

Ministry

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Religion
in Russia:

Open
or
Shut?

A biblical theology of drinking

Roger Evans' article, "A Biblical Theology of Drinking" (July 1993), was excellent. It is just the sort of thing that I file away for future reference and use in leading others to the Lord Jesus and helping them see the biblical truth in regard to drinking.—O. Kris Widmer, Lakeport, California.

■ God never condones drinking of any alcoholic beverages. What Jesus made at Cana was not wine but grape juice. Abundant evidence exists to show that *yayin* and *oinos* (and their cognates) are generic terms that refer to wine or unfermented grape juice, in spite of what modern lexicons say. Two recent studies (Robert P. Teachout, "The Use of 'Wine' in the Old Testament" [Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979]; S. Bacchiocchi, *Wine in the Bible* [Berrien Springs, Mich.: Biblical Perspectives, 1989]) have shown that it is simply not true that *oinos* and *yayin* refer only to fermented beverages.

This view is supported by a number of secular scholars as well as American and English biblical scholars of the past century. In fact, classical scholars as far back as the seventeenth century argued that *oinos* referred to fermented and unfermented grape juice. Older lexicons and dictionaries support this conclusion.—Yvon Caza, Ponoka, Alberta, Canada.

■ While I agree with the author's moral conclusion—that abstinence is better than temperance—I disagree with his exegesis at several points. For example, to argue from Luke 7:33, 34 that "there is no evidence that Jesus ever drank fermented grape juice" is to miss the point of the text. Jesus has just contrasted the well-known abstinence of John the Baptist with His own practice of "eating and drinking." Obviously Jesus' "drinking" does not mean that Jesus drank water while

John did not, but that Jesus drank wine while John did not. Jesus Himself declares this contrast, not His enemies, and the contrast clearly implies that where John was abstinent in the use of wine, Jesus was not, thus giving His enemies the opening in which they accused Jesus of being a "wine bibber." To say, as the author does, that it "is gullibility at best and poor scholarship at worst" "to take at face value an accusation about someone from that person's avowed enemies," is to fail to recognize that it is Jesus Himself who says His practice was unlike the abstinence of John. The accusation of His enemies that His drinking was drunkenness may well be rejected as unfounded, but His practice of doing that which John did not do is attested from His own mouth, and the obvious conclusion is that that which Jesus did that John did not do was drink wine.

I feel constrained to point out that our zeal to prove from Scripture that abstinence is better than temperance makes us susceptible to such failures of logic. Unfortunately for our endeavor, many of those we are trying to persuade are bright enough to see our exegetical shortcomings. They then conclude that any argument that makes use of illogic must be unsound not only in its methodology but also in its conclusions.

Can't we just plainly state that the Bible teaches temperance (the use of wine without drunkenness), but we believe that abstinence (the complete nonuse of all alcoholic beverages) is better because it is safer? No one who took abstinence as his or her standard ever became an alcoholic, while many who took temperance as theirs were seduced by this dangerous drug and did—including my own (Seventh-day Adventist-reared) father. I know whereof I speak!

Unanswered is the question of whether and how the church should enforce a standard of abstinence for all

its members. Perhaps some scholarly effort should be given to that question.—David VanDenburgh, senior pastor, Campus Hill Church of Seventh-day Adventists, Loma Linda, California.

■ The article speaks on the easy texts and ignores the tough ones. I refer specifically to two passages.

Deuteronomy 14:22-27 tells the Hebrews to "spend the money for whatever your heart desires, for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice" (NASB). Evans mentions this only in passing, and yet the text approves the use of both wine *and* strong drink.

Evans also neglects Jesus' turning of water into wine. Jesus having done so, the headwaiter says to the groom, "Every man serves the good wine first, and when men have drunk freely, then that which is poorer; you have kept the good wine until now" (John 2:10, NASB). Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says that the Greek word translated "have drunk freely" is, literally, "have become drunk." So the headwaiter is comparing that which Jesus created to the wine that makes people drunk.

We preachers or writers have a responsibility to deal with the hard texts, too. Especially if we are going to present a "biblical theology" of something. Would Evans care to comment on these texts in relation to his conclusions?—Byron Moats, Napa, California.

■ I wonder why Evans conveniently ignored some crucial biblical passages regarding alcohol consumption. He ignores the fact that Jesus used wine to institute Holy Communion. (The Jews have always used fermented wine for Passover. There is no fresh grape juice available in Israel in April!) What about Jesus turning water into wine at

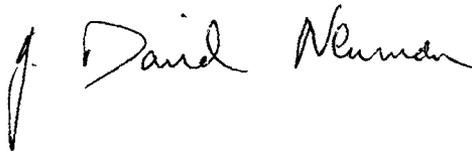
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If you're receiving MINISTRY bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 MINISTRY has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but we believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence 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.

The day before I wrote this page, Boris Yeltsin, Russian president, dismissed the Russian Parliament and called for December elections. During my visit to Moscow in July 1993, the Central Bank recalled all banknotes issued prior to 1993. I well remember how relieved I was to discover that all my banknotes were stamped 1993. Some of my friends were not so fortunate and began a mad scramble to exchange their money before the deadline.

Yes, Russia is much in the news these days. In this issue we publish three articles on what is happening in Russia and the former Communist led countries surrounding Russia: "Religious Freedom in Russia: Open or Shut?" by Gary Ross, my and Sharon Cress's report on the Mark Finley Moscow evangelistic meetings, and "A Western Message in Eastern Europe" by Borge Schantz. Russia is alive and still desperately striving to come to terms with itself in the post-communism era. These reports will help you catch a little glimpse of what the Russian and Eastern Europe people are experiencing.

Don't forget to read the other articles, all of them excellent (naturally).



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Cover: St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow graces the lid of a Russian lacquer box.

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Worship's true motive

John M. Fowler

Why do we go to public worship? Some of us want to set a good example: How else could our children make church a vital part of their life? How else could we speak of the need for corporate togetherness in faith? Some because of tradition: Come Sabbath, the involuntary spiritual reflexes make us put on our best clothes, rush to church, and find our cozy seats. Some because of a bee instinct: Gather honey wherever it is found, and the instinct drives us to where popular preachers dispense their profound theology with oratory or compassion. Some find in worship the extra-strength Tylenol for all the week's headaches.

But a scene in Revelation 4 directs us to worship's only true motive: the worthiness of God. The scene describes God, glorious and majestic, seated on a throne. Around the throne are 24 elders, clothed with white raiment and wearing crowns of gold. Seven lamps are burning before the throne, out of which proceed lightnings and thunderings. Close to the throne are four living creatures, each full of eyes before and behind, and each with six wings. The four creatures rest neither night nor day, but continually praise God by singing, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!" (Rev. 4:8).^{*} The 24 elders prostrate before the throne, cast their crowns, and cry out in adoration, "Worthy art thou, our Lord and God, to

receive glory and honor and power, for thou didst create all things, and by thy will they existed and were created" (verse 11).

This heavenly model of worship presents God as the sole object of worship, and creatures as having the opportunity to engage in that worship. Between the Creator's prerogative and the creature's privilege, Revelation 4 defines worship as an act that affirms God's absoluteness and confesses human helplessness.

The absoluteness of God

Revelation 4 relates worship to four aspects of God: His holiness, His eternity, His activity, His authority.

Worship begins with the acknowledgment that God is holy. The four beasts continually sing without rest or interruption, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty." Likewise, the psalmist's call to worship is a cosmic reminder of God's holiness: "Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of his holiness" (Ps. 29:2, NIV); "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God" (Ps. 95:6, 7, NIV).

An affirmation of the holiness of God immediately places Him apart from us. He is holy, He is entirely the other, and He is not human. Christian worship does not create the object of worship. It only calls upon the worshipers to come to terms with the reality of God. Moses learned that lesson around the burning bush. Isaiah grasped that truth in his first vision. The distinction between the

worshiper and the One who is worshiped needs to be kept clear always. Without that distinction, Christian worship faces two dangers: on the one hand, there is the peril of mysticism, with the worshiper assuming the possibility of merging with the divine; on the other, there is the threat of materialistic humanism, with its presumption that God eventually becomes dispensable. So when worship prioritizes the otherness of God, it not only helps to define for us the reality of who God is and who we are, but also preserves our worship activities from becoming common, trite, and irreverent.

To so emphasize the holiness of God does not mean that public worship must become a monotonous, joyless, boring exercise of a routine nature in which adults doze off, children are busy with crayons, and the atmosphere is filled with a clock-watching anxiety. No. When we acknowledge the holiness of God, the corollary becomes obvious: we are unholy and helpless, much in need of divine grace. So every time we confess the holiness of God, we are in effect discovering our own unworthiness, like Isaiah discovered his unclean lips. Such a discovery can never be monotonous; it can lead only to a powerful experience whereby the "live coal" of God's grace can purge us from sin and help us see God, hear God, and praise God (see Isa. 6:6-8).

Second, worship in Revelation 4 recognizes the eternity of God. Three times God's eternity is stressed: the four living creatures worship God "who was and is and is to come" (verse 8), and

“who lives for ever and ever” (verse 9); the 24 elders praise “him who lives for ever and ever” (verse 10). To acknowledge the eternity of God in our worship is to say that He is not governed by limitations, such as time and space. There was a time when we were not; there will be a time when we might not be. But there never was a time when He was not; and there never will be a time when He will not be. He is the eternal I AM. Our existence is temporal, and even when we cross the borders of temporality by His grace, even that shall always be because of that divine attribute: His grace to unworthy sinners such as we are. And so as we worship in time and space, can we afford to miss the opportunity to affirm the One “who was and is and is to come”?

Third, worship in Revelation 4 points us to the activity of God. The 24 elders cry out that God is worthy “to receive glory and honor and power” because He created all things and by His will all things exist (verse 11). Our worship must acknowledge the creatorship and the providence of God. “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). “In him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). “In him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). These are axioms of faith that provide both reason and content to our worship. In worship we not only affirm that “the heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1), but also confess that God is our creator and provider: “The eyes of all look to thee, and thou givest them their food in due season. Thou openest thy hand, thou satisfiest the desire of every living thing” (Ps. 145:15, 16).

The redeeming activity of God forms a large part of praise in worship. The scene in Revelation 4 makes that abundantly clear. The throne is a redemptive throne, a victorious throne. The elders with white garments of righteousness and crowns of victory are symbolic of that redemptive activity of God. The entire worship scene revolves around the throne with its rainbow of redemptive promise. Can any worship ever begin or end without pointing to the worshiper that this God who created a billion stars hung upon a cross outside

of Jerusalem 2,000 years ago for a sinner such as I am? Worship is incomplete without the cross. The songs we sing, the silence we observe, the Scripture we read, the tithes we give, the stories we tell, the preaching we do, the prayers we say, the fellowship we have must somehow or other lift up the cross. For the Man on that cross is the reason for our worship and for our being.

Revelation 5, a thematic extension of chapter 4, stresses in no uncertain terms the centrality of the cross in worship. The 24 elders and the four living creatures fall “down before the Lamb” and sing “a new song” because God’s redemptive grace toward sinners was manifested by the shed blood of the Lamb (Rev. 5:8, 9). In response to that matchless revelation of God’s grace on Calvary, all heaven and earth bow in adoration: “To him who sits upon the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might for ever and ever!” (verse 13).

Fourth, worship in Revelation 4 acknowledges God’s authority. With reference to God, the word “throne” appears 12 times in the chapter and dominates the worship theme. Throne signifies authority—the authority of the one who sits on it. God is the eternal sovereign, and our worship must ever be mindful of that. The entire created order, including the worshiping church, cannot escape the presence and the power of that throne. When we come to worship, corporately we confess and individually we accept the sovereignty of God. “God being who and what He is,” says A. W. Tozer, “and we being who and what we are, the only thinkable relation between us is one of full lordship on His part and complete submission on ours. We owe Him every honor that it is in our power to give Him. Our everlasting grief lies in giving Him anything less.”¹

Our helplessness

Worship in Revelation 4 underscores not only God’s absoluteness, but also human unworthiness and helplessness. The 24 elders “fall down before him who is seated on the throne,” and “cast their crowns before the throne” (verse 10). The twin acts of falling down and casting the crowns proclaim forcefully

Worship is a recognition that we are nothing, and He is all in all.

human unworthiness before God. The elders, symbolic of the redeemed, wear white robes of righteousness; they have crowns of victory; they sit on thrones; they are in God’s presence. But from where comes that victory, from where that privilege? By placing their crowns at the feet of the One who sits on the throne, the redeemed acknowledge that what they are and what they have are not their own.

That moment when people are confronted with the reality that they are not their own, leading them to bow down and place their crown at the feet of the One who sits on the throne, true worship takes place. Worship is thus adoration surrender; it is a recognition that we are nothing, and He is all in all. Worship is a reminder that the battle and the victory are His. The journey as well as the reward, the forgiveness as well as the assurance, the wedding banquet as well as the garment, the beginning as well as the end, are His. The best in us cannot commend us to His presence, and the worst in us cannot insulate us from the power of His grace. Worship is that acknowledgment that we are because of Him; it is that assurance that we are a new creation because of Him. “Worship is the submission of all our nature to God. It is the quickening of the conscience by His holiness; the nourishment of the mind with His truth; the purifying of imagination by His beauty; the opening of the heart to His love; the surrender of will to His purpose.”² ■

* Except as otherwise stated, all Scripture passages are from the Revised Standard Version.

