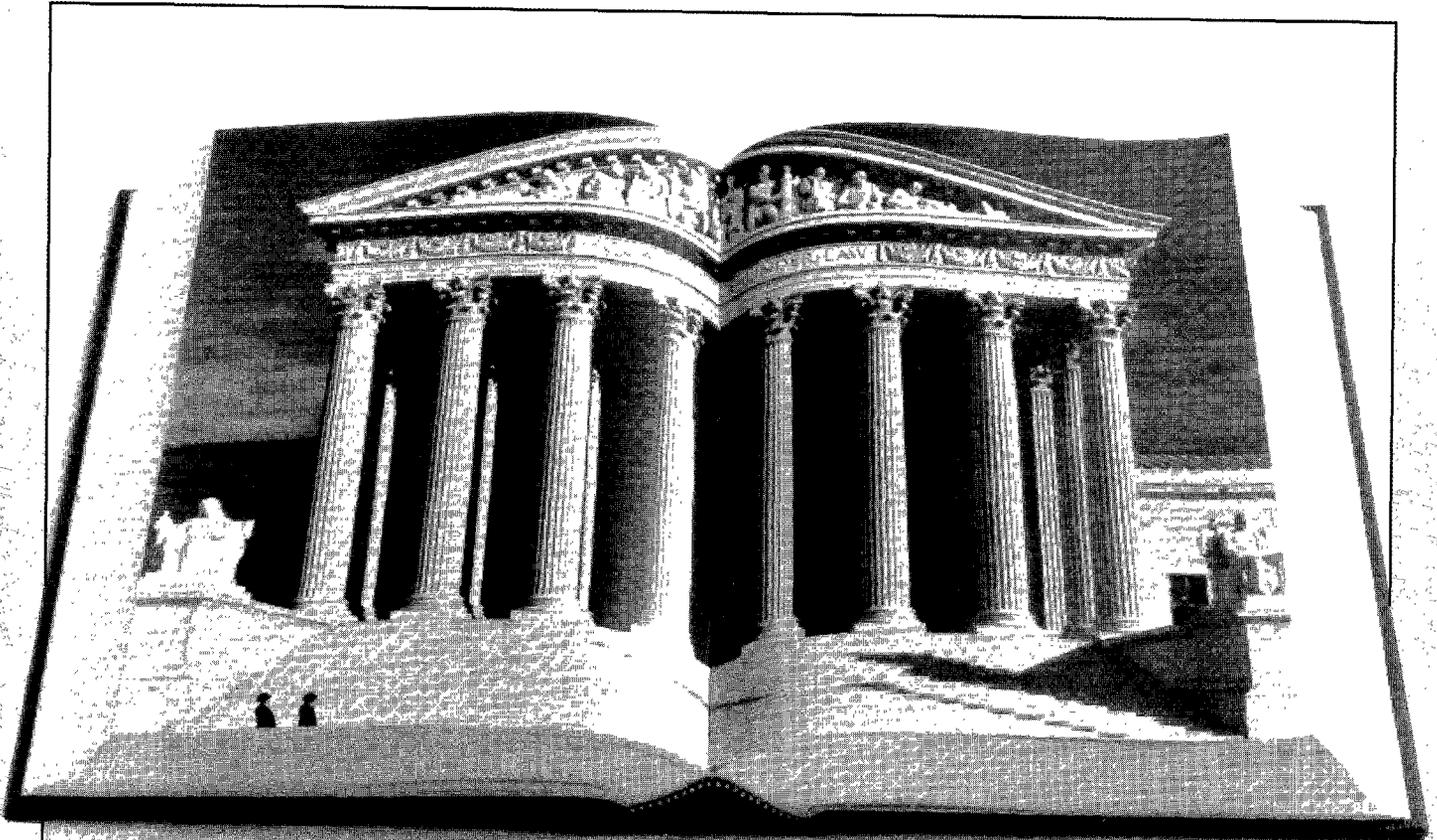


Ministry

International Journal for Clergy

November 1991



Is
the Bible
our final
AUTHORITY?

Ministerial Supply
Center Catalog

Ministering to the handicapped

As a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, I have been receiving *Ministry* for some time now. I want you to know that each issue is read and appreciated. One article that caught my eye immediately was "Ministering to Families With Handicapped Children" (July 1991). Karen Holford gave a lot of helpful information. I too am perhaps guilty of spending more time with those who create their own problems (smoking, alcohol, drugs) than with those who are born with them, through no fault of their own.—Rev. Michael J. Bodnyk, Ashfield, Pennsylvania.

Confused over the basis of salvation?

Newman's editorial ("Confused Over the Basis of Salvation") in the July issue really rang a bell with me. It got me so excited I threw away my notes for last Sabbath's sermon and preached to my people (and myself) that truly the cross is the basis of our salvation—nothing more, nothing less. I haven't felt so good in years!

Please continue to publish such clear and noncompromising gospel material.—Pastor Phil Johnson, Livingston, New York.

■ Your editorial is one of the most dangerous that I have read in a while.

I hope your church does not teach this from the pulpit. It sounds that you believe a person can live any way he desires and claim to be a child of God with expectations of eternity in heaven.

We have too many so-called Christians today who will spend their final reward in hell because of this type of teaching.—Rev. Ray Crane, N. Friendship G. B. Church, Lynnville, Indiana.

■ I was impressed with the editorial in the July journal. Almost everything you said agrees with how I and a host of others interpret the Scriptures. Thank you for a clear voice among Adventists.

Part of your frustration comes from other opinions in your denomination. I have known scores of Adventists in the past 10 years who would not agree with you. I could not agree that the Sabbath school lessons unwittingly added to the confusion. I think they wittingly made their opinion known. There seems to be some doctrinal disagreement in your denomination. This will continue to plague you because of the importance of the issue.—Pastor Bob Burris, Lancaster Evangelical Free Church, Lancaster, California.

■ Your editorial caused me concern. The rightness or wrongness of the two viewpoints of justification discussed is not my immediate concern, but the fact that you so overtly aired your differences with the Sabbath school quarterly. Was that helpful? There are surely other, less confrontive ways of making your point.—Pastor Thomas A. Davis, Armstrong, British Columbia.

■ Concerning your editorial, apparently the young people were asked if they thought they must live by God's rules in order to be saved. The correct answer would be yes. If the question had been in regard to their justification, the correct answer would be no. I think they were asked the wrong question.

Certainly we are justified by what was done for us, but do you always equate justification with salvation? People who, unlike the thief on the cross, continue to live after justification must sincerely attempt to live by God's rules (Rom. 2:13-16).

When the Christian's justification is

upheld in the judgment, then justification will equal salvation.—Pastor Stewart I. Bauer, Redding, California.

■ My heart was warmed as I read your editorial. For too long we have not heard the good news of the assurance of salvation in Christ.

I believe that the message of Christ our righteousness when more clearly and distinctly understood will produce within God's people a heart appreciation for the gospel that is unshakable. Please let us hear more!—David H. Otis, Wyomissing, Pennsylvania.

■ Your editorial sounds much like those evangelicals who have long held the belief that justification is a legal transaction with a forensic dimension only. This has led to false assurance, some claiming to have been justified while giving little evidence of confession. Even among Adventists all too often there has been a contradiction between belief and practice.

Adventists have long held that the Bible teaches justification as including the new birth (Rom. 4:25; 5:1; 6:7, 8; Titus 3:5-7). In an article in *Ministry*, February 1988, Hans K. LaRondelle wrote: "In summary, Jesus considered justification and forgiveness identical concepts that implied both the forensic restoration of the right relation with God and the immediate fruits of spiritual rebirth."—Francis Wernick, Fulton, Maryland.

■ Just a note to express my gratitude for your excellent editorial stating the biblical basis for our salvation in Jesus. This is so timely in view of the confusion today. If we ever expect to make a serious impact on this generation, we have to go back to item number one in Revelation 14:6—the everlasting gospel! I believe there are

(Continued on page 29)

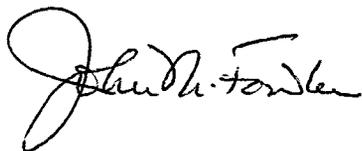
If you're receiving *MINISTRY* bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928, *MINISTRY* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but we believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help to you too. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, the Indian philosopher who tried to mediate between Eastern philosophy and Western pragmatism, found the Christian postulate on God's activity in history difficult to comprehend, and remarked that Christians are ordinary people making extraordinary claims. The difficulty is nothing new. Even Christians can't quite grasp or agree on the way God deals with the sinful race.

Some of the difficulties are taken up this month. George Reid surveys the problems surrounding the doctrine of inspiration, and suggests that the Bible continues to remain valid and authoritative for Christian faith, life, and practice.

God's claim through the cross occupies other writers. Frank Hasel examines the issue of God's wrath and provides a portrait of the redemptive and holy nature of God. Editor Newman and Marvin Moore dialogue on the role of new birth and justification in the salvation experience.

But ministry is not all theology. Read Donna Habenicht's concern for the pastor's family, written from experience as a minister's wife and as a psychologist.



- 2** Letters
- 4** I like BBC
John M. Fowler
- 5** Allaying confusion over salvation
J. David Newman
- 6** Is the Bible our final authority?
George W. Reid
- 10** The wrath of God
Frank M. Hasel
- 13** Justification and conversion revisited
Marvin Moore
- 15** Ministerial Association Resource Catalog
- 23** Myths and the ministerial family
Donna J. Habenicht
- 26** Should you try topical preaching?
Floyd Bresee
- 27** Biblio File
- 31** Shop Talk

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VOLUME 64 NUMBER 11



I like BBC

John M. Fowler

No other area of human quest demands as great a sense of wonder and humility as theology. For two reasons: the infinite nature of its subject matter and the finite and warped status of its doers. And yet theological activities, particularly at the level of its defensive or indifferent postures, get tinged with extreme positions. Extremism's first victims are charity and sanity.

To take extreme positions is a perennial temptation in theological life. Take, for example, the question of revelation. The biblical position is simple. God has chosen to reveal Himself: "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world" (Heb. 1:1, 2, RSV). This and other passages in the Scripture proclaim that one of the ways God has self-disclosed is through the Word. The biblical testimony on the Word also speaks about God inspiring the Word. But what is the meaning of inspiration? The extreme dogmatist would argue for a word-upon-word literal divine dictation theory; the skeptical critic may concede only a human document that inspires, much like Milton or Shakespeare, conceivably even better. The trouble may be isolated in the form of extreme stances: the tendency of the critic to creep into the world of faith and revelation, and the temptation of the dogmatist to rush into the unknown and the undefined.

How does a believer handle the di-

lemma? I find help in the New Testament principle of "already/not yet." The principle comes through in Jesus' teaching that the kingdom of God is already here (Luke 7:21; cf. Matt. 12:28; 11:12, 13; 4:23; 9:35; 13:11) and not yet here (Matt 6:10; 8:11; 19:28; 24; Mark 13, Luke 24), a present reality and a future prospect, an experience as well as a hope. Some have found these sayings regarding the nature of God's kingdom confusing, but Jesus' message is "that in His own person and mission God has invaded human history and has triumphed over evil, even though the final deliverance will occur only at the end of the age."¹

The "already" settles the finality of the kingdom—Christ has ushered it in in history: "The kingdom of God's grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love."² The "not yet" assures the physical end of evil and the establishment of the new earth: "The full establishment of the kingdom of His glory will not take place until the second coming of Christ to this world."³ The one assures the other; and both balance each other.

Now let us apply this principle to the dilemma of revelation. As a believer I have the already—the given, the finality. My ground of being, my faith rests on what has been revealed: "All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, RSV). But then there is the not yet: the realm of the unknown, the unexplainable, the discrepancies, the

difficulties. Humility forces me to concede that "secret things belong to the Lord our God." Faith invites me to accept that "the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29), and that we "may be complete, equipped for every good work" (see 2 Cor. 9:8). And hope beckons me to look forward: "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood" (1 Cor. 13:12, RSV).

The failings of the Church

We may apply the already/not yet principle to other areas as well. Consider the failings of the church, something that troubles many people. The calling of the ecclesia is indeed a part of God's plan to gather His Messianic community. The church is to be His body—representative of His love, carrier of His mission, doer of His will on earth. Its members are to be children of one God, believers in one faith, practitioners of one brotherhood, and proclaimers of one Word. Love, unity, holiness, and faithfulness are to mark their life and mission. But history witnesses anything but the ideal Christian community. What do I do?

The already/not yet tension suggests that I neither retreat into despair nor flee into rejection, but approach the issue with a sense of balance. In spite of the failures of the Christian community, the possibility of the ideal is "already" here, and it is for each member of the body to recognize that he or she is part of a great, cosmic experiment⁴ in character formation. To that extent, I must with God's enabling grace walk the high

road of sanctification. Christian character is thus a personal responsibility more than a corporate achievement. The "not yet" affirms the promise that the ideal of one loving, united, redeemed community—the lamb and the lion dwelling together—is still to be realized.

