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“Does God Get Angry?”

I was deeply distressed and disappointed when I read Tim Crosby's article, “Does God Get Angry?” (July 1990). To suggest that God has to inflict exquisite pain on the finally impenitent at the end is to deny that sin has serious and terrible consequences of its own. If sin does prove to be as deadly and destructive as God has warned, there is no need for Him to add to the pain of the lost by performing a miracle to keep them alive in the fire!

To put it bluntly, Tim Crosby's concept of “divine retribution” pictures God as a vicious, insane despot. Call it justice, call it what you may, but no matter which way you cut it, the idea of God's taking vengeance on His finally rebellious children by keeping them alive for the sole purpose of experiencing blinding pain is torture, pure and simple! To suggest that God operates in this manner is a monstrous insult to His goodness and graciousness, and it is outright slander of His good name. —Robert E. Wielt, Blossvale, New York.

■ I have just read some of the July issue and have been very impressed with Brother Crosby's excellent article. Twentieth-century Christians are all too prone to try to re-create God in man's image, making Him more palatable—“lovey-dovey, namby-pamby, laidback, harmless, and jovial” to repeat some of the caricatures of Him that Crosby so accurately describes and so clearly dispels. In one of his fine books A. W. Tozer tells us that the root of every false cult is a wrong concept of God. For this reason much that calls itself biblical Christianity today has a theology that borders on cultism. —Andrew E. Auxt, Hagerstown, Maryland.

■ I found no mention of the great controversy theme (Rev. 12:7-10; Eph. 1:7-12; 3:8-12; Col. 1:19, 20) in this article. This theme helps tremendously

in our harmonizing the Old Testament stories with Jesus' teachings. Although God definitely has taken human life in the past, these “strange acts” made statements to us and to the unfallen hosts of God's family about the true nature of sin and where it will ultimately lead those who persistently follow its path. But those superimposed results were administered upon God's family in the realm of the first death. Jesus didn't reveal God as angry or vengeful. He's the one we must follow. —Alan Williams, pastor, South Greene Seventh-day Adventist Church, Greeneville, Tennessee.

■ Crosby has a gross misconception of the nature of God's agape. If God is life, it stands as perfectly logical that without God there is no life. In the destruction of the wicked, God does not actively bring punishment upon the unrepentant, but allows the sinner to have that which he has chosen. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23; cf. 1 John 5:12).

God's wrath does not involve any form of retribution or anger. He is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). God has sought to reform, rehabilitate, and educate continuously throughout the sinner's lifetime. He is not angered by our choice, but saddened because we have chosen Satan's ways instead of His love. To present vengeance and retribution as “salient aspects” of God's character does more injustice to the concept of God's holiness than does an “overemphasis” on His unconditional agape! —Ann Walper, Lancaster, Tennessee.

■ So we need to believe in a hostile, vindictive, and punitive God in order rightly to appreciate His mercy and love! No doubt I have it all wrong (I hope!), but in his effort to deny the mushy, sentimental, it-doesn't-really-

matter God Crosby ends up siding with a viewpoint well expressed by Thomas Aquinas' suggestion that one of the main blessings of the righteous in heaven will be to watch the barbaric torture of the wicked in hell (“see what you missed”).

Certainly we must be true to the biblical evidence. God does kill, and is credited with doing so many times in Scripture. However, the truth that He lays down His children in the sleep of the first death should not lead us to conclude that He does so in order to inculcate the “right” understanding of Himself. If God had wanted the kind of obedience based on fear of punitive wrath, He could have done so right at the beginning and spared Himself and all creation a great deal of trouble.

As God makes the ultimate demonstration that He is unutterably right, we should not take His justice and turn it into our concept of “getting our own back”—which is what retributive punishment really means. God's justice (in the Greek, the same word as “righteousness”) is distributive—allowing each the inherent consequences of their individual choices.

Our Father *does* love us unconditionally—for our future with Him (or otherwise) is dependent upon *our* response! It is we who choose whether to accept or reject that unconditional love so clearly demonstrated on the cross. —Jonathan Gallagher, executive secretary, South England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Watford, Hertfordshire, England.

■ Though I am sure Crosby's motives were above reproach, the fact that he based his article on at least two false premises led him to the inescapable conclusion that God is exactly the kind of god Satan has been accusing Him of being since the controversy over His character first began. Crosby's failure to
(Continued on page 29)

If you're receiving MINISTRY bimonthly 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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“What Kind of Prayers Would You Publish if You Were God?” by Alden Thompson, is an excerpt from a larger work, *Are You Afraid of the Old Testament God?* This book discusses some of the problems people have with the Old Testament: the contrast between the “tough” God of the Old Testament and the “gentle” God of the New Testament, the question as to why Satan almost never shows up in the Old Testament, and God’s active role in tempting, punishing, and destroying, to name just a few. (Zondervan, the publisher, is making a special offer for this book—see Shop Talk for details.)

How do church members rank the desirable characteristics of ministers? According to Russell Staples in “The Minister as a Member of the Community,” the most highly rated characteristics “center in the minister as a person in interrelationship with others.” Find out how you may be successful as a community builder.

Most people live, at times, some sort of double life. Our behavior does not always match our profession. Robyn Warner discusses some disturbing implications about one kind of duplicity—extramarital affairs—in “Are You Living a Double Life?” She lists six specific dangers we need to be aware of.

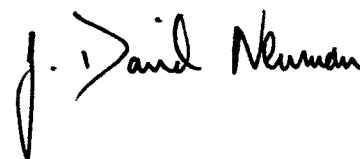
No one marries expecting to divorce, yet all too frequently this has become the reality today. Margaret Hempe has both experienced divorce and served as a pastor. In “Surviving Divorce—How You can Help” she tells how you may best minister to your members who are going through this trauma.

Does conflict ever strike your church? Jan Johnson, a pastor, offers four biblical keys for lowering the conflict level in your church. It may take you weeks and months to solve some conflicts, but it will take only a few minutes to read “Church Brawls” and come away refreshed.

Tabitha Abel-Cooper responded to our advertisements for more articles from overseas with one entitled “The Changing Role of the Pastor’s Wife.” Tabitha’s husband, Richard, and brother, Dominic, were both school chums of mine at Stanborough School in Watford, England. Enjoy the international (especially British!) flavor as you relate her experience to your own.

Our former editor, J. Robert Spangler, pays us a brief visit with a guest editorial on his visit to China. Though retired, he works as if possessed. His mind still dreams up millions of ideas. How wonderful that eternity never ends: he will need it all.

And speaking of eternity, I trust that we all will be there, saved by grace and the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.



What kind of prayers would you publish if you were God?

Alden Thompson

Why are the “vengeance” psalms in the Bible? How does God deal with critical people? Are there degrees of inspiration?



Alden Thompson, Ph.D., is professor of Old Testament at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington. Taken from his book, Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God? Copyright 1989 by Alden Thompson. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and Pater-naster House, Exeter, England. Available at your local bookstore.

Whenever I come to the prayers of the Old Testament, I have difficulty in restraining my enthusiasm, for they have helped me greatly in solving two problems of Christian experience and theology. In fact, my study of Old Testament prayers has brought together these two, apparently distinct, but equally thorny problems, and has shown how one is actually the solution to the other. Now whenever two miserable and unhappy people can get together in a marriage that is both a joy to experience and a joy to behold, that has to be good news. This chapter tells a story something like that.

Now for the two problems. The first one focuses on the psalms: the violence, the self-righteousness, the God-forsakenness, so boldly proclaimed therein. How could inspired writers be so virulent? Is it right for a man of God to breathe vengeance on his enemies? In short, many psalms seem to reflect an experience far from the Christian ideal. For Christians who claim the Bible as the Word of God, the problem is particularly acute, for we cannot simply dismiss a portion of Scripture if it does not suit our fancy. If we wish to remain within that heritage that claims the Bible as the Word of God, we really have only two choices: either we can avoid the difficult parts, or we can try to come to grips with them. This chapter will attempt the latter approach.

False politeness

The second problem is more difficult

to define, but it has to do with the polite distance that sometimes separates a Christian and God, a distance that makes it difficult to be frank and open with one's Maker. I suspect this problem is particularly acute for conservative Christians who have grown up with a deep appreciation of God's holiness that sometimes borders on fear. There is, of course, a proper fear of the Lord, but there is an improper fear, as well, one that is closer to panic than to respect. In my own experience, this problem did not manifest itself so much as panic, but as an excessive politeness that left my relationship with Him ordinary and superficial. Somehow I felt reluctant to tell God where it hurt and when. I was reluctant to confess to Him that I did not understand His ways. If my experience was anemic, I hesitated to admit it. I somehow felt that I had to keep a smile pasted on my face to show Him that I was indeed one of His happy children and that all was going well on earth.

Looking back on that experience, I think I have discovered why I tended to be so polite with God: I would cite a couple horror stories (Uzzah, the bears and the boys, etc.), a few proverbs (the “abominations” [cf. Prov. 3:32; 12:22; 28:9]), a choice morsel from Ecclesiastes (“Be not rash with your mouth” [Eccl. 5:2]).* Such passages, along with a few other oddments from Scripture, all mingled together in the dark recesses of my mind to produce an ominous effect. All these bits and pieces were straight from Scripture, but I don't recall that they were ever being brought forcefully to my attention at any particular point in time. Perhaps I was just a rather sensitive

youngster who tended to overreact to rebukes. I don't know. But in any event, my selective memory produced a caricature of God that counteracted my polite public confessions of a God of love.

In fact, if you had asked me at any time during my experience about the kind of God I served, I would not have breathed the slightest complaint. I served a good God who loved me and cared for me. But in a sense, I was forced to say those nice things about Him, for back there in the dimly lit passages of my mind lay poor Uzzah and the 42 boys; right close by stood God with a big stick. So I developed the habit of being quite careful of what I did and said in God's presence. My prayers were polite. Any agony of soul was kept well under cover. After all, who wanted to become an abomination to the Lord?

Now bring the two problems together: the violent and passionate words of the psalms and my polite little prayers to the great God of the universe. You can imagine my initial shock when I actually began to read the psalms. Do you mean to tell me that those were God's men, speaking for God and under the influence of His Spirit? And the Lord did not strike them dead? Such wild prayers and here they were in my Bible! But maybe you haven't read the psalms lately and need a sample to remind you of the kinds of things that at one time threatened to curl my hair. Let me share with you a few of the more lively examples.

Pride of place must go to Psalm 137:9. Here the psalmist breathes out his hatred against one of Israel's longtime enemies, the Edomites, concluding his "prayer" with the words: "Happy shall he be who takes your little ones and dashes them against the rock!" Then there is Psalm 17, a good one to lay alongside the New Testament story of the Pharisee and the publican (Luke 18:9-14): "Give ear to my prayer from lips free of deceit" (verse 1); "If thou testest me, thou wilt find no wickedness in me; my mouth does not transgress" (verse 3); "My steps have held fast to thy paths, my feet have not slipped" (verse 5). Here was a man truly thankful that he was not like other men. Finally there is Psalm 22. One of God's men had the gall actually to claim that God had forsaken him (verse 1). Furthermore, this same psalmist bluntly suggested that there was a certain injustice on the part of the Lord, for the Lord had listened to his fathers' prayers, but not to his own (verses 2-6). Such bravery. Such

opening of one's mouth in the presence of God.

I finally awoke to the fact that God's people had been quite frank with Him all along. I had simply robbed myself of a great privilege by letting a few stories and a few lines of Scripture loom large and out of proportion to their worth. If David and the psalmists could be open with God, why couldn't I? And that was the beginning of a real friendship with my God.

The problem of inspiration

But what about the role of the Holy Spirit and inspiration as it relates to these brash prayers? Even though I was willing to admit that certain parts of Scripture were more helpful to me than others, I was not at all willing to concede that there might be degrees of inspiration. And I would still hold most vigorously to a strong position on inspiration. I reject the view that some of the biblical writers were more inspired than others. Either a man is inspired or he is not. As a conservative Christian, I believe that all Scripture is inspired by God (2 Tim. 3:16). That is actually one of the great strengths of the evangelical position, for we cannot be tempted to take out our scissors and snip away that which we cannot understand or cannot accept. Scripture is Scripture and we must continue to grapple with it until we make our peace with it and with God.

How then can we explain those passages of Scripture in which we clearly see a difference in the experience of one writer when compared with another? For example, "Father, forgive them," the famous prayer of Jesus for His enemies (Luke 23:34), reflects an experience far superior to that of the psalmist who asks the Lord to smash his opponents (Ps. 69:22-28). We must recognize that difference or we run the risk of wrongfully appealing to the psalmists to support our perverted passions. I think it is safe to conclude that both the mental and the spiritual capabilities of the various writers of Scripture varied greatly and this variation is reflected in their writings. Yet the quality of inspiration is constant throughout.

Perhaps a mundane illustration might help. If I take a stack of wet wood and a stack of dry wood and put the same match to both, what will be the result? One will burn bright, clear, and hot. The other will burn reluctantly, with much wheezing and a great deal of smoke. Both are

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burning, both have been lit by the same match, but the difference in the quality of the raw material makes a great deal of difference in the fire. One can, however, still get warm by both fires, and for some purposes, the smoky, slow-burning fire may even be superior.

So it is with God's inspired men. The same Spirit kindles them all; some will burn more brightly than others, but the Lord can work through them all. We might be inclined to blame the match for the poor fire. Any fault, however, lies not in the match, but in the soggy wood. And surprisingly, in spite of soggy wood, anyone who so desires can be properly warmed even by that smoky fire.

Content and form

In the college classroom I sometimes draw a comparison between the biblical writers and the productions of the first-year students in college writing. Our particular grading system calls for two marks to be placed on each composition: one for the content and one for the mechanics. Thus a student who is a creative writer but a poor technician can actually receive both an A (content) and an F (mechanics). With reference to the inspired writers, we could perhaps give one mark for spiritual capability and one for mental. In actual practice, it would be rather difficult to assign marks, except in some of the more notable cases, such as we have already mentioned from the Psalms. And I would hasten to add that God's messengers never fall below a C-, the lowest mark "honorable" in our system, in spiritual or mental capabilities. In other words, some of the Bible writers may be more brilliant than others, but

How can I change my heart when I “enjoy” that delicious feeling of revenge that wells up when I have slipped in that last biting word.

each is bright enough. Some undoubtedly have a deeper experience than others, but each has an experience deep enough to be used by God.

We should also note that the brilliant student may not always be the best one for the job. Average students who really have had to work for their marks sometimes make the best teachers and the best family doctors. The same holds true of the biblical writers. The varying skills and insights of the various writers can meet the needs of a variety of people. The simple gospel stories may be just what some need, while others prefer to be stimulated by the more complicated logic of the Pauline correspondence. In my case, I needed some really violent prayers from the psalms. So in the end, God's purposes are served very well by the great variety of writers and the differences in their experiences. Through this variety, there is something in Scripture for everyone.