¹ A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit After God*, in *A Treasury of A. W. Tozer* (Kent, England: STL Books, 1980), p. 107.

² William Temple, *Reading in St. John’s Gospel* (London: Macmillan and Company, 1940), p. 68.



Reaching the secular mind

J. David Newman

In my home country of Great Britain 90 percent of the population do not attend church. For them church is irrelevant; they do not see how it meets the needs of the nineties. Most of the First World faces the same problem. How do you reach secular people for Christ?

I have several friends who are good moral people but who think religion is not for intellectually honest minds. From their perspective they see Christians living lives of quiet desperation, solving the problems of life no better or no worse than the non-Christian. Unfortunately, for many Christians—and Adventists in particular—form too often takes precedence over function, being right is more important than being loving, facts become more important than feelings, doctrine takes precedence over relationships.

Jon Paulien in a just-published book, *Present Truth in the Real World* (Pacific Press Pub. Assn.), seeks to show how to meet felt needs of secular people. He particularly stresses one of the great weaknesses of religion—the uncanny ability to answer questions most people are not asking. While this book is written from the perspective of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, its thesis and practical suggestions apply to anyone trying to take the gospel to secular people.

Paulien, a professor of New Testament at Andrews University, seems a most unlikely candidate to write a book on reaching the secular mind. But this book contains no dry theory. It brims over with anecdotes and suggestions for communicating the gospel in relevant dress. He shares his own failures and successes in trying to bring Jesus Christ to those who see Him as irrelevant.

Paulien defines the secular person as one who is contingent, autonomous, relative, and temporary (pp. 43-51). Secular people have become secular because of science, pluralism, or privatization (pp. 53-57). They are reached mainly one-on-one (p. 164).

If you are looking for a book that lays out a simple one, two, three for evangelizing secular people, you will be disappointed. Paulien says, “We need to encourage a multiplicity of ministries. Secular people are as diverse as snowflakes. They are not normally reached in large groups” (*ibid.*, p. 164). Those who rely on mass public evangelism will be disappointed. Paulien then points out another truth that will disappoint those who believe in planning from the top down: “The only way, therefore, to counter the pluralism of society is with the pluralism of the Holy Spirit, which is an explosion of all kinds of outreach ministries empowered by the Spirit. This will not come from central planning, but from the members discovering the unique roles God has developed for each person. I am encouraged, therefore, by the spiritual gifts movement in our church. . . . No two people are gifted in exactly the same way. If secular people are as diverse as snowflakes, we need a missionary force that is as diverse as snowflakes” (*ibid.*).

Personal experience

Paulien then illustrates his point by telling the experience of his own parents. They tried to build a German-oriented church in New York by traditional ways such as Bible studies, only to see the church dwindle down to some 20 members. Then his parents decided to let their gifts flow naturally. His mother loves the kitchen and finally discovered that could be her ministry as well. Paulien describes

what happened: “I came home from Andrews one day, walked in the door, and my mother said, ‘I’d like you to meet your new brother!’ He was sitting in the living room, bare to the waist, with a gold chain around his neck and a big gold medallion on his chest. This was going to be an interesting brother! I soon learned of his homosexual orientation. He lived next door, and he would come over for hours at a time and watch my mother do the housework. I don’t know what the psychological dynamic was, but he absolutely adored my mother as she opened her life to him” (p. 165).

“I found out that my mother had also developed a close relationship with some Buddhist girls who were homosexually orientated. Buddhists! I thought to myself, What has happened to my conservative Adventist parents? One Sabbath there were 25 young people home for lunch. Twelve were church members, and 13 were not” (pp. 165, 166).

Paulien reports that when his parents left that city, there were nearly 100 young people in that church. Love wins most arguments.

Fortress and salt

One point stands out above all others: if you are to reach secular people, you must spend much time with them. Jesus said Christians must live as salt in the world. Unfortunately, because we are afraid that we might be contaminated by the world, we withdraw into fortress-type enclaves and mentalities. But if the salt does not penetrate and permeate the food, it will not be effective. While Romans 12:2 admonishes us not to be corrupted by the world, 1 Corinthians 9:22 says that we must become all things to all people in order that we might win some. Where do we find the balance? This book will help. ■

Evangelism in worship

Eoin Giller

**Worship must not
only nurture but
also evangelize.**



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Seventh-day
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Tucson, Arizona.*

Sunday morning. The pealing of bells. The carved wood. The pipe organ. The nooks and crannies of the sanctuary. The high roof. The dim light. The towering pulpit. The minister in flowing robes and bibbed collar ponderously ascending the pulpit. These were some of my childhood memories of worship that left a picture of God: God was a serious person; He liked order, ritual, solemnity, and a subdued constituency. As a child I observed that the baptismal service consisted of sprinkling and christening of babies. Never once did I see an adult baptized. It seemed that adults never became church members—not even by profession of faith. If worship on earth were to be a foretaste of heaven, then heaven surely seemed boring!

I also recall, however, another childhood worship experience. A warehouse in Sydney. Concrete floor, white painted walls, festive banners, and an orchestra. Singing included hymns and Scripture songs, projected on a large screen. A lectern served as the pulpit. The pastors wore no robes. Baptism was by immersion, and each week there was a baptismal service, with adults joining the church. The congregation was animated, involved, full of awe and joy, and yes, even enthusiasm.

As a youngster I often reflected on the two worship styles: In the first, God

seemed like a grandfather—wise, old, stern, and not at all favoring joyful expressions. He seemed to wait in heaven until we died, then took us in some spirit form into an ethereal abode of placidity. In the second place, God seemed young (like Jesus, in His 30s?), active, involved in life—to the extent of changing the lives of those who believed in Him. He seemed happy, giving His people salvation, peace, and joy in this world, and inspiring them to tell others about their Saviour who is coming again to gather His people to be with Him. He seemed like a hero to His constituents—most of whom were university students.

At first I even thought that we worshiped God the Father in one church and Jesus Christ in the other. But upon more mature reflection, the two experiences represented two different concepts of God: in one, God was transcendent; in the other, He was both transcendent and immanent!

Upon listening to my experience, a friend observed, “Well, what does it matter? You just worshiped God in two different traditions.” But it does matter, affecting the very life of the church: the first church today is only a shadow away from death; the second has relocated, has its own modern building, and is a thriving congregation of several thousand.

Putting it bluntly, the first church majored in traditional liturgy and liberal “relevant” concerns in worship and is dying. The second church majored in

evangelical and biblical issues, brought an evangelistic thrust to worship, and is experiencing both qualitative and numerical growth.

Worship and evangelism

Should worship have an evangelistic purpose? Let us observe two New Testament passages. First, Paul's concern for unbelievers who worshiped at Corinth: "So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some *unbelievers* come in, will they not say you are out of your mind? But if an *unbeliever* or someone who does not understand comes in while everyone is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner. . . . *So he will fall down and worship God*, exclaiming, 'God is really among you!'" (1 Cor. 14:23-25).*

Paul's burden is that the quality and mode of worship should not only honor God but also serve an evangelistic purpose.

Worship is never neutral. Paul is troubled lest a charismatic excess of tongues should convince unbelievers that church members are insane. On the other hand, he believes that Spirit-filled prophecy,¹ together with signs and wonders, will convict the unbelievers of their sinful condition, and lead them to worship God.

For a second passage linking (by inference) worship to evangelism, we turn to James: "Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?" (James 2:2-4).

Primarily James is using his illustration to warn the church against discrimination. Secondarily he is concerned that the members avoid evil thoughts and judgmentalism. We are to welcome people (believers or unbelievers) to our meetings without favoritism. Such an attitude among believers has both nurturing and evangelistic implications.

It is unlikely that people against whom members discriminate in the church's worship meetings will return and become members of the body of Christ. Because worship affects both values and

relationships, it is quite legitimate to question both the worship and the God who is worshiped in a church that practices discrimination.

James, then, is raising a legitimate concern about discrimination at church meetings. Worship makes a strong statement about the values that a congregation adopts in relation to its God. Thus the quality and style of a church's worship do affect the nurture of the converted and the evangelism of the unconverted. As evangelism leads men and women to worship God, so worship affects, for better or for worse, the evangelistic potential of a congregation.

The Evangel, worship, and evangelism

Crucial to the thesis of this article—that a church's worship service affects its evangelism—is the definition of worship: worship is communication with God. Secularization has introduced a shift in the way people see things today. In the New Testament world, and for that matter even until recent times, *mystery* was in everyday thinking. God was in heaven—high, holy, and in majesty. Today the awe and reverence have been replaced by intellectualism on the one hand, and a "buddy-buddy" experience on the other.²

Worship is communication. But it is not simply coming together for another meeting, not simply a weekly ritual like that of a club or a PTA meeting. It is communication evoked by its Subject—God. For the Christian it is a celebration³ of the God who has made a difference in our world. He is our Creator. He is our Redeemer. He is our Provider. He is our Providence. He is our Future. And we worship celebrating the crucified, risen, and living Saviour of the world.

Worship is communication with God. It is ascribing praise, reverence, and honor to Him. It derives from *worship* (Anglo-Saxon *woerth* "worth," with the suffix *scipe*, Eng. *ship*),⁴ and therefore involves values. It also prepares a person to hear from God—through His Word, and by proclamation of the gospel. Gospel is good news—God's promise of salvation through faith in Christ. Those who accept God's promises by faith are counted worshipers of the true God (Rev. 14:6, 7). Paul's contention is that the unbeliever "will fall down and worship God, exclaiming, 'God is really among you'" (1 Cor. 14:25). An experience of

the presence of God in congregational worship convicts the unbeliever to confess Christ. Viewed thus, true worship is evangelism.

Pastoral issues

Pastors are responsible to lead the congregation in worship. They must also equip members for soul winning. But first they must win over their congregations, gain "entry" to the local congregation—regardless of the style and ethos of its worship service and its missionary outreach. This may mean that pastors need to spend their first year visiting members, listening to their stories, gaining their confidence, and making contact with unbelievers through parishioners' friend networks.

With confidence established, a pastor can move to effect changes in worship, which in turn will impact the mission of the church. Meanwhile every pastor needs to find out:

1. How many in this congregation regard the sermon as the "high event" and all that precedes it as mere "preliminaries"?

2. How much of the service incorporates the congregation's participation in God-focused worship?

3. Does the assembly experience the presence of the Holy Spirit in church on Sabbath? Are members aware of the vertical, horizontal, and internal dimensions in worship?

4. What about music? Does the singing consist of hymns of exhortation (speaking to each other about God), or is there an element of genuine praise and thanksgiving (as in the Psalms)? Are the lyrics addressed to the Father and the Son through the Holy Spirit, or to ourselves? Is there a balance between songs of worship, praise, and exhortation?

5. When an elder offers the pastoral prayer, is it soaked in biblical allusions and yet personal with reverential awe? Do the elders know how to move through a pastoral prayer from praise, to confession, to supplication with intercession and thanksgiving, concluding with affirmation?

6. Is the preaching biblical, grace-oriented, expository, filled with the drama of the stories of the Bible, and yet practical in terms of culture, current problems, and individual needs? Are appeals extended at the conclusion of every sermon—whether or not an altar call is given?

Honest answers to these questions sensitize pastoral leadership to changes that may be needed to construct worship with an evangelistic thrust. Changing the liturgy, however, touches one of the most sensitive areas of congregational life and can endanger church unity as well as pastoral tenure. Therefore, education must precede any attempted change in worship style.

Practical worship evangelism

How can we reach people for Christ and invite them to worship with us at church without giving them a long series of Bible studies? Perhaps the easiest method is to use the church's side door! When Christians assemble in small groups and follow the house-meeting practice of the early church, the church will grow as it did in apostolic times (Acts 5:42; 6:1). In these groups, unbelievers need to learn as much about worship as about God and fellowship. Worship, of course, must consist of, as in the primitive church, prayer, praise, lessons, prophecy, the use of other gifts, and contributions.⁵

The intimacy of a small group offers security to the unbeliever. If the group focuses on relationships and worship (through conversational prayer), most people will continue to fellowship and worship week after week with their group. Soon they will discover Jesus in a new way, meeting their deepest spiritual needs. Church attendance will be their next step. Simply stated, when believers invite unbelievers into a small group, offer them acceptance and Christian love, and then teach them *how* to worship God in praise, prayer, and Bible study, the unbelievers are usually led to Christ and to worship Him in His church.

Consider the experience of our Desert Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church at Tucson, Arizona. We have seven small groups functioning at various times of the week. The groups stress relationships and worship. Members study and fellowship in their group. Within a week or two after the initial exposure to Christian worship in these small groups, unbelievers often come to church. For example, four new people attended our May 12 small group meeting. Three of them attended church May 15, and they returned to the group meeting on May 19, bringing another (unbelieving) friend with them. He also attended church May 22. These four have already asked for

baptism, and two have requested to be married in our church. Before baptism, however, Bible studies are given. For new Christians we have a Serving in the Spirit Sabbath school class. This experience helps new members identify spiritual gifts, and motivates them in Christian service before they discover the art of "pew warming."