Such a balanced focus of what is and what is to come makes me look at the ecclesia in an altogether positive way: "Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace."⁵

Proclamation and compassion

The already/not yet principle can also help me appreciate my spiritual and social responsibilities better. The kingdom has brought the good news of life, eternal and temporal. While the grace of Christ transforms the heart and gives birth to a new life, the person so transformed also experiences a new life style, a new dignity. When the good news of Jesus is accepted, the wonders of a life healed and of a life turning to God coalesce: "They saw the dumb speaking, the maimed whole, the lame walking, and the blind seeing; and they glorified the God of Israel" (Matt. 15:31, RSV). And yet the wonder often turns to a query in the face of abusive living, family breakdown, racial bigotry, social injustice, wasteful ecology, and war and aggression. Should I give up proclamation and plunge into an agenda of social activism? Should I retreat to the safe haven of the pulpit and insulate myself from social concerns?

Proclamation without compassion leads to isolation; compassion without proclamation results in emptiness. Neither is acceptable to the Christian. The already/not yet principle calls for a balance. The kingdom is here, with its victory over evil already a fact. But the whole creation is groaning and waiting for deliverance (Rom. 8:22, 23) on that day when "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 11:15, RSV).

When my faith and life take on that kind of balanced perspective, I find security and strength to face the temptations of extremism. That's why I like BBC. For faith, strength, integrity, and endurance, there is nothing like BBC: balanced, biblical Christianity.

¹ George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974), p. 67.

² Ellen G. White, *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 108.

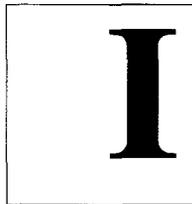
³ *Ibid.*

⁴ _____, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 18.

⁵ _____, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 12.

Alaying confusion over salvation

J. David Newman



I need to clarify one issue in my editorial "Confused Over the Basis of Salvation" (July 1991). Marvin Moore (see his response on page 13)

states that he agrees with most of my editorial, yet he differs on the key point that sparked the editorial in the first place.

Moore argues that "conversion is a qualification for salvation," and therefore we ought to ask ourselves, "Am I converted?" He maintains that a justified person is saved, but he cannot be saved without the new birth experience. And if one is saved solely on the basis of justification by faith, then the new birth must be part of justification.

In my previous editorial I was unable to cover every point in detail, and therefore I did not clearly explain the relationship of the new birth to justification.

The new birth is not a qualification for heaven! Nowhere does the Bible say that a person gets to heaven on the basis of the new birth experience. Then what did Jesus mean when he told Nicodemus that unless a person was born again he or she would not see the kingdom of heaven?

When we seek to describe and explain what happens in salvation, we must be careful to avoid the trap of making salvation a linear process. The elements in salvation need to be described in some order, but that does not mean that they follow in sequential fashion. For example, if we are to ride a bicycle successfully, we must distinguish between the front and back wheels. If we separate them, we no longer have a bicycle. The wheels are a unit, but with different functions.

Justification and sanctification are like the front and back wheels of the bicycle.

You cannot separate them. He or she whom God justifies, He also sanctifies. But that does not make justification and sanctification the same thing.

Paul makes it clear in Romans 4 that it was not any experience or change in Abraham that justified him. In fact, Paul stresses that God's justification is effective even while people are wicked (verse 5).

Paul says that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Rom. 10:13, NIV). Individuals separated from God recognize that they need a power outside of themselves to do for them what they cannot do themselves. The Holy Spirit has been working on their heart. They reach out by faith and say "God save me; help my unbelief." At that moment two things happen *simultaneously*: God declares those persons righteous on the basis of Christ's perfect life and death, and at the same moment He brings about the new birth experience.

They now have the will to work toward

the perfection they now have in Christ but do not have in themselves. God wants them to become in reality what they have been declared to be in Jesus. While the work of Christ for them is perfect and complete, the work of Christ in them is never fully completed in this life.

The key element here is choice. If people choose to depend completely on Jesus Christ, they are justified. That is how they have the assurance of salvation. They don't have to ask "How converted do I have to be?" All they have to ask is "Have I chosen Jesus

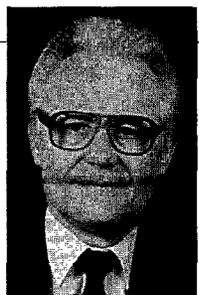
(Continued on page 29)



Is the Bible our final authority?

George W. Reid

What is the meaning of inspiration for today? What is the normative value of Scripture?



George Reid, Th.D., is the director of the Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland.

The seventeenth-century philosopher John Locke's contention that in every person resides a self-directed autonomy not to be abridged except by permission of the possessor appears to have won the day. First visible politically in revolutions in North America and France, it has become foundational to every segment of Western thought. Contemporary extremists now challenge all kinds of authority.

An interesting sidelight is this autonomy's impact on religious authority and morality. The idea that no one has a right to limit my personal desires and that my permission must be sought before any sort of limit can be set on my activities continues to bleed across into areas once thought to be the domain of God's direction. As a result, moral, behavioral, and even doctrinal beliefs now find themselves set by a polling of the community, in search of majority opinion. Molding that opinion has become big business as smooth public relations programs ply the group in an effort to sway opinions or to generate the mood that would propel people toward a desired end.

In such a climate it is hardly surprising that many people think of objective norms governing right and wrong as an antiquated leftover from a less enlightened era. The basic source to be consulted becomes one's inward opinion or feeling.

With these conditions prevailing, the Bible's claim to be the expressed will of

God is under heavy fire, even on occasion among Adventists. We must recognize the fact that the strongest force shaping opinion, including Adventist theological opinion, comes from the surrounding social environment, something particularly true in industrialized countries. We can deny it, but the pastors in the field know full well its truth.

To observe this is by no means to dismiss the gravity of serious talk about authority, rather to underline the necessity of saying clearheaded things. General reassertion of a position, no matter how fervent, will not do. Adventists must undertake a reassessment of where we are and explore once more the authority of the Bible. This includes the question of whether the message presented in the Scriptures will recapture the deepest wellsprings of the Adventist spirit, and if so, just how it can come to pass. Given the historic Adventist insistence on grounding all things in God's Word, this question is of high importance. The erosion of biblical authority is so significant that it overshadows many of the issues being tossed about, and in fact contributes to the discussions of some of those issues.

Sources of authority

What are the sources of religious authority? Many suggestions are made: an inner mystical force (typical of several Eastern faiths), human perceptions (often preceded by rational analysis), a religious organization (cults with a single leader), a combination of Scripture and church tradition (Catholicism's several branches), human experience claimed to be under control of the Holy

Spirit (charismatic groups), the Bible as the authoritative word of God (conservative Protestants), and various blends of these. Some, such as the Mormons, subordinate the authority of canonical Scripture to other writings. Of all these, Adventists have heretofore placed the Bible—the full 66 books—in commanding position. As Ellen White wrote: “God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”¹

Ellen White is not denying value to other channels of learning; instead she is identifying the Scriptures as the sole final voice in matters of religious faith. That she does not intend to limit the biblical voice to religious matters alone, however, is evidenced by her repeated commendation of the Bible as a source of historical information and as an authentic record of origins.

But when we extend scriptural authority beyond purely religious lines, we render it vulnerable to historical and scientific research, and therein lies the collision point that pits honest people against one another over the nature of the Word. Further, the steady process of critical studies has turned up substantial numbers of difficulties in the biblical text. These issues impact any acceptable understanding of inspiration. Dealing with this so-called phenomenon presents a challenge to Adventists.

Theories of inspiration

Books published on revelation/inspiration since 1975 present at least six theories of inspiration, three of which deserve brief review.

The three approaches are the (1) liberal, (2) neoorthodox, and (3) evangelical. After looking at the essential character of each view, we shall turn to look at where Adventists fit in.

Liberal. Liberal Protestantism traces its origin to the German philosopher Schleiermacher’s idea that God is inwardly perceived and is variable in

form. This approach can be described as a sense of dependence upon a higher power. Such a concept soon was wedded to the critical examination of the biblical books.

In essence the liberal view begins with the “phenomenon” of the Scriptures, the millions of fragmentary pieces of information, and proceeds toward formulation of an overall view of inspiration that can account for all the elements under examination. It claims a thorough faithfulness to the text itself, letting conclusions arise from the text rather than imposing them from predetermined norms.

As the work proceeds, three repeated motifs emerge: First, divine truth is not to be located in an ancient book, but is represented in the ongoing work of the Spirit in the community. This work is discerned by *critical rational judgment*. Its ultimate goal is not to identify objective truth, but to seek an authentic awareness of God. Second, Jesus appears as the archetype of religious insight and excellence. Salvation becomes a matter of Jesus’ teaching and pioneering a better way to understand God. The emphasis is on Jesus’ humanness, above other qualities. Third, the essence of Christ is to be found in His human greatness.

From this perspective, discrepancies within the biblical text pose no special problem, for the accent falls on Christ’s humanity. It is not important that Matthew cites a quotation as coming from Jeremiah when no such passage occurs in our present text of Jeremiah (Matt. 27:9, 10). All such reports are of human origin, but what counts is that they bring the reader toward Jesus. It is in this continuous conveying to faith in Jesus that liberal theologians find inspiration.

As Paul Achtemeier puts it, inspiration occurs as an activity of the Holy Spirit where tradition, the right situation, and a respondent come together. For him the respondent is not simply the person who wrote, but every person who had been active in gathering, shepherding, preserving, modifying, and reinterpreting the tradition over the years, including the final writer. For this reason inspiration is a continuing dynamic, present in all ages whenever the Scriptures are read. A great deal more could be said, but obviously much in this perspective is not compatible with Adventist thinking.

Neoorthodox. Even defenders of a

When we extend scriptural authority beyond religious lines, we render it vulnerable to historical and scientific research.

liberal view of inspiration concede that its end product is amorphous and heavily subjective. In the absence of absolutes, to what does the believer key his life? The answer generally is: To that which reason decrees to be good, drawn from the total life experience.

This uncertainty led to a twentieth-century reaction, called neoorthodoxy or encounter theology, that seeks return to an increased authority in Scripture. Here we find Barth, Brunner, and Bultmann. The task: to reconcile an error-prone text with the idea of true authority. The means: to conceive of the Bible at two levels. On the lower level is the text as we find it, error-prone, in human language, steeped in the context of culture. When examined critically, we find the text to be the record of human encounter with God.

But on a higher level God functions above the limitations of human language. There He moves in an experiential range, dynamically at work in relationship with the biblical text but paradoxically floating free from it. The encounter with God is an event of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, although under the stimulus of the testimony of the biblical witnesses.

The end product: Because this approach’s value lies in the floating upper level of encounter, we may ply the lower-level record with critical analysis without disturbing its function. So revelation becomes, not transmission of objective, propositional truth, but a subjective encounter with God, inwardly received. It is not difficult to see the influence of Schleiermacher in this system and how its ambiguity has left it

unsatisfying to many.

Evangelical: Evangelicals begin with the concept that Scripture is the word of God written. The stress is heavily on its Godward side, often to a minimizing of the human element. Although the Bible itself scarcely lays out a systematic order of inspiration, it has much to say about how God committed His Word to speech and writing. Bernard Ramm develops this thesis in his *Special Revelation and the Word of God* (1961).

We have the familiar statements of 2 Timothy 3:15-17 ("All scripture is inspired by God," literally, God-breathed [verse 16. RSV]) and 2 Peter 1:20, 21 ("No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" [verse 21, RSV]).

Evangelicals accept the prophetic model of Scripture. In so doing, their heavy emphasis on the Bible's God-given qualities has brought with it the assertion that the original manuscripts must have been error-free. The present perplexity lies in working with copies whose original perfection has been lost because of copyists' errors, misinterpretations, and a series of other problems introduced by the transmission process. Among informed Evangelicals the effort has been to reconcile differences in the best ways possible. Some proposals exhibit considerable ingenuity, if lacking in credibility. The key word is "infallible." Again, among the better informed this does not require a mechanical dictation theory, but it has proved difficult for Evangelicals to agree exactly on what they mean by "infallible."

Most Evangelicals appeal to the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*. By this principle, the Reformers were appealing to the Bible as the court of final appeal. This position differs from today's Evangelical teachings of an error-free text in the original autographs, an idea actually developed in the post-Reformation era.

