

Ministry

International Journal for Clergy

December 1992



Challenging the Continuity of History

Deliverance ministries

John Glass ("Beware of Deliverance Ministries," August 1992) does not prove his assertions. Christian ministry as defined by our Lord includes more than preaching; it includes healing the sick and casting out demons. Would anyone say that there is less demon possession today than in the days of our Lord, with all the satanism, witchcraft, and New Age teaching and practice leading millions to eternal destruction? If ever there was a time for this ministry to be available, that time is now. Casting out demons is as much a part of the Christian minister's responsibility as is preaching a Sabbath sermon.

Christ Himself is the perfect model for Christian ministry. He preached, taught, healed, and cast out demons. Indeed He defined ministry when "he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils" (Mark 3:14, 15).

Ellen White wrote: "How slow men are to understand God's preparation for the day of His power! God works today to reach hearts in the same way that He worked when Christ was upon this earth. In reading the Word of God, we see that Christ brought medical missionary work into His ministry. *Cannot our eyes be opened to discern Christ's methods? Cannot we understand the commission He gave to His disciples and to us?*" (*Medical Ministry*, p. 246; italics supplied)—Dunbar W. Smith, M.D., Calimesa, California.

■ John Glass is right that the best manuscripts omit Mark 16:9-20. *The Jerusalem Bible* remarks: "This ending to the gospel may not have been written by Mark, though it is old enough." *The Tyndale New Testament Commentary* on Mark states, "It would be unwise to build any theological position upon these verses alone." However, we may be setting a dangerous precedent if we appear selective in what we will accept: the Scriptures are our only defense against the delusions of spirits. Ellen White treats the

disputed verses as part of the Gospel narrative; she cites the full passage 23 times, even though she does not comment in detail. Her thrust is on healing and power to witness.—Hugh I. Dunton, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

Confused over the basis of salvation

Although I have been a Seventh-day Adventist minister for the past 16 years, only now can I consider myself a born-again Christian. Only recently I have come to understand the wonderful gospel of Jesus Christ. Your article "Confused Over the Basis of Salvation" (July 1991) got me real interested in righteousness by faith. The Holy Spirit then led me to the most wonderful truth in the Bible: the free, objective salvation in Jesus Christ; what He did for me on the cross, not what I do for Him. Since then my emphasis has been on Jesus, not just on doctrines. Of course, I am not for cheap grace.

You have no idea how rested I feel. Just knowing that Christ is my Saviour has taken a burden off my shoulders! I always felt like there was a piece missing to complete the "big puzzle." What Christ did for me on the cross has now made all the difference in my life. I translated your article "Confused Over the Basis of Salvation" into Spanish and passed it along to my students. I do not want my students to go through the same experience I did. I wasted 16 years of my life leading people to doctrines rather than to Christ. Sixteen years in the ministry not knowing the meaning of the gospel! What a shame! Many of my students are discovering the gospel and are experiencing the same joy. Even our worship experience is changing. Our worship now has purpose and meaning.

I love the Adventist Church. Yet I find two Adventist churches: those who cling to the gospel on the one side; and those who hold on to the "present truth" without the cross as the center. I may sound self-contradicting, but now I feel my mission is to evangelize Seventh-day Adventists.—Oscar A. Hernandez, Universidad Adventista de Chile.

Membership figures

I address the problem of accurate membership records as stated in your open letter to the General Conference president (October 1992).

Our division leaders returned from the Perth Annual Council saying they would conduct a membership audit. Nine months later they announced the completion of the audit. They said that the division membership figures, with some minor adjustments, were reliable. I don't doubt that in nine months a Division can carefully evaluate reports from its unions and conferences (fields). However, the problem is really located at the grass roots, the local church.

Our union, for example, reports over 100,000 members. Our quarterly baptismal reports are amazing. People are literally flooding into the church. Praise the Lord.

The problem is that our rapid growth has out-paced the record system of the local church. We haven't had official membership record books for local church clerks for a decade or more. A few of these precious 100,000 plus names are recorded in very old official record books. Most appear in generic note books, or on random scraps of paper in the back of someone's Bible, or, at worst, nowhere. Our church clerks don't understand their work as well as they should.

District pastors give their quarterly reports like this: "Last quarter we had 500 members plus 100 baptisms minus 25 for death and apostasy equals 575." The new figure is hardly ever cross-checked against actual membership lists because they usually don't exist in a reliable form.

Our union's current portion of the General Conference statistical report is the end product of many, many years of quarterly district reports like the one described. Our national census reports 1 million nominal Adventists.

We need to work on the system as follows: 1. Every local church must have an official membership record book; 2. every church clerk must be trained; 3. every pastor must be trained
(Continued on page 31)

God has appointed the Seventh-day Adventist Church to perform a special work at the end of time. Throughout the ages God has always commissioned a person or group to herald an impending calamity or blessing. George Knight in his article "Challenging the Continuity of History" develops the thesis that the eventual success of the Adventist Church is just as conditional as the success of the Jews. Our cover celebrates the third anniversary of the dismantling of the Berlin wall.

We publish several articles directly related to the needs of pastor's spouses. However, every reader will benefit by the insights of our women writers: Hannele Ottschowski, Mary Barrett, and Linda Gallimore.

This issue also contains our Annual Council report. The most important news that affects the ministry the most is the election of James and Sharon Cress as the secretary of the Ministerial Association and director of Shepherdess International.

We normally do not report on division year-end meetings, but an action taken by the North American Division at their year-end meeting was so significant that we are reproducing it in this issue. Our church is blessed by many caring, helping, self-supporting groups; it is also burdened at times by some who are not so supportive of the church. This action details four such groups who have been found wanting. We regret that we have to issue such a report, but you need to know that some of these organizations are not really blessing the church.

May the grace of our Lord be with you as you enter 1993.

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The transforming change

John M. Fowler

He was a source of terror, an object of pity, and an epitome of uselessness. No chain could bind him. No person could tame him. Night or day made no difference to his will to violence; the tombs were his resting place, the demons his companions, the night his solace. He cut himself and did not know. He cut others and did not care.

But one day Jesus met the man of the Gerasenes. Out of that encounter came forth healing. Violence gave way to quietness. The itch to destruction was replaced by an eagerness to be useful. The frenzy of a divisive and tormented soul found itself transformed into an integrated human being at peace with himself. Insanity met its judgment. The man became a new man (see Mark 5:1-20).

But newness brought its own terror. The people were terrified at what Jesus had done, and they begged Him to leave town. They had their reasons; we have ours. Not so openly perhaps, not always so directly, but ever so subtly we find ourselves begging the Lord to leave us alone. For when He comes and where He is, He demands change—unpalatable, disturbing, radical, and costly change.

The change is unpalatable. When Jesus comes, He brings a new scale of values. Like the citizens of Gerasa, we too have our honorable occupations. We have our town uppermost in our collective mind. We plan well, we work hard, we build together brick by brick Gerasa's chamber of commerce. We work at a system to assure the material wealth and the consumer comforts of the commu-

nity. But when Jesus comes to town, He finds that the collective has crowded out the individual. On one side of our balance of values is the community, satisfied with prosperous pursuits; on the other side, a lonesome man, forgotten by the community's preoccupation with the present. The man is hungry, tired, naked, and not of himself. The community is content, comfortable, and booming. Jesus casts His lot on the side of redeeming the man. The pigs rush to their death. We join the people of Gerasa, weep for the pigs, ignore the man, and beg Jesus to leave us alone.

The change is disturbing. When Jesus comes, He upsets the status quo. Like the citizens of Gerasa, we find security and safety in things as they are. In our fathers' trades. In our mothers' recipes. In our settled convictions. In our committees' wisdom. In the arrogant strength of our policies. In the structure of our system.

But Jesus has other things on His mind. While we want to talk about how to make a living, He wants to talk about how to live. We want to press on with our programs and strategies, but He wants to wait for people. We want to nurture the healthiest stock market of the region, and He wants to usher in the kingdom of God. We are in search for power, but He wants to redefine power as surrender. Against our self-imposed mandate for greatness, He prescribes a mission of servanthood. As opposed to the arrogance of our self-importance, He insists on the mystery of brotherhood. While we like to stay by the easy and the comfortable, He bids us rise to the holy and the lofty. We seek life, He offers death. His formula for fulfillment

is a mystery locked up in a paradox: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone" (John 12:24).*

The change is radical. When Jesus comes, He brings about a total and revolutionary change. The citizens of Gerasa witnessed such a transformation; they "saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind" (Mark 5:15). In one moment he was a raging volcano, a rushing tide of violence, an uncontrollable fury; in the very next moment he was a picture of calm, a certitude of quietness, an arrival of peace. In one moment he was naked, erratic, directionless, lacking in identity, groping without destiny; in the very next, he knew who he was and what he should be doing.

The difference between wasted life and the discovery of assurance is Jesus. When He comes, He comes to mediate God's grace and bring about a radical change. When He speaks, He commands the uncomfortable. When He sits at the table, He talks of the hungry and the poor. When He knocks, He insists on unconditional entrance. When He enters, He permits no competitor.

The change is costly—but transforming. When Jesus transforms a person and offers a new life, the new life is free but not cheap. It is free because one cannot and does not buy it or barter for it. It is free because the new life is never a humanly achieved reality, but always a gift of God's grace: "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

But the new life in Jesus is never cheap nor incidental. As Bonhoeffer forcefully comments, it's everything. "It is nothing else than bondage to Jesus Christ alone, completely breaking through every programme, every ideal, every set of laws. No other significance is possible, since Jesus is the only significance. Beside Jesus nothing has any significance. He alone matters. When we are called to follow Christ, we are summoned to an exclusive attachment to this person."¹

The new man of the Gerasa discovered the joy of that exclusive attachment. He sat at the feet of the One who healed him and became the bearer of the good news. But his fellow citizens of Gerasa

found the price too heavy to bear. They were "so fearful of endangering their earthly interests that He who had vanquished the prince of darkness before their eyes was treated as an intruder, and the Gift of heaven was turned from their doors."²

They had their reason; we have ours. But the Gift of heaven still remains unchanged: ours by faith in His grace. ■

*All Scripture passages in this editorial are from the Revised Standard Version.

¹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1963), p. 63.

² Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 339.

The pastorhood of all believers

Rex D. Edwards

The pastoral office is an acted parable. It is a gracious likeness to the life of the church in its calling to unite the Word of God and the work of God. It is a lively reminder of the inseparable wholeness of the church's mission. In person and office the pastor combines both the declaration of God's reconciling love to the congregation in worship, and the active ministration of that love to the congregation according to its several needs.

However, this symbolic nature of the pastoral office is frequently obscured, if not obliterated, in our churches today. The size and dispersal of the typical urban congregation has led increasingly to multiple ministries with specialized functions. A senior minister cares for preaching;

another, visitation, with primary responsibility for pastoral care; another, youth and educational divisions of the church or the administrative duties of a busy and complex congregational life. Thus, Word and work have been sundered, and the symbol destroyed. We cannot, of course, wish away the difficulties or pronounce irresponsible judgment on those who are honestly attempting to create an effective ministry. We can, however, encourage them to combine specialized function with pastoral wholeness and commend the whole church to an earnest grappling with the problem. Thus, the church may be helped to restore a proper image of itself.

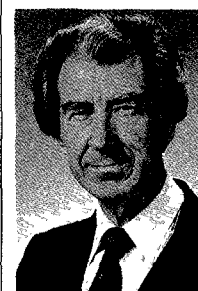
In yet another way the pastor serves a representative function. The New Testament directs those in Christ to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). To bear one another's burdens means, in part, to bring to bear

upon them the resources of the divine life in Jesus Christ. Such resources are not the possession of any individual or the natural endowment of an ecclesiastical elite, the "spiritually gifted" persons the church has acknowledged by the bestowal of the pastoral office. On the contrary, the resources of the divine life are given to the church as the body of Christ. As such, those resources are the endowment of all Christ's faithful by virtue of their own faithfulness.

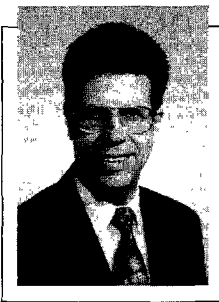
The church as the pastor

In one important sense, then, the church is the pastor. The church has created the pastoral office for ministry in its own behalf. The pastor gives such attention to this ministry only as the congregation, with its other vocational preoccupations, cannot give. The pastor gives such guidance as the congregation, for lack of training and experience, cannot give. The pastor, without invitation, seeks out those in need in ways that would seem presumptuous to other professionals. The pastor stands in places where, for reasons of delicacy, the congregation neither can nor ought to stand. But the pastor always does these things, not in his or her own behalf, but in a representative capacity. The church has created the pastoral office to minister in its own behalf, to bear each other's burdens, and to admonish and encourage in all things according to the mind of Christ.

Yet it should be clear that there is no genuine bearing of one another's burdens



when the church is present only in a representative sense. The congregation may not assume that it has discharged the whole of its pastoral responsibility simply by virtue of investing in that office able men and women of learned piety, personal sympathy, and apparently endless energy. Just as the lay apostolate means "the priesthood of all believers," so it also means "the pastorhood of all believers." The members of the congregation, both individually and corporately, will seek, through the exercise of a devout imagination under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to discover afresh what new demands and opportunities are present to its burden-bearing ministry. ■



Raising or lowering standards?

J. David Newman

I

f you want to start a discussion in a church group just mention the word “standards,” and everyone will have an opinion. Mention the

word “jewelry,” and the discussion will become more intense.

Many people believe that the Adventist Church is abandoning its standards and is rapidly becoming more and more permissive. Some people link this departure from historic Adventist standards to the preaching of what some call the “New theology,” and others to too much emphasis on the cross, love, forgiveness, and acceptance.

When people are asked for an example of this lowering of standards, they invariably select jewelry. “I know a church where all the preacher talks about is righteousness by faith, and I see more and more people putting on jewelry,” says one person. By linking these two items together, it is assumed that if a person emphasizes the gospel, standards will be lowered.

Does a true preaching of the cross lower standards? No! No! No! It raises standards. Jesus makes it crystal-clear that obedience is the fruit of our love:

“If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15). * “Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him” (verse 21). “If you obey my commands, you will

remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father’s commands and remain in his love” (John 15:10).

True obedience, however, is more than listkeeping. While God is intensely interested in correct behavior, He is even more interested in correct relationships. Each time Jesus entered into a conflict with the Pharisees, He sought to lead them away from their emphasis on the “doing” of the law to the “being” of the law, to “mercy, not sacrifice” (Matt. 12:7), to loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself (Matt. 22:37-39). Jesus told His disciples that the primary mark of discipleship is that “you love one another” (John 13:35).

