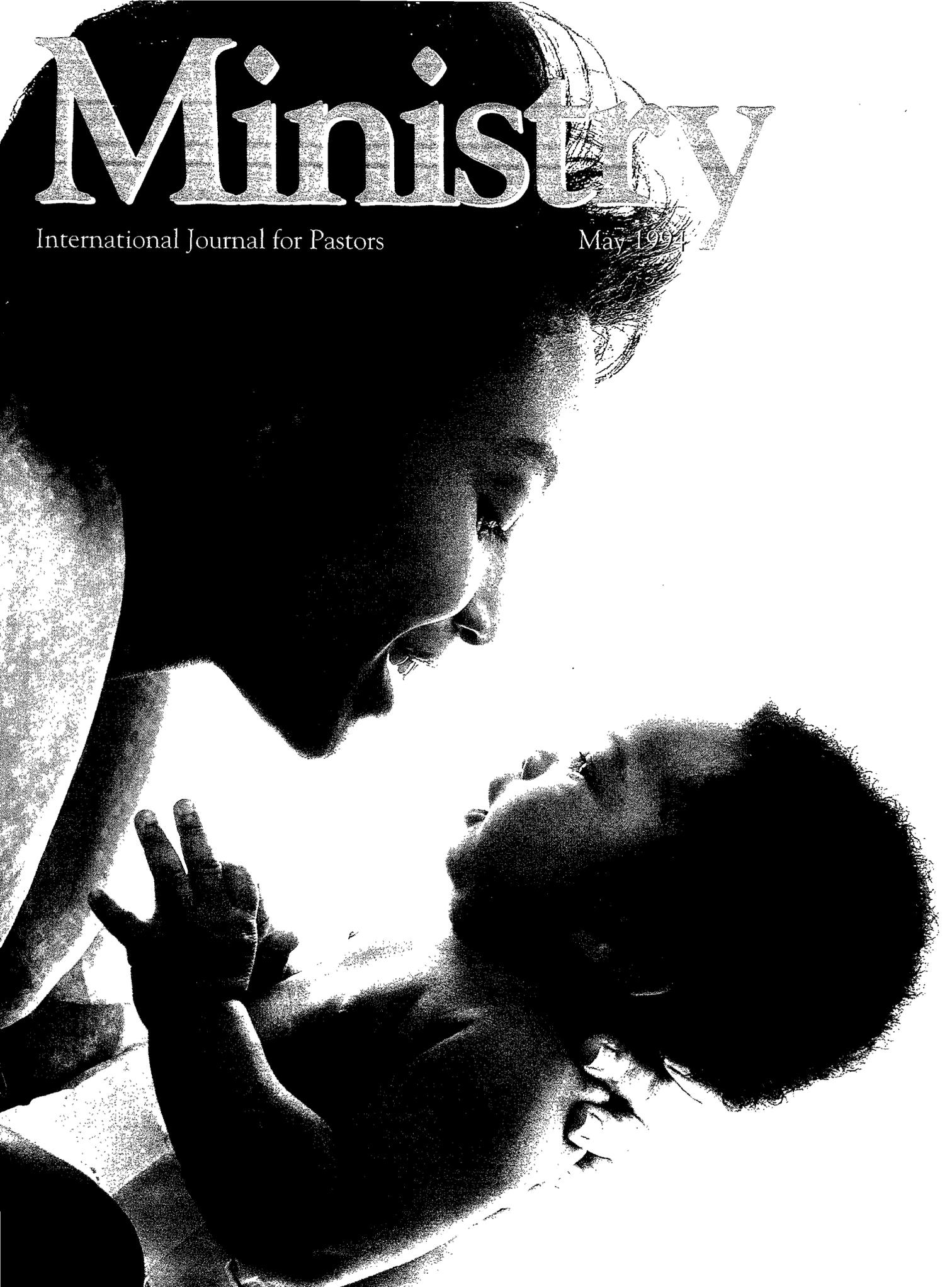


Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

May 1994



Lurking legalism and liberalism

Commenting on the article "Lurking Legalism and Liberalism," Paul Powell (Letters, January 1994) says: "To follow Exodus 20:8-11 is next to impossible today."

I am a member of a denomination that historically has emphasized the keeping of the Sabbath [albeit the first day]. Unfortunately, at times such emphasis has come across with a legalistic tone, but this need not be so.

The framers of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism make it clear that, while we do not need to be legalistic about the use of the Sabbath, the Sabbath is to be observed fairly strictly but with provision for "works of necessity and mercy." This is what the Confession says: "This Sabbath is to be kept holy unto the Lord when men, after a due preparing of their hearts and ordering of their common affairs beforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all the day from their own works, words, and thoughts about their worldly employments and recreations, but also are taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of His worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy."

In response to the question "How is the Sabbath to be sanctified?" the Shorter Catechism states, "The Sabbath is to be sanctified by a holy resting all that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days; and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy."

A biblical understanding of the Decalogue exists only when we understand the law in the context of

God's covenantal dealings with His people. The prologue, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery" (Ex. 20:2, NIV), informs us that God's demand of obedience is rooted, not in legalism, but in freedom. The deliverance from Egypt is not just a historical event, but it signifies the redemption of God's people from sin and their subsequent freedom in Christ. Note especially the significance of the Passover in this regard. By being obedient, Israel could become the kind of people God intended His people to become. In the same way obedience to the law today is required because God has redeemed us through Jesus Christ. Because this is so, we understand the law in terms of being the framework whereby we, like they, can become the people He wants us to be.

In such a context the fears of legalism as well as being "politically incorrect" fade away.—Ralph E. Joseph, pastor, Reformed Presbyterian Church, Selma, Alabama.

Wine in the Bible

The article "A Biblical Theology of Drinking" (July 1993) and the letters that followed were of little value as far as I am concerned. The problem can be resolved without all this arguing over whether the Greek *oinos* and the Hebrew *yayin* refer to fermented or unfermented wine. When one substitutes the words "grape juice" in every text where the word "wine" appears, it'll become clear whether the word refers to fermented or unfermented grape juice.—Wayne Willey, pastor, Seventh-day Christian Church, Bentonville, Arkansas.

■ A careful reading of Scripture shows that the word "wine" may

refer to fermented or unfermented drink, with the context determining which is intended.

Proverbs 23:31 states: "Do not look on the wine" (NKJV). Obviously the reference is to fermented wine and the disastrous consequences that follow its drinking. On the other hand, Jesus invited His disciples, "Drink ye all of it." He even produced wine at the wedding at Cana. Can we charge Him as contradicting His own inspired counsel in Proverbs? Obviously Jesus was serving unfermented wine.

If John the Baptist kept the Nazarite vow by avoiding all grape products, while Jesus did not, does this make Jesus a glutton and a winebibber who drank fermented wine, as His enemies charged? They also charged Him with blasphemy and Sabbathbreaking. Was He guilty of these?—R. E. DuBose, Avon Park, Florida.

Assistance requests

Henry Speidell (November 1993, p. 31) prescribes appointments, evaluations, and referrals for those who come for assistance. He says he does not accept drop-in appointments; what about people who need assistance right now, and not at a later time? He speaks of an evaluation system; will that system help a person in need? He wants a history of that person, credit reports, etc.; why not help the person the best you can and forget all these?

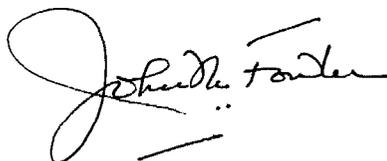
How glad I am that the man that fell among the thieves did not have to make an appointment or fill out a form. Or perhaps he was asked to by one of those that passed by on the other side. Let us help if we can, and not humiliate those who seek our assistance.—Fred J. Wolff, Lincoln, Nebraska.

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.

Whether it's a doctoral dissertation, a paper for a theological journal, or an article for laymembers, sparkle and readability are the hallmarks of William Johnsson's writings. A graduate of chemical engineering, he turned to ministry after he met his Lord. Ever since that meeting, Bill has taught, preached, and lived the message of the cross. And this month, the editor of *Adventist Review* shares with us (p. 6) how he keeps the sparkle, the scholarship, and the salvation focus in biblical preaching.

One can never say too much about the cross. It's beyond human understanding. It'll be a study of the redeemed throughout eternity. But we have to begin here. You will not want to miss Adolphe Monod's classic, "Looking Unto Jesus," (p. 12) first printed over 100 years ago. Each paragraph is a call to reflect on the uniqueness of our Lord, and what He has done for us.

Ministry is not all theology. Nancy Canwell, a pastor and a special assistant editor of our journal, shares her joys, her hopes, her inmost thoughts experienced while ministering to a congregation out there and a growing life within her (p. 15). The joys of motherhood, a tribute for Mother's Day.



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Ministry is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association.

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ADVERTISING SALES: Melynie Tooley

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES: Larry Burnnett

Ministry, (ISSN 0026-5314), the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 1994, is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and printed by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740, U.S.A. Subscriptions: US\$22.00 for 12 issues worldwide, air mail US\$39.85. Single copy US\$2.25. Member Associated Church Press. Second-class postage paid at Hagerstown, MD. This publication is available in microfilm from University Microfilms International. Call toll-free 1-800-521-3044. Or mail inquiry to: University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Editorial Office: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Stamped, self-addressed envelope should accompany unsolicited manuscripts. Office telephone: 301-680-6510.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *Ministry*, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740.