In distinguishing themselves from neoorthodox views, Evangelicals insist that although the Bible mediates encounter with God, it does far more. It transmits content in the meaning of the words themselves. The Bible presents factual, propositional, and objective truths that provide norms for faith and practice as God's revealed will, norms valid whether accepted or not, and norms that are permanent because they reveal His character both in written

messages and in reports of the ministry of His Son. As the Holy Spirit was at work in transmitting to the writer, so is He active in leading the reader to respond to God's call.

Thus the Evangelical perspective views inspiration, not simply as one of the Spirit at work within the believing community, but also as an objective phenomenon. Even though expressed within the language, culture, and times of humanity, the biblical text carries transcendent values above and beyond, values designed to present God's Son as the unifying center of a collection of documents written at varied times and places. And alongside the revelation of the Son there is expression of the will of God and the way of salvation.

An Adventist response

How do Seventh-day Adventists respond to these theories of inspiration? Being far from the liberal position and almost as far from the neoorthodox perspective, Adventists also find themselves uncomfortable with Evangelical inerrancy. The idea of defending the error-free status of lost autographs rings hollow. It seems to be a form of shadowboxing. But the challenge is as serious to Adventists as to Evangelicals: how to maintain a high view of scriptural authority while, at the same time, recognizing the limitations of Scripture. Can "the Bible and the Bible only" position be defended?

Already Adventists have begun work on these problems. Several carefully reasoned articles and a number of book-length essays and collections of essays have appeared. We have Gerhard Hasel's *Biblical Interpretation Today* (which particularly addresses methods); George Rice's *Was Luke a Plagiarist?*; Alden Thompson's *Who's Afraid of the Old Testament God?* (which has implications for hermeneutics); and other Biblical Research Institute publications, such as *Biblical Hermeneutics*. We should note as well the valuable publication of several Ellen White writings on the nature of the Bible and the workings of inspiration. Indeed they set us on a path that offers at least partial resolution of the tensions.

A continuing concern in the Adventist history of inspiration is the temptation to soften the firm commitment to a high view of Scripture. Without yielding to such a temptation, we may look at three options.

Adventist pioneers were well aware of the struggle, over the Bible's credibility, raging around them in the past century. Ellen White and others were alarmed by the rapid growth of skepticism and higher criticism, better known today as historical criticism.

The trend manifested itself even in the fledgling Battle Creek College and in George I. Butler's series in the *Review and Herald* of 1884, in which he proposed degrees of inspiration, one of the mainstays of today's liberal view. Under this rubric, liberal scholars sorted biblical elements according to their own value judgments. Ellen White's response: "I was shown that the Lord did not inspire the articles on inspiration published in the *Review*, neither did He approve their endorsement before our youth in the college. Where men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground, and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired."²

Although Butler abandoned his views, the threat remained, prompting Ellen White to continue publishing articles on the Bible's authority.

A second proposed solution was the idea of confining the Bible's authority to religious matters only. This would relieve historical and scientific statements from the limitations of inspiration. In one of her most impressive early articles, which appeared in 1876 under the benign title "Bible Biographies," Ellen White reinforced her defense of the historicity of biblical reports, at that time under challenge by Wellhausen and others. She wrote: "The lives recorded in the Bible are authentic histories of actual individuals. From Adam down through successive generations to the times of the apostles we have a plain, unvarnished account of what actually occurred and the genuine experience of real characters. . . . The scribes of God wrote as they were dictated by the Holy Spirit, having no control of the work themselves."³ The last sentence is a remarkable assertion that troubles some. Elsewhere she also defended the Genesis reports of the seven-day Creation and the Flood as literally true.

More recently certain Adventists have maintained that historical criticism without some of its rationalistic elements can be a valid tool in the study of the Bible.

This approach treats historical criticism not as an integrated method but as a pool of elements from which one can select. For example, consider the historical-grammatical method, used by Adventists. This method functions in areas also examined by historical criticism. However, a close examination shows that the objectives of the two systems are at cross-purposes. Recognizing the problems involved, the church's 1986 Annual Council meeting in Rio de Janeiro approved a statement designating the historical-critical method, as classically defined, as unsuitable for use by Adventists.

While certain highly technical procedures can yield data useful for both systems, historical criticism's view of the Scriptures is radically at variance with the prophet-oriented view of Adventists, with obvious implications for an understanding of inspiration and the authority of God's Word.

Ellen White on inspiration and authority

We have already noted Ellen White's ringing endorsement of the truthfulness and authority of the Scriptures not only in religious matters but in their report of events, as well. However, Ellen White is not where Evangelicals are. While affirming the Bible's authority, she recognizes in far higher profile the human element in Scriptures. Here's what she wrote:

"Don't you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?' This is all probable. . . . All the mistakes will not cause trouble to one soul, or cause any feet to stumble." ⁴

"The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language." ⁵

"There is not always perfect order or apparent unity in the Scriptures." ⁶

"The Bible must be given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect." ⁷

"The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. . . . The writers of the Bible were God's penmen, not His pen." ⁸

"It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influ-

ence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts." ⁹

How can we reconcile all these statements with the previously cited dictation statement from "Bible Biographies"? By reference to the context. There Mrs. White is addressing the idea that Bible writers were impelled to tell the whole truth about Bible characters rather than yield to the normal temptation to lionize, omitting unpleasant facts. It is in this matter that the writers were strictly guided by the Holy Spirit, not in their selection of specific words.

And what of Ellen White's confidence in the finite Scriptures? It remained untouched by skepticism. While attending the General Conference in Minneapolis in 1888, she wrote: "The Lord has preserved this Holy Book by His own miraculous power in its present shape—a chart or guidebook to the human family to show them the way to heaven." ¹⁰

Ellen White accepted the humanness of the language and the means of expression and yet retained her clear, resounding, unshakable confidence in the authority of those same Scriptures. A few paragraphs later she continued: "I take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. I believe its utterances in an entire Bible. . . . Let not a mind or hand be engaged in criticizing the Bible." And again: "Brethren, cling to your Bible, as it reads, and stop your criticisms in regard to its validity, and obey the Word, and not one of you will be lost." ¹¹

Reconciling the tensions

Given her stress on the human side of the inspired Scriptures, how could she reconcile her unshakable confidence in the authority of the Bible? She employs two basic principles.

First, accommodation. She did not expect to find God's style or majesty in a way that would require an error-free Bible. She wrote: "The truths revealed are all 'given by inspiration of God'; yet they are expressed in the words of men and are adapted to human needs. Thus it may be said of the Book of God, as it was of Christ, that 'the Word was made flesh.'" ¹²

And again, "The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. . . . He meets fallen beings where they are." ¹³

"The truths revealed are all 'given by inspiration of God'; yet they are expressed in the words of men and are adapted to human needs."

Second, suspension of judgment. "The entrance of sin into the world, the incarnation of Christ, regeneration, [and] the resurrection . . . are mysteries too deep for the human mind. . . . But God has given us in the Scriptures sufficient evidence of their divine character, and we are not to doubt His Word because we cannot understand all the mysteries of His providence." ¹⁴

Given our limits of data and comprehension, Ellen White encourages us to hold our judgment until we have sufficient information, to operate from a premise of faith, trust, and confidence, and to allow God in His own good time by His own good means to open the doors of understanding. In the kingdom we are likely to find ourselves asking, Why was I so troubled over this? Under the explanation of the Creator Himself everything will fit the pattern of His order, plan, and Word. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), p. 595.

² ———, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 23.

³ ———, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 4, p. 9.

⁴ ———, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 17, 18.

¹² ———, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 747.

¹³ ———, *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 22.

¹⁴ ———, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 699.

The wrath of God

Frank M. Hasel

Can a God of love be also a God of wrath? What does the Bible say?



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Can you recall the last time you preached on the wrath of God? Probably not. But most likely you will have no difficulty remembering your last sermon on God's love. How come? Is the wrath of God something incompatible with the Christian doctrine of God? Is the idea not usable in modern theology, as Helmer Ringgren has put it?¹ Is "the notion of the affection of wrath on God" without any "religious worth for Christians?"² Isn't the idea of an angry and wrathful God a rather pre-Christian or even pagan concept that does not fit with the view of God that Jesus Christ has given us Himself? Is divine wrath representative of the Old Testament way of thinking? Does it have no relevance for a Christian and therefore should be avoided in our preaching, teaching, and evangelism?³ Should we abandon the concept of wrath in favor of the grace and love of God? Is God's love and His wrath a contradiction that cannot be reconciled?

Indeed, what does the Bible teach about God's wrath?

The Old Testament often speaks of the wrath of God. According to J. Fichtner, of the 455 Old Testament references for wrath in noun form, 375 speak of the wrath of God, and the rest speak of the wrath of human beings.⁴ The New Testament neither discontinues nor abandons the concept of the divine wrath.⁵ The wrath of God remains a foundational element in the New Testament proclamation of the good news of God—whether it is by John the Baptist

(Matt. 3:7), or by our Lord Himself,⁶ or by Paul (Rom. 1:18; 5:8-11), or as part of the triumphant scenes of Revelation (Rev. 6:16, 17).⁷

Anthropomorphism?

Why, then, this neglect of the doctrine of the wrath of God? Two possible reasons may be considered. First, the suggestion that the phrase reflects an anthropomorphism—a figure of speech that attributes to God human characteristics. Such attribution, it is claimed, reduces God to our finite and sinful ways of understanding and thereby dishonors Him by adapting Him to fit our human concepts. Although this line of objection became prominent particularly in the course and aftermath of the Enlightenment, it is an old argument.⁸ From very early times it was felt that God cannot experience feelings. The dignity of God required the absence of emotions. Wrath was not only an emotion, but a sign of weakness. Consider, for example, the god of Greek philosophy. He is *nous*, the mind; the essence of his being is thinking.⁹ He is above joy and sorrow.¹⁰ Aristotle identifies such a deity as the first cause, the one who has the capacity to move all things but who himself remains unmoved. His only activity is thinking.¹¹ He has no pathos.¹² These Greek ideas influenced the early Church Fathers and had a lasting impact upon Christian theology.¹³

In contrast to this view, the God of the Bible is full of feelings. He cares for His people. He is involved in human history and is affected by human acts. Paul Althaus has pointed out that the wrath of God is no more anthropomor-

phic than is God's love!¹⁴ If one rejects God's wrath, one must also reject His love, because the denial of either, in effect, destroys the personal character of God. The Old Testament—which speaks so much about the “hiddenness,” the distance, and the unapproachableness of God—speaks also in tangible terms about God's acting and being.

Biblical ontology does not separate being from doing. What *is* acts. The God of the Bible is a mighty God, active in His love to save sinners, and active in His wrath to oppose everything that threatens His dominion and saving purpose. To deprive God of His willful, active, living way of being, as the Bible testifies on every page, is to destroy His personal character. Just as God's love is greater than our imperfect love, His wrath is free from any sinful imperfection that accompanies human anger so often.

Furthermore, the idea of divine wrath shows that humanity is relevant to God. God is concerned about humankind. Hence He commands and forbids, admonishes and commends, seeks and rejects. He is an angry and a “jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Ex. 20:5, 6). Since humanity is created in the image of God, there is a certain *theomorphic anthropology*. Thus, it is perhaps more proper to describe the wrath of God as theomorphic rather than anthropomorphic.

Only an Old Testament concept?

The second reason for the neglect of the wrath of God in Christian preaching is the idea that it is only an Old Testament concept. However, textual evidence in the New Testament argues strongly against any such view. Jesus,¹⁵ John the Baptist,¹⁶ Paul,¹⁷ and John in his Gospel¹⁸ and in Revelation¹⁹ preach a gospel that includes the proclamation of the wrath of God. Nowhere does the New Testament replace God's wrath with His love;²⁰ instead, it views wrath as an essential and indispensable trait of God; it presents God not only as saving Lord but also as judge who brings with Him the judgment of His wrath. The good news of the Bible is not that there is no wrath of God, but that humankind

is saved from wrath through faith in Jesus Christ: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by his blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him” (Rom. 5:8, 9). Therefore, we “wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10).

In the New Testament, then, God's wrath is never seen as an inconsistent relic of Old Testament religion. Biblical facts do not permit compartmentalizing the wrath of God as belonging to the Old Testament and the love of God as belonging to the New Testament. Both the Testaments speak overwhelmingly about love and the wrath of God.²¹ In fact, as Tasker concludes, the idea of the wrath of God is one of many factors that point to the inner unity of both Old and New Testament theology.²²

Another significant point on the biblical understanding of God's wrath is found in the words used. The New Testament and the Septuagint never use the terms of the Greek poetry for the implacable wrath of the gods (*menis* and *xolos*), but use *orge* (wrath) and *thumos* (anger, wrath). This seems to indicate that the biblical authors did not associate God's wrath with an eternal hostility between God and humanity because they knew about God's love, which wants to save mankind.²³ The same understanding of God's wrath can be seen in the Old Testament.²⁴

Wrath is not wrathful

However, misconceptions of the wrath of God have led to a false picture of God. One such is reading into the phrase “wrath of God” the idea of a “wrathful” or “angry” God. The picture changes dramatically: here God is seen as stern and cruel, a mean Judge who loves to revenge and punish humankind whenever there is an opportunity to do so, at times even arbitrarily.²⁵ Such a picture of God, however, is a grave distortion of His character and often leads to fear or reward-motivated obedience, disconnected from love.