Paul emphasizes that the motive behind the act is of even greater importance to God than just the act itself: “Everything that does not come from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Sin is first the absence of a relationship with God, which then results in sinful behavior. Jesus said: “In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness” (Matt. 23:28). It is possible to observe the letter of the law and yet fail to keep the spirit of the law.

Standards and jewelry

How does one explain a church where the pastor is preaching a balanced message of grace and law, where the cross is emphasized, where the beauty of Jesus is dwelt on from sermon to sermon, and yet, so it seems, more people are putting on jewelry than ever before? Isn’t that proof

that the pastor is not preaching the right message? Before we judge too quickly, let’s examine the issue a little more closely.

Seventh-day Adventists have defined jewelry very narrowly. The 1972 Annual Council teaching interprets jewelry as “necklaces, earrings, bracelets, jewelled and other ornamental rings.” However, dictionaries and non-Adventists define jewelry as anything used to adorn the person. This would include pins, tie-tacks, cufflinks, brooches, scarves, pocket handkerchiefs, etc. If a woman ties a silk scarf around her neck, no one complains, but if she replaces that scarf with a string of pearls, she is immediately condemned. Yet both serve the same purpose—adornment.

Many women consider these items an integral part of good grooming, just as men would never consider discarding their tie, which is also looked upon as part of good grooming. The tie, incidentally, serves no other function than adornment, yet we allow this aspect of our culture to dictate to us.

A man’s tie-tack is another unnecessary item. I own a tie-tack that clips behind the tie and is completely hidden from view. Therefore, it is not necessary for a tie-tack to show except as adornment. Some people believe that if one person can wear a fancy brooch, others can wear a simple earring. We too often forget the principle and dwell on limited applications of that principle. Scripture states the principles of simplicity, economy, and modesty, but nowhere gives

us an exhaustive list of what is or is not appropriate. The various applications of these principles may or may not be sinful, according to the motive and maturity of these people.¹

Proper standards

Now, it is quite possible that these same people who seem lax in one area are abandoning many sinful practices in other areas. Because they love Jesus and want to be like Him they concentrate on developing the fruit of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22). They may also be intent on feeding the hungry, helping the stranger, clothing the naked, ministering to the sick, and visiting those in prison (Matt. 25:35, 36). It is also quite possible that they are bringing up children in the Lord, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble, and devoting themselves to all kinds of good deeds (1 Tim. 5:10). These people might also be learning tolerance (Rom. 14:1) and patience with others (Rom. 15:1). They may also be preaching, teaching, and evangelizing (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 4:5).

As a result of the pastor's preaching, the standard may be much higher than normal practice. Under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, and as people learn and practice the principles of simplicity and economy, some may trade in their Mercedes for a Toyota Camry or Honda Accord; some may give up their homes with four baths and a three-car garage for a home with two baths and a one-car garage; others may decide to give up their weekly visits to the hairdresser and put that money into missions; again, others may switch their motorbike for a bicycle.

Faith and works

Before we are too hasty to judge what is going on in certain churches, we must conduct a much deeper evaluation. It is possible that the minister is preaching cheap grace. But we need to be careful lest we conduct a superficial evaluation. The Bible makes it crystal-clear that we are saved by grace alone (Eph. 2:8), but it is also just as clear that works will always follow faith (Eph. 2:10). When sinners stand at the foot of the cross and recognize the sacrifice Jesus has made for them; when they understand that He has so graciously accepted the penalty they deserve; when they see that He will credit

His perfect life to their account; when they believe that "there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1), they will respond by saying "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13).

Ellen White reminds us that "God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.' This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning."²

God wants us to be victorious over sin, and we do not have to wait a lifetime for this to happen. Again Ellen White says: "The germination of the seed represents the beginning of spiritual life, and the development of the plant is a beautiful figure of Christian growth. . . . At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime."³

God works in such a wonderful way. He gives us the perfect character of Christ so that as long as we trust in Him we are counted absolutely perfect by God; and yet He longs for us to become in deed what we are in faith in Christ. So day by day we grow toward the ideal that God has for us, and yet according to our individual growth we can be perfect at every stage.

Victory comes only as we look at the cross. Standards are raised in proportion to how much the cross is lifted up. "The love of Christ," said Paul, "constraineth us" [2 Cor. 5:14]. This was the actuating principle of his conduct; it was his motive-power. If ever his ardor in the path of duty flagged for a moment, one glance at the cross caused him to gird up anew the loins of his mind, and press forward in the way of self-denial."⁴

Is it just possible that while we are arguing over jewelry, where to watch movies, and whether people have reached the stage that I have reached, we are doing nothing about the 300,000 homeless children in the United States—to say nothing of the millions of homeless boys and girls worldwide? Is it possible that in our desire to overcome, we forget that

Victory comes only as we look at the cross. Standards are raised in proportion to how much the cross is lifted up.

one of the most important traits of the overcomers is compassion?

Yes, we must raise our standards; a person in love with Jesus wants to grow more like Him every day. Those who love the gospel will aim for the highest standards. God calls us to holy living. But let's make sure we are majoring in "the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter without neglecting the former" (Matt. 23:23). ■

* All Scripture texts in this editorial are from the New International Version.

¹ I will examine the whole issue of jewelry in a later editorial.

² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

³ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 65.

⁴ *Gospel Workers*, p. 293.

Tribute to Pastor and Mrs. Floyd Bresee

The ministers and spouses of the Africa-Indian Ocean Division salute Floyd and Ellen Bresee for the faithful labor of love that they have rendered to their Lord and their church around the world. Their dedication to team ministry, preaching the Word, and giving encouragement to minister's wives will have residual impact on this division for years to come. May heaven's richest blessings attend them as they flow into their retirement years and toward the bright dawn of Christ's return.—W. S. Whaley, Ministerial Secretary, Africa-Indian Ocean Division, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire.

Challenging the continuity of history

George R. Knight

A historian examines the similarities between the failure of Marxism and the frustration of Adventism.



George Knight, Ph.D., is professor of church history at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

W

hat do Marxism and Adventism have in common?

In the words of Paul, I might add, "Much in every way." While I do not intend to examine the "every way" similarities, we will take a look at two significant relationships that could be included in the "much."

Marxism: an eschatological movement

Marxism is an eschatological movement that reflects a great deal of Christian content. Marxism began as a movement with a global mission to usher in the millennium through preaching its own version of the "good news." It might be postulated that the reason Marxism hated Christianity is that it was in essence its rival rather than its opposite. It had its own prophets, scriptures, and stringent ethical codes, as well as its own millennial vision of the last events of Planet Earth.

In short, Marxism was in competition with Christianity in the marketplace of human souls and cosmic ideologies. It was fighting for victory for its own version of the "great controversy."

Generations of idealistic young people have been thrilled with the essential Marxist message—that all people should do "all they can to contribute to the general welfare." Thus individuals should put as much into the collective pot as possible, while taking out only

what they need. At its best, that dictum is also near the heart of the Judeo-Christian ethic.

One reason Karl Marx despised Christianity is that he saw it as an inadequate avenue to millennial bliss. Worse! Christianity was a deceptive lie. It promised the truth, but turned out to be a deception. For example, in place of operationalizing Christian values, Western Christianity, Marx indicated, uplifted the survival-of-the-fittest law of the capitalistic jungle and became a tool for the rich and powerful to control the masses. Thus Marx saw that Christianity was too often not the way of salvation, but "the opium of the people"—a way to get the masses to swallow the medicine of oppression. That insight was not only brilliant; it was too often correct. *For Marx, Christianity had become the antichrist.*

Thus Marx and his followers developed their own "true philosophy"—their own true religion, their own avenue to salvation, and their own road to the millennial kingdom. Their beliefs impelled their missionaries throughout the world.

Marxism, therefore, should *not* be viewed as an economic system, but as an eschatological philosophy in which economic socialism was an essential aspect of reality.

Marxist eschatology was built upon the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, especially Hegel's triadic dialectic. Hegel's philosophy of history allowed for historical progression

through the opposition of opposing forces. Thus every idea or thesis would come up against its opposite or antithesis. The result would be a new resolution or synthesis. That new synthesis would in turn become a thesis that would be met by a new antithesis to form a new synthesis, and so on. Thus for Hegel history was progressive and dynamic. It flowed from point A to point B to point C.

But Marx pointed out in his adaptation of Hegelianism that the dialectic would come to an end. The final synthesis would come with the dictatorship of the proletariat, when the egalitarian ideas of socialism at its best would be established forever throughout the world. There would follow a time of peace and plenty for all. The age of the oppressor would be over for all time. The Marxist millennial kingdom would have arrived.

The flaw in the Marxist gospel

But the Marxist eschatological dream has obviously failed. Why? What was wrong with its end-time formula?

That is not always an easy question to answer. My own doctoral work is in social reconstructionism (a revolutionary philosophy). Before entering doctoral studies, I had, in my frustration with my church and my personal life, resigned from the Seventh-day Adventist ministry and had determined to leave both the church and Christianity, but I needed the answer to life. So I studied social philosophies. Still being a fairly young idealist, I was enthralled with the revolutionary doctrines I was imbibing. In fact, my dissertation was on the theories of George S. Counts, who in the depths of the depression of the 1930s put fire into the possibilities for educational revolution through his *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* It was a beautiful theory, built upon the best human values.

But at the end of several years of such study I was forced to ask the hard question: "This is all so beautiful, but why hasn't it worked?"

My answer is that the Marxist and non-Marxist revolutionary spirits of a socialist nature had not taken into account the true nature of humanity and the problem of sin.

It sounds good for rosy-eyed idealists to say that all should put in what they can and take out what they need. But in practice people take out as much as possible and put in as little as possible. Thus the fall of Marxist socialism.

But it was built upon good doctrine in part. Many conservative American religionists are going to be shocked when they get to heaven and find out that God is a socialist. After all, He couldn't be a capitalist.¹ The functional strength of capitalism is based upon the insight of the truth of human selfishness—get all you can for yourself at the expense of others. That doctrine is appealing to "normal" people, so capitalism works in a sinful society as long as it is heavily regulated by socialism to keep it from being too brutal. The driving force of capitalism is to maximize profits at the expense of labor. It is a survival-of-the-fittest economic doctrine that arrived at its glory days at the same time as Darwinism and social Darwinism. The strength of capitalism is that it has captured the basic truth on the nature of human selfishness—the centerfold of sin. That is an essential aspect of capitalism's correct vision of doctrinal truth.

Indeed neither socialism nor capitalism works in a fallen world. Socialism, as Communism found out, needed to be buttressed by capitalistic incentives to get people working, while capitalism, as in the experience of the United States, needed to be softened by socialistic humanitarianism. The real problem for pure socialism as found in idealistic Communism is that while capturing the economic principle of heaven, it missed the driving force that makes things work on earth—it had overlooked human nature and the effects of sin. *It missed the linchpin of the human problem, and thus fell*—and mighty was the fall thereof. *Marxism, in short, failed to take into account the tremendous power of vested interests among both its own leadership and followership.*

Adventism and the flaw

That brings me to the second major point on the similarities between Marxism and Adventism: the temptation to downplay the force of human nature (the core of sin) and vested interests. (Note: I did not say *ignore*, but *downplay*.)

At this point I should say a word about Adventism's vision of itself as a prophetic end-time remnant force in world history. Like Marxism, Adventism finds its roots and purpose in millennial hope; in bringing about the end of human history and the ushering in of the kingdom of God—the final solution, the final dialectical synthesis. Also like the Marxists, such a goal has pushed Seventh-day Ad-

ventist missionaries to the ends of the earth.

There is a major difference in the eschatologies, however, since the Marxist solution is basically humanistic. In Marxism the kingdom will be ushered in by human effort. Adventism, of course, with its view of the Bible, cannot take that viewpoint on the end of history. The Adventist solution is not humanistic but theistic: it is God's effort, not humanity's, that will result in the ushering in of the kingdom.

But at this point Adventism's theology often becomes somewhat blurred. After all, is not God dependent upon the remnant church's preaching of the three angels' messages, including the everlasting gospel, "to every nation and tribe and tongue and people" (Rev. 14:6)?* And isn't the last great accomplishment of the end-time church the preaching of "this gospel of the kingdom . . . throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:4)? Haven't Adventists believed that the Lord's coming awaits the faithfulness of His last-day remnant people on earth?

In summary, have not we as Adventists to some extent made God's theistic solution dependent upon a humanistic accomplishment? And if so, may we not possibly be tending toward the fallacy that undermined Marxist millennialism?

Now, I am not saying that Seventh-day Adventist theology is wrong or that we should stop our missionary activity, but I am suggesting that we ought to reexamine Adventism's past and present and its possible futures.

That brings us back to the secularizing stages of the church that I earlier described in *Ministry*.² In that article I indicated that churches, like people, go through an aging process and that religious revivals eventually succumb to the process of secularization. Thus repeatedly across history we find that once vital and reforming movements degenerated into denominations that are often preoccupied with maintaining their own existence and traditions. That article also pointed out that there are several sociological forces arrayed against the continuity of vital reformation that make it almost impossible for a religious movement to maintain its original intensity and single mindedness toward mission.

As Adventism approaches its 150th birthday in 1994 it seems to be moving in lockstep with other religious movements

To put it another way, are Adventists *guaranteed* a victory in just the way they have always taught it?

from the early church to the Reformation to Wesleyanism. Each went through a secularizing process that put it off its missiological course by its 150th birthday. It is of crucial importance to realize that *not one major religious revival in the history of Christianity has successfully escaped that process.* None has broken the process of history. None has, in Marxist terms, ended the dialectic.

And why? The answer seems to lie, as I suggested in my earlier article on the Adventist drift toward secularism and institutionalism, in the dynamics of human nature, including the problems of mixed motivation and vested interests of both individuals and national segments of the church. Those problems not only derailed Marxism and earlier Christian movements, but they could conceivably sidetrack Adventism. At least I see no empirical reasons to believe otherwise, given a church that has over-institutionalized, overbureaucratized, and seems to be in the process of becoming increasingly happier with the kingdom of this world.

A lack of insight into the tenacity of human nature in the face of human inability in cosmic affairs eventually ended the Marxist dream. Is it not a *possibility* that the same forces might eventually take their toll on Adventism? To put it another way, are Adventists *guaranteed* a victory in just the way they have always taught it?

Probably not. *It was one of the great fallacies of the first-century Jews to believe that the God of heaven was somehow dependent upon them.* They had carefully read the Old Testament and correctly concluded that the *main* line of Messianic prophecy taught that Christ was to come as a mighty king after the order of the conquering David; that an earthly millennium would be set up and

that all the faithful from around the world would come to Jerusalem to pay homage to Yahweh; that the Messiah would conquer all Israel's enemies.

