing is that more and more of our people are looking for creative ways to advance the mission of Christ in North America." North America's *Hope for Big Cities* project is Montreal, Canada.

Europe's increasingly post-Christian cities are largely untouched by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The

Trans-European Division plans to plant and nurture 20 new congregations in London, Europe's largest city. The Euro-Africa Division is planning long-term church-planting projects in 12 cities—Paris, Istanbul, Berlin, Munich, Vienna, Sofia, Prague, Rome, Lisbon, Bucharest, Madrid, Zurich. They are calling their project *12 Gates to the Kingdom: Building the Church, the City of the Future*. ■

Gary Krause is director of the Office of Mission Awareness for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland. For further information on Hope for Big Cities, please visit www.hope4cities.org

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Southern Asia-Pacific Division—Bangkok, Thailand, and Jakarta, Indonesia

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Sexual promiscuity and ministerial accountability

Nikolaus Satelmajer



Nikolaus Satelmajer, D. Min., is an associate ministerial secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Editor's note: *This proposal is not intended to be an official statement of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference. It is process oriented, and presupposes further responsible theological and executive reflection. So far, the paper has been presented to the Board of the Biblical Research Institute and the North American Division Human Relations Commission. It has also been distributed and discussed in various pastoral group settings. It is presented in Ministry for purposes of ongoing discussion.*

Ministers are individuals who have responded to a call from God, and whose call has been confirmed by the Church. They are entrusted with a sacred task. They¹ are in constant and personal contact with individuals. It is important that they treat these individuals as persons who belong to God.

Most ministers relate to others in a moral and ethical way. However, some behave unethically and engage in immoral behavior or sexual misconduct. Some have theological, financial, or violence issues that violate their ministry. This paper addresses the issue of sexual misconduct by ministers and the question of what the Church should do. The principles may apply to other areas.

The present situation

At present, policy assumes that once a minister engages in serious sexual miscon-

duct, that individual is not to continue as a minister in the Church.² In reality, the application of these policies is not consistent. While it is true that some ministers who engage in sexual misconduct are dismissed from ministry, it is also true that others find employment in other Church entities, or even continue where they are. This lack of consistency creates confusion among ministers and the Church generally.

Thus, we live with a false assumptions. We think that sexual misbehavior by ministers brings about dismissal, but in reality the outcomes vary significantly. If we do not initiate change, cynicism will only increase among ministers and members. We must become consistent in policy and application.

Theological perspective

Our theological perspectives may be summarized as follows:

1. There are those who maintain that our theology mandates that we dismiss ministers who engage in sexual misconduct. Again, the problem is that we are not consistent in the way we apply this theological position. If this is our theological position, then administratively the Church must address the issue of unequal application or, as mentioned above, our credibility will continue to erode.

2. Others maintain that our theology does not mandate automatic dismissal from ministry for those who have engaged in sexual misconduct. Some wish to assess the nature and gravity of the offense before such a decision is made. Thus, in some instances rehabilitation is seen as an appropriate response. While it is true that publicly many are reluctant to acknowledge this view, in application this approach has been followed in a number of cases.

If this approach is to be applied, we need to study and define our theology and outline its application so we can proceed in a consistent, equitable and unified manner. It needs to be stressed that if this is the approach we are to use, it does not mean that offending ministers will automatically continue in their role.

For their sakes, the sake of the victim or participant, and for the sake of the Church, such ministers must be held accountable. The future of these ministers must be determined by their behavior, the attitude of the minister, the minister's past behavior, a thorough investigation by the Church, and finally a

decision made by appropriate bodies within the Church. Theology and application must be in agreement and consistent with one another.

A proposed process

Whichever theological position we take, we need to develop a more effective process of handling sexual misconduct cases. This process must be fair, consistent, and uniform.³ If an accusation of sexual misconduct is made, or if evidence of sexual misbehavior comes to the attention of the leadership of the employing organization, the following procedure is suggested:

The administration of the employing organization⁴ will determine if there is credibility in the accusation or evidence of pastoral sexual misconduct. If there is no credibility to the accusation, the matter will be brought to a conclusion without any further action. If there is evidence the following steps are suggested:

1. The matter will be referred to a Professional Conduct Panel, which will have the responsibility of investigating the matter and making the determination.

2. The panel will be made up of five (suggested number) individuals who will be from a trained pool within a division representing ministers and lay members. The committee hearing the case cannot have members from the employing organization and must not have other conflicts of interest.