Worship evangelism

Worship evangelism is a powerful method of soul winning. "Jackson" was invited to attend one of our small groups. He came for a few weeks. He requested prayers for an emotional distress that had caused him much suffering. We prayed with him by the laying on of hands. He learned to pray himself and began to study the Bible at home. Later he brought his three boys to church, and invited a divorced couple to his baptism. "Jill" and "Bert" came to the church in jeans. Later they said they have attended several churches, but they felt at home, welcomed, and loved in our church. They were impressed by the Christ-centered, gentle, and flexible style of worship, and are now preparing for baptism. As a consequence of their communion with Christ, their marriage found healing; their two children have been taken out of temporary homes and are back again with them. "Jackson's" estranged wife has now agreed to attend worship

services with him, and has stopped divorce proceedings.

Communion with Christ and the power of prayer are the most potent evangelistic media we possess. Spirit-filled worship wins people to Christ. It meets hearts' deep hunger for God. It provides healing from sin and guilt. ■

* All Scripture passages are from the New International Version.

¹ One meaning of "to prophesy" is to forth-tell, to speak openly, to proclaim the divine message. The primary usage in 1 Corinthians 14 denotes inspired preaching, rather than foretelling the future. "For Paul, prophecy was one of God's greatest gifts to His church for edification . . . , and he ranked the prophet second only to an apostle in honor and importance. . . . By 'prophecy,' Paul understands intelligible preaching that builds up the church in faith . . . , explains mysteries, and imparts knowledge" ("Prophet in the New Testament," *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962]).

² See Robert E. Webber, *Worship Is a Verb* (Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1985), pp. 30, 31.

³ Some may object to linking the word "celebrate" to worship. I tried for a synonym, i.e., carnival, feast, festival, gala, jubilee, party, commemoration, observance, ritual; ant.: depressing, dull. The range of meanings restricts me to "celebrate," a good King James word: "From even to even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath" (Lev. 23:32).

⁴ "Worship," *A Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. James Hastings (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1902).

⁵ In Hastings, p. 943.

BLACK WEDNESDAY

Millennial Fever

by George Knight

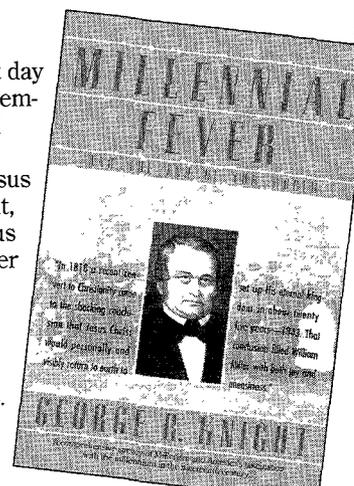
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Where have all the women gone?

Odette Ferreira

Understanding their historical role can solve present problems.



Odette Ferreira is dean of adult classes at Saleve Adventist Institute in Collonges-sous-Saleve, France.

Where have all the women gone?" This question began to be whispered by the 1960s and later reached a crescendo that still echoes in our day. Women are still around, of course; they are all over this round earth, but what about their present role in world mission?

For more than a century the role of women has sparked passionate debate in the church, the consequences of which are important to Christian mission. As in all sensitive matters, personal implications have not proven helpful. In a spirit of mutual understanding we must search for solutions.

Let us begin with a brief historical sketch of missions. With this knowledge we can profit from the lessons of the past for the sake of the mission we love.

The golden century

A journey back to the nineteenth century reveals that women's involvement in foreign missions was intertwined with the great American Protestant missionary movement of that era. It coincided with the awakening of free moral agency, women's rights, suffrage, and abolition. Women became involved in the humanitarian side of mission work, specifically health issues and social problems. Working in these areas, they often proved more valuable than men. As Joanna P. Moore stated: "We are the highway and hedge workers, who are also able to expound the Scriptures. We can help a tired mother, cut out a garment for her child, and meanwhile teach them the gospel. We not only pray for the sick but we also cook for them. . . . We are equally at home in parlor or

kitchen. Our shoes are iron and brass, there is no road too hard for us to travel."¹ This is a representative job description for the missionary woman of days gone by.

At first, appointing women to the mission field didn't seem feasible, proper, or biblical. Only in the 1860s, with the rise of women's foreign missionary societies, did their dream of service become reality.

The nineteenth century, that golden century of world mission, is also called the women's century, since "for many years women constituted the majority of foreign missions."² We find women such as Mary Slessor working at Calabar, one of the most treacherous spots in the African continent, for which "no return tickets were issued." An old African chief who witnessed her work remarked: "I tell you them women be best men for mission."³

By the late nineteenth century women's overseas missionary service became so significant that a Methodist bishop concluded that "when a field was found too difficult for a man, a woman should be sent."⁴ In 1875 a male official of the Southern Baptist foreign mission wrote: "I estimate a single woman in China is worth two married men."⁵

Why women succeeded

There were several reasons for the success of women missionaries:

1. *Their human warmth.* A woman's warmheartedness compensates for the machine coldness of emerging industrialization in areas of mission.

2. *Their power of endurance.* Women often cope more easily than men with pain and physical discomfort. They have the capacity of endurance, adaptability, and even wholesome stubbornness.

3. *Their ability to address other women's needs.* Women know how to deliver other women from moral slavery and stifling cultural and religious taboos. They can open unsuspected doors, destroy barriers, and prepare the road for male missionary action. In India, for example, the work among the Zenana women, secluded Hindu and Muslim women, could never have been accomplished by men.

Many obstacles to Christian penetration among Muslims could be partially overcome by women. I believe missionary bodies ought to lay far more emphasis on work for Muslim women through other women.

The decline

Unfortunately, the golden years of women in mission were doomed. As we survey the present situation, well may we ask, "Where have all the women gone?" They have taken a back seat in mission, and this may be one of the main reasons for the general decline in mission work and influence. Missionary wives face a lack of recognition and role definition. Even voluntary work is often considered meddling. This has helped create a certain apathy almost impossible to overcome. As national women are now trying to fill the roles previously occupied by expatriate women, the need for such role models is even more pressing than in the past. Catholics have recently come to terms with the importance of these role models, and so have missionaries of other denominations. What about Seventh-day Adventists?

The Seventh-day Adventist missions

There is an endless list of courageous Adventist women who have invested their lives as missionaries. Their contribution has been priceless in the past. What about the present?

To begin with, it is rather striking that no statistics whatsoever exist about Adventist women in mission. This alone speaks volumes for their lack of status and role definition.

According to information that can be gleaned, the three main opportunities for women missionaries are nursing, teaching, and secretarial work. Nevertheless, few women actually receive calls in these areas. They are usually engaged on location, mostly in a national budget or on a volunteer basis.

One administrator's wife observed,

"Missionary wives have served only as their husbands' helpers—without portfolio, low profile, an unpaid, unrecognized colaborer, largely unhonored and unsung, but still expected to accomplish the impossible." Often they have borne as heavy a load as a paid worker.

One General Conference official remarked, "These women may not be getting the calls, but they certainly are very well prepared and qualified on their own for service." Of the 25 family units sent overseas in the summer of 1988, 17 featured wives with a college degree.

Only two world divisions seem to have some women in administrative positions. One mission president's wife wrote: "Sadly, the many talents of women in mission have very seldom been fully utilized in my division."

In recent times there seems indeed to be a tendency to have some women missionaries appointed in their own right, especially as nurses, secretaries, and teachers. Their numbers, however, are still quite low. Of course, many wives are quite content with their role as husband's helper, happy to work wherever needed. But when these women feel that they can have no outlet for talents and involvement in mission—yet have all the disadvantages of climate, isolation from family and friends, prevalence of disease and low-grade educational facilities for their children—it is small wonder that they become frustrated. Having gotten a negative view of mission, they are tempted to quit.

Women in the past were a stabilizing element in mission. Many seem nowadays to have become a hindrance, if we consider that most cases of failure in mission are credited to the wife's lack of adaptability. If, however, they had a defined role in mission life, they would certainly go back to the same spirit their predecessors showed. Lack of budget often hinders this process of role definition, but even so, there is much more women can do with their talents.

One missionary wife expressed her heart's desire: "I have a dream that one day soon, men and women will stand as equal partners, each using their God-given talents to advance the work of mission."⁶

Trends for the future

Women the world over are asking what it means to be a servant of Christ in rapidly changing social contexts. After

searching for personal freedom and satisfaction in the 1960s and 1970s, many women now realize that the goals they attained have exacted too high a price. Tired of being treated as sex objects and work machines, exhausted by their self-imposed superwomen myth, many are looking for fulfillment in higher social and religious commitment. Many women who have been caught between old myths and new images are discovering their purpose in life. This may lead to a new interest in missions.

European women, for example, are getting involved in such issues as quest for peace and curbing the acceleration of the nuclear arms race. North American women are concerned about issues of social justice—breaking down barriers of race and class. Latin Americans are yearning for solutions against oppression by militarism. Asians are preoccupied by the imbalance that exists between the extremely poor and the few who have wealth. African women are debating problems related to polygamy, the ethics of celibacy, family autonomy, etc. Women missionaries are becoming involved with inculturation—an encounter between the Word of God and cultural/historical realities.

One male Adventist leader from overseas affirmed in a letter: "We still have a long way to go concerning the role and status of women in mission. It is difficult to change attitudes and time-honored practices. Women are still far from winning recognition as equal partners in mission, but changes are slowly but steadily taking place. There is hope for the future."

Through these gates of hope we shall step into the future with confidence, knowing that together men and women, toiling side by side with God's help, will take the gospel into all the world. Then the work will be finished and the Saviour will come. ■

¹ Joanna P. Moore, *In Christ's Stead* (Chicago: Women's Baptist Home Mission Society, 1902), p. 140.

² Elisabeth Elliot, *The Place of Women in World Mission* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1974), pp. 124, 125.

³ Katherine Moore, *She for God: Aspects of Women and Christianity* (London: Allison and Busby, 1978), p. 167.

⁴ Frederick B. Hoyt, *The Historian* (1992), Vol. XLIV, p. 314.

⁵ Catherine Allen, *The New Lottie Moon Story* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1980), p. 142.

⁶ May Porter (letter, June 1988).

Religious freedom in Russia: open or shut?

Gary M. Ross

An analysis of the Russian Orthodox Church's current attempt to define religious freedom through Parliament.



Gary M. Ross, Ph.D., is the associate director of public affairs and religious liberty of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

On July 14, 1993, the conservative-dominated Supreme Soviet (Russian parliament) amended the country's progressive 1990 Law on Freedom of Religion. The resulting discriminatory clauses sparked outrage among foreign churches and vigorous protests from foreign governments. President Boris Yeltsin and the law's author, Father Vyacheslav Polosin, quickly moved to moderate the crisis.

Extremely fluid, the situation could change at any moment. But even as it clarifies, we summarize below what are understood in the West to be the basic facts—and a few of the uncertainties.

Nature of the problem

Article 14 of the amended law (see box p. 14) curtails activity in Russia by foreign religious leaders or organizations unless they are accredited by the appropriate authority in Russia or linked to an indigenous group. Currently held accreditation is apparently invalid.

Rarely mentioned but perhaps more problematic, Article 17 of the amended law stipulates situations in which religious organizations may be terminated by the Ministry of Justice. These include the organization's own decision to close and, more ominously, judicial findings

of a disparity between the group's activities and Russian law.

Advocates of the amendments

Although individuals from various faiths went along with the law, and although resurgent nationalism provided an abstract accompaniment, the Russian Orthodox Church operated through parliamentary allies to accomplish the deed. From the outset, the Orthodox patriarch Alexei II pressured the deputies "to bring order to the activity of foreign religious organizations in Russia." Acknowledging the right to choose one's religion, the patriarch nevertheless insisted that "this choice must not be imposed on us from the outside." The Reverend Polosin, mentioned above as the bill's author, is an Orthodox priest who chairs Parliament's committee on freedom of conscience. But Orthodox advocacy is not unanimous. Within Russia the chief critic of the law, Gleb Yakunin (see photo), is a dissident Orthodox priest who leads the Radical Democrat faction in Parliament.

Target of the law

Obviously, the Orthodox Church feels anxious about the activities of Western religious groups, often generically referred to as "cults," and their many alleged offenses against the citizens of Russia. Opinions vary, however, as to which groups threaten Orthodoxy the

most. Location on the religious spectrum (fringe versus mainstream, for instance) may matter less than the resourcefulness of particular fellowships in bribing converts through various gifts and in funding the rebuilding of churches and ministries. Perhaps concerned with such largesse, Orthodox leaders have convinced Parliament not to relish what normally it might welcome: the infusion of millions of dollars into the country.

Probable motives of Orthodoxy

Stated negatively, the church's mode seems defensive and protective—fear over the loss of members and potential converts to attractive, even glamorous, alternatives. But positive visions operate also. For Orthodoxy, not less than, say, for the American Baptists, a window of opportunity exists that could close at any moment: the ideological vacuum created by Communism's demise. The desire to be Russia's favored, established religion lurks, for example, in Orthodoxy's suspicion of ministry groups that would train and equip Russian educators to teach moral and religious values in the public school classrooms.