The point to remember is that the first-century Jews had come to correct prophetic conclusions. From Isaiah to Malachi the theme of a victorious Israel and an earthly millennium dominate the prophetic literature. On that basis, it is little wonder that they rejected Jesus, who claimed to be the Christ. It must be admitted that Jesus was a Christ who was truly out of harmony with the main prophetic thrust of the Old Testament scriptures. I would suggest that most of us, had we lived in the time of Christ, would have drawn the same conclusion, along with the arrogant one that God was dependent upon the literal Jewish remnant.

The first-century Jews forgot only two things: (1) human nature and (2) the right of God to be God in spite of human failure.

They forgot that the prophetic promises fell within the *covenant relationship*; a relationship that promised blessings *if and only if* God's people remained selflessly faithful to Him. The Jews had forgotten the big "if" of the covenant: "If you obey the voice of the Lord your God, being careful to do all his commandments which I command you this day, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth" (Deut. 28:1). "But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God . . . , then all these curses shall come upon you" (verse 15).

God had done all He could for His remnant, but they did not respond in heartfelt allegiance to Him. Human nature overcame them, and they forgot that God could still be God independent of them. Many Jews of the New Testament era had come to believe that God was dependent upon them for the coming of His Messianic kingdom. "If Israel were to keep two Sabbaths according to the laws thereof," cried some of their rabbis, "they would be redeemed immediately."³ "If," cried others, "Israel repented in one day, the Son of David would come immediately. If Israel would keep one sabbath correctly, the Son of David would come immediately."⁴

"But," Jesus remonstrated with them, "you have missed the boat. You have missed the meaning of the covenantal relationship. Therefore, God can raise up children of Abraham from the stones if need be" (Matt. 3:9, paraphrased). That

God is not dependent upon human beings was Christ's message. *God could still be God. He could still act independently to achieve His goals.*

Because of the failure of the Jewish remnant, God altered His eschatological promises and put into action Messianic plan number two. That plan was tucked away in such passages as Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22, passages that were not even perceived as being Messianic. Messianic plan number two was not one of Jewish victory, but of a suffering and rejected servant;⁵ a Messiah most Jews could not even recognize because of their fixation on their victory and on God's dependence on them and their actions. Thus, even though the first-century Jews taught a biblically correct end-time doctrine, the first coming of Jesus overtook those students of prophecy as a thief in the night. They were passed over, and God raised up the Christian church to complete the Jewish mission to the world.

The conditional nature of covenant

But once again, it must be noted, the Christian church is also a covenant people. God's New Testament people are still in an *if/then* relationship with the promises of God. They, as God's people, still have to wrestle with the frailty and self-centeredness of human nature. *They still must recognize the fact that God can still be God and independently act to bring the affairs of earth to a close in His own way if His church loses its missiological integrity.*

I would like to suggest that we as Adventists ought to keep our eyes open to the possibility that God might have a plan number two to bring about the end of the Christian age, just as He had for Christ's first coming. We need to keep open the possibility that even in our time the covenant-keeping God has not made Himself dependent upon human faithfulness. Prophetic confidence resides in the absolute certainty of Christ's first and second advents, rather than in any secondary promises concerning those advents or any specific human means of bringing them about.

That distinct possibility first came to my mind as a seminary student in the mid-1960s while reading *Selected Messages*. There we read about the Adventist work spreading "like fire in the stubble." The passage goes on to state that "God will employ agencies whose origin man will be unable to discern; *angels will do a work which men might have had the*

blessing of accomplishing, had they not neglected to answer the claims of God.”⁶ We generally call attention only to the first part of that passage, while neglecting the if/then language and the plan number two type talk of its second part. Again, Ellen White wrote: “None of us can do without the blessing of God, but God can do His work without the aid of man if He so choose.”⁷

“There is a deplorable lack of spirituality among our people,” Ellen White wrote in the late 1880s. She had seen that “self-glorification was becoming common among Seventh-day Adventists and that unless the pride of man should be abased and Christ exalted we should, as a people, be in no better condition to receive Christ at His second advent than were the Jewish people to receive Him at His first advent.”⁸ In another passage she suggests that the great crisis could steal upon Seventh-day Adventists as a thief,⁹ and in yet another place she claims that if a church is not faithful to God it can be bypassed in His work, “whatever” its “position.”¹⁰ She drew a lesson from history: “Because” we read of the ancient Jews, “they failed of fulfilling God’s purpose, the children of Israel were set aside, and God’s call was extended to other peoples. If these too prove unfaithful, will they not in like manner be rejected?”¹¹

From the perspective of Ellen White, God did not grant the Adventist Church any immunities. “In the balances of the sanctuary the Seventh-day Adventist Church is to be weighed. She will be judged by the privileges and advantages that she has had. If her spiritual experience does not correspond to the advantages that Christ, at infinite cost, has bestowed on her, if the blessings conferred have not qualified her to do the work entrusted to her, on her will be pronounced the sentence: ‘Found wanting.’ By the light bestowed, the opportunities given, will she be judged.”¹²

Finally, in the midst of the Minneapolis crisis Ellen White deplored the fact that Seventh-day Adventists had been acting like other churches. She went on to say that “we hoped that there would not be the necessity for another coming out.”¹³ Thus Ellen White at the very least hinted at the possibility of Adventist failure. Finally, in 1883 she wrote that “it should be remembered that the promises and threatenings of God are alike conditional.”¹⁴

After coming across a few such hints of alternative eschatological futures in the writings of Ellen White, I began to read the Bible for hints of a backup eschatological vision in the New Testament, that, like plan number two in the Old Testament, *might possibly read clearer or even differently by way of hindsight*.¹⁵

The first text that came to my mind was Luke 17:26-30: “As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of man. They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise as it was in the days of Lot—they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they built, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all—so will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed.”

Now, there are two ways to read that eschatological passage. The first understands it from God’s perspective, as reflected in Genesis 6:5. Speaking of the time of Noah, Genesis claims, “the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” From that viewpoint, the eating and drinking and marrying became degenerate signs of the times.

But there is another perspective in Luke 17: the human interpretation of what was happening in the days of Noah and Lot. Their contemporaries were eating, drinking, marrying, buying, selling, planting, and building until the very day of their destruction. In other words, life appeared to be going on just like normal. “So will it be on the day when the Son of man is revealed.” Thus it seems that we should at least admit the possibility that that day could come as a thief to modern-day students of prophecy if the if/then covenant obligations have been disrupted.

Jesus told us to be ready, “for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matt. 24:44). That hour is today and tomorrow. It is a time for which Adventists could be unprepared if they have not even considered the possibility of an eschatological plan number two.

Lessons for Adventism

Now, what can we conclude from all this? *Not*, I would suggest, that the end will definitely come about in a different way than Adventists have always taught.

Adventism needs to come to its individual and collective senses if it is to maintain meaningful existence.

But it does seem necessary to conclude that Adventists must allow for the *possibility* (1) that God can close the events of history in a different way than promised if the faith conditions of the covenant are not fulfilled by His people; (2) that God still reserves the right to be God; and (3) that He is no more dependent upon modern spiritual “Jews” than He was upon ancient literal Jews.

Furthermore, another possible conclusion is that if Adventism hopes to complete its historic mission it will have to come to grips with the sociological forces of history that eventually spelled failure for Marxism and drove other Christian bodies off their missiological course by the end of their first 150 years. The human factor expressing itself in such realities as secular drift, vested interests that hinder top-to-bottom *radical reform* in Adventist organizational and institutional structures, and mixed motivation among both laity and clergy can only be overcome by conscious, heroic, and continuous efforts at reform and revitalization.¹⁶ And those efforts can come only through renewed and daily surrender in faith to the cosmic God of the covenant.

Adventism needs to come to its individual and collective senses if it is to maintain meaningful existence.

And, you may ask, “what if Adventism fails to come to a sense of its contingent/conditional/finite status?” *Then God will still be God, just as human nature will still be human nature*. He is not short on power or dedication to bring about the coming eschaton. ■

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* Unless otherwise noted, Bible texts used in

this article are from the Revised Standard Version.

¹ At this point it is important to recognize that the terms "socialism" and "capitalism" are used in this article as abstract economic principles developed by philosophers of marketplace. As such, the basic meanings of capitalism and socialism should not be confused with any past or present expressions of those philosophies in real life.

Too many people have blurred the distinction between American practices and the ultimate ideals of the Kingdom of God. Those in that position might also be surprised to discover that God is neither an American (or Western European) nor the ruler of a democracy.

The ultimate principles of heaven must not be confounded with the economic and political necessities of a sinful earth in which no one person or group can be trusted (an insight that led the ex-Puritan founding fathers to place the system of checks and balances in the United States Constitution) and in which sin pushes individuals and nations in the direction of distorted self-interest. One gets the impression that service and sharing will be of much more concern to the citizens of heaven than acquisitiveness or the maximization of self-interest.

² George R. Knight, "Adventism, Institutionalism, and the Challenge of Secularization," *Ministry*, June 1991.

³ Babylonian Talmud, Shabbath 118b.

⁴ Jerusalem Talmud, Taanith 64.

⁵ The presence of alternative eschatologies in the Old Testament should not lead us to discount the need for the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ under either model. After all, substitutionary sacrifice is central to the Old Testament; being first hinted at in Genesis 3 and 4 and later highlighted by the sanctuary service. On the other hand, the Bible does not explain how the sacrifice of Christ would have taken place under the victorious Israel model. The necessity is clear but not the means. I have treated the centrality of substitutionary sacrifice to the entire Bible in *My Gripe With God: A Study in Divine Justice and the Problem of the Cross* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1990), pp. 44-60.

⁶ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), book 1, p. 118. (Italics supplied.)

⁷ ———, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 736. (Italics supplied.)

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 727, 728.

⁹ ———, *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 414.

¹⁰ ———, *The Upward Look* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), p. 131. (Italics supplied.)

¹¹ ———, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D. C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), p. 304. (See also p. 303.)

¹² ———, *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 247.

¹³ Ellen G. White Manuscript 30, 1889, in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D. C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), vol. 1, pp. 356, 357.

¹⁴ White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 67.

¹⁵ The possibilities of New Testament plan number two in the following discussion are merely hinted at rather than developed to any extent in this article.

¹⁶ I have more fully developed this topic in "The Fat Lady and the Kingdom," *Adventist Review*, Feb. 14, 1991, pp. 8-10; "Church Structure: Help or Hindrance to the Mission of the Church," *Adventist Professional*, March 1992, pp. 14-16; and in the *Ministry* article referenced in note 1 above.

'I, if I be lifted up'—a response

Larry Christoffel

D

uring the 1880s two young editors stimulated the Seventh-day Adventist Church's thinking on justification by faith through the col-

umns of the *Signs of the Times* creating such a stir that they were allowed to present their convictions at the seminal 1888 General Conference. Although we may be disappointed in the way church leaders reacted, we look back at the Minneapolis meeting as the great watershed of Adventist thinking on the gospel. From that mountain peak flow two distinct streams: the pre-1888 law-oriented view of salvation and the Christ-centered approach. These then break into a number of rivulets. The church's failure to reach consensus on the meaning of the gospel and the relationship of law and gospel has been responsible for much confusion and in-fighting and has stunted the growth of the church. What we lack is a sense of unity concerning our most important doctrine—salvation.

Recent theological stirrings in *Ministry* remind me of the debate which raged a little over a century ago, and I am hoping that the Seventh-day Adventist Church

will again be pressed to consider its reason for existence. I deeply appreciate your article "Global Mission, My Mission" (April 1992) in which you advocate the church's placing the doctrine of Christ at the head of our fundamental belief statement and then in the other doctrinal statements, showing how each of them relates to Christ. Your follow-up article, "I, if I Be Lifted up From the Earth" (October 1992) continues in the same vein as you urge the president of the General Conference to bring the church into consensus on our most vital doctrine, the doctrine of salvation (the relationship of justification and the renewing work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer). In the October issue, both Martin Weber's "Three Counterfeit Christs" and Woodrow Whidden's "The Way of Life Engravings: Harbingers of Minneapolis?" forcefully support your contention that the church *must* resolve its internal tension over the gospel.

Within Seventh-day Adventism at least

four major gospel rivers are flowing besides lesser streams, each claiming possession of the central message and mission of the church. Evangelical Adventism would have the church focus on Christ's vicarious,



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

substitutionary work, including His life of obedience, and especially climaxing with His death on Calvary. For evangelical Adventists "justification" means the satisfaction of all the law's claims in the final judgment through the doing and dying of the God-Man Jesus Christ in behalf of believing sinners. We, as sinners, deserve death, yet He took our sin and guilt upon Himself, dying in our place. The law de-

mands perfect obedience from the one who would be justified, but we have none to provide. The obedience of Jesus and the character He developed living on earth is placed to the account of the believer (imputed) covering his or her inadequacies. God accepted the life and death of Jesus in our behalf and raised Him from the dead. Seated at God's right hand in heaven, Jesus Christ is our righteousness, presenting us as righteous in His person to the Father. For evangelical Adventists this is the gospel.

Some may ask where sanctification and victory over sin come in. Evangelical Adventists also believe that the resurrected Lord sends the Holy Spirit into their hearts, and that this victory over sin is a fruit of the gospel. The Holy Spirit provides assurance of salvation, even though He brings to them a deepening conviction of sinfulness and inadequacy. The Holy Spirit floods their heart with hope for Christ's second coming, and they long for the day when the struggle between the sinful flesh and the spirit will be over.

There is, for the believing Christian, a series of uninterrupted victories. The key to victory is to hold justification and sanctification in proper relationship, always distinguishing them but never separating them. Separating them results in antinomianism and the "once-saved-always-saved" error. Equating them, or rendering them indistinguishable, results in the opposite error, legalism, or perfectionism, as the individual looks inwardly for the basis of acceptance with God. Continual faith in what Jesus Christ accomplished for us nearly 2,000 years ago motivates and keeps us throughout the progressive character development that stretches from conversion to the Lord's coming.

But what about those living when Jesus returns? The final generation of saints are no different in their faith or commitment from the saved of any previous generation, though they will have gone through a unique experience. Of them it may be said, as it could be said of the saved of every generation, that two things are true: (1) they are trusting in God's grace and the doing and dying of Jesus Christ as their sole claim to salvation; and (2) they would rather die than reject or neglect any of God's commandments. This is what I believe and teach as a Seventh-day Adventist minister. I believe that there are many pastors and members of the laity who would agree with me. This is what I call evangelical Adventism.