Volume 67 Number 5



The E word

Rex D. Edwards

In thinking about evangelism, some call to mind *Elmer Gantry*, the anxious bench, sawdust trails, tent meetings, altar calls, and endless verses of "Just as I Am." Others picture the charismatic power of a Dwight L. Moody, Billy Graham, or C. D. Brooks. More than a few have memories of shouting, gasping hellfire preachers in white leisure suits and patent leather shoes. For baby boomers, evangelism evokes images of Mormons on bicycles, "I Found It!" buttons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Jesus freaks, Hare Krishnas in airports, and faith healers.

Even Adventists regard evangelism with pessimism and skepticism. They dislike tactics based on fear, intimidation, manipulation, and coercion that cause the message to be lost in the method. Such uneasiness accounts for the chiding references some employ in caricaturing evangelism as the E word.

A recent study among ministers and laity published in *Christianity Today* revealed three basic conceptions of evangelism. The first comprises models that communicate a plan of salvation and a call for decision. About one fourth of those surveyed held this concept. Within the second category cluster various understandings of sharing the faith or communicating about Christ with no emphasis on outcome or result. This was the majority view. The third category involved building friendships or relationships; about one fifth of those surveyed mentioned this model.

Much dissent within the church over evangelism comes from isolating one model from the others and

rejecting those who disagree. In reality, all three types are appropriate for different times and situations.

Evangelism must be understood as any form of communication or witness that influences someone toward faith or depth of relationship with Jesus Christ. At the same time, we must not abdicate responsibility to call people to significant decisions and ongoing growth in the faith. The operative assumption that biological church growth experienced through births within the church is the basic paradigm for many churches in the Western world is no longer valid. As pastors, church professionals, and congregations, we must foster an approach to evangelism that builds an active, inviting membership, one that presents a faithful, hospitable community open to Christians and non-Christians alike.

Think globally, act locally

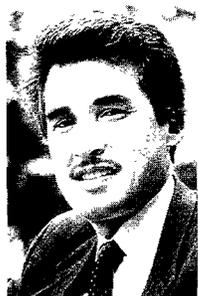
Each congregation and each member must assume responsibility for evangelism in their particular locality, for neither denominational nor global evangelism has an incarnational reality until it becomes local evangelism. Evangelism and ecology are similar in that we must think globally but act locally. In a sense, evangelism is not a denominational issue, for it cannot be done by denominational boards, staff, or agencies. Rather, the particular congregation is the matrix within which evangelism can and must take place. The various governing bodies may serve a role of advocacy, providing resources, training, and networking, with conferences having responsibility for planting

churches, but ultimately congregations must own the task of evangelism, or it will not occur. This has been the burden of the 12-part series "Evangelism in the Local Church" set forth in *Ministry* during 1993.

A vast body of literature provides insight into vital factors contributing to the deterioration of congregations. While this information is foundational, we must move beyond a pathology of the church. Rather than bemoaning the decline and decay of many congregations, we must work to better the health of the church by modeling a wellness approach to ministry and evangelism. This strategy includes proclaiming the gospel and its call to faith in Jesus Christ with integrity and clarity, vital worship and music, collegial ministry between pastor and people, spiritual growth, active outreach, and empathic pastoral care.

The Lazarus syndrome

In laying claim to the demonstrated strengths of our heritage, we must beware of what can be termed the Lazarus syndrome. Our attempts to reclaim the vigor of our tradition can entice us to resuscitate the past and a host of congregational corpses. Congregational revitalization and redevelopment can occur only as we allow the methods and mind-set based primarily on institutional maintenance or survival to die. The focus of the congregation's mission is resurrected in discerning its call to be evangelistic, sharing the good news of Jesus Christ in all aspects of life and ministry.



Counterfeits of community

Martin Weber

Many have been the counterfeits of Christ's goal for His church: a community united in love. Back in the sixties and seventies hippies in Western nations congregated in communes but failed to experience real love. In the eighties and nineties Euro-Communism finally gave up trying to create a new humanity out of shared participation in economic justice. Meanwhile, Western society beset by recession has failed to deliver its dream of a materialistic utopia.

Religion itself has failed to foster a spirit of community. In India, Hindus and Muslims kill each other. In the Middle East and Africa, militant Islam sponsors holy warfare with terrorist cell groups. Jewish settlement communities on the West Bank are fighting the Palestinian peace accord.

Even Christianity has not fostered much of community. In Bosnia, "faith" fuels the fire of fratricide. In Ireland, Protestants and Catholics bomb each other's funerals. In Latin America, the liberation movement betrayed its name. In North America, popular televangelists preached love while living in lust until angry donors pulled the plug.

Throughout Christian history the spirit of community has escaped many of its most ardent proponents. What will it take for God's people to renew the oneness of Pentecost? An important first step is to know what's involved in the biblical doctrine of community.

Back in the beginning, God created Adam and gave him a wife, and together they became one flesh—a community. Beyond the marriage relationship, all humanity in ages to come was intended to be a community of God's children through Adam. This corpo-

rate oneness is reflected in the very nature of the Creator, where three separate, eternal persons make up the unit of the Godhead.

When sin burst upon this planet, it shattered the spirit of community. Man and woman became enemies (see Gen. 3:12). They also severed their relationship with God, hiding from His presence (see verse 8). Heartbroken at the alienation, God took initiative to restore the oneness given humanity at Creation. The Word became flesh to live among us and renew community—not just to reestablish our individual relationship with Him, but also to form a corporate body—the church, replacing the original community of humanity destroyed when Adam sinned.

The night before Jesus died, He gathered His band of disciples and washed their feet to create a spirit of community. Then He prayed to His Father on behalf of His people, "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You: they may be one as We are" (John 17:11). His prayer for corporate oneness embraced His entire church "that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (verses 20, 21).

Amazing! Jesus made the success of His gospel mission dependent upon the communal fellowship of His followers, their corporate oneness in Him. He even declared this manifestation of community as the proof of His success as the Messiah: "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (verse 23).

Following that intercessory prayer, Jesus descended into the valley of

Gethsemane, where His eternal oneness with the Father was broken apart. Representing fallen humanity, He had to take over where Adam failed, experiencing the separation from community with God that resulted from our sin.

At Calvary, two pieces of wood comprised the cross of our salvation. On the vertical beam the body of Jesus linked heaven above with earth below, restoring our community with God. On the horizontal beam His arms stretched wide to unite us in community with one another. At the place where those crossbeams met, the heart of Jesus broke. By that death He "abolished in His flesh the enmity, . . . so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace" (Eph. 2:15). One redeemed humanity in Christ—this experience of community is what the gospel does for us.

The intersection of those two beams on Christ's cross, where His heart broke, is the bonding place of all redeemed humanity: Black or White, male or female, rich or poor; all now have oneness in Christ Jesus. The community of believers is the universal church, the body of Christ, "in whom you also are being built together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (verse 22). This unifying process within the body of Christ fosters genuine perfection.

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the believers as they shared their oneness in Christ (see Acts 2:1, 2). It was a foretaste of what God will achieve again with His commandment-keeping remnant community (see Rev. 14:12). Then in heaven we will enjoy eternal "koinonia" with God and with fellow redeemed humanity. ■

* All texts are from The New King James Version.

The art of expository preaching

William G. Johnsson

Four steps to make your sermon speak the Word to the life of the believer.



William G. Johnsson, Ph.D., is the editor of Adventist Review.

As a teenager I listened one day to a tall, no-nonsense preacher expound the Word of God. The preacher was H.M.S. Richards. More than 40 years later I can still recall his topic—"Our Unsparing God"—and his text, Romans 8:32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

That is one of the great benefits of expository preaching: it sticks in the mind. Carefully prepared and delivered with the power of the divine Spirit, it bears a harvest for the kingdom over many years.

But exposition is the most difficult preaching of all. It calls for vigorous study to be true to the text. The text imposes constraints on the preacher's imaginative powers, and the pitfalls are many. The "sermon" can become a study in exegesis, a display of the preacher's learning; it may degenerate into a commentary, a string of clever observations on the words and parts of the text; or it may never touch and move the lives of the hearers. And the people go home instructed but not fed, impressed but not renewed, or bored and not born again.

How do you get from text to sermon? For me, expository sermons entail four major steps. For each one I will illustrate the process by referring to a sermon that I developed several years ago and to which I have returned on numerous occasions.

Step 1: getting the text

A great professor of homiletics used to teach that all powerful sermons arise from only two sources: preachers who have experienced something that they want to share with the people; or preachers who discern a spiritual need among the congregation that they seek to address.

In reflecting on the hundreds of sermons I have heard and preached, I think that analysis is still true. It applies to the expository sermon as much as to any other. An expository sermon is not simply "on 1 Corinthians 13," for instance. Granted that it may derive from this passage and expound it, it is much more than a study in Scripture. It is a *sermon*, an art form that in a peculiar and beautiful way unites the Word of God with the life of the Christian in these times.

So you have a message, a theme, a concern on which you wish to preach. How do you find a text that will impart the message?

There can be no simple answer. Sometimes you will struggle for hours and days, mulling over possible passages, going from one to another and only settling on the text after strenuous thought; sometimes the text will be "there," in front of your eyes, as soon as you have become clear as to the message of the sermon.

All genuine preaching unites the ancient text with life today: the preacher has one foot in each world—or, to change the metaphor, he or she

has the Bible in one hand and today's newspaper in the other. But expository preaching imposes more stringent controls, since the input from the Word comes primarily from one passage.

Expository sermons, therefore, demand a thorough knowledge of Scripture. The preacher must be steeped in the Word; it must be his or her friend, a source of spiritual nurture that is sought after daily with delight. Could this be the reason that we hear so few expository sermons today—that preachers no longer have the close acquaintance with the Word that this art form mandates?