The Bible, of course, makes it very clear that the wrath of God is not the last horizon. God is love (1 John 4:16).²⁶ He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but is pleased when they turn from their sinful ways and live (Eze.

If the preaching of judgment produces only fear, we are pointing not to the Coming One, but to the coming things.

18:23). God wants all to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the saving truth (1 Tim. 2:4-6). Reconciliation has its starting point in God! He wants the world to be reconciled with Him in Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-21; Rom. 5:8-11). He does not desire revengeful punishment. In fact, judgment is God's “strange work” (Isa. 28:21). Within the context of biblical judgment, divine wrath is not an expression of a despotic deity, but a just and legitimate reaction against the sinfulness of sin. God's wrath is neither capricious nor arbitrary.²⁷ It is aroused against sin, because sin is a rebellion against God's nature and character. But even in His wrath God remembers mercy (Isa. 54:7, 8); His anger lasts only for a moment (Ps. 30:5); and for His own namesake He does not execute it to the fullest (Isa. 48:9). Through a manifestation of His anger God wants men and women to come to their senses and turn from their evil conduct (Jer. 36:7; Isa. 42:25; 12:1). Therefore, it is wrong and irresponsible to take the wrath of God and paint a picture of fear in the minds of people.

Take, for example, the coming judgment. It is a serious affair and must not be passed over. However, if the preaching of judgment produces only a sense of fear, we are pointing not to the Coming One, but to the coming things. The emphasis is different. It seems to me that our task should be not so much the description of God's terrible judgment, but rather the necessity of people turning to Jesus Christ, who is our judge as well as Saviour.

Implications

A biblical understanding of the wrath

of God leads to several important consequences and implications. First, as noted already, all preaching of the good news, from the prophets in the Old Testament to Jesus and the apostles in the New, begins with the proclamation of the wrath of God. This approach destroys all self-righteousness and all self-made religious ideologies, and the sinner stands facing the reality of the *living and holy* God.

Second, the wrath of God notifies that God takes sin seriously. God's wrath reveals the detestable nature of sin on the one hand and God's aversion to it on the other. Sin is incompatible with God's holiness.²⁸ Holiness (Hebrew *qadosh*, to separate) distinguishes God from every other form of existence and is an undergirding factor in the plan of salvation. The wrath of God teaches us that He is deeply and personally involved in the struggle with evil and that He is capable of reacting in the strongest possible way.

Third, an awareness of the wrath of God creates new appreciation for God's love. Sin has placed us in opposition to God. By nature we are objects of His wrath (Eph. 2:3). Justice demands that we receive our punishment, death. And yet God has loved us while we were still His enemies (Rom. 5:8-10). He has so loved us that He made our redemption possible by the death of His Son. His love and mercy gains new depth and meaning when placed against the background of what we deserve!

Fourth, to deny the wrath in God is to paralyze God's rulership: a surrender of God to the powers of evil who aim at the destruction of God's creation. Would God be morally just if He could not react against evil in this world? Would God be holy and loving if He could not detest sin and react against it? Would God be a redeemer if He were forced to compromise with evil?

Fifth, the wrath of God shows that God views my individual decision seriously. If I choose to live without God, He does not overrule my decision, but lets me meet the consequences of my choice. (cf. Rom. 1:18 ff).

Finally, God's wrath shows that guilt is more than merely a subjective feeling. Sin requires expiation. Between the wrath of God and the substitutionary death of Christ on the cross there exists a close relationship. The New Testament brings this out very clearly in its usage of different words for reconcilia-

tion, as Heppenstall points out. "They [the words for reconciliation] give clear expression to the inevitable opposition of God to sin, to the fact that there exists a real problem for God that must be resolved, that there is in the divine administration of the world and the universe a necessity—that when sin is forgiven, it is forgiven in such a way as to make clear the necessity for God to execute judgment on sin."²⁹

God's wrath, then, is not an embarrassment to be avoided in our preaching. It is the biblical way of proclaiming God's utter opposition to sin. It tells me that God takes sin seriously and wants to bring it to an end. It creates in me a new appreciation for the cross. It helps me better understand the nature of Christ's intercessory ministry in heaven and the nature of His final judgment. It builds my confidence in God and gives me grace and assurance to await the final outcome of His purposes at the Second Coming. ■

¹ Helmer Ringgren, "Einige Schilderungen des göttlichen Zorns," in *Tradition und Situation. Schilderungen zur alttestamentlichen Prophetie. Festschrift für Arthur Weiser* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1963), p. 107.

² Albrecht Ritschl, *Die Christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung* (Bonn: 1882), p. 154; cf. the English translation *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation: The Positive Development of the Doctrine*, trans. and ed. H. R. Mackintosh and A. B. Macaulay (Clifton, N.Y.: Reference Book Pub., 1966); Nicolas Berdyaev goes even further, saying that "anger in every shape and form is foreign to God" (Nicolas Berdyaev, *Freedom and the Spirit*, trans. O. F. Clarke [New York: Scribner's and Sons, 1936], p. 175).

³ This was the conviction of Friedrich Schleiermacher, who expressed his ideas in a sermon entitled: "Dass wir nichts vom Zorne Gottes zu lehren haben," in Hayo Gerdes and Emanuel Hirsch, eds., *Dogmatische Predigten der Reifezeit, Kleine Schriften und Predigten* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), pp. 123-135.

⁴ J. Fichtner, "The Wrath of God," in G. Friedrich, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), vol. 5, p. 395, note 92. (Hereafter cited as *TDNT*.)

⁵ For a more in-depth discussion of the concept of the wrath of God in the New Testament, see G. Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); H. Conzelmann, "Zorn Gottes. III. In Judentum und NT," in K. Gallig, ed., *RGG*, 3rd rev. ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1962), vol. 6, pp. 1931, 1932; A. Diekmann, "Die Christliche Lehre vom Zorne Gottes nebst Kritik der betreffenden Lehre A. Ritschl's," *Zeitschrift für Wissenschaftliche Theologie* 36, No. 2 (1893): 321-377; G.H.C. MacGregor, "The Concept of the Wrath of God in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies* 7 (1960/1961): 101-109; D. G. Schrenk, *Unser Glaube an den Zorn Gottes nach dem Römerbrief* (Basel: Verlag von H. Majer, 1947); G. Stahlin, "The Wrath of Man and the Wrath of God in the New Testament," *TDNT*, vol. 5, pp. 419-447; R.V.G. Tasker, *The Biblical Doctrine of the Wrath of God* (London: Tyndale Press, 1951).

⁶ "When we consider carefully the evidence of the Gospels, it is clear that the revelation of the wrath of God in Jesus Christ is in fact to be found as part both of His prophetic and His priestly ministry" (Tasker, p. 28).

⁷ Cf. X. Leon-Dufour, *Wörterbuch zur Biblischen Botschaft* (Freiburg: Herder, 1964), p. 805; Walter Künneth, *Fundamente des Glaubens* (Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 1980), p. 71.

⁸ Cf. the thorough study by Max Pohlenz, *Vom Zorne Gottes. Eine Studie über den Einfluss der Griechischen Philosophie auf das alte Christentum*, FRLANT (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1909), vol. 12, pp. 3-9.

⁹ Plato, *Philebus* 22c, 28c; *Phaedrus* 247d.

¹⁰ Plato, *Philebus* 33b; *Republic* 2. 377e.

¹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1178b.

¹² For an excellent description on the Greek philosophy of pathos and its implications, see Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (New York: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), pp. 247-306.

¹³ Pohlenz, pp. 16-156.

¹⁴ Paul Althaus, *Die Christliche Wahrheit. Lehrbuch der Dogmatik* (Gutersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1969), p. 397.

¹⁵ Even though express reference to Jesus and wrath is rare, "wrath is an integral characteristic of the Jesus of the Gospels." (G. Stahlin, "The Wrath of Man and the Wrath of God in the New Testament," in *TDNT*, vol. 5, p. 427. Cf. Mark 3:5; 1:41, 43; Matt. 9:30; John 11:33, 38).

¹⁶ Cf. Matt. 3:7.

¹⁷ Cf. Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8; 5:9; 12:19; 13:4, 5; Eph. 2:3; 5: 6; Col. 3:6; 1 Thess. 1:10; 2:16; 5:9; Heb. 2:2-3; 10:26-31.

¹⁸ Cf. John 3:36.

¹⁹ Cf. Rev. 6:16, 17; 11:18; 14:10, 19; 15:1; 16:1; 19:15.

²⁰ Cf. Conzelmann, p. 1931.

²¹ "In point of fact, however, the Hebrew Scriptures (partly because they make up three fourths of the Bible) contain far more verses on the mercy and lovingkindness of God than the New Testament does" (Gleason L. Archer, *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982], p. 309).

²² Tasker, p. 45.

²³ Cf. H. Kleinknecht, "Wrath in Classical Antiquity," *TDNT*, vol. 5, pp. 383-392.

²⁴ Cf. J. Bergmann and E. Johnson, "'anaph, 'aph,'" in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), vol. 1, pp. 348-360.

²⁵ Some, like Democrit, have seen the fear of God as the origin of religion. H. F. Fuhs, "'jare,'" in G. J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, eds., *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1982), vol. 3, p. 876.

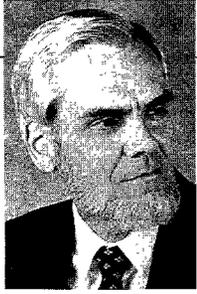
²⁶ Interestingly, nowhere in the Bible do we find the expression "God is wrath." Does this suggest that God's nature is love and that wrath is provoked only when His saving purpose is jeopardized?

²⁷ Cf. Bergmann and Johnson, pp. 348-360.

²⁸ On the relation of God's wrath and God's holiness, cf. Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1949), pp. 157-174.

²⁹ E. Heppenstall, "Subjective and Objective Aspects of the Atonement," in *The Sanctuary and the Atonement. Biblical, Historical, and Theological Studies* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1981), p. 686.

Bible texts in this article are from the *New American Standard Bible*.



Justification and conversion revisited

Marvin Moore

Ministry editor David Newman recently wrote an excellent editorial on righteousness by faith ("Confused Over the Basis of Salvation," July 1991). I wish every Seventh-day Adventist understood this subject as clearly as Newman does. However, I take exception to one point Newman made on the role of justification and the new birth in salvation: "This mingling of justification (the forensic) and the new birth (the experiential) presents a very real problem. Questions arise in the mind: How converted do I have to be in order to be saved? Is there enough evidence of conversion in my life to grant the assurance of salvation? How much must I be transformed for God to forgive me?"

Newman goes on to point out that the

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basis of our salvation, and therefore the assurance of our salvation, must be justification, not conversion. Conversion cannot be a part of justification, he says, because conversion is the work of the Holy Spirit *in* us, and we must never look within ourselves for the assurance of salvation, but only outside of ourselves to Christ and His forgiveness of our sins.

Newman is essentially correct that we must look outside of ourselves to Christ and what He has done for us as the basis of our assurance of salvation, and not within ourselves, questioning whether we are sufficiently converted.

However, we do not solve the problem by splitting conversion off from justification. Christ's statement that "no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again" (John 3:3, NIV) forces us to ask whether we are converted, regardless of whether or not we make conversion a part of justification. Conversion is a qualification for salvation.

Newman says that the problem leads to questions such as "How converted do I have to be in order to be saved?" and "How much must I be transformed for God to forgive me?"

I do not find any such questions posed by Jesus' simple statement. Jesus did not say, "You have to be transformed 50 percent (or 75 percent) to be saved." We have no way to measure the degree of our conversion or to know if God is even concerned about it. With Christ the issue is whether we are converted, not how much. This is a pass/fail test, not a grading by percentages or A, B, C, and D.

Newman correctly distinguishes be-

tween what Christ does for us forensically (outside of us) and what He does for us experientially (inside of us). He also points out that the forensic precedes the experiential; the external precedes the internal. Forgiveness on the record books in heaven precedes the new birth in the heart.

Why even bring up the question "How much must I be transformed for God to forgive me?" By Newman's own theology, the answer to that question is "Not at all," since forgiveness (the external) always precedes the new birth (the internal). The issue is not whether we have been converted enough to be forgiven, but whether we have been forgiven enough to be converted.