But returning to the “problem” psalms, what is the truth that God is trying to tell me, assuming that He is not trying to tell me to smash my enemies? Quite frankly, I think the great “truth” of many of the psalms lies in the openness and the frankness that characterizes the relationship between the psalmist and God. Even though these men still have much growing to do, they have great confidence in God. They trust Him. And they can tell Him when and where it hurts.

We should note, however, that there are more signs of growth in the Psalms than might first meet the eye. For example, the psalmists are generally quite will-

ing to grant God the privilege of taking vengeance on their enemies. That is not a “natural” human response. Our human tendency is to take justice into our own hands: “If you even touch me, I’ll smash you!” The classic biblical example of this burning thirst for vengeance is found in the experience of Lamech, the descendant of Cain: “I have slain a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold” (Gen. 4:23, 24).

That is precisely what happens in all those troubled areas of our world where strife never ceases: a constant battle to strike the last and the heaviest blow, a constant maneuvering to thrust in the last and most cutting word. That is human nature. But the psalmists were willing to leave it to the Lord, a truly remarkable step in the right direction. They may still be seething, but the Lord will have to be the One to even the score. There are exceptions to this pattern, even in the Psalms, but it is truly remarkable how the psalmists seem to feel that if they pour out their feelings to God, all will be well.

Praying with the psalmists

So how do I pray, now that I have heard such lively, vivid, and almost disrespectful prayers in the Psalms? In the first place, my polite, all-is-well approach has disappeared. I have discovered after considerable reflections that I had, in effect, fallen into a form of righteousness by works. For when I felt that my feelings were unworthy to lay before the Lord and that my soul was too sordid to appear in His presence, I was essentially telling myself that I had to tidy myself up first before I could come to Him. If only those with clean hands and a pure heart can ascend the hill of the Lord (Ps. 24:4), then who will help the sinner? I cannot stifle my feelings of vengeance or my pharisaical pride. Only the Lord can cure ills of that sort. In fact, there is a beautiful verse in Acts that has helped me to see the larger picture. After the resurrection when Peter and the apostles were speaking before the Jewish leaders, Peter declared that God had exalted Jesus “to give repentance to Israel” (Acts 5:31). So repentance is a gift from God! How can I change my heart when I “enjoy” that delicious feeling of revenge that wells up when I have slipped in that last biting word? It is a bitter joy, to be sure, but in our strangely human way, we do enjoy our bitterness, our hatred, and

our envy. All we can do is ask the Lord to give us repentance, to take away the bitter joy in our sinning, to make our hearts new in Him.

So now I can open my heart to the Lord even when it is deeply soiled—especially when it is soiled—for He is the only source of my help. My prayers may not be quite so polite now, but I serve Him with a vigor and a joy that was unknown before. I can tell it like it is, for I serve a great God who has given me the privilege of complaining to Him when I feel He has forsaken me. I cherish that privilege and I know it is mine. He has even published a prayer to prove it.

Questioning God

There is another aspect of the Old Testament experience that has greatly enriched my prayer life, and that is the great freedom that God's friends exercise in His presence when they don't understand His justice or if they fear that He might be doing something damaging to His own reputation. Now there are passages in Scripture that encourage caution in our conversations with the Lord, and these have their place (cf. Mal. 3:13-15; Rom. 9:20). There is a skepticism that is damaging and destructive and ought to be avoided at all costs. But there is also a healthy doubt that arises from honest questioning, from a sincere desire to know the truth and to see God's kingdom established. It is this latter brand of questioning that is actually quite easily aroused in God's true friends.

One of the most striking examples of such a “skeptical” friend of God is Job. In ordinary conversation we speak of the patience of Job, but the only place in the book of Job where the patience appears is in the first two chapters. Beginning with chapter 3, Job opens his mouth and curses the day of his birth (Job 3:1). And that is only the beginning. During the course of his conversations with his friends, Job says some startling things about his friends and some shocking things about God. For example, when speaking of God he exclaims: “It is all one; therefore I say, he destroys both the blameless and the wicked. When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent” (Job 9:22, 23). In fact, I find it fascinating to note how Job is used and quoted in the Christian community, for often the “noble” sayings cited from the book of Job actually come from the mouths of Job's friends, and they

had to repent in the end (cf. Job 42: 7-9). If, however, we were to read in the church many of the things that Job said in his distress, the assembled worshipers would be horrified. But in spite of all Job's shocking utterances, when the dust had settled, God declared that Job was the one who had spoken the truth; the friends had uttered lies (Job 42:7). That in itself is a striking illustration of how the larger framework of one's thoughts and motives is much more important than the specific words and sentences. Taken at the level of individual words and sentences, it was Job who blasphemed and the friends who praised. But in terms of the larger picture, Job's apparent blasphemy was transformed into truth, while the praises of the friends called for repentance and restitution. When the heart belongs to God, such a skepticism can be a powerful weapon in the service of the Lord.

Abraham and Moses argue

Two other stories, this time from the Pentateuch, are among my favorites for illustrating the openness that God's friends have toward Him. The first story is Abraham's conversation with God over the fate of Sodom. I would highly recommend that you read the whole narrative, but especially Genesis 18:22-33. There we see Abraham's initial reaction when he learned from Yahweh that the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah was imminent. He was horrified: "Wilt thou indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (verse 23). "Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" (verse 25).

Now there was a time when I thought that anyone who would talk like that to God deserved a slap in the face or something worse. But no. The Lord kept a straight face and was actually willing to bargain with Abraham. He did not strike Abraham dead for questioning Him. You see, Abraham was a friend of God and God's friends can afford to talk frankly with the Lord of the universe. It is interesting to observe, however, the telltale signs that Abraham's conscience was gently pricking him throughout this bargaining session with the Lord (verses 27, 30, 31, 32). Yet that respectful side of his conscience did not deter him from thrusting forward the questions that the

skeptical side of his conscience impelled him to ask. And of course, Abraham's primary concern was for the reputation of the great Judge of all the earth. Abraham was a subject of that great Judge and he was intent that the reputation of his Judge remain absolutely untarnished. What bravery! What loyalty! What friendship!

A similar experience is reflected in Moses' relationship with God. Exodus 32 describes the conversation between Moses and Yahweh after Israel's great apostasy at Sinai. The Lord must have been testing Moses to see if his heart was in the right place when He said, "Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them; but of you I will make a great nation" (verse 10).

Any normal human being would have jumped at the chance to become the founder of a great nation, and especially if one had gone through the agony that Moses had experienced with Israel. But Moses was no normal human. He was another one of God's friends and his reaction was immediate: "Why Lord? What will the Egyptians say? And remember the promises You made to Abraham, Isaac, and Israel. You even swore to them by Yourself. Repent of this evil and turn from Your fierce wrath" (see verses 11-14). "And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do to his people" (verse 14). When the right people are skeptical with God at the right time, they can even save whole nations. At least that is what happened when Moses opened his heart to the Lord.

Some basic principles

In conclusion, let us summarize some basic principles that can be of help in dealing with the problems noted at the beginning of the chapter, first, the violence and crudities in the Psalms, and second, the difficulty of being really open with a holy God. As I have suggested, the two problems belong together, for when we realize that the psalmists could address God with absolute honesty, we can take heart and do likewise. But we must remember that the violent language in the Psalms is not a reflection of the ideal experience; it is not a reflection of God Himself, but rather of His erring children who were struggling with life-and-death issues in a twisted world. Under the impulse of His Spirit, they cried to Him, baring their souls in a way that often makes us uncomfortable, but their faces

The violent language in the Psalms is not a reflection of God Himself, but rather of His erring children who were struggling with life-and-death issues.

were toward God and He listened, even to their uncultured language. From that we can take courage, for whether our souls are bitter, angry, or depressed, when we come to Him, we know that He will listen.

And that, of course, is the answer to the second problem, the problem of our polite, arms-length conversations with God. Surprisingly, now that I know that the Lord will listen to strong, even seemingly disrespectful language, that very knowledge often takes the edge off my rebellion. Simply knowing that He can handle my seething emotions is often just the tonic that I need to restore my soul to health.

This chapter has described something that is very near to the heart of my Christian experience. Yet even as I bring this chapter and this book to a close, I am aware of the great paradox in the divine-human relationship. As I now reflect on the grandeur and the nearness of my God, His holiness and His friendliness, I feel myself torn between two conflicting emotions. I am drawn by the force of His love, but am forced to my knees by the awareness of an awesome gulf between a God like that and a man like this. It is the tension between a Jacob who desperately clings to his Master: "I will not let you go, unless you bless me," and a Peter, who falls on his face crying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man."

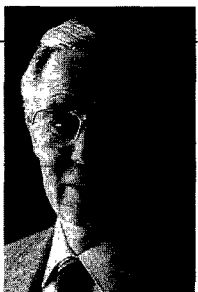
But the Lord does not depart from people who pray such a prayer. That is news worth sharing. ■

*Bible texts quoted in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

The minister as a member of the community

Russell Staples

The most appreciated service ministers provide is that of community-building.



Russell Staples, Ph.D., chairs the Department of World Mission, Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Holy Father, protect by the power of thy name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are one" (John 17:11, NEB).

This series began with the *humanity* of the minister and now it draws near its close with a reflection on the minister as a *member* in a human society. Why? Surely it would be more usual to start with the transcendent dimension of ministry rather than the human—to stress the divine call and the majesty of the office of one called to proclaim the word of God—and to emphasize the role of leadership rather than that of membership.

I can only presume as to the reasons for this particular slant and arrangement, but I find myself in concurrence with what I take to be the purpose of the planners.¹ It would seem to be clearly implied that there is a bivalency to the vocation of the ministry—that it has to do with human as well as with divine relationships—and that the human side of the task should be given at least as much attention as the divine.

Let us commence where the series starts—with the human. It is instructive to think of the cognates that grow out of the Latin original of *human*—humane, humanism, humanitarian, humanist, humanization, humanity. These words convey the sense that to be a human be-

ing means to live in interaction with others. The word "humanization" implies that the kind of human being each of us has become owes much to the molding influence of our family, our religious community, and of the educational and other societal groups to which we belong. Consideration of ministers as human beings is essentially a consideration of ministers with regard to their *humanity*, their interaction with other human beings, and the quality of those relationships.

This series is not intended to detract from that which is transcendent in the calling and vocation of the ministry, but it does call us to recognize that undue emphasis upon the high calling of the ministry may form a cloak that hides pride and arrogance from self-perception. Exaggerated preoccupation with the magisterial dimensions of ministry may lead to aloofness and noninvolvement in the life of the community. We have probably all known preachers who have unselfconsciously yielded to these temptations and who glory in the power of their high calling. If we are honest, most of us may see these tendencies in our own lives.

As an antidote to this, and with our thoughts grounded in the meaning of the Incarnation, we turn our attention to the role of the minister as a *member* of the community of faith. Perhaps after all, this is the proper place to start thinking about the ministry. Ministers are first of

This article is the ninth in a 10-article series that considers the most vital relationships and responsibilities for which Seventh-day Adventist ministers are accountable. Most of the articles in the series were first delivered as chapel addresses at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

all human beings who, in the exercise of their discipleship, remain responsible members of the human community, and second the incumbents of a divinely ordained office.

What is the church?

But what is the church? How do Adventists conceive of it? It is possible to think of the church primarily in functional terms—as an organization with a mission to perform. In this case, we might think of the church as an army—a spiritual army, to be sure—fighting a campaign and proclaiming the message to the ends of the earth, regardless of the obstacles or the cost. If this is how we think of the church, then it is more appropriate to think of ministers as generals or officers drilling those in the ranks and leading out in the campaign than as “members.” Or if mass evangelism is the major object, then perhaps ministers could be thought of as “performers,” surrounded by hosts of admirers, and with suitably elevated egos.

However, the New Testament most often describes the church in ontological terms. It is the “body of Christ.” If this is so, then what the church is in itself—its being rather than what it does—forms the guiding motif from which self-understanding grows. Like Christ Himself, it is recognized to be human, but also divine. It is the community in which salvation is affirmed and in which the gospel is preached and received. If we think of the church in this way, then we can think of ministers as *members* promoting the church’s corporate functions.

The celebration of Christianity has always been more corporate than private, for all of us undergo experiences too profound and weighty to bear alone. It is within the congregation that Christians celebrate the deepest and most holy moments of their lives—there they give thanks for the miracle of birth, there they commit their dead into eternal safekeeping, there confession is made and forgiveness sought, members are united with the Lord in baptism, lives are joined in marriage, and solace is found in times of grief.

We are wont to say that the greatest argument in favor of the gospel is a committed Christian life. But the Christian community that experiences the power of the gospel in its midst and radiates the love and glory of its Lord is a greater witness than this. It is of such communities that ministers are called to be mem-

bers—in fact, as members of the community ministers should function as catalysts promoting an atmosphere of love and acceptance.

Sociologists remind us of the need for community and fellowship in our age. One of the notable characteristics of American society is its institutionalized individualism. Each wants to have and develop his or her own shining identity, to hang free, to do his or her own thing. This attitude stands in stark contrast to the communal solidarity of tribal societies, in which persons sublimate personal gains for the greater good of the whole. Not surprisingly, anthropologists are half in love with such societies and use them as a foil against which to describe the rivalries and cankers of our own society. Freedom and individualism are disproportionately treasured in Western society, and little thought is given to the point at which personal license constitutes a trespass against the neighbor. Society threatens to become a battle of each against all.

We are thrust together in masses in our cities, but proximity does not lead to community, and many are lonely. The system reduces persons to role players. We relate to one another as if each is simply a cog in a great machine. Our interaction is devoid of social significance. Persons suffer alienation and fade away behind the service performed. The harsh competitiveness of society shows up personal inadequacies, and the unsuccessful are torn with feelings of failure and guilt. The unsatisfactoriness of existence deprives life of meaning. Daily there are those who lose all courage to face the rigors of life and simply give up. They sink beneath the flood. “Stop the world, I want to get off” is more than the theme of a play; it has become a significant syndrome in our society.

What such people need is the love and acceptance of a community. The lonely need fellowship, those in despair need hope, and those who suffer the pangs of guilt require forgiveness. All need the gospel and the meaning it restores to life.

To know that one is forgiven and accepted by God lies close to the essence of what it means to be justified by faith. But doctrine tends to be abstract, and one of the most satisfying ways of making religious experience real is to have it confirmed in the life of the community. To be genuinely accepted by the community just as one is, without having to prove anything, corroborates the inner witness

What such people need is the love and acceptance of a community. The lonely need fellowship, those in despair need hope. All need the gospel.

of the Spirit that one is accepted by God. On the other hand, rejection by the community may lead one to doubt God’s acceptance.