So we have the message, and then we have the text. Out of our closeness to the Word, and by prayerful reflection, the text comes to us. And we are ready to begin the craft of sermon building.

Shortly after I came to Washington, D.C., I was asked to prepare a sermon for our church's Annual Council. And with the invitation came the topic: "Foremost in Exalting the Cross of Christ." Now, I find it difficult to preach on assigned subjects, because such sermons do not grow out of my own experience or observations of others' needs and therefore run the risk of being artificial. The invitation suggested a passage of Scripture (for which I was thankful), but it referred to Ellen White's statement to ministers: "Of all professing Christians, Seventh-day Adventists should be foremost in uplifting Christ before the world" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 156).

Right away I determined to quote her words—but not as the introduction to the sermon! While I believe that Adventist ministers should be acquainted with Mrs. White's writings and make some reference to them publicly, I am convinced that they should make the Word central in their preaching.

Although I don't usually care for assigned topics, this one excited me. I felt I could make it my own without a hint of artificiality; already it was my own. To uplift the cross—what a

glorious topic! But what text among the many in the New Testament to use as a basis for the sermon?

I thought of Galatians 6:14: "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." I reflected on that wonderful, dramatic chapter, which portrays the slain Lamb in Revelation 5. But then Paul's proclamation of the cross in 1 Corinthians—that soaring passage of the divine foolishness—rolled by and swept me off my feet. I had the text.

Step 2: focusing the text

After you have found the text—or

Because the Bible is the Word of God, it has power to speak to us today—if we take time to hear it.

better, the text has found you—your work on the sermon has hardly begun. The passage will probably have both *more* and *less* than the sermon will require. More, because all parts of it will not be equal, and some may be extraneous to the sermon topic. And less, because some parts may not be as fully developed in the passage as your sermon will require to bring home the message convincingly to the people.

When I prepare an expository sermon, I read through the passage over and over. I read it in context, making sure I understand what the author intended the original readers to take from it. I read it through in the original language (if from the New Testament), and also in several translations.

While I read I am thinking, thinking, thinking. Thinking what the logical and legitimate divisions of the

passage are. Thinking about its leading ideas. Thinking about what is there and what isn't. Thinking about the passage itself—and with the sermon message in the background. Thinking, reflecting, and praying.

During this time I consult no other source—the Bible only. I am trying hard to listen to the Word, to be honest with it, to be true to it. I want nothing to interpose an external idea on the Word.

For me, this is the most strenuous but most creative step in the whole process. I frequently scribble possible outlines and configurations on large notepads, not stopping to subject them to rigorous scrutiny. I turn the page and scribble again as a new rush of possibilities present themselves.

For me, this process takes several days. I begin each new day's efforts on a new page without turning back to the previous day's work.

And out of it all—the miracle. Out of it all—the marriage, as text and message join hands and become one. Three or four main ideas emerge, and they complement one another and together combine to communicate the sermon message, but no longer from my mind but from the text itself.

I say "miracle," for that's what it is. Because the Bible is the Word of God, it has power to speak to us today—if we take time to hear it. And miracle because the Holy Spirit alone is able to set aside pride in my learning and discovery, my vaunting ego, so that the Word may be central, so that *He* may increase and I may decrease.

My proposed sermon on 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, did not come into focus easily. The problem was the sheer abundance of great ideas. I soon settled on the place to begin—verse 17, with Paul's declaration of his call to preach: "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power" (NIV).

But where to end? I toyed with closing at verse 25, but that seemed to

do violence to the passage. Verses 17-31 form a seamless robe, a grand parade of thought that builds and strengthens to a denouement in verse 31.

At last, however, three leading ideas that form the structure of the passage emerged—emerged in relation to one another, and more important, in relation to the theme of the cross:

A. The cross—secret of power (verses 17-19)

B. The cross—secret of wisdom (verses 20-25)

C. The cross—secret of newness (verses 26-31)

And I also had a title—something I find important. When I am satisfied with the title, the sermon is in focus. My title? “The Divine Foolishness.”

Step 3: shaping the sermon

Now is the time to read widely about the passage. Now is the time to work through each detail, until you are sure you have mastered the meaning of the text.

But you must not attempt to convey all you know through the sermon. You must resist the temptation to give lessons in Greek or bring in interesting asides that are not germane to the sermon, just as in all preaching you must steadfastly refuse to bootleg an illustration that doesn't really fit but is “so good” that you just can't leave it out.

Shaping the sermon includes both elimination and addition of biblical material. Some words—perhaps even some verses if you are dealing with a long passage—can be dealt with in passing or omitted completely. And others that are important to the sermon may need to be filled out by reference to scriptures outside the passage.

Let me mention a misguided approach that I have sometimes heard in expository sermons, especially those that seek to elaborate a single verse or two. The speaker takes up a particular word and tells how the Greek may mean this, or that, or something else. And the hearers are left wonderfully befuddled. So, preacher, study the Greek but keep it to yourself. And, second, while the Greek may mean

The Divine Foolishness

Sermon Outline

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:17-31

Introduction:

Would you like to have *power*—for witness, for living?

Would you like to have *wisdom*—not merely good judgment, but divine insight?

Would you like to be *made new*—to start afresh, to be revived?

The secret of power is the same as the secret of wisdom, and the same as the secret of newness.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-31, noting Paul's three concerns—power, wisdom, newness. And the source of all three is Jesus and Him crucified.

The cross—the secret of power (verses 17-19).

Verse 17: Paul's surprising statement: not to baptize but to preach.

The mystery religions—devotees linked to the teacher.

Further, not by clever words, but by the cross.

When Paul came to Corinth: 1 Cor. 1:1-5.

The role of the Spirit—to exalt Christ and Him crucified: John 14:26; 15:26; 16:14.

Ellen White: “Of all professing Christians . . .” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 156).

Verse 18: Paul breaks the contrast: power before wisdom.

Verse 19: brief mention only.

Illustration: “Tell us about how God died.”

The cross—the secret of wisdom (verses 20-25).

Verse 20: the Greek's love of wisdom, etc.

Verse 21: with all their wisdom, the Greeks fell short, could never reach the ideal.

Nicodemus versus the woman at the well.

Verses 22-25: “God's foolish thing . . . God's weak thing”—the cross.

Calvary in its first-century context.

The offense of the cross.

The foolishness of the cross.

But—the divine foolishness! John 12:32.

Illustration: Albania—human wisdom versus divine foolishness.

The cross—the secret of newness (verses 26-31).

Verse 26: the Christians at Corinth—a motley lot.

Verses 27-29: God chose them, and made them something.

The dramatic change—1 Cor. 6:9-11.

Illustration: Celsus' sarcastic critique of Christians and Origen's reply.

Today: God's people from all over the world—Revelation 14:6, 7.

Verses 30-31: We are in Christ Jesus.

His cross makes us one.

His cross gives our identity.

His cross gives us our message.

His cross gives us our power.

Appeal

this, that, or whatever in various contexts, in the text at hand it *cannot* mean all these at once!

Notice the three leading ideas that came into focus as I studied 1 Corinthians 1:17-31 intensively. In terms of the number of verses Paul wrote on each, the first should be a minor idea and the third the dominant one. But in preparing the passage for preaching, the flow of ideas demanded that the first should be emphasized over the third.

I was especially impressed by Paul's reasoning in verses 17-19. When he says that the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, we would expect him to say that for those who are being saved it is wisdom. But he doesn't: the cross, he says, is the *power* of God. Later he will speak about wisdom, but first he deals with power. The break in logic is deliberate and too important for the preacher to pass by lightly.

The portion of the passage on the new people of God presents a marvelous concept and deserved adequate treatment, but it was the result of the two earlier sections on the cross as power and the cross as wisdom and so could be handled more briefly than these others. But that meant, of course, passing quickly over many of the verses in this last section.

Step 4: honing the sermon

In this last stage I polish and complete the sermon. This process includes working on the introduction, illustrations, links, and conclusion.

Because the preacher must catch the attention and interest of the hearers immediately, I favor an introduction that springs out of life today and that points to the message of the sermon. Occasionally I have begun with an arresting statement about the passage itself, but in today's media-jaded society I doubt the effectiveness of such approaches.

If the sermon has arisen from the preacher's own experience or the lives of the parishioners, illustrations will present no problem. They will be real, not phony; actual, not bookish. They will ring with the conviction of the sermons of Acts, where the first Chris-

tians told the story of Jesus and also their stories.

With all the emphasis on communication in today's society, most sermons still fail where most public speaking fails: people don't "get it." They don't know what the speaker was trying to say. They can remember a lot of words, but not the message. And the reason is that the speaker didn't provide links—those transitions that sketch the structure of the speech or sermon and indicate movement from one part to another.

Finally, the conclusion. I find that, if the rest of the sermon hangs together, the conclusion suggests itself. A good sermon is a whole, a unity; thus, the conclusion is in the introduction.

The conclusion deserves careful planning, however. It may be short, but it must be powerful. It should not only bind off the art form that is the sermon but should move the hearers to action. Indeed, throughout the sermon the people should feel the call to response, as the Word addresses life—

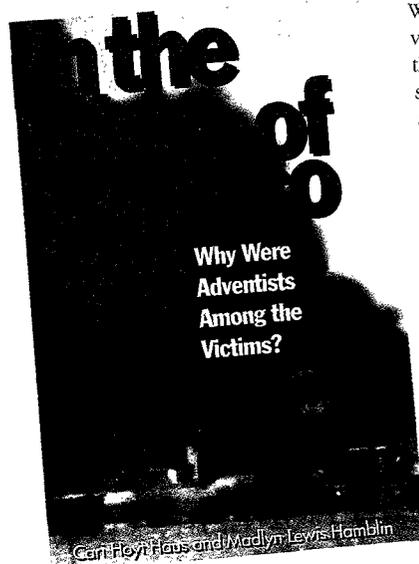
their life; and the conclusion pinpoints that response. Response can be of various kinds: at times public, but just as much private.

