

# Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/May 1983



*Reactivating the inactive member*

# Letters

## **Incomplete?**

"English's Complete Guide to Weddings" (January, 1983) suggests remaining neutral if problems arise concerning the question "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" I have a method to avoid the question entirely. Many couples prefer having me ask the following question of *both* sets of parents. I call the names of father and mother and ask: "Will you grant them your blessing and pledge them your love and acceptance?" They respond. Then I have the second set of parents stand, and I ask the same question of them. This method involves all parents and avoids any unpleasant situations.—Lutheran Church, Minnesota.

The January issue contained some really good "meat and potatoes" articles. I thoroughly enjoyed "English's Complete Guide to Weddings," and I plan to put together some guidelines for our church as soon as I can. Thank you for the inspiration.—Church of Christ in Christian Union, Ohio.

"English's Complete Guide to Weddings" is most incomplete in that it omits clear Biblical teachings.

First, the Bible nowhere authorizes the State to license weddings. According to Romans 13:1-9, the State should protect the home once it is created through the marriage contract of the spouses. Second, the modern marriage ceremony is not based on Biblical examples. According to the Bible, a man takes a woman as his wife by bringing her to his abode (Gen. 24:67; 25:1, et cetera). The Bible calls for no ceremony whatsoever, nor for a pastor to be present, nor for the marriage to take place in a house of worship. The fact that *MINISTRY* would publish such an anti-Biblical article shows how far it has sunk in apostasy.—Reformation Bible Presbyterian Church, Separated and Reformed, Maryland.

*We see a great difference between "clear Biblical teachings" that are set forth in Scripture and conclusions drawn from the silences of the Bible. The fact that Scripture*

*has nothing to say about certain modern customs cannot be taken as authoritative disapproval if they are otherwise in harmony with the Word.—Editors.*

## **Don't change a thing!**

I truly enjoy *MINISTRY*. It has more useful information in it than any other magazine I receive. Please don't make any changes in content or format!—Assembly of God Church, New Mexico.

## **Identifies with shepherdesses**

We have received your inspiring publication for several years. I especially read the Shepherdess section every time and laugh as I identify with the experiences of other ministers' wives. Keep *MINISTRY* coming. It's refreshing, colorful, strong, and beautiful. Truly, it's worth reading, as it makes me think.—Pastor's wife, New York.

## **Courteous spirit**

Thank you for sending *MINISTRY* to me gratis. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Not only have the articles been informative but the style and accuracy of their composition have been superb. The courteous spirit the writers show toward those of other religious persuasions has been admirable. In a day of much intolerance this ethic is notable.—Alabama.

## **Pay as you go**

The article by Thomas L. Are, "Avoiding the Credit Trap" (January, 1983), touched my heart. Its outspoken thoughts on being charginolics is a message that every pastor (and layman) needs to hear. Thank you for your insight, your scriptural backgrounds, and your wisdom in publishing the article at such an hour. We need to come back to a Christian walk based on faith and pay as you go.—Assembly of God Church, Wisconsin.

## **Band-aids should have been included**

If there had been any way to do so, you should have included band-aids and styptic pencils along with your piece "The Immaculate Perception" (January,

1983). Never have I seen such a jam-packed, continuous bombardment of satire. I read it to my wife, and we agreed it was one of the best things of its kind we had ever read. Its Damascus-blade pungency shook me up a bit, but it was all so true to everything I have come to learn about myself and ministers in general that it was refreshing just the same. It really makes a compact impact.—Virginia.

In the parlance of the day, "Right on!" Your article "The Immaculate Perception" reminded me of the couple seeking counseling. Said the husband, "I may have faults, but being wrong isn't one of them!" I had IP for years, but the older I get, the more it evaporates.—New York.

## **Says it clearly**

I have just finished reading the January issue of *MINISTRY* and truly appreciate the articles in it. "Testimony to My Task," by Don Reiber, says so clearly how I feel. Thank you.—Free Methodist Church, Missouri.

If you're receiving *MINISTRY* bi-monthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928, *MINISTRY* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but we believe 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 with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help to you too.

We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy; requests should be on church letterhead.

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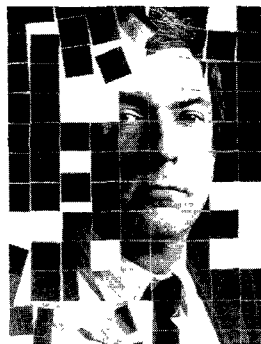
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# Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/May 1983/Volume 56/Number 5



COVER DAVE SHERWIN

**Reactivating the Inactive Member/4.** MINISTRY editor J. R. Spangler interviews Dr. John S. Savage, developer of the successful Calling, Caring Ministry program for reclaiming backsliders. Here are some concrete suggestions for helping turn former members into active ones.

**Preach the Word/8.** Lindsay J. Laws. When we are tempted to substitute gimmicks for the gospel, raffles for revival, bazaars for Bible study, and showmanship for Christian leadership, then we need this forceful reminder that men and women are brought to the cross in no other way than by the preaching of the Word.

**Did Jesus Intend to Return in the First Century?/10.** Hans K. LaRondelle. A superficial reading of Matthew 24 and Mark 13 suggests that Christ planned His return to coincide with the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Was our Saviour mistaken? Was His inner circle of disciples mistaken? Have we misread His sayings on end-time events? An Old Testament principle, the prophetic perspective, is the key to solving these difficult questions.

**Is the Moving Van Coming?/14.** Ken Wilson speaks from his own experience in offering helpful tips on how to make the transition between outgoing and incoming pastors as pleasant as possible.

**Put Electronics to Work in Your Church/18.** Edward A. Henkel.

**Elected for Life?/20.** Morris Chalfant.

**Adventists: Heading for Schism?/22.** J. R. Spangler.

**The Rebuke of the Waters/24.** Warren H. Johns. There's always the danger of reading into a passage of Scripture what one wants to find, even when one wants to find scripture support for a certain scientific model. The author does a careful exegetical study of Psalm 104 to discover whether indeed the Noachian flood is described therein.

**Ultimate Priorities/28.** James C. Dobson.

**Viewpoint/20**  
**From the Editor/22**  
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**Shepherdess/28**  
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# Reactivating the inactive member

**T**he inactive church member is perhaps the most neglected aspect of the total church program, yet he symbolizes one of the greatest untapped resources for strengthening the local church. Here MINISTRY editor J. R. Spangler interviews Dr. John S. Savage, who as director of LEAD Consultants has developed a successful program to tap this largely overlooked resource.

**Q.** *I am interviewing Dr. John S. Savage, president of LEAD Consultants. And my first question is What does this LEAD Consultants mean?*

**A.** LEAD is an acronym that stands for Leadership, Education, and Development. Our national offices are in Pittsford, New York, which is a suburb of Rochester.

**Q.** *When did your organization begin and how did you get the idea?*

**A.** LEAD Consultants is coming up to its fifteenth year. I got the idea of establishing a consulting agency that would develop a pool of highly trained individuals to work with local congregations in the late sixties, when the denominations were losing top executives because of the financial crunch the church was facing. We hired some of these executives to work for us on a part-time basis or to act as consultants on demand. For the first six or seven years, we worked primarily in the area of Christian education, helping different churches to double or triple their church schools. We met with great success in this.

Seven years ago I developed the Calling, Caring Ministry program, and besides that we now have fourteen different training programs, including



John S. Savage



J. R. Spangler

workshops in conflict management, problem solving, youth programs, choir conducting, and holding creative meetings. But the thing we're best known for is the Calling, Caring Ministry program, which has to do with visiting the inactive member.

**Q.** *Is the Calling, Caring Ministry program, then, the most popular, or should I say the primary, seminar?*

**A.** It's the primary and by far the most popular. We'll do five of those to any one of the others.

**Q.** *I understand you were a Methodist pastor for twenty-six years before you went full time into the LEAD Consultant program. It's claimed that one third of the*

*average church membership list is made up of persons who were once active but now have become inactive. How do you define an inactive member?*

**A.** I define an inactive member, first of all, by defining an active one. An active member is one who attends regularly at worship, perhaps sings in the choir, comes to Bible school classes, and participates regularly in the life of the church community. The inactive member does not attend the worship service, does not make any financial contribution, comes to none of the church activities, and shows a very distinct negative or apathetic attitude toward the life of the church.

**Q.** *So, it's as if he were not, in terms of being a church member?*

**A.** That's true. But we've discovered in our research that although a person drops out from a relationship with the church people, he does not usually drop his relationship with God. This fact pinpoints one of the problems that we've faced in visiting the inactive member—namely, that we have gone with an assumption that there's something wrong with his faith in God. But we have discovered, upon our arrival, that more inactive people have articulated their faith about Jesus Christ as Lord and

**T**he inactive member does not usually drop his relationship with God, yet we have gone with the assumption that there's something wrong with his faith in God.

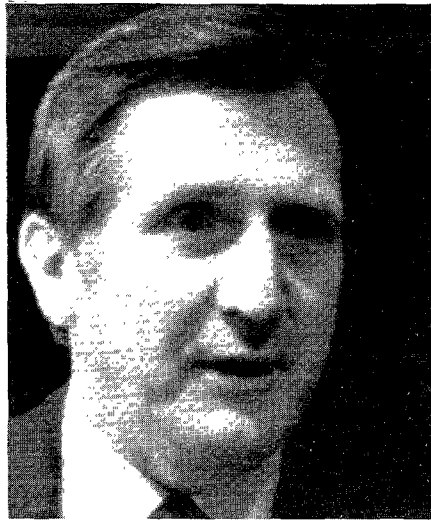
Saviour than active ones. The breakup is in the relationship to the congregation, not necessarily in relationship to God.

**Q.** The concept, then, of a person losing his hold on God when he loses his hold on the congregation is not as valid as we have believed. Is that what you're saying?

**A.** I think that's true. However, I do want to make clear that as the person leaves the church, his faith does go into a spasm. We have very clear statistics that when a person is in the process of leaving, his relationship with God becomes very doubtful, on top of his broken relationship with the people. After the person leaves, he seals off all the pain that has been developed in the loss of that relationship, and, as a result, the relationship with the people is completely broken. But then, after that seal-off occurs, the person begins to rework the relationship with God on a one-to-one basis.

**Q.** What are one or two major reasons, gained from your research, why people really leave the church?

**A.** It begins with an active member having a series of personal, anxiety-provoking events. We call these a "cluster of events." They occur privately inside the life of the active member, so the local congregation is not aware of them. For example, a family whom I visited had the following cluster of events happen to them: The father was fired from his job and was out of work for six months; because of the stress related to the loss of income, the wife had a mental breakdown, and was in a mental hospital for two weeks; their daughter in junior high had been caught smoking marijuana in back of the school, and the son had been caught stealing money in the church. Then the church called them and told them that they were not adequately carrying out their church responsibilities. When I visited them, the couple used that last event as the reason why they left; namely, that someone had called and said they were not adequate



leaders. But that wasn't the issue. The issue was the cluster of events building up to that final event, the "straw that breaks the camel's back." Therefore, when you go visit these inactive church members, to deal only with that event is not to deal with the real problem.

**Q.** How do you recognize when a person is facing a cluster of events leading up to a withdrawal?

**A.** When that cluster of events is beginning to occur, the member—the active member—follows a predictable pattern of behavior. He or she comes to members of the congregation or to the pastor and cries Help. "Help" language sounds like this: "You know, the worship service just seems to be losing a lot of its meaning for me lately." Or, "If that's the way you want to run your meetings, you can have them; they're a waste of time." The person never says directly what the problem is, but his verbal language begins to change slightly, and the local church begins to set up its screening behavior. The most sophisticated form of screening is: "Don't respond to the cry for help, and the person will go away."

One of the things we have been developing in our lab is how to listen to the cry for help so that we can intervene in that dropout process at its beginning stages. If the church does not respond to

the cry for help, the person now adds another piece of anxiety to the cluster. When that occurs, he has moved to another stage, anger. The person now gets very upset, and it looks as if he's upset about the church. In part that is true, because Christians aren't listening; they're not caring for him. This person is in pain; he wants help; and no one is responding. The pastor isn't responding; in fact, the pastor is one of the great screeners of the church. Right?

**Q.** I agree.

**A.** And, consequently, the person begins to be so anxious and so upset that he moves beyond his ability to deal with the situation, and retreats from the church. What we have done over the years is to label the inactive member as the bad one, the apostate . . .

**Q.** The black sheep.

**A.** But our research shows that the congregation contributes to the dropout cycle. It's not a lone activity; it takes both sides for it to occur.

**Q.** How much emphasis do you put on this screening process? Isn't it simply a lack of time? People are so busy—husbands working, wives working—that they don't have time to go out of their way to hear these cries of help and to do anything about them.

**A.** I don't think the problem is a lack of time. It takes very little time. For example, a couple of weeks ago, coming out of a worship service, I had a little elderly lady walk by me, just brushing me on the arm. I don't even know her name. She simply said, "I haven't been around here for a while." I turned around, and she walked away from me. I pursued her and then asked, "How come?" She said, "I've been in a mental hospital for the past six weeks, and this is the first Sunday that I've been out. They've given me three hours free, and I'm spending two of them here at church." That's called a cry for help. All it takes is a moment to show that you care.

**L**istening builds a relationship more quickly and effectively than any other single type of behavior. I'm not just talking about social listening, but effective, depth listening.

**Q.** In other words, you're saying it's the personal touch, even if it's for a short span of time, that means so much. You have emphasized the importance of personal visitation. Do you recommend a particular method of developing a calling program in the local church?

**A.** The calling program that we have developed does have the distinctive thrust of "go and listen," rather than "go and tell." In other words, "listen first, tell second." Not "tell first, listen second."

If I am visiting an inactive member, I am going into a home in which there's probably very little trust, because dropping out always involves a lot of pain. Therefore, I want to listen first, because listening builds relationships better than anything else.

**Q.** I'd like to have you repeat that. You're saying listening builds relationships?

**A.** Listening builds a relationship more quickly and effectively than any other single type of behavior. I'm not talking just about social listening, but effective, depth listening that builds relationships very rapidly.