A second group within the church holds that Christ's death provides for forgiveness for *past* sins but does not cover present shortcomings. When your past debt is canceled, then Jesus through the Holy Spirit comes into your life in such a powerful way that you are able to live a sinlessly perfect life. You can and must become so victorious that when human probation closes just before the Lord returns, you must stand without the benefit of a mediator. If there is a single sin or shortcoming, then you are eternally lost. The gospel and even justification itself are believed to include both a person's standing before God as well as one's state. God is waiting for a whole generation of absolutely sinless individuals to vindicate Him before the universe, just as Jesus Christ did when He lived on this earth.

A third type of gospel popular among some Adventists states that the church ought to move beyond such primitive expressions as "propitiation," "substitutionary atonement," "God's personal wrath," "the judgment," "justification," etc., correct and helpful though they may have been. Jesus' death was not a penal substitution for our sins but rather a demonstration of God's love. The cross does not change God's relationship to us but rather changes our relationship to Him. The greatest need of the church is to recognize ourselves as God's friends and not His servants. God is most interested in restoring relationships, and that happens when people understand that He is not the vengeful God that the devil and some Christians have made Him out to be. The purpose of the atonement is not to satisfy justice but rather to vindicate God before the universe, answering all of Satan's charges against God.

Then there is a fourth group, the "A-theologicals" who really don't care what you believe about the gospel as long as you don't argue about it. Some of this group are perfectly content with theological pluralism, though they may have definite personal convictions on the gospel. They tend to minimize the importance of the term justification or downplay the distinction between justification and sanctification. What is important to them is emphasizing areas in which all agree and on developing healthy relationships.

From the standpoint of the fundamental beliefs one can hold any of the four gospels and not be at variance with the stated position of the church. The question which evangelical Adventists are asking is

Can one can hold any of the different gospels and not be at variance with the Scripture? For example, is it biblical to deny the believing sinner's continual need for God's forgiving grace? Is it biblical to deny the vicarious, substitutional and imputational aspects of Christ's work in behalf of sinners? Theories are often right in what they affirm but wrong in what they deny or ignore. Certainly it is proper to insist that the Christian may have victory over sin, but that can come only through deepening repentance and continual trust in the merits of Christ. Certainly it is true that God is not vengeful and bloodthirsty in the way the gods of paganism are often depicted, but does that mean that God must not, in Christ, reconcile the world to Himself through the cross of Calvary? Certainly unity is important, but never at the expense of the Bible truth of the everlasting gospel. There are many theological points that are minor, but certainly the gospel is the major issue. We may have diversity on the minor points, but we must have consensus on the one central doctrine.

How can we fulfill our commission of heralding the three angels' messages, centering on proclaiming the "everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6) unless we agree on the gospel? For the sake of the glory of God for which the unity of the church exists, we must come into consensus on the biblical meaning of the gospel and settle the internal warfare over the gospel.

Here are three suggestions for reaching consensus on the meaning of salvation. First, read the "Dynamics of Salvation" published in the February 1988 issue of *Ministry*. This document comes the closest to a consensus on defining righteousness by faith. Perhaps it could be made the subject of sermons, discussion groups, camp meeting presentations, and area-wide meetings.

Second, a few of us who consider ourselves evangelical Adventists are in the process of forming an association. It does not purport to be an official organization, but merely an association of those who understand the gospel as justification (which always results in sanctification) and who love to talk and study about Christ and the cross.

Third, perhaps an open forum could be established where articulate proponents for the various views could state their case. In the early days of Seventh-day Adventism, the *Review and Herald* served this purpose. ■

Friends—we all need them

Hannele Ottshofski

**How to have them;
how to keep them.**



*Hannele Ottshofski
is a pastor's wife in
Mainz, Germany.*

The young woman's voice broke down. She was close to tears. "At the seminary they told us not to have any friends in our church. My husband manages well enough, because he has such a lot to do. But I feel so lonely and insecure . . ."

We were sitting on the floor in a circle around candles, a group of 30 ministers' wives who had convened for a seminar on counseling. Every evening we gathered to discuss our personal needs and pains. The camaraderie we felt encouraged this young ministerial intern's wife to confide her unfulfilled yearning for friendship.

Friends—we all need them. They are more precious than gold and diamonds. God created human beings with the need to communicate with each other. Although pastors and their wives are just as human as everyone else, often I've heard counsel that we should not have close friends in our local churches. As if the pastoral couple is supposed to constantly give—give love, give time, give help, in various situations. When are we able to receive?

Of course, we can plug into the divine power plant, and that should be our prime effort every day. But I think God uses other means to give us strength as well, such as the influence of good friends. Time spent with friends makes us happier and healthier—healthier in a broader sense. And friends can help us when we have difficulties. They can help us with constructive criticism that we might otherwise be unwilling to accept. They are

often the only pastor a pastor has access to.

One conference president testified that at the beginning of their ministry he and his wife avoided close relationships with parishioners. At the seminary they had swallowed the pill called "no friends," but they never found happiness in that mind-set. Now, looking back, they are sure it was wrong. The wife in particular could have done with a bit of help and friendship, having borne two babies within a year without grandparents nearby.

Naturally, it is not wise to favor some church members with friendship while neglecting others. We should be friendly with all parishioners, remembering that not all "friends" are really trustworthy.

Acquaintances and friends

Real friends are those you can disturb in the middle of the night if necessary and still find yourself welcome. There is a difference between acquaintances and friends. At least in our "old" European countries you don't get too chummy with new acquaintances. A friendship will blossom when the circumstances are right. And when it does, it will bring forth fruit that has no harmful effect on others. So let's not worry so much about the danger of having too close friends in the church. Good friends will help us cope with all the rest of the church!

We are often encouraged to find our friends among other pastors and their wives. And how wonderful it would be if colleagues could all be friends! Unfortunately, sometimes a neighboring peer is not quite a kindred spirit! Becoming vulnerable might be detrimental to one's career.

No, it is not easy to have friends among the pastoral corps. And even when the men manage to form a bond, what about their wives? As long as children are at home and in school, mothers are more or less bound to the turf even when shepherdess meetings are organized.

Another problem with befriending fellow ministers' families is that it takes time for a friendship to grow. We are so busy in our own district that it is sometimes impossible to enjoy fellowship with neighboring pastoral couples. And when a friendship finally forms . . . it's time to pack our cases and move on again. Sometimes we realized who our real friends were only when we moved away!

Keeping in touch

Being a part of the "Advent movement," it is difficult to grow roots anywhere. But we have friends in many countries on various continents with whom we stay in touch through letters in different languages. Moving means we leave our friends behind—but it also means we have a chance to make new friends. And thus each time we move we eventually feel richer.

I remember how we used to wait for the mail when we served in Africa. Our nearest friends lived more than 500 miles away—that meant 24 hours on disastrous roads. My husband often spent weeks on bush trips, leaving me alone with our children. The mail was my only contact with friends and family. It came once in a fortnight if some bus driver remembered to go and pick up the mailbag on his way out of the capital. No wonder I appreciated letters!

It isn't always easy to find time to write to friends. But it takes effort to keep a friendship alive whether you are close together or far away. And the rewards are worth the trouble.

Just be yourself

I have often wondered why missionaries have an invisible bond of friendship even if they don't know each other well. Recently we hosted a missionary family for the weekend. My husband knew them, but I had never seen them before. Yet from the moment they entered our house we were friends. Sharing common experiences may be the reason—participating in the joys and difficulties of a life that only another missionary can fully understand. Why doesn't this camaraderie apply in the same way to other pastoral

couples? They experience similar concerns and joys. The *problem* may be that we are so busy "playing a role" that we don't let people see us as we are, our normal selves.

Karen Burton Mains tells in her book *Open Heart, Open Home*¹ of a lady who came into her home at a moment when she was least prepared for visitors. She looked around and remarked, "I used to think you were perfect, but now I think we can be friends."

I resist talking about the "role of a minister's wife" because I don't want to play a role. I want to be myself. I like to reach out to others in my own particular way, with my own talents. If we try to project an image of the perfect pastoral family, people might even be scared of us. Let's have the courage to be normal people. Then we can reach out to others and give of our love in a natural way. When we give of our love, friendship will grow.

Blossoming friendship

I like to think of friendship as a beautiful flower that spreads out the perfume of love and caring. This perfume will attract bees and butterflies. Don't worry about their robbing your nectar. At the same time they take from you they also give you pollen that will fertilize your own being. So friendship is constantly giving and taking, one of the most natural things in life.

Some people are more outgoing than others and find it easy to make friends. Others are shy and retiring and tend to watch life go by. I am basically a shy person and have experienced the frustration of being in a crowd of people knowing hardly anybody. I have learned not to withdraw, although this would be the easiest thing to do. There are always others who do not know everybody and who also feel lonely, so I just go to somebody and ask a few questions. At pastoral retreats I approach the people who are new in our conference and try to make them feel at ease. Usually they are glad to share their experiences, and the first steps toward friendship are taken.

Children help make friends

We have found that our four daughters have been a great help toward communication. Sometimes I tell young ministerial couples, half in earnest, "The best way to make friends in your new church

is either to have a new baby when you arrive or to expect one soon!" Children really are a big help in making friends. They always give something to talk about, even for a very shy person. Mothers are a species of their own, and once you belong to this category of people, communication is guaranteed.

Older children have their own friends, and often contacts with the parents of your children's friends develop into real friendships. Don't be afraid of asking them to stay for supper even if you haven't prepared anything. Spontaneous invitations are so much cozier! Nobody expects a five-course meal.

We used to live at the back of the church building. Our daughter Nadia would wait in front of the church on Sabbath mornings for the first people to come. She could hardly await the arrival of her friends. What a welcome! At the end of a Sabbath day full of activities the children were still reluctant to part. So we would invite the family to stay for supper and play games together. We had a lot of fun.

Doing things together

Another way to make friends is to do things together. Pastors who are continuously "on duty" will find it harder to make friends than those who take time off to share their leisure with others. Some say, "This is my day off and that is family time." Family time is great, but family time together with another family can be the beginning of a lasting friendship. Pastors off duty are easier to make friends with.

Church retreats have a way of mixing duty and leisure activities, so church members can see the pastoral family as normal people. Sports or hobbies are a good way to make friends. The point is to be as normal as possible so others dare to be our friends.

My husband loves to go to my home country, Finland, for our holidays. One day on a church outing he told our church elder about our plans for the summer holidays in Finland. My husband must have described Finland as a paradise on earth, because, to my horror, the elder became interested in sharing our holiday in Finland! I don't enjoy playing the tour guide, so I wasn't enthusiastic about showing this elder and his family around the country. Nevertheless, we went to Finland with them and had a marvelous time. We became friends.

(Continued on page 30)

Making friends with God

Mary Barrett

Is your life one huge tread-mill? How can you find time for a fulfilling relationship with God?



Mary Barrett is a pastor's wife writing from Cambridgeshire, England.

In number 7 "Heavenly Row" lives Shepherdess "Let's do it right!" She wakes faithfully every morning at 5:30. With no children as yet, her life is fairly ordered.

On rising, she fights the flab for 20 minutes—after all, the experts say she must take care of her body. She then has a hot shower, followed of course by a cold one. Breakfast next, consisting of high-fiber cereal, low-fat milk, fruit juice, and toast with a lowfat spread. Everything in harmony with the blueprint for good health.

For the next hour Shepherdess "Let's do it right!" has her devotions. Following the advice of experts, she reads five chapters of her Bible followed by several pages from the pen of Ellen White (usually the *Testimonies*). She then prays, following the recommended formula—adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and supplication.

The problem is Shepherdess "Let's do it right!" doesn't get much from her Bible study. In fact, she wakes up most mornings feeling depressed. She is tired of the mundane routine of life, tired of feeling dry and empty inside, tired of wondering if God is really there.

"I am trying"

In the house across the road lives Shepherdess "I am trying, Lord!" Her alarm also goes off at 5:30 a.m. As usual, she cannot find the knob to turn off the shrill ring of her clock. In desperation she wraps it in her pillow, jumps out of bed, and bundles the clock and her pillow into her bathrobe!

She stands silently for a few minutes. Her husband is in a deep sleep, as usual, and all is quiet from the children's room. Hoping they will keep sleeping for another hour, she tiptoes to her bedside table, grabs her Bible and a torch (flashlight). Perhaps today she will succeed in having some time with God. Like a burglar in her movements, she slinks down the stairs, the beams from the torch guiding her.

Finally, downstairs, she turns on a table lamp and snuggles into her favorite armchair. With a smile of satisfaction, she opens her Bible and looks forward to a "spiritual breakfast" with God. But within five minutes she hears the voice of her eldest daughter: "Mom, is it time to wake up?" followed closely by the voice of daughter number two: "Mom, I'm starving. I want some breakfast!" Shepherdess "I am trying, Lord!" sighs, closes her Bible, and tells the Lord she'll try again—in another 15 years!

"Too tired to care"

Next door lives Shepherdess "Too tired to care!" She never bothers to set the alarm—she's so weary she wouldn't have the energy to turn it off. Awake most of the night with baby number 5, who is teething, she is too bleary-eyed even to think about God.

Her life is one huge treadmill. Round and round she goes with all her endless responsibilities. Children to care for, work to help with the family finances, after-school activities to drag the kids to, housework, and of course all that pastoral hospitality. Plus the three offices she holds at church.

Sure, it would be nice if she could spend time with God, but when? And if

she did ever find time to squeeze God into her busy schedule, how could she prevent herself from falling asleep?

Three pastors' wives, each with a different experience concerning her relationship with God. Does one of them represent you?

Worship isn't easy

Maintaining our friendship with God through having personal devotions is a challenge in the busy life of a parsonage. All of us are well acquainted with the many Bible texts and Ellen White quotations that admonish us to spend time alone with God. I'm thinking, for example, of Exodus 34:2, 3: "Be ready in the morning. . . . Present yourself to me there on top of the mountain. No one is to come with you."* Then there's that familiar statement in *The Ministry of Healing*, page 58: "All who are under the training of God need the quiet hour for communion with their own hearts, with nature, and with God."

Yes, we know we need personal time with God to reconnect with Him, to confess our sins, and surrender ourselves to Him. But all this can seem a million miles away and quite unimportant when all your children have the chicken pox, and when you are burned out from trying to make ends meet or fulfill all your expectations as a pastor's wife.

God gives us an ideal

So why does God tell us to seek His kingdom before anything else? Why does He give us an ideal that is sometimes so difficult to put into practice? Most of the time we can get by in our humdrum days without a special time with God, so why is it so important to Him? Because . . .

1. You are valuable to God.

Throughout the Old Testament we find God asking His children to listen to Him. He desperately yearns to share Himself with the Israelites, but they are so intent on seeking other gods and being independent that they constantly push Him away. It's very sad, because God wants so much to be a part of their lives.