3. The panel will review the accusation(s) and make one of the following recommendations:

a. The panel may find that under their investigation there is no basis for the accusation. They will then recommend that the individual continue as an employee. This recommendation will be reviewed by and acted upon by the employing organization.

b. The panel may determine that minor, yet still inappropriate behavior took place and that it was of such nature that the individual should not continue in the employing organization, but that the individual may be

employed in a similar role in another entity within the organization. (There could be several other options.) In this instance, any organization of the church may feel free to employ this person.

c. The panel may find that the allegations are more likely than not to be true and that the individual should not continue in the Seventh-day Adventist ministry. The employing organization will make its decision based on this report. If it chooses to ignore the committee decision, the employing organization may be taking legal and insurance risks. Likewise, any organization that hires such an individual will be taking legal and insurance risks.

d. Appeal: An appeal process would be set up so that any of the parties (accused, accuser, employing leaders) may appeal the decision.

Conclusion

If the above approach⁵ is followed, there will be greater consistency in the application of our theology and governing policy. The panel process may seem costly for some, though it is possible for the group to meet on a specific occasion, which will shorten the overall process and keep expenses down.

Further, it is important to realize that the Church has a significant investment in a minister and the credibility of the Church is at stake, not to mention the reputation of involved individuals.

While this paper suggests an approach that should improve the process, it is only the beginning. Additional work would need to be done before such an approach can be implemented.⁶

1 This paper refers to ministers, but similar procedure could be developed for teachers and others

2 See GC Working Policy L 60 "Safeguarding Credentials—the Integrity of the Ministry" For a Division implementation see NAD Working Policy L 70 "Safeguarding Credentials—the Integrity of the Ministry," D 70 "Harassment," and D 80 "Sexual Misconduct in Church Relationships Involving Denominations Employees or Approved Volunteers—Model Procedures." The Church Manual (140, 141) also has a brief section titled "Removing a Minister From Office." All of these policies give the primary responsibility of dealing with wrongdoing or with accusations to the employing organization.

3 The proposal would not place the primary burden on the employing organization, but rather a special panel would be given the responsibility of hearing the case. The employing organization would be involved in the process. If the employing organization has to deal with the matter by itself, it often finds such matters to be extremely time consuming for the leadership and it is more likely to be subject to input that is not helpful in the resolution process. Furthermore, it may be perceived that the employing organization may be in a position of conflict. The disposition of such cases is a matter of concern to more than the employing organization since ordination is an act of the Church as a whole. If this proposal is to be implemented, appropriate policy changes would not be made.

4 In this paper, it is assumed that the individual is an employee of a conference—local or union. The policy would make provision for employees of other Church entities and institutions.

5 The proposed panel would also address questions of re-marriage (after divorce) by pastors. Often when such re-marriage takes place questions are raised as to whether there was a basis for re-marriage or not and the impact such re-marriage has on the work of the minister. Additionally, the panel would address the conduct of ministers who, after accusation of sexual misconduct, resign. These cases are not resolved and yet all too frequently we find them later in ministry. The panel would make a determination as to whether a minister who resigns under such circumstances should in the future serve in the ministry.

6 For instance, individuals who are accused of sexual misconduct may be reluctant to meet with the panel if the hearing takes place before or during any criminal proceedings. This concern needs to be addressed.

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Don't miss the boat

Nearly twenty-five years ago I doubled my one fine-art print of Edward Hicks's Noah's Ark with a second ark. I inadvertently began a collection that, had I realized its ultimate size, I might never have chosen to expand.

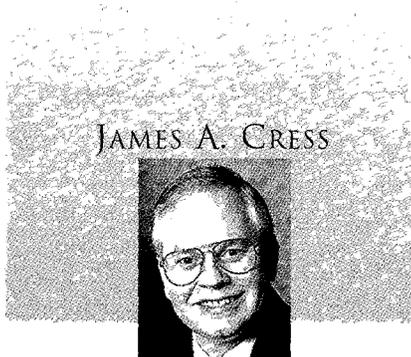
Today, guests who tour the General Conference headquarters enjoy viewing my display, which ranges from the remarkable and valuable to the truly kitschy. My collection grows by the well-intentioned generosity of those who ship items often addressed only to the one who collects Noah's Arks.

For a number of months now, I've received numerous copies of a cartoon illustrating a woodpecker drilling a hole in the ark, accompanied by proverbial truisms which may have some spiritual value for pastors:

Don't miss the boat. Priorities are essential. Many urgent matters can pre-occupy our attention as well as our activities, but above all else, we must prioritize the things Jesus prioritizes to prepare ourselves and our people for His return. How tragic to miss the boat!

Remember, we are all in the same boat. Often it seems easier to compete than to cooperate. Our too-easily-adopted attitudes of "us versus them" can destroy our individual influence as well as our corporate impact.