We teach our callers how to be aware of what we call the "readiness state" of the person we talk to. People are at all different stages of being ready to return. Some are very ready to return, so that if you make a phone call first, they respond by saying, "Now, I've really been thinking about coming back to church, and am I ever glad you called. When can you come over and see me?" That's called a high-readiness state. But if you make a phone call, and a person says, "I don't need to talk to you," and then hangs up and doesn't want a visit, that's called a low-readiness state. If you do not test the person's "readiness state" first, you will probably push the person too far, and he inevitably backs up. He actually becomes less ready than he was at first.

**Q.** What do you mean when you speak of the difference between a social listener and a depth listener?

**A.** A social listener is one who engages in "counter-story." You tell a story; I respond by telling another story, which reminds you of another story; this you tell, which reminds me of another story, which I tell. And we sit around the table telling stories to each other. That's called social conversation. It's very appropriate, and it does build relationships at a social level, but it does not get down to the pain that an inactive church member feels. The distinct difference, then, is that in depth listening we teach. When you tell your story, I don't counter with my story; I continue to follow your story into depth levels. One of the skills that I personally have developed—probably the most powerful skill of the whole lab—is the skill of story listening, based on the fact that people communicate to each other primarily through their stories.

**Q.** How does that happen?



**A.** Let me give you a very simple example. It involves a conversation with my dad three years before he died. He was 89 and had had a hip replacement. When I went to see him in the hospital, I said, "Hi, Dad, how are you doing?" And Dad responded with two very brief little stories. These are called "back-then" stories, which are the first type of story a person usually tells.

**Q.** What is a "back-then" story?

**A.** A "back-then" story is one out of the past. It begins with story language "Once upon a time" or "Long ago and far away." Dad's two little stories out of the past ran like this: "You know, Tim [my family always called me Tim], when I was 17, I used to work on the railroads as a telegraph operator. The railroads were really strong then, but you know they're pretty near bankrupt now. You know, I . . ." He then moved to his next story: "You know, I worked in Bethlehem Steel in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, for forty years. I built the towers to the Golden Gate Bridge. You know, they just closed up that plant; it's gone out of business."

Identifying what was being communicated beyond the story, I simply asked, "Dad, I sense you're giving up, right?" At that point, he began to cry. His stories were not telling me about railroads and Bethlehem Steel; they were communicating that once he was strong, and now he's failing.

**Q.** If a person repeats his story over and over and over, is it because nobody's listening?

**A.** Absolutely. You've heard an

**O**ne of the skills that I personally have developed—probably the most powerful skill of the whole lab—is the skill of story listening, based on the fact that people communicate primarily through their stories.

**T**he most consistent error that callers make is trying to tell the inactive member what to do, which immediately builds resistance. The caller takes on a telling stance, instead of a listening stance.

elderly person tell the same story over and over. The reason for that is that no one has heard it. However, if you make a perception check on its truth, you won't hear it again.

Q. What do you mean, make a "perception check"?

**A.** Make a guess on what you believe that story really means at a deeper level. What does this story actually communicate? The difficulty is that we take the story literally, and we miss its truth. But the story is a container that carries truth—it's like a vessel, it's like a vase that carries flowers, or a bottle that holds liquid. If you see just the vase, you miss the flowers. Human story is the most powerful form of communication that has ever been, and every culture from the beginning of time has told its deepest truths through story.

Q. Now, can you identify some common mistakes the caller should avoid? What procedure do you follow in visiting the dropout?

**A.** I think the most consistent error that callers make is trying to tell the inactive church member what to do, which immediately builds resistance. The caller takes on a telling stance rather than a listening stance. Also, the caller goes with a sales pitch, with the deliberate purpose of trying to get the person back. True, we do have a ministry aimed at getting people back, but we do not go originally to get them back. That's not the purpose. The purpose is to go to listen, to care, and to deal with their personal pain.

Q. In other words, the caller must forget the ultimate goal. He's simply going to find out where the person is.

**A.** Yes. If I'm going there to do whatever I have to do to get him back, then my task ends up being highly manipulative. But my first ministry is to

minister to the needs of the person. Then the person may choose to respond to that by returning to the congregation. If not, I still continue to minister to him in the name of Christ.

Q. What is one of the greatest benefits your program offers?

**A.** I think the most singular, powerful thing about our program is that it teaches lay people and pastors how to hear the pain of another, not only with the inactive church member, but with any group or any individual that's in pain—the widow, the person going through divorce, the person who's just lost his job (and there are millions of those right now in our country). If each church had a crew of thirty or forty callers who could go minister to that pain, the church would have a ministry that would be very relevant in today's society.

Q. Can anyone be a caller, or should the



pastor look for special qualifications in selecting callers?

**A.** I think one should be selective. We urge pastors not to announce from the pulpit, "We would like volunteers." There's a reason. In selecting people to call on the inactive member, one of our first criteria is the ability to keep confidences. If the inactive member shares some deep personal pain with you, and you go back to the church and share some of that with your calling partners and support group, who, in turn, spread that information around the congregation, then you will destroy the program overnight. Thus, the ability to keep a confidence is extremely important.

Q. That means a pastor would have to know his people very well, to choose those he thinks could abide by that type of confidence, wouldn't he? What are some of the criteria in selecting a caller?

**A.** We choose adults who like adults. Obviously, it doesn't help to choose as callers any adults who don't like adults. Their hostility is too high, and their anger is triggered too easily. They will put the inactive member down. We also ask for people who have the time to be trained. It does take training—a very specific kind of training—to learn these skills. We ask for people who not only have the time to be trained but also have the time to spend in a local church support group. It takes forty hours to go through the training. In addition, a person has to spend at least three hours a month in a support group, where the pain is dealt with and where other kinds of training take place. We also like to

(Continued on page 27)

**T**he most singular, powerful thing about our program is that it teaches lay people and pastors how to hear the pain of another, not only with the inactive member but with any individual who's in pain.

# Preach the Word

*Blessing motorcycles, issuing trading stamps, raffling whiskey, or any number of strange innovations can never substitute for the church's clear task. The churches that are growing and healthy are those that are more concerned to follow God's guidelines than to adapt themselves to the feelings and desires of sinners.* □ by Lindsay J. Laws

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With dwindling congregations, and interest in secular things surpassing church meetings, some clerics are trying desperate innovations to attract people: A minister in Southsea, England, has taken to delivering sermons through a ventriloquist's dummy. "We have to think of new ways of communicating with the

congregation," he told reporters. "This is a good method."

Another planned a dance in the graveyard next to the church. His purpose? "We want to show that the church is not dead, but very much alive."

In White Sulphur Springs, Montana, one church raffles a case of whiskey each year at 50 cents a ticket, for a \$3,000 profit.

Meanwhile a Woolwich, England,

church, not content to raffle whiskey, wants a license to sell alcohol to attract the sophisticated under-21 crowd and teach them to "drink sensibly."

A service billed as "a special for sportsmen" began with three blasts of a referee's whistle; a sermon on Jonah and the whale ended with a fish dinner and a prize for the one telling the tallest fish yarn.

One church in Somerset, England, is issuing "trading stamps" to children and youth in an effort to increase church attendance. When the stamp book is filled, its owner can swap it for a Bible or hymnbook.

A small-town minister brought a leather-jacketed motorcycle gang into his church for a special "blessing of the

motorcycles." Several bikes were wheeled down in front of the pews. The service turned out to be lively, but permanent results were disappointing. The gang never came back. "All we did was get a lot of grease on the carpet," the caretaker remarked wryly.

Some churches, such as the Los Angeles Metropolitan Community Church, with an estimated membership of 15,000, exist exclusively for homosexuals. Efforts have begun in Australia to organize similar groups.

Such aberrations indicate how far we have come from the time when the church was the center of the community and "men of the cloth" were looked upon with awe and respect. Many churches today are in difficulty; membership fig-

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Lindsay J. Laws is pastor of the Avondale Memorial Seventh-day Adventist church, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.



# **W**hen a church turns from preaching Jesus Christ as man's only Saviour and His Word as man's only guide, that church is destined for deterioration, decay, and decline.

ures of many denominations are not keeping pace with the general population growth. Some are openly questioning whether the church will survive at all. Thus churchmen look for the ever more bizarre to rekindle interest.

But do such unusual measures get results? Apparently not. The churches that are growing and healthy are those that are more concerned to follow the clear guidelines of God's Word than to adapt themselves to the feelings and desires of sinners.

Nowhere do we read in the Inspired Record that New Testament preachers had to resort to alcohol, dances, gambling, and rock 'n' roll bands (or whatever was the first-century equivalent) to advance the conquests of the cross. They contented themselves with preaching Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Their messages proclaimed the dire nature of sin and its inevitable end. They held before men the wonderful offer of pardon, cleansing power, sanctification, and peace through Jesus the Saviour. And the Scripture says, "The Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47).

The church's commission is still the same as that given by the Lord to Paul: "To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" (chap. 26:18). When a church turns from preaching Jesus Christ as man's only Saviour, and His Word as man's only guide—diluting and deleting its message—then that church is destined for deterioration, decay, and decline.

The apostle Paul seemed to anticipate the spiritual decline evident in many quarters today. He wrote: "For the time will come when people will decline to be taught sound doctrine and will accumulate teachers to suit themselves and tickle their own fancies; they will give up listening to the Truth and turn to myths" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4, Moffatt).\*

The great doctrines of sin, the person of Christ, the atonement, regeneration,

and salvation comprise the gospel message, and there can be no true preaching without them. In the Word of God, which is a revelation of Jesus Christ and which tells of Christ's ultimate plan for humanity, there is food for every hungry soul. When we abandon these great soul-stirring themes for sermons on current affairs, politics, psychology, and the like, we cause our congregations to suffer spiritual malnourishment.

Of certain preachers in his day Isaiah declared, "His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa. 56:10). God save us from being such today! God calls for faithful watchmen to warn, exhort, strengthen, and comfort His people. This is no time for weak, watered-down messages that gratify men's and women's desire for the unusual and bizarre, that excuse their negligence for not heeding

there is a sense in which the church is to advise, warn, and challenge by proclaiming the absolute criteria by which God will judge mankind—such as the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount— . . . and by preaching the whole counsel of God. . . . As a result of the church's straying off the main track of its ministry, many of its members are restive and dissatisfied. Some refuse to give any more money to the church. Many are looking elsewhere for spiritual food. One of the great labor leaders of this country recently confided to a friend of mine, 'I go to church on Sunday, and all I hear is social advice; and my heart is hungry for spiritual nourishment.' A President of the United States told me he was sick and tired of hearing preachers give advice on international affairs when they did not have the facts straight. . . . I am convinced that if the church went back to its main task of preaching the

## **W**e have no need to bless motorcycles or hold graveyard dances. We offer the Word that is able to make our hearers wise unto salvation through faith in Christ.

the voice of conviction, and that lull them into a false security, leaving them unprepared for the coming of Jesus. May God make us to be preachers who do not shun to declare the whole counsel of God!

It seems there have always been preachers who delight in giving advice not based on God's Word. When King Ahab sought counsel whether he should go to battle, four hundred preachers urged him to go, and advised that God would give him the victory. They gave this advice, not because it was God's message to Ahab, but because they knew this was what the king wanted to hear. A single "prophet of God" had the temerity to declare the truth. And the outcome of this experience, as recorded in 1 Kings 22, illustrates the inevitable result of disregarding the word of the Lord.

Billy Graham has said, "Certainly

gospel and getting people converted to Christ, it would have far more impact on the social structure of the nation than it can have in any other thing it could possibly do."—*World Aflame*, pp. 180-182.

This, then, is the inspired challenge to us as preachers: "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

We who have been entrusted with the whole counsel of God have no need to bless motorcycles or hold graveyard dances. We offer the Word that is able to make our hearers wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (see chap. 3:15).

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# Did Jesus intend to return in the first century?

*When the disciples questioned Jesus about the timing of His prediction concerning Jerusalem's fall, He responded with a prophetic discourse that seems to link His second coming with that first-century event. Did He really intend to return that soon? Was He simply mistaken? How are we to understand His words? □ by Hans K. LaRondelle*



he interpretation of Jesus' prophetic discourse, recorded by the Synoptic Gospels in Mark 13, Matthew 24, and Luke 21, contains a fundamental problem: How are the two major events about which the disciples ask—the destruction of Jerusalem and Christ's glorious second coming with its world judgment at the

end of the age (the Parousia)—interrelated within the Synoptic accounts?

Both Mark and Matthew (we accept the common assumption that Mark's record was probably the first of the Gospel accounts) seem, on the face of things, to place the Parousia at the time of the fall of Jerusalem (see Mark 13:24-27; Matthew 24:29-31 even says "immediately" after the distress of those days). This, among other considerations, has led many scholars to conclude that Mark's "mistaken" forecast is not really an authentic record of Jesus' words, but a mixture of Mark's own additions to an older, unknown apocalyptic pamphlet that supposedly warned

the Jews against the attempt of Emperor Caligula to erect a statue of himself in the Temple at Jerusalem around A.D. 40. This is known as the "little apocalypse" theory.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that Jesus' assuring words in Mark 13:30 ("I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened")\* follow the Parousia description of verses 24-27 has only intensified the problem and even caused some to conclude that because His parousia did not take place in A.D. 70, or shortly thereafter, Jesus simply was mistaken.<sup>2</sup>

Christ seemed to predict that "all these things" (*tauta panta*, verse 30) described in verses 5-27—including His parousia—would take place within His contemporary generation. But some have interpreted this phrase, along with the words "these things" (*tauta*) of verse

29, as referring only to the signs described in verses 5-23, thus excluding the Parousia.<sup>3</sup> Others have identified "this generation" (*genea*, verse 30) with "mankind," "the Jewish race," "Christians," or "unbelievers." Yet the context seems rather to point especially to Christ's contemporary generation—those that rejected Him (see Matt. 23:35, 36; Luke 19:44; 21:32, 22).

In order to account for the period of many centuries that have elapsed between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Parousia, conservative scholars have basically proposed five different solutions.

One proposal sees a pattern in which Jesus' words about the fall of Jerusalem (Mark 13:5-22) alternate with His words about the Parousia (verses 24-27), return to the fall of Jerusalem in verses 28-31, and back again to His parousia in verses

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**T**he solution that seems to be the most adequate is called the prophetic-perspective view. The fall of Jerusalem as God's judgment on the Jewish nation is a foreshadowing of His final act in world judgment.