Paul as a community builder

Some regard the apostle Paul as having been a recluse—as a lonely, abstract intellectual, sometimes abrasive and jabbing, who alienated many he brought into the faith. I see the apostle rather as a churchman, always concerned for the young churches he had established. He constantly nurtured them with letters of love and instruction, writing his letters from the intimacy of community in one place to the corporate body of faith in another. Even his most private letters are at the same time communal.

He moved from the bosom of one home church to that of another, and the intimacy of the relationships he sustained in each is revealed in countless expressions and nuances in his letters. Of course, he was concerned to instruct the faithful aright and to promote a correct understanding of the gospel, but he was just as passionately concerned to maintain the unity and harmony of the church.

Paul’s concern for harmony in the church is strikingly evident in Galatians 5. Of the 15 weaknesses of the flesh listed in this passage eight are precisely those that made for discord in the church—“quarrels, a contentious temper, envy, fits of rage, selfish ambitions, dissensions, party intrigues, and jealousies” (verses 20, 21, NEB). The obverse is even more noteworthy. Each of the gifts of the Spirit listed is such as makes for peace and harmony in the

Membership is both costly and rewarding, and the rewards are commensurate with the investment.

church—"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control" (verses 22, 23, NEB).

Paul's purpose is clear: He rebukes the attitudes and actions that produce discord and commends behavior that promotes love and harmony. This is no isolated instance—it runs like a leitmotiv throughout the apostle's work. Perhaps we have to do here with a ministry of *membership*.

The essence of being a member of the community lies in identifying with its aims and living out what it stands for. There can be no insincerity or cheating here. Any sham or phoniness is certain to be uncovered. To relate intimately means to reveal oneself as one is. This makes one vulnerable, and to do this most of us may need to fight the tendency to protect ourselves by maintaining more social distance than necessary.

To be members of the community means that we must carry the burdens of others as well as ministering the solace of grace to them. It means that we may need to sacrifice some personal goals and rewards for the interests of the group. Membership is both costly and rewarding, and the rewards are commensurate with the investment. Here the words of Jesus are indeed appropriate—"He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." There may be a professionalism about our preaching and organizing and leading and serving, but membership requires a depth of involvement that transcends professionalism. It is in the relationships of membership that true ministry is born, and it is there that it is most effective.

Ministers' most highly rated characteristics

The published report on the "Readiness for Ministry" survey substantiates the fundamental assertions made here regarding what it means for the minister to be a member of the community of faith.²

The comprehensive survey instrument employed organized 444 dimensions of ministry into 64 clusters. It is striking that the five most highly ranked clusters of characteristics relate to personal commitment and faith, and center in the minister as a person in interrelationship with others. The first four relate to personal qualifications as these have a bearing on the experience of the community as a whole, whereas the fifth has to do with the minister as a promoter of a sense of community.

"Ranking at the top is a construct or dimension whose items point to the label 'service without regard for acclaim.' . . . This is reinforced by the second highest factor, namely, that of personal integrity; this describes one who is able to honor his or her commitments by carrying out promises despite all pressures to compromise. Ranking third is a factor that has to do with Christian example. The cluster describes one whose personal belief in the gospel manifests itself in generosity, and in general, a Christian example that people in the community can respect.

"The total group of clergy and laity allot fourth place to the characteristic of acknowledging limitations and mistakes, and recognizing the need for continued growth and learning. Ranking fifth is a cluster that has to do with the minister as a leader in community building. The items in this cluster focus on actions that will build a strong sense of community within a congregation. It includes taking time to know parishioners well and developing a sense of trust and confidence between him- or herself and the members of the parish."³

Roles more traditionally associated with the vocation of ministry rank sixth through tenth: "The sixth cluster describes the responsible functioning of one who shows competence and responsibility by completing tasks, by being able to handle differences of opinion, and by recognizing the need to continue to grow in pastoral skills. The seventh ranked dimension describes the minister as a perceptive counselor, as one who reaches out to people under stress with a perception, sensitivity, and warmth that is freeing and supportive. This is followed by a cluster that focuses on the minister as a person who manifests a positive approach, remaining calm under pressure while continuing to affirm people. The ninth ranking criterion focuses on a theocentric biblical ministry, a drawing attention to God's Word and Person in preaching, teaching, and leading worship."⁴

It is striking that preaching does not appear in these clusters before the ninth rank. In other words, eight clusters describing personal characteristics are rated more highly than, or at least precede, the minister's ability to preach.

It is equally informative to examine the three clusters that received the lowest rating. Again they focus on the minister as a person and more specifically on traits of character and failures in behavior that cast reproach on the church and disrupt the community:

"Significantly the three lowest in rank . . . focus on the minister as a person. . . . The harshest criticism centers on what people describe as undisciplined living, a construct centered on . . . self-indulgent actions that irritate, shock, or offend. The second most serious negative describes a self-serving ministry, a minister who avoids intimacy and repels people with a critical, demeaning, and insensitive attitude. This is a large cluster. It includes items that describe such actions as belittling a person in front of others, using one's ministerial role to maintain a sense of superiority, and being quick to condemn people whose words or actions are seen as questionable. The third most serious set of problems cluster around expressions of professional immaturity."⁵

One can hardly endorse these criticisms too strongly. Nothing is more destructive of community than the set of actions and attitudes appearing in this category—nothing stands further from a genuine expression of what it means to be a member of the community.

Of course, professional skills are appreciated. Leadership, ability to communicate the Word of God clearly, ability to lead out in evangelism, administrative skills, ability to conduct services well and in an inspiring manner, are ranked relatively high on the list. But it is striking that throughout the survey those queried rated the personal characteristics of integrity and warmth higher than professional skills.

What does this mean for us? It is obvious that the characteristics most ardently desired in ministers are personal qualities that reflect the essence of the gospel. These are not the kinds of things in which the seminary curriculum specializes, nor can they be easily taught. These qualities are more, on the one hand, like

the fruits of the Holy Spirit in the life, and on the other, the outgrowth of a kind, loving, and emotionally stable person. These qualities are generated more in prayer and in happy social interaction than in academic lectures. Qualities such as these prepare one for rewarding membership in the community and help one to build up the communal life of the church.

In conclusion, we must ask again what it means for ministers to be *members* of the community. It means, at the very least, that they place the life of the community ahead of personal or professional goals. Ministers who are truly members cannot even begin to think of—let alone treat—the community as an entity to be manipulated or used as a stepping-stone for professional advancement. Pastors who are joyous members of God's new society should naturally generate a consciousness of fellowship and acceptance—acceptance by God and acceptance within the community.

Being true members of the community means knowing that the deepest and broadest manifestation of Christianity in this world is corporate rather than private. It means understanding the transformation brought about when people know that they belong to God and to His people forever. It means believing that the prayer of Christ—"May they all be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, so also may they be in us" (John 17:21, NEB)—not only describes the church in its ideal form but is a realizable possibility. This is why the fullest revelation of the love of Christ the world can see is the love manifested in the community of faith.

The minister who is truly a *member* of the body of Christ is a minister who can also best *lead* the community in faithful fulfillment of God's purposes. ■

¹ Dr. C. Raymond Holmes, dean of the chapel at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University, and those on the chapel committee.

² David S. Schuller, Merton P. Strommen, and Milo L. Brekke, eds., *Ministry in America* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1980). This is an exhaustive study of the ministry in the United States and Canada, conducted by the Association of Theological Schools during the years 1973-1979. Thousands of laypersons, ministers, church leaders, teachers in seminaries, and theological students in 47 denominations (including our own) were surveyed to find out what churches most expect from young ministers.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 19, 20.

Are you living a double life?

Robyn Warner

The sobering fact is that second marriages have a smaller chance of success than first marriages. Why give up all you have for something that has a good chance of crumbling?

Robyn Warner is a pseudonym.

A

fter his father's death John stumbled across the briefcase. It was one his father had used frequently. The contents were few, but disturbing: a set

of handwritten sermons, a copy of *Steps to Christ*, and three letters from a woman with whom he'd been having an affair.

As mismatched as the contents might appear, they represent a reality that is not unique. It is the desire to have it all—pulpit and private life; clerical collar and clandestine encounters.

Recently a professor of theology on a large Christian campus was called before the administration to confirm or deny rumors of an extramarital affair with a young woman in the community. He eventually confirmed the accusation. What had he planned to do, had he not been "caught"? Continue teaching, continue attending church with his wife each week, continue advising students on the merits of serving the church, continue the affair? He had not thought that far ahead.

This article is for those who might find themselves in a similar situation. Perhaps it is a bit bold to assume that "good Christian ministers" as those who read *Ministry* would even consider such a duplicitous life. Is there an audience for such a subject? If you find yourself offended at the thought, turn the page and choose another article. If, however, you find yourself tempted to close the magazine, pretending there is no such problem in your life when you know there is or could possibly be, read on.

If you are living a dual life (or consid-

ering it), it is inevitable that you will face a crisis. You cannot stay betwixt and between forever, living in conflict with yourself. There are a number of losses that you will eventually experience in such a life. They are:

1. *The loss of self-esteem.* Your self-esteem has probably already suffered, because no matter how you try to rationalize an extramarital relationship, it simply goes against everything you've believed in, preached about, and taught.

A damaged self-esteem is a tough thing to repair. The more your sense of value as a person erodes, the more difficult it is to put your life back together.

2. *The loss of position.* One day it will happen. Like the theology professor, you may wake up some morning to find that the word is out. Or perhaps like a minister of two small churches on the West Coast, you will finally decide to confess. In any event, it is not easy to suddenly find yourself scanning the Help Wanted section of the newspaper, when all you've ever done, according to the public's definition of a pastor, is preach sermons and hold prayer meetings.

3. *The loss of respect in the community.* Gossip travels fast. Once the word is out, people you've never even heard of know your secret. You get an uncomfortable feeling as you realize that you cannot enter a church, walk onto the grounds of a camp meeting, or drive your car into your own driveway without feeling the eyes of others on you, branding you as an outcast and hypocrite.

4. *The loss of your children.* The rift that will come between you and your children will never be fully repaired. As much as you might wish that someday your children will be mature enough to understand, there will always be an ache in their heart whenever the word "father" is mentioned. Similarly, you will grieve for the relationship that was never allowed to ripen or was destroyed on the vine. Holidays will be strained; visits limited. Your parental role will be transformed from a day-to-day bandaging of bruised knees to a long-distance relationship weakly held together by phone calls and occasional brief visits.

5. *The loss of financial security.* Financial loss might not seem too threatening at the beginning, but it is a definite reality for those in the throes of a divorce.

A counselor who had driven from Canada to Washington in an attempt to help his sister who was experiencing marital problems told me recently: "They

were seriously considering divorce before I hit them with the cost. That sobered them right up."

From the expense of the legal proceedings to alimony and child support, divorce is not a cheap solution to marital problems. Divorce can be financially devastating.

6. *The loss of your partner.* Most likely your relationship now with your spouse is far from perfect. But once you face the irretrievable loss of one you have spent much of your life with, the memories keep haunting you. Says author Pat Conroy, in reference to his own divorce: "It was a killing thing to look at the mother of my children and know that we would not be together for the rest of our lives. It was terrifying to say goodbye, to reject a part of my own history."¹

And after the losses—self-esteem, position, respect, children, financial stability, your spouse—what do you think you will gain? The love of another woman? Happiness? Do you look forward to life in a secluded mountain village somewhere, where no one knows you, and you can throw pots on a wheel and live in a rustic log cabin in an idyllic relationship?

As beautiful as your relationship with another woman might seem right now, it only represents a simplicity that has nothing to do with reality. Says Anne Morrow Lindbergh, in *Gift From the Sea*: "The first part of every relationship is pure, whether it be with friend or lover, husband or child. It is pure, simple, and unencumbered. It is like the artist's vision before he has to discipline it into form, or like the flower of love before it has ripened to the firm but heavy fruit of responsibility. Every relationship seems simple at its start. . . ."

"And then how swiftly, how inevitably the perfect unity is invaded; the relationship changes; it becomes complicated, encumbered by its contact with the world."²

The sobering fact is that second marriages have a smaller chance of succeeding than first marriages. Why give up all you have for something that has a good chance of crumbling?

Paul found himself increasingly attracted to a woman he had met at his brother's house during the holidays. A relationship developed, and he began making excuses to leave the house on one- and two-day trips. A neighbor who knew the woman with whom Paul was spending so much time eventually leaked the news to his wife, Peggy.

A damaged self-esteem is a tough thing to repair. The more your sense of value as a person erodes, the more difficult it is to put your life back together.

Peggy was crushed, but she was willing to work at putting the marriage back together. But Paul refused to terminate his relationship with the other woman. His wife gathered up their three children, traveled 3,000 miles, and reestablished herself on the East Coast.

One year later Paul boarded a jet. When he arrived at his destination, he begged the woman with whom he had spent 20 years of his life to give him another chance. By this time Peggy was firmly established in a new job and renting a home in a school district that provided her children with a quality education. She feared giving up her new life for a man who promised, "If you come back to me, I will move out on the other woman tomorrow." She simply could not take the chance of bearing the pain of rejection again. The second time it might not be so easy for her to find another job and home. This time Peggy was the one who refused. Paul flew back to the West Coast feeling the weight of his earlier choice like a sodden woolen blanket that threatened to suffocate him.

Losses are not pleasant to think about or easy to face. But there is one more loss to consider. It is one that every pastor can recite from memory.

"What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Is it really worth it? ■

¹ Pat Conroy, "Death of a Marriage," *Reader's Digest*, October 1987, p. 108.

² Anne Morrow Lindbergh, *Gift From the Sea* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), pp. 64, 65.

Surviving divorce—how you can help

Margaret Hempe

Care for those who are divorced includes support through the initial pain and emotional upset and then guidance and counsel as they rebuild themselves and their lives.



Margaret Hempe was an associate pastor of the Loma Linda University Seventh-day Adventist Church when she wrote this article. She has since retired.

Tears fill Mary's eyes and her voice quavers as she tells me, "John is leaving me. He's already filed for a divorce. Oh, Peg, I don't know what I'm going to do. This all seems like a terrible nightmare. How could he do this to me and the children? I wish I were dead!" She bursts into uncontrollable tears, pouring out her anguish, fear, anger, and pain.

At the moment Mary honestly isn't sure she can survive this experience. But she can, and, as her pastor and friend, I can help her do it. I know she can because after 25 years of marriage I went through a painful divorce myself—and survived. I know I can help Mary deal with her divorce because in the 20 years since mine I have been helping other people go through that wrenching experience. I know it is possible to bring healing, encouragement, and insight to people who, if left to deal with the pain of divorce alone, might well sink into bitterness and despair.