And so I honed "The Divine Foolishness." I began without reference to the text, throwing out questions that at once introduced the key ideas of power, wisdom, and community (see sidebar). I drew in illustrations from this year and yesteryear; I tried to ensure that the people would know what I was trying to say and where I was going; and I closed with an illustration that seemed to capture the feeling tone of the passage and to sum up the message of the sermon.

How long did it take me to prepare the sermon? Many hours. In fact, about 30 years. While it emerged from a period of concentrated study and creative reflection, it distilled a lifetime of experience.

Ah, the miracle of expository preaching! For out of the divine-human struggle the gospel is proclaimed through lips of clay. ■

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Setting goals

Pablo Perla

The issue never should be whether our churches should have goals but rather how we use them.



Pablo Perla is pastor of the Washington Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, D.C.

Having goals is the one essential for all organizations. Goals give a sense of direction and purpose, promote enthusiasm, facilitate effective operation, reduce needless conflict, and give a clear understanding of what is expected. Indeed in an organization there are few things more powerful than the idea of a goal.¹

Goals are important for another reason as well. They act as the measure by which we can tell whether something has been achieved. Without goals we have just activity, and we cannot be certain that a predetermined level of performance has been actually achieved. Set goals, and you know where you ought to go. Fail to plan, and you in fact plan to fail.

You may ask, "What does goal setting have to do with nonprofit organizations, such as my church?" Ever since Peter Drucker coined the term "management by objectives" some 40 years ago, goals and goal setting have been a central feature of management theory and practice. Research has shown time and again that people and organizations that have objectives consistently outperform those who do not have any, even though they may be instructed to do their best.² Dale McConkey, in his book *MBO for Non-profit Organizations*,³ suggests that those who might question goal setting in nonprofit organizations would do well to consider the following: 1. Does the organization have a mission to perform? Is there a valid reason for its existence? 2. Can priorities be established for accomplishing the mission? 3. Can the operation be planned?

4. Does management believe it must manage effectively, even though the organization is a nonprofit one? If the answer is yes, then you do need goals.

The Bible too speaks of men and women who established specific goals. Abraham envisioned "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10, NIV). Moses pressed toward the Promised Land. Hannah fasted and prayed to a son. David set about establishing the kingdom. Daniel looked forward for the liberation of his people from captivity. John the Baptist prepared the way for the Anointed One. Jesus set His eyes upon the cross. Dorcas defined her work within the needs of her community.

Effective goals

Effective goals should have the following characteristics:

1. *Specific and verifiable.* To set a goal is to predict accomplishment. But accomplishment cannot be determined unless measurement parameters are built into the goal. When a goal is not specific enough, we cannot formulate plans to achieve it, and we would not know what resources we will need to carry out the plans, and we will have no means to measure the accomplishment.

2. *Realistic and attainable.* Challenges are necessary for improvement, but a challenge must be within the range of performance capability and resource availability. Goals based on hopes, desires, and wishes are seldom realistic.

3. *Clearly understood.* All persons involved in setting goals must

clearly understand their respective roles in the reaching of their set objectives. Otherwise confusion and misunderstanding will frequently result.

4. *Ranked by priority.* Goal setting must be preceded by a clear definition of priorities. An organization's—and more so a church's—resources of time, funds, and personnel are limited, and we must ensure that we devote our resources to the most important objectives.

5. *Communicated in writing.* A written goal promotes better understanding, avoids confusion, and serves as a constant referral point.

6. *Set in prayer.* A church goal cannot be taken lightly. Seeking God's guidance through prayer should precede goal setting. A prayerful atmosphere has a way of weeding away that which contradicts God's will.

7. *Set in faith.* A church goal merely demonstrates the faith of members regarding what God can accomplish through them. Regarding membership goals, for example, the question could be asked: How many new disciples can I trust God to win through me and my church over the next year?

Church life goals

Often we think of church life goals only in terms of baptism. But other significant areas of church life also deserve measurable goal setting. Some examples of time-bound goal setting in church life are:

1. By December 31, 1995, increase Sabbath school attendance by a monthly average of 10 percent over that for 1994.

2. By June 25, 1998, pay off the church mortgage.

3. During 1995, place literature in the homes of 500 new families.

4. In the first quarter of 1995, train 200 lay members in witnessing.

5. Increase the tithe monthly average of 1995 by 15 percent above that of 1994.

6. Increase church school teachers from three to six in the next two years.

7. By November 30, 1997, estab-

lish a new church in a neighboring vicinity with no less than 60 members.

Goals and growth

Thousands of churches around the world experience no growth simply because nobody established any growth goal. So says Robert Schuller.⁴ Adventist researchers Roger L. Dudley and Des Cummings, Jr., agree. They studied Adventist churches in Hawaii and Atlanta, Georgia, and discovered that a higher baptismal goal increased the likelihood of a real rise in the number of local members, and that church baptismal and church growth goals were among the most significant factors that distinguished high-growth from low-growth congregations.⁵

Commitment is an essential component of motivation in goal setting.

The motivational theory in goal setting emphasizes the role of intentions to act as major causes of motivated behavior.⁶ Actions are governed by intentions.⁷ If an individual makes a commitment to an objective or a desired endpoint, that resolution will in fact strongly influence the subsequent behavior of that person. Therefore, commitment is an essential component of motivation in goal setting.⁸

Commitment is the totality of internalized normative pressures to act in a way that meets organizational goals and interest. Commitment causes individuals to behave in ways that they believe are morally right, rather than in ways that are going to be instrumental to their own personal interests. Most people engage in church activities on the basis of duty, cooperation, support, loyalty, or recompense. These bases, however, are

not strong enough to support a process in which the church will move in a prescribed direction.

Studies show that a person will not truly commit to achieving a result unless that person has had a voice in determining what the result will be. Conversely, people will be more motivated to work for the success of a project if they have helped develop it. Thus high commitment and high motivation usually go hand in hand to the degree that people feel that the project is their own.

Why? First, mutually formed goals tend to be both more demanding and fair than unilaterally imposed goals. Second, members who have participated in goal setting are more likely to be ego-involved in attaining those goals. Because they have made themselves responsible for the expectations in the goals, they are eager to see them fulfilled. And third, through participation members gain a better understanding of the reasons behind their goals as well as how to attain them.

Setting goals

Setting goals for the church should have a sequence. Craig Pinder⁹ suggests the following. First, the pastor confers and negotiates with members individually to determine church objectives for an upcoming time span. The degree to which members may participate in this goal-setting process varies according to the personal styles of both pastor and members. Second, members prepare an action plan that specifies how they will pursue the agreed-upon goals. Third, both pastor and members conduct a periodic performance review to measure progress. Finally, it will be time to set new objectives for a subsequent period.

Numerical goals

As a pastor in the Inter American Division I worked with numerical goals. In that division, it's something one cannot escape. I used them and found them effective in my different responsibilities as a pastor, departmental director, conference president,

and college president. Where I am pastoring now, numerical goals are not an issue. But our church established specific goals to motivate our members. In 1992-1993 this helped bring us more than 350 baptisms, two new churches, a 25 percent increase in tithe, and the doubling of membership and attendance. Not only did we surpass the goals set, but we gained a collective feeling of accomplishment and increased confidence.

All things are subject to improper use, of course. Wrongly employed, goal setting may cause rather than solve problems. For example, if the goals are *unfair, arbitrary, or unreachable*, dissatisfaction and poor performance may result. If goals are set without proper quality controls, quantity overcomes quality. When goals become more important than human considerations, they become burdensome, detrimental, and destructive to church community.

The danger to avoid is making numerical and measurable goals an end in themselves. Goals are only a means to an end. Focusing on numbers to the exclusion of making responsible disciples can lead to unfaithfulness to our paramount goal: to disciple the church into Christ-likeness. Numbers can never be substituted for rebirth through the Holy Spirit. So the issue is ultimately not whether we should have numerical and measurable goals but rather how to use them. ■

¹ Edward Dayton and Ted W. Engstrom, *Strategy for Leadership* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1979), p. 51.

² See Edwin A. Locke, Gary P. Latham, and Miriam Erez, "The Determinants of Goal Commitment," *Academy of Management Review* 13, No. 1 (1988): 23-29.

³ McConkey, p. 6.

⁴ Robert H. Schuller, *Your Church Has Real Possibilities!* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books Division, 1979), p. 72.

⁵ Roger L. Dudley and Des Cummings, Jr., *Adventures in Church Growth* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1983), p. 61.

⁶ Richard M. Steers and Lyman W. Porter, *Motivation and Work Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991), p. 355.

⁷ William C. Howell and Robert L. Dipboye, *Essentials of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1986), p. 77.

⁸ Locke, pp. 23-39.

⁹ Craig C. Pinder, *Work Motivation* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1984), p. 172.

Looking unto Jesus

Adolphe Theodore Monod

Three words only, but they contain the secret of life.

Adolphe Theodore Monod (1802-1856) was a French Protestant clergyman and editor.

This article appeared as the first of the Apples of Gold Library, a series of pamphlets published in the 1890s by the Pacific Press Publishing Association, Mountain View, California.

Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:2).