Western insensitivity

As it responds to the above crisis, the West must admit that something more than theological appeal and the proffering of material things occasionally characterizes foreign missionaries in Russia. Perhaps unconscious for the most part, it is a style of arrogance, mindless zeal, and cultural insensitivity that ignores the thousand-year history of Orthodoxy in Russia and portrays the message of Christianity as a new arrival on Russian soil.

Echoing Orthodox concerns, Baptist World Alliance leader Denton Lotz referred to the "lone ranger" evangelism of Western mission groups. Leonid Kishkovsky, an American Orthodox leader who deplors the Parliament's action against missionaries, nevertheless speaks publicly about "high profile, massive, uncontrolled American evangelism" that combines "genuine motives and woeful ignorance."

Elements of the critique

Having granted this self-made aspect of the crisis, the West can authentically reproach Parliament for its action. One argument sees that action delimiting the

spiritual options and thus affronting the pluralism that religious liberty presupposes. The human rights critic bemoans Parliament's repudiation of key international instruments, such as the accords of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, regarding the exchange of ideas across national borders. Western democrats applauding the blossoming of freedom in Russia advance a third criticism by asking whether Russia's commitment to democracy is really genuine enough to justify Western support.

Responses from outside Russia

Who voiced the foregoing case against Parliament's actions as the furor grew intense and worldwide in late July and early August 1993? Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany, more than 100 representatives of other foreign governments, and numerous members of the

U.S. Congress sent letters of protest. Among various church denominations with mission boards that objected loudly, the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and its affiliated International Religious Liberty Association faxed statements of concern to officials in Russia and simultaneously convened a coalition of more than two dozen organizations to monitor developments, coordinate responses, and identify strategies for mitigating the law if implemented. (The Russian chapter of the latter association may have been first to alert the West about the impending legislation.)

President Yeltsin's dilemma

As they rebuked Parliament, Westerners also pleaded with Yeltsin not to sign the law, thinking (perhaps wrongly) that inaction or a veto on his part would preclude its enactment. But Yeltsin's

Article 14 (original text)

Persons who are not citizens of the Russian Federation and foreign religious organizations

Persons who are not citizens of the Russian Federation have the right, during their presence on its territory, to fulfill their religious needs with religious organizations functioning in the Russian Federation or with the representative bodies of foreign religious organizations.

Under the present law, the term "foreign religious organizations" shall be applied to organizations that are officially recognized as religions by foreign governments.

Russian religious organizations may make provision to constitute themselves as representative bodies (act as representatives) of foreign religious organizations and may also act in the capacity of religious agents for a person who is not a citizen of the Russian Federation.

Representatives of foreign religious organizations, individual religious figures who are not citizens of the Russian Federation, and also officials and agents of Russian religious organizations, shall have the right to conduct their activities after receiving government accreditation.

Foreign religious organizations and their representative organizations and individual representatives, as well as persons who are not citizens of the Russian Federation, shall not have the right [without first receiving government accreditation] to carry on missionary, publishing, and advertising/propagandistic work.

Decisions concerning government accreditation of representative bodies, individual representatives, and persons indicated in the preceding paragraphs of this article, shall be made by the organs of the government in a manner established by the Council of Ministers and Government of the Russian Federation, in the interests of the state and of social harmony.

predicament—despite having announced his intention not to stand for reelection, and despite having won a recent referendum—was large. On the one hand, battling with Parliament for reforms widely considered urgent, he needed the support of a church whose adherents number more than 50 million and whose leaders engineered the bill. On the other hand, faithfulness to his own apparently genuine democratic values plus the need to placate the West to safeguard its 3 billion aid commitment spelled caution *so long as* such caution did not look like a sellout to American pressure. (Hence the concurrent dilemma of the critics themselves: dissuade Yeltsin from signing the amendments without being too conspicuous about it.)

Fallout elsewhere

What dramatized the president's dilemma was not only the larger Russian context in which it unfolded, namely the fate of the country's democratic experiment, but the still larger context of an eastern Europe no longer beholden, yet still attentive, to Russia. In large parts of that region, ascendant Orthodoxy faces problems similar to Russia's. Bulgaria, for example, currently seeks ways to counter and restrict the "new sects" entering the country. Of course, there as elsewhere Orthodoxy suffers from division, if not schism, from within, and from persistent rumors that it once collaborated with the Communists.

Developments at presstime

As *Ministry* goes to press, it has become apparent that President Yeltsin neither signed nor vetoed the amendments but rather referred them back to the Parliament for further consideration. The BBC reports that despite its abbreviated August sessions, the Parliament has completed this reconsideration and offered Yeltsin a revised bill (see box, p. 14).

Worst-scenario prospects

To critics driven by arguments of the kind noted above, "watered-down" terminology or compromise language will hardly suffice. Suppose, as one probably should, that some manner of restraint on foreign missionaries materializes. *What to do?* Pressing for time-consuming debate over the law's implementing regulations and time-consuming court challenges might permit the larger political

situation to clarify, especially Yeltsin's desire to dissolve Parliament and call for new elections and his intention to promulgate a new constitution—either of which would probably go far to mitigate the crisis, but both of which apparently exceed Yeltsin's prerogative under the

current constitution. Something else could throw light on the matter if not resolve it: the rumored intention of the Russian Orthodox hierarchy to organize sometime in the near future an international conference on religious pluralism. ■

Article 14 (revised text)

Foreigners can exercise their religious rights (guaranteed by the Russian Constitution) personally or jointly with others, privately or publicly, in accordance with Russian law. They can do this through Russian religious unions and organizations, Russian offices of foreign religious organizations or independently, by forming, where they work or live, special societies called foreign religious societies.

A foreign religious society can be founded by foreign workers who live in Russia for more than six weeks. To obtain permission to form such a society, the founders (numbering 10 or more) present to the local organ of justice:

- an *application*;
- copies of the *documents* confirming their right to be in Russia; and
- a *questionnaire* describing the nature of the society's activities.

The questionnaire must include:

- (1) the name of the foreign religious organization, its creed, and its place of worship and other activities,
- (2) the type of activities (including public ones) and description of its worship features,
- (3) the inner structure of the society and its government, and
- (4) the sources from which its money and materials will come.

The Ministry of Justice of Russia, having consulted with the Police Ministry and local authorities, within three months after submission of these documents decides whether to permit the organization to be formed. If permission is given, the organ of justice issues the proper certificate. The Ministry of Justice of Russia, police, or local authorities have the right to check whether the activities of a foreign religious society are in accordance with their founding documents and within the law.

The Ministry of Justice shall deny such permission (or revoke it if previously given) if the activities or doctrines of a society:

- (1) are against Russian laws or public morals;
- (2) ignite religious, national, or social friction or offend the religious feelings of Russian citizens;
- (3) have a religious/missionary [proselytizing] nature, i.e. show signs of coercing or in fact bribing the Russian citizens in their choosing of beliefs and deciding which religious organization or society to join, as well as other signs of limiting the personal freedom of Russian citizens.

The Ministry of Justice may also close a foreign religious society if its founders lose their right to remain in Russia.



Super evangelism in Moscow

J. David Newman and Sharon Cress

In reflecting on the puzzling contradictions of this country [Russia], the outstanding Nikolai Berdyaev wrote: 'It is almost impossible to budge Russia, she has become so heavy, so inert, so lazy . . . and so humbly reconciled to her life. All the layers of our society neither appreciate nor desire progress.'"¹

While this assessment may be true of Russian society as a whole, it is not true of evangelism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I arrived on my first visit to Russia in time for the first large baptism of Mark Finley's Moscow campaign. I had heard so much about the former Soviet Union; I wondered what I would find.

I was not prepared for a city that gave the impression of struggling just to exist. Potholes scarred every street; buses rattled and wheezed; dilapidated cars seemed the norm; buildings wore a uniform gray; manicured lawns

were nowhere in sight; every subway station had its quota of people trying to sell everything from magazines to cats and dogs.

The hotel I stayed in lacked hot water, as that part of the city was taking its turn conserving power. People's energies were consumed in providing the basic necessities of life, with little left for luxuries. Moscow certainly seemed to be proving the truth of Berdyaev's words: "all the layers of our society neither appreciate nor desire progress."

Thank God, that could not be said

that religion had died and declared atheism the state religion, but now people thirst for spiritual things.

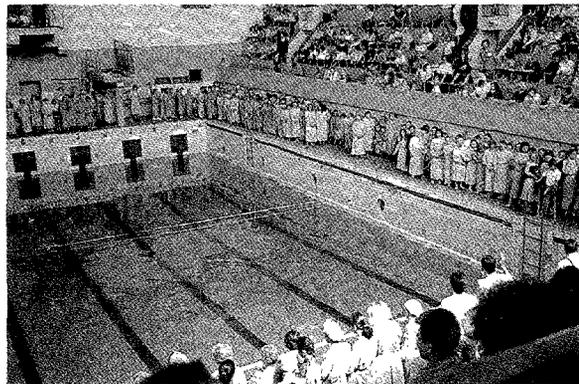
Mark Finley, *It Is Written* telecast director, following a successful campaign in the Kremlin in early 1992, dreamed of an even bigger outreach to the Muscovites. He rented the Moscow Olympic Stadium for a five-week series in June and July of this year.

This was one of more than 250 evangelistic series in Russia that will be conducted during 1993. When the Berlin Wall came down almost three years ago, there were 35,000 Adventist Church members in the former Soviet Union. Now there are approximately 85,000.

While the Olympic Stadium seats 40,000 people, the campaign leaders planned to use only half of the hall. That still left 20,000 seats to be filled. Some 16,000 people attended the afternoon and evening sessions. Five weeks later on July 31, at the final meeting, about 10,000 were still attending.

That so many people would attend an afternoon meeting amazed me. The two-wage-earner family

so common in the Western world has not yet spread to Russia. The work needed to organize a meeting this large also dazzled me. More than 165 volunteers traveled from North America to augment the 160 pastors who came from all over the



Baptism in the Olympic swimming pool

J. David Newman, D.Min., the editor of *Ministry*, reports on the Moscow evangelism and pastors' meetings. Sharon Cress, the coordinator of *Shepherdess International* for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, reports on the pastors' wives meetings.

of religion and the Seventh-day Adventist Church in particular. Our church has succeeded in reaching large numbers of people as enthusiasm for proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ grows. Under Communism, the government pretended



Mark Finley with Euro-Asia pastors

former Soviet Union.

There were volunteers like Sarah Luke from the Marietta Seventh-day Adventist Church in Georgia who organized 12-step groups. And Scott Thurman, who brought 160 men's suits donated by members of the Marietta church for the Euro-Asia² pastors.

James Cress, Ministerial Association secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, coordinated a field school of evangelism for the Euro-Asia pastors. Dan Bentzinger, of the Adventist Evangelism Association connected with the Seventh-day Adventist Media Center, co-taught with James Cress in the mornings and led field experiences in the afternoons and evenings.

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of these meetings concerned the tripling of Adventist churches in Moscow from 4 to 12. Large theaters were rented for each of these new churches. I attended a new church of more than 700 people, and there are seven more like it. Each of the new churches had a pastor assigned to them. I imagined how overwhelmed I would be to suddenly inherit a newly-formed church of 700 with no elders, deacons, or other staff.

Mark Finley and his team scheduled the first baptism for the next-to-last Sabbath of the meetings. They rented 50 buses to carry the baptismal candidates from the various churches to the Olympic swimming pool where the baptism would take place. The day before the baptism the leadership team learned that the contract for these buses, which had been signed and paid for, had been can-

celed. For a moment there was panic. But the same social situation that allowed sealed contracts to be broken also contained the seeds of the solution.

On the appointed day the Russian pastors swarmed over the city flagging down buses and offering the drivers money if they would take the baptismal candidates to the pool. By afternoon we had more

buses than we needed, and the people all arrived on time.

What a thrill it was to watch 37



Anatoli Kulko

pastors, standing in the pool with their candidates, right hands raised over each one. Then Mark gave the prayer of blessing, and the pastors immersed the candidates and brought them back up to enthusiastic cheers and clapping from friends and visitors thronging the sides

of the pool. It took several hours to baptize that group of almost 900. By the time the meetings ended, almost 1,600 had been baptized, and more than 4,000 are being followed up. While a large majority of those attending the meetings were older women (with a scarcity of men and young people), those baptized reflected a better balance of sex and age groups.

People often complain that evangelists show more interest in numbers than quality. Not these. No candidate was baptized until the pastor who had been assigned to them had studied with them personally and gone over the 14 questions on the baptismal certificate. Each person clearly understood that baptism signified their entrance into the kingdom of God and membership in the Adventist Church.

Because of decades of Communist rule the Adventist Church never developed more than an embryonic organization in the countries served by the Euro-Asia Division. This makes adequate care for all the new converts a challenge. But parallel to the growth in membership is growth in church organization.

Interview with Euro-Asia pastors

To gain insight into what is happening in this and other areas, James Cress and I interviewed 11 of the Euro-Asia pastors: five from Russia, four from the Ukraine, and two from Moldavia. We asked them to share freely concerning



Baptism in the Moscow River

their fears, hopes, and dreams. We present the following as a nearly verbatim compilation of their answers. It may sometimes read like a list, sometimes like a story, depending on how many contributed to a particular point.

Ministry:

What do you enjoy most about pastoring?

Pastors:

Learning truth, serving people. Helping to change people. Sharing eternal perspectives, especially those about Jesus.