As a pastor or pastor's spouse, you have probably known someone like Mary (or John),¹ and wish there was more you could give than the words "I'm sorry." In this article I will be sharing how I, a female pastor, deal with people in Mary's situation. A female Bible worker or pastor or pastor's spouse can be the best friend a newly divorced woman can have. The male pastor, of course, can use the same steps in dealing with divorced men, but will need to modify some of them when the person he is ministering to is female.

First aid for divorce

Initially Mary needs support and help simply to deal with the emotional trauma of the divorce. At this point my role is something like that of a physician aiding a skier who is lying on a ski slope with a broken leg. The physician's first concern is to prevent or deal with shock and alleviate pain; there is plenty of time later on to worry about physical therapy and rehabilitation measures. Here are some of the major steps I take to minister to Mary in the initial fear, grief, and pain of her divorce:

Communicate her worth. I let her know that I see her as a survivor, even a "survivor plus," and not as a loser, a pathetic and helpless victim. I tell her clearly and strongly that I believe in her, that she is still a person of great worth with a lot to give to the world.

Pray. I pray with Mary, asking God to be close to her. But I also pray for myself, seeking His guidance: "Lord, how can I best support and help Mary? Help me, O God, to provide the safe climate she needs for comfort and nurture. As she experiences the devastation of divorce, help me to lighten her load so that eventually healing and growth can take place."

Encourage biblical optimism. I share with Mary a biblical concept that helped me greatly when I went through my divorce. It is based on Romans 8:28, and I express it like this: "God has something better for you than you have ever known."

I don't mean that divorce itself is a good thing, because it isn't. I am convinced, however, that even during the pain and loss suffered in divorce, God

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knowing that she will
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works with His children. He will help us to grow, to expand the horizons of our lives, to find the good and meaningful things He has in store for us. He can bring blessings out of our darkest hours.

I encourage Mary to begin imagining what could come into her life that would make it better than it has ever been. "Let failures inspire you rather than defeat you" are my nudging words.

Enlist friends. I ask people who know Mary to send her short affirming notes and cards. I try to get her involved in a divorce recovery group as soon as possible. (Many churches and Christian counseling centers conduct these groups regularly.) Such a group will give Mary new friends, and also many helpful tools she can use in coping with her situation. I recommend a group that includes both men and women, for in such a setting Mary can learn—if she hasn't before—how to relate to men as friends and not simply as romantic partners.

The friendships that she makes in a divorce recovery group support her intellectually, as group members share books, lectures, and seminars; emotionally, as she sees that others share her feelings in time of need, and are only as far away as her telephone; spiritually, through shared prayer and shared values; practically, in providing everything from babysitting to expertise for dealing with the new financial challenges that a divorce often brings; and recreationally, as the group shares concerts, plays, holiday dinners, and other activities.

Minimize painful memories. Together in prayer we turn John over to Jesus. Then—since I am a pastor, this may sur-

prise you—I urge Mary to stop praying for him. Why? Because more than anything else, she needs to heal. Whenever John's name passes through her mind, scabs are torn off, the wound is reopened, and healing is impaired. In His wisdom and love God brings others into John's life who pray for him.

I do not urge Mary to attend church during this short time of intense pain, unless it is comfortable for her to do so. The church, which once meant stability and friendship, may now be a place filled with painful memories—"John and I stood right here when John, Jr., was dedicated." Well-meaning church friends may ask, "Have you heard from John?" Or even worse: "Don't you think you can find some way to patch things up? John is such a wonderful person." Seeing happy families sitting together, or listening to a sermon about "building happy homes," is not likely to help Mary right now.

Listen. I listen attentively to Mary, listen some more, and then keep listening. I don't listen as a prelude to giving her advice; I listen simply to be sure I really hear her. I listen acceptingly, encouraging Mary to let out all the hostility and pain she is feeling, and I do not pass judgment or tell her "You shouldn't feel that way." I listen patiently, knowing that she will probably need to express her pain over and over and over again before she begins to find relief. An impatient "I know, I know—you already told me that" will not help her.

Love and accept her. I express my acceptance to Mary not only in words but through gestures such as a pat on the shoulder, a hug, and holding her hand while we pray. She is my friend; she is important to me. Because I am divorced myself, I tell Mary, "I understand something of what you are feeling." (I would never use that expression if I weren't divorced.)

I do not defend John or talk about mistakes she made that contributed to the breakup of the marriage. This does not mean that I am naive; it is simply that I want to help Mary, and I know that, at this point, being "objective" about her flaws is not the way to do it. (People who cannot avoid raising these issues during this difficult time are not the persons to try to support those undergoing this trauma.)

Watch for excessive stress. I watch for the signs that warn that Mary is suffering excessive stress. Among these signs are prolonged periods of sleeplessness, total

loss of appetite, persistent headache and vomiting, dramatic and severe mood swings, and severe exhaustion. If I see these symptoms developing, I urge Mary to see a medical doctor. If necessary, I may even make the appointment for her and accompany her to the office.

Encourage a daily walking program. Even if it means going along with her, I encourage Mary to begin a program of walking daily. Walking two to three miles a day is not excessive, assuming that she is in normal physical health. The exercise will help her not only physically but mentally—and it's good for me, too! This kind of personal support is something that only another woman can give. Here a woman from the church who is available and willing can make an invaluable contribution.

Teach problem ownership. There will be times when Mary will feel absolutely overwhelmed and will say to me, "I can't bear this! My children are upset about the divorce, my in-laws are angry with me, my parents tell me that I should try to win John back (as if I could). Church members who I thought were my friends ignore me, and some women treat me as though I were out to get their husbands. I've got bills that I have no idea how I'm going to pay. And tomorrow I'm due in court to listen to John tell the judge what an awful wife I was. I just can't handle it all!"

For a person facing emotional overload, the concept of problem ownership is particularly crucial. Here's how I explain it to Mary: "God never promised to give you strength to bear problems that belong to your parents, your children, and your former spouse. They own those problems, and they must deal with them. Don't accept their burdens as belonging to you—handling the problems that you own will be enough for you to bear."

Mary must deal with her own emotions and behavior and seek eventually to make them loving and constructive. Even if she tries, she cannot solve the problems that belong to others.

Introduce how-to books. To help increase Mary's understanding of her situation, I introduce her to how-to books about coping with divorce. To maintain her interest in the reading, I set up specific times at which I meet with her and we review and discuss what she has been reading. Some of the books I recommend are:

Amy R. Mumford, *By Death or Di-*

voice: *It Hurts to Lose* (Denver: Accent Books, 1981).

David Augsburger, *Caring Enough to Forgive* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1981).

Jim Smoke, *Growing Through Divorce* (New York: Bantam Books, Inc., 1986).

Jim Smoke, *Suddenly Single* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1982).

Lee Salk, *What Every Child Would Like Parents to Know About Divorce* (New York: Harper and Row, 1978).

Suggest professional help. If it seems necessary for Mary's emotional health, I will suggest that she see a professional therapist who can help her deal with emotional problems that go beyond my level of competence and training. Again, I may make an appointment for her and go with her on her first visit to the office.

Help during the second phase

The length of time during which a person involved in a divorce suffers intense pain varies with the individual. Three to nine months is common. A second phase follows that generally lasts six to twelve months. (It usually takes two to four years of processing the emotions after the divorce is finalized before a person is ready to marry again.)

As time passes, Mary completes the first phase of recuperating from the divorce, beginning to recover from the initial shock and pain it brought. She needs to take concrete steps to rebuild her life and assure herself of continued growth. To move her into the second phase, I say something like "You know, Mary, neither you nor God Himself can change history. What has happened has happened. What do you say we get on with life?"

In this stage of Mary's development, I focus with her on these major areas:

Increasing her confidence. I help Mary to see how her inner strength is increasing. I point out decisions that she has made and followed through on that would have been difficult for her in the paralyzing ambivalence that accompanied the initial shock of the divorce. When I pray with her now, I thank God for providing fresh starts in life and praise Him for the strengths He has given her. I celebrate with her the resurrection of her spirit, the movement from "I want to die" to once again cherishing life and wanting to live it to the full.

Making her choices. Mary is ready now,

in a way that she was not earlier in her recovery, to apply logic and reason to her situation. But rather than focusing them on her past, with thoughts like "You made some real mistakes with John," I apply them to her future. "Mary," I tell her, "what you choose now will make a real difference in your future. God has given us principles that can make your future a bright, beautiful, rewarding adventure. But it is up to you to shape that future by making the choices that will allow those principles to operate in your life."

Among the choices I encourage Mary to make are these:

1. The choice to have faith. Too many people emerge from the pain of divorce locked in paralyzing bitterness, blaming God for what they have experienced. I tell Mary that unless she chooses to believe Scripture when it tells us that God loves us, wants what is best for us, weeps with us when we weep, and rejoices with us when we find the joy of life, she may also experience that bitterness. God has provided abundant evidence of His care in every life, including Mary's. But it is up to her to make the choice of faith, and that choice will shape her future.

2. The choice to forgive. Most of all, Mary needs to learn to forgive herself. Now that the initial pain is past, she will probably begin recognizing that she made mistakes in her relationship with John—for no one is a perfect spouse. Faced with that realization, Mary may replace her anger at John with self-hatred, overcome by thoughts such as "I see now that the divorce was all my fault. No one could live with me!" But as she confesses her mistakes, God forgives her. She must choose to accept His forgiveness and to make it real by forgiving herself.

Beyond forgiving herself, Mary will further her own growth if she can forgive John. I do not mean that she should take him back into her bed or home. Unless significant changes have been made, taking him back would only lead to yet another agonizing breakup in the future. But anger and bitterness consume tremendous amounts of energy. If Mary can come to a realistic view of John, seeing the weaknesses that were so destructive to their marriage and yet wishing him no ill, she will free her energies for use in building a better life.

3. The choice to love. Loving is always a risk, and when Mary took that risk with John, she got hurt badly. She may be

Mary needs to learn to forgive herself. She will further her own growth if she can forgive John.

tempted to say "I'll never take that risk again," and to distance herself emotionally from her children, other family members, and even her best and most loyal friends. But as a single person, she needs more than ever the emotional strength and sustenance that can come to her from these relationships. She needs to choose to love and to allow herself to be loved.

Making her commitments. As Mary moves into her future, it is also important that she make two basic commitments. Without them, she may never find the better things that God has for her, and may end up trapped in nonproductive and even destructive behaviors. That's why I discuss these commitments with Mary and urge her to make them. They are:

1. A commitment to herself and her growth as a person. The specifics of such a commitment depend, to some extent, on who Mary is and what specific strengths she wishes to develop in herself. Whatever those may be, however, she must choose not to be intimidated by the past, nor to be immobilized by fear of the future. She must commit herself to living life actively and eagerly, to being involved in the wonders of the world God has created, to being, in John Powell's powerful phrase, "fully human, fully alive."²

2. A commitment to God and His values. Like other divorced people, Mary faces some alluring traps. Having been married, Mary knows how enjoyable sex can be. In addition, her divorce may give her a sense of freedom from the constraints that formerly governed her life.

I have seen God's grace at work in her life, sustaining her through an experience that may be as close to hell as most people go through.

Under such circumstances she could fall into casual sexual relationships because of her desire for closeness and warmth and her need to reassure herself that she is still attractive to the opposite sex. Such relationships are destructive under any circumstances, and have grown even more dangerous with the tragic spread of diseases such as AIDS.

Beyond that trap, Mary may find herself drawn toward a variety of destructive compulsive behaviors—overeating, overspending, chemical dependencies, etc. To escape emotional pain and challenges, too many take refuge in such behaviors. God's love and the values He has set out in Scripture can help Mary to avoid these traps. He has not given us these values to rob us of happiness, but to keep us free from destructive practices. That may not always be evident to Mary in the short term, which is why it is so important that she make a long-term commitment to her God and the values He has communicated.

Setting her short- and long-term goals. "Mary," I say, "Do what's right because it is right. Jesus Christ has seen you through this far; He's not going to leave you now." That's not an abstract motto to me; it is the reality of the life I have lived since my divorce, and I know it can be Mary's, too.

I encourage Mary to think through and then write down for herself short- and long-term goals for her life. To aid her thinking, I suggest that she ask herself such questions as: "What kind of person do I want to be a year from now? What do I want to be doing? Where will I be living? What dream do I have that I

can make real in the next five years? What kind of role model do I want to be for my children?"

I have seen the power that is set free when people think through and write down such goals as: *I will build and enjoy a new identity for myself. I will continue to accept God's forgiveness for the mistakes I made that contributed to the breakup of my marriage. I will continue to believe that because God accepts and loves me, I am acceptable and lovable. I will be a good parent and an interesting, involved friend. I will be more involved in the church because I need its fellowship and the opportunities for service and challenges to growth it provides, and because I believe I have something of unique value to offer the church.*

Much has changed for Mary since she first came to see me. In the time that has passed since her divorce, I have seen God's grace at work in her life, sustaining her through an experience that may be as close to hell as most people go through. I have seen Him strengthen her as she has begun to rebuild herself and her life. As she has dealt with the pain of the past and begun to shape the future, I have had the joy of helping her through many difficult moments.

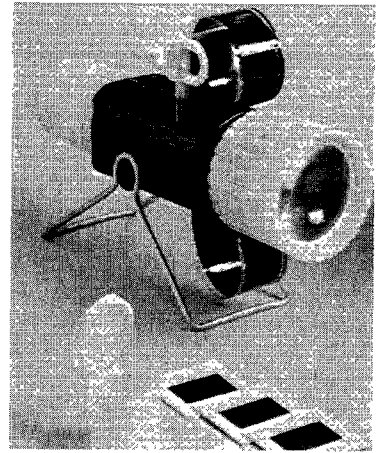
When I see Mary now, she looks sharp and has a confident air about her. She is motivated and enthusiastic about life. She respects herself, and because of that self-respect and her self-confidence, she has good relationships with others. She has rebuilt her life and has, with God's help, brought something positive out of the terrible minus of divorce.

Mary will always be my friend, but she no longer needs my help in the same way she did right after the divorce. I have done what I had hoped and prayed I would be able to do—I have worked myself out of a job! ■

¹ The names used in this article are not the real names of the persons who were involved in this experience.

² John Powell, *Fully Human, Fully Alive* (Valencia, Calif.: Tabor Pub., 1976).

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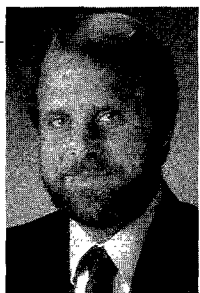
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Church brawls

Jan G. Johnson

Paul offers four keys for lowering the level of conflict in your church—and for keeping the members' missiles directed away from you!