"Looking unto Jesus"—in the Bible, to learn who He is, what He has done, what He gives, what He requires, to find in His character our pattern, in His teachings our instructions, in His precepts our law, in His promises our stay, in His person and work a full satisfaction for every want of our souls.

"Looking unto Jesus"—crucified, to find in His blood poured out our ransom, our pardon, our peace.

"Looking unto Jesus"—risen again, to find in Him that righteousness which alone can justify us, and through which, unworthy though we are, we may draw near, with full assurance in His name, to His Father and our Father, His God and our God.

"Looking unto Jesus"—glorified, to find in Him our advocate with the Father, making complete, through His intercession, the merciful work of our salvation; appearing even now in the presence of God for us and supplying the imperfection of our prayers by the power of those whom the Father hears always.

"Looking unto Jesus"—as revealed to us by the Holy Spirit, to find in constant communion with Him, the

cleansing of our sin-stained hearts, the illumination of our darkened minds, the transformation of our perverse wills, to the end that we may triumph over the world and the devil, resisting their violence through Jesus our strength, bringing their devices to naught through Jesus our wisdom, upheld by the sympathy of Jesus who was Himself tempted in all points.

“Looking unto Jesus”—that we may receive from Him the work and the cross of each day, with grace which is sufficient to bear the cross and do the work; patient through His patience; active by His activity; loving with His love; asking not “What can I do?” but, “What can He not do?”; relying upon His strength, which is made perfect in weakness.

“Looking unto Jesus”—that the brightness of His face may enlighten our darkness; that our joy may be holy, and our grief subdued; that He may humble us to exalt us in due time; that He may afflict and then comfort us; that He may strip us of our self-righteousness to enrich us with His own; that He may teach us how to pray and then answer our prayers, so that while we are in the world we are not of the world, our life being hid with Him in God, and our words bearing Him witness before men.

“Looking unto Jesus”—who has ascended to His Father’s house to prepare a place for us, providing a blessed hope that gives us courage to live without murmuring, and to die without regret, when the day shall come to meet the last enemy whom He has conquered for us—whom we shall conquer through Him.

“Looking unto Jesus”—who gives repentance as well as remission of sins, to receive from Him a heart that feels its wants, and cries for mercy at His feet.

“Looking unto Jesus”—that He may teach us to look unto Him who is the author and object of our faith, that He may keep us in that faith of which He is also the finisher.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and to no other.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to

ourselves, our thoughts, our wishes, our plans; unto Jesus, and not unto the world, its allurements, its examples, its maxims, its opinions; unto Jesus, and not unto Satan, whether he tries to frighten us with his rage or to seduce us with his flatteries. Oh, how many useless questions, uneasy scruples, dangerous compromises with evil, distracted thoughts, vain dreams, bitter disappointments, painful struggles, and backslidings could we avoid by looking unto Jesus, following Him wherever He leads the way, careful not even to cast a glance at any other way lest we should lose sight of Him.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to our brethren; not even to the best and most beloved among them. If we fol-

as we are of comprehending either the reason why they are permitted or the means by which we may overcome them. The apostle began to sink as soon as he turned to look at the boisterous billows; but when he resumed looking unto Jesus, he walked upon the billows as upon a rock. The harder our task and the heavier our cross, the more it behooves us to look to Jesus only.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to the temporal blessings which we enjoy. By looking at these blessings first, we run the risk of being so much captivated by them that they even hide from our view Him who gives them. When we look unto Jesus first, we receive all these blessings as from

Him; they are chosen by His wisdom, given by His love; a thousand times more precious because received at His hands, to be enjoyed in communion with Him, and used for His glory.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to our strength; for with that we can only glorify ourselves. To glorify God we need the strength of God.

The contemplation of sin brings only death; the contemplation of Jesus brings life.

low people, we run the risk of losing our way; but if we follow Jesus, we are certain we shall never go astray. Besides, by putting a man between Christ and us, it happens that the man imperceptibly grows in our eyes, while Christ becomes less, and soon we know not how to find Christ without finding the man, and if the latter fails us, all is lost. But if, on the contrary, Jesus stands between us and our dearest friends, our attachment to our friends will be less direct, and at the same time more sweet; less passionate, but purer; less necessary, but more useful—the instrument of rich blessings in the hands of God when it shall please Him to use it, and whose absence will still prove a blessing when it shall please Him to dispense with it.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to the obstacles we meet in our path. From the moment that we stop to consider them, they astonish and unnerve us and cast us down, incapable

Jesus’ strength fortifies

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to our weakness. Have we ever become stronger by lamenting our weakness? But if we look unto Jesus, His strength shall fortify our hearts, and we shall break forth into songs of praise.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to our sins. The contemplation of sin brings only death; the contemplation of Jesus brings life. It was not by looking at their wounds but by beholding the brazen serpent, that the Israelites were healed.

“Looking unto Jesus”—and not to the law. The law gives us its commands but does not impart the strength necessary to obey them. The law always condemns, never pardons. To be under the law is to be out of the reach of grace. In the same measure as we make our obedience the means of our salvation, we shall lose our peace, our strength, our joy, because we forget that “Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that

believeth" (Rom. 10:4). As soon as the law has constrained us to seek salvation only in Christ, He alone can command obedience, an obedience which asks no less than our whole hearts and our most secret thoughts, but which is no longer an iron yoke and an intolerable burden, having become an easy yoke and a light burden—an obedience which He makes lovely while it is also obligatory—an obedience which He not only enjoins but inspires, and which, well understood, is less a consequence of our salvation than a part of the same, and like every other part is the gift of free grace.

"Looking unto Jesus"—and not to what we are doing for Him. If we are too much taken up with our work, we may forget our Master—we may have our hands full and our hearts empty; but if we constantly look unto Jesus, we cannot forget our work; if our hearts are filled with His love, our hands will also be active in His service.

"Looking unto Jesus"—and not to the apparent success of our efforts. Outward success is not always the measure of real success, and besides, God has not enjoined success upon us, but only labor; He will ask an account of our labor but not of our success. Why, then, should we be too much concerned about it? We must sow the seed; God will gather the fruit, if not today, it will be tomorrow; if not for us, it will be for others. Even if success were to be granted us, it would always be dangerous to look complacently upon it. On the one hand, we are tempted to claim for ourselves some of the glory; on the other, we are too prone to slacken our zeal when we see good results arising from it, and that is the very time when we ought to put forth double energy. To look at our success is to walk by sight; to look unto Jesus and to persevere in following and in serving Him is to walk by faith.

Grace for today

"Looking unto Jesus"—and not to the gifts that we have received or are now receiving from Him. As to the

grace of yesterday, it is gone with the work of yesterday; we can use it no longer. As to the grace of today, given for the work of today, it is entrusted to us, not to be contemplated, but to be used; not to be paraded, but to be employed.

"Looking unto Jesus"—and not to the depths of sorrow we feel for our sins, or to the degree of humility they produce in us. It is looking unto Him which above everything else shall cause godly tears to flow and sinful pride to fall.

O God, well pleased art Thou*
With Thy beloved Son!
Before Thy feet I bow
And plead what He has done;
For His name's sake remember me,
His precious Book is all my plea.

Thou, God, hast set Him forth
Worthy of endless fame,
I won His matchless worth,
And plead no other name;
My faith is centered in His blood,
Which brings poor sinners home to God.

O God, behold our Shield!
And let us share His grace,
While to the Lamb we yield
The brightness of Thy face;
Through Him, O God exalted high,
Through Thy Anointed, lo, I cry!

*This poem was attached to a copy of this sermon found in the Bible of the late W. H. Branson, president of the General Conference from 1950 to 1954.

"Looking unto Jesus"—and not to the liveliness of our joy or the fervor of our love. Otherwise, if our love seems to grow cold, and our joy is dim—whether on account of lukewarmness or for the trial of our faith—as soon as these emotions have passed, we shall think we have lost our strength and we shall give way to hopeless discouragement—if not to shameful inactivity. Ah! let us rather remember that if the sweetness of religious emotions be sometimes wanting, faith and its power are left us; and that we may

be always abounding in the work of the Lord, let us be constantly looking, not to our wayward hearts, but unto Jesus, the same yesterday, today, and forever.

"Looking unto Jesus"—and not to our faith. The last artifice of Satan, when he cannot lead us out of the way, is to turn our eyes from Jesus to look at our faith and thus discourage us, if it is weak; to puff us up, if it is strong; and in either case to destroy it. For it is not our faith which makes us strong, but it is Jesus through faith.

We are not strengthened by contemplating our faith but by looking unto Jesus.

"Looking unto Jesus"—for it is from Him and in Him that we should learn, not only without injury, but for the good of our souls, as much as it is fitting that we should know of the world and of ourselves—of our misery, our dangers, our resources, our victory; seeing all these things in their true light, because He shall show them to us at the time and in the measure when the knowledge shall be best calculated to produce in us the fruit of humility and wisdom, of gratitude and courage, of watchfulness and prayer. All that is well for us to know, Jesus will teach us. All that He does not teach us, it is better for us not to know.

"Looking unto Jesus"—during all the time which He has allotted us here below—unto Jesus ever anew, without allowing either the remembrance of the past, which we know so little of, or the cares of an unknown future to distract our thoughts; unto Jesus now, if we have never looked unto Him; unto Jesus again, if we have ceased to do so; unto Jesus always, with a more fixed and steadfast gaze, "changed into the same image from glory to glory," and thus waiting for the hour when He shall call us to pass from earth to heaven, and from time to eternity, the promise, the blessed hour, when at last we shall be "like him, for we shall see him as he is."