32-36. Few seem satisfied, however, with this solution of abrupt alternations.<sup>4</sup>

A second solution, an old one defended today by R. T. France<sup>5</sup> and C. Brown,<sup>6</sup> applies almost the whole discourse—including the cosmic imagery and the Parousia description (Mark 13:1-31)—exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem. The cosmic imagery is taken as symbolic language indicating the doom of the nation by divine judgment. The strength of this proposal lies in its recourse to the Old Testament prophetic sources of Christ's terms and images. The argument of J. S. Russell (written in 1878) is attractive: "Is it not reasonable that the doom of Jerusalem should be depicted in language as glowing and rhetorical as the destruction of Babylon, or Bozrah, or Tyre? . . . If these symbols [see, e.g., Isa. 13:9, 10; 34:4] therefore were proper to represent the fall of Babylon, why should they be improper to set forth a still greater catastrophe—the destruction of Jerusalem?"<sup>7</sup> Colin Brown points out, furthermore, that the apostle Peter applied the cosmic imagery of Joel's prophecy (chap. 2:28-32) symbolically to God's visitation on the day of Pentecost (see Acts 2:15-21).

But can we assume that New Testament applications of Old Testament prophetic terms and images do not correspond to historical realities in the apocalyptic future simply because they have not been realized in history? To do so shows a fundamental disregard of the apocalyptic perspective in the Old Testament prophetic oracles and confuses poetic expression with metaphorical language (allegorism). G. E. Ladd has rightly warned against such speculative spiritualization. He calls the cosmic imagery of the Old Testament prophets "semi-poetical language" because it represents eschatological events that transcend our present historical experience.<sup>8</sup> David Wenham also points out that "Mark 13:24-27 has parallels elsewhere in the New Testament, where the reference [of an apocalyptic Parousia] is unmistakably to the last day (e.g., Matt. 13:30f.)."<sup>9</sup>

In short, the inadequacy of this approach is its exaltation of the Old Testament typological fulfillment as the ultimate norm without allowing room for the greater, cosmic-universal consummation at the Parousia.

An exact opposite solution to the structure of Mark 13 and Matthew 24 is proposed by dispensationalism in the *New Scofield Reference Bible*. This view simply asserts that Mark 13 and Matthew 24 deal exclusively with the Jewish people in Jerusalem during a *future* crisis in the end-time after the church has been raptured from the earth to heaven. It accepts only Luke 21 as a prophecy of Jerusalem's fall in A.D. 70. The inadequacy of this fundamental dichotomy between Mark and Matthew on the one hand and Luke on the other has been dealt with in my articles "Where Did Jesus Place the Seventieth Week?" (MINISTRY, July, 1982, pp. 12-14) and "The Church and the Great Tribulation" (MINISTRY, March, 1982, pp. 13-15). It is vital to the proper exegesis of Jesus' prophetic discourse to apply the term "the elect" to *both* Jewish and Gentile Christians in the gospel church (cf. 1 Peter 1:1; 2:9).

A fourth school of interpretation reads Jesus' prophetic discourse as a continuous description of the whole Christian era.<sup>10</sup> This view relies mostly on Luke's account, especially on the extended historical application of the "times of the Gentiles" in Luke 21:24. Luke's phrase seems to denote an indefinite period of suppression for Jerusalem and the Jewish people following the events that occurred in A.D. 70.<sup>11</sup> In this way, the historian Luke unmistakably indicates that there is to be a certain time span between the fall of Jerusalem and the Parousia with its world judgment. The implication of Luke's account clearly seems to stress that Christ's return should *not* be expected immediately after the destruction of Jerusalem. Significantly, Luke places the cry, "'The time is near'" (verse 8) on the tongue of the false prophets. Luke's record also suggests that "'there will be signs in the sun, moon and stars'" as a warning prelude to

the Parousia; he classifies these cosmic signs, together with disasters in nature on earth, as indicators that "'your redemption is drawing near'" (verses 25-28; cf. Joel 2:31).

Mark's account likewise contains an indication of a lengthy time span before the end of the world: "'And the gospel must first be preached to all nations'" (chap. 13:10; cf. Matt. 10:17-22; 24:14). In Christ's vision, this would begin on a universal scale only after the fall of Jerusalem (see Matt. 22:7-10; 23:38; 21:41, 43). The problem of Mark's and Matthew's still-shortened perspective is resolved in this approach by inserting the "times of the Gentiles" of Luke 21:24 into the "days of distress" of Mark 13:19 and Matthew 24:21. In other words, Mark's and Matthew's time of tribulation for the elect is enlarged chronologically by Luke's "times of the Gentiles" so that the prophetic discourse can more easily be applied as straightforward history. A real problem for this continuous-interpretation approach, however, is the phrase "this generation shall not pass . . ." in Mark 13:30, Matthew 24:34, and Luke 21:32. The expression can no longer be applied to the fall of Jerusalem because these words appear *after* the Parousia description in the Synoptic Gospels.

Finally, the solution that seems to be the most adequate and defensible to most interpreters is called the prophetic perspective view. In this view, the fall of Jerusalem as God's judgment on the Jewish nation is a foreshadowing of His final act in world judgment. "The long ages between are telescoped in the prophetic perspective to a negligible length, and in the events of A.D. 70, the Parousia, though clearly conceived as a distinct and more distant event, is already in essence present."<sup>12</sup>

The convincing power of this approach is that it continues the pattern of Old Testament prophecy with its dual focus on both the immediate national judgment and also on the final, universal judgment of God. Israel's Old Testament prophets consistently placed their predictions of God's impending judgment

**N**o line of separation is drawn between the impending, contemporary judgment and the last judgment at the end of the world. Both are depicted as taking place at the same time.

on the wicked nations in the eschatological context of the day of Yahweh with its characteristic cosmic imagery (see Eze. 32:7, 8; Hab. 3:11; Isa. 34:4; Joel 2:10, 31; Amos 8:9). Because the same Yahweh would be the judge in both the present and the final crisis, contemporary history was viewed in an eschatological perspective. H. Ridderbos explains the typological principle involved: "In the judgment upon Israel, God has provided the world with an example. At the last [day] the world of the nations will stand before the very same judgment."<sup>13</sup> No line of separation is drawn, no differentiation in time is made, between the impending, contemporary judgment and the last judgment at the end of the world. Both are depicted as taking place at the same time. The chronological distance is deliberately omitted as irrelevant.

Isaiah's oracle against Babylon is a case in point. The prophet made the following prediction in the year 716-715 B.C., as chapter 14:28 indicates:<sup>14</sup>

"Wail, for the day of the Lord is near;  
it will come like destruction from  
the Almighty. . . .

The stars of heaven and their constellations  
will not show their light.

The rising sun will be darkened  
and the moon will not give its  
light. . . .

Her time is at hand" (Isa. 13:6-22).

This prophecy of doom for Babylon was first fulfilled during the lifetime of Isaiah, when the city of Babylon was utterly destroyed by the Assyrian army under Sennacherib, in the year 689 B.C. Nevertheless, Isaiah's prophecy of the day of the Lord did not find an exhaustive and permanent fulfillment in this historical fall of the city. Babylon was rebuilt soon afterward to become one of the most beautiful cities of the ancient world under Nebuchadnezzar. Only many centuries later, at the end of the first century A.D.,<sup>15</sup> did it become permanently "like Sodom and Gomorrah" (see verses 19-22). However, the cosmic imagery of Isaiah 13:10 still had received no literal fulfillment.

The New Testament emphatically applies Isaiah's prophecies of doom for Babylon and Edom to the future day of the Lord. This is the developed apocalyptic perspective in Christ's discourse (Matt. 24:29) and in John's Apocalypse (Rev. 6:12-14). Just as Isaiah blended the imminent historical day of judgment for Babylon with the eschatological judgment of the day of the Lord, so Christ's prophetic perspective refers first to the immediate historical destruction of Jerusalem during the time of His contemporary generation (Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30), but focuses likewise on the ultimate cosmic-universal judgment at His parousia in the unknown future (Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32). In basic continuity with Israel's classical prophecy, Christ blended the two great judgments—on Jerusalem and on the world—into one comprehensive prophetic perspective.<sup>16</sup>

The apocalyptic term "'the abomination that causes desolation'" (Mark 13:14; Matt. 24:15) or "'the desolating sacrilege'" (R.S.V.)<sup>†</sup> also participates in this dual prophetic perspective. While Luke omits this term from Daniel, he applies Mark's apocalyptic expression directly to the devastating Roman armies that defiled the Jerusalem sanctuary by their sacrilegious legionary standards, their pagan sacrifices, and their destruction of the Temple (Luke 21:20-24). But Luke's historical application of Daniel's prediction (verse 22) does not exhaust its fulfillment. Mark's prophetic perspective of Daniel's anti-Messiah (Dan. 8:9-13; 11:31, 36) remains open to a future eschatological fulfillment, a perspective clearly endorsed by the apostle Paul's prophetic outline in 2 Thessalonians 2. The masculine form of "the abomination" in Mark 13:14 (*hestēkota*, "standing") corresponds to Paul's "man of sin" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, K.J.V., that is, to the antichrist himself. We agree, therefore, with C. E. B. Cranfield's comment on Mark 13:14-20, "It seems then that neither an exclusively historical nor an exclusively eschatological interpretation is satisfactory, and that we must allow for a double refer-

ence, for a mingling of historical and eschatological."<sup>17</sup> To recognize an apocalyptic perspective in Christ's reference to unequaled "days of distress" or tribulation (Mark 13:19) seems justified, because the phraseology is borrowed from Daniel 12:1, which speaks clearly of the final "time of distress" followed by the final deliverance with its dramatic resurrection of the faithful ones (verse 2).

Likewise, Christ's warning of future "false Christs and false prophets," who will perform supernatural signs and miracles to deceive, corresponds exactly with Paul's warning against the revelation of a coming antichrist who will deceive with lying signs and wonders, even taking his place in the temple of God (2 Thess. 2:9-12). Here we see the thought developed that the antichrist power was active only in a preliminary way in the Roman defilement of the Jerusalem Temple, but would manifest itself more fully within an apostate "new" Israel or Christianity. Cranfield observes here what may be called the "typological principle": "Thus in the crises of history the eschatological is foreshadowed."<sup>18</sup>

Christ's blending of the imminent with the future eschatological abomination evidently excluded placing His remarks in a continuous chronological succession. The "days of distress" are applied explicitly to true believers in Christ, His "elect" (Mark 13:20, 22, 27; Matt. 24:22, 24, 31), who are finally delivered by His parousia (Mark 13:27; Matt. 24:31; Luke 21:28). Mark states that the Parousia will take place after the "distress" of those days (chap. 13:24); Matthew says, "Immediately after the distress of those days" (chap. 24:29). It seems obvious that it is the final eschatological time of tribulation for the elect of Christ that is in view here "never to be equaled again" (Matt. 24:21; Mark 13:19; Dan. 12:1). By taking a typological approach to Jesus' prophetic discourse, we have no need to ignore or explain away this definite temporal link. In the types, there are, by definition, only partial fulfillments, as we have seen

# Christ's prophetic perspective refers first to the immediate historical destruction of Jerusalem, but focuses likewise on the ultimate cosmic-universal judgment at His parousia in the unknown future.

in Isaiah 13. The church needs to be especially alerted to the final manifestation of apostasy and deception and to the final deliverance by the glorious Parousia, which follows immediately (cf. 2 Thess. 2:8).

The question, then, whether Mark and Matthew imply a period of time between the destruction of Jerusalem and the eschatological time of distress for the elect of Christ may be answered by the consideration that the prophetic-perspective principle does not function the same as the apocalyptic approach, which describes a continuous historical succession. The historical-succession structure can be discerned rather clearly in Luke's interpretation of Jesus' prophetic forecast; Mark and Matthew follow Israel's classical principle of a dual prophetic perspective. As has been pointed out in an earlier article (MINISTRY, May, 1982, pp. 14-17), the prophetic-perspective style gives no warrant, however, for the insertion of any gap between time units in Biblical prophecy.<sup>19</sup>

Mark and Matthew introduce the Parousia by the familiar Old Testament description of unnatural signs in the sun, moon, and stars (Mark 13:24, 25; Matt. 24:29). These passages have been called "the most obviously apocalyptic verses" in Christ's prophetic discourse.<sup>20</sup> The Old Testament taproot of this cosmic imagery is the standard apocalyptic language of Israel's doom prophecies for apostate nations: Isaiah 13:9, 10 (Babylon); Isaiah 34:4 (Edom); Ezekiel 32:7, 8 (Egypt); Habakkuk 3:11 (Babylon); Amos 8:9 (Israel); Joel 2:10, 31; 3:15 (Judah). Although the doom oracles refer first of all to an imminent judgment on the sinful nation, each time the prediction is couched to some degree in the stereotyped, cosmic imagery of the judgment setting at the day of Yahweh. The deeper lesson to be learned was that Israel should view each historical judgment of God in the light of the final cosmic-universal judgment (see Isa. 24:21-23) and should prepare for it accordingly. This theological significance of the cosmological signs of the

day of Yahweh is given a new, christological meaning by the Synoptic Gospels: the Judge of the world is not Yahweh in isolation, but Jesus Christ as the Danielic Son of man (see Dan. 7:13, 14; John 5:22, 27). The Old Testament theophanies of Yahweh are reconstituted in the Synoptic Gospels as a glorious apocalyptic christophany.

This christological application of the day of Yahweh as the Parousia is undoubtedly the theological thrust of the new setting of the cosmic signs that usher in the coming of the Son of man (Mark 13:24-27; Matt. 24:29-31; Luke 21:26, 27). Then Christ will be fully revealed to all nations in His messianic glory. "The clouds of His parousia unveil His hitherto hidden glory, which is the glory of God, the Shekinah; He is seen to be the eternal Son of God, sharing in the majesty and power of God."<sup>21</sup> The Synoptic Gospels unite in stressing that Christ's parousia will take place first and foremost for the purpose of salvation: the Son of man will gather His own to Himself (Mark 13:27; Matt. 24:31; Luke 21:28).

In summary, the ultimate question regarding Christ's prophetic discourse is the nature of its theological structure. It seems that Mark and Matthew follow the typological perspective of Israel's classical prophecy with its compressed time scale, while Luke rather follows a straightforward historical description, which inserts the "times of the Gentiles" after the fall of Jerusalem. Both approaches must therefore be considered complementary and equally valid. They should not be declared mutually exclusive, because each approach continues an Old Testament tradition: the classical prophetic and the apocalyptic style of forecast.