God also wants you to spend time with Him because He wants to share Himself with you. He wants to tell you personally what He is like; He wants to share with you all the exciting, wonderful, unbelievable things He wants to do for you and through you. He wants to be with you simply because you are His child. You are unique and special to Him, and there

is no one else like you.

2. God wants to enrich your self-esteem.

Another reason God wants you to spend time with Him is that He seeks to lavish His love on you—and what a difference that will make in the way you feel about yourself. Satan has many psychological weapons with which to attack us, the most effective being low self-esteem.

Psychologist and best-selling author James Dobson tells of a poll he conducted among a large group of women. Most were happy, married, financially secure, possessed excellent health, and enjoyed motherhood. In the poll Dobson listed 10 sources of depression, asking the women to rank them according to the order in which they affected their lives. The list included lack of romantic love, fatigue, time pressure, problems with children, boredom, loneliness, and health problems. Fifty percent of these Christian ladies ranked low self-esteem as number one, and 80 percent listed it in the top two or three.¹

Lack of self-esteem is indeed common for us women. How many of you have felt that you are not attractive enough, or talented enough, or that people wouldn't like you if you removed your "mask"? How many of you have condemned yourself as a failure to your husband, your children, and your church? This lack of self-esteem not only stunts our relationship with God; it also damages our friendships and causes us to suppress the talents the Lord has given us.

At least 90 percent of our self-concept is built on what we think others think of us. This needs to change, and as we regularly spend time with God, it will. Reading God's Word daily helps us focus in on the depth of His love for us individually. Meditating on that love will foster a sense of belonging to Him. No longer will we feel compelled to prove ourselves valuable, because we have accepted God's love for us.

3. God wants us to be positive.

Regular quiet times with God can reprogram our computer-type brains to God's way of thinking rather than the crazy, mixed-up thoughts we tend to harbor. A neurosurgeon named Penfield conducted some experiments on the brain. He deduced that bad programming, i.e., bad input from the past, affects our present-day attitudes. This bad programming can result in our being critical, fearful, negative, cynical, etc.² Through the Holy

Spirit, however, God gives us the potential for renewal. Our minds and emotions can be transformed so that we can think positively rather than negatively. Many Bible texts confirm that God's Word can empower us to accomplish this (see Isa. 55:11; John 3:6; Rom. 12:2; Deut. 32:46, 47; Col. 3:16; Matt. 4:4).

I can testify to the truth of this in my own life. My natural tendency is to worry about things. Three years ago that began to change. I discovered that I suffer a medical malady known as ankylosing spondylitis. This painful condition, which is incurable, results in diminished mobility and movement. For the first time in my life I really had something to worry about! I spent a lot of time with my Bible, focusing particularly on the verses that tell us not to worry about anything. Each time my illness brought a specific problem or obstacle, instead of worrying I began dwelling on God's counsel to me. Not only have I seen the most amazing ways that God has used to answer my needs, but I have felt peace within.

Whatever negative attitude handicaps you, you can get rid of it. Reach for a concordance, look up what the Bible says about your particular problem, and claim God's promises to change you.

4. God wants to make us strong.

Mary Slessor was a young missionary who went to Africa at the turn of the century. The area she served was particularly unpleasant. One night, as Mary lay in a crude jungle hut after a stressful day, she wrote the following:

"I am not very particular about my bed these days, but as I lie on a few dirty sticks laid across and covered with a litter of dirty corn shells, with plenty of rats and insects, three women and an infant three days old alongside, and over a dozen sheep and goats and cows outside, you don't wonder that I've slept little. But I've had such a comfortable quiet night in my own heart."³

That's what God wants for each one of us—peace and calmness within our hearts, so that even though we may face unpleasant situations, we remain quiet and undisturbed. In Proverbs 4:23 we read, "Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life." We cannot guard our hearts unless daily we have time with God.

You are a daughter of God

Yes, God wants to do so much for us through our daily quiet time with Him.

Before we are a wife, a mother, a daughter, a career woman, a pastor's wife, we are God's child.

The bottom line is Do we really want Him to?

For most of us, our lives are busy doing good things—quality time with our spouse and children, working to stretch the family finances, entertaining church members, listening to endless problems and complaints, filling church offices that no one else wants. With all this going on, we figure God will understand if we fail to spend time with Him. But God doesn't want us to do all these good things if doing them means we have no time for Him. He calls us primarily to be Marys more than Marthas.

Before we are a wife, a mother, a daughter, a career woman, a pastor's wife, we are God's child. As His children we must decide whether having a strong, close relationship with God is the ultimate goal of life. This calls for us to love Him so intensely and desire Him so much in every facet of our lives that building our relationship with Him will come before anything else.

Making it happen

After deciding that fellowship with Jesus is our number one priority, we are left with the question How can we maintain that bond throughout the cluttered, stress-filled days in which we live? Well, just having made the commitment brings us halfway to its accomplishment, since we always find time for what we want most. Beyond that, here are some practical tips I've found helpful:

1. *Read a book on time management.*

In our extremely busy lives, scheduling and organizing our time is essential. Two books invaluable to me on this subject are *Where Will I Find the Time?* by Sally McClung,⁴ and *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman*, by Anne Ortlund.⁵

2. *Ask God to reveal our time wasters.*

Author Millie Youngberg was so frustrated with the rapid pace of living that

she prayed, "Slow me down, Lord!" He showed her that some of her hustle and bustle resulted from pride, ambition, and a desire for recognition. The Lord can likewise reveal to us what we are doing that is unimportant, leaving us time for a deeper relationship with Him. If we truly yearn for that, He will gladly slow us down sufficiently to make it possible.

3. *Enlist the help of your husband.*

As soon as was practical, my husband began feeding our two daughters breakfast. He enjoyed spending special time each day with them while I had my spiritual feast with God. Maybe something like this could work in your home, or perhaps your husband can drive the kids to school and give you some time to yourself. Talk it over with him. He may agree that the greatest thing we can do for those we love is to strengthen them spiritually.

4. *Be adaptable.*

Since the discovery of the disease from which I suffer, my devotional time has become my exercise time. I have had to become adaptable in securing time with God. When the children are getting up before 6:30 a.m., I have my worship in the evening. If they sleep late, I worship in the morning.

Ideally it is best to spend time with God early in the morning, but that is not always practical for those of us with young children. We need to ask God to help us set aside the best time of the day, when we can be most receptive to Him. Sure, there may be some days when we cannot sit down and have a specific quiet time with God, but that must be the exception and not the rule. Motherhood does not mean that we must feed on yesterday's stale bread of spirituality; we desperately need the fresh bread of today.

Making time with God a joy

Having made time to spend with God, the next step is to make sure our devotional experience is rich, satisfying, and challenging. Some achieve this by reading the Bible from start to finish, five chapters at a time. For others, that does not work. We each have to find the method that best deepens our own relationship with God. Personally, I need to read the Bible slowly, dwelling on the thoughts God is sharing with me. I usually focus on one particular verse or aspect of what I'm reading and carry that thought throughout the day.

As you know, when we read it helps to

put ourselves into the stories. Let the imagination flow and see yourself as part of that biblical account, asking God for insight. Then look at what the passage says about the character of God and the weaknesses of humanity. Take time to dwell on any symbolism and images. For example, in Psalm 1 God likens a godly person to a tree. Why? What personal message is there?

One tip I have found helpful is to keep a notebook nearby when I spend time with God. It is divided into three sections. The first contains a prayer list, answers to prayers, and thoughts I believe God has shared with me through prayer. The second section has information from the Bible or other inspirational books that is pertinent to my needs. The third is for recording thoughts that have made an impact on me that I want to share with others.

Reading the Bible in such a way has made a tremendous difference to my relationship with God. His Word has become a power, an inspiration, and a tool for change. My time with God is exciting, refreshing, and satisfying as I am learning more and more about the incredible love God has for me.

It lasts throughout the day

Enjoying the companionship with God does not terminate with the end of our devotional time. We can enjoy His friendship throughout the day. While ironing our husbands' shirts, we can pray for them. Clearing up the never-ending havoc our kids leave can remind us to thank God for them. While preparing the Sabbath meal for visiting members, we can pray that God will show us how to minister to them. Having a notice board in the kitchen dotted with photos of people to pray for is another way to maintain communication with God. It also helps to have Christian books or magazines scattered about the house for whenever we find five minutes for a page or two of spiritual refreshment.

Listening to Christian music or sermons on tape can also bring strength. If your church does not already tape its Sabbath services, ask your husband to arrange it. Most of us with young children spend more time out of the sanctuary than in, so this is a good way to keep in touch. A key ring with little cards with Bible texts relevant to your particular needs is another way in which God can talk to us. When time permits, we can flick through

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Are you the pastor's wife?

Linda M. Gallimore

Y

es, and I'm one of those work-behind-the-scenes individuals. Don't give me glory—give me nitty-gritty stuff!

Our first district had three churches, and one of them was having a work bee. My first—as a pastor's wife. I showed up ready and willing to tackle anything from cleaning toilets to hanging shingles. Finding no ladies outside, I searched indoors and found them all scrubbing the kitchen. I went to the floor-washing crew and joined in, but they quickly caught me by the arm and escorted me to a chair.

"Our minister's wife isn't going to do any dirty work," they informed me. "You just sit here and talk to us." I was so surprised it took a moment to find my voice.

"Oh, no," I protested, "I want to help!"

They insisted I sit down. I protested again. They insisted some more. I suggested I could go outside and work. Finally they let me help with the stove.

And that's the type of thing I've been doing ever since. If something needed to be done, I'd do it. My motto: Whatever my hands find to do—do it.

As a young person I'd go to the pastor's house to help with literature stuffing, mailing, bulletin folding, and like projects—just because it was fun! I thought pastors' wives got to do that kind of thing all the time and therefore it would be great being married to a pastor.

Then I did become a pastor's wife. And 20 years later I still think it's great!

During Jay's first eight years in the

ministry none of our churches had secretaries. So I helped with the bulletin, newsletters, and correspondence. I became involved with cooking schools, evangelism, home visitation, and answering the telephone. I even held prayer meeting in one church while Jay was out of town. Some of those dear people drove 30 miles to be present. I was 24 years old and so nervous I raced through the whole subject in 10 minutes. Then, seeing we had a "lot" of time left, I asked if they wanted to go through it again—slower!

When Jay had churches with secretaries, I worked in the Sabbath school divisions along with cooking schools and evangelism plus all the other things pastors' wives do. Generally I haven't taken a position someone else could fill unless I would be helping train others for the job. After all, it was their church and most likely they would still be there after I had moved on. It's been difficult, though, to let go of a job once others were able and willing to do it.

After our children came along, I made sure the positions I accepted didn't distract me from caring for them—especially during church services. So my Sabbath duties involved helping with the children's departments, added to whatever I could continue doing the rest of the week—including answering the phone to tell people what time sundown was. Other roles have included being a sounding board for my husband and watching for articles or stories he might use. Through it all I've felt it important to maintain a personal devotional life and keep from complaining. All things considered, I think being a pastor's wife is a great life! To be honest, though, I must admit there was one time I didn't want to be the pastor's wife. I'm thinking of the episode when I was standing quietly in the church foyer

looking at a book from the literature rack. Suddenly a man I'd never seen grabbed my arm, shook me, and bellowed, "Are you the preacher's wife?" I turned and saw a huge man glaring at me—while squashing my arm. For the first time in my life as a minister's wife I desperately wanted to say, "No, she is," and be able to point to someone else—anyone else.

By now all eyes in the foyer were on us, and I was frantically looking for the intern's wife! Not seeing her, I finally acknowledged, "Yes, I am," and jerked my arm free from his grasp.

The silence in the foyer was broken only by the bellowed question, "Well, why do you have this book in here?" The man thrust a book from the literature rack into my face. I said something about not being the one who orders the books but that I'd be happy to introduce him to the person who did. He wasn't interested, and stalked into the sanctuary. I retreated to the missionary room to calm my nerves.

Both men and women who had witnessed the drama sympathized with me and said such things as "I can't believe you admitted to being the preacher's wife!"

Yes, there are some negative aspects to living in the parsonage. But there are negatives with everything in life. And when they come, ask yourself, "In 100 years, will this really matter?" or tell yourself, "This too will pass." And think of this: In what other profession do we get extra attention when we are sick, and extra care when we are pregnant? Or extra advice when our children are small? Or extra tasters when we try a new recipe at a church dinner? Or extra sympathy when we are sad or discouraged?

Don't forget the extra prayers offered on our behalf. And most of the time, from most of the people, we get extra love! ■

Linda Gallimore is a mother and a certified public accountant in Lansing, Michigan. Her husband is president of the Michigan Conference.



The pastor/elder leadership team—II

The vital role of local church elders

J. H. Zachary

B

oth pastor and local church elders have been set aside by the Lord for leadership. Let's consider the qualities that elders need to contribute to

the leadership team:

1. *Loyalty.* To help maintain a strong team spirit, local elders must be loyal to the Adventist message, to the pastor and to the conference. The test comes when the newly assigned pastor may not live up to the expectations of the elders. Each new pastor will bring different strengths to the district, and the loyal elders will seek out these strengths and support the pastor. Elders will always remember that the pastor is the overall leader of the congregation.

2. *Time investment.* A strong elder will set aside time in his or her busy schedule for the work of leadership. Time will be needed for visitation, evangelism, and supporting departments and activities of the church. These are heavy responsibilities, so several elders in each congregation should share the burden of responsibility.

3. *Preaching.* In multichurch districts, elders will carry the main burden for preaching. This demands time for study and sermon preparation. Attending the pastors' training seminars will help ease the burden. How important it is to have interesting, Spirit-filled messages that will strengthen and encourage the members of the congregation.

4. *Nurture.* The elder is referred to in

Scripture as a shepherd. This imagery stresses the most important aspects of the role of local elders. They are responsible to the Lord for these services to each member:

- a. Feeding the flock with spiritual food,
- b. Protecting the flock from doctrinal error, encouraging members to follow the Bible truths entrusted to them,
- c. Caring for the injured or sick ones,
- d. Spending time with the flock, pro-

moting fellowship.

5. *Training.* Elders should attend the regular training seminars sponsored by the conference and the pastor. They will also benefit from books and other resource materials.

Elders and pastors both must ever be conscious of the need for the Holy Spirit's presence in their work. The Spirit is our guide, wisdom, teacher, helper, and power for the accomplishment of effective leadership in the church. ■

IS BAPTISM ALL THAT COUNTS?

As a local church elder you know that discipleship really makes a difference in the lives of baptismal candidates and new members. You can use *In His Steps* to guide them into a practical knowledge of Adventist doctrines and Christian living.

This loose-leaf-bound series of studies is available from your conference or mission ministerial association. Or a package of 10 can be purchased for US\$8.95 (postage included in U.S.A., overseas postage extra) from the General Conference Ministerial Supply Center, P.O. Box 66, Keene, TX 76059. Make phone inquiries to (817) 641-3643 and phone orders to (800) 982-3344 or by fax (817) 641-3640.