"And there came a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him" (Luke 9:35). ■

Before I knew you

Nancy Canwell

From the moment I found out I was going to be a mother, my ministry became even more fulfilling.



Nancy Canwell is a special assistant editor of Ministry.

My husband, Keith, and I, both pastors, were expecting our first child. This was a special time in my life. I had wondered what it would be like pastoring while pregnant. Would it somehow be different?

It was. From the moment I found out the happy news, my ministry became even more fulfilling.

You see, the joy of becoming a mother spilled over into my ministry. It seemed that I thought more seriously about life and contemplated more what I was doing as I served in my ministerial role. Throughout my pregnancy, while fulfilling my pastoral responsibilities, I had many conversations with my unborn child. I would often talk to her about life, about servanthood. I even got in some motherly advice! Before I knew her, she was a large part of my life as well as my ministry.

Since this is May, when we celebrate Mother's Day (United States), this article is a tribute to those moms who also serve in ministry. As I share some of my conversations with my unborn child, and later, conversations after her birth, maybe you'll catch a glimpse of how she made richer my ministry, as well as my relationship with God.

November 22, 1992

It's your daddy's birthday. I've just given him the best gift I could ever give him. No other gift ever has,

or ever will, match this one. I've given him a card that says "To the Best Daddy in the World," and inside I've written, "See you August 1! I love you, Baby Canwell." He just keeps on looking at me and repeating, "Honey, what does this mean?" I tell him it means we're going to have a baby. With tears in our eyes we're filled with joy and awe. We give you to God tonight. We dedicate you to Him and ask Him to keep you safe until you're born. And we ask that even at this age you'll be filled with the Holy Spirit. When you and I are alone, I sing you a song I wrote just for you:

Little child inside of me,
I wonder how it can be?
You were formed with our love;
We've been blessed from above.
And I'll always love you.
And you'll always be
the greatest gift in all the world
to our family.

December 1992

No one knows about you yet but your daddy and me. We've decided to keep it a secret until we get together with family at Christmas. On this Sabbath morning, your dad and I are dedicating several babies in our congregation. Before the service we exchange a smile and a knowing glance. As we stand side by side, we feel a common ground with these new parents, although they are totally un-

aware. After we've dedicated the babies, I quietly say my own dedication prayer for you. When speaking of you to God, I call you "our child," meaning His, mine, and your dad's.

* * * *

I can hardly believe my ears and eyes! We're visiting the doctor for the first time, and even though you were conceived only eight weeks ago, we can hear your heart beating. You really *are* there! You're *alive*! Then we're taken into a dark room and through the technology of ultrasound, we can actually see your form on a screen. You're a tiny person. You're only one inch in length, and you look like a peanut with arm buds! Today I nickname you "My Little Peanut." We can see your heart beating strong inside your tiny chest. I wipe tears off my cheek.

Overcome by the wonder of it all, your daddy begins reciting part of Psalm 139 as we look at you. "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well." The text goes on to say: "My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth, your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (verses 13-16, NIV).

January 1993

It's a cold afternoon as we stand at the graveside of a church member. As I listen to one of the other pastors speak words of comfort and hope, I reach inside my coat pockets and put my hands over you. *How ironic*, I think, *that here we have both life and death. We're saying goodbye to an elderly man, and here I stand with a new life growing inside me.* I hope that you won't have to experience death, little one. I hope that Jesus comes in your lifetime.

February 1993

Your dad and I are at the hospital visiting a very sick member. She needs the healing touch of God, or she'll not live. With one of the other pastors we pray and anoint her. She's at peace, having rested her life in God's most

When speaking of you to God, I call you "our child," meaning His, mine, and your dad's.

capable hands. After the anointing, while people are visiting, I think of you. I pray that you'll grow up to be a compassionate person. That you'll feel hurt for those who are hurting. That you'll try to ease their pain by gentle touches and kind words. I pray that you'll be a servant.

April 1993

Today is a special Sabbath for me. Today is my commissioning service, the day I'm set apart as a woman pastor through a special ceremony and prayer. Some people are unhappy about the service. They think that I should be ordained, just as the pastors who are men. Although I've never been a crusader for the ordination of women, I've always felt it would be an honor to be ordained. And because we know now that you're a girl, I can't help thinking as I sit in front of my congregation, *What will it be like for your generation?* Will women in the ministry be a common thing, or will there still be walls to break down gently, showing that yes, God calls both men and women to the ministry? But these thoughts don't overshadow the meaning of this special service. Before I stand to preach, you begin kicking hard inside me—maybe you feel my nervousness too!

As the ministers kneel around me in a circle to give the prayer of dedication, I feel that somehow you're being dedicated too, for you're such a part of me. I wonder what form of ministry God will call you to.

May 1993

Some teenage girls are in my office. They're so excited about you! They all want to feel you move and are full of questions. I'm able to share with them the joy of having a life growing inside me. I want to implant in their minds that *this is life*, so they'll keep themselves sexually pure and not face an unwanted pregnancy and thoughts of abortion. I try to show them how special it is to have a child when you've found and married the right person and the timing is right.

June 1993

We're all in robes, waiting in the wing of the baptistry. I've baptized others since you became a part of me, but today seems somehow different. I think about the symbolism here. How these two young people are being "born again." They get the chance to begin their lives again, as if they were babies. Jesus taught this to Nicodemus.

When you're born, you'll be perfect, never having sinned. How I'll ache inside the first time I have to witness you do something wrong—a sharp word, being selfish, showing improper anger. Your daddy says it would be wonderful if we could raise you in heaven. What an awesome responsibility he and I have to raise you in this world!

* * * *

Your daddy and I are standing in front of a crowded church as the bride and groom walk down the aisle toward us. We've done their premarital counseling; now their wedding day has arrived, and we are two of the ministers marrying them. As I watch the bride, dressed in white, my eyes fill with tears. I realize that someday I'll watch you walk down the aisle. I

pray you will make the right choice in a life companion—God’s choice.

July 1993

With your daddy at my side, I’m not afraid. This is the moment we’ve been waiting nine long months for, and I’m thrilled (even if you did decide that 1:30 a.m. was when you wanted to come!). The pain and work of childbirth are exhausting, and I ask your dad to pray as I hold on to him. After many weary hours of labor I close my eyes for a short rest after a hard push when I hear your dad and the nurse say, “Look! Nancy, look!” I look, and there you are! The room is flooded with joy. I’ll never forget how soft and warm you felt when they placed you on my chest. I cried and kissed you. *You are a miracle.* How can anyone think there is no God? As your daddy takes you to the nursery to be checked, he tells you, “I’m sorry I don’t have a better world to offer you.” But he assures you that Jesus is working on that—that it is for His new earth we live and wait.

Later, when I’m finally alone with you, I hold you close and pray for you. I ask God to take you, to claim you as His child. I ask Him to protect you and to keep you from the evil one. I ask Him to raise you as a girl and then a woman of God, so you’ll never leave His side. We’ve named you Christina, which means “follower of Christ.” I pray you will always follow Him.

November 1993

It’s Sabbath morning. You’ve been home a little more than three months now. After much prayer, discussion with your dad, and counsel from people I respect, I’ve made a life-changing decision. I stand before the congregation I’ve come to love over the past five years of ministry. They’ve been incredibly supportive and affirming of my ministry, and accepted you right from the beginning. My calling and dream since I was 10 years old to be a full-time pastor has been fulfilled in this church. But now I must tell what I feel God’s will is for me at this stage in our lives.

I tell them that I’ll be taking an extended leave of absence from the ministry until you and any brothers or sisters you may have are older and in school; that I still feel called to the ministry, but also feel called to motherhood. I assure them that I’m not saying our decision is one that every woman should make. Some women must work, while others choose to work. Every family must make their own decision, and this one is ours. I explain to them that your dad and I were committed to raising you ourselves, and so we tried taking shifts between home and office, as well as taking you to occasional meetings.

It didn’t take me long to realize that this wasn’t the kind of life I wanted for you or us. Pastors’ lives are so busy, with day, evening, and weekend responsibilities. The reason we had you was so that we could be a family, but we weren’t all together enough. Your dad even offered to be the one to stay home for a few years if I didn’t want to put a hold on my ministry—he’s always been this supportive. But no, I wanted to stay home with you. When I was at work I missed you so! In closing, I thank the members for all they’ve meant to me through the years, and ask for their support as I make the transition

You didn’t take me away from the ministry, but rather you’ve given me a new form of ministry—that of raising a child for the Lord.

from pastor to mother.

As I walk off the platform, they applaud. The senior pastor stops me and hands me a dozen long-stemmed roses. I lower my head so no one will see the tears flowing. When I lift my head a few moments later, I see the entire congregation on its feet, still

applauding. They’re showing appreciation. But more important, they’re saying: We support you in your decision to be a full-time mom.

I see you in the back of the church, cradled in your daddy’s arms, and I wave to you. Don’t mistake my tears as regret. I *want* to stay home with you. But if I weren’t sad to be leaving the ministry for a time, it would mean I hadn’t enjoyed it—and I’ve loved every day of it. Today’s a happy/sad day, but that’s OK. I have a peaceful feeling that I’m doing what’s right. There’ll be plenty of years ahead to serve professionally in the ministry, but you won’t always be my little girl.

January 1994

It’s nighttime. You’ve been asleep for a couple hours now, and I tiptoe into your nursery to look at you. You look so beautiful and peaceful lying here. It’s been two months since I began my leave from pastoring. Some are disappointed with my decision, I’m sure, while others support it. As for me, I know I’m where I should be—here at home with you. You make it all worthwhile, you know—your smiles when I answer your cries in the middle of the night; your laughter when I don’t even know I’ve done something funny; your acceptance of me even on those days when the business of being a new mom has kept me from dressing nice or curling my hair; the pleased look on your face when you’ve learned something new. The list goes on.