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<sup>1</sup> In spite of the arguments of G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Future: An Examination of the Criticism of the Eschatological Discourse*, Mark xiii;

With Special Reference to the Little Apocalypse Theory (New York: MacMillan, 1954), the "little apocalypse" theory is still assumed by various modern exegetes (see, e.g., *The Interpreter's Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1951] on Mark 13). A variation of this theory is presented by K. Grayston, "The Study of Mark XIII," *Bull. J. Rylands Univ. Lib.* 5 (1973-1974), 371-387, with his so-called "Instruction Leaflet" of Mark 13:7, 11, 14, 21 as the original nucleus.

<sup>2</sup> G. E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1977, 3d pr.), pp. 208, 209, refers to O. Cullman and others.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209; C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959), p. 409.

<sup>4</sup> R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament* (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971). Appendix A mentions a few older commentators for this approach (p. 228, n. 5).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, C. Brown, ed. (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1979; 4th pr.), vol. 2, pp. 38, 39.

<sup>7</sup> *The Parousia* (London: 1887, 2d ed.), pp. 80, 81, as quoted in France, *op. cit.*, p. 234. France mentions further modern interpreters of this solution of the structure of Mark 13.

<sup>8</sup> *The Presence of the Future* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1973), pp. 61-63, 316, 317. Cf. also G. E. Ladd, *Jesus and the Kingdom* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), pp. 41-71; G. R. Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark 13* (London: Macmillan, 1957), pp. 87, 88.

<sup>9</sup> *In Theol. Stud. Bull.* 72 (Summer, 1975), 6.

<sup>10</sup> Beasley-Murray, *A Commentary on Mark 13*, pp. 87, 88 (note 1), refers to the German scholars W. F. Gess and Th. Zahn.

<sup>11</sup> For a larger treatment of Luke 21:24, see my book *The Israel of God in Prophecy. Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews Univ. Press, 1983), Chap. X.

<sup>12</sup> This characterization of the "prophetic perspective" view is in the words of France (*op. cit.*, p. 228). Beasley-Murray mentions many representatives of this view since J. A. Bengel, in *Jesus and the Future*, pp. 131-141, 147-167 (note 1).

<sup>13</sup> *Matthew's Witness to Jesus Christ*, World Christian Books (New York: Association Press, 1958), p. 79. See also Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 89, 90, 199.

<sup>14</sup> *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, on Isa. 13:1, p. 163.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, on Isa. 13:19, p. 166.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. E. G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898, 1940), p. 628.

<sup>17</sup> Cranfield, *op. cit.*, p. 402. Cf. D. Wenham, in *Theol. Stud. Bull.* 72 (Summer, 1975), 8; H. Ridderbos, *Mattheus*, Korte Verklaring (Dutch) (Kampen: Kok), on Matt. 24:15.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> For a fuller treatment of 2 Thessalonians 2, see the present author's article "Paul's Prophetic Outline in 2 Thessalonians 2," in *Andrews University Seminary Studies*, Summer, 1983.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Philip Mauro states correctly, "Never has a specific number of time units, making up a described stretch of time, been taken to mean anything but continuous or consecutive time units."—*The Seventy Weeks and the Great Tribulation* (Boston: Hamilton Bros., 1923), p. 95.

# Is the moving van coming?

*Moving to a new pastorate is never easy, but it can be made much less complicated and traumatic with just a little forethought. Here are some suggestions for making life a great deal simpler for the one who follows you. And you can hope that the one you follow will do the same for you. □ by Ken Wilson*

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astors, no less than other mortals, are resistant to change, preferring the security of the tried and familiar. This was vividly impressed anew on my mind recently when I experienced, for the fourth time, the challenge of being transferred to a new pastorate.

Those of us in denominations given to moving pastors

frequently may have come to accept these uprootings as part of pastoral life. Yet, say what we will about "expanding horizons and fresh challenges," pastoral transitions are times of inevitable strain and complications, both personal and professional. As a recent survivor, I offer the following suggestions for making such transitions smoother. They will certainly simplify life for the one who follows you. (And you can always hope that the one whom you follow will read this article and carry out at least some of its suggestions!)

## **Making the announcement**

Be honest! You need not reveal every chapter in your pastoral journal, but do,

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at least, give the essence of your reason for leaving. Your people have been loyal and have supported your ministry more than financially, so they deserve to know. But be careful at this emotional moment; your flock will remember the reason you give for leaving far longer than your reason for coming.

If you are in an organization that arranges these transitions by fiat, and you know your successor's name, build him up before your members have a chance to doubt his potential. (Of course, if you can't honestly do so, don't! At any rate, you can assure them that Jesus Christ is head of His church on earth and that He will lead it under your successor as He has under you.) Try to pave the way for his strengths.

## **Files**

The greatest gift you can leave your successor is not curtains for the parson-

age, but an up-to-date file! And one of the most important items in that file should be a current membership list, complete with addresses and phone numbers. In rural areas, brief directions or a sketch of how to locate hard-to-find homes will cause the new pastor to rise up and call you blessed! If you have a pictorial directory of your congregation, think how helpful a copy could be if mailed to the incoming pastor a few weeks before his arrival.

Upon arriving at one new pastorate, I was told, "Everything you need to know about the church is in that cardboard box on the office desk." My predecessor had been told the same thing when he arrived, I discovered, and was now bequeathing it to me untouched. No one had gone through the box for several years. I culled a large wastebasket full of old, meaningless papers. Incidentally, in the process several important items came

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to light, among them the crumpled title to the church van (everyone thought it was lost forever), as well as a set of architectural blueprints for the entire church plant. No current information or lists surfaced, however. You can save your successor days of detective work by leaving him a current file of the information he needs.

A list of present church officers is invaluable to the incoming pastor. Along with this, leave him a weekly schedule of officers on duty (unless the church secretary, if there is one, has this information), financial statements, copies of past and present budgets, and all correspondence crucial to the church program.

One of the most valuable files you can pass on to your replacement is the list of prospective members and individuals interested in the church. One pastor, it's true, told me such names were of no more interest to him than my old sermon notes! But few of us feel that way. I have baptized several persons within the first month or so of arriving in a new pastorate because the former minister left accurate, up-to-date lists of interests. Such a list can be invaluable to your successor.

Be sure the new pastor has access to the clerk's books or secretary's notes, as well as church board minutes for the past few years, to enable him to get a feel of the program atmosphere. Often much unfinished business can be attended to quite expediently by a simple reading of such records. An informed pastor, like an informed member, is the most efficient.

### **Community considerations**

If you know who your successor will be, a nice gesture would be to send him a packet of information about the local area from the chamber of commerce, including maps. Introduce him to the local ministerial association by mailing the president a letter with details of the pastoral change. (Be sure to send a copy to the new pastor as well.) If you are participating in a chaplain's rotation at

local hospitals, the schedule would be helpful to your replacement.

If circumstances permit, introduce your successor personally to key individuals in the community. In my last transition, the departing pastor took me with him to meet the most generous nonmember contributor, the manager of the best dry cleaners in town, several people with whom he was studying the Bible, and others with whom I would need to be acquainted in my work there. He was not threatened by my presence in his domain prior to his leaving, and this was a great help.

Since we would be living in a church-owned home (for the first time), this contact also gave us the opportunity to measure for window curtains and learn about the heating system and the home-maintenance contracts. We also went together to each of the utility companies in the city, allowing us in one visit to have the electricity, water, garbage, gas, and phone service to be transferred from his name to mine. This saved hours and hours of potentially lost time scouting out the territory on our own for the first time. Such an ideal opportunity is not always possible, of course, but when it is, take advantage of it.

### **Church building**

If you've ever been the "new minister," you can probably remember having to call around among the members (assuming you know their phone numbers) to discover how to obtain a set of keys to the church facility. In one new pastorate, I actually had to borrow the key to the main door from the janitor and have one made at a nearby hardware store! Yet how easily you can eliminate this frustration for your successor. Simply assign the head deacon to present the new pastor with your complete set of keys while the pastor's furniture is being unloaded, if not before. If you want to go the extra mile, tag each one for the door it fits.

A list of any peculiarities concerning the church plant is also helpful. It can come as quite a surprise to your successor to discover the day before a baptism that

the baptistry water heater burned out six months earlier! This isn't an example plucked from thin air; I speak from experience!

Probably you can do nothing to make your successor feel quite as welcome as being sure that when he arrives at the church building he will find his name already on the church sign—correctly spelled. Few pastors like to be seen scrubbing off the former pastor's name and applying their own.

### **Program**

A copy of the church program certainly helps the new pastor keep the church seams together when he arrives. This is true, of course, only if he is not an "out with the old, in with the new" type. It helps your successor, for example, to know that you were only five more weeks (at a chapter a week) from finishing the book of Acts at the midweek service. Knowing this, he can pick up right where you left off and endear himself to the congregation. A little forethought on your part is all it takes.

### **Membership**

Last but not least, a word about your members. Except for a few accolades for outstanding service and a short sketch of current critical membership problems, allow your successor to formulate his own unbiased opinions of his new flock. He will learn quickly enough without your telling him who are the troublemakers, who are faithful, where the feuds lie. After your departure, one of his parishioners will undoubtedly say to him, "I'm sure Pastor Departed told you all about me!" Imagine that dear saint's happy surprise (and your successor's relief) when he can answer truthfully, "No, the former pastor told me nothing!" We all deserve a new start once in a while—even the butting rams and jealous ewes of the flock.

These suggestions will undoubtedly help the new pastor in your church to have a happier and smoother transition than any he has likely experienced. But, who knows? He may not be the only winner!



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Moving Toward Receptivity

Monday, September 5:

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• Steps in strategic planning

• Conducting a church-growth

seminar in the local

congregation • Planning for

nurture in the local church

Tuesday, September 6:

#### Targeting the community.

Understanding secular man

• Church planting

• Media Evangelism for

the local church

Wednesday, September 7:

#### Pastoral leadership.

Conflict management

• Leadership in the black

church • Understanding

pastoral leadership for

church growth • The church

in the computer age

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# Put electronics to work in your church

*Recent advances in electronic technology have done more than make it possible for teen-agers to play video games. New devices, as well as improved capabilities for familiar equipment, are opening up all sorts of opportunities for the local church to use. And the cost is often surprisingly affordable.* □ by Edward A. Henkel

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*Today's electronic explosion is changing the way you and I live—how we shop, pay bills, entertain, and communicate with others. Last December, Time bestowed its prestigious “man [in this case, machine] of the year” award on the personal computer and characterized 1982 as the year the computer came into the*

home. The same electronic technology that promises to affect our personal lives profoundly has other applications as well. Many of these applications can benefit your church in its outreach ministry. This article will make you aware of some of these new devices and how they can help you in your church. And the good news is that you don't have to have a congregation of two thousand members to put many of these items to use. The price is often well within the budget limitations of the average or smaller church.

The cassette machine has become such an integral part of the PA system for quality, reliable recording and playback that most of us can hardly remember the precassette era. But you should realize that most consumer-type recorders are no longer adequate. They simply will not

stand up to the service required in a commercial or church situation. Heavy-duty machines are now available that provide much-needed features to help you make and play good recordings. What capabilities should you look for when shopping for a cassette recorder to use with your PA system?

First of all, the recorder must have sufficient output in playback to drive the PA system at a proper level. Now that many vocal artists are using prerecorded tapes of instrumental backgrounds for their performance, a machine with an output volume control and extended frequency response is necessary. Other features that help are switchable noise filters and speed adjustment.

You should also look for a machine that provides fast forward/rewind cueing so that the material recorded can be located rapidly. Get a machine with a third head (playback only) so that the recording on the tape may be monitored while it is being made. Most consumer machines merely monitor the input, and

the movement of a meter doesn't guarantee the material is on the tape! A playback head will tell you for sure. One recorder with all the features listed above is the Marantz PMD 220 mono cassette recorder priced around \$190. (All products mentioned in this article are used merely as examples to help you in planning; reference should not be construed as specifically endorsing a particular machine over comparable items. You should be able to find all the equipment mentioned in this article at local suppliers. Also, see page 31 for information regarding two distributors who operate nationwide mail-order businesses in electronic components at competitive prices.)

While we're on the subject of recordings, hardly a pastor exists anywhere who has not at one time or another gotten requests for a tape of his sermon for some purpose. To make duplicate tapes, a good master is a must. Of course, you will need a cassette duplicator. These now come in all sizes and shapes and in all

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Edward A. Henkel is an electronics consultant for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

# **H**ow about a TV monitor in the mothers' room receiving a signal from a camera in the sanctuary? No special lighting is required, and the prices are well within the budget of a small church.

price ranges. Analyze your potential duplicating needs and buy accordingly. Keep in mind, however, that the quality of your copied tapes (called dubs in the trade) will depend on the quality of tape you buy. In the long run, cheap tapes are not worth the slightly lower cost. They make poor fidelity copies, and in the process they tear up parts of your duplicator, especially the heads. What you save on tape will be more than offset by shortening duplicator life.

Typical tape duplicators range from the Telex copier that makes one copy of a C-60 cassette in about two minutes (price: about \$325) to a Recordex machine that copies two tapes at a time (about \$1,500). In between you can get a Telex copier that makes three copies at once for about \$800 or a Wollensak 2770 machine that makes two copies at a time and has the capability for adding "slaves" in groups of three. Its price: about \$1,400. The key factor in buying a tape duplicator is to be sure to buy one where you can get service. Duplicators have moving parts that simply wear out. In fact, you might want to consider buying two machines so you will have a spare.

Here are some suggestions that will help you make good copies:

1. Do not use off-brand or extra-long tapes for masters. Master tapes should be exact-length tapes, i.e., a C-60 should be exactly thirty minutes on a side. Allow ten seconds after pushing the record button before you start the material to be copied. This allows the blank leader and some of the tape to pass the recording head so that nothing is missed.

2. Don't let the master tape run out. Plan to turn it over while there is still some tape left. Stop at the end of a sentence or thought, flip the cassette over (do not rewind), wait for the speaker to pause, and then start recording. You may miss a few words this way, but your tape will sound good.

3. Always make a copy of your master tape in case your duplicator should chew it up. Use master tapes that are in screw-type cases; these are much more easily repaired in an emergency.