Jan G. Johnson pastors the Seventh-day Adventist church in Granger, Washington—which is not the scene of the battle he describes in this article.

What can only be called a religious war ignited in the church I was pastoring. A theological controversy, it was fanned by well-meaning but inflammatory publications from the fringe of Adventism. Battle lines formed, and members of the congregation took sides—each viewing those on the other side as children of Satan. When the smoke cleared, 15 members no longer worshiped with us.

The conflict deeply affected me and my ministry. I began hounding the themes of unity and reconciliation, but with no visible results. Chairing a church meeting was like facing a firing squad. Those who before had provided the church with spiritual leadership fought like demons, trying to maintain their positions of power. The members involved saw every issue on the agenda in terms of the wider conflict. Before long I began to question my own call to the ministry, and I confess that at times I thought selling insurance looked pretty good.¹

My experience is not unique among Adventist ministers. There are a number of forces in the church pushing for change, not the least of which are some independent publications that question administrative leadership and widely held theological views. Members who support these causes with offerings and even their tithe tend to withdraw from the church not only their financial support but also their allegiance.² The result is that while these members may still worship with Adventist congregations, they see themselves as somehow differ-

ent. They tend to see the church and its members as needing the new truth they have come to hold.

Paul warned the leadership of the Ephesian church about similar difficulties. He told them to be alert because “fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:29, 30).³

Paul foresaw the kinds of attacks the church would experience: outside forces that would persecute, and churchmen on the inside who would draw away disciples by their perverse teachings. In the face of these threats, Paul counseled the leaders of the church in Ephesus to “take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God” (Acts 20:28).

First Corinthians provides a classic example of the care Paul envisioned Christian leaders giving their flocks. The members of the church at Corinth were largely Paul’s converts. When, after establishing the church there, he moved on to new mission fields, various conflicts arose—among them, factions loyal to different leaders (1 Cor. 1:10-17; 3:5-23), problems because of immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-5), theological differences (1 Cor. 15:1-58), and worship irregularities (1 Cor. 11:2-34).

Naturally, these controversies divided the membership. But they also separated the leader from the congregation—in his Second Epistle to the Corinthians Paul writes of both his personal pain and his estrangement from the church (2 Cor. 2:1-4).

Spiritually satisfied and growing members are less vulnerable to the negative messages that abound.

In his effort to quell the conflict and reunite the congregation, Paul used various theological and ethical arguments. Most pastors would do as much. But Paul used four other techniques that we also can use to protect our congregations from the fragmenting influences of the fringe movements.

1. We can project a spiritual image.

"Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 11:1; 2:2).

One charge that fringe publications level at church leadership—pastors and administrators—is that they are not spiritual. My experience indicates that above all else, our members want spiritual leadership. Pastors who know and are known by God, who pray for and with their people, who speak with conviction about the love of God, who are able to say "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ"—these are the pastors who will be successful at countering the influence of the fringe movements.

But we must not only be spiritual; we must project a spiritual image to our congregations. How can we do this?

We must communicate some elements of our spiritual journeys. Tom, a young pastor on the Oregon coast, walked the beach discouraged. The serious situation that had recently developed in his district so occupied his thoughts that he barely noticed the winter storm that raged around him. When he reached the rocky headland that marked the end of the beach, he stopped and watched the enormous waves thunder against it. The waves seemed overwhelming, as did the problems he was facing.

After a moment Tom turned, intending to make his way back to his car. But on an impulse he climbed the headland instead. When he reached the top, he noticed that the roar of the surf had diminished. In fact, the surf itself did not seem so formidable. The height to which he had climbed gave him a new perspective on the surf and the storm. It also gave him a new perspective on his problems. Kneeling on the rain-soaked earth, he thanked the Lord for the refreshing insight. The renewal he felt strengthened him as he returned to face his work.

The next Sabbath Tom began his sermon by relating this experience. In doing so, he offered his congregation an insight into his walk with the Lord.

We must project a spiritual image in our prayers. George was the seasoned pastor of a large city congregation. I knew him to be a saintly man concerned for the spiritual welfare of his congregation. But he had the annoying habit of praying "Xeroxed" prayers—he repeated such lines as "bless our hearts," "mold us," and "beds of sickness" every week. As laudable as these sentiments are, how much more effective would his spiritual witness have been if he had sought new, meaningful ways of expressing them?

We must preach spiritual sermons. A congregation has its best opportunity to see the character of its pastor in his or her preaching. Our messages reveal a great deal about our spiritual lives.

Sermons drawn from the Word of God, flowing with the sweetness of Jesus' love, punctuated with the power of the Spirit, unfolding truth simply to road-weary Christians, testify clearly of our spirituality.

2. We can construct spiritual events.

In 1 Corinthians Paul mentioned church meetings a number of times (1 Cor. 5:4, 5; 11:17-33; 14:23-28, 33, 34), but his counsel as to how to handle a case of church discipline perhaps best witnesses to his predisposition to make meetings into spiritual events. For the man living with his father's wife, Paul instructed an assembly of the church to "deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5).

For Paul even a case of church discipline had momentous spiritual implications. It was a collective-redemptive event; the final attempt of caring Chris-

tians to retrieve a wayward soul.

Is it too much to try to make every meeting of the church a spiritual event? It is easy to see how worship services, prayer meetings, Sabbath schools, and funerals can serve spiritual ends, but how about board meetings, business meetings, and committee meetings? Certainly the Lord is actively leading His work. Since this is so, we can point it out. Even the mundane business meeting provides the opportunity for the aware pastor to declare the Lord's care for the church and its business.

In addition to the regular meetings of the church, we can construct other spiritual events. We might structure a Communion service for young marrieds, develop a Week of Prayer especially for the elderly, or start prayer groups, study groups, or work groups of various kinds.

The list is endless, but the key is to enliven and feed the membership. Spiritually satisfied and growing members are less vulnerable to the negative messages that abound.

3. We can project an image of loyalty to church leadership.

Today there are many who are propagating disloyalty. Various groups secure church membership lists and spread the disease through their publications. And like cancer, when disloyalty invades a congregation, it grows until it destroys the church's vitality.

Ralph, a district pastor in a farming community, nurtures a resentment. During his internship days his conference president transferred him from one district to another against his will. Though the president moved shortly afterward and has since retired, Ralph is still angry. In subtle ways his unresolved feelings now surface as distrust of the organization and its leadership.

Unfortunately, some in Ralph's congregation are picking up his signals and are vocalizing their feelings. Though Ralph is uncomfortable with the hostility he has been hearing recently, his lack of confidence in the church's leadership makes him hesitant to defend them.

Ralph should realize that one word of disloyalty from the pastor can neutralize a thousand positive words. The damage that has been done in his church not only will take some time to repair, but also provides fertile soil for the messengers of discontent.

Paul, on the other hand, encouraged

loyalty to the leadership of the church. He refused to demean the work of Apollos ("I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth" [1 Cor. 3:6]), he collected money to support church relief (1 Cor. 16:1-3), and he counseled the Corinthians "to be subject . . . to every fellow worker and laborer" (verse 16).

As pastors, we have many opportunities to communicate to our congregations our loyalty to the leadership of the church. Among other ways, we may do so by mentioning conference goals—Harvest 90, the academy development program, and so forth—frequently from the pulpit, by praising the work of some conference official, and by inviting conference personnel as guest speakers.

4. We can develop a tolerance for diversity.

Diversity—whether cultural, racial, ethical, or theological—is a characteristic of life. In fact, it is embedded in creation itself, spoken into existence by God and blessed by Him.⁴ But experiencing differences can be painful. The failure to see eye to eye can alienate people from each other and disrupt the workings of an organization.⁵

Yet such traumas need not occur. And diversity has its positive elements as well. In his book *Managing Change in the Church*, Douglas Johnson says that diversity both permits the surfacing of ideas that can spark new ways of acting and encourages the development of good and sensitive leaders.⁶

By comparing the church to the human body, Paul highlighted its diverse nature. Just as the parts of the body differ, so the church is composed of members having many different gifts. The fact that it is the Holy Spirit who bestows these gifts indicates that God Himself has ordained diversity in the church.⁷

And remember, the church to which Paul wrote affirming diversity was one that was deeply divided by its differences. I confess that under such circumstances my own inclination is to preach on unity. But a focus on unity may have the opposite effect; in their attempts to heed the call to unity, members may shun the disaffected person. The member thus frozen out of church life will either become more vocal in order to be heard or will drop out entirely. Neither alternative is acceptable.

Jeff was laughed down the last time he tried to get his usual oddball point across

at a church business meeting. When the meeting concluded, no one attempted to soothe his feelings. Defeated and hurt, he decided to try a new tactic. As often as his finances permitted, he wrote scathing rebukes and mailed copies to every member of the church, including the newly baptized. Thus he began his own independent publication.

People like Jeff could be kept active in the church if only congregations knew how to react to their uniqueness. How we lead as pastors can determine how accepting our congregations are of people's differences. To help our congregations learn to be more accepting, we can:

Celebrate differences. We can help our people see the positive impact that differences have on congregational life by pointing out how someone used a unique gift or talent to help some member or to win someone to the church. These celebration events are appropriate for any service of the church, but are particularly appropriate during the worship service.

Preach differences. Scripture is filled with material suitable for this theme. For example, 1 Corinthians 12 (spiritual gifts), Genesis 1 (Creation), Revelation 4 (the four living creatures and the 24 elders—differences represented at the throne of God), Acts 15:36-41 (disagreement between Paul and Barnabas), Matthew 4:18-22 (menders and casters—differences between Peter and John), etc.

Set the example. We can demonstrate by example a capacity to include people with differing opinions. For instance, during board meetings, business meetings, and other committee meetings, we can seek the opinion of all those present—even those who usually do not speak up. When we consider each comment, thanking each participant, our members will soon learn that their ideas count. When they have a healthy view of their own opinions, they will be more accepting of the opinions of others.

Structure visual events. Perhaps an example will best illustrate what I'm thinking of. A few years ago my church held a banner day. We encouraged each family in the church to design and make a banner that illustrated the theme "The Caring Church Is . . ." On the appointed Sabbath each family brought their banner to the front of the church, unrolled it, and explained its meaning. By the time the service concluded, the congregation was surrounded by colorful banners. Each was creative, distinctive, and appropriate to the theme. We left them

Diversity—whether cultural, racial, ethical, or theological—is a characteristic of life.

hanging in the church for several Sabbaths as a graphic reminder that for one Sabbath differences were knitted together into a vitalized worship event.

Dealing with the negative independent publications and the people they influence will certainly continue to challenge us. But pastors can make a difference by how they lead. Instead of allowing the diversity in our churches to either immobilize us or make us inflexible, we can learn to regard it as normal, healthy, and even desirable. By building in our churches a tolerance for differences, we can create a climate that encourages spiritual growth.

Remember, even the volatile Corinthian church did an admirable work for the Lord. ■

¹ Speed Leas lists 27 symptoms that result from unresolved conflict. Among them are "painful pressure on the minister, evidenced by increased use of the theme of reconciliation in sermons, prayers, and hymns"; "desperate 'circuit-riding' calling by the minister, attempting to hold everything together"; "minister developing a sense of personal failure"; and "job-hunting by the minister" (Speed B. Leas and Paul L. Kittlaus, *Church Fights* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973], pp. 16, 17).

² John Savage sees pledges and donations as indications of a member's commitment. A dropout will reinvest both his time and money in a new project, representing his new commitment. See Savage's *Skills for Calling and Caring Ministries* (Pittsford, N.Y.: LEAD Consultants, 1979), p. 6.

³ All Scripture quotations are from the Revised Standard Version.

⁴ Jan G. Johnson, "A Design for Learning and Developing Skills for Handling Interpersonal and Substantive Conflict" (D.Min. diss., Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Mich., 1986), pp. 34-37.

⁵ Leas, p. 16.

⁶ Douglas W. Johnson, *Managing Change in the Church* (New York: Friendship Press, 1974), pp. 11-13.

⁷ See 1 Corinthians 12.

The changing role of the pastor's wife

**Tabitha
Abel-Cooper**

While society's norms are changing for women in Britain, congregations still expect the pastor's wife to remain traditional.



Tabitha Abel-Cooper is a pastor's wife and mother of two children in Newtownards, Northern Ireland. She is also a nurse in the cardiac care unit of Belfast Royal Victoria Hospital.

What does your husband do?" is a question frequently asked me where I work. When I inform questioners that my husband is a clergyman, their eyes open wide, a smile crosses their faces, and their eyebrows raise.

It is hard for me to understand why, when we are almost into the twenty-first century, my work colleagues have an unchanging mental picture of a clergyman's wife. Etched in their minds is the traditional British vicar's wife depicted in films—a friendly, gentle lady who wears traditional clothes and attends coffee mornings and bazaars for the church. She is a member of the Womens' Institute, chats to everyone, and pours tea at church social gatherings. She attends cricket matches with her husband on warm summer days and stands behind him smiling and nodding her head appropriately as he chats with the parish folk. She entertains small groups of women in the manse with homemade scones and cakes, and raises money for the church organ fund or a mission project. She epitomizes a self-effacing, kindly lady concerned with the welfare of her husband's parish.

Today's schools teach children to be independent and self-sufficient in preparing for adult life. Girls no longer have to wear only pastel colors, play with dolls, and plan to become secretaries or nurses. It is acceptable for girls to wear pants, play with Legos and cars, become karate black belts, and plan careers in science. Women no longer need to find husbands as providers, but can them-

selves go into business, science, medicine, or even construction. They can have careers and family life, too.

In a rapidly changing society, the ministerial family is no exception. But this change is not understood by most people, and especially not church congregations. A clergyman's wife is expected to follow tradition, forget her career, and put her degree on a shelf after leaving the marriage altar.

In the past in Britain, it was the squire, the physician, and the man of the cloth who were important personages in the village. Each one was given great respect by the community. However, communities have now developed alternative hierarchies, with affluent people from diverse occupations (including local politics) commanding respect. Money flows freely, with a resulting increase in the standard of living. The man of the cloth no longer receives equal wages with other professionals. Leisure activities such as music lessons and sports are not so available to him and his family. Even many parks and trails charge entrance fees.

In a society in which many consider fun to include drinking, eating out, or dancing, it requires time, planning, and cash to organize alternate family activities. Frequently the teen from an Adventist family finds it impossible to earn extra money since most part-time jobs require Saturday work.