Newman also points out, correctly again, that those who have appropriated Christ's external work on their behalf in forgiving their sins will inevitably and immediately experience the new birth. This order of "events" is very important for Christians to understand. It causes us to put our confidence for salvation in what Christ has done for us outside of ourselves. We simply trust that once we have met the conditions to receive that, we are converted whether we feel like it or not.

Let's return now to the question of whether justification includes conversion, or whether conversion is separate from and comes after justification. I will begin my answer to that question by raising another one: Is the justified person saved and assured of a place in God's kingdom?

I think all the readers of *Ministry* would agree that the answer is yes. At

least I hope all of us agree on that!

If a justified person is saved, then justification has to include conversion, since "no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." If we split conversion off from justification, then we must admit the odd notion that a person who is justified may not be saved.

It doesn't help to say "Well, a person who is justified is immediately born again." That is correct. And all would be fine if we could forget our fine-haired definitions and simply accept what God does for us, without trying to classify everything under this label or that. Let's forget the debate over terms and go on with what we all know God *does*.

Unfortunately, we humans have a propensity to label and argue about our labels. So if we are going to debate fine

hairs, let's split fine hairs. When I split this fine hair, I discover that by excluding conversion from justification, the justified person is unsaved because he or she isn't converted. If we could push the pause button on the video of a person's life in that split second between justification and conversion, we could point to the screen and say, "There's a man who has been justified, but he's still not saved because he hasn't been converted yet."

I'm not as concerned about what a Christian includes in his or her definition of justification as I am that he or she understands correctly the order of events in the salvation process: conviction, repentance, confession, forgiveness, conversion, sanctification.

When a person understands this order and applies it in his or her life, the question of what to include in justifica-

tion becomes a matter of labels, and not worth arguing about. It is not worth letters to the General Conference president accusing people of heresy. It is not worth heated articles in independent newsletters excoriating the church for failure to adopt the authors' points of view.

I enjoy discussing these fine points of theology. It helps us grow in our understanding of salvation. Problems arise when, in spite of agreeing on the ideas and their relationship to each other, we spend our time arguing about how to classify them and which labels to attach to our various ways of grouping those ideas.

Let's teach people the steps in the salvation process. When we agree that the ideas and the order are correct, we can be tolerant of the variety of ways people label them. ■

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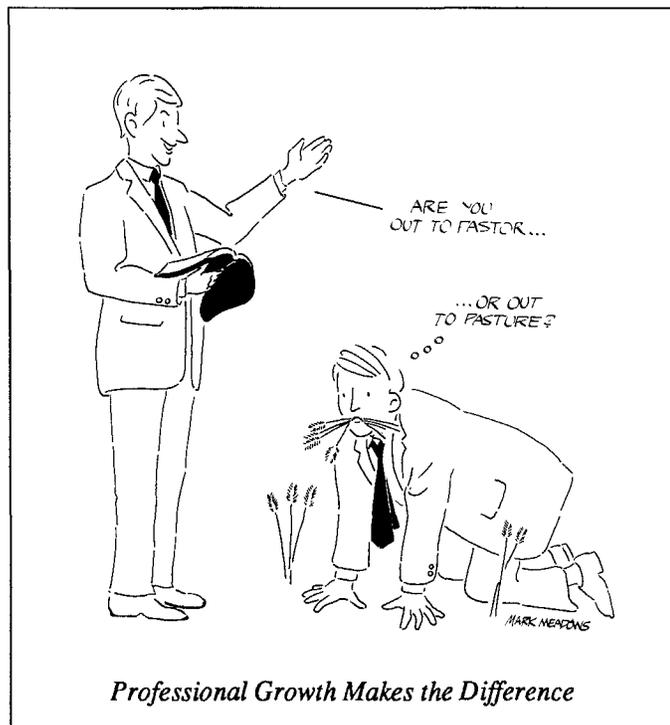
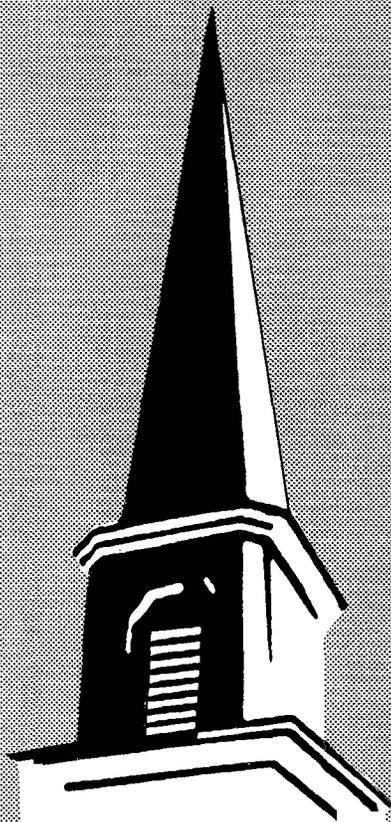
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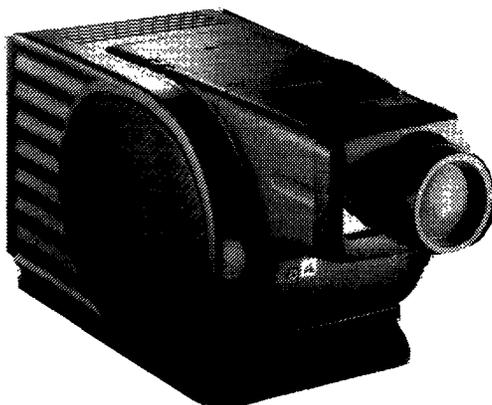
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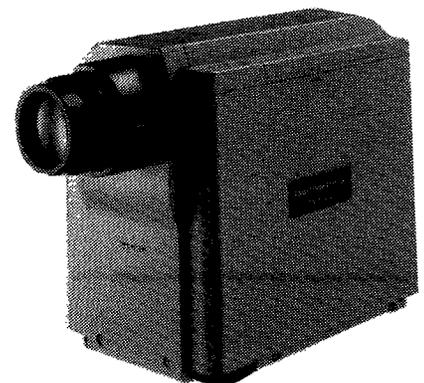
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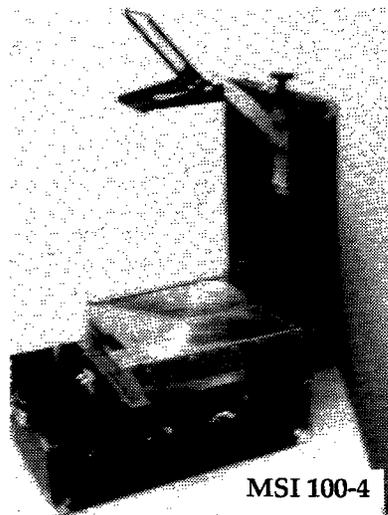
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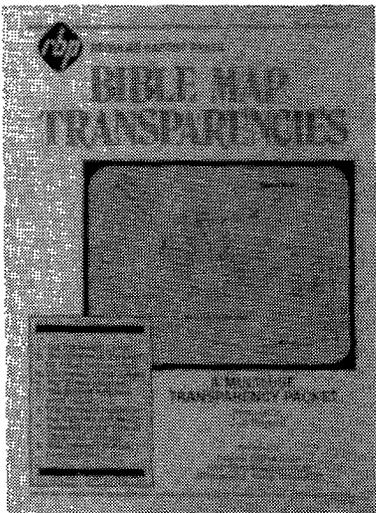
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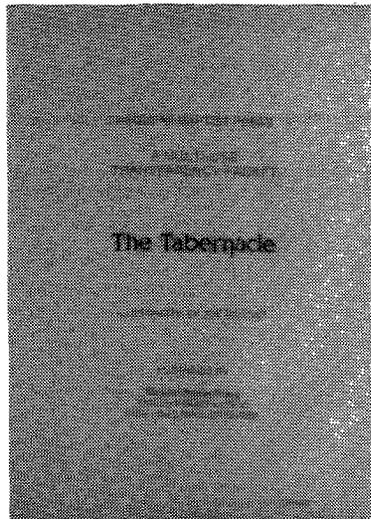
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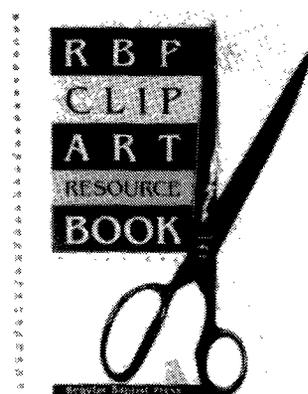
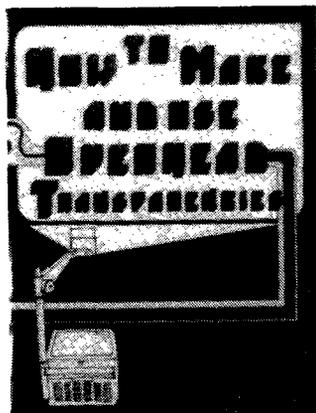
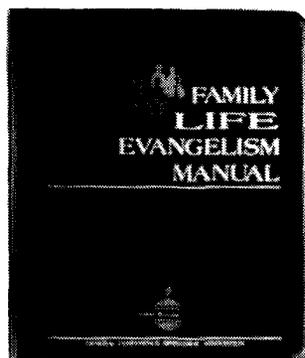
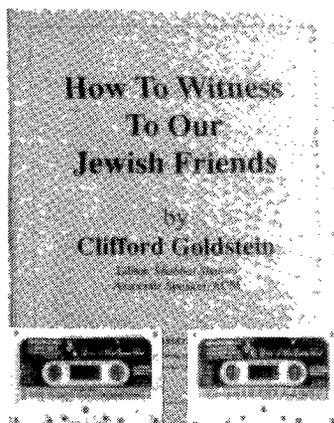
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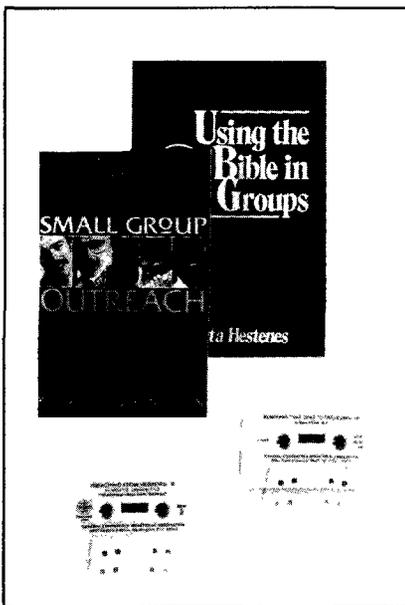
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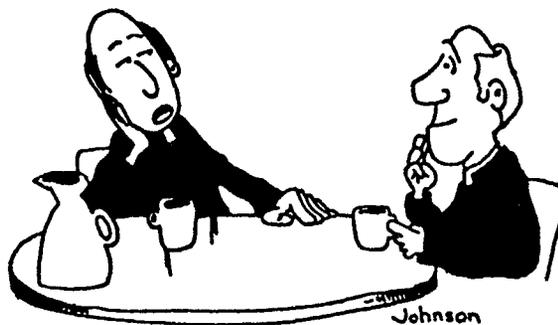
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Myths and the ministerial family

Donna J. Habenicht

What are the myths that surround the ministerial family? And how do they affect the spiritual growth of the pastor's kids?



Donna J. Habenicht, Ed.D., is chairperson of the Department of Educational and Counseling Psychology, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

A myth has a grain—perhaps many grains—of truth, but is not the whole truth, and may even be deceptive in some important way. Although many people believe in myths, following one may lead to personal disappointment.

As a PK (preacher's kid), the wife of an ordained minister, and a professional counselor, I have identified some common myths that impact the behavior of ministerial families. Because family religious values closely tie into how children feel about their family, myths can affect the spiritual growth of the pastor's children.

Myth No. 1: The minister's family should be (is) perfect.

Mike disrupts the general science class for the umpteenth time with one of his famous pranks. His teacher is exasperated and yells, "How can I ever believe anything your father preaches when you act like this?"

Mr. and Mrs. Pastor know that church members expect their family to be perfect. In their desire to be models to their congregation, the couple place a heavy burden of perfection on their children. Phrases like "We can't do that—the members wouldn't understand" or "Sh-sh, Daddy's the preacher and everyone's looking at us" slip out frequently. The pastor's children must be models in behavior, dress, and spirituality. The children get the underlying message: Mom and Dad's love for them is conditional on good behavior. They easily transfer this message over to their

relationship with God.

Mr. and Mrs. Pastor may give their children the idea that if their family have problems, no one should know. To admit problems is to admit imperfection. They must deny feelings, put on a good front. Appearance counts. But Michael and Michelle, alert PKs that they are, know everything isn't right. They know how they feel, even though Mom and Dad deny those feelings. The kids interpret the instructions to "look good" for the parishioners as crass hypocrisy. All of this game-playing can easily lead to feelings of perfectionism—a denial of grace, a reliance on self for salvation.