Ministry:

What are the greatest challenges for a pastor in Russia and the surrounding countries?

Pastors:

The weak church organization from the local church to the division. Maintaining a strong devotional life. Winning more youth. Providing more good literature. We want at least 50 percent of church members devoted to missionary work.

It is easier to work in a new church.

People are more open and enthusiastic; they still exhibit their first love. How to help them keep that first love. Small groups in the church and getting the whole church organized into Bible classes.

We need church buildings and better finances. The older the church, the more the Laodicean condition. Believe it or not, the same apathy that infects other parts of the world also contaminates the Euro-Asia Division. New members burn with a hot flame. Churches are different as pastors are different.

Keeping priorities straight. What are the important things? The older member comes to the newer member and sees the wedding ring on her finger and says to her that no Adventist can wear it. So she takes it off. Then her husband sees the absent wedding ring and wants to know what is happening. She tells him.

"I am a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and must take it off." But even the pastors teach differently in some of these areas.



Victor Gomer, Valadimir Kotov, Victor Kostev



Victor Vitko and Pavel Liberanski

We need good technical skills, slides, books, equipment, and a budget for local crusades.

Another challenging area is the poverty of the people. People spend large amounts of time trying to find food. However, our task is to show them how to look first toward heaven. The lack of adequate housing in Moscow is a real problem.

I worked in Moscow for 14 months and lived four hours away by train. Sometimes I spent the night in the flat of a church member. (Among the 12 pastors in Moscow, nine have experienced similar problems; however, a flat has now been provided for each pastor.) I cannot afford to relocate my family to Moscow. Prices allow me to feed my family for two weeks out of each month in Moscow. When I prepare my sermon I think of how to feed the family. This situation forces the pastor to do something else to earn extra money.

They tell us to pastor a church on \$40 a month (that is in United States dollars), but our leaders do not tell us how to live on this amount. The situation with family and housing is the last blow. Our family lives in a run-down and cramped apartment. I cannot relax even at home. Sometimes we have no heat, no food, and no water.

When I began pastoring, I heard about the Ministerial Association from Floyd Bresee, the secretary of the association. I was enthusiastic. I expected the support of this association. But nothing has happened.

It seems to us that no one seems interested in the needs of the pastor; even the conference and union do not place satisfying the needs of pastors very high on their list of priorities. For example, when we are told to move to another city we must find our own apart-





Nikolai Smuggins

ment, but no money is given to help us find an appropriate one. I visited one town for three months and could not find an apartment and had no money to buy one. Everyone must live in a city dictated by the state. It is very difficult to move locations. Once I was sent to live in a church hall that was half built, with no heat or water.

Ministry:

A majority of the people attending the Moscow meetings were older women, with a minority of men and young people. What plans do you have for reaching young people especially?

Pastors:

It is important to plan meetings for the right time of year. In June and July the students are not in school, and many have left for vacation or are working.

The advertising needs to be designed to attract young people. Our advertising was not sophisticated enough. If we were to run English language schools and promise to teach people how to read and speak English, we would reach many young people.

We need a different kind of music to reach the young people. It must not be so conservative. Young people want lively music. We need to pay more attention to the kinds of topics that would attract

young people. We need better designed handbills. And when we do advertise we must flood the schools and universities with advertising and make personal contacts with the students.

This series seemed to be designed for middle-aged and older

people, with the youth not a major part of the program. We need to organize Bible classes in the schools. We need translation for the deaf. If we want to reach the youth, personal contact is more important than the mass meeting.

We need a lot of time for visitation, especially in the first few weeks of the meetings. Personal work is more important and more effective than mass advertising. If the handbills are distributed too early, people forget them.

Ministry:

What are some of the needs that readers of Ministry can help with?

Pastors:

We would welcome another congregation that could write to us, exchange ideas, and perhaps provide some financial assistance. People could provide clothing.

Ministry:

Westerners have come from America and other countries. What are the benefits and the problems?

Pastors:

The large amount of money that spent here would produce five times as many results if given to local pastors to hold their own meetings. For \$1 a Euro-Asia pastor will win the same amount of people that the Westerner spends \$5 to win. While Mark Finley has done an

outstanding job, there is no way for him to know the needs of the Russian people as well as an indigenous pastor. Russian people react painfully to changes in the program. It hurts if American evangelists advertise one subject with a fancy title but then do not cover that subject. For example, one evangelist from America advertised a particular topic and got an audience of 1,000 unbelievers. The audience perceived that he did not adequately address the topic, and so the next night only 300



Vladimir Gnatiyik

people came.

It's very important to conduct strategic planning and counsel more with Russian pastors as to where are the best towns and what are best strategies to use. Many evangelistic series create more problems than benefits. We are delighted with the baptisms from the meetings here in Moscow. But with the same amount of money spent in the suburbs and smaller towns surrounding Moscow we could have baptized five times as many people as we have baptized here.

We should have started with the positives rather

than the problems. I have worked with both Finnish and American evangelists. The Finnish evangelists are more liberal than the American evangelists in deciding whom to accept for baptism. The Americans are more conservative, which I prefer. On the other hand, the Finnish evangelist trusts the local pastor more than the American evangelist does.

I have held many crusades in the Ukraine and in Russia. I find that when an American and a Russian preach the same truth, the people are more likely to accept the truth from the American than



Vladimir Chaplinsky, David Newman



Paul Gonchar, Sergey Kalinovsky

from the Russian. People, in general, feel that Americans are more trustworthy, partly because they have a better lifestyle and achieved greater material success.

There is also the curiosity factor. People think that Americans come from another planet. We have been so isolated that people want to see how people from other parts of the world think and live.

Ministry:

Is there a problem with nominalism among converts?

Pastors:

We believe that the preparation for baptism in this series was the best that we have ever seen. We have never seen an American evangelist work on such a fine individualistic basis as Mark Finley.

A German evangelist conducted a series in a certain church. He gave the series in two parts: a one-month preliminary series, with a two-month gap, then a three-month series. At that time there

were no Adventists in that town. He baptized 90-100 people, and they are all in the church to this day.

Despite the problems, we are greatly encouraged knowing that all is in the hands of our God, who is always able.

Pastors' wives rejoice

Fellowship, intercessory prayer, and intensive training marked five historic days of meetings for pastoral wives in Moscow. Most of the 70-plus women who attended participated in a first-ever experience of sharing their own lives and learning skills that would enhance their marriage, family, and church life.

In addition to Ernestine Finley, who organized the daily meetings in conjunction with the Moscow evangelistic series and gave seminars on priorities and responsibilities, the weeklong activities featured Nancy Wilson, wife of the Euro-Asia Division president, Ted Wilson, who brought greetings and extended encouragement to the women in Russian. The women applauded happily to hear their division leader's wife speak

in their own language. Nancy also participated in the question/answer sessions, which addressed concerns presented by the pastoral wives themselves.

Sharon Cress, coordinator of Shepherdess International, made presentations on team ministry, ministry to and for children, and the services of the Shepherdess organization. Marie Spangler, founder of Shepherdess International, focused on the pastoral family, particularly the needs of the children. In previous years Marie had met with smaller groups of women throughout the former Soviet Union; because of religious restrictions, these meetings had been called "recipe exchanges." It was especially appropriate that the founder of Shepherdess International could participate in this first large gathering of pastoral wives in Russia.



Marie Spangler with Pastor and Mrs. Gomez

prayer partner for ongoing fellowship after the meetings ended.

Each pastoral wife who attended received a special gift packet prepared by Shepherdess International plus a complete set of spiritually encouraging books provided by Ruthie Jacobsen and the women of the Oregon Conference. Since most of the attendees did not have their own Bible, each woman also received a personal-sized Russian Bible compliments of Bob Spangler and Don Gray of the crusade management team.

One evening during the crusade, speaker Mark Finley asked

the pastoral couples of all 12 Moscow churches (four existing and eight newly planted congregations) to come on the platform, and he introduced them to his audience. Nancy Wilson, Ernestine



Pastors' families fellowshiping together

Finley, Marge Gray, Lillian Guild, Marie Spangler, and Sharon Cress presented beautiful flowers to each of the Moscow pastoral wives as part of this special introduction.

Another feature of the morning meetings was the opportunity for pastoral wives to submit questions for discussion. Dr. Harvey Elder, professor of medicine at Loma Linda University, helped answer the personal-ethical questions. Educational credit for each participant came from the Ministerial Association's Center for Continuing Education.

All participants remained enthusiastic despite hot and cramped conditions (more than 70 crowded in a room designed for 50).

Pastoral wives everywhere are encouraged to remember the challenges faced by their sisters in Russia and to pray for the continuing outpouring of the Holy Spirit on their families. ■



Sharon Cress with her translator, Tanya Kalugeena

¹ Gennady S. Musaelyan, *Moscow Magazine*, June/July 1993, p. 3.

² Since pastors participated from other countries besides Russia I will use the designation Euro-Asia to describe them even though the meetings were held in Russia itself.

A Western message in Eastern Europe

Borge Schantz

**Concerns and
counsel from personal
observations and
interviews in a dozen
former Communist
countries.**



Borge Schantz, Ph.D., is director of the Seventh-day Adventist Global Centre for Islamic Studies in Binfield, Berkshire, England.

In the beautiful congress hall of an Eastern European capital, tensions were mounting. Participants had gathered there for the first symposium on religious liberty and freedom of conscience. The bishop of an ancient Eastern rite church had just delivered a stirring speech describing how believers had suffered persecution from both Muslims and Marxists. He was in full agreement that freedom of conscience was the basis for social peace, as the logo for the gathering succinctly stated.

To the surprise of the audience, however, he remained adamant that religious liberty in his part of the world should not mean open doors for every kind of Western sect and cult to operate. Some groups, the bishop claimed, were employing materialism and high-powered communication to pervert the gospel and “confuse” people in gaining members.

Other participants who represented various religious bodies objected vehemently to the apparent inconsistencies in the bishop’s speech. Had he learned nothing from the past? Did he want to turn back to the era when his church had a monopoly on Christianity and abused her power over people? No doubt an element of paranoia lay behind his controversial address. However, the bishop’s observations went deeper than his thinly veiled fear of losing his grip on the people, and he deserves to be taken seriously. Newly gained freedom also opened formerly suppressed nations to abuse by Western people, including religious representatives.

Conversion and confusion

When the East opened up, concerned people in the West appropriately felt a burden for the freed masses once isolated and denied the good things of life. Religious enthusiasts arrived with a mixed bag of spiritual teaching and social service to people starving for both. In the forefront, keen on having their share of the spoils, were evangelicals, charismatics, even Eastern cultic groups. Some outreach methods included free gifts (in one case cash dollars), modern communication vehicles such as films and videos, attractive female gospel singers, even indirect suggestions of visas and assistance to travel to the West. Such novel approaches overwhelmed the audiences—sometimes numbering in the thousands—unaccustomed to such enticing spiritual entertainment. However, the result was not just conversion. It was also confusion. How could the people distinguish among the many voices calling them in different directions? No doubt Christianity’s great embarrassment—doctrinal divisions and conflicting proclamations—grew as competing groups focused on controversial issues and pet theological ideas.

As one person put it: “During the Marxist rule the dictators shouted, ‘There is no God!’ Today confused and bewildered people ask, ‘Who is God?’”¹ Among the babel of voices, some may be heard proclaiming the three angels’ messages. Seventh-day Adventists have been wise to the advantages of using Western evangelists in developing the providential situation. In some cases, fortunately, they involved experienced indigenous ministers eager to learn new methods and skilled in counseling on local issues. In a few cases the expatriate

evangelists became lonely pioneers. In all cases there were opportunities to harvest sheaves where barren Western fields yielded only single ears. This was stuff that evangelists dream of. And to think it was happening in areas that for decades were declared inaccessible for gospel proclamation!

Back to our bishop's concern. He pointed out that Orthodox churches, pre-dating not only Communism but also the Protestant Reformation, still have a message steeped in and geared to local culture. He therefore insisted that the gospel should be preached in the cultural context of the people involved, convinced that the "dollar-based" evangelistic methods would draw people to foreign messages for the wrong reasons.

The missiologists among us admit that the Orthodox priest exposed a significant flaw in Western evangelistic methods applied in the East. Without question the message in all its saving fullness must be preached in areas that until recently were Communist-ruled and before that were dominated by totalitarian churches and Islamic sects. However, the evangelical witnesses should endeavor to learn about local culture and customs before engaging in the delicate task of communicating the everlasting gospel across cultural frontiers. Otherwise, well-meaning endeavors could be futile and might even backfire.

Culturally sensitive elements

Perhaps the following pointers might be helpful in resolving the problems mentioned.

1. *The message.* There are biblical absolutes for all cultures and ages. These must be proclaimed powerfully. However, application of the absolutes should and indeed must vary from one culture to another. We have to admit that a high proportion of one's Christianity is dictated by local culture. Often pioneers have difficulty distinguishing between what is their own culture (European, American), and therefore can safely be left behind, and what is biblical and must be proclaimed. The Adventist Christian lifestyle, involving such things as dress, food, and even styles of Sabbathkeeping, is often a problem area. If we make converts who equate Western

Christendom with biblical Christianity—in other words, to be an American is to be a Christian—we have not fulfilled our mission. Lasting results in evangelism are accomplished only where the message is adapted to local culture, and even grows out of it. Marxism was a Western (German) import to the East. Perhaps one reason for its final fall was the lack of its ability to adapt and fit the Eastern context. Is there a significant lesson here for church planners?²

2. *The audience.* Years of isolation and public condemnation of all things Western served only to whet the Eastern European appetite for everything from the First World. People there contrast life in Western societies with the dismal realities of their daily lives. This is an unfair comparison. Western ideals must be compared with Eastern ideals. Like

Application of the absolutes should and indeed must vary from one culture to another.

with like. Western customs do not always emerge favorably when compared with Eastern customs.