The ministerial family's calling

Most ministers feel that they have had a personal calling to their life work, even if it is a family tradition. Few decide their careers by default, despite it being a sure

job with many rewards. Whatever the reason for entering the profession, church members assume that the pastor has responded to a call to be God's messenger. His original call may be directly from God, but his second call will come indirectly through a committee. Their goal is to direct the minister in a way that will best advance the purpose of the church. But how do the committee machinations affect the minister's wife? Most ministers' wives receive only the indirect committee call.

The selection process for ministers differs from union to union and no method is without flaws. I have heard of congregations that spied on unsuspecting ministers and their families before they approached them about a new position. Generally the pastor and his family meet with the church board and both the church and ministerial family become thoroughly acquainted before a decision is made. But I have also heard of committees that called a pastor, sight unseen. Thus the church ends up with a minister about whom they know nothing.

When I was a young person considering marriage, someone told me that I would marry not only my partner but his family. However, no one added that in marrying a clergyman I would also join myself to a variety of congregations who may or may not accept me as fulfilling their differing expectations.

Many congregations in Britain continue to expect their minister's wife to fill a role that is fast becoming obsolete. As the lifestyle of the minister's wife is changing, a harmonious knitting together of at least three roles is essential. A failure to do this can result in problems for the minister, his wife, and the church.

The minister's wife as homemaker and mother

The pastor's wife is expected to support her husband's ministry and be a homemaker. The home is a respite for him after long toilsome hours of appointments, church work, and visiting. At home he is accepted and loved, able to relax and recharge his batteries.

As a mother, the pastor's wife is frequently the only available parent to comfort, encourage, and make decisions concerning the children. This too is part of her commission.

The minister's wife and the church

A minister's wife can only extend her-

self within her capabilities. Even though her talents may be few, she can take an interest in each member of the church. She supports her husband both passively and actively by being a sounding board for his ideas, providing hospitality to the homeless and poor (or a visiting minister), and caring for the many who need help. She visits the sick and provides counsel for those who have difficulty voicing their concerns to the minister. She develops secretarial skills she never knew she had and answers the phone any time of the day or night. She arranges flowers in the church. If she is musical, she plays the organ or sings. She prays in public and teaches children's classes. She dresses conservatively and hopes her children are well behaved.

On occasion the minister's wife hears her husband criticized. Sometimes it is fair criticism and other times it is not. It is difficult to always "turn the other cheek." And how does she convey to the critics that her husband is human and thus imperfect, able only to work within his limits? She too may be criticized despite her desire to follow her minister's wife role as best she can. A willingness to help can lead to expectations being placed on her until she becomes overextended, responsible for too many varied jobs. Any attempt to follow a career can cause feelings of rejection on the part of the congregation.

The minister's wife and her career

A new minister's wife will sometimes be surprised that some in the congregation do not support her choice of a career and family despite modern trends. Like all career women she must work hard to prove her abilities. In addition, if her husband is transferred, she must give it all up, move, and start over somewhere else. Should she request a hold on the move, then her husband is faced with being marked as having a difficult wife over whom he has no control.

Discouragement awaits the minister's wife in any career move. Her job stays are short. She will be passed over for promotions in favor of someone with more seniority even though she is more skilled.

In addition to full-time work, she must be all things to her husband, children, and congregation. Should she pay someone to clean the house, get a part-time nanny for her children, or give up leading a Sabbath school department, someone is bound to misunderstand her choice.

The minister's wife who chooses to

The minister's wife who chooses to have a career will not fit the role envisaged for the minister's wife.

have a career, either by choice or necessity, will not fit the role envisaged for the minister's wife. This is the negative side. But there are positive aspects of a career.

As a professional person, the minister's wife adds a new dimension to her family, to church programs, to church outreach, and even to her husband's sermons. She can make contacts among her colleagues that others could not, and she will have a more realistic understanding of the problems faced by those outside the church. As she develops skill and enthusiasm in witnessing to her coworkers, the minister's wife becomes a motivating influence in the church for others to do the same.

Making the choice for a career

It is essential that the minister's wife firmly believe in what she wants to do and understands the consequences of her choosing to follow a career. She must be supported in this action by her husband in order for them to work effectively as a ministerial team. If one of the team is sensitive to criticism, then the other member must strengthen the less-strong spouse.

It is important that all members of the ministerial family agree on new courses of action they plan to take. They need to be able to discuss their feelings openly with one another. Time must be set aside to ascertain the rightness of decisions through prayer, study, and discussion.

Finally, in order to gain satisfaction from all her roles, the minister's wife must manage her time well. Her time needs will change as new situations arise, ensuring the need for constant reappraisal. She needs to allow time for her husband's and children's needs, the realistic needs of the church, her job, and her own relaxation and spiritual refreshment.

Problem solving

When the expectations of a congregation concerning the role of the minister's wife differ widely from her own expectations, problems arise. Most people are defensive when faced with the unknown. So the minister's wife should take steps to avoid or ameliorate problems that might arise because of these differing expectations.

At the first opportunity a new minister and his wife should inform the congregation how their family works as a team and what they would like to do for the church. This allows the church family to understand better how each perceives the family's role in the church. Such discussion can take place at a planned social evening in the minister's home or in the church hall. Such an evening can be set up by inviting all the congregation to get acquainted with the new pastoral family. In this setting the pastor can chat with the group, tell them of his plans, and allow the church family to ask questions and voice their expectations. All persons concerned learn more about each other's thinking styles. Most criticism is based on lack of understanding and misinformation. When the pastor sets up a practice of open, frank discussion between himself, his wife, and the church at the beginning of his ministry, future problems are easier to resolve.

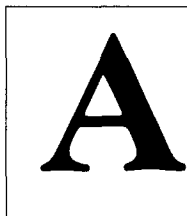
Conclusion

In a world that is less than perfect, it is unrealistic for anyone to expect to reach total fulfillment in all areas of his or her life. With this in mind the minister's wife should work toward giving her best to her family, her church, and career within her limits. As society continues to change, I believe congregations will certainly change. In time a church's expectations of the pastor's wife will no longer rely on tradition but will accept society's changing parameters.

Cutting new pathways is not easy, and at times the minister's wife must reassess her values. The minister's wife must be sure that her choice of commitments is acceptable to all those who are important to her, and that her walk with God remains a close one. If those values are assured, then despite trials, criticisms, and other problems, she can feel free to continue in her chosen course. ■

He asked for it!

Eldred Johnston



A friend of mine has the custom of kneeling in prayer just before preaching and of requesting his congregation to join him in this act of devo-

tion. During a recent worship service it occurred to him to ask the people what they prayed for at that particular time. He assured them that he wanted them to speak frankly. And they did!

- "I prayed that you wouldn't preach too long. I have arthritis, and after 15 minutes my bones begin to ache."

- "I prayed that you would keep it simple. Sometimes you get going into point 2, point 3, point 4, etc. All I want is just one clear point that I can take home and think about during the week."

- "I prayed that you wouldn't drop your voice. It's so irritating when I can't hear some of the words in what seems to be an important statement."

- "I prayed that I might listen carefully and respond when I find God speaking to me."

- "I prayed that you would sense

something of the burden I've been carrying this past week and give me some hope."

- "I prayed that God would give you courage to speak out against some of the evils in our world: war, poverty, injustice, and pornography."

- "I prayed that you wouldn't use deep theological terms, but would use language we can understand."

- "I prayed that you wouldn't be too dogmatic—that you wouldn't insist that we accept your point of view, but would give us a choice of alternatives."

- "I prayed that you would not deal with some antique biblical passage that is not vaguely related to our modern world."

- "I prayed a thanksgiving for you and your ministry."

- "I prayed that God would help me listen with an open mind and heart."

My friend concluded: "I didn't preach a sermon that week—the people did. And boy, did I need it! It's so tempting to stand in the pulpit and imagine you're Jeremiah or Paul. The people reminded me that I am nothing more [or less!] than God's messenger with the serious commission to speak His word and speak it well." ■

Eldred Johnston is rector emeritus St. Mark's Church, Columbus, Ohio.



Surviving the upheavels in China

My wife and I visited China a few months before the student demonstrations that attempted to bring democracy to that country. The Chinese have a sophisticated culture predating the Christian Era by more than 1,000 years. They are a resilient, frugal people who have maintained a determined work ethic, either by choice or by force. They have survived what seemed insurmountably destructive historical events.

With a tour group composed of 18 Adventists, we spent two and one-half weeks visiting major cities such as Shanghai, Xian, Beijing, Kunming, and Guilin. Our leaders, Pastor Milton and Mrs. Helen Lee, were born in China and spent most of their lives preaching the gospel to the Chinese. During the tour, their reunions with pastors and church members whom they had not seen for years provided many emotional moments.

The natural and man-made monuments we visited both surprised and intrigued us. The thousands of bicycles we saw weaving down streets and roads and parked in lots bore witness to China's immense population of 1.1 billion people.

During the eight years Marie and I spent in the Far Eastern Division we became acquainted with many overseas Chinese and came to admire their philosophy and customs. Our visit to China helped us to a more complete understanding of the roots of these resourceful people.

Recently retired as Ministry editor, J. Robert Spangler now holds the position of editor emeritus.

But while we enjoyed becoming better acquainted with China's beauty and culture, our main reason for touring that country was to investigate the situation of Christianity, and more specifically of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in China.

All religions, Christian and non-Christian, suffered terribly during the decade from 1966 to 1976. Of course, many churches and their institutions had already been closed, but during the Cultural Revolution Mao's Red Guards undertook not only to close every visible religious institution that had been left open, but to eradicate everything that was perceived as Western.*

In spite of political repression under a dictatorship, China has made a truly remarkable economic recovery from those years of disaster. Food and consumer goods seemed in abundant supply everywhere. The cities were relatively clean and orderly, and the hotel accommodations for tourists were excellent.

Although our church has suffered during the nearly four decades of atheistic Communist rule, it has survived, as have other Christian groups. We pray earnestly that the situation will improve.

Meeting David Lin

The name David Lin is well known among Adventists. David, a 1941 graduate of Pacific Union College, spent 20 years confined in prisons, in labor camps, or on a farm, though he testifies that he was never physically abused. His dear wife Clara suffered persecution as well, being confined not in prison but to her home. In spite of their problems, by God's grace this family has survived. Their influence is a source of strength to our growing church in China. Just hear-

ing his experience brought me courage.

We were thrilled to have David, his wife, daughter, and grandson meet us at the airport. During our visits in various places in Shanghai we spent several hours with him, listening to his reports and interviewing him. He answers the oft-asked question as to how many Seventh-day Adventists there are in China by saying that the exact figure is unknown. In 1949, our China Division encompassed 21,000 members, a large segment of whom worked in our institutions. When our schools, hospitals, and publishing houses were either closed or placed under government-selected management in 1951, large numbers left the church. David states that our membership in China reached its lowest point at that time.

David was the division secretary when this "liberation movement" took place. Both he and Pastor Hsu Hwa, the division president, were removed from leadership. During our visit I was able to interview Pastor Hwa as well. Their stories, which had a tremendous emotional impact on me, convinced me that we in the West have no idea of what it really means to suffer because of our faith.

If I learned anything from this visit to China, I learned that it is people that comprise the church. Today we have no organizational structure in China—no local conference, union conference, or division offices. We have no departmental structures. We have no schools, no seminaries, no publishing houses, no hospitals or clinics. We have no TV or radio broadcasts (though our Guam radio station, KSDA, reaches into China). We have no public evangelists, no public evangelistic campaigns, no retirement or

medical or educational assistance for ministers. But we have a church! A church that is in all probability far larger and stronger than ever before.

David stated: "Now it is just a matter of the gospel seeds springing up in different parts of China, and many of our people, our believers, are responding to God's inspiration by going out and winning souls by themselves. So in one way we can say that the Chinese church is in better spiritual condition than it was before. Those who were in the church just for the pay left, while those who had a hold on God stayed. Even though the church may no longer be functioning as an organization, these dear souls who are still in touch with God are working for Him."

I don't mean to downgrade organizational structure, policies, and so forth. When structure serves our mission of preaching the gospel in the setting of the three angels' messages, then the church can move more rapidly and in a stronger way than it can without that dedicated structure. Nevertheless, if the structure should be destroyed, the church can and does survive. Under these circumstances, the two, three, or more people who meet together in the Lord's name in a house, barn, garden, park, or wherever—those who love the Lord, obey His law, and have the common goal of sharing their faith in Jesus Christ in every way possible—comprise the church.

David's strong commitment to the Advent movement grows out of his unshakable confidence in both the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. In his youth, when he was studying to see which church he should join, he read *The Great Controversy*. This book dispelled his doubts about our message. (To our non-Adventist clergy friends, if you wish a complimentary copy of this book, which traces our Christian heritage from the time of Christ until our Lord's second coming, please send your request to the editor of *Ministry*.)

David remains committed to the importance of the Spirit of Prophecy. He believes that his removal from the post of secretary of the China division of our church was providential. When he was division secretary, committee meetings and problem solving totally consumed his time. His removal from that position gave him the time to devote to a special project. During the six-year period prior to his arrest, while he supported his family by operating a small slide rule factory

in his home, he was able to take the leadership in translating the five books of the Conflict of the Ages Series. As soon as he translated a chapter, some of our enthusiastic youth would cut stencils and print a few hundred copies. These were distributed among our people in various parts of the country, and the influence of this action was immediate.

Lessons concerning our medical work

In our conversation, after he described the closing of all of our institutions by the authorities, including our 13 hospitals and sanitariums, David made some remarks pertinent to our medical work. In response to my question as to what he would recommend if we had the opportunity of starting our work all over, he emphasized the need of staffing our institutions with dedicated, converted Adventist Christians. He spoke of our hospitals as being our largest institutional presence in China, saying they had grown like mushrooms. In order to keep the buildings they had erected and equipped in operation, they had to hire doctors and nurses without regard to their religious affiliation.

Commenting on this situation, he warned: "Do the work according to the workers you have. If you have just three workers, undertake only a task that three workers can handle; don't try to make them bear a load requiring six. I believe that the limited witness those large institutions we had offered hardly justified the funds they required. We did have a few dedicated physicians and nurses, but when they were surrounded by a large number of non-Christian, secular-minded individuals they found it very difficult to witness for God. There was no cooperation. In the hospital you need an atmosphere—a religious atmosphere—that is part of the healing process.

I asked David about his privileges during his incarceration. Was he able to have religious books and the Bible during the six and a half years he spent behind bars? He replied that prisoners were allowed to read only the works of Mao Tse-tung, Karl Marx, and Friedrich Engels. The jailers made regular searches to remove any diaries or notes the prisoners might have written. David's witness was restricted as well. Much of the time the prisoners were not allowed to speak to each other, especially if they were in large cells.