Denying feelings and problems often leads to an inability to deal with one's own feelings or to understand those of others. Hardening of the emotional arteries sets in, leading to difficulties in interpersonal relationships. Sometimes the pent-up emotions and pressures of being the "perfect kid" erupt in an explosion of anger toward God (or parents). Mr. and Mrs. Pastor are crushed. What went wrong? Michael seemed such a good kid. Very likely Michael simply couldn't stand being in the pressure cooker of perfection any longer.

What can we do about this myth? Yes, part of the job description of a church leader is to model God's way of family life. But how can we do this without denying problems or demanding unreasonable perfection?

The answer lies in our motivation for Christian living. If our actions emanate from an ongoing relationship with Christ, we will communicate this to our children. We will be concerned about how we stand with God, and not be

We need to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves. Are we doing this because it makes us feel important?

overwhelmed by how we stand with the congregation we serve. Our way of living comes from how God wants us to live—not from what the parishioners expect. We should never let the parishioners' wishes decide our own expectations for our children. We must teach our children to derive their enthusiasm for life from God. When that happens, the model for the congregation takes care of itself.

The answer lies also in how we deal with problems. Pretended perfection doesn't show our children how to deal with their own guilt and imperfections. If we humbly admit our own shortcomings and ask forgiveness, our children will feel surprisingly warm toward us. They will also learn how the grace of God operates in real life. The burden of perfection will be removed by the comforting and reassuring grace of salvation.

Yes, we can be a model for the parishioners, but only by being in close communion with God. Our modeling becomes the natural outgrowth of our walk with the Lord. Our children must hear this message and experience the freedom needed to grow spiritually.

Myth No. 2: Every need is a call from God.

The phone rings constantly. Parishioners, the conference, the city fathers, the church school, other conferences, discouraged saints, dependent clingers, and myriads of others want to talk to the pastor. Most calls involve a request for something, and don't respect time—family time, mealtime, sleeptime, devotional time. The needs and the calls seem endless.

Each request raises the specter of turning down a call from God. So Mr. and Mrs. Pastor keep trying to meet everyone's needs. In time a grave but

subtle danger arises: the pastoral ego begins to feel needed and indispensable. Each call feeds an insatiable ego. Gradually God's will and Mr. and Mrs. Pastor's need for approval and feeling needed become intertwined, and, as Tim Hansel shows in *When I Relax I Feel Guilty*,¹ busyness becomes an evidence of doing God's will. In contemporary terminology, the pastoral couple has become addicted to doing good.

The problem with any addiction is that it dominates a person's life and makes rational decisions about everyday life and relationships difficult. The satisfaction of the addictive need becomes paramount.² This, in a ministerial family, means putting others' needs before those of the family. This "sacrifice" feeds the pastoral ego, but starves the family.

Mr. Pastor promises to lead out in the games at Michael's birthday party on Sunday afternoon. But early Sunday morning Sister Suzanna calls and asks the pastor to please help her move. Everyone she knows is gone for the weekend, and besides, the pastor is such a good organizer. Things will go so much better if he is there!

Sister Suzanna, a new church member, really needs his support, reasons Mr. Pastor. Maybe he can get back in time for the party. Mom can cope—she always has before. "No problem," responds Mr. Pastor, "I'll be over right after breakfast." Of course, the moving takes longer than expected, and Dad doesn't make it to the birthday party.

When 5-year-old Michael asks why Daddy didn't come to his party, Dad explains how he had to help Sister Suzanna. And Mom covers up for her husband by reminding Michael that "Jesus is happy when we help other people." That doesn't satisfy Michael, who feels let down that Daddy wasn't at his party.

Michael and Michelle soon learn that they are less important than others. Eventually this translates into feelings of rejection and resentment of their father's job. Because his work is a religious calling, they easily transfer these negative feelings to their father's God and his church.

How can the ministerial family keep in perspective the many demands on their time? Isn't their specialty helping God meet human needs? The answer lies in an intimate connection with time's Creator. Helping others can

never substitute for personal encounter with God. Before the day begins, we must seek God's priorities for our time. The moment personal devotions begin to slide, we walk on dangerous ground. Satan quickly substitutes his motives for God's, and traps us in his net of ego needs.

We need to be specific in seeking God's help to direct our daily activities. We need to ask for creativity in solving human problems. We need to be ruthlessly honest with ourselves. Are we doing this because it makes us feel important? Could someone else help? Are we willing to give up some control to others (assistant pastor, elders, deacons, and deaconesses)? Have we organized our church so the members can help meet the needs of others? Can we say no graciously but firmly, without feeling insecure? Are we aware of the effect of flattery on our priorities? And the most searching question of all: What will be important 10 years from now?

The answer to the myth of the pastor meeting every need also lies in a firm commitment to family needs. Putting work first and family second does not provide the undergirding necessary for children to grow spiritually. Placing God first reorders our priorities into family second and work third. Putting the family before work does not mean second-rate work. It may actually result in better work because we then focus on the most important aspects of our calling. Our families will know their importance to us exceeds that of others.

How does this work in practical terms? Consider again Sister Suzanna. The pastor had several alternatives. 1. He could have told her he would help for only two hours (placing a limit on his availability), because he had an appointment later that day (writing family commitments in the weekly schedule instead of leaving them to chance). 2. He could have suggested that Sister Suzanna call one of the deacons (delegating responsibility). 3. He could have given her the names of some teenagers who would like to earn a little extra money.

As soon as he received the call, Mr. Pastor should have thought to himself, *Nothing is more important today than my son's birthday party.* He also should have been aware of the desired effect of Sister Suzanna's flattery on his ego. His family commitment called him to be home in time to prepare for Michael's

party and share the pleasant event with them.

Children understand real emergencies like a death or an accident, but they quickly recognize pseudo emergencies. They will share their parents for the real emergencies, but they will resent it when Dad ignores them in favor of ego-satisfying "emergencies."

Children need their parents every day. A special time each day for play or reading creates a warm bond between parent and child. When Dad spends time with his children before leaving for evening appointments, he gives a forceful message of love. When children know their importance to their parents, they also know they are equally important to God.

Myth No. 3: The minister's family must attend all church functions and be active in all church programs.

I never met the anonymous writer of a letter I received, but my heart ached for her. The wife of a ministerial student, she wanted to be his perfect helper in ministry. However, a serious problem arose: Her husband insisted that she and their 15-month-old son attend services at both churches in the district where he worked as a student pastor. After the services he wanted them to accompany him on his afternoon pastoral calls. She found it impossible to keep the baby quiet through both church services, and he didn't want the child to have a bottle because that would be "eating between meals and giving a bad example to the members." The baby needed an afternoon nap, but he had difficulty sleeping in strange places. Sometimes he would drop off to sleep, only to awaken as they moved on to another home. At the end of the day they had a cranky baby and a critical husband who told her she was ruining his ministry because she couldn't "make the baby behave." The young woman felt totally inadequate as a minister's wife. Every week this scenario was replayed. What should she do? Her husband believed the myth.

Because religion is the life career of ministerial families, their children have certain advantages. They attend services regularly, frequently hear about God and salvation, learn to respect and love the Bible, and often experience the joy of serving others. However, along with these advantages, there exists the danger of overexposure until religion becomes routine and loses its heart appeal.

To require children to attend all the

services in one or several churches where Mr. Pastor is the minister ignores the normal needs of children and imposes an impossible burden on the family. Children cannot be expected to forgo their own Sabbath school classes and attend two or three church services each Sabbath. They need activity on Sabbath just as they do on other days of the week, and such activity should be with their friends with whom they feel close. An unbalanced church life often leads to boredom, resentment, and eventually to rejection.

How can we communicate to members our involvement and support without denying the normal needs of our children? Perhaps we should begin by examining our own attitudes about ministry. Most church members understand today's lifestyles and would probably welcome a more family-oriented ministry. An emphasis on spiritual gifts may guide the ministerial family to set their priorities for church involvement on the basis of their own gifts. Lay leadership and participation in different aspects of ministry would certainly reduce the possibility of ministerial burnout.

Myth No. 4: Spiritual activities nourish personal spiritual growth.

Church services, Sabbath schools, and prayer meetings are all good, but not sufficient to nourish spiritual growth. Preparing sermons, giving Bible studies, and serving others can help, but they in themselves are insufficient. Sending children to church school, Pathfinder meetings, and summer camp, though highly desirable, cannot compensate for a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

All these activities do have their role in personal spiritual growth, but the question is Are they motivated by Christian love expressing itself in joyous service, or are they a kind of salvation by works? The danger becomes real when ministerial families begin to think of these activities as making up for deficiencies in family life. After all, Mr. Pastor is working for God. In our rush of activities for the Lord, we are too busy to notice our children's needs. We think everything is going fine, until that day when reality hits. Children rarely collapse overnight. The little red flags are usually up for a long time.

True, God does care for our inadequacies, but not our deliberate flouting of His priorities. What we sow, we reap. His instruction is clear: There is no

There exists the danger of overexposure until religion becomes routine and loses its heart appeal.

substitute for individual time with Him, for family worship, for heart-to-heart talks with our children, listening to them and being there when they need us.

Myth No. 5: The minister represents the voice of God speaking to humans.

Unfortunately, some individuals are attracted to the ministry because of an unhealthy need or desire to exercise power and authority. When a minister believes he or she is the voice of God in all matters, it can lead to extreme authoritarianism in the family. As the voice of "divine authority," the pastor believes in doing whatever he or she wishes to any member of the family. Such an individual denies human fallibility, shuts off new ideas, and exhibits authoritarian-type parenting. The situation may even lead to child abuse—physical, sexual, or emotional.

Of the four parenting styles identified by research (authoritative, authoritarian, indulgent, and neglectful),³ the authoritarian style remains the most damaging to the child's moral development, religious values, and self-concept. Children reared in authoritarian homes often have difficulty making decisions because all decisions have routinely been made for them. Over the years they amass a reservoir of anger against their parents and God. Many times they leave home at an early age and reject family values.

The authoritative parenting style retains parental control and sets firm limits for children, but provides more communication and support. The parents gradually and supportively introduce children to decision-making. They communicate reasons for parental sanctions

and provide openness between parent and child. The parents do not exercise authority for authority's sake, but, in communicating reasons for rules, encourage children to participate in learning how to live. The parents feel secure about their parenting role; they do not feel threatened because they know they remain in control. Authoritarian parents fear loss of control, so they exercise it in extreme.

Authoritative parenting leaves more room for children to make decisions. Therefore, it reflects God's method of helping humans grow in spirituality and character. Parents can best understand authoritative parenting by studying God's Father role.

How shall we react to this myth of authoritarianism? Pastors do have a responsibility to communicate God's Word to the parishioners, and they do have a priestly role in the family. Leadership, however, does not imply pastoral-parental infallibility.

Studying different parenting styles and gradually introducing them into the family can be helpful. If parents attempt new ways of parenting, the children must know this ahead of time; otherwise confusion follows. When switching from authoritarian to authoritative parenting, we can expect things to get worse before they get better, as with any major change in family structure. Children in late childhood or the teen years will not know how to be more involved in self-direction.

A ministerial family does provide advantages for spiritual growth. But perpetuation of certain ministerial family myths places a burden on a pastor's home. A close relationship with God, a careful reordering of priorities, an awareness of problems, and an attempt to let the positive dominate the family atmosphere would ensure a spiritual and balanced pastoral home in which God remains the true head of the family. ■

¹ Tim Hansel, *When I Relax I Feel Guilty* (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Pub. Co., 1979).

² Craig Nakken, *The Addictive Personality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

³ Eleanor E. Maccoby and John A. Martin, "Socialization in the Context of the Family: Parent-Child Interaction," in *Handbook of Child Psychology*, ed. Paul H. Mussen, 4th ed., vol. IV of *Socialization, Personality, and Social Development*, ed. E. Mavis Hetherington (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1983), pp. 37-56; cf. Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Parents and Teachers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1943), p. 155; *Child Guidance* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), p. 263.

Should you try topical preaching?

Floyd Bresee

T

opical preaching tends to be popular and practical. But is it biblical? The answer is an emphatic yes!

Topical defined

A topical sermon is one in which the subject is chosen and the Bible as a whole is researched on that topic. The content and form owe more to the topic than to any one passage of Scripture. Topical preachers usually begin their sermon by choosing a topic and then developing it in depth with the aid of a topical Bible or a concordance.

Strengths and weaknesses

Topical preaching enjoys significant strengths. Certain emphases of the Christian year lend themselves naturally to topical preaching: Mother's Day, Christian Education Day, Missions Promotion Day—even Communion.