Without doubt our target people have by definition received freedom. They can now choose for themselves governments, leaders, jobs, and places to live. They can change their religions or decide to be atheists. However, we must remember that these people, generally, are unused to making far-reaching decisions. Neither are they always able to distinguish between the bogus and the genuine in Western propaganda methods. This could especially be true for Russians who have mystical tendencies. For this reason a choice of whether to accept Christianity or Hare Krishna is rarely a decision between truth and error. It could well be determined by a trivial factor such as who rented a particular auditorium first.

Anything foreign there is attractive, especially for the less educated. Evangelists must also realize that although people have been exposed to Commu-

nist propaganda and isolated with few opportunities, many are still sophisticated and intellectually alert. During the writer's lectures in the former Soviet Union, he had markedly more sophisticated questions than after similar lectures in the West.

3. *History.* The areas ripe for evangelism today are those where varying degrees of Marxism in the past 45 to 70 years dominated the population. Now open to new ideas, in what church growth people call transition, they are winnable. But evangelists must work thoughtfully. In public presentation and private conversation they may be tempted to ridicule and cast contempt on Communism, gloating in its fall. Such expressions usually elicit some compulsive audience approval, which spurs the speakers to continue in the same vein. But deep

inside, the sensibilities of the prospective new converts may be wounded. After all, they submitted to and perhaps even approved of the superiority of some aspects of Marxism for years. To this must be added that the rather arrogant denigration of Marxism may come across as an attempt to make local culture and customs seem inferior, leading to resentment of the Christian witness. It must be remembered that most of the

newly opened countries have a pre-Marxist Christian culture that goes back centuries. There is even an evangelical mission history with Bible colporteurs and Bible schools going back well before Communism.³ Positive aspects of Communist society should not be ignored. For instance, they introduced a system of education where all children had free access to schools, they provided social security for the people, they broke the power of the monopolistic state churches, and to some extent they secularized at least 100 million Muslims enough to become open to Christianity.

Those involved in evangelism must remember that people are invariably proud of their own culture and past history and thus react negatively to criticism and ridicule from foreigners.

4. *The loud cry of Western money.* The well-known British missiologist Roland Allen suggested that money is an important complement to preaching. The importance does not lie in how the church finances are organized but rather in "how

these arrangements . . . affect the mind of the people and so promote, or hinder, the spread of the gospel."⁴

The Communist system collapsed largely because of economic conditions. It failed to deliver the goods. The West became synonymous with wealth and luxury and all that wealth embraces—cars, TVs, videos, refrigerators, etc. In many cases the first “capitalists” with whom Eastern European people had contact were Western evangelists. No doubt many of the people had a genuine interest in listening to the gospel. However, the novelty of associating with friendly persons who as capitalists represented money also had great attraction. Evangelism often means big money, and it is not always under the control of the church. In some cases it is even spent without accountability. Sponsors who see few results in the West are prepared to invest heavily in the East.

No doubt the messages preached by Adventist evangelists are biblically sound and true. But what about the para-messages? The evangelists and their associates are generally well dressed, live in fairly expensive hotels, enjoy special food, and use costly communication equipment. Sometimes in ill-advised generosity they pay local employees well above the average salary. People may be enticed to meetings by gifts.

Do the hearers get the impression that Western Christians have great wealth? That the Communists were right in equating mission with capitalism? That church workers are overpaid? Do Western Christians live by the moral code they so eloquently proclaim?

In planning for a stable future church, what basis do we lay for stewardship when old and new members get the impression (however incorrect) from evangelistic teams that there is plenty of money around? No doubt help from well-meaning outsiders is a great asset in the pioneer stages. However, outside ownership and complete financial dependence threaten to cripple the work for the future. The church will never be established in a meaningful way unless the financial sacrifices of local members are a part of all activities, including evangelism expenses, the building of churches, and the establishment of institutions.

It is tempting but shortsighted to be

overgenerous with Western money that goes so far in countries where the monthly salary is often only a few dollars. Stewardship foundations laid in the first few weeks will determine future economic strategies for good or ill. Tithe and offerings are significant aspects of Adventist belief and practice. The impression that the church has great wealth, coupled with unwise use of money, will discourage poor new converts from paying a faithful tithe and giving generous offerings.

5. *Follow-up.* The next step after baptism, incorporating members into church life, presents a problem in many areas. There are not enough trained pastors to care for newly baptized members. Without doubt, the Communist governments, years ago, realized the importance of pastoral training. They calculated that by closing theological seminaries they could cripple the future of Christianity.⁵ The result of insufficient pastoral care is a mass of apostasies immediately after the visiting evangelists leave. In one city in Russia during 1991, more than 200 persons were baptized, but after six months, fewer than

Some interpret the present openness as only a temporary interlude in the great controversy between Christ and Satan.

100 were attending church. Another report shows that after a few months, only 10 remained regular church members after a baptism of 110. One pastor even claims that when he was entrusted with the important follow-up work after a short campaign, the evangelist did not even have a list of names and addresses of all who were baptized, making the discipling process so much more difficult—even hopeless.

Perhaps part of the problem stems from the numbers game we often get involved in. Efficiency and success are thought to be in proportion to numbers baptized. For this reason evangelists could be tempted to make short-range plans aiming at a triumphant baptismal target, but little beyond that ceremony.

This sometimes brings about a competition not only among different denominations but also among evangelists. This is unchristian and unhealthy, bringing a secularizing influence into the life and growth of the church. In the short term, such action may impress the Adventist public. In the long run, it will bring confusion, pain, disillusionment, and disappointment to the work in local areas.

Any church growth activity must incorporate at least a 10-year plan. There should be precampaign arrangements for effective follow-up. Pastors and lay members should be trained to be a significant part of the postharvest activities. Perhaps the method of reporting baptisms should be changed so that evangelists can report only those candidates who are faithful church members one year after baptism.

Tension can be beneficial

The unexpected opening up of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to a free proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ has become a time of unprecedented problems. The new situation

has created tensions. However, these tensions can be both creative and healthy. They can force Western churches to rethink not only their strategies and theology but also their reason for existence. This in itself is a useful exercise even when applied to evangelism in the home fields.

The new situation has also meant a time of unprecedented possibilities. Western churches feel they must strike while the

iron is hot. Some interpret the present openness as only a temporary interlude in the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Evangelicals believe therefore that they must preach to as many as possible as soon as possible. Such feverish urgency leads to ill-planned witnessing, shallow preaching, and careless followup.

Eastern churches are also alert. They have so far gained the most from *perestroika*, maximizing the fact that they are the ancient churches rooted in national culture, their teaching and liturgy representing an integral part of the country's heritage. They openly warn against evangelical intruders with foreign messages, categorizing them as superficial. They even push for legisla-

tion that will exclude certain kinds of Western sects.

All this can easily result in cultural and political discrimination against Protestants. Perhaps we should consider that the popular style of "evangelism" with cheap, artificial methods is one of the factors prompting the new states to close some doors that were opened.⁶ Some of the newly formed independent states already have laws in their constitutions heavily curtailing certain imported religious activities. In all honesty we must admit that we as Adventists have occasionally also been guilty of applying shallow church growth principles.

However, it is also encouraging for Adventists to observe, as one national leader told me, that indigenous pastors and laity are more and more to the forefront and are assuming an ever increasing responsibility both for soul winning and for the discipling of new members. It is also heartening to realize that on the administrative level, some divisions, unions, and conferences responsible for monitoring the new wave of evangelism have built-in control mechanisms, with more thorough prebaptism instructions, stricter examination of the candidates, and an age limit for baptizing young people. These controls are based on decades of soul-winning experience in Eastern Europe.

Perhaps all personnel involved in evangelizing Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union should be expected to take an orientation course similar to the well-established Mission Institutes. These minor institutes, perhaps of a week's duration, could be conducted at one of the training schools in one of the newly opened countries and have a curriculum including classes in local customs, history, and culture.

The work is God's

In closing, let us note that the work belongs to God. His Spirit converts, guides, teaches, watches, enables, unifies, and strengthens. The apostle Paul as an itinerant evangelist left us a good example for any pioneering work. He attempted to find the balance between control and trust in church planting. He was prepared to entrust the new converts to the Holy Spirit and leave them alone sometimes after only a few weeks of instruction, letting them deal with their own administrative, theological, and pastoral dilemmas. Yet the apostle Paul

kept in touch. They wrote him letters outlining their problems. His admonition, counsel, and teaching constitute a significant part of his Epistles in the New Testament and form a base for biblical theology.

May the God of evangelism likewise give us the wisdom to find a proper balance between teaching the Bible and trusting the Holy Spirit as we press into newly ripening fields. And may God raise up national leaders to care for His church in these areas. ■

¹ Brother Andrew, "There Is No God," *Open Doors News Brief*, October 1991, p. 2.

² Walter Sawatsky, "After the Glastnost Revolution: Soviet Evangelicals and Western Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, April 1992, p. 59.

³ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), vol. 2, pp. 698, 785, 786.

⁴ Roland Allen, *Missionary Methods: Saint Paul's or Ours?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962), p. 49.

⁵ Randy Frame, "Where Taxi Drivers Read Dostoevsky," *Christianity Today*, May 18, 1992, p. 46.

⁶ Sawatsky, p. 58.

Where are your former colleagues?



The General Conference Ministerial Association is looking for names and addresses of former Adventist pastors. We plan to send a gracious letter and establish a friendly contact with those who have left the pastorate for whatever reason—career change, discouragement or disenfranchisement.

**If you know a former Adventist pastor,
please send name and address to:**



James A. Cress, Secretary
Ministerial Association
General Conference
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904



The Russians are coming

James A. Cress

And I saw another angel . . . having the everlasting gospel to preach . . . to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

Although I have preached these words and prayed for the results, I'm not certain I ever dreamed how they could become a reality in Russia. Now I am writing this from Moscow, living in the midst of a miraculous movement of the Holy Spirit in this great city, where I am teaching a field school for pastors in conjunction with a great evangelistic thrust led by Mark Finley.

Reality is greater than what my hope could have imagined. My limited faith embraced fulfillment of this prophecy through a small remnant of believers in every country, but I would never have dreamed of this! Nearly five years ago when I first visited Russia, religion was still practiced quietly by the few who embraced faith. Public proclamation was virtually unknown. Adventists had only a limited presence despite a rich history of faithfulness during awesome trials.

Things change! God is still on the throne. Sweeping political and economic changes have brought a great opportunity to the former Soviet Union. This is a new day. The Russians are coming!

The Russians are coming to Christ. After 70 long years of Communism's oppression of religion, people are starved for a meaningful religious experience. People are responsive. Pastors and evangelists are popular. Spiritual hunger compels people to sit for hours as the Scriptures are taught. Ready acceptance follows the preaching of the message, and new believers embrace personal piety with strong fervor for sharing the gospel with

others. The coming of Jesus is a blessed hope.

The Russians are also coming to cults. Christianity is not alone in capturing the interest of the people. There is a proliferation of false prophets and false Christs, all of which are not imported. Bizarre groups originating locally vie for the attention of the people. When people are so hungry for spirituality, the truth about God's character and His plan of salvation is urgently needed to combat error.

The Russians are coming to commercialism. Materialism is a god in the changing Russian culture as much as anywhere else. Sudden availability of luxuries never before known tempts people to trust in their own entrepreneurial ventures for security. Pursuit of hard currency and the struggle for economic advantage pervade a society that needs Jesus to satisfy the longing that many hope to find in money.

The Russians are coming to evangelistic direction. When religious freedom first came to the former Soviet Union, the churches were dependent upon foreign evangelists to assist them in proclaiming the gospel. Consequently, independent ministries as well as denominational entities have flooded the various republics with personnel, programs and products. While much of this has been needed and appreciated, the Russian sense of hospitality demands that they care for visitors and devote their best to those who come to work with them. Often this taxes faithful members above their own abilities. Now is the time to come only at their request. A high level of competency and professionalism increasingly marks the work of Russian pastors and evangelists. Careful preevaluation of every proposed venture should determine why we come: to help meet their needs, not because the

open field seems more inviting than our own challenges.

The Russians are coming to cooperation. Believers no longer view themselves as recipients only. Russian Adventists see themselves as part of Global Mission. I was encouraged to see 100 pastors earnestly praying for large cities such as New York, Hong Kong, and London as they realized that more new believers had attended worship services the previous Sabbath in Moscow than the total of all worshippers in these cities. Appreciation for the benefits that have come from an influx of money and personnel is coupled with a missionary spirit. Our churches want to share in proclaiming the gospel. I was impressed with one congregation's emphasis on the mission offering when my evaluation would have been that they needed money. I was wrong. Certainly they have great needs. But they understood their need to give and to participate in Global Mission.