J. H. Zachary is an associate secretary of the Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.



1992 Annual Council report

J. David Newman,

The 1992 Annual Council, held at the General Conference headquarters, saw a major departure from past practice. For the first time, instead of debating all the items on the floor the council created five discussion groups: Abortion and Care for the Dying Statements, Environment Statement, Finance Committee, General Agenda Items, Policy Items. These discussion groups operated similar to United States Senate hearings. All groups met at the same time, and delegates chose which one they wanted to attend.

Each group voted on changes that were then brought to the whole council for its vote. This speeded up the process, as much of the discussion often centers on wording a policy or other item in a particular manner.

Daily devotionals

The most significant aspect of this Annual Council turned out to be not the various actions taken but the series of daily devotionals given by Dr. George Knight, professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. The theme for the council was "Safe in Him." Dr. Knight stirred the council members first by his provocative titles: "Sin Is Love"; "Adventists Neglect the Law"; "Justification: The Work of a Lifetime - Sanctification: The Work of a Moment"; "Temptation Is Not TEMPTATION"; and "I Used to Be Perfect" then by his Christ-centered messages.

Dr. Knight lifted up Jesus in a beautiful and reassuring way. He tried to do for the Seventh-day Adventist Church what Jesus did for the Jews when He gave the Sermon

on the Mount. Knight cut through much of the superficiality surrounding current Adventist discussion on sin, law, grace, and love. Many groups within the church constantly bombard us with exhortations to righteousness, but George Knight through his preaching set a far higher standard to reach than even these groups teach. Knight pointed out that we too often mirror the Jews who were consumed by emphasizing correct behavior while strangely neglecting right relationships. He asserted that in our quest to be perfect we often become impossible to live with.

Knight clearly revealed that our perfection lies in what Jesus has done for us in His life and death and when we trust in Him, surrendering our lives completely to Him, He considers us to be perfect. Knight also made it clear that the Christian will never take the law of God lightly. Rather, the Christian is even more motivated to live a holy life because of that person's surrender to Christ and great appreciation for the sacrifice of Christ. The secret to victory and overcoming sin comes from focusing not on oneself but on Christ.

Global Mission

Mike Ryan led out in the report concerning Global Mission. We will say very little here, as we have already devoted a whole issue (November) to this most important subject.

Carlos Aeschlimann gave a thrilling report concerning the number of accessions to the church. During the first eight quarters of Global Mission there have been 1,207,675 baptisms, which totals 366,537 more than during the same period of Harvest 90. Aeschlimann pointed out that we are now baptizing one new person every 52 seconds. Our official church membership stood at 7,274,181 on June 30, 1992.

Division presidents told thrilling stories of what is happening throughout the world. Out of many that could be told, we

mention one. On July 30 and 31, 1992, 2,000 persons were baptized in one city in China. This number of people presented a huge logistical problem. The church did not have an ordained Seventh-day Adventist minister so they invited one to come from a neighboring city.

The government had given permission for praying, preaching, and baptizing to take place, but then some Sundaykeeping believers complained to the government. They prevailed upon the local government to withdraw their permission for this baptism to take place. But the believers were determined to proceed anyway. On the morning of July 30, the Sunday keepers arranged for a large group of their members to again complain to the government. The provincial government then ordered the city government to stop the baptism. So leading cadres of the United Front, the Religious Department, the Street Committee, and the Police Station were sent to the Adventist church to prevent the baptism taking place. However, our members formed a wall around the church and prevented them from entering.

How does one man baptize 2,000 people? Very tiredly! The pastor began at 8:00 a.m. and kept baptizing nonstop until 8:00 p.m., at which time he had immersed more than 1,500 persons. The next day the minister baptized more than 400 people.

On Sabbath, August 1, some 2,500 arrived to attend the Communion service, but they were prevented from entering the church by the police and several government cadres. The church leaders were concerned about the possibility of confrontation and decided not to continue with the Communion service. But because about 1,800 people, many of whom had traveled a long distance, refused to leave and continued to wait outside in the hot sun, the church leaders finally decided to continue with the Communion service. The police tried to break up the meeting, but without

success. They ended up watching the communion service take place.

Praise God for the many wonderful and thrilling events happening around the world. Look for future reports in *Ministry*.

Year of the pastor

The Annual Council voted 1993 as the Year of the Pastor. The delegates discussed and then listed five objectives: "(1) Reaffirm the importance of the pastorate in the mind of each church leader, pastor, and

member as the pivotal function of ministerial endeavor; (2) update and strengthen communication and understanding between pastor and administrator; (3) establish a global theology of ministry which defines the role of the pastor as watchman, shepherd, and preacher in modern society; (4) address the issues threatening the Church's mission; (5) structure, with broad input from pastors, systems of evaluation, communication, and accountability for all levels of church organization that will assist in improving effectiveness in achiev-

ing church ministry."

The January issue of *Ministry* will give additional details, including what some pastors are saying about the Year of the Pastor. In addition, each division is to prepare its own implementation of these objectives.

Salary equity study

During the discussion concerning the Year of the Pastor several pastors voiced their concerns about the disparity between the pay scale for pastors and the pay scale for administrators and nonpastoral workers. Pastors are told that the pastorate is the key position in the church, yet pastors are rewarded financially by receiving a higher percentage of remuneration when they leave the pastorate. One of the pastors moved and it was voted: "To appoint a study group composed of pastors and administrators representing the world field to study salary equity among pastors, department directors, and administrators and to bring a recommendation to the 1994 Annual Council."

Elections

The council filled the following elective positions: Ted N. C. Wilson, president of the Euro-Asia Division; P. D. Chun, president of the Far Eastern Division; V. F. Bocala, secretary of the Far Eastern Division; Philip Follett, a general vice president of the General Conference; James Cress, as the new ministerial secretary of the General Conference (a full introduction will appear in the January issue); Enrique Becerra, an associate in the General Conference Department of Education; Gerald Karst, associate secretary of the General Conference.

The "Historic Stand for Temperance Principles and Acceptance of Donations Statement" was voted, urging "individuals and church organizations to refuse donations and favors from the alcohol or tobacco industries."

Marrying non-Adventists

Consensus prevailed during most of the council except when it came to approving an addition to the *Church Manual* in the section on courtship and marriage. The old *Minister's Manual* and the new *Minister's Manual* state that an Adventist minister cannot marry a non-Adventist to an Adventist. Some felt that this should also be in the *Church Manual*. Three paragraphs were suggested outlining the reasons ministers should not perform this ceremony. A number of the delegates spoke



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against this inclusion. They felt that it would be too prescriptive and did not allow for any exceptions.

However, instead of voting the proposal down, they referred it back to the *Church Manual* Committee for further study. It could come back at the next Annual Council. There is no easy answer to this dilemma. Some feel strongly that with marriages disintegrating at an alarming rate, the church needs to take a strong stand in this area. Many feel that if the church does not take a stand, it will show the church in general and young people in particular that courting and marrying outside the church are of no consequence.

Others argue that making such a blanket prohibition allows for all sorts of strange situations: people will be pressured into joining the church before they are ready so that they can be married in the church; others, who are only nominal members, who may not have attended church for years but whose names have never been removed from the books, will be treated just like the most committed members. Just because two people are Adventists does not necessarily make them compatible; and so the arguments continue.

It is still the recommendation of the

Ministerial Association that ministers not perform mixed religious marriages. However, this recommendation has not been codified into canon law or been voted by an Annual Council or a General Conference session. If pastors have any questions regarding this recommendation, they should counsel with their local conference or field presidents.

Minister's manual

Floyd Bresee, retiring Ministerial Association secretary, presented a new *Minister's Manual* to each delegate at the Annual Council. This is not just a revision of the old manual, but a re-write. It contains 267 pages the size of the *Church Manual* and covers almost every conceivable area of ministry. Its 42 chapters are divided under four major headings: "The Minister," "The Minister and the World Church," "The Minister and the Local Church," "The Minister and Special Services."

We recommend that as part of the Year of the Pastor every conference and mission give a copy to its pastors. More than 100 people served on the reading committee giving their ideas. Unfortunately, not every idea could be incorporated.

Abortion and other statements

The Annual Council voted statements on abortion, euthanasia, and the environment. The abortion statement, three and a half years in the making, occasioned the most discussion. The council changed the title from that of "A Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Consensus on Abortion" to "Seventh-day Adventist Guidelines on Abortion."

A minority report from the Christian View of Human Life Committee was also presented to the council. The members graciously listened but declined to accept any of its recommendations. Dr. Rock said history was being made in that a minority report was being allowed to be presented. He emphasized that this did not set a precedent or that any minority reports would be allowed in the future. The framers of the minority report were concerned that it be written within a biblical framework, the majority report, while based on Scripture only added some texts at its end. In contrast, the statement on euthanasia incorporated Scripture throughout the document.

The Annual Council overwhelmingly approved (more than 90 percent majority) the abortion guidelines. The major area of

(Continued on page 30)



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Statement pertaining to issues between the Seventh-day Adventist Church and certain private organizations

This action taken at the year-end meeting of the North American Division has significance for other countries of the world. Those who might be interested in reading detailed information regarding the organizations mentioned in this action can purchase from their local Adventist Book Center a 467 page book Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries. Editors.

Divinely called movement

Seventh-day Adventists consider themselves a divinely called movement, raised up to proclaim the good news of Christ's second coming and to help to prepare the world for that glorious event. One of the 27 fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church states:

"The universal church is composed of all who truly believe in Christ, but in the last days, a time of widespread apostasy, a remnant has been called out to keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. This remnant announces the arrival of the judgment hour, proclaims salvation through Christ, and heralds the approach of His second advent. This proclamation is symbolized by the three angels of Revelation 14; it coincides with the work of judgment in heaven and results in a work of repentance and reform on earth. Every believer is called to have a personal part in this worldwide witness" (Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* [Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald, 1988], p. 152).

As Seventh-day Adventists, we pursue our mission in general through an organized structure of churches, local conferences, union conferences, divisions, and the General Conference. Incorporated into these entities are various church-sponsored

institutions and ministries dealing with such areas as education, publishing, health care, and broadcast media. In addition, however, a number of "private," "independent," "supporting," or "special" ministries have arisen from time to time whose stated purpose is to assist in fulfilling the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church but which function outside the regular church structure.

A blessing

Overall, the denomination has been richly blessed by private supporting ministries. They accomplish tasks that the organized church cannot do because of financial and personnel limitations. Most of these have worked in harmony with the official organization, usually having denominational leaders or lay members on their boards of directors. We are grateful to the committed men and women who give so unselfishly of their time and means to operate these private supporting ministries.

At cross purposes

In a few cases, however, private organizations have worked at cross-purposes with the denomination, have become destructively critical of the leadership of the church, have undermined the confidence of members in the organized body of believers, and have drained away funds which could have been used in accomplishing the mission of the church, thus crippling the evangelistic outreach of the church. Such behavior presents a serious challenge to the spiritual health of the church body.

After much prayer, study, and repeated discussions with the leaders of Hope International, Hartland Institute, Prophecy Countdown, Steps to Life Church in Wichita, Kansas, and Rolling Hills congregation in Rolling Hills, Florida, it has become apparent to the church that these private organizations have displayed an unwillingness to operate in harmony with

denominational procedures and protocol. This has been evidenced by the materials they produce, verbal presentations, and in-depth discussions with many denominational leaders over a long period of time.

In view of this situation the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a responsibility to make clear its relationship to these organizations. In 1980 the church examined and then rejected the rising dissident views relative to the sanctuary and to prophetic interpretation. Just as the church continues to dissociate itself from the Good News Unlimited organization, so it must continue to express its grave concerns regarding groups or individuals who undermine either the doctrine or structure of the church.

Following the model of Acts 15, church leaders must alert church members to dissidents who either cause dissension in the church or who undermine the central beliefs of the church. However, questions regarding individual church membership are processed by the local congregation and are not within the purview of levels of church governance other than the local church.

Divisive activities

These groups identified above continue to exhibit a variety of divisive activities such as:

1. They accuse the Seventh-day Adventist Church of apostasy from the historic faith because the church does not accept their interpretations of certain theological positions as the only valid ones.

2. They accuse denominational leadership of collusion in apostasy because the leaders do not squelch teachings that the private organizations find offensive.

3. They accuse the ministry of introducing worldly, and even immoral practices into the church and denominational leadership of approving of these practices.

4. They seek to set up a "church

within the church," which they perceive to be a true and purer remnant that will remain when the apostates (those who disagree with them) will be shaken out.

5. They accuse the Seventh-day Adventist Church of activities which may encourage loyal Seventh-day Adventist members to divert tithes to their private organizations rather than to the church.

A church within the church

It is now apparent to the church that the above named private organizations are in effect establishing a church within the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which includes the following elements:

1. **Authoritative Leadership**—Supporters of Hope International/Our Firm Foundation, Prophecy Countdown, Hartland Institute, Steps to Life Church, Rolling Hills Church, or any other churches or groups associated with the above private organizations, or other private organizations promoting similar divisive concepts look for spiritual guidance and doctrinal integrity to the leaders of these private organizations rather than to their church pastors and denominational leaders. In this position these leaders pose a rival authority to elected and ordained church leadership.

2. **Organization of Local Congregations**—These private organizations have fostered the organizing of local congregations not associated with the local conferences. Examples are in Rolling Hills, Florida, and in Derby and Winfield, Kansas. In other cases followers of these private organizations have attempted to join existing congregations in large enough numbers to gain control of the local church.

3. **Camp Meetings**—These private organizations hold camp meetings, as well as other meetings, to which their followers are invited through the pages of their publications. These meetings often stand in competition with meetings conducted by the denomination.

4. **Ordained Pastors**—The Seventh-day Adventist Church has established certain qualifications for ordination to the gospel ministry (see North American Division Working Policy L 45). Among these is approval of the candidate for ordination by the local conference and union conference committees. Recently, several of these private organizations have ordained ministers without such approval. This action clearly demonstrates an intention to operate a rival organization to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, a "church within the church."

5. **Written Communications to the Churches**—Much of the New Testament consists of letters written to Christian congregations by duly appointed church leaders. Today Seventh-day Adventist leaders communicate with church membership via various publications, most notably the *Adventist Review* and union papers. *Our Firm Foundation*, the monthly journal published by Hope International, is to the followers of Hope International and Hartland Institute what the *Adventist Review* is to the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is their rallying point for announcements, theological teaching, and coherence of their organizations. Without this magazine few people in the world would have heard of these private organizations. Many who read *Our Firm Foundation* regularly consider it their church paper. Every church must be held together by some method of communication. This paper is the glue for the Hope International, Hartland Institute "church within the church."