Topical preaching also lends itself easily to doctrinal preaching. Evangelistic preaching is usually topical. For some reason, preaching in those parts of the world where the church is growing fastest tends toward the topical.

The weakness in topical sermons is twofold: a temptation to rely too heavily on nonbiblical sources, and a tendency to misuse the Scriptures, if the Bible is used.

Effective topical preaching

Some suggestions for effective topical preaching:

1. *Begin with the Bible.*

Properly prepared, a topical sermon may be more biblical than its expository counterpart. To understand what Scripture says on a subject, turning to one passage or book is not enough; it requires the perusal of the whole Bible—the topical approach. Hence we are safe in following Isaiah's "here a little, there a little" counsel (Isa. 28:10) and searching all the Scriptures. For example, to obtain the right balance between faith and works from the book of James alone is pretty difficult. But put James with Paul, as a topical sermon ought to do, and we have balanced truth.

Speaking of Bible authors, Ellen White explained: "One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life" (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. vi).

We should be creative but cautious in our biblical exegesis. We mustn't get so anxious to be original that we preach mere plausibility as certain truth—discovered, of course, by us. *When we find something in Scripture no one else has used, we shouldn't completely dismiss the nagging notion*

that it may be because that person knew better.

2. Keep texts in context.

The story is apocryphal. A certain preacher got very upset about the new hairdo among ladies in his congregation. They were wearing their hair in a bun on top of the head. He disapproved of the style, and sought a text to use in preaching against it. The best he could find was Matthew 24:17: "Let him which is on the housetop not come down." Actually, he used only a part of the verse, taking as his text, "Top knot come down!"

That's only an exaggerated example of the topical preacher's temptation to use texts out of context. I maintain that topical preaching is not necessarily less biblical, but it is necessarily more difficult, because each text must be studied in its context lest the preacher should say something the text wasn't meant to say.

3. Emphasize theme above topic.

A topic is merely what you're going to talk about. A theme is what you're going to say about it. It's a point of view, a spiritual lesson to be learned from that topic. You want people to remember not just what you talked about, but what you said about it.

For example: Topic—Trials. Theme—"God's promise is not protection from trial, but presence in trial."

If you traditionally preach expository or some other type of sermon, should you try topical preaching? By all means. Topical preaching increases the evangelistic fervor and spirit of your church. Besides, your congregation will appreciate the change of pace. But keep it biblical.

At times it is possible that a sermon is all three: part expository, part topical, and part narrative. There is significance, however, in whether we begin our sermon preparation by investigating a passage, a topic, or a narrative. Our purpose in preaching is to *teach* a biblical Christ and *motivate* our listeners to follow Him. We never do it well enough. Maybe a little experimentation with different sermon types will help us do it better. ■

Questions You've Asked About Sexuality

Alberta Mazat, *Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1991, 127 pages, \$7.95, paper. Reviewed by Dick Tibbits, vice president for mission and corporate culture, Kettering Medical Center, Kettering, Ohio.*

The toughest, most complex issues for a minister often involve sexuality. Strong emotional drives can easily alter one's reasoning, making it difficult to sort out needs, desires, and even know right from wrong. Mazat offers direct, open dialogue on a variety of subjects related to human sexuality. I found her question-and-answer style straightforward and informative.

The author organizes her questions into six major categories. The first has to do with communicating with children about their sexual development. She offers helpful suggestions as well as dealing with such difficult topics as masturbation and incest. The second chapter discusses questions teenagers ask, such as "How far can I go when I'm in love?" The third chapter deals with issues unique to unmarried adults concerned about "compatibility" before committing themselves to marriage. The fourth chapter deals with sexual expression in marriage and focuses on harmonizing the differences in sexual performance. Mazat next deals with the midlife years and finally discusses sexual desires and needs of retirement-age couples.

Mazat has given us one of the best books now available on sexuality written from a Christian perspective. The book invites open and tasteful discussion. The book helps identify and deal with sexual problems before they become destructive to a relationship. Parents should buy it for ideas to share with their children; adults should buy it to facilitate communication and understanding. The book can also help identify extreme dysfunctional problems that need professional counseling.

I find the "Dear Abby" style of writing a shortcoming, as it seems to expect me to trust the author's advice. But Mazat, a trained and well-experienced marriage and family therapist specializing in sexuality, has the

expertise to write on this subject. I find her answers consistent with medical, psychological, and spiritual principles.

I believe pastors definitely need to buy this book. They can recommend it to their membership with the assurance that it will be helpful and reliable in addressing sexual issues.

In Potiphar's House

James L. Kugel, *Harper-Row Publishers, New York, 1990, 286 pages, \$34.95, hardcover. Reviewed by William H. Shea, Biblical Research Institute, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

Basically concerned with postbiblical interpretation and how it developed, this book begins with the biblical narrative about Joseph. Kugel touches briefly on the story's content from the Bible and then focuses on what postbiblical sources did with this narrative. He also analyzes the story of Joseph's bones being carried to Canaan for burial.

Kugel explains the evolving relationships of literary sources and how people elaborated on them over a course of time. He does not talk about biblical exegesis or theology per se, though his work does at times give information on those subjects. The book may not appeal so much to the biblical generalist, but to those who have a special interest in these literary relationships.

The Heart of Pastoral Counseling: Healing Through Relationship

Richard Dayringer, *Zondervan Press, 1989, 173 pages, \$9.95, paper. Reviewed by Kristen Johnson Ingram, writer and teacher, Springfield, Oregon.*

Written for pastors who counsel, the author sees pastoral counseling as a form of psychotherapy in which relationship is the essence of counseling.

Dayringer holds up Jesus as the minister's ideal counselor, who does not emphasize external behavior but seeks to know the inner person. He proposes that pastor-counselee relationships be marked by nine prerequisites. Pastoral counselors should: (1) have responded to divine calling; (2) be given built-in authority through ordination that points to God's power; (3) know that their role

Counseling failures and abuse of relationships occur because the pastor does not make the Holy Spirit the True Counselor.

has been confirmed by society; (4) counsel within a context of fellowship; (5) be accountable to their congregations and to God; (6) assume the presence and guidance of the Holy Spirit during counseling; (7) use special resources, such as prayer, Scripture, worship, and small-group support; (8) be committed to confidentiality, respect for others as God's creation, and accountability to God for their behavior; and (9) have their counseling goals include divine forgiveness and redemption rather than just human relief.

Pastoral counseling does have its pitfalls. Counseling failures and abuse of relationships occur because the pastor does not bring the Holy Spirit into the relationship as the True Counselor. Dayringer likes lists, and each chapter averages two or three of them. But the comprehensive volume offers concrete help and provides ladders for those suffering counseling pitfalls. It gives guidelines and structures for counseling acquaintances, terminating the counseling while keeping the parishioner, handling discomfort when meeting outside the counseling setting, and problems in opposite-sex counseling.

Dayringer sees relationship as a sacred reach across an abyss of isolation that characterizes most human dysfunction. He recognizes a fact all pastors need to explore—that relationships based on genuine concern for persons radiate Christ's presence.

Laura, One Woman's Story—Every Woman's Fear

Laura Sisk, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1990, 127 pages, \$7.95, paper. Reviewed by Marie Spangler, former Shepherdess International director,

Burtonsville, Maryland.

A book like *Laura* is long overdue. In an age when the media bombards us with horror stories of rape and missing persons, we need the kind of information contained in this book. The author, a pastor's wife, describes her experience as a rape victim and that of others. More than a book on rape, the book contains valuable information on child abuse, incest, and battered wives. Sisk gives advice to victims on how to cope, listing agencies, books, and places they may turn to for professional support.

Laura dispels the prevalent myths regarding rape. Sisk states that "probably half of all rape victims are attacked by someone they know." She alerts us to tricks rapists play on victims and gives practical guidelines on how to avoid rape situations. These include trusting your feelings, being aware and assertive, and being mentally prepared to escape rape.

The section dealing with sexually abused children outlines ways to help children be less vulnerable. Sisk gives tips on how parents can detect sexual abuse in their children and how to interact with a child that has been assaulted. She states that "one out of three girls will encounter some form of sexual abuse, and about one out of eight boys." She claims, "Our hope lies in educating our children and ourselves. We need to know how to get help and how to help."

The author writes with sensitivity about recovery from abuse, encouraging victims to find inner peace through Christ's healing love, giving them tools to help work through fear, self-blame, and anger.

Every woman must get a copy of *Laura*. Every mother must share it with her children. Ministers, teachers, and counselors will find *Laura* a useful resource as well as an excellent book to give to anyone hurting from sexual abuse.

The Clergy Search Dilemma, Pastors and Lay people Reflect on the Crisis of Clergy Deployment

Charles and Diane Crane, Cowley Publications, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1991, 220 pages, \$11.95, paper. Reviewed by Victor Elliott, attorney, Risk Management Services, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Has the Episcopal Church's search for a better way to deploy its clergy been the

answer to everyone's prayers? In 1969 the church replaced the "old buddy network" method of negotiating a new pastorate with the Clergy Deployment Board and its computer clergy data bank.

The authors, after retirement from parish ministry, took a two-year trek around the United States, armed with a tape recorder and a word processor. They came back with a 220-page book full of stories about the process of calling a pastor from one parish to another. Chapters tell about "the winners," "the losers," and "the search committees."

This book sensitized me to the clergy search dilemma as perceived by 200 clergy and 50 members of search committees interviewed by the authors. The concluding chapter distills information learned in the interviews. The authors use this information to make suggestions for refining the process of clergy search. The feelings that come across in these interviews should motivate improvements in the Episcopal Church's impressive machination of the search process so as not to clutter up the call of the Holy Spirit. As summed up in the book's final line, "the task that lies before the church is to provide, in deployment, an atmosphere in which the call to a parish can be clearly perceived as an authentic call from God."

The short stories told from the perspective of both pastors in the process of being called and the laypeople on local search committees make this book interesting and valuable to all churches. These vignettes caused me to reflect on how I am dealing with pastoral change in my own church. My pastor has taken a call to Texas, and I am part of the search committee. This book adds a whole new perspective to my thinking.

How to Be Filled With the Holy Spirit and Know It

Garrie F. Williams, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1991, 188 pages, \$7.95, paper. Reviewed by James Ayers, graduate student in patristics, Boston College, and pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Waltham, Massachusetts.

Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the Father and the Son come to make their home within our hearts (John 14:15-24). Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him (Romans 8:9). Williams correctly understands the implications of these texts that divide the world into two

groups (those who are Christian, and those who are not) rather than three categories (those who are not Christian, those who are Christian but not filled with the Spirit, and those who are both Christian and Spirit-filled).

I find the title misleading in that it implies that being filled with the Spirit is something that Christians might or might not decide to do. However, Williams provides a study guide that will prove helpful to groups looking for an introduction to the present ministry of the Spirit within their lives.

Youth Evangelism: When They're in Your Neighborhood but Not in the Fold

David R. Veerman, Victor Books, 1988, 214 pages, \$12.99, hardcover. Reviewed by Angela Hunt, free-lance writer, youth worker, and pastor's wife.

Youth Evangelism is a readable how-to book for anyone who wishes to work with young people and lead them to the gospel. Relying heavily on Youth for Christ material (Veerman is their national campus life director), the book explains how adults can meet, relate to, understand, and reach today's youth.

If you've felt an inward yearning to work with teenagers but didn't feel confident in your abilities, this book will prepare you for the world of adolescents.

Managers With God

Daniel Kauffman, Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, 1990, 196 pages, \$9.95, paper. Reviewed by G. Tom Carter, director of Trust Services, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Kauffman tells of his search for a better way to establish a base for financing the educational and religious work of the church. The author has worked in the financial area for seven different denominations. In *Managers With God*, he outlines the stewardship principles that he found successful in his 45-plus years of experience.

In the chapter "Creative Vehicles," Kauffman includes excellent material on the techniques of deferred giving. This book can be an effective resource tool for stewardship seminars and sermons.

Recently noted

Clergy and Laity Burnout, William H. Willimon, Creative Leadership Series, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1989, 111

pages, \$8.95, paper.

A thoroughly frank look at the causes of burnout, complemented by nonsense creative strategies for change. The author suggests it is not lack of energy but lack of meaning that causes ministers to wear out. A readable book for those wanting both a practical and theological resolution to the problem.

Spurgeon Sermon Illustrations, Charles H. Spurgeon, David O. Fuller, ed., Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1990, 144 pages, \$4.95, paper.

Choice selections from the "Prince of Preachers."

Spurgeon's Sermon Notes, Charles H. Spurgeon, David O. Fuller, ed., Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, 1990, 333 pages plus index, \$9.95, paper.

More than 190 sermon outlines from Genesis to Revelation.