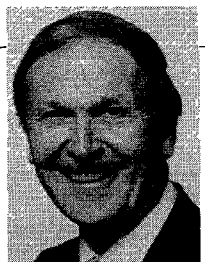
Although he was deprived of his Bible

Although he was deprived of his Bible and for a time experienced a spiritual low, he never doubted God's love and presence.

and for a time experienced a spiritual low, he never doubted God's love and presence. He believed that God had a reason for allowing all the confusion and trouble that came upon our church. He noted that in the destruction of the Temple in Old Testament times, God had been trying to teach His people a lesson.

David understands the Chinese church's experience during this time of persecution as necessary to learning a lesson. He said, "What we need most is the spiritual preparation that draws us near to God—that teaches us not to depend on the arm of flesh, not to depend on material prosperity and modern gadgets, so to speak. We should draw near to God every morning. The book of Daniel says that when Daniel was praying, the man Gabriel came in answer to his prayer. Now, if Daniel had not prayed, I believe Gabriel would not have come. He came in answer to Daniel's prayer for skill and understanding. We need that kind of heavenly aid, so we also need to pray.—J. Robert Spangler.

*If you wish to read a vivid portrayal of those horrendous times, I suggest the 543-page book *Life and Death in Shanghai* (New York: Penguin Books, 1988). The author, Nien Cheng, is an indomitable Christian who was held in solitary confinement for six and a-half years. She credits her faith in the Lord as giving her the strength to survive the persecution that almost destroyed her physically. Don't start reading this book at night, for you will have difficulty putting it down!



Clergy commitment/2

Floyd Bresee

It's a given that Christian clergy are to be committed persons. But precisely what should they be committed to? Revelation 14:1-5 portrays God's special people—which should surely include the ministry—as committed to three things.

Committed to principle

These redeemed whom God honors are shown standing with the Lamb, "having His Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). *The name on their foreheads, like the team name on a ballplayer's cap, identifies to whom they belong. It's obvious to everyone who sees them. Our congregations want to know that their ministers are God's. And they want it to show.

God's honorees are further described: "And in their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God" (verse 5). We Christian ministers live in a community not only for the purpose of preaching Christ, but to show, at least to a small extent, what Christ was like. We are Christianity with skin on. We are not perfect people, but we ought, like Christ, to be persons of principle.

Committed to family

Revelation further describes God's own: "These are the ones who were not defiled with women" (verse 4). Since our passage is metaphorical, this qualifier

certainly refers to more than sexual relationships, but it surely includes those. Christ's redeemed should be a sexually pure people.

Unfortunately for us ministers, our commitment to our families and our moral purity are becoming more and more suspect—and with good reason. A 1986 survey of 2,400 United Methodist clergy discovered that their divorce rate was twice as high as that of their laity.

The reasons are abundant. Ministers represent right and goodness, and, for most women, goodness makes a man attractive. Ministers work mostly with female church volunteers. They counsel alone, often in empty churches. They are the only white-collar professionals who still make house calls.

But most insidious and tragic of all, many ministers take upon themselves what might be called a god image. Glenn Gabbard is director of the Menninger Hospital in Topeka, Kansas—a major referral center for troubled clergy. He insists, "The more the minister sees his own person as central to delivering the message of God, the more he is likely to become sexually involved with members of his congregation."

We now know enough so that we can draw a fairly accurate picture of the clergyman most likely to be involved in sexual misconduct. Typically he (1) is middle-aged, (2) is disillusioned with his ministerial calling, (3) is isolated from his fellow ministers, (4) is neglecting his own marriage, and (5) has met some other woman who needs him.

Do any of the above five touch you? Let's commit ourselves to taking time for our families. If love isn't working at home, it's awfully hard living it elsewhere.

Committed to Christ

Christ is central in our passage. He is the "lamb standing on Mount Zion" (verse 1). He is the one who "redeemed" His own (verses 3, 4). He is the leader of His people "who follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (verse 4). We become truly successful ministers to the extent that we allow Christ to be central in our ministry; in other words, when we gladly follow the Lamb no matter where He leads us.

Nothing revitalizes our ministry quite like declaring with Paul, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

John Robertson was a mighty preacher in Glasgow. But he confessed that for some of his 40 years in ministry he was a backslider. There came a time when the glow of his first years in ministry was gone. He felt himself a failure and finally decided to quit. In absolute frustration he prayed, "O God, Thou didst commission me 20 years ago, but I have blundered and failed and now I want to resign."

He broke down as he prayed, but between sobs he seemed to hear God answer, "John Robertson, it is true that I commissioned you 20 years ago. It is true that you have blundered and failed, but, John Robertson, I am not here for you to resign your commission, but for you to re-sign your commission." Robertson did his greatest work after that recommitment.

Fellow minister, won't you recommit yourself today to Christian principles, to your family, and to Christ? Won't you re-sign your commission? ■

*Bible texts quoted in this article are from the New King James Version.

Excerpted from Floyd Bresee's opening address at the World Ministers Council in Indianapolis, Indiana, July 1, 1990.

Wine in the Bible

Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Biblical Perspectives*, 4569 Lisa Lane, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, 1989, 307 pages, \$12.95, paper. Reviewed by Herbert Kiesler and William H. Shea of the Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

The central thrust of *Wine in the Bible* is that Christians should not drink alcoholic beverages. Though the reviewers are in complete agreement with that conclusion, they interpret some of the biblical texts differently from the author.

Bacchiocchi is to be commended for taking the position of total abstinence from alcoholic use at a time when many Christians are ambivalent on the subject. He is the first Adventist scholar to address the question of wine in the Bible in a scholarly and comprehensive way. The author takes the stand that Jesus did not use alcohol in His personal life. Consequently, His believers should follow the same lifestyle.

In his last chapter, Bacchiocchi points out the destructive effects of alcohol on American society. He builds a case for abstinence by describing the harmful effects of alcohol on health, self-image, family, and society. He also covers well the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's stand on these matters.

Chapter 4 is of special interest to the reviewers as it covers early preservation of unfermented grape juice. Bacchiocchi has surveyed the Greco-Roman writers for their comments and probably has the largest collection of such material available. He draws the conclusion that ample preservation technology was available in New Testament times. However, this does not necessarily mean that biblical people living in Judea used those methods. There is little in the Scriptures to indicate how they processed their grape juice or wine.

Old Testament

The author treats linguistic matters in chapter 2, "The Meaning of 'Wine.'" Bacchiocchi's view is that the primary Old Testament Hebrew word for wine, Hebrew *yayin*, can refer to ei-

ther fermented or unfermented grape juice. In this he is correct and has assembled a good corpus of texts to demonstrate that point. He gives six texts that refer to *yayin* as a direct product of the grape harvest. Three are quite definite (Isa. 16:10, Neh. 13:15, and Jer. 40:10, 12), one of them probable (Gen. 49:11), while two are rather weak (Lam. 2:12 and the Song of Songs in general). Cumulatively the author proves the point he is making. Since there are also texts that refer to the effects of alcoholic *yayin*, it is clear that the word can also mean fermented wine.

This linguistic premise in Bacchiocchi's presentation leads to his second step. In order to present the Bible as universally against alcoholic beverages, he treats all texts that speak well of *yayin* as referring to unfermented grape juice, and all that speak ill of *yayin* as referring to fermented wine. One can see the potential for a methodological flaw with this approach that can lead to circular reasoning or assuming what one sets out to prove.

The word *yayin* appears in the Old Testament 141 times. Bacchiocchi looks with favor on the figures of scholar Robert Teachout, who has divided the references into 71 unfermented and 70 fermented. The statistics seem too even.

The linguistic evidence should show instead that *yayin* was predominantly used for fermented wine but on occasion meant unfermented grape juice. Commentators and lexicons indicate that the word *tiros* is the Hebrew word for grape juice and they agree that is how the Old Testament uses it. In one instance, however, it appears to refer to wine soon after it has begun to ferment (Hosea 4:11). This indicates that *tiros* predominantly referred to grape juice but on occasion could also refer to the fermented beverage. We have here two words that are reciprocals. But Bacchiocchi seems to have given *yayin* a different emphasis that shifts it a little from its original intent.

The reviewers disagree with the author's use of *shekar* ("strong drink"). Bac-

chiocchi defines this as unfermented date-palm juice. This does not fit the linguistics or the biblical evidence. The cognate word in the Babylonian language (*shikaru*) clearly meant beer, and cuneiform texts tell us how they brewed it. In 19 of 21 uses in the Old Testament the term gets a negative evaluation. The verbal root from which this noun comes means "to become drunk."

There is one problem text that uses the term in a favorable light (Deut. 14:23, 26). To explain this, Bacchiocchi creates a greater problem. In making this text mean unfermented drink, he weakens the force of the rest of the Old Testament against beer-drinking. This text should be interpreted as referring to action taken under rare circumstances. Originally *tiros* (verse 23), the delayed tithe of the fruit of the vine becomes *yayin* (verse 26), just as the "firstlings . . . of thy flocks" grow into oxen or sheep. It is symbolic that the later purchase is a mature product and not the original harvested from the field.

Because some people used fermented beverages in ancient times does not mean that God approved their actions. The considerable body of biblical evidence indicates that the Old Testament took a negative view of the use of fermented drinks.

New Testament

Bacchiocchi treats the word *oinos* as a generic term. In his opinion the Bible applies it to both grape juice and fermented wine. This strengthens his thesis, but the evidence is not as clear as the author wishes it to be. Regarding the miracle at Cana (John 2:1-11) there is a deeper meaning than the use of wine. Bacchiocchi ignores the theological point underlying the symbolism in the passage. Could it be that in the contrast between the water and the wine one can recognize the antithesis between law and spirit? Here water and wine have a theological function and we should not interpret it in a literal sense. The same is true for the wine in Matthew 9.

We find that Paul is appalled at conditions at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:21ff.). Bacchiocchi's suggestion that the problem

was overeating rather than intoxication ignores what Paul had to tell them —intoxication and the Lord's Supper are incompatible.

There are many other examples such as *paroinon* in 1 Timothy 3:2, 3. *Paroinon* is an excessive drinker. In 1 Timothy 5:23 small amounts for medicinal purposes would be absurd if Timothy were being advised to drink grape juice.

In Jesus' time people did not drink wine but water in their everyday life. Daily breakfast was "bread with salt" and "a tankard of water," according to the works of Jeremias. Bread and water were the chief ingredients of all meals. The scribes led a Spartan existence and intemperance was not an issue. The people used wine moderately and only at major festivals. The only group that avoided the use of any fermented beverage was the Essenes.

In conclusion, *Wine in the Bible* is a serious attempt to counter the arguments of those who take a liberal position toward alcohol. We do not question that total abstinence is the answer to the growing problem of alcoholism among Christians in today's drug-oriented society. But we do wish the author had treated the biblical evidence with greater objectivity instead of having some of it seem so contrived. It is also difficult to overlook the numerous editorial errors. In spite of the problems noted, the thrust of this book makes it a definite contribution to the literature that espouses abstinence.

Back to the Heart of Youth Work

Dewey Bertolini, Victor Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1989, 228 pages, \$12.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Angela Hunt, a teacher, pastor's wife, and free-lance writer living in Largo, Florida.

Most people of my generation never had a youth pastor. Occasionally, our church would sponsor a "youth director" to fill in during the summer and take us on various activities and community visitation. The senior pastor's message spilled over from the adults to us and what we could absorb we did. But we never had anyone that took a special interest in our spiritual lives.

Today there is a new breed of youth pastor on the scene. I have been married to one for 10 years. My husband considers his calling as legitimate and serious as any pastorate or full-time evangelistic work. And never before in the history of

our country have young people needed youth pastors more.

Back to the Heart of Youth Work is a mature, logical, perceptive work written for those who don't view youth ministry as a mere stepping stone to some other pastorate. Bertolini's 15 years of youth work shine forth in this book. His ideas and suggestions resound with experience.

Those involved in youth work for 10 or more years may not find much in this book they haven't learned from trial and error. But for those still in the growing stages of youth ministry, this book can be a needed mentor. Bertolini addresses contemporary concerns on how to have access to and be used of God on a public campus; how to minister to parents; how to recruit, maintain, and encourage lay ministers; and how to foster a love and appreciation for the senior pastor.

Youth pastoring today involves much more than visitation and beach parties. This book covers it all.

A Special Place

Bill White, Stanborough Press, Ltd., Grantham, England, 1990, 111 pages, £4.95; available in North American from Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, \$6.95, paper. Reviewed by Robert Paterson, vicar of Gabalfa, Cardiff, England.

The garden tomb and "Gordon's" Calvary are probably more attractive to Protestant Christians than the Church of the

Holy Sepulchre, the traditional site of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. This little book (written with obvious affection) argues for the possibility that the alternative might be authentic. Much of the remainder of the book is about the establishing of the Garden Tomb Association and its minister. Sprinkled throughout the book are some good photographs and many helpful insights. It makes especially interesting reading for anyone planning a trip to Israel.

My Gripe With God

George Knight, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., 1990, 160 pages, \$10.90. Reviewed by Clarence Dunbebin, associate superintendent of education, Potomac Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Takoma Park, Maryland.

My Gripe With God is provocative, encouraging, frustrating, and filled with hope. It has been a long time since I read a book that was all of these things. I could not easily lay it down.

I confess to a bias when it comes to books by George Knight, professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan. He is incisive and profound enough for those comfortable with theology, yet he writes plainly enough to be understood by the non-theologian.

When I opened my copy of *My Gripe With God*, I scanned the chapter titles and

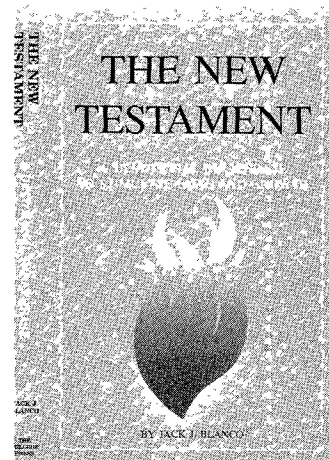
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headed for chapter 3, "The Bible's Most Disgusting Teaching." About a third of the way down the first page, I said, "George, you couldn't have done that. I don't believe it." Knight's purpose in writing chapter 3 was simple. He wants his readers to gain an emotional insight into the concept of sacrifice as the Old Testament Jews were required to experience it. I must admit he caught my attention fast. I did not put the book aside until other activities forced me to close the cover.

As a 19-year-old agnostic, George Knight formulated serious questions about God. These questions form the basis for this book. Answering those questions, Knight moves on to discuss the results of sin, and to God's solution for reversing those results. He then shows how that solution is being worked out through the life and death of Christ.

The problem of sin is much more than a human crisis, says Knight. "The real issue in the great controversy between good and evil is not the justification of mankind, but the justification of God," he adds.

My Gripe With God is a book every thoughtful pastor and Christian educator should read for spiritual growth. While Knight's style is readable, some chapters do not read as easily as others.