4. Before inserting the master tape and the dub tape in the duplicator, be sure the tape is not loose in the case. It may be tightened by inserting a pencil into the supply reel spoke hole and turning until the slack is gone, as observed through the little window in the tape.

When it comes to the public-address system itself, equipment that is currently on the market can make your church's operation a dream. Cool-running high-power amplifiers will give a quality sound to your services. Crown, Inc., for example, makes 75-, 150-, and 300-watt amplifiers that are just about destruction-proof. Prices start at around \$395 and go up. The addition of an audio compressor/limiter makes blasting and feedback almost a thing of the past. Furman makes a mono version priced at \$235.

Does your PA system mixer lack enough output to feed other areas of the church where you might want sound to go? The addition of a distribution amplifier will take the output of your system's mixer and provide six to twelve identical, isolated outputs all individually volume controlled and short-circuit proof to various areas of your church that need a signal feed from the sanctuary. For example: tape recorder jacks for members to use with their personal tape recorders; a signal feed to a radio station for broadcasting the service; a mothers' room or a youth room amplifier for overflow situations; a separate amplifier for the lobby speakers; even a video tape recorder. As you can see, distribution amplifiers can be very versatile and handy things to have. An added attraction is that they won't knock a huge hole in your budget. The Excalibur rack mount unit, for example, is available for \$250 from David Green Associates, Leesburg, Virginia.

The explosion in home television equipment and cable technology offers your church some really innovative and relatively inexpensive possibilities. How about a TV monitor in the mothers' room receiving a signal from a camera in the sanctuary? No reason to build

mothers' rooms with glass windows looking out into the sanctuary any longer! This system can provide a beautiful, in-focus picture (in color, if you wish) completely unattended, thanks to remote-control cameras. No special lighting is required, and the prices are well within the budget of the small church. Cameras start at about \$400. Be sure yours has a zoom lens. Add a large-screen television, and that evangelistic overflow crowd in the youth room can have a better seat than those in the sanctuary! Prices here start at about \$900 for a large-screen TV.

With the deregulation of the telephone industry, new devices are appearing on the market that your church can utilize. High-quality telephone ministry is a reality with such features as counters and instant answer. The installation is as simple as plugging it in. One example is the Panasonic KX-T1525 with a message length of up to forty-five minutes. Resemblance to the old telephone answering machines is slight. Cost for this machine is around \$325. The use of special devices on telephone lines is increasing as well. These include frequency-shifting devices for better sounding voice quality that allows remote lecturing possibilities either to or from your church.

For the hearing-impaired in your congregation, a new accessory is the wireless transmitter. Connected to your PA system and plugged into an ordinary electrical outlet, it will transmit a low-power radio signal that can be picked up on an ordinary AM portable radio anywhere in the congregation. An individual needs only to plug in an earphone to the radio, set the volume level desired, and not miss a thing that is going on. LPB, in Frazer, Pennsylvania makes the Radio-Aide for \$960.

These are just a few of the electronic capabilities that are presently available to make your ministry more effective. Developments in this field are advancing at such a pace that you can expect new products to keep appearing. Electronics is here to change our lives—and our churches. Make it work for you!

# Elected for life?

*Is it in the best interest of the church for a person to remain in a leadership position for decades simply because he has avoided serious mistakes and egregious blunders?*

Viewpoint

by Morris Chalfant



William Wrigley of chewing-gum fame was said to have changed any method that he had used in his business for ten years or more, even if it had been paying off, because of his fear that it might otherwise become sacred. The church, of course, has always been one of the great defenders of the status quo. And

there are some practices and beliefs we *should* never change. But many things in the church rest on nothing more solid than "we've always done it this way." One such practice is the "life tenure" many church leaders hold.

I believe that one of the major factors that has hindered church growth in many denominations stems directly from

the refusal of those who hold executive positions in the church "hierarchy" to relinquish power and responsibility for any reason short of ill health or retirement. A question being asked again and again at the grass-roots level is: Should a person remain in leadership for decades simply because he has managed to avoid serious mistakes and egregious blunders?

James Madison wrote in the *Federalist*, "Liberty demands not only that all power should be derived from the people but that those entrusted with it should be kept in dependence on the people by a short duration of their appointments." Yet many men who are now in church leadership have been in these positions of power for ten or twenty years, and some for more than a quarter of a century. For the most part these men have performed with distinction. But it is my strong opinion that for the best interest of the total program of the church and for the morale of those serving local congregations a method

should be developed to ensure a wider participation in leadership opportunities.

The practice of limiting terms of office in the church is widely applied to laymen, but the tenure of the clergy has been assumed to be an exception to this principle. Most church groups are very reluctant to remove a leader for any cause, unless it is a case of moral or ethical failure. Incompetent administration or a lack of wisdom is seldom sufficient in itself.

In addition, the political aspect of church organization and elections gives the incumbent in office a tremendous advantage. He is known to the membership of the church and can call many of them by name. This makes it very difficult for him to be unseated if he does not wish to be. Consequently men who do even reasonably well can expect to be perpetuated in office until retirement. I do not believe this is good either for them or the church.

Some church executives change after they have been in leadership over a period of years. Sometimes a heady sense of power in office generates these unfor-

Morris Chalfant is pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene in Norwood, Ohio.

**Viewpoint is designed to allow readers an opportunity to express opinions regarding matters of interest to their colleagues. The ideas expressed in this feature are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Seventh-day Adventist Church or the opinions of the MINISTRY staff.**

**You are invited to submit your ideas to Viewpoint on any topic; however, the editors reserve the right to make a final decision regarding the appropriateness or suitability for publication.—Editors.**

**S**ome practices we should never change. But many things in the church rest on nothing more solid than "we've always done it this way." One such practice is the "life tenure" many church leaders hold.

tunate transformations. If we want to understand this feeling, consider how many motorists change when they get behind the wheel. People who are normally courteous and decent, who would never think of pushing ahead in a bank line or bumping some other pedestrian off the curb, turn into bellicose aggressors under traffic conditions. Dr. Jekyll is transformed into Mr. Hyde fast enough to scare the wits out of Robert Louis Stevenson.

Most will agree that executives have the same human nature as the rest of us. Because the use of power runs all too naturally to the abuse of power, leaders can enter their new position with deep humility, only to lose that quality after a few years because they have not distinguished the dignity of the office from their own. Fortright opposition to their policies is sometimes called obstructionism or even labeled going contrary to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, groups in power for a long time develop techniques for getting work done and for speeding up the democratic process, but in doing so, they all too often tend to brush aside groups not in power, especially those that have never been in power. A few months ago I wrote one of the executives in my denomination of my desire to change pastorates from the one I have served the past ten years. We are both the same age, around threescore years. Here is a portion of his answer to my request: "I can understand your interest in making a move, and I will continue to work with you in this regard. I'm sure that there would be places where you could move, Morris. But to be honest, I'm afraid the size of the church and the salary and benefits would be much smaller than you now are receiving.\* The facts of life are catching up with those of us who are getting older, and I just have to be frank with you at this point. If you are willing to accommodate to such situations, I think we could place you without any problem. This certainly does not mean that I feel that your abilities have diminished or that the contribution that you can still make to the church is

compromised. I just know that the emphasis in the church more and more is on youth, and we must face these realities."

How odd! A pastor at age 60 is considered disqualified by his age from greater responsibilities, while the church executive of 60 feels his age is no impediment to continuing in the office he holds!

The question being asked by a growing number of pastors is: How can executives ethically accept all the benefits and privileges of their leadership positions until they have reached the age of retirement, but no longer can recommend a pastor, because of his age, for a place of leadership comparable to that in which he has been serving? It is my opinion that many denominations need to be honest about power games and realize that power will eventually be invested, and has been invested, in a few individuals. Why not be honest and admit it? Pastors in all denominations are becoming increasingly restless regarding the power structure of executives who remain in office for long periods, sometimes for a quarter of a century. This unrest is heightened by the double standard between executive leaders, who upon reaching their 60s have another five or ten years of service, and pastors, who upon reaching their early 50s are in many instances faced with a limited place of service.

My denomination has been blessed with outstanding executive leadership. For the most part, intelligent, capable men have served. They have been wise and godly men who have stood for truth, standards, and doctrines, and have kept our denomination on a solid footing. But experience indicates clearly that the benefits resulting from such long terms in office are unfortunately far outweighed by the losses. The benefit of continuity and administrative know-how is not nearly as important as the losses in perspective and sensitivity. The average executive, after a decade in office, loses touch with what is going on at the grass roots. More and more he turns for counsel to his peers, the denominational

elite, and less influential people come to learn that they get less and less consideration.

The answer to this problem is not easy. What can be done about it? In my opinion, quite a bit: (1) prohibit the election or appointment of an executive over age 60; (2) elect executives every four years; (3) limit executives to two terms, such as is done for the President of the United States. Such a plan would give the executive leaders ample time to put their administrative programs to work, and it would also return some outstanding men to the pastorate, evangelistic field, and colleges. There are many colleges and churches that would like to have their institution graced by a former high executive of their denomination.

This plan would correct the prevalent trend of diminishing usefulness. When those serving as pastors have reached their early 50s, they could still look forward to another ten years of productive service. In my denomination, my observation is that it has been the men on the local church level in their 50s and 60s who have been the ones to give our denomination its greatest years of growth. This plan would let many executives realize that they too would have to face again the problems at the grass-roots level, where the action really is.

Some time ago when I discussed my concern about the peril that long tenure for ordained executives is having on my denomination, I was informed that my suggestions would not work because "we have never done it that way." Perhaps. But let's not canonize past methods. We don't have to elect church officials for life.

\* Seventh-day Adventist pastors do not face this financial problem. Each pastor is paid by the local conference organization from the tithe of all the churches in that conference. The pastor of the largest congregation receives the same basic salary as does the pastor of the smallest church. With only minor variations because of allowances based on local factors, the same is true among the conferences—a pastor in one conference receives the same basic salary as his counterpart in other conferences.—Editors.

## Adventists: heading for schism?

*Christianity Today reports that theological differences are moving Seventh-day Adventists closer to a split. MINISTRY points out some errors of fact and gives its view of what the issues really are.*

Some of our readers may have seen a news item in the March 18 issue of *Christianity Today* headlined: "Adventist Teachers Are Forced Out in a Doctrinal Dispute." The subtitle suggested the church is moving closer to schism.

We normally try, in print, to ignore such reports—not because we have nothing to say, but because no matter what one says, it appears defensive. It's the old "Have you stopped beating your wife?" kind of situation. However, we felt that this particular piece was sufficiently one-sided and contained enough errors of fact (in a periodical usually given to fair coverage of issues) that it deserved some sort of response. We realize *complete* objectivity may be too much to expect of reporters, religious or secular. But frankly, our knowledge of the situation is at such variance with this reporting of it that we have begun to wonder how much one should believe of *anything* he reads!

Obviously, there are two sides to every story. Since the article in question presents the viewpoint of dissidents within the Adventist Church, we thought it only fair to provide a brief look from the other perspective. Both sides may be considered to be biased, of course, but surely not one more than the other. Without trying to set every item straight, we would simply point out a few errors of fact and then describe a bit of our view of what the actual issues are.

Some errors in the report: Current theological controversies do not swirl about "one of the church's basic doctrines—the investigative judgment of Christ." Current theological controversy has to do with much more than a single doctrine; it involves basic hermeneutics of Bible prophecy and the entire self-understanding of the Adventist Church.

The church does not believe that this doctrine "was revealed to prophetess Ellen White in 1844." Rather it originated from the Bible study of three

individuals—Edson, Crosier, and Hahn—who published their views in April, 1845 and February, 1846. After further study, the doctrine was accepted by those who would later compose the Seventh-day Adventist Church. As a final step, Ellen White (who, incidentally, never claimed the title "prophetess") received a vision in 1846 endorsing the view as "true light." Hiram Edson never asserted that he had received a vision as the article states; nor were the minutes of a 1919 Bible conference "suppressed." Actually, the transcript was placed in the vault following the meeting and forgotten through the years. It was discovered after the church's Archives Department was established in

correspond with me and give me the details.

More troublesome than the factual errors, however, is the impression left by the article that the church is on the brink of rupture and doctrinal chaos. That there is certain theological dissension within the Adventist Church is beyond question; that the church is widely rent or nearing schism is an exaggeration far beyond reality. In fact, two of the most visible and measurable signs of church health—membership and finances—seem to indicate that the church is far from schism.

The January 7, 1983, issue of *Christianity Today* reported that Seventh-day

**T**hat there is certain theological dissension within the Adventist Church is beyond question; that the church is widely rent or nearing schism is an exaggeration far beyond reality. In fact, two of the most visible signs of church health—membership and finances—seem to indicate that the church is far from schism.

the 1970s.

"Numerous SDA ministers have had to take loyalty oaths on the investigative judgment issue," the article declares, "with some sending in manuscripts and cassettes of sermons to be checked." If questions have arisen about a particular presentation, some may have been asked for copies of a sermon in order to determine what was actually presented. But I know of no one who has had to take a "loyalty oath" on any doctrine. We want to be fair, and so I invite any of you who have had such experiences to please

Adventists were the fourth-fastest-growing denomination in North America for the decade 1970-1980. For the fourth quarter of 1982, accessions to the church (baptisms and professions of faith) numbered 107,726 worldwide. This is more than 1,000 per day, a goal recently set by the church, and is the highest single quarter in the church's history. The February 4, 1983, issue of that same journal pointed out that Seventh-day Adventists in North America have the second-highest giving record among 45 denominations sur-

veyed by the National Council of Churches—an annual per capita average of \$732.20. (The survey average was \$239.71.) Of course such figures alone do not indicate that the church is completely problem free. But neither do they suggest a church that is hopelessly divided.

The article quotes an estimate that 150 pastors and teachers have either been fired or forced to resign recently for their theological views. (It does admit that a church official puts the number at far less.) Even if the 150 figure were accurate, it would hardly qualify as serious schism. The Adventist Church currently employs approximately 15,000 ordained and licensed ministers. Thus the 150 figure is exactly 1 percent of the total. The 150 loss is said to cover a two-and-one-half-year period beginning in the summer of 1980. The annual rate of loss would be 0.4 percent. It seems inconceivable that such a percentage could be labeled "schism"! The other side of the picture is that some who actually have left teaching or preaching positions because of theological differences are returning in doctrinal harmony.