The main thrust of the journal seems to be to win support from Seventh-day Adventists for the positions of Hope International and Hartland Institute. Thus the appeal: "We are asking our subscribers and supporters to take this special edition to every member of God's church. The hour is late, but the Loud Cry cannot sound until every one has heard and understood God's special message for this hour" (Ron Spear editorial, *Our Firm Foundation* 2, No. 10 [October 1987], p. 6). The "church within the church" concept is here made apparent.

6. **Baptism of Converts**—In the Seventh-day Adventist Church baptism is administered only to those converts who have demonstrated a walk with Christ and who are accepted into the membership of a local congregation. Recently leaders of these private organizations have supported baptizing individuals by their own organizations. Thus again the competitive or rival nature of the movement is demonstrated.

7. **Tithes and Offerings**—According to the Bible plan the church is supported by tithes and offerings. When these private organizations seek or knowingly accept tithe for themselves, it thrusts at the heart of the individual Christian experience, for they are asking church members to switch loyalties away from God's plan to a rival plan. This decision creates division and a fundamental commitment as to where we will place our support, loyalty, and influence. The diversion of tithe from

God's storehouse to a private ministry is fundamental to the "church within the church" concept.

Admission of the church within the church

Evidence has been presented in this statement as well as more fully in the book *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries* (filed with the original minutes of this meeting in the North American Division Secretariat office, prepared under the authority of the North American Division Officers and Union Presidents) that Hope International, with support from certain other private organizations, has developed an atmosphere establishing a rival or competitive church within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. How does this private ministry respond to this charge? A recent article in *Our Firm Foundation* addressed the reason private organizations have arisen in the church:

"The one main underlying reason is that some of us want to see the third angel's message go forward. For years we have been stagnant. . . . One other reason these ministries have come into being is our present backsliding as a church, and issues involved with that backsliding. This sad state of affairs has caused an independent backlash. . . . Once again, Independent Ministries are a reaction to the direction in which the church, as a whole, has been heading for the last forty years" (Jeff Reich, "The Church and Special [Independent] Ministries," *Our Firm Foundation* 5, No. 3 [March 1990], pp. 12, 13).

"It is quite evident that there are now two churches under one church name. To try to keep both sides satisfied will eventually cause the downfall of the whole denominational structure, spiritually and physically" (*ibid.*, p. 14; italics supplied).

In a later issue another writer explains: "When I say independent, I mean independent from the control of the denomination" (John Grosboll, "Has God Ordained Independent Self-Supporting Work?" *Our Firm Foundation* 7, No. 2 [1992], p. 8).

This is the heart of the Seventh-day Adventist Church's problem with Hope International/Our Firm Foundation, Prophecy Countdown, Hartland Institute, Steps to Life Church, Rolling Hills Church, or any other churches or groups associated with the above private organizations, or other private organizations promoting similar divisive concepts. It is not the fact that these groups call attention to the sins and failures of the church. No true Seventh-

day Adventist—leader or laity—approves of the sins and failings that appear at times within the church body. The real problem is that these private organizations charge the church with being in a state of apostasy because the church does not accept their views on certain debatable theological positions. And the sins and failures of the church are seen as issuing out of this condition as well.

The concern expressed by the church regarding these private organizations as identified above and as more fully addressed in the supporting book *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries* is that these interlocking private organizations have created in effect a church within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Appeal

Therefore, the 1992 Year-end Meeting of the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists feels it necessary to take action calling the attention of all church members in the North American Division, or in any part of the world field affected by these private organizations, to the fact that materials or programs produced and fostered by Hope International/Our Firm Foundation, Prophecy Countdown, Hartland Institute, Steps to Life Church, Rolling Hills Church, or any other churches or groups associated with these private organizations, or other private organizations promoting similar divisive concepts should be recognized as materials and programs which potentially cause division rather than unity within the church.

Because of the serious problems created by these aforementioned private organizations, we urge all members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to recognize that these private organizations are not supporting the Seventh-day Adventist Church in proclaiming the gospel commission given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church by our Lord. We also endorse circulating the book *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries* in the North American Division in order that all interested individuals may be able to clearly recognize the serious divisive problem caused by private organizations which attempt to establish a church within the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Spirit of this document

This document is not presented in a spirit of combat or hostility. The denomi-

nation holds no ill will toward either Hope International/Our Firm Foundation, Prophecy Countdown, Hartland Institute, Steps to Life Church, Rolling Hills Church, or any other churches or groups associated with the above private organizations, or other private organizations promoting similar divisive concepts. Church leadership would urge these private organizations to join with the church in using their energy and influence to assist the church in fulfilling its mission as most private ministries have done and are doing.

The church speaks out through this document only because it senses a danger to the spiritual life of its members and to the resources needed to proclaim the gospel. If members lose confidence in the church and its leaders, they may well become discouraged and abandon the gospel entirely—to their eternal loss. Thus the church is weakened in its attempts to complete its mission.

So the church must act to protect itself. But it acts out of love and concern, not out of malice. The church does not attempt to dictate the beliefs or work of these private organizations. It asks only for the courtesy and charity that any genuine Christian would afford a fellow member.

Conclusion

These dissident organizations have chosen to work in opposition to the organized church rather than in cooperation with it. Ellen G. White met a similar challenge in the 1870s:

“Christ and His church are inseparable. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to lead out and to bear the responsibilities connected with His work and with the advancement and spread of the truth is to reject the means which God has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. To pass these by and think your light must come through no other channel than directly from God places you in a position where you are liable to deception and to be overthrown” (Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 418-419).

These dissident organizations divide the church when they insist that their interpretations of the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy are the only authentic ones. They construct their own version of “historic Adventism.” They undermine confidence in the church by accusing ministers and leaders who do not agree with them of “apostasy.” They threaten the viability of the church when they encourage members to divert financial resources from the orga-

nized church to their private treasuries. Thus they sow seeds of disunity. While each Seventh-day Adventist must consult his/her conscience in deciding what to do about their message, the church is taking this action to draw attention to the problems attending these dissident organizations in order that all members might see the facts in their true light and have an adequate basis for making their decisions.

In the book *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries* detailed information has been shared concerning the problems the church has experienced with Hope International/Our Firm Foundation, Prophecy Countdown, Hartland Institute, Steps to Life Church, Rolling Hills Church, as well as other churches or groups associated with the above private organizations. These private organizations present the most immediate challenge. But the principles stated herein are applicable on a wider scale. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has had its detractors throughout its history, and it is likely to meet such challenges until the Lord comes. We hope the reader of this action and the book *Issues: The Seventh-day Adventist Church and Certain Private Ministries* will find help in understanding and responding to any self-perceived “reform” group that seeks to work by undermining leadership and dividing the loyalty of the members.

And so we appeal to our separated brothers and sisters: Don’t Continue to Fight the Church. In the long run we all want the same thing—the finishing of the Gospel proclamation, the return of Jesus, and a glorious eternity together with Him and each other. You are free, of course, to preach and publish your call to a higher standard of holiness, or to explain your particular theological understandings, as you see them. But please allow other, equally sincere members to have their own views also and still be counted your brothers and sisters in Christ. In other words, be tolerant on those points which the Church has left open. Never seek to destroy confidence in the ministry or leadership of the church, for that could cause “weaker” members to lose faith altogether and turn away from God’s church. If you see wrongs in individuals, follow Christ’s counsel in Matthew 18, but never publish the matter abroad. And never encourage members to bypass God’s treasury and send their tithes to you, for this is not God’s plan. Let us work together—in unity but not necessarily in uniformity—to finish our mission. We love you. Your church. ■

The Pharisee's Guide to Perfect Holiness: A Study of Sin and Salvation

George R. Knight, *Pacific Press Publishing Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1992, 256 pages, US\$14.95, Cdn\$17.95, hardcover.*

Reviewed by Hugh I. Dunton, director, E. G. White Seventh-day Adventist Research Centre, Newbold College, England.

The Pharisee's Guide builds on the author's two earlier volumes, *1888 to Apostasy* and *Angry Saints* and takes up the issues of sin and holiness, issues that sometimes lead to unholy attitudes. Knight has read extensively and is able to view the topic both from Adventist and non-Adventist perspectives. Critics may feel that Knight has quoted too widely and that Ellen White should have been his major source. For this reviewer, however, Knight has struck a good balance. When he does use White, her voice is clearer because the book is not a compilation of her statements.

Knight's undergirding thesis is that different definitions of sin lead to varying approaches to "achieving" righteousness. Human striving may marginalize Christ. The Pharisees' problem, says Knight, was that they viewed sin as a "series of actions," and consequently righteousness was also a "series of behaviors or actions." Knight believes this was the approach of Adventist theologian M. L. Andreasen. The author contends sin is a condition of the heart, not a series of acts.

Knight examines the heterodoxies in both extremes of Adventism. He rejects the idea that some may be "born again" at birth because they have godly parents. He believes everyone has an inherent bent to evil, and sinful acts follow a broken relationship with God. Therefore, "transgression of the law" is the manifestation of the problem not the problem itself. Sin manifests itself not just in misdeeds, but also in attitudes and omissions. The narrow forensic view of justification, adopted by some Adventists, stems from Melancthon, not Luther argues Knight. Knight's chapter on justification has a curious title: "Justification the Work of a Lifetime, Sanctification the Work of a Moment." He shows that White had a much wider view, "a reclaiming from sin." Justification is the work of a lifetime in that we need Christ's merits daily.

The chapters that will arouse most interest are those on White's views on sinlessness and the last generation. Those

defining perfection as perfect sinlessness rely heavily on White. But Knight argues that this is methodological confusion between the role of the lesser and greater light. The author believes White must be understood within the framework of biblical teachings.

Knight deals with the tension between White's statements. Some of her statements imply we can live as sinless as Adam. Others indicate we cannot claim sinlessness, but need the merits of Christ until the Second Coming. Then he points out her definition of sin.

Knight accepts from the Bible and White that spotlessness is required of the final generation. But why? The author finds the answer in the unprecedented end-time polarization between good and evil. White repeatedly links character development with Christ's second coming. The crucial point for Knight is what she means when she talks about the character of Christ being "perfectly reproduced" in His people. He sees a danger in linking perfection to strict dietary and other ascetic practices. Perfectionism is too often performance-related—self-centered, cold, joyless, and legal—rather than having to do with relationships and character.

Knight argues that White's statements imply character perfection for those who are resurrected as well as those who are translated, says Knight. He believes that Philippians 1:6 and Hebrews 11:39, 40 indicate how God will bridge "the gap between character and action." Christ performs a perfecting act at His second coming. Knight emphasizes that the redeemed do not reach a static state of perfection, for they will continue to mature, and grow into Christ's perfection.

At a time when Seventh-day Adventists may be polarized between passively waiting for the Advent and striving for perfection, this book offers a thoughtful approach. As the author states: "One of the most difficult exercises for Adventists to perform is to read statements about human perfection unemotionally." This reviewer hopes that readers will study this book prayerfully, focusing on the holiness and perfection of Him upon whose righteousness alone we shall forever depend.

Love Aflame

Karen and Ron Flowers, Review and

Herald Publishing Assn., Hagerstown, Maryland, 1992, US\$8.95, Cdn\$11.20, paper. Reviewed by Linda and Victor Elliott. Victor is elder of administration, Atholton Seventh-day Adventist Church, Columbia, Maryland, and Linda is the children's ministries director.

The Song of Solomon (also known as the Song of Songs) has been analyzed over the years by many learned scholars and religious teachers who have viewed this love poem as allegory. To accept the poem as a beautiful sonnet between two lovers entering into a marriage relationship has been considered almost a sin. Most expositors deal with hidden messages or symbolism rather than the most obvious meaning of the text.

Karen and Ron Flowers believe the Song of Songs has been placed in Scripture to teach "the principles of relational living inherent in any close relationship" as well as create in each married couple a desire to elevate the marriage relationship to Edenic ideals.

The authors give a thematic overview of the poem, a brief discussion of the poem's chiasmic structure, an explanation of major symbols, and a look at other interpretations. They also provide a sprinkling of ideas from modern authorities on relationships supporting Solomon's wisdom and upholding God's plan.

Many readers will find the interpretive history of the Song of Songs fascinating. But some terms relating to this sensitive topic seem toned down so as not to sound clinical. Solomon followed the same pattern in describing the scenes of wedded love—he used the language of poetry and metaphor. Thus he does not embarrass or evoke negative reaction, but invites readers to cherish, enjoy, and reclaim God's perfect wedding gift.

Chapters 11 and 12 held our attention with their practical applications. As parents we found usable suggestions to guide our four boys in developing needed relationship skills.

We were raised during a time when sexuality was not openly discussed at home or in the church. As a young married couple we found assurance in the Song of Songs that God created intimacy between husband and wife and declared it very good. And it is still very good. Emotional and physical pleasure remain essential to a healthy marital bond—they

protect a marriage from unfaithfulness. An illicit relationship can sneak up on anyone, but happens most often when warning signs are ignored (noted in chapter 11).

Song of Solomon does not speak of sexuality in procreative terms. Children seem far from the minds of Solomon and Shulamith. They intend to enjoy each other, having fun, becoming one flesh, discovering unity in the marriage act as a gift from God. This gift allows them a taste of the original Eden-type relationship.

Coauthored books are often disjointed and difficult to follow. But Karen and Ron Flowers do an excellent job of letting readers know whose perspective they are reading.

The authors conclude by reminding us that human love is not God's love, but that we can learn about God's love through human love. Anyone reading the Song of Solomon, whether he or she has experienced love or not, can believe that such happiness is possible. Once this truth is accepted, it is easier to receive God's agape love.

False Balances

Clifford Goldstein, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1992, 190 pages, \$12.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Brian Jones, Bible instructor, Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Auburn, Washington.

Recognizing the varieties of belief in the Adventist Church today, Clifford Goldstein attempts to lead us to a balanced, integrated concept of the gospel. Goldstein believes that doctrinal conflicts, distortions, and paradoxes can be resolved by a correct understanding of the heavenly sanctuary. He supports his thesis and manages to depolemize this controversial topic by focusing on the beauty, order, and harmony of Christ's sanctuary work for human salvation.

Adventists, who love truth but have grown weary of theological debate and contention, will find refreshment in this book. Goldstein does not attack or defend factions or philosophies—He exalts Christ. His teachings clearly and logically show the pitfalls of extreme views.