Colossians & Philemon, Murray J. Harris, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1991, 310 pages, \$21.95, paper.

This is the inaugural volume of a series providing Bible students and pastors with the information needed to understand and expound the Greek text of the New Testament. A unique combination of serious exegetical work and homiletical intent, the book leads the reader into an in-depth understanding of the Greek text by guiding him or her through the processes of thorough exegesis flowing into sermon construction.

War No More? Options in Nuclear Ethics, James W. Walters, ed., Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1989, 115 pages, \$6.95, paper.

Is there an authentic Christian stance toward national policy on the development, possession, and use of nuclear arms? Walters brings together proponents of three distinct options on this question. James W. Walters is an associate professor of Christian ethics at Loma Linda University.

12,000 Religious Quotations, Frank S. Mead, ed., Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1989, 534 pages, \$19.95, paper.

A tremendous amount of research has gone into this volume that every pastor will find beneficial. As Mead quotes: "He who never quotes is never quoted."

Allaying confusion over salvation

From page 5

Christ as my Saviour?" To lose that salvation, they have to make a conscious choice to withdraw their decision to depend alone on Christ.

Let us return to the bicycle analogy. The front wheel is justification; the back wheel is sanctification, which includes the new birth. Just as you can't have a bicycle without two wheels, so no one will enter heaven without being both justified and sanctified. But just as the front and back wheels have different functions, so justification and sanctification have different functions. Justification (the work of Christ for me) is always the basis of my salvation, while sanctification (the work of Christ in me) is the result of my salvation.

They cannot be separated, but they must be distinguished if we are to avoid the confusion over the *basis* of salvation. ■

Letters

From page 2

many SDA ministers ready to team together for a mighty preaching of the gospel.—Howard C. Lund, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

■ Your editorial was long overdue. The truth that God justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5) that He "callesh those things which be not as though they were" (verse 17), is still an offense to the pride of human nature. As the Holy Spirit said: "The offense of the cross [has not] ceased" (Gal. 5:11). No generation to the end of time is excluded from that offense.—Michael D. Marsh, deacon, Palm Springs, California.

■ Tragically we seem to be confused over the gospel of Jesus.

In that grand old classic *Systematic Theology*, by A. H. Strong, is an excellent comment that compares Council of Trent theology with biblical Protestant theology. As you are aware, the Roman Church confuses justification with sanctification, and hence even the very best Catholic is never sure of his salvation. When do I ever

have enough love, works of the Spirit, etc.? Hence the doctrine of purgatory, a perfectionistic necessity to finish off in the afterlife what the Spirit did not complete in this lifetime.

Isn't that the problem with some? Instead of purgatory, we have substituted sanctification, and thus there is no assurance of ever being "good enough." Thank God, my salvation does not depend on my works, but on His works!—Pastor John Carter, Newbury Park, California.

■ The editorial confuses objective justification (effected by Christ's sacrifice) with justification by faith (our subjective experience).

The youth know that not everyone will be saved. Since Christ "wrought out their victory at Calvary, and now offers that victory to all who believe," the author transfers their anxious concern from "how converted do I have to be in order to be saved?" to "how can I know that I have believed enough?" Thus, for a thoughtful youth, the problem is deepened.

To others this says, "We're saved no matter what we do, because we have accepted Christ." True, "they no longer feel guilty," but have a false assurance. They can slip into antinomianism.

The 1888 concept of righteousness by faith cures both legalism and antinomianism. Christ effected an objective justification for "every man." Thus the news is assurance that Christ has accepted you, and He will prepare you for heaven if you don't resist His abounding grace.

While it is true that you don't have to do anything to be the recipient of that forensic "verdict of acquittal" (Rom. 5:16-18, NEB), this cannot be antinomianism because immediately Paul explains how appreciating that grace makes it impossible for a believer to go on transgressing (5:21-6:18). Christ saves *from*, not *in*, sin and can sanctify completely in this life.

Genuine faith is more than "accepting Christ," a mental assent to a formula; it is a heart-appreciation of what it costs the Son of God to redeem us. Such faith works by love (Gal. 5:6), producing obedience.

Although all were forensically justified by Christ, no one experiences justification by faith unless he is con-

verted. Thus justification is always a change of heart, a receiving of the atonement (Rom. 5:1, 11), because no one can be reconciled to God unless he is also reconciled to God's holy law. Faith is never inactive.

The editorial assumes the egocentric motivation; but a far more powerful motivation grips the heart who learns to sense a concern for the honor of Christ rather than an obsession with their own personal security. To be "in Christ" by faith is to be in union with Him, to sense a concern for Him that transcends our natural-born concern for ourselves.—Robert J. Wieland, Meadow Vista, California.

Casebook or Codebook?

Alden Thompson's title "God's Word: Casebook or Codebook?" (July 1991) contains an insinuation that a dichotomy exists in the Word of God. While he later admits that the Scriptures act in both fashions, it raises an unnecessary and dangerous question for the one who can't resolve the question from Scripture. Why pose the question as an either/or situation when it acts as both?

The very heart of Scripture is its code, the most succinct expression of it being the Ten Commandments. The Scriptures contain numerous case studies of humans who have encountered the code. These case studies were given to us for examples. They help us understand how others related to the code and the Codifier. Our successful application of the code to our case today depends on a right relationship with the Codifier. How else can you know God, except through Bible study, prayer, and sharing? Does the author know of any means of staying alive other than eating, breathing, and drinking?—Kenneth Mathews, Jr., Greeneville, Tennessee.

■ The publication of Thompson's *Inspiration* has sparked what will prove to be the issue of all issues. To declare that certain instructions given in the Scriptures were merely a reflection of the culture of the day is the most subtle and dangerous of all errors. Moses framed no law, Paul originated no doctrine, and the messages they proclaimed were just as contrary to the customs of the unconverted in their day as they are today. Because God's laws have always distinguished His

people from those around them, the fact that a biblical command is culturally unpopular could be one of the strongest arguments in favor of its validity.

The author's conclusion that the Bible is primarily a casebook appears from his own testimony to be a reaction against legalism. The true remedy, however, is conversion, which enables the child of God to find his greatest delight in doing God's will, however unfashionable it may be.—Pastor Ken LeBrun, SDA Church, Council Bluffs, Iowa.

■ The article "God's Word: Casebook or Codebook?" provides a much needed new approach to the interpretation of the Bible. Thanks for providing this article to me, a Baptist, through your magazine.—Fred Halbrooks, director of missions, Nelson Baptist Association, Louisville, Kentucky.

■ I am grateful you have published Thompson's provocative article "God's Word: Casebook or Codebook?" The author wins his case against the codebook approach. But his treatment of the casebook approach misses two vital points: 1. The Christian way of resolving a clash of possibilities in the Bible is to make the Jesus story ultimately authoritative. I call this the Christological principle (Heb. 1:1-3). 2. Thompson advises us to do our own thinking but does not say explicitly that the thinking should be done in community with others. Sheer individualism is destructive. As Matthew 18 suggests, working together, in cordial and constant conversation, is the best way to find God's truth for today.—Pastor Charles Scriven, Sligo SDA Church, Takoma Park, Maryland.

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Make your church an evangelistic center

Our church complexes represent the single biggest capital investment most congregations make. Yet many use their buildings for as little as a half-dozen hours a week or less. I believe there are compelling reasons that our churches should be opened and used as centers of help, outreach, and evangelism.

First, convenience and availability—our churches are easier places from which to work than most rented facilities. They take little time to prepare and can often be left “set up” between programs.

Second, while we genuinely want to help people, it must be our intention to go beyond smoking, stress, weight-control, and cooking courses. Using our church facilities enables us to move naturally into more direct forms of evangelism.

Third, the use of our own facilities offers the opportunity of running a mix of programs throughout the year in a single venue. This continuity is important, for it encourages strangers to understand progressively our wholistic message.

In neutral venues, the positive attitudes generated and then associated with whatever we do is eventually all but lost. When the pastor leaves for another district, so does the physical, visible association with the church. The public needs to associate our distinctive lifestyle and message with permanent

places, and in our communities, our churches are the obvious places.

Fourth, continual opening of our church doors to the public not only leads to strong church growth but also to a revitalizing of the church members and their attitude toward their own church. They discover how easy and natural it is to invite friends and family to their church functions. And in our buildings we can orchestrate the spiritual gifts of all our members, making each a part of the church's outreach. We can integrate community programs, seminars, and evangelistic meetings with the Sabbath school, worship service, youth, Pathfinders, and senior citizens' clubs to woo friends and neighbors from our communities to embrace God's saving message for the world.

As a pastor, you can urge your members to invite family, friends, and neighbors to your church. And you can encourage them to do so by instructing them how to invite these people and by preparing sermons that are suited to all who may come. Plan a year crammed with a wide variety of special services and programs to which visitors can be invited. Print invitations and invite strangers to single services, advertising a special subject. Preach a short series during the church service time. Preach about the great themes of the Bible. It is high time we spent some money promoting the church as a place of spiritual growth and blessing.—*At the time he*

submitted this item, Peter B. Cousins was the pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist church in North Rockhampton, Australia.

Cousins notes that in one district in which he pastored, hard work over a two-year period produced 18 baptisms. During the next two years, using the approach he suggests above, he baptized 52—a growth rate of more than 10 percent per year.—
Editors.

Sabbath seminar on end-time events

Did you ever feel a need for a weekend or all-day Sabbath seminar on end-time events? Marvin Moore is offering such a seminar in three parts. The Sabbath morning sermon, “The Crisis of the End-Time,” focuses on current evidence that Christ's second coming is near. One afternoon seminar presents strategies for preparing for the end-time, assuring the believer that the coming time of trouble need not be a source of fear or anxiety. The final session discusses the judgments of God during the time of trouble, the latter rain, and the loud cry. For further details, contact Marvin Moore, Associate Book Editor, Pacific Press, P.O. Box 7000, Boise, ID 83707 (phone: 208-465-2570).

The Scripture and the soul

At a time when the whispers and thunders of the New Age movement alike support the doctrine of the inherent immortality of the human soul, the

Christian needs to pause and reflect on what the Bible says about the nature of death and life after death. Robert L. Odom's *Is Your Soul Immortal?* (Wildwood, Ga.: Discovery Reading, 1989) provides tools for evaluating the issue in the light of Scripture. Written for the layperson, the book marshals biblical facts, patristic literature, and theological and religious writers to argue for the conditional immortality of the soul. Available for \$6.50 at Adventist Book Centers. For quantity price, write: Samuel S. Jacobson, P.O. Box 675, Bronx, NY 10475 (phone: 212-320-5213).

Talking about conditional immortality brings to mind a quarterly journal, solely devoted to the subject. *Resurrection* is published by the Pastor's Library Foundation for the Resurrection Fellowship in America and the United Kingdom. As part of an international evangelical movement, the journal is committed to the proclamation that “immortality is inherent in God alone,” and that the human is “mortal by nature” and may “receive immortality from Jesus Christ as a gift conferred at the resurrection of the last day.” Each issue carries a wide range of biblical, theological, and philosophical articles and book reviews. Annual subscription: \$8.00. The Pastor's Library Foundation, P.O. Box 353, Sterling, VA 22170.

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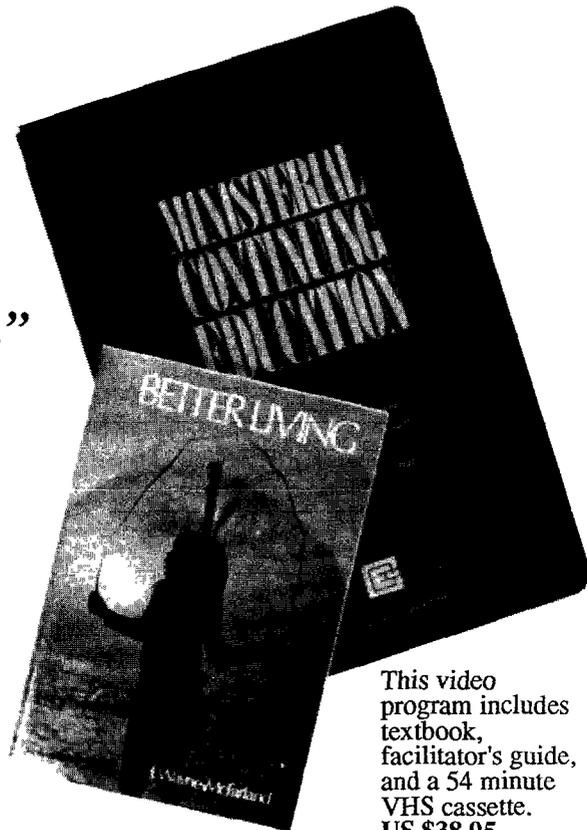
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