Now just a word about what we see as the real issues in this situation. The theological differences do not involve merely a single doctrine—the investigative judgment, or any other doctrine alone. The basic theological differences within the Adventist Church today have to do with how we shall understand and interpret Bible prophecy. This question affects many foundational areas of church doctrine, as well as the church's view of itself, its mission, and reason for existence. Those who are taking theological issue with the church today are asking it not merely to reexamine a single doctrine, or even several doctrines. They are asking the church to redefine its basic understanding of the prophetic portions of Scripture and thus to alter radically the very nature of the church itself. It is not, as the article implies, simply a matter of fine-tuning certain doctrinal concepts in order to bring them into greater harmony with Scripture. If that were the case, there would be little disagreement. Rather, it is a question of taking a view of hermeneutics fundamentally different from, and at odds with, that which the church has previously held. The disagreement, therefore, goes far beyond any specific doctrine.

The Adventist Church has always held to a historicist position in which apocalyptic prophecy was seen to be linear and predictive of events from the time of the Bible writer until the end of the world. Its prophetic and eschatological understandings are built on such a view. Those challenging this position have taken essentially a preterist stance (with some futurism included, as well) and find a contemporary fulfillment in the time of the writer for all Bible prophecies. Thus they deny that prophecy was ever intended to give us any specific information about the future or end-time events. Seventh-day Adventists cannot accept such a view without surrendering that which makes them Seventh-day Adventists.

The article indicates that those who are opposed theologically are "not antagonistic to the church. . . . We just want to see it come into full harmony with Scripture." We believe that the church's historic position on how to interpret Bible prophecy and the doctrines based on that method of interpretation are in full harmony with Scripture. Careful investigation reveals that our historicist position regarding the interpretation of

at the Cross, they must be blotted out by Christ before man can enter heaven. . . . Thus salvation is never secure." In actuality, we believe that our salvation is as secure as Jesus Christ Himself. We have no fears on that point. We do believe, along with many other Christians, that our security in Christ is not irrevocable; that we can turn from our saved condition and choose to be lost. We believe Bible prophecy indicates a judgment prior to Christ's coming in which He will differentiate tares from wheat for all time. Such a judgment does not tell us that we cannot be sure of salvation; it tells us that heaven will ratify each man's decision and that those who, by the grace of God, endure to the end will be saved. (Matt. 24:13; Heb. 3:14.)

It is unfortunate that the *Christianity Today* article continues the often-repeated charge that such doctrines as the investigative judgment and other positions held by the Adventist Church are not scriptural and have been derived from extra-Biblical visionary sources. This is simply not true. We feel we owe it to those within Adventism who disagree theologically with the church and to our

**W**e believe our salvation is as secure as Jesus Christ Himself. We have no fears on this point. We do believe, along with other Christians, that our security in Christ is not irrevocable. We believe Bible prophecy indicates a judgment prior to Christ's coming in which He will differentiate tares from wheat for all time.

Bible prophecy, although heard less and less in these modern times of Babylonian confusion and conflicting winds of doctrine, is the position taken by the majority of serious Bible students of the past from the early church on—the Church Fathers, the Reformers, the Puritan writers, the great conservative scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is not we, but those who have abandoned these positions, who have left Scripture.

The Adventist Church is said to believe that although "sins are forgiven

readers representing a wide spectrum of faiths and doctrines, to set forth, succinctly and clearly, how we view Bible prophecy and its interpretation, the doctrines that emerge from our understanding of prophecy, and what role we believe God has assigned us to fill in these days just prior to His Son's return. The July issue will carry an examination of the doctrine of a pre-Advent or investigative judgment. We are content to let each reader make up his own mind whether or not these positions are scriptural.—J.R.S.

## The rebuke of the waters

*Should Psalm 104:6-9 be connected with the Flood rather than with the Creation event? Some creationists say Yes and others say No. A look at its proper context provides us with the answer.*

Psalm 104 is a hymn of praise for God's mighty acts in the natural world, bringing the world from chaos into intelligence and beauty, just as Psalm 106 is a hymn of praise for His mighty acts in bringing the Israelite people from bondage into freedom. One of His mighty acts in Psalm 104 is the separation of the land from the water, and the collecting of the waters into the confines of the ocean basins. All of this occurs at His rebuke or the sound of His thunderous voice.

The question that arises is whether the rebuke occurs at the time of Creation or at the time of the Noachian deluge. The verses in question read as follows: "Thou coverdest it [the earth] with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains. At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them. Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth" (Ps. 104:6-9).

One's first impression is that we have here a graphic picture of the activity of the Flood waters, which are under the control of God's omnipotent hand. The psalmist's description "the waters stood above the mountains" is strikingly reminiscent of words in the Flood account: "And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered" (Gen. 7:19). Then the psalmist's reference to the setting up of bounds for the waters, "that they turn not again to cover the earth," seems to be a direct parallel with the divine promise given to Noah's family that never again would the world be destroyed with a flood (chap. 9:11, 15).

But if Psalm 104:6-9 is a primary reference to the Noachian deluge, then

we would have to explain why these verses are sandwiched into a Creation hymn. The rest of this psalm, as we shall see, is a magnificent description in poetic form of the work of the divine Creator, paralleling in many respects the account of Genesis 1. Should these verses, then, be placed within the context of the events of Creation week, rather than the Deluge? If so, we have the problem of explaining why there is almost no reference whatever to the Flood in the Old Testament outside its original description in Genesis.

It is significant to note how *little* is said about the Noachian deluge in the Old Testament other than in Genesis 6-11. Aside from possible tenuous allusions to the Flood in Job 12:15; 22:16; and Psalm 29:10, the only clear-cut reference to the Flood in Sacred Scripture from Exodus to Malachi is Isaiah 54:9. Generally, when the word *flood* is used it has reference to the overflowing of a river (Job 20:17; Ps. 32:6; Jer. 46:7, 8; Nahum 1:8), and sometimes in particular the flooding of the Nile (Amos 8:8; 9:5).

The scant attention that the Flood is given in the Old Testament, other than in Genesis, stands in contrast to the way other cataclysmic events described in the early chapters of the Bible are kept alive in Israel's memory. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah receives extensive coverage (Deut. 29:23; Isa. 1:9; Jer. 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Zeph. 2:9), as does the deliverance of the Israelites at the Red Sea (Num. 21:14; Deut. 11:4; Joshua 2:10; 4:23; 24:6; Neh. 9:9; Ps. 106:9-12, 22; 136:13-15). We would expect the Flood, which was both an act of destruction and an act of deliverance, to have received more than passing mention, because of the magnitude of the event.<sup>1</sup> If we add Psalm 104:6-9 to the one unambiguous reference in Isaiah 54:9, where the "waters of Noah" are twice mentioned, then we have four more Old Testament verses in support of the historicity of the Deluge.

From 1850 to 1950 commentators who have accepted the historicity of the Deluge have applied Psalm 104:6-9 to Creation, rather than to the Flood. In his 1860 commentary Hengstenberg<sup>2</sup> views the mighty acts described in Psalm 104 as paralleling the events of Creation week. The two nineteenth-century harmonists of science and religion, Kurtz<sup>3</sup> and Reusch,<sup>4</sup> both view this psalm in the light of Genesis 1. Barnes<sup>5</sup> views verses 6-8 within the framework of Creation, but when he comes to verse 9, "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over," he wavers a bit, stating, "It is possible that in connexion with this, the psalmist may also have had his eye on the facts connected with the deluge in the time of Noah."

In contrast to this predominant view, Denis Crofton, writing before 1850, applies Psalm 104:6-9 to the flood of Noah. However, he wishes to keep the previous verses within the context of Creation, and thus he argues: "There seems to be a period of above sixteen hundred years passed over in silence, between the fifth and sixth verses, the former referring apparently either to the creation or making of the earth, and the latter to the flood of Noah."<sup>6</sup> Whereas the popular gap theory of harmonization inserts thousands or even millions of years between the first two verses of Genesis, here we have a mini-gap theory, proposing the insertion of 1,600 years between two verses in Psalm 104.

It wasn't until the rise of "scientific creationism" in the 1950s that Crofton's mini-gap theory was resurrected by a substantial number of harmonists seeking to reconcile the literal record of Genesis and the findings of modern science. Writing in the 1950s Rehwinkel<sup>7</sup> and Marsh<sup>8</sup> both used portions of Psalm 104 in support of the Noachian flood. With the publication of Whitcomb and Morris's *The Genesis Flood* in 1965, we find a strong link being forged between Psalm 104:5-9 and Genesis 6-9.

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JOHN DOUGAL

For the first time verse 5 of Psalm 104 is linked with the Deluge.<sup>9</sup> Also for the first time the subtle nuances of verses 5-9 are viewed as providing a scientific description of the isostatic adjustments made in the earth's crust for the accommodation of the Deluge waters that formerly were stored in the heavens.<sup>10</sup>

In the years since the landmark publication of *The Genesis Flood*, subsequent studies defending Deluge geology have continued to fuse Psalm 104:6-9 with the Deluge rather than with Creation.<sup>11</sup> Thus more recently, creationists have used as one of the key Old Testament supports for the Flood outside of Genesis 6-9 this particular passage in the Psalms. The reason for this is that it appears to give additional solid scriptural support for the universality of the Flood.<sup>12</sup> A scientific reason for its usage is that it would also give strong support for orogenic (mountain-building) activity during the time of the Flood. The American Standard Version of Psalm 104:8 is used because it contains a clearer reference to this orogenic process: "the mountains rising and the valleys sinking, with the waters hasting away."<sup>13</sup> This alternative reading, which is based upon the Septuagint and the Vulgate, suggests

the idea that the mountains, and not the waters, were rising.

The question here is not whether the Septuagint and Vulgate readings are correct; the real issue is whether this verse refers to the events of the Flood or to the Creator's activities on day three of Creation week. What will be proposed in the remainder of this article is that a few harmonists in their enthusiasm to reconcile the scriptural and geological records have utilized Biblical arguments that are weak or even unfounded.

A prime example is Psalm 104:6-9, where occasionally harmonists have lifted this passage out of its natural Creation context, which is tantamount to inserting a 1,600-year gap between verses 5 and 6, as Denis Crofton did. But they have gone a step further and inserted another 1,600-year gap between verses 9 and 10! It would seem strange that the psalmist would mention the Deluge, an act of destruction, in the same context as Creation, an act of construction, unless the destructive act were a prelude to the constructive, as in 2 Peter 3. In that case, we should have verses 2-5 follow, rather than precede, verses 6-9.

The most consistent interpretation of

Psalm 104 is to view it as a hymn of Creation, a recounting of the Genesis 1 narrative in poetic form. The emotional and literary high point of this hymn is verse 24: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches." This verse is also the key to the proper interpretation of the entire hymn, which is a recounting of God's creative works, the same works that are described in Genesis 1. We have in Psalm 104 the creation of light (verse 2), paralleling day one of Creation week; the creation of the firmament (verses 2-4), paralleling day two; the creation of the dry land with its separation from the waters (verses 5-9), paralleling day three; the creation of the vegetation (verses 14-16), paralleling also day three; the creation of the sun and the moon (verse 19), paralleling day four; the creation of the birds (verse 17) and the fishes (verse 25), paralleling day five; and the creation of beasts (verse 18) and man (verse 23), paralleling day six. The psalmist views all of these as objects of the divine creative power, as denoted in his summary statement: "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created" (verse 30). Even the mention of the "leviathan" (verse 26) finds a parallel

in the creation of the "great sea monsters" of Genesis 1:21, R.S.V.\* There is nothing in this psalm that is outside the scope of the divine creative activity.

Those who relegate verses 6-9 to the Flood are in effect defacing this beautifully written Creation account and leaving it incomplete. If these four verses are to be applied to the Flood, then this Creation hymn would have no reference to the creation of the dry land and no reference to the separation of the land from the water, resulting in the creation of the seas, as described in Genesis 1:9, 10. Then there would be no dry land upon which vegetation can grow, and no mountains to provide refuge for the wild goats and the conies. Neither would there be any ocean in which innumerable creatures could swim. The Creation account of Psalm 104 would be incomplete, and thus marred.

It's true that verses 6-9 have two apparently firm links with the Flood account: (1) the mention of the waters covering the mountains, and (2) the establishment of bounds for the waters, so that they would never again cover the earth. These links seem even stronger when comparison is made to the unam-

104:9; Job 38:10, 11; Prov. 8:29; cf. Jer. 5:22). If the establishment of this decree took place at the time of the Noachian deluge, and not Creation, then we would be forced to assign Job 38 and Proverbs 8 to the Deluge, which would directly contradict the obvious references to God's mighty acts in creating. Speaking of the earth, the psalmist says, "Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment" (verse 6), which is very similar to the imagery in Job, where the cloud is made the covering of the sea—"I made the cloud the garment thereof" (chap. 38:9). In Psalm 104 the waters are collected "unto the place which thou hast founded for them" (verse 8), and in Job 38 the Creator retains the sea with "set bars and doors" and establishes its "decreed place" (verse 10). This is reminiscent of God's command in Genesis: "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place" (chap. 1:9). Here is a firm link between Psalm 104 and Genesis 1 by way of Job 38. The setting up of the bounds of the sea, and its confinement to its appointed place, took place at Creation, not at the close of the Flood.

Just as significant as the obvious

describe the breaking up of the fountains, and Proverbs in the sense of establishing the fountains. This expression is strikingly absent from both Psalm 104 and Job 38.

To take two or three apparent parallels between Psalm 104 and Genesis 6-9 and then to conclude we have in that psalm the most complete Old Testament description of the Flood outside of Genesis is to ignore completely the more numerous and convincing parallels between Psalm 104, Job 38, Proverbs 8, and the Creation account in Genesis 1. To do so is comparable to saying that because a porpoise has fins in place of feet and spends all its life in ocean waters, it must be classified as a fish. This would be ignoring that porpoises have major characteristics more in common with mammals than with bony fish.

Having restored Creation fully into its rightful place in Psalm 104, we can then begin to appreciate the beauty, magnificence, and wealth of meaning it has for us. There is no aspect of creation that is not under the care and control of the Creator—whether the wind or clouds, mountains or seas, the conies in the heights above or the leviathans in the depths below. God is over all, and to Him be the praise, honor, and glory forever!