I’m glad that I was a pastor before I was a mother. Being a pastor has made me a better mom for you. It’s taught me better how to show compassion, how to guide gently, how to discipline my life, and how to show God’s love by the way I treat others.

I love you, Christina. You’re the desire of my heart. You didn’t take me away from the ministry, but rather you’ve given me a new form of ministry—that of raising a child for the Lord. It’s a high calling. One that has eternal significance.

Good night, precious child. ■

Let's preach the distinctives

Robert S. Folkenberg

Adventist preaching finds its distinctiveness in the context of the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ.



Robert S. Folkenberg is the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

In previous articles of this series I've shared two convictions about preaching: that it should be biblical and that it should present the gospel clearly and convincingly. Here I share another concern: we also should proclaim those truths that set us apart as a people.

Seventh-day Adventists are called to preach "the everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6, 7), but in a particular setting. Throughout history God's messengers have proclaimed His only way of saving humanity from sin. While the essential message hasn't changed, its context has. In Noah's time, the gospel came in the setting of the approaching flood. In Moses' day, the Exodus experience shaped it. For the people of John the Baptist's era, the message was cast in the expectation of the Messiah's appearance. Jesus, the Word made flesh, proclaimed the gospel in terms of the kingdom of heaven that was breaking through in His life and work.

So today God commissions us to preach the good news in the setting of a worldwide call to "Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (verse 7). Seventh-day Adventist preaching, then, cannot be just like that of any others. We are a prophetic people with a prophetic message!

What are the Adventist distinctives?

The three angels' messages of Revelation 14:6-14 give us our marching orders. For us, the everlasting gospel

comes in the setting of:

1. *A global mission.* Every congregation, no matter how small in size or how humble in its meeting place, is part of our worldwide fellowship. Our message indeed is going to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. God has brought this church together in a unique blend of people of more than 200 countries. Seventh-day Adventist preaching should lift the sights of the people, helping them to think big, plan big, do big—to be global in their outlook. Further, our preaching should call us all to rejoice in the incredible diversity of God's people, as we respect and love one another regardless of color, race, language, age, gender, or social standing. We are one in Christ.

2. *The judgment hour.* This truth opens up the understanding of the heavenly sanctuary, with Jesus as our great high priest who represents us before the throne of God. It sweeps our minds away from the petty things of this earth to the very headquarters of the universe.

3. *Worship of the Creator.* In an age when men and women worship themselves, sex, sports, pleasure, or money, Seventh-day Adventist preaching must exalt God as the only true object of adoration. It must proclaim Him as the Creator and Source of all things, as well as our Redeemer and Lord.

4. *The law of God.* God's last-day people will love and follow Him, no matter what the cost. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (verse 12). We are lawkeepers, not in order to be saved, but because we have been saved. For

us, obedience is the expression of who we are as children of the King of heaven.

5. *The Sabbath.* Of all the commandments, the Sabbath is the seal of our love and allegiance to our loving heavenly Father. By choosing to set aside for Him the day that He set aside and blessed, we honor Him as Creator and Lord of time and space. For us, Sabbathkeeping isn't a burden but a privilege and a blessing. More than ever, we look forward to its sacred, peaceful hours in the midst of the frantic pace of modern living.

6. *The great controversy.* We believe we are engaged in a cosmic struggle between good and evil. The "beast" mentioned in Revelation 14:9-11 represents the forces that oppose God's last-day people. But we serve One who is far greater, One who holds the destiny of the world in His hands and who will bring us through any and all troubles. By His cross He has won the decisive battle in the struggle with the demonic powers, and His triumph is assured.

7. *The second coming.* "I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one 'like a son of man' with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand" (verse 14, NIV). We are Seventh-day Adventists—we believe Jesus will come again. We know He will keep His promise (John 14:1-3). We believe that the great prophetic time lines and the signs all around point to the climax of the ages when God will send forth His Son a second time, just as He sent Him to earth 2,000 years ago in "the fulness of the time" (Gal. 4:4).

8. *The Spirit of Prophecy.* Another Seventh-day Adventist distinctive, not found in the three angels' messages but identified in Revelation 12:17 and 19:10, is our belief that God has revealed Himself to His end-time church through the Spirit of Prophecy. We believe that God used Ellen White to bring His messages to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her counsels do not add to or take the place of Scripture, but we accept them as a continuing source of guidance and nurture. While Adventist preaching should be utterly biblical in its foundation and content,

it should not fail to affirm confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy.

What breathtaking themes are these! They speak powerfully to life in our times. Seventh-day Adventist preaching cannot help being relevant!

In several places Ellen White describes our distinctive teachings as "the pillars," "the landmarks," or "the foundations." She specifically identifies them as the sanctuary and its cleansing, the three angels' messages, the law of God, the Sabbath, and the nonimmortality of the soul.¹ "Let the truths that are the foundation of our faith be kept before the people," she urges. "We are now to understand what the pillars of our faith are—the truths that have made us as a people what we are, leading us on step by step."²

She further counsels: "Ministers should present the sure word of prophecy as the foundation of the faith of Seventh-day Adventists. . . . The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is presented to me again and again as something that is to be brought to the attention of all. . . . The time in which we are living calls for constant vigilance, and God's ministers are to present the light on the Sabbath question. They should warn the inhabitants of the world that Christ is soon to come with power and great glory. The last message of warning to the world is to lead men to see the importance that God attaches to His law."³

How shall we present the distinctives?

We should present our distinctive truths only in terms of the everlasting gospel. This means that Christ will be the center of every doctrine, whether it be the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the law, or the state of the dead. Christ must not be added as an afterthought. He must be the foundation, the heart, the alpha and the omega, the first and the last.

Sometimes I find that some Seventh-day Adventists do not seem interested in doctrinal presentations. The reason, I think, isn't because our distinctives don't touch people's lives. What could be more relevant than the Sabbath and the Second Coming? Too often in the past we have preached these truths in a dry, theoretical, or argumentative manner. We haven't

presented them with the love of Jesus. We haven't applied them to daily living so people can see the difference such doctrines can make.

So we must study much and pray much if we are to present our distinctive truths effectively. We must ask the Lord to set aside our pride. Our purpose isn't to prove that we're right and someone else is wrong. It isn't to put down someone we know, perhaps even one of our own members. We aren't called to preach *at* people but to *proclaim* the everlasting gospel, which is always *good* news no matter what the specific subject is.

Finally, if we want our preaching to have power, we'd better plead with the Holy Spirit for power to *live* the distinctives as well as speak about them. We must treasure the Sabbath as a precious, gracious gift from our loving Father. The Second Coming must be "the blessed hope" when we will meet our Saviour face-to-face, not an event of terror and anxiety. The judgment must give us hope as we trust in the One who speaks on our behalf and frees us from all uncertainty and apprehension. The great controversy must focus on the power and victory of Jesus, not the deceptions of Satan and the trials of the last days.

What we *are* will mean more than what we preach. Our strongest sermon will be our lives overflowing with Christian love for all.

May the Lord send His Spirit to revive His people. May our preaching be *biblical* preaching that comes from the Word and centers in the Word. May our preaching be *gospel* preaching that points listeners to the Lamb of God that takes away our sins and gives us the assurance of salvation *now*. And may our preaching faithfully portray the Seventh-day Adventist *distinctives* that provide the setting for the proclamation of the everlasting gospel in our day. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville, Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), pp. 30, 31.

² *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³ White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub.. Assn., 1948), p. 148.

Religion in America: change and continuity

B. B. Beach

Religion retains a strong hold on the American life, sometimes pulling it to extremes.



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Take a look at the religious landscape of America, both its enormity and its diversity: nearly 500,000 churches, synagogues, temples, and mosques; no fewer than 2,000 denominations; and countless independent churches and parachurch movements. The United States has one Protestant church for every 500 adults.¹

The Gallup organization uses a benchmark known as the Princeton Religious Index. This benchmark is based on eight key religious beliefs and practices: belief in God, religious preference, religious membership, worship attendance, confidence in church, confidence in clergy, importance of religion, and religion's ability to answer current problems. The index for the U.S. now stands at 656 (maximum possible = 1,000). The highest rate was in 1960 and the lowest in the late 1980s. Since 1991 the rate has started moving up again.

Thomas A. Stewart argues in a *Fortune* magazine article that "whatever else it is, religion is big business. America has more clergy than Ford and Chrysler together have employees. If U.S. religion were a company, it would be No. 5 on the Fortune 500 list of the largest U.S. corporations, with some \$50 billion of revenues, and this does not include an estimated \$75 billion a year in volunteer work."²

This article will deal with certain characteristics, trends, and projections concerning religion in America.

Breadth v. depth

George Gallup makes a significant point about American religion. "Probing the religious and spiritual lives of Americans is an extraordinarily difficult task—there is no tougher assignment for survey researchers—but there is, many would agree, none more important. And this importance is likely to grow in the decades ahead as religion is increasingly shaped from the 'bottom up' rather than the 'top down'—from the people in the pews rather than by the church hierarchy."³ Gallup further states, "We now know a great deal about the *breadth* of religion in America, but not about the *depth*. In many respects, the inner life is virtually unexplored terrain in terms of empirical studies."⁴ Well has it been said, and Gallup agrees, that this century has concentrated on the "exploration of *outer space*" and the next should "be devoted to an exploration of *inner space*."⁵

Continuity

One of the most consistent aspects of America's religious life is its durability. In defiance of all the dramatic social changes, "the religious beliefs and practices of Americans today look very much like those of the 1930s and 1940s."⁶ The percentage of church members and churchgoers today closely match the figures recorded in the 1930s. It must, however, be noted that this does not apply to all churches and denominations in the same way.