Goldstein is no armchair theologian. For the sake of his own spiritual health and survival he has had to work his way through the issues he writes about. These same concerns inescapably confront every serious Seventh-day Adventist. These issues include the relationship between

law and grace, faith and works, justification and sanctification, Christ's sacrifice on Calvary and His mediatorial ministry in heaven, and the role of Christ as our substitute and example. Goldstein fills in the artificial dichotomy between these issues, not with untempered mortar, but with solid Bible truth, thus bringing out the underlying harmony and beauty of the subjects.

The author reasons out every point with judicial clarity and comes to au-

thoritative conclusions from a careful analysis of Scripture. I found this to be the book's greatest strength. He treats this challenge with reverence and logic, comparing scripture with scripture and spiritual things with spiritual. The result is not tidy, dry, desiccated answers, but rich, soul-satisfying truth. He adheres to traditional Adventist doctrine, but brings in fresh insights that highlight the progressive power and relevance of our message and mission.

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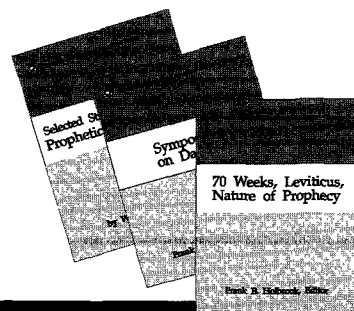
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Goldstein shows how the distinctive beliefs of Adventism are not just scripturally defensible, but illustrative of the Bible's central theme of righteousness by faith in Christ our surety.

In the development of the subject matter of this book it would have been easy for a writer to move to the right or left of the issues and underscore personal persuasions. Goldstein shows himself to be a centrist; he cannot conveniently be placed in either the liberal or conserva-

tive camps. The truth lies between and above both positions, just as Christ's theology was not a hybrid of Pharisaism and Sadduceeism but a sublime transcendence of both schools. Goldstein's stance is one of Calvary consciousness that brings all doctrine into an appealing symmetry that magnifies Christ's saving sacrifice.

Goldstein does more than unravel complex issues—he provides readers with a method for examining doctrine and expe-

rience in light of God's activity in the heavenly sanctuary. This view is not innovative or gimmicky—it is scriptural (see Ps. 20:2; 27:4; 43:3, 4; 73:17; 77:13; 90:1, 2; Heb. 2-10).

I believe the Lord guides us into a renewed study of the sanctuary for more than the benefit of doctrinal rectitude, as indispensable as that may be (2 John 9). God wants more for us—a vibrant, joyful, and pure religious experience as a people. Goldstein's book offers a significant and stimulating contribution to that process.

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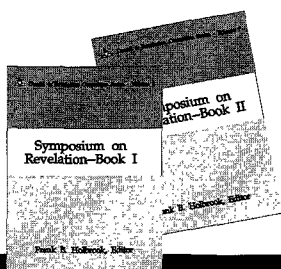
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Living by the Book

Howard G. Hendricks, William D. Hendricks, Moody Press, Chicago, 1991, 349 pages, US\$16.99, R. G. Mitchell Family Books, Willowdale, Ontario, Cdn\$21.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Herbert Kiesler, associate director, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Living by the Book is a joint venture of a father-and-son team. Howard Hendricks brings to the task his experience as a longtime seminary professor at Dallas Theological Seminary and shares his "life's passion on paper." His son, Bill, brings his expertise as an editor, writer, and video producer.

The Hendrickses wrote the book to counteract a tragedy of modern Christians. Professor Hendricks states, "Too many are under the word, but far too few are in the Word." To help the reader experience the transforming power of the Word, he suggests a course of study that provides important answers in the struggle against biblical illiteracy.

Hendricks affirms that the Bible not only provides fresh and timeless insights, but also offers protection in our daily battles, comfort for dashed hopes, and an education for a life worth living. When he became a Christian, the professor discovered the truism of a statement he penned on the flyleaf of his Bible, "This book will keep you from sin, or sin will keep you from this book."

He arranges his material around three major steps: (1) observations, (2) interpretation, and (3) application. His inductive approach to Bible study is scholarly and analytical, yet made simple for the nontheologian. His illustrations, charts, and other graphic devices arouse and sustain interest in studying God's Word.

In this reviewer's opinion, not only

lay readers but also pastors and teachers will benefit from the material. If readers take Hendricks' method of study seriously, they will experience changed lives.

Recently Noted

Christmas in My Heart, compiled and edited by Joe L. Wheeler, 1992, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Hagerstown, Maryland, 128 pages, US\$8.95, Cdn\$11.20, paper. A treasury of old-fashioned Christmas stories.

The following devotional books for 1993 are now available from the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland (they will make excellent Christmas gifts):

Morning Praise, Daily Meditations for Adults, Bob and Marie Spangler, 373 pages, US\$9.95, Cdn\$12.45, hardcover.

Among Friends, 432 pages, US\$14.95, Cdn\$18.70, hardcover. More than 170 women share from the heart how Christ has brought solutions to their problems and given them hope for the future.

The Official 1993 Devotional Book for Super Kids, Renee Kempf Coffee, 377 pages, US\$9.95, Cdn\$12.45, hardcover. Daily devotions for juniors.

Quiet Times With Jesus, 190 pages, US\$9.95, Cdn\$12.45, hardcover. A multi-authored devotional for pre-schoolers.

Youth Edition Steps to Christ, Ellen White, 128 pages, US\$4.55, Cdn\$5.55; US\$39.95, Cdn\$49.75 per 100; US\$34.95, Cdn\$43.70 per 5,000.

Friends—we all need them

From page 15

Other friends

A friend of mine from childhood recently sent me a copy of a document we both signed when we were 12 years old, promising to be friends "till death us do part." I had completely forgotten about it, but she had pasted it in her diary. And really, our friendship has lasted more than 30 years even though we have lived far apart. I believe some of our best friendships are the ones we make in childhood—

my friend is as close as a sister. I can trust her with things I would tell no one else. We don't write letters all the time and we don't see each other often, but when we do, it is as if we had never been separated. I encourage my children to keep in touch with their friends by letters and visits so that they can keep their childhood friends.

Many pastors and their wives find it refreshing to have friends outside the church—and not just for the purpose of converting them. Could it be that the church forces us into a mold to which we are expected to conform, and thus the only place we can be normal people is outside the church? Neighbors can become good friends if we spend time with them. They may not directly encourage us in our ministry, but they will keep us in touch with the real world and will challenge us to keep our Christianity real.

Focus on being a friend

If we want friends, we should support and encourage those around us. Rather than focusing on "having friends," we should dedicate ourselves to "being friends." This is especially important in relating to colleagues in the clergy, where it seems difficult to find real friends. When we support and affirm our ministerial peers, holding their secrets in confidence, we establish lasting friendships with them.

Thank God He made us as He did, dependent on relationships—relationships that enrich our lives. Let's be open and honest with each other, and then we'll find rewarding relationships wherever we are. ■

¹ Karen Burton Mains, *Open Heart, Open Home* (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publishing Co., 1987), p. 20.

Making friends with God

From page 18

the cards, remembering that God wants to deal with every facet of our lives.

Fostering our friendship with God is not easy—it requires great effort and commitment. There may be days when our relationship with Him seems dry and we feel nothing, but does that really matter? During those times we can just minister to Him out of our love for Him! And when we do, we will find an experience that surpasses anything else on earth! ■

*Unless otherwise stated, all Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

¹ James Dobson, *Man to Man About Women* (Eastbourne, United Kingdom: Kingsway Publications, Ltd., 1976), p. 22.

² Frank B. Minirth and Paul D. Meier, *Happiness Is a Choice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990), p. 169.

³ James Buchan, *The Indomitable Mary Slessor* (New York: Seabury, 1981), p. 86.

⁴ Sally McClung, *Where Will I Find the Time?* (Eastbourne, United Kingdom: Kingsway Publications, Ltd., 1988).

⁵ Anne Ortlund, *Disciplines of the Beautiful Woman* (Waco, Tex.: Word, Inc., 1984).

1992 Annual Council report

From page 23

focus centered on statement 4 in the Guidelines: "The church does not serve as conscience for individuals; however, it should provide moral guidance. Abortions for reasons of birth control, gender selection, or convenience are not condoned by the church. Women at times, however, may face exceptional circumstances that present serious moral and medical dilemmas, such as significant threats to the pregnant woman's life, serious jeopardy to her health, severe congenital defects carefully diagnosed in the fetus, and pregnancy resulting from rape or incest. The final decision whether to terminate the pregnancy or not should be made by the pregnant woman after appropriate consultation. She should be aided in her decision by accurate information, biblical principles, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, these decisions are best made within the context of healthy family relationships."

The council ended with a strong appeal from President Folkenberg to remember the prayer watch begun at the 1990 General Conference session in Indianapolis. More than 2,500 people signed a commitment to pray daily at 6:15 in the morning for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit is to lift up Jesus Christ and Him crucified. May every reader of *Ministry* make a strong commitment to daily pray for that power to lift up Jesus and to live daily for Him. ■

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Letters

From page 2

to supervise the clerks; 4. every local church must have annual membership audits by field or union personnel.

Implementing these suggestions will take two to three years from the point that record books reach the churches and the training begins. After two or three years of patient training we will be able to defend our membership figures in good faith.

We also need official books and training for local church treasurers whose records are no better off than the clerks.

The real problem is not dishonesty or bad faith. We simply haven't tended the system. While no system can claim one hundred percent accuracy, and while every local church will have some "dead wood," the system in our union has fallen behind our amazing growth rate to the point that our figures are untrustworthy no matter what anybody says.

Let our division make a joint covenant to ensure quality record keeping in every local church between now and the 1995 General Conference session, no matter what happens to the figures. Let us put aside blame distribution and turf protection and consider only our spiritual stewardship of the precious names we hold in our records.—Name Withheld.

Investigative judgment

Ministry is to be commended for trying to establish the investigative judgment as a biblical doctrine. Unfortunately, I feel the most recent attempt to do this—an article by Eric Livingston ("Investigative Judgment—A Scriptural Concept," April 1992)—was inadequate to the task.

Livingston began by marshaling examples of God investigating before executing judgment. The problem is that in every case the investigation and judgment concerned those who were lost. (It is true that Adam and Eve may ultimately be saved, but at the point they were investigated they were in a state of lostness and alienation from God.) The end-time parallel to this type of investigation is not the pre-Advent judgment of the saved, but the

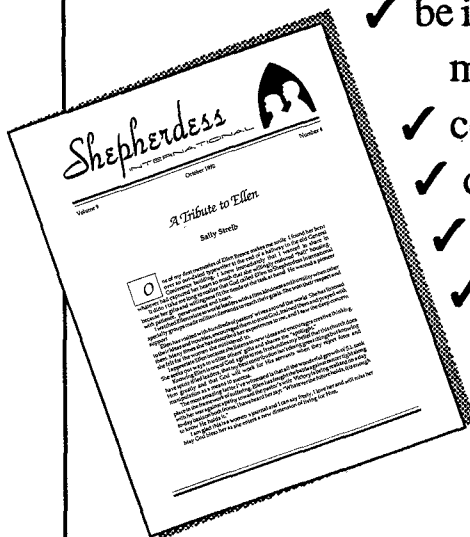
opening of the books of record at the end of the millennium, as described in Revelation 20. It may very well be that God judges the righteous in the same manner, but to assert this is to so involve a leap of faith that it is not the same as demonstrating that it is a biblical teaching!

Livingston looks at the call of the righteous (especially in the Psalms) to be judged. Here he is on stronger ground. However, these psalms can easily be understood as a call for God to judge those who accuse and perse-

cute the righteous. Their condemnation vindicates the righteous as a by-product.

As a young minister caught up in the post-Glacier View hysteria of this division in the last decade, I had no option to give the pre-Advent judgment significant attention. I came to the conclusion that our theology had an essential soundness to it, but that we sometimes used very poor arguments to defend it. Livingston's article confirms me in that view.—D. H. Thiele, New Plymouth, New Zealand.

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"America's Changing Face and the Church's Changing Voice" is an eye-opening and compelling analysis of ethnic trends in North American evangelism. This well-documented treatise is available for US\$4.50 (postpaid) from Multilingual Ministry, North American Division, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Please include a check or money order.

Renewing enthusiasm

When our church voted its "Big 25" objectives for the next five years, our number two objective was: "A renewal of Seventh-day Adventism's distinctive mission."

Our adult Sabbath school superintendents plan to help achieve that goal weekly by asking select individuals to prepare a thoughtful two-minute testimony on "Why I Am a Seventh-day Adventist." Superintendents will ask them to describe their favorite of one of the following: Bible doctrine; lifestyle practice; Adventist fellowship tradition; feature of our local church family.

The two-minute time limit will be "enforced" to keep the feature crisp so it can be used over and over as a weekly reminder of "what God has wrought!" (Num. 23:23, NEB) in raising up the Seventh-day Adventist Church.—David E. Smith, Greeneville, Tennessee.

Free 1992 Ministry index

To save space for what may be of more general interest, we no longer publish an index to *Ministry*. You can find material published in this magazine by using the *Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index*. Or you can

obtain a free copy of our 1992 subject and author index. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to *Ministry* Index, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600, and we will supply you with a copy of this index as soon as it is available.

Cordless phone warning

While a cordless phone

may free you to perform other functions while ministering, be aware that others can eavesdrop with another cordless phone or scanner. Never forget that such conversations are not confidential.—Albert E. Myers, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

Before you move . . .

Many pastors in new

districts must start from scratch in finding necessary information about members, interests, minutes of meetings, and other items of importance. The following checklist could be useful for conferences to remind transferring pastors to leave behind essential data for their successors.—James Astleford, Hosur, Tamil Nadu, India.

XYZ Conference of SDA Ministerial Transfer Procedure Form

Church: _____

Pastor _____, You are getting ready to transfer away from your district. Please ensure that all (applicable) materials below are prepared and ready. They are to be handed over either to the incoming pastor or to the conference ministerial secretary.

- ☐ Membership list: name, address [+map], birthdate, baptism date, marriage date.
- ☐ Interest list: name, address [+ map], source of interest.
- ☐ Minutes of church board meetings.
- ☐ Minutes of church business meetings.
- ☐ List of current church officers.
- ☐ Calendar of events.
- ☐ Minutes of Interdenomination Ministerial Association. Introduction letter.
- ☐ Names and addresses of other clergy.
- ☐ Minutes of SDA Ministerial Association.
- ☐ Church territorial maps (Ingathering/personal ministries, etc.).
- ☐ Ingathering cards.
- ☐ File of church correspondence.
- ☐ Summary of projects-in-process.
- ☐ Minutes of school board meetings.
- ☐ Area map.
- ☐ Summary of useful local information (eg. parking privileges at hospitals, clergy benefits, shopping tips, discounts, housing tips).

Signature of Outgoing Pastor

Signature of Incoming Pastor

Signature of Conference Ministerial Secretary

Signature of Head Elder