The Russians are not just now coming to commitment! They are already there! The cost of discipleship remains high. The faithfulness of God's people will be challenged again and again.

Recent constitutional actions could severely threaten freedom of religion. Satan is not asleep. He will exploit every opportunity. But pastors and members are committed! I've seen them down on their knees. I've seen individuals who have been scurrilously attacked by those who know little of reality earnestly praying for God's will and His power for the church. We could learn from them. Even if I had been imprisoned for my preaching it would be unsafe for me to judge others who have suffered!

Here's the best news! When the saints come marching into the kingdom, the Russians are coming too! ■

Law for the Christian Counselor

George Ohlschlager and Peter Mosgofian, Word, Inc., Waco, Texas, 1992, US\$15.99, hardcover.

Christian Counseling and the Law

Steve Levicoff, Moody Press, Chicago, 1991, US\$12.99, hardcover. Reviewed by Robert W. Nixon, general counsel, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

These two books grapple with a word that increasingly strikes fear into the hearts of pastors and church-affiliated counselors: "lawsuit."

And there is some substance to that fear. Increasing numbers of lawsuits are being filed against clergy and church counselors. Practitioners must be informed about the legal implications of their work, and these two books set out to provide necessary background information.

The Ohlschlager-Mosgofian volume wins hands down in my opinion. It is more comprehensive (seven general parts with 24 chapters, 321 pages) and portrays more accurately the workings of the law and the legal system.

The Levicoff volume is less comprehensive (17 chapters, 193 pages). And it lost me as a reader through the use of a "straw man"—an American Bar Association seminar at which lawyers allegedly were being trained to sue churches—that was used in the book as a unifying thread. The illustration caused me to lose confidence because I attended that seminar. Many, if not most, of the speakers represented churches and their viewpoints on legal issues. So Levicoff left me thinking, *If I can't trust the illustrations, what about the substance?*

I recommend Ohlschlager-Mosgofian's *Law for the Christian Counselor* to every church counselor who is not acquainted with today's legal issues. And I recommend every reader take to heart the authors' warning: "Every reader with specific questions on personal and organizational liability is strongly encouraged to consult an attorney, your denomination, or state, provincial, and national professional association."

A Touch of Humor

Many Are Called but Most Leave Their Phone Off the Hook: Exploring the Serious, Curious, and Hilarious Sides

of Church, Doug Peterson, illustrations by Dan Pegoda, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 1992, 208 pages, US\$9.99, Cdn\$13.50, paper.

Doug Peterson explains the church for us in six chapters corresponding to the six days of Creation. With such chapters as "Let There Be Ministers" and "Let Church Programs Be Fruitful and Multiply," you will never view church life that same boring way again. Besides being humorous, the book challenges and informs.

Pastor Karl's Rookie Year: Twelve Unexpected Truths About Church Life, Karl Beck, illustrations by Kevin Pope, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 1993, 119 pages, US\$6.99.

Karl Beck thought he had all the answers when he left seminary, but was he in for a surprise! Here he presents truths that can be learned only through involvement. What are some of the 12 main truths? Churches will accept ordinary, fallible human beings behind the pulpit. People not only know they're sinful—they think they're uniquely awful. At your average church it's easier to introduce a fourth person into the Trinity than to introduce a new carpet pattern into the nave. What are the others? You'll have to read this volume to find out!

Youth Ministry

Life Application Bible for Students: The Living Bible, David R. Veeman, senior editor, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, 1992, 1,326 pages, US\$24.99, hardcover, US\$19.99, paper.

With reference notes written by youth experts who know the concerns youth have, this edition brings the Bible to life for today's teenagers.

Creative Worship Ideas: 70 Meaningful Ways to Involve Teenagers in Worship, Lois Keffer, ed., Group Books, Loveland, Colorado, 1993, 110 pages, US\$10.99, paper.

To be authentic, worship needs to be meaningful for the participants. Keffer provides creative ways to involve teenagers in joyful worship. He gives ideas for new angles on the traditional components of church services. Prayer, drama, music, and interaction with the congregation add to the worship experience. "Let this book get you on track for a

journey of awesome joy," says youth pastor Steve Case of Piece of the Pie Ministries, Sacramento, California.

Youth Group Trust Builders: 71 Activities to Develop Community in Your Youth Group, Denny Rydberg, Group Books, Loveland, Colorado, 1993, 140 pages, US\$15.99, paper.

The Practical Youth Ministry Handbook: 43 No-Fail Ways to Energize Your Ministry, Michael Warden, compiler, Group Books, Loveland, Colorado, 1993, 153 pages, US\$12.99, paper.

Premarital Counseling

Before I Thee Wed, Carolyn Shealy Self and William Self, Fleming H. Revell Co., Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1989, 144 pages, US\$8.00, paper.

Before I Thee Wed grapples with the routine as well as the necessary questions that need to be asked prior to marriage. The routine deals with such topics as money, sex, religion, children, traditions, etc. The necessary raises the issues of why a couple wants to marry and how they define love.

The authors discuss substance use and abuse. They ask important questions relating not only to one's personal life, but the family as well. An engaging chapter titled "Good Advice" gives couples the wisdom of those who have gone before, including all the I wish I had's.

Getting Ready for Marriage Workbook: How to Really Get to Know the Person You're Going to Marry, Jerry D. Hardin and Dianne C. Sloan, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1992, 252 pages, US\$14.95, paper.

Written by two professionals, *Getting Ready* comes highly recommended by Dr. Frank Minirth, cofounder of the Minirth-Meier-Byrd Clinics. He states, "It is one of the most thorough workbooks for couples preparing for marriage." The authors talk about couples loving and knowing each other and understanding each other's family backgrounds. Other chapter topics are communication, attitudes, resolving conflicts, religious orientation, money matters, sexual relationships, family planning, and children. Interactive exercises help couples gain insight and apply what they learn from the authors.

The Church at Work

Volunteer Ministries: New Strategies for Today's Church, *Margie Morris*, Newton-Cline Press, Sherman, Texas, 1990, 160 pages, US\$15.95, paper.

The author reminds pastors that volunteers need to be cultivated like a garden, well planned and cared for. She suggests that each church develop a volunteer coordinator position to help discover and develop volunteers. The coordinator would match people and their skills to available jobs. Morris suggests that jobs be created to meet the volunteers' abilities rather than continue positions that have been around for years.

52 Ways to Help Homeless People, *Gray Temple, Jr.*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1991, 143 pages, US\$7.99, paper.

Have you ever looked with pity at the homeless persons in your city and wondered what you or your church could do? Temple gives obvious yet ignored answers such as "get to know some homeless people" and "stop seeing these people as a problem to be solved." But the author also teaches us how to treat

the homeless in a personal relationship as well as work for them through organizations. This practical volume is endorsed by former president Jimmy Carter, well-known for his humanitarian work.

Room in the Inn, Ways Your Congregation Can Help Homeless People, *Charles F. Strobel*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1992, 111 pages, \$7.95, paper.

A step-by-step guide for beginning a facility for homeless persons in a local church.

Hospice Resource Manual for Local Churches, *John W. Abbott, ed.*, Pilgrim Press, Cleveland, Ohio, 1988, 90 pages, US\$10.95, large paperback.

In an age of AIDS and the need for special care for those with this and other terminal diseases, what is the role of the church? At no other time is an individual more open to the gospel and in need of nurture.

This manual discusses personal strategies for coping and provides a biblical basis for hospice. Four models of hospice are described in the manual: independent, hospital-based, home-health

agency, and community or coalition approach. There are suggestions for funding the start-up of a hospice, and for an agenda for the future.

Getting Through Grief: Caregiving by Congregations, *Ron Sunderland*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1993, 144 pages, \$10.95, paper.

Only 3 percent of churches have organized grief ministries. Sunderland shows congregations how and why they need to carry out this important responsibility.

Letters for Every Occasion: A Pastor's Sourcebook, *Thomas J. Tozer*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1992, 160 pages, US\$11.95, paper.

This practical volume contains more than 100 creative, carefully written letters that can be modified for any occasion. It also includes stewardship and commitment campaign materials.

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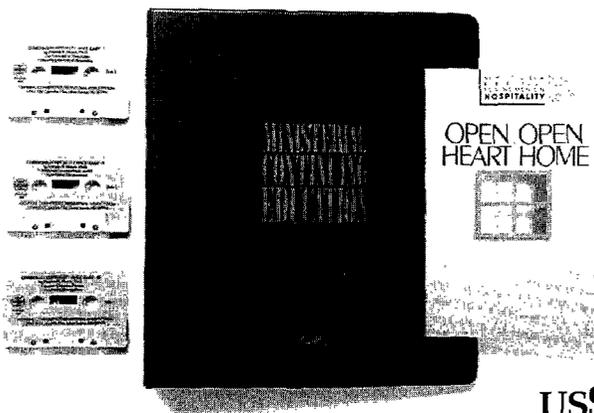
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vating, or Resurrecting, *Jeffery P. Dennis*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992, 133 pages, US\$7.95, paper.

Clip-Art Activity Features for Children for Church Bulletins and Newsletters, *Howard Paris*, illustrator, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1992, 104 pages, US\$5.95, paper.

Recently Noted

Paul! May I Speak With You? Six Dialogues for Bible Study, *Marion Fairman*, C.S.S. Publishing Co., Inc., Lima, Ohio, 1993, 115 pages, \$8.75, paper.

Marion Fairman's dialogues with the apostle Paul provide church groups a unique and creative method of Bible study.

The author, a teacher of literature and writing, uses role playing to make Paul come alive in today's context. In *Paul! May I Speak With You?* a twentieth-century woman interviews Paul, questioning him about his journeys, his life, and his beliefs. Fairman bases Paul's answers on Bible texts and their historical background. She includes suggestions for the teacher, Scripture references, historical background, and questions for discussion after completion of each mini-play.

This imaginative way of studying the Bible will bring life to your Sabbath schools and small groups.

Rediscovering Your First Love: The Joys of a Devoted Heart, *Ronald F. Bridges*, *Here's Life Publishers*, San Bernardino, California, 1990, 270 pages, US\$7.99, paper.

Ron Bridges, a pastor, looks at how and why Christians fall away from the joy they first experienced as new Christians. He tells how his love for the ministry began to wane and what he did about it. Pastors will be challenged by this book and will want to pass on the concepts to their congregations. The book would make an excellent addition to the church library.

Varieties of Prayer: A Survey Report, *Margaret M. Poloma and George H. Gallup, Jr.*, Trinity Press International, Philadelphia, 1991, 142 pages, US\$14.95, paper.

This report is an objective study of prayer power in the lives of American people. It analyzes more than 1,000 persons, showing that prayer, usually a

solitary act, has social consequences.

Choosing a New Pastor, *Henry A. Virkler, Ph.D.*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, 1992, 250 pages, US\$12.95, paper.

To help make the process of choosing a pastor easier, Virkler offers a comprehensive step-by-step guide for search committees. Although written for the congregational-style church, the book addresses related issues such as conflict resolution and saying goodbye

to the one who is leaving and hello to the new pastor.

The Television Time Bomb, *E. Lonnie Melashenko with Timothy E. Crosby*, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., 1993, 64 pages, US\$1.35, paper.

According to the authors, television is the most potent shaper of thought in America. They show how the entertainment world has conditioned an entire generation in regard to violence and values. The message of the book is not

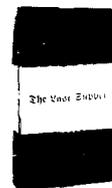
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new. One would wish it had not quite painted all television with the same brush. Television has as much potential for good as it does for evil; programs and stations exist that present spiritual and educational fare. Unfortunately Christians have generally abdicated their role in films and television, leaving them in the hands of the secular world.

But the book's purpose is undoubtedly to warn rather than answer questions. For this reason it should be in the hands of every parent in your congregation.

The Overcomers, George E. Vandeman and Mark Finley, Pacific Press, Boise, Idaho, 1992, 94 pages, US\$4.95, paper.

"It's nice to have the emotional support of a loving family, but," says *The Overcomers*, "our ultimate hope must be in God alone. No human being can provide that solid-rock foundation for our lives." On this basis the authors discuss overcoming an alcoholic environment, a handicap, spousal abuse, depression, sexual abuse, bankruptcy, and opposition.

Letters

From page 2

a wedding after the guests had drunk "freely" already?

How can Evans say that it was only Jesus' enemies who accused Him of drinking, when He Himself said, "The Son of man came eating and drinking"? He drank that which John did not drink: wine. All this proves that Jesus was not a teetotaler.

How can the drinking of *shekar* be "universally condemned" when in Deuteronomy 14:26 God commanded the Israelites to drink the same?

Why did Evans ignore such passages as Proverbs 31:6, where again *shekar* is recommended besides wine as a means to console the unfortunate? Why did he ignore Psalm 104:15?—H. L. Wipprecht, Cobalt, Ontario, Canada.

■ I found some of the claims made in the article somewhat puzzling. The main one is the statement that "there is no evidence that Jesus ever drank fermented grape juice."

The grape harvest in Israel falls in late summer, early autumn. The

keeping ability of grapes without refrigeration is very limited. Once they have been crushed, it is even less. The Passover festival is celebrated in early spring. How could the Lord's Supper have been celebrated with unfermented grape juice, given the fact that there was no technology or equipment to keep it germ-free and sterile?—Mrs. H. Kotzur, Toowoomba, Australia.