Plan ahead. It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. If heaven's first rule is "order," then planning becomes essential, whether long-range for the growth of the church or shorter range for sermons and worship services. Dwight D. Eisenhower said it well,



JAMES A. CRESS

"Planning is everything; plans are nothing." The very process of planning engages the creative spirit as well as the cooperation of those whose teamwork is needed for success.

The woodpecker may have to go. Refuse to permit a few negative complainers to hold your congregation or your goals hostage by their repetitive drilling. Usually the vast majority are with you, and if your leaders concur with your vision, you are safe to ignore the vocal minority.

Stay fit. When you're 60 years old, someone may ask you to do something really big. Our youth-saturated society needs ministries to children and youth, especially the essential task of deploying them in service for the Master. Equally important, we must honor, value, and utilize the contribution of seniors whose time and talents sustain multiplied church programs.

Don't listen to critics; just get on with the job. If you allow skeptics and scoffers to set your agenda, little or nothing of import will be accomplished.

If, like Nehemiah, you are too preoccupied with important matters to sink to their level, these barking dogs will eventually tire of their own noise and retreat or, better yet, join the mission. Don't stoop to the level of your critics. Never wrestle with a pig. You cannot win and the pig enjoys the fight.

Build your future on high ground. Focus on eternity. Relegate low value issues to the level of their ultimate impact. For example, don't bog down fighting over carpet colors when weightier matters are neglected. Likewise for interpersonal relationships. Thinking leaders talk about ideas and observe people. Reactionaries talk about people and only observe ideas.

For safety's sake, travel in pairs. Team ministry is Jesus's plan. Work two-by-two for specific reasons such as safety (both of your person and your reputation) and success (two are more effective than one; plus each learns from the other). Try to include your spouse in partnership as the modern fulfillment of our Lord's design.

Speed isn't always an advantage. The snails were on board with the cheetahs. The more worthy a project, the more time it may take to fulfillment. Get started. Making progress may be more important than completion. Faithfulness is measured by consistency.

When stressed, float awhile. If you cannot remember your last vacation, then you have not taken sufficient time off. Frenetic activity is no indication of either importance or wisdom. No pastor has ever been busier than Jesus, who regularly found time for spiritual, social,

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and recreational retreats. Take your days off. Even if you believe you don't need them, your spouse and your members know that you do!

The ark was built by amateurs; the Titanic by professionals. However, the ark's design specifications were from God. Nothing can limit the effectiveness of amateurs as long as they follow heaven's plan.

No matter the storm, when you are with God, there's always a rainbow waiting. In this life, God's people will experience trials. A better world is coming. His kingdom is just around the corner. Even during your lonely times, remember Jesus' promise, "I will see you again!" (John 16:22).

If tempted to despair, refocus. The only thing that made life tolerable on board that ark full of smelly animals was the sure and certain knowledge that things were a whole lot worse on the outside. If circumstances seem overwhelming and your problems multiply, just remind yourself of how much worse things are outside.

Display booth theme. We have chosen "Don't Miss the Boat" for our display booths at the upcoming St. Louis session, and I hope thousands of you will stop by for a chat and enter our drawing for a free fine art print of "The Invitation," newly commissioned art by renowned artist Elfred Lee. In addition to his extraordinary artistic capabilities, which have been featured at our displays for the last two sessions, Lee has uniquely prepared for this painting by

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making four expeditions up Mount Ararat in Turkey to search for Noah's ark. We are pleased to joint venture with John and Christen Adolphi of Bibleland Studios in bringing this artistic masterpiece to the session and making it available for purchase in your churches and homes.

Emphasizing highest-quality production techniques, the original 4 x 8 canvas has been reproduced by Hallmark's art division into 6,000 signed limited-edition prints of such quality that each looks like an original. The studio's "wonder of reality," links online (www.ministerialassociation.com) and showcases as reality what others might

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Please accept our invitation to view this magnificent painting in person or online (see ad on page 18), and to own a copy for yourself.

Above all, when you hear God's invitation, Don't miss the boat! ❏

Pastors and sexual misconduct

continued from page 25

grate a pastor into the ministerial workforce without proper care being given to those whose trust has been broken by that pastor's misconduct. Regaining this trust is a significant and difficult challenge and could have extended implications.

The use of experts in ministry, psychology, and counseling could be

involved in churches in which the pastor's sexual infidelity has affected not only his victims but also others in the congregation.