**A** few harmonists, in their enthusiasm to reconcile the scriptural and geological records, have utilized Biblical arguments that are weak or even unfounded.

biguous reference to the Flood in Isaiah 54:9: "I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth." This echoes Psalm 104:9: "Thou hast set a bound that they [the waters] may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth." But these apparent ties with the Flood begin to sink into insignificance when we discover that Psalm 104:2-9 finds its strongest parallels with Job 38:4-30 and Proverbs 8:22-31. Scholars are unanimous in assigning these passages in both Job and Proverbs to Creation, not to the Flood.

It is interesting to note the striking similarities among these three accounts. All three mention the laying of the foundations of the earth (Ps. 104:5; Job 38:4; Prov. 8:29). All three also refer to the establishment of a decree resulting in the setting of boundaries beyond which the ocean waters could not pass (Ps.

parallels between these Creation passages is the noted lack of parallels between certain aspects of the Flood account and the verses in Job 38, Proverbs 8, and Psalm 104. These three Creation passages have no mention of the words "flood," or "rainbow," which would be expected if the Flood were being described. They have only two references to "rain" (Job 38:26, 28), but these occur within the context of Creation, not destruction. The only reference to the destruction of living creatures occurs in Psalm 104:29, "Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust," but the language here is closer to Genesis 2:7 and 3:19 than it is to Genesis 6-9. The expression "fountains of the deep" is used in only three places in Scripture (Gen. 7:11; 8:2; Prov. 8:28), but Genesis uses it to

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<sup>1</sup> When we come to the New Testament, we find numerous references to Noah and the Flood, the Flood event taking on eschatological proportions, as a symbol of the universal destruction by fire in the last days. Sodom and Gormorrah are also used in a similar way in the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup> E. W. Hengstenberg, *Commentary on the Psalms* (1860), vol. 3, pp. 233 ff.

<sup>3</sup> J. H. Kurtz, *History of the Old Covenant* (1859), vol. 1, p. 53.

<sup>4</sup> F. H. Reusch, *The Bible and Nature* (1886), vol. 1, p. 226.

<sup>5</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes on the Old Testament. Psalms*, vol. 3, pp. 84-85.

<sup>6</sup> Denis Crofton, *Genesis and Geology*, p. 209.

<sup>7</sup> Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *The Flood* (1951), p. 122.

<sup>8</sup> Frank M. Marsh, *Life, Man, and Time* (1957), p. 90.

<sup>9</sup> John C. Whitcomb, Jr., and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (1965), p. 122. cf. Harold Coffin, *Creation: Accident or Design?* (1969), p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> Whitcomb and Morris, *op. cit.*, pp. 77, 267, 269.

<sup>11</sup> Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record* (1976), pp. 203, 206; John C. Whitcomb, Jr., *The Early Earth* (1972), pp. 44, 66; Henry M. Morris, *Studies in the Bible and Science* (1966), p. 41; Coffin, *op. cit.*, p. 57; Henry M. Morris, ed., *Scientific Creationism* (1974), p. 245.

<sup>12</sup> Henry M. Morris and Martin E. Clark, *The Bible Has the Answer* (1976), p. 103; Morris, *Studies in the Bible and Science* (1966), p. 132.

<sup>13</sup> Morris, *Studies in the Bible and Science*, p. 41.

# Reactivating the inactive member

(Continued from p. 7)

choose persons who have a natural ability to listen, who are not defensive. We ask for people who are on the growing edge of their lives, who are eager to learn new things. We have discovered that the older one gets, the more difficult it is for him to change his listening behavior. But take a group of young adults, or even teen-agers, and we can teach them the skills three times as rapidly as people in their early 70s.

**Q.** Have you developed an effective model for renegotiating a relationship with the inactive member?

**A.** Yes, we have developed a model originally used in industry in negotiations, and have reoriented it to the life of the church. It is called the Role Renegotiation Model, and it tracks the four predictable stages of all human relationships. The first stage of any relationship is the ability to develop clear expectations of that relationship. Those expectations, which include gathering of information and the consistency of behavior, define the roles of each party. This can be used not only in church life, but in marital life and professional life. In other words, the very first stage is to clarify what is expected to be a part of a given congregation. Usually we tell the parishioners what we expect of them, but they never have a chance to develop what they can expect of us.

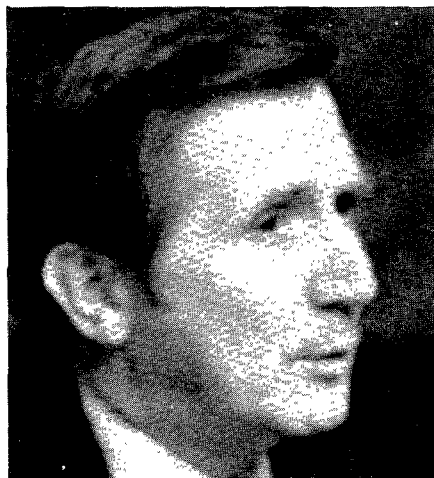
One stage is the stage of commitment, followed by a stage called "stable and productive," when everything in the relationship is in good shape. The next stage is predictable and unavoidable. Known as the "pinch," it occurs when an expectation is not being met, or when someone does something not expected. A typical reaction is this: "I didn't know that you as my pastor would preach that kind of a sermon." A broken expectation.

The best way to handle broken expectations is called "renegotiation," or the act of reconciliation. This is using all of the listening skills, sitting down when everybody is upset, and renegotiating again the relationship for clarity of role. And that is hard work. It takes very specific skills to sit down with a group of parishioners as a pastor, when they're all upset at you, and listen to their pain, which not only is directed at

you but also involves a whole history of pain that is unresolved in the parish.

**Q.** You have mentioned that you once had a congregation with a 60 percent return rate of inactive members over a three-year period. To what do you attribute this astonishing success?

**A.** I believe the success comes as a result of intensive follow-through in the calling program. We did this program over a four-and-a-half-year period at a United Methodist church outside of Rochester, New York. I trained twenty-four callers. The first thing I did, which was an absolute necessity in the calling program, was to create an ongoing support group for those callers. Without it the program would have died very rapidly. We met twice a month, the year round. We called on every member of the church annually. And from our work with the inactive members, we discovered this statistic, which is very solid: 50 percent of the people who will return will do so on one call. Please note how I put that: 50 percent of the people *who will return* will do so on one call. The other 50 percent will take one call for every inactive year. That is an unbelievably stable statistic, but it's the follow-



through over an extended period of time that makes the difference. There's one parish that we've tracked that had an 86 percent return rate of all the calls that were made. That's the highest we know. We also know that if the callers work hard over a period of one year, the minimum they can expect is a one-third return rate.

**Q.** And, finally, may I ask a more personal question? How about your own personal visitation program? What was it like in the church you once pastored? How often did you visit?

**A.** Oh, I visited all the time, and still do. The reason I do this is that it keeps my skills alive. On the average, I make probably ten interviews a week, though not always involving inactive members.

**Q.** When you say "interviews," are you talking about your own program as a psychotherapist, or are you talking about something else?

**A.** No, I have in mind several contexts—my own parish, the church I'm with, and also out on the road visiting and interviewing pastors and lay people almost daily. My ministry at this point is not so much directed toward a local parish or a local church as it is to the broader church of virtually every denomination in this country.

**Q.** How can a person gain further information on your program, which has proved to be so successful?

**A.** An interested person may write us at P.O. Box 311, Pittsford, New York 14534, or call us on our WATTS line at (800) 828-6556 (or within New York State, [716] 586-8366). Much of what we have talked about appears in a book I have written, *The Apathetic and Bored Church Member*, which can be ordered from our national office.

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## Ultimate Priorities

*Introducing the Christian faith to one's children is something like a relay race. The most critical time comes at the passing of the baton. Once it has been successfully passed, the runner rarely drops it.*

You may think, from its title, that this is a strange article for the Shepherdess section of the magazine. But it really speaks to both father and mother in setting priorities for the rearing of their children in today's world, where there has been such a widespread rejection of Christian principles. In my classroom I find it very rewarding to use parent volunteers. I have been especially blessed for two years to have a pastor father who is willing to come in for a half-day each week on his day off to become involved with his children and their friends in the classroom setting. A few days ago we were discussing what a valuable asset children are and the importance of their rearing. He told me that as important as are the members of his congregation, he feels his children are his first obligation.

May God help us who are leaders of His cause, busy with spiritual obligations and responsibilities, to communicate the real meaning of Christianity to those of our own family.—Marie Spangler.

It occurred first in 1969, when *Dare to Discipline* was being written. I was running at an incredible speed, working myself to death like every other man I knew. I was superintendent of youth for my church, and labored under a heavy speaking schedule. Eight or ten "unofficial" responsibilities were added to my full-time commitment at USC School of Medicine and Children's Hospital of Los Angeles. I once worked seventeen nights straight without being home in the evening. Our 5-year-old daughter would stand in the doorway and cry as I left in the morning, knowing she might not see me until the next sunrise.

Although my activities were bringing

me professional advancement and the trappings of financial success, my dad was not impressed. He had observed my hectic life style and felt obligated to express his concern. While flying from Los Angeles to Hawaii one summer, he used that quiet opportunity to write me a lengthy letter. It was to have a sweeping influence on my life. Let me quote one paragraph from his message that was especially poignant:

"Danae [referring to our daughter] is growing up in the wickedest section of a

widespread rejection of Christian principles in our culture. In effect, there are many dissonant voices that feverishly contradict everything for which Christianity stands. The result is a generation of young people who have discarded the moral standards of the Bible. Consider the findings of UCLA sex researcher Aaron Hass as reported in his 1979 publication *Teenage Sexuality* (New York: Macmillan, 1979). Basing his investigation on questionnaires completed by 625 boys and girls in five

**T**he greatest delusion is to suppose that our children will enter into the Christian faith in any other way than through their parents' deep travail of prayer and faith. But this demands time.

world much farther gone into moral decline than the world into which you were born. I have observed that the greatest delusion is to suppose that our children will be devout Christians simply because their parents have been, or that any of them will enter into the Christian faith in any other way than through their parents' deep travail of prayer and faith. But this prayer demands time, time that cannot be given if it is all signed and conscripted and laid on the altar of career ambition. Failure for you at this point would make mere success in your occupation a very pale and washed-out affair, indeed."

Those words, written without accusation or insult, hit me like the blow from a hammer. It contained several themes that had the ring of eternal truth. First, it is more difficult to teach proper values today than in years past, because of the

States, he drew several striking conclusions. Among students between 15 and 16 years of age, 43 percent of the boys and 31 percent of the girls have had sexual intercourse. Twenty-eight percent of the boys and 7 percent of the girls report having had at least ten sexual partners. Furthermore, among those 17 to 18 years old, more than nine tenths of the boys and two thirds of the girls approve of oral sex, and more than half of each group has experienced it! That is the world in which our children will be reared!

The second concept in my dad's letter was the one that ended my parental complacency. He helped me realize that it is possible for mothers and fathers to love and revere God while systematically losing their children. You can go to church three times a week, serve on its governing board, attend the annual

picnic, pay your tithes and make all the approved religious noises, yet somehow fail to communicate the real meaning of Christianity to the next generation.

I have since talked to dozens of parents whose children are grown and married.

"We thought our kids had accepted our faith and beliefs," they say, "but somehow, we failed to get it across."

For those younger parents whose children are still at an impressionable age, please believe the words of my dad. "The greatest delusion is to suppose that our children will be devout Christians simply because their parents have been, or that any of them will enter into the Christian faith in any other way than through their parents' deep travail of prayer and faith."

If you doubt the validity of this assertion, may I suggest that you read the story of Eli in 1 Samuel 2-4. Here is the account of a priest and servant of God who failed to discipline his children. He was apparently too busy with the "work of the church" to be a leader in his own home. The two boys grew up to be evil young men on whom God's judgment fell.

It concerned me to realize that Eli's service to the Lord was insufficient to compensate for his failures at home. Then I read further in the narrative and received confirmation of the principle. Samuel, the saintly man of God who stood like a tower of spiritual strength throughout his life, grew up in Eli's home. He watched Eli systematically losing his children, yet Samuel proceeded to fail with his family, too! That was a deeply disturbing truth. If God would not honor Samuel's dedication by guaranteeing the salvation of his children, will He do more for me if I'm too busy to do my "homework"?

Having confronted me with these spiritual obligations and responsibilities, the Lord then gave me an enormous burden for my two children. I carry it to this day. There are times when it becomes so heavy that I ask God to remove it from my shoulders, although the concern is not motivated by the usual problems or anxieties. Our kids are apparently healthy and seem to be holding their own emotionally and academically. The source of my burden derives from the awareness that a "tug of war" is being waged for the hearts and minds of every child on earth, including these two precious human beings. Satan would deceive and destroy them if given

the opportunity, and they will soon have to choose the path they will take.

This mission of introducing one's children to the Christian faith can be likened to a three-man relay race. First, your father runs his lap around the track, carrying the baton, which represents the gospel of Jesus Christ. At the appropriate moment he hands the baton to you, and you begin your journey around the track. Then finally the time will come when you must get the baton safely in the hands of your child. But as any track coach will testify, relay races are won or lost in the transfer of the baton. There is a critical moment when all can be lost by a fumble or miscalculation. The baton is rarely dropped on the back side of the track when the runner has it firmly in his grasp. If failure is to occur, it will likely happen in the exchange between generations!

According to the Christian values that govern my life, my most important reason for living is to get the baton—the gospel—safely in the hands of my children. Of course, I want to place it in as many other hands as possible, and I'm deeply devoted to the ministry to families that God has given me. Neverthe-

parenthood. There is not enough knowledge in the books—not enough human wisdom anywhere on earth—to guarantee the outcome of parenting. There are too many factors beyond our control—too many evil influences—that mitigate against the Christian message. That is why we find ourselves in prayer, week after week, uttering this familiar petition:

Lord, here we are again. You know what we need even before we ask, but let us say it one more time. When You consider the many requests we have made of You through the years . . . regarding our health and my ministry and the welfare of our loved ones . . . please put this supplication at the top of the list: Keep the circle of our little family unbroken when we stand before You on the day of judgment. Compensate for our mistakes and failures as parents, and counteract the influences of an evil world that would undermine the faith of our children. And especially, Lord, we ask for Your involvement when our son and daughter stand at the crossroads, deciding whether or not to walk the Christian path. They will be beyond our care at that moment, and we

**I** t concerned me to realize that Eli's service to the Lord was insufficient to compensate for his failures at home. He was apparently too busy with the "work of the church" to be a leader in his own home.

less, my number-one responsibility is to evangelize my own children. In the words of my dad, everything else appears "pale and washed out" when compared with that fervent desire. Unless my son and daughter grasp the faith and take it with them around the track, it matters little how fast they run. Being first across the finish line is meaningless unless they carry the baton with them.