Roger Evans responds:

First, let me thank those who have responded to the article, and for the insights shared. Since most of the questions concern the New Testament passages, I will limit my responses to those questions.

1. *The passage in John 2 clearly states that Jesus turned water into wine (oinos). However, to conclude from this story that Jesus is condoning the use of wine is unmerited for the following reason. This story, as are many of the texts in the Old Testament which use the term yayin, is not about wine. Verse 11 states, "This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him" (NASB). This story is about the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. And John says that Jesus performed this miracle to (1) manifest His glory, and (2) inspire belief in His followers. The story was not included in the gospel account to condone drinking.*

2. In Luke 7:31-34 Jesus is making the point that no matter how He conducts His ministry, His enemies, whom He compares to never-satisfied children (cf. verse 32), will condemn Him. The point of the story, as I mentioned in the article, is that neither He nor John sought or received official sanction for his ministry and message. This was an affront to the religious leaders, and it seems that they fell to argumentum ad hominem against both John and Jesus. Therefore, although, as readers Wipprecht and VanDenburgh correctly point out, it is Jesus Himself who says that He came "eating and drinking," that is not what this story is about. He is not advocating drinking for the litany of accusations to include that He is "a friend of tax gatherers and sinners." This story is about the rejection of Him and His ministry. Luke, perhaps

without design, shows how the enemies of Jesus unwittingly declare the essence of who He is and the people that He came to call (cf. Luke 5:32).

Finally, two points should be made here. First, let me quote the last sentence of the introduction to the article. "This article will examine only those texts that speak to the moral issues surrounding the use of wine and/or drunkenness." I was, of course, aware of the texts in Deuteronomy 14, and John 2, and of the use of wine as part of the Passover feast (Matt. 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22). No moral issues seemed to be raised in these texts, and therefore, in the light of the stated purpose of the article, they were not included in the study. As stated in the introduction to the article, a proof-text approach to this question is no longer acceptable, whether one is arguing for abstinence or temperance. I refused to take a text here and there, and build an argument on these. What I attempted to do was to build a theology—more precisely, a biblical theology. In doing this, I attempted to use a hermeneutic that would not allow me to make wine an issue in texts in which it appears but is not the focal point of the story.

Second, it must be conceded that the people of the Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, used wine. Often these were God's called people. To conclude, however, that their use of wine makes it all right for God's people in the twentieth century to use it simply cannot be supported. We also find God's people at times lying, cursing, given to pettiness and violence, and being revengeful. And to those who would point to Jesus as our example—without denying that, I would say that the message of the New Testament is that Jesus is our substitute.

Pastors beware

Martin Weber's editorial, "Pastors Beware" (July 1993), was an open and frank discussion of the progressive dynamics that create the possibility for employee sexual misconduct. The one caution I have relates to confidentiality. While I agree with the need for accountability, it is important for pastors to maintain the confidentiality of the persons they are seeing. If a person shares with the pastor things in confidence and the pastor reports

those to others (even the pastor's spouse) without consent, there is a potential legal liability carried by the pastor and the church.

I would urge that when sharing any information about someone you have seen as a pastor, you obtain consent to share that information with others. It is appropriate to share your feelings and thoughts with others as long as you protect the anonymity of the individual you are referring to.—Richard M. Tibbits, Kettering, Ohio.

■ The editorial raises the important issue of clergy becoming involved sexually with parishioners of the opposite sex.

The first paragraph says that male pastors or church leaders may themselves have inappropriate sexual attractions. However, much of the editorial seems to suggest that women church members, consciously or unconsciously, are after male clergy. The title itself is stated defensively, "Pastors Beware." Watch out, they're after you. "Regardless of your physical appearance, there is something about your leadership that many women find

intriguing."

Beginning with Adam, church history has a long tradition of assigning blame for transgression to women. Respected churchmen have argued that their life for God would be much easier if women weren't so needy, so emotional, so seductive, and yes, so necessary for reproduction of the human species.

Martin Weber's editorial contains several statements suggesting women are responsible for men being tempted. For example: "Women have a deep emotional need for a man encouragement, guidance, tenderness, and affirmation"; "The unsuspecting man..."; "Frightened as I was of this woman's interest in me, I was also intrigued by it"; "Perhaps unaware of what they really want from the pastor, these women may approach him with a request for spiritual help."

A different explanation for inappropriate sexual liaisons between men in leadership positions and women parishioners is outlined in the book *Sex in the Forbidden Zone*, by Peter Rutter, M.D. He states that men are responsible for their own sexual drives.

Ministry editors are acquainted with Rutter's work and published an excerpt from his book not long ago. He argues that "the dynamics of the forbidden zone can render a woman unable to withhold consent. And because the man has the greater power, the responsibility is his to guard the forbidden boundary against sexual contact, no matter how provocative the woman" (p. 28).—Kit Watts, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Martin Weber responds:

I was not blaming women for the problem of immorality among male clergy. On the contrary, the spiritual leader/authority figure must be held responsible. "Pastors Beware" warned that a man's ego combined with deep-seated insecurities renders him vulnerable to attention from women. And many women, in turn, crave a man's encouragement, guidance, and tenderness. Each sex is vulnerable to the weaknesses of the other.

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However, let me hurry to say that I judge a Christian publication as to how many articles I want to put in my files. By far, *Ministry* comes out on top every month. Many of my own denominational periodicals don't give me even one article a month that I would want to file away.

Every month I enjoy the articles, but especially I turn to the letters to the editor. Often the comments and rebuttals are as challenging as the original articles themselves.

Please be encouraged in your excellent work. You provide ideas and materials from a particular perspective that I do not get often. Thank you for "rounding out my spiritual diet."—Ralph O. Lyons, Clearbrook, British Columbia, Canada.

Small group ministry

In his excellent article, "Small Group Ministry" (July 1993), Craig Dossman states that the "clergy took the Scriptures from the people, not allowing them to read the Word for themselves." History teaches us that relatively few people, until the past century, could read at all. Reading as we know it is a relatively new human

activity. Paul tells his listeners that faith comes through hearing, requiring that it be preached by people who are competent. Thus the rise of the clerical state as a form of ministry on a global scale.

The so-called Dark Ages resulted from barbarian invasions motivated by looting and plunder, the basest expression of greed.—Stephen F. Duffy, pastor, St. Paul the Apostle Roman Catholic Church, Jersey City, New Jersey.

Abortion

I am writing in reference to the statement on abortion (May 1993). I could not believe what I was reading! My heart ached when I read how your organization not only endorsed abortion, but seemingly was in favor of it.

I'm having a real hard time believing that it's wrong for a normal pregnancy but right for one that may have a birth defect. You kill one, you kill the other. What's the difference between sucking out the brains of a child that is simply unwanted or one that has come into being because of rape, incest, or birth defect? None! It isn't the baby's fault that Mom was raped. Your stand punishes the innocent

for the guilty. The difference is not in the pregnancy, but in one's warped mind and distorted principles.

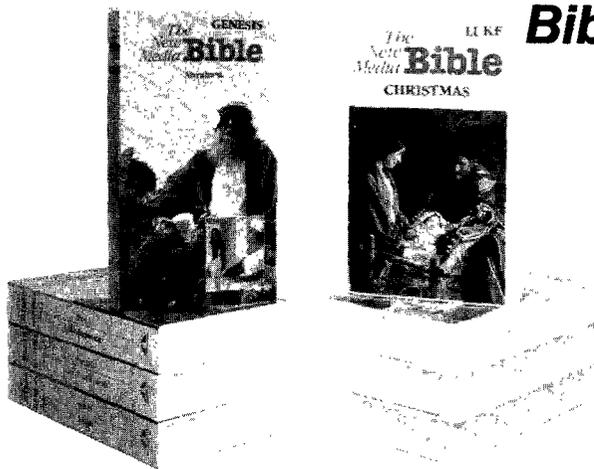
There was a man in the Bible that was born blind; would this qualify under your guidelines for an abortion?—Robbie Spencer, Fredericksburg, Virginia.

Laodicea

I read your article on the Laodicean condition (June 1993) with great interest. I have appreciated your openness to discuss the issues facing the church, and your call for repentance.

This call cannot be dismissed as irrelevant. There is no question that we are in a Laodicean condition. The quality of our evangelistic outreach and the resultant baptisms, the status of our church life, and the mission of our institutions are all a source of concern that I personally feel. I pray that a recognition of our condition would keep us close to the Lord, who alone could lead us to repentance, revival, and reformation. Thank you for your ministry.—Paulraj Isaiah, president, North Tamil Section, Tiruchirapalli, India.

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Thanksgiving prayer partners

Here's an idea for having a spiritual Thanksgiving. Ask someone or some group in the church to prepare some type of seasonal bookmark, and on Thanksgiving weekend hand one to everyone. Have all of them write their names on the back of the bookmark. Collect and pass them out again at random. The person whose name is drawn becomes the prayer partner until Christmas. I have found that this simple project helps to draw the congregation into a bond of unity and is a special blessing during the stressful holiday season.—Betty Robertson, Bethany, Oklahoma.

Assistance requests

People often seek a pastor for financial assistance. Usually they arrive at an inconvenient time, and I've found that most requests come from people I don't know. To remedy the situation, I no longer accept drop-in appointments prior to or during church or personal occasions. All are invited to return later. I've also developed a system to evaluate the need. The person wanting help must complete a form that seeks the following information: home address (unless he or she is homeless), the composition of the family, past and present places of employment, name of the landlord, permission to obtain a credit report, names and addresses of other family members, names of all agencies with whom he or she is known, names of religious affiliations or contacts, and personal references. I also ask for an income and

expense statement with documentation of net worth, along with a written statement of the problem and how any assistance we may be able to render will help solve this situation.

Included with the questionnaire is a statement stipulating that any funds available are only for emergency purposes, which excludes vacations, lottery tickets, drug purchases, bond for those in jail, etc. Applicants are also informed that the pastor does not cosign or make personal loans, and that those who make misrepresentations will be reported.

If the information is returned, my office carefully verifies it. Actually, few of the forms ever come back, and some walk out without even taking them. The number of requests has fallen dramatically. This leaves us able to help those truly in need.—Henry W. Speidell, Paterson, New Jersey.

Name tag day

Have you ever heard members say, "I've attended this church for years, but I just can't remember names"? Try this idea from our church. Once a quarter we designate a special day to help members and visitors become better acquainted. A note is posted on all doors proclaiming: "NAME TAG DAY! Today we have the opportunity to get to know each other better. Everyone, please fill out a name tag in the hallway and wear it this morning."

Name tags and felt-tip pens are waiting at tables inside all entrances. Someone on hand helps elderly individuals or others needing assistance. Our

members now say things like: "I've seen those people coming to church, but I forgot their names. Now I can associate the face with the name and become better acquainted."—Betty Robertson, Bethany, Oklahoma.

Happy memories

If we are honest with ourselves, at times our pastoral morale gets low. When this happens to me, I reach for my "good memories" file, which contains letters and cards of appreciation and affirmation. Reading these again inevitably boosts my spirits by reminding me that God has used me in the past and will use me in the future.—Bill Peterson, Sylacauga, Alabama.

Words of wisdom

Think back on how often you've needed a good quote for your speech or article on financial stewardship. How often have you searched through generic books of quotes looking for the right one? Now there is *Words of Wisdom*, a book of quotations useful for promoting Christian charity and monetary faithfulness. With this book you have a compilation of nine years of the Giving Is Caring calendar. The more than 200 pages contain 2,700 quotes to add creativity, distinction, and credibility to your speech or article.

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Good food, good fellowship

To widen the circle of friendships among members and to incorporate new believers into the church family, we've started the good food/good fellowship program. Once each month groups of four or five units (such as four families or two families and three singles) get together in each others' homes. Church visitors and friends are invited from week to week by group members, who always anticipate extra company.

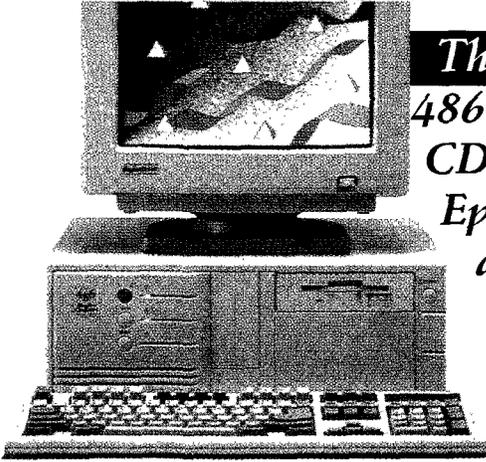
To organize the groups, the program coordinator puts an advertising sheet in the bulletin, after which for two weeks a signup sheet is available on a table in the foyer. Someone is present to answer questions.

After the coordinator divides up the names, he or she designates a leader to contact the others in each group and decide when and where to meet. What works best is Sabbath lunch or supper. After four months of rotating around the various homes, the coordinator divides up the names into new groups.—Bud Beaty, Mickleham, Victoria 3064, Australia.

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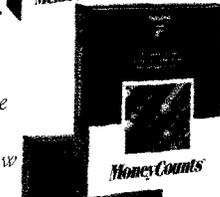
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