Conclusion

In the end, I commend to you the real cases of the scores of pastors who have suffered through a moral fall. I say suffered because for them it was a fall, not a descent into something they desired. Their hearts are repentant, and they eagerly and sincerely wish to serve God and His church.

Those who seek to justify and sus-

tain their fallen behaviors need not concern us here. As a church we have a moral obligation to them as well, but this article is explicitly focused on those repentant, rehabilitated pastors who seek to answer God's call to ministry. Under the grace of God and the careful wisdom of church leadership, is it not possible—does our faith not provide for—the return of these men and women to pastoral leadership? ❏

1 Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 3:217.

Center for Women Clergy opens at Andrews University

Addressing the need to provide for a growing enrollment of women in seminary classes, the Center for Women Clergy opened at Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

"Obtaining professional degrees is equally important to women as to men, so attending seminary is a logical next step following college," says Dr. Patricia Mutch, vice president for academic administration at the university. "Many of these women are also professionals from other fields who have felt the call to ministry and changed careers to enter professional ministry."

Seminary student Dilys Brooks has been involved with the establishment of the center for three years. She took over after another seminary student laid the groundwork. Brooks talked with Mutch and began developing a vision and "creating networking and support for women [who are] answering the call to ministry," Brooks says. Other female seminary students have been involved with the center's development as well.

The center helps women taking

seminary classes prepare for ministry through mentoring and networking, Mutch says.

There are 95 female students in the seminary, up 20 students from two years ago. Brooks explains that, in comparison to the 500-plus enrolled in the seminary, it may not seem like much, but it's huge for female enrollment.

"[We want to connect] women through internships and professional ministry. We want pastors to mentor them. . . . We see the need to be an advocate, a listening ear," Brooks says. The center is working to provide a system where "any woman, anywhere, who feels a call to ministry should know there's someone she can call." This also means that after graduation, women have someone in the ministry to connect with, "someone who can mentor."

Brooks, who describes the seminary as the "most amazing experience of my life," says female seminary students she's talked to have felt a compelling call to ministry. They come from all over the globe, including Africa, Korea,

Mexico, North America, and Europe, and range in age from early 20s to 60s.

"The center will serve more than women seminary students," Mutch says. "The number of undergraduate women students who are religion and theology majors is increasing at Andrews, as well as at other Adventist schools. The center hopes to include these undergraduate students in its networking."

After graduation from the seminary, Mutch explains, women are involved in a variety of ministries, including pastoring in churches, youth ministry, and chaplaincy. "Women who are spouses of seminary students also take courses to prepare them for team ministry."

The center is reaching out to other Adventist institutions, letting them "know we're here and what our purpose is," Brooks says. ■

Wendi Rogers is a reporter for the Adventist News Network (ANN). Reprinted with permission from The Adventist Woman, Vol. 22, No. 2.



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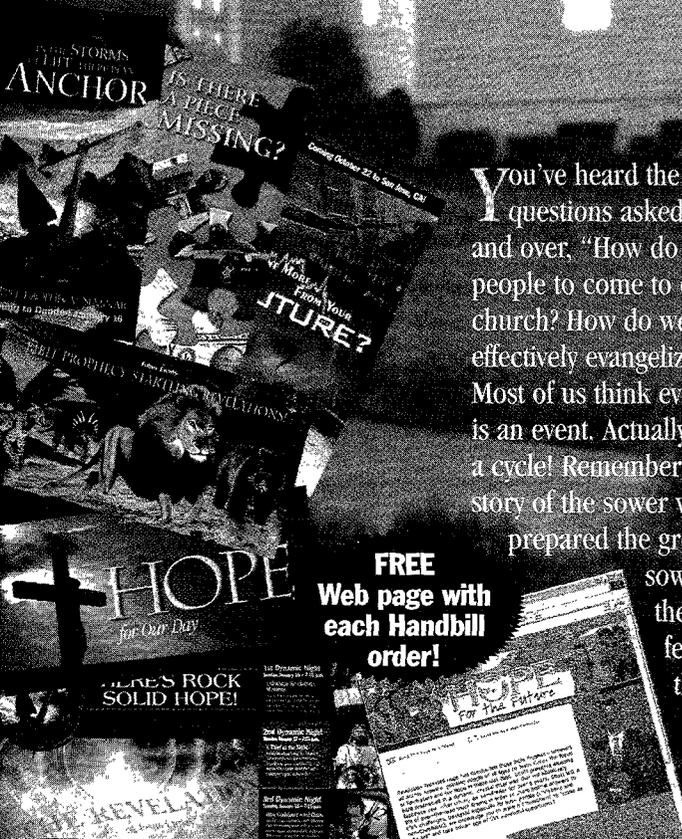
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