I am grateful for the final chapter, "Radical Faith's Response to the Cross." I needed the assurance with which he concludes his book and the statement "The Christian by faith finds hope where others experience only hopelessness and boundless despair. The theology of the cross is a theology of hope."

By all means, purchase this book, read it, internalize it, and tell your parishioners and students about it.

Pauline Theology: Ministry and Society

E. Earle Ellis, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1989, 182 pages, \$14.95, paper. Reviewed by Wayne Willey, pastor, Bentonville, Arkansas.

Occasionally I find a book that provides so many useful insights it becomes a treasured part of my library. This is such a book! I found the 34-page section on "Paul and the Eschatological Woman" alone of sufficient value to merit the book's purchase. Ellis breaks new ground in his interpretation of some of Paul's more difficult sayings on the role of women in the church. His suggestions regarding these passages are both reasonable and faithful to

the biblical context. And he presents them so clearly that one wonders "how could I have missed seeing that?"

In dealing with the doctrine of spiritual gifts, the author avoids the extremes of, on the one hand, denying the presence of the gifts in the church today and, on the other, making any one of the gifts a test of either individual experience or the authenticity of a particular part of the body of Christ. Ellis demonstrates that the fruit of the Spirit has pre-eminence over the gifts because the fruit gives evidence of Christ's character, which abides forever in the perfected people of God, while the gifts come to an end at the second coming of Christ.

Though brief, the presentation on

church order is remarkably thorough and practical.

Pauline Theology is a reference book pastors will find valuable in discussing these difficult issues with parishioners. It will also help them to re-examine their own understanding of these areas. It's subject, textual, and author indexes are excellent.

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Letters

From page 2

separate the first death from the second death and his understanding of Christ's death as merely a legal payment of a legal penalty imposed by a legalistic God led him to conclude that God is a god of torture and retribution.

It is from the second death that there is no return, and it is this death that God has never allowed to happen to any of His children. Only Jesus, His own Son, experienced the outpouring of God's wrath on the cross as the demonstration of the second death was given. I would invite Mr. Crosby to the foot of the cross and have him tell me if he sees "God's retributive justice as He inflicts the exact amount of pain Jesus deserved in light of His (our) crimes." Christ did not say "My God, My God, why are You torturing Me to death?" but rather "My God, My God, why are You forsaking Me (giving Me up, letting Me go)?"—a perfect description of God's wrath as so aptly described in Romans 1:24, 26; 4:25. —David L. Harrom, Andover, Massachusetts.

Re preliminary statement on abortion

I read the preliminary Seventh-day Adventist statement on abortion (July 1990) and don't think much of the document. It is very weak. The statement "to accept responsibility for the protection of prenatal human life while also preserving the personal liberty of women" especially concerns me. How can we protect the right of the unborn to live and yet say to women, "It's up to you to decide ('thoughtfully') whether or not to kill that prenatal life?"

Our institutions should be at the forefront of institutions that refuse to kill the unborn. Guidelines will be subject only to the economic concerns of doctors who perform life-terminating procedures in our institutions. —Hugo Meier, Palmdale, California.

■ It was impossible to make statement 4 without calling the baby a *fetus*. That somehow makes killing it all right. The committee had to stay away from the terms *human life* or *baby* or *child* to make it all right. I like statement 3. —Brenda Morris, Rapidan, Virginia.

■ When physical or mental health take

precedence over life, our priorities are out of order. When the fetus's not measuring up to our standards of perfection is grounds for taking its life, our priorities are out of order. When the circumstances of conception (rape or incest) are the determining factor, our priorities are out of order. When it comes to a life-or-life situation, then and then only with much prayer should abortion be considered.

Jesus said, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt." We say, "Father, please remove this cup from me. If You don't, then I will." —Van Ottey, Hedgesville, West Virginia.

■ Never in my 10-plus years of membership in the Adventist Church have I seen a more responsible statement, one that combines a solid biblical foundation with a strong compassion for a difficult issue.

Having degrees in both theology and public health, I believe that the statement drafted has eloquently combined the concerns of both disciplines. It avoids the extreme rigid dogmatism that attempts to make this issue a simplistic, black-and-white/yes-or-no moral judgment. Instead, it affirms the sanctity of life while preserving the integrity of the concept of free will. Far from opening the door for a "holocaust abortionist" mentality, this statement affirms the complexity and gravity of the whole concept of life and our collective responsibility for it. —Mark Fulop, Tustin, California.

■ It seems unbelievable to me that one person should be able to decide whether another living person shall continue to live or die. To my knowledge, our criminal justice system never gives the decision on capital punishment to one person. I would vote to keep this matter in limbo forever rather than to come down on the side of pro-choice! —R. W. O'Ffill, director, Health and Temperance Department, Florida Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Orlando, Florida.

■ Saying the "final decision . . . should be made by the pregnant woman" and rejecting "attempts to coerce women to remain pregnant" is a virtual acceptance of the pro-choice position. If we truly want to protect human life, we need to affirm a pro-life document that has some teeth—not some duplicitous

attempt to be all things to all people.

—Ron Thomsen, Houston, Texas.

■ Your provisional statement on abortion was one of the best to come out of church circles. I appreciate the way you struggled with balancing the sanctity of unborn life with the sanctity of born, relational life.

The anti-choice groups seem intent on using terms such as "murder" and "shedding innocent blood" in reference to all abortions. They fail to realize the complexity of the issue. In using Psalm 139:13, 14, 16, for instance, anti-choice people fail to recognize that the book of Psalms is poetry. To literalize or factualize poetry gets us into nonsense. Poetry expresses existential truth, not scientific or factual truth. Verse 15 refers to the person being "intricately wrought in the depths of the earth" (RSV). Obviously this is symbolic and poetic, not factual.

The later prophets and the New Testament witness lead us indeed into reverence for all of life. That life includes the born and unborn, the pregnant woman, the woman's family, the community, and the world's social state. Life is in constant tension with life, and agonizing decisions often have to be made between less than desirable alternatives. We cannot absolutize existence as the primary value any more than one of us can absolutize his or her life over against all other values. —George M. Ricker, director of special ministries, Campus Christian Community, Southwest Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas.

About the visiting pastors

In reference to "Where Have All the Visiting Pastors Gone?" (March 1990): Without home visitation the pastor's ministry is not complete. Nor can he evaluate his flock's needs. Christ's ministry was mostly on a one-to-one basis.

But an equally important question is Where have all the visiting elders and deacons gone? The *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual* (1986 edition) recommends that a report concerning visits made to members be rendered during a business meeting (p. 91). It also says, "The elder should, in counsel with the minister, carry much of the pastoral responsibility, visiting the church members" (p. 58). —F. Edgar Nunes, pastor, Universitas Seventh-day Adventist Church, Bloemfontein, South Africa.

■ May I also point out that not all pas-

tors are good visitors but may have a spiritual gift in some other areas, such as administration. It is a sad fact that giving one individual everything to do prevents the development of the gifts or gift that God may have given to that individual. Church tradition may have dictated this one-man-band approach, but it is surely a long way removed from Paul's picture of church growth as he describes it in Ephesians 4 and 1 Corinthians 12 and 14. Not even Jesus could or would do everything Himself—not even all the pastoral visitation. He shared that with His chosen disciples. Surely there's our model. —Matthew J. Beech, vicar of Motupiko/Tapawera and Murchison, Nelson, New Zealand.

Children of immorality

Pastor Luka Daniel (July 1990) seems to think the children of immoral women are not gifts from God. But our Lord's legal descent from Abraham was through Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba. These, the only women in Matthew's genealogy of Joseph, were each immoral or abused or from pagan, foreign stock. —James L. Swindle (father of two), Glendale, California.

■ I am sadly amused by the statement that "when many couples decide to have large families, even wealthy countries like the United States cannot keep up with the rapidly increasing needs of public services." Right now my generation is facing an old age in which there will not be enough young, productive taxpayers to support the public services modern technology has led us to expect in retirement, and many economists foresee a labor shortage in our future—all because of birth control. The problem could be partially alleviated by liberalized immigration regulations, but that would not help cure the selfishness and materialism that the easy availability of artificial birth control nurtures. —Michael T. Vahle, pastor, Faith Lutheran Church of the Verde Valley, Cottonwood, Arizona.

"True Repentance"

I read "True Repentance," by Neal C. Wilson, in the July 1990 edition of *Ministry*, and it is one of the best articles that I have read on repentance. This is a day in which many are bypassing an old-fashioned altar of repentance and are being taken into churches on a mere profession of faith.

Your ministers have expressed a desire for an outpouring of the Holy Ghost for your church. I can assure you that the promise is yours (Acts 2:4, 39).

—David R. Foster, El Dorado, Arkansas.

Thanks for *Ministry*

Among the many magazines I receive, *Ministry* has always been one of the most useful for the pastoral ministry. As I think back, there are a number of articles or series that stand out. Those on stewardship come immediately to mind. Another article of particular interest was that very brave and open discussion on

abortion. Those on prophecy I find of interest, but I still have to be convinced that they are of paramount concern. I always read articles on homiletics and administration with interest. Thanks to you, and the Adventist Church, for their willingness to share the gifts of God with others. —James Liddon, former rector of Bradwell, Suffolk, England.

After further reflection we have decided that we have had sufficient debate regarding our article on chiropractic and will publish no further material on the subject at this time. —Editors.

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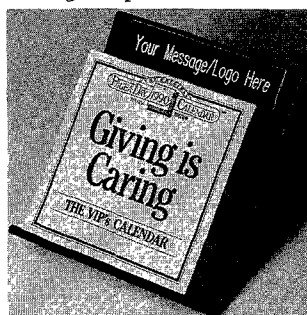
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Finding more time

Ministers wrestle daily to

balance their time between the demands of their job and the needs of their families.

This past summer my husband and I invested one day of vacation to plot a time management chart. At the outset we recognized that we must be flexible in following the plan day by day. Even so, a schedule on paper has become a great help.

We scheduled his hours each day in the office, in various church meetings, in area ministers' meetings, calling, and other responsibilities. We also wrote on the chart the hours he would plan to be at home—for attention to house, car, finances, yard work, shopping, and just sharing with the family.

Plotting the chart put us in touch with how many overtime hours he gives to church work. With this assurance, he is able to give more hours per week to family and personal needs without a guilty conscience.

The family can anticipate specific times with Dad. Also, the family now accepts unexpected interruptions more graciously. When Dad must transfer family hours to church demands, the chart clarifies the amount of time involved, and Dad allots equal time to family as soon as possible.

A time management chart increases peace of mind, enhances the minister's family life, and makes him or her more effective on the job. It's a valuable tool for maintaining a balanced life. —Submitted by Becky Donaldson, St. Cloud, Florida.

Ministry article policy changes

We've had a hard time keeping up with all the articles submitted to us here at *Ministry*—reading, evaluating, and accepting or rejecting them. We've not treated our authors well—we haven't responded as quickly as we should. So we're instituting a new policy: we will no longer accept unsolicited articles.

We don't want to discourage your writing for *Ministry*, particularly if you are a pastor or pastor's spouse. But if you have a good idea for an article that you'd like to write for us, please write us about it and submit an outline of your proposed article before sending us the article itself. (If you have a sample of your writing, include that also.) Then if your idea fits into our plans, we'll tell you to go ahead and produce the entire article. Write us at *Ministry*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600.

Please note: this policy does not apply to submissions to our pastoral talent search. Manuscripts for the talent search should be submitted as per those instructions.

Special offer on book

Zondervan Publishing House is offering pastors a free desk copy of Alden Thompson's *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?* (Zondervan, 1989; \$8.95). The article "What Kind of Prayers Would You Publish if You Were God?" which appears in this issue of *Ministry* is a reprint of the last chapter of this book.

The free desk copy is

available with an order of 10 or more copies of the book through an Adventist Book Center (ABC) and is in addition to whatever bulk discount the ABCs may offer. (For the address of the ABC nearest you, call 1-800-253-3000.)

Thompson, professor of biblical studies at Walla Walla College (College Place, Washington), proposed the plan to Zondervan as a means of encouraging serious Bible study by small groups. He notes that a rising number of voices are expressing alarm over the demise of the Bible among Christians. On the basis of his pastoral and teaching experience, Thompson is convinced that many Christians simply are afraid of the Bible, especially the Old Testament. The eight chapters of *Who's Afraid* show how the Old Testament "can lead us to a fresh appreciation of all that God has done for us" (p. 11).

Reviewers of the British edition (Paternoster, 1988) have warmly commended the book. "This is a book which makes easy reading, but deals with provocative questions. Those struggling with the unfamiliar world of the Old Testament should try it" (Sue Gillingham, in *Anvil*). "Thompson faces the difficulties of the Old Testament with sensitivity and skill. . . . The principal merit of the book is that it enables a believing Christian to take the Old Testament seriously on its own terms, and I heartily commend it" (Nicholas King, in *Catholic Herald*).

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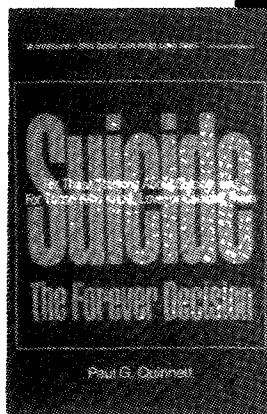
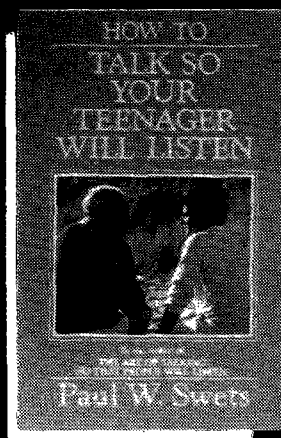
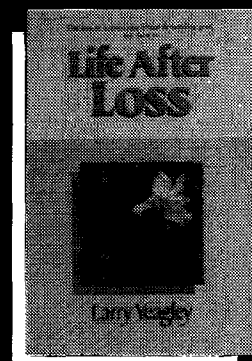
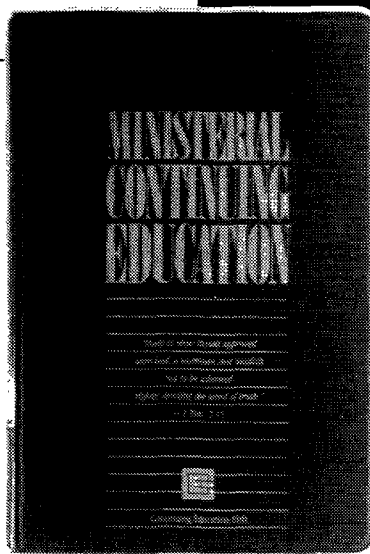
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