The urgency of this mission has taken Shirley and me to our knees since before the birth of our first child. Furthermore, since October, 1971, I have designated one day a week for fasting and prayer specifically devoted to the spiritual welfare of our children. Shirley joined me in that venture for several years, until she became physically unable to participate every week. This commitment springs from an intense awareness of our need for divine assistance in the awesome task of

humbly ask You to be there. Send a significant friend or leader to help them choose the right direction. They were Yours before they were born, and now we give them back to You in faith, knowing that You love them even more than we do. Toward that end, we dedicate this day of fasting and prayer.

Not only has God heard this prayer but He has blessed it in ways that we did not anticipate in the beginning. First, it has represented a project that Shirley and I have enjoyed together, drawing us closer to each other as we drew closer to God. Second, this act of fasting each week serves to remind us continually of our system of priorities. It is very difficult to forget your highest values when one day out of seven is spent concentrating on them. Finally, and most important, the children have seen this act of discipline every Tuesday, and have been

influenced by it. Conversations similar to the one below occurred during the early 1970s:

"Why are you not eating dinner with us tonight, Dad?"

"This is Tuesday and I'm fasting today."

"Oh, yeah—what did you say 'fasting' meant?"

"Well, some Christians go without food during a short time of special prayer. It's a way of asking God for a blessing, or of expressing love to Him."

"What are you asking for?"

"Your mother and I are praying for you and your brother today. We're asking God to lead and direct your lives; we want Him to help you choose a profession and to find the right person to marry, if that is His will. We're also asking Him to walk with you every day of your lives."

"You must love us a lot to fast and pray like that."

"We do love you. And God loves you even more."

I suppose there's another explanation behind my concern for the spiritual welfare of our two children. I'm told that George McCluskey, my great-grandfather on the maternal side, carried a similar burden for his children through the final decades of his life. He invested the hour from eleven to twelve o'clock each morning to intercessory prayer for his family. However, he was not only asking God to bless his children; he extended his request to generations not yet born! In effect, my great-grandfather was praying for me.

Toward the end of his life, the old man announced that God had made a very unusual promise to him. He was given the assurance that every member of four generations of our family would be Christians, including those yet to be born. He then died, and the promise became part of the spiritual heritage that was passed to those of us in George McCluskey's bloodline.

Since I represent the fourth generation subsequent to the one that included my great-grandfather, his promise assumes added significance. It has, in fact, been fulfilled in a fascinating way. McCluskey and his wife were ministers and charter members in their church denomination. They brought two daughters into the world, one eventually becoming my grandmother and the other my great-aunt. Those two girls married men who were ministers in the same

denomination as their parents. Between them, they produced a boy and four girls, one becoming my mother. The girls all married ministers in the same denomination, and the boy became one. Then came my generation. My cousin H. B. London and I were the first two members to reach the age for college, where we were roommates. During the first semester of our sophomore year he announced that God had called him to be a minister in (you guessed it) the same denomination as his great-grandfather. And believe me, I began to get very nervous about the entire proposition!

**M**y most important reason for living is to get the baton—the gospel—safely into the hands of my children. My number-one responsibility is to evangelize my own children.

I now represent the first, though not the only, member of four generations from the time of my great-grandfather who has not felt specifically "called" into the ministry. But considering the hundreds of times I have stood before audiences, talking about the gospel of Jesus Christ and its application to family life, I have to ask, "What's the difference?" God has marvelous methods of implementing His purposes in our lives.

Though my great-grandfather is long dead, having died a year before my birth, he still provides the richest source of inspiration for me. It staggers the mind to realize that the prayers of this one man, spoken more than fifty years ago, reach across four generations of time and influence developments in my life today. That is the power of prayer and the source of my life and optimism. Don't tell me God is dead, or that He doesn't honor His commitments. George McCluskey knew, and I know, that He lives!

The men in my family have transmit-

ted a spiritual heritage that is more valuable than any monetary estate they could have accumulated. And I am determined to preserve it on behalf of my children. There is no higher calling on the face of the earth.

From James C. Dobson, *Straight Talk to Men and Their Wives*, copyright © 1980 by James C. Dobson, pp. 48-56; used by permission of Word Books, Publisher, Waco, Texas 76796.

## Prayers from the Parsonage

The newspaper deadline for church news is Monday noon. Since we live in a different city, I send the releases with Dick, who either drops them off himself or leaves them with the church secretary to take downtown.

But today Dick was gone, and I couldn't get to the church until afternoon. The editor OK'd my late submission, so I called the church office to ask whether someone could deliver the articles.

"But isn't the deadline at noon?" asked the secretary, a hint of reproach in her voice.

I explained the situation, but she

Cherry B. Habenicht

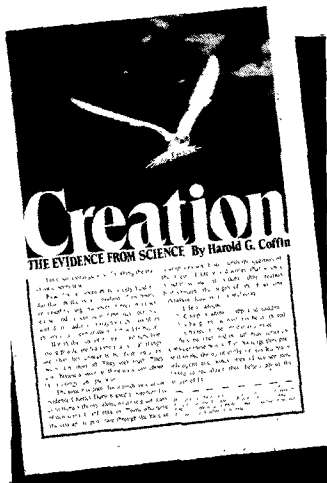
repeated, "Isn't the deadline at noon?"

And I thought of times I couldn't resist reminding someone of something he already knew. Lord, let this experience keep me from making an issue over minor things. May I remember that someone caught in a bind usually doesn't need to be told how or when or where he fell short.

Thank You, my Friend, for listening when I come with a recurring problem, a familiar question, or a worn excuse. I'm glad You don't ask rhetorical questions: "Isn't this something we've already settled?" "Aren't you making any more progress than that?" "Haven't we discussed this before?"

I'm glad You don't rub it in.

# Shop talk



## Yours for the asking

Until our supply is gone, you can have a single copy of the sixteen-page pamphlet "Creation: The Evidence From Science," by Harold G. Coffin, simply by sending a large, self-addressed, stamped envelope (two 20-cent stamps, please). This paper is in four colors and presents scientific evidence to support the conclusion that "Creation best explains the origin of life." Send your request and stamped, self-addressed envelope to: MINISTRY Services, P.O. Box 217, Burtonsville, Maryland 20866. Offer good only in the United States and while supplies last.

## Managing your time

Since April, 1982, I have been using the Minister's Time System put together by Net-Growth, Inc., to blend time management, communications, and organization for the minister. It has really organized me and my work, and I recommend it highly. The organization marketing the Minister's Time System will even hold free one-day seminars to explain the system and concepts of managing time.

About eight of us ministers in the metropolitan Atlanta area got together, and the company held a seminar for us. There is no obligation to buy. For more information, write: Net-Growth, Inc., 1800 Water Place, Suite 280, Atlanta, Georgia 30339, or call (404) 955-5256.—John A. Swafford, Atlanta, Georgia.

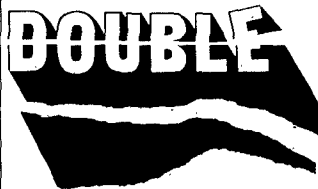
## Electronic gear

If Edward A. Henkel's article (see p. 18) has started you thinking about putting some of his suggestions to work in your church, then you may be interested in contacting the following firms for information on the electronic equipment they offer: Hosanna, 146 Quincy NE., Albuquerque, New Mexico 87108. Phone: (800) 545-6552. Missionary Tape and Equipment Supply, 2826 Centerville Road, Garland, Texas 75040. Phone: (214) 494-3316. Both firms cater to churches and religious organizations and offer competitive prices on a wide variety of items. But, as in all purchases, compare carefully and check local suppliers, as well.

## Ministers and money

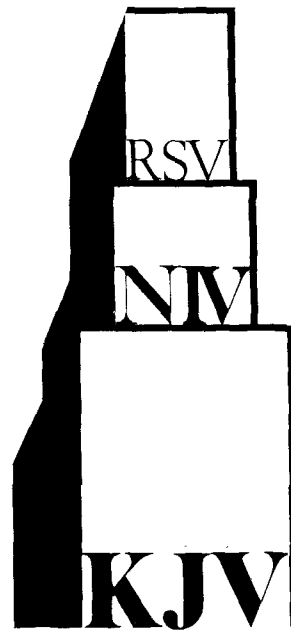
"Ministers face enough problems; money shouldn't be one of them." So says Ministers Life Resources, a service of Ministers Life Insurance. Among the eighteen offerings to help make clergy finances less taxing are: "Clergy Tax Tips Newsletter," money-management booklets, the pre-parish planner ("Do's and Don'ts for Managing Money

in Your First Parish"), housing for clergy, and *The Complete Retirement Planning Book*. These resources include both tapes and printed materials. Prices range from \$1.25 to \$14 depending on the item selected. For a complete listing, write: Ministers Life Resources, 3100 West Lake Street, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416. (612) 927-7131, ext. 303.



## IRS bans Double-dipping

Ministers in the United States who own their own homes have been enjoying the double tax benefit of excluding from gross taxable income the mortgage interest and real-estate taxes on their personal residence in the form of a parsonage allowance and also deducting the same interest and taxes again in their itemized deductions. Under IRS ruling 83-3, scheduled to go into effect June 30, 1983, such double-dipping will no longer be allowed. In bureaucratese, the new ruling "disallows" a Federal income-tax deduction for any portion of a minister's mortgage interest and property taxes for which he has received a tax-exempt housing allowance. In some cases, exceptions will still exist. If housing expenses exceed the housing allowance, a portion of the interest and taxes may be deducted.



## K.J.V. still the favorite

A poll conducted by *These Times* magazine bears out findings of an informal survey done earlier by MINISTRY in five Seventh-day Adventist churches and reported in the October, 1982, issue. In both surveys the most popular Bible version among Seventh-day Adventists was the King James Version (66 percent in the MINISTRY survey; 57 percent in the *These Times* poll). Following a distant second and third in both listings was the New International Version and the Revised Standard Version (13 and 9 percent, respectively, in the MINISTRY survey; 21 and 5 percent, respectively, in the *These Times* ranking).

Among non-Seventh-day Adventists, *These Times* found the top three spots to be occupied by the King James Version (45 percent), the New International Version (11 percent), and *The Living Bible* (10 percent).

# Recommended reading

## **God Cares, Volume 1: The Message of Daniel for You and Your Family.**

C. Mervyn Maxwell, *Pacific Press Publishing Association*, 1981, 318 pages, \$8.95. Reviewed by Nikolaus Satelmajer, Ministerial secretary, *New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*.

For years the book of Daniel has not received the attention it deserves. On the one hand have been those who claim it was written in the first or second century B.C. and not during the Babylonian captivity. This group has not accepted either Daniel's history or prophecy seriously. On the other hand are those who accept the early authorship of Daniel, but who have often gone to extremes in interpreting its prophecies. Unfortunately, neither group has given us much help in understanding Daniel.

Dr. Mervyn Maxwell has capably dealt with many of the questions that are raised about the book and has provided an invaluable aid to those who wish to study seriously the book of Daniel. Here is a volume that will help you to understand the setting of Daniel's time and the prophecies of the book. It will richly reward the reader.

The style of *God Cares* is rather unusual. Most readers will find it appealing, although at times they may wonder whether they are reading a story or a serious book on Daniel. The fact of the matter is that Maxwell is a storyteller who is providing a serious work on Daniel in the format of a story. The style makes the book interesting reading. The scholarship makes it a useful tool.

The organization of the book is a helpful feature. Most chapters have an introduction, followed by an explanation of the messages of that particular chapter of Daniel and a section titled "Your Questions Answered." Maps, charts, bibliographies, and indexes are helpful aids throughout the book, also.

This outstanding study of Daniel would be most useful for study groups. The printing of the Biblical text for each chapter is a real benefit for such use. The price is not prohibitive, and members of

study groups will no doubt be willing to purchase it.

The author is already working on a companion volume, *The Message of Revelation for You and Your Family*.

## **There's a Lot More to Health Than Not Being Sick**

Bruce Larson, *Word Books*, 1981, 144 pages, \$6.95. Reviewed by Albert S. Whiting, M.D., associate director of the *General Conference Health and Temperance Department*.

Anyone familiar with the relationship of mind (and behavior) and body will recognize the insights that Bruce Larson presents in this readable volume. Those not as familiar with these relationships should make this book a priority item on their reading list. It is not a medical or psychological treatise but a series of illustrated questions that the reader will be compelled to apply to his or her ministry.

The author, an experienced pastor and counselor, emphasizes the holistic aspects of health in a Christian context. His basic ideas are in harmony with current medical knowledge. The book deals with attitudes and behavior choices that have negative or positive effects on physical health and our sense of well-being. The principles outlined are not gimmicks but Christian principles that if practiced will be good health insurance.

## **Ministry in America**

David S. Schuler, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo L. Brekke, editors, *Harper & Row*, 1980, 640 pages, \$31.95. Reviewed by Raoul Dederen, professor, *Andrews University Theological Seminary*.

*Ministry in America* is subtitled *A Report and Analysis, Based on an In-Depth Survey of 47 Denominations in the United States and Canada with Interpretation by 18 Experts*. It represents the most exhaustive study of ministry in North America ever undertaken. Founded by the Lilly Endowment and the Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada, and assisted by the Search Institute of Minneapolis,

it surveyed thousands of lay persons, parish clergy, church leaders, theological professors, and seminarians in forty-seven denominations to uncover what it is that the churches expect of a beginning minister. The results are presented through 225 figures and tables.

The forty-seven denominations in this study were grouped by the editors in thirteen denominational "families" on the basis of historical similarities and patterns of responses to the long and fine-tuned questionnaires sent out.

*Ministry in America* delves into numerous critical issues that apply to ministers of all Christian denominations. It provides information about ministry that is unparalleled in quality and scope. Seminaries, church officials, and local congregations can profit highly from a study that will undoubtedly become a standard source for assessing contemporary attitudes toward ministry. Better, it will further understanding and cooperation between clergy and laity in many Christian churches.

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