Some are up and some are heading down. While the overall market of religion is not depressed, "market share has changed drastically."⁷

Indeed, figures for 1991 show a growth in church membership. Two out of three adults (68 percent) claimed church membership (3 percent more than in 1990). Church attendance was also up, with 42 percent in 1991 versus 40 percent in 1990. In a typical week four out of 10 people attend church, though some recent research suggests that this figure may be on the high side. The highest attendance is among college graduates and middle-income Americans.

Religious individualism

Americans also remain highly independent in their religious interests. Religious liberty has enabled religion to flourish in the U.S. in many forms and has contributed to its vigor and vitality. It has also been a contributing factor to religious individualism. In fact, *denominational switching* is a common phenomenon in the United States. About one in four adults changes religious affiliation at least once. Protestants (especially smaller denominations) benefit from this switching. Despite this strong sense of religious liberty, American history also records religious intolerance and bigotry, greed and dishonesty on the part of some religious leaders, and rancor and acrimony among and within denominations.

Mainline Protestant decline

Mainline Protestant denominations (Episcopalians, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, United Church of Christ, and the Christian Church) are on the decline. Russell Chandler points out that *mainline* Protestant denominations have gone to the *sidelines*, and the Evangelicals (a term often associated with "born-again Christians") have moved to the *front lines* and have even grabbed the *headlines*.⁸ The traditional Protestant majority has slipped from 67 percent in 1952 to 57 percent in 1987.

Among mainline Protestant churches, proportion of members under 30 is below the national average. Generally speaking, a church grows when it keeps its children and when it evangelizes. Gallup and Castelli point out that evangelism is "virtually invisible" in mainline Protestant denominations. Sunday schools for children have also had a decline of 55 percent between 1970 and 1990. However, recent evangelistic emphasis among these mainline denominations may help change the picture.

Rise of Evangelicals

A 1990 survey of the 500 fastest-growing Protestant churches in the United States indicates that 89 percent of them were evangelical (nonmainline).⁹ Evangelicals are usu-

This century has concentrated on the "exploration of *outer space*" and the next should "be devoted to an exploration of *inner space*."

ally associated with fundamentalists, charismatics, and Pentecostals. The Assemblies of God (the largest Pentecostal group) has quadrupled in size since 1965. The Southern Baptist Convention (the largest Protestant denomination) has had steady growth despite internal wrangling between so-called fundamentalists and moderates.

Few priests but many parishioners

The Roman Catholic Church is faced with a different challenge: fewer priests and more parishioners. Between 1970 and 1990 the number of priests went down from 59,000 to 53,500. At the same time the Catholic population increased by 7 million, currently forming about 25 percent of the country's population. Nearly a third of its membership is Hispanic,

although Hispanics are joining Protestant churches at the rate of about 60,000 a year. Another problem for the Catholic Church, according to Gallup, is a decline in attendance at Mass, from 74 percent in 1958 to 48 percent in 1988.

Islamic growth and Jewish status quo

A recent development in the American religious scene is the growth of Islam, most of the members African-Americans. Islam now rivals Judaism as the largest minority religion in the United States. Jews have remained at about 2 percent since 1970. The Jews are concerned with the growth of Islam, the low Jewish birth and conversion rates, the high rates of marriage to non-Jews, and the low attendance at their religious services. Divisions between the four branches of Judaism (Orthodox, Conservative, Reformed, Reconstructionist) are also a source of concern.

Mormon growth

In 1989 there were 4.2 million Mormons in the United States, concentrated mostly in Utah, California, and Idaho. Barna expects the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to reach 10 million members by the year 2000.¹⁰

Segregated churches and inclusive society

America is less a melting pot than a salad bowl, with the ingredients keeping their own identity and taste. Racism is still a dominant issue, with the danger of increased tension between minorities (Cubans versus Haitians, Blacks versus Hispanics) becoming real.

The seven largest Black denominations claim about 80 percent of the 24 million Black Christians. Of this, 77 percent are Protestant, mostly Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal. Gallup and Barna indicate that Blacks tend to be more evangelical and traditional, also praying and studying the Bible more. One weak spot is the apparent trend of fewer Blacks enter-

ing the ministry. Many Black leaders are not pushing for integration of churches, but advocate an inclusive society that values diversity without conformity.

Church-state issues

Church-state relations are becoming increasingly important. The Supreme Court has vigorously supported the rights of religious minorities, but recently there seems to have been a change. For example, in order to restrict the free exercise of religion, the state was expected to show a "compelling interest" to do so, and even then the state had to use the least restrictive means possible. However, according to the 1990 *Oregon v. Smith* Supreme Court decision, the state no longer needed to show a compelling interest. All that was necessary was that the law be applicable to everybody and not single out any one religion. This was, of course, bad news for religious minorities, because the majority is usually quite able to look after itself through the political/representative process. Fortunately, in November 1993 the Freedom Restoration Act became law and restored by congressional fiat the "compelling interest" protection.

In the future, churches will come under pressure to comply with non-discrimination laws, those dealing with gender, sexual orientation, race, and even religion, especially laws regarding employment. Questions will also be raised regarding preferential tax treatment of churches as tax-exempt charitable organizations, regarding religious chaplaincies, and parsonage allowance for ministers allowing tax deduction. Also, churches will increasingly face lawsuits dealing with clergy malpractice and sex abuse.

Christian Right

The Christian Right is another important issue in the American religious scene. A large number of Christians feels that America should be a "Christian nation," and greater Chris-

tian influence should be felt in the so-called religiously "naked public square" (to use Richard Neuhaus's phrase). Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority had considerable political influence in the early 1980s. Now we have

The God in whom they believe is often only an affirming one, not a demanding one.

the "Christian Coalition," a grassroots organization, sophisticated in methodology and concentrating on local politics, trying to control school boards, public library boards or committees, etc. Its influence was keenly felt at the 1992 Republican Convention, especially in the formulation of the Republican platform (abortion, family values, etc.). A more extreme group is the "Coalition on Revival," with reconstructionists like R. J. Rushdoony wanting to establish in America a sort of the kingdom of God with Old Testament theocratic aspects.

Concern regarding two extremes

Many Americans are concerned regarding two extremes: Fundamentalism/Christian Right and secular humanism. About half of American adults are concerned about religious fundamentalism. About a third are concerned about secular humanism with its emphasis on moral relativism, and thus the denial of moral/religious absolutes.

Some emerging trends

Gallup identifies some of the emerging trends in religion in the U.S.¹¹

1. *Beliefs.* Virtually all Americans say they believe in God, or at least a universal spirit. Most believe in a

personal God who watches over and judges people. A substantial majority believes that they will be called before God at judgment day to answer for their sins. Most believe in a living, indwelling Christ and in His second coming. The vast majority of Americans accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

2. *Religious experience.* One-third of Americans consistently claim to have had a profound religious experience, either sudden or gradual, that has changed their lives.

3. *Religious practice.* Americans find meaning in prayer. A consistent 40 percent attend church or synagogue every week and 70 percent say they are church members. One third watch some religious TV each week.

4. *Religion as an institution.* Of the key institutions that elicit respect in society, the church rates near the top. The clergy is held in high esteem, equal to doctors. Three fourths of Americans say that religion is very important to them now or was so at an earlier point in their lives. Fifty-six percent claim to be current members or to have attended services during the past six months.

However, Gallup points out that if one digs a little deeper, one becomes less impressed with the sincerity of the faith claimed by Americans. Americans pray, but often in a desultory fashion. The God in whom they believe is often only an affirming one, not a demanding one.

Americans revere the Bible but don't read it. The proof is the sorry state of biblical literacy in the United States. The lack of understanding of one's own religious traditions can result in large numbers of Americans being uprooted from their faith and, therefore, rather easy prey for movements that glorify self. Gallup concludes that while religion is important in the lives of Americans, it does not have primacy. In selecting 19 social values, "following God's will" is far down the list among the public's choices of the most important, and well behind "happiness" and "satisfaction."

Five gaps condition religion

Gallup uses five gaps to describe the religious condition of Americans today.¹² First, the obvious gap in the vertical relationship with God. Second, the gap on the horizontal level between humans, with separateness being a basic problem in American society. Third, the ethical gap, the difference between the way people think and the way they actually do. While religion is highly popular in the U.S., it does not change peoples' lives to the degree one would expect from the level of professed faith. Fourth, the knowledge gap between stated faith and the lack of the most basic knowledge about that faith. Fifth, the gap between believers and believers, involving a decoupling of belief and practice.

Decoupling of faith and church

Millions claim to be Christians, but they do not participate actively in the congregational lives of their churches. This tends to lead toward the privatization of faith. It's true that Americans have traditionally exhibited an independent attitude toward religion, but recent Gallup surveys note a different emphasis: the "decoupling" of faith and church. This trend may have serious implications for organized religion. It can easily hurt the church's ability to raise funds, recruit staff and volunteers, and influence public policy. For example, in 1987, Gallup's survey indicated that 77 percent of American Catholics said they were more likely to follow their own conscience in making moral decisions, while only 14 percent said they would follow the pope.¹³

Growth projections

What about the future of the church? One way to estimate the future growth of a church group is to consider its retention program for its young members and its evangelism for others. While Catholics score low on evangelization, they have a significant proportion of persons under 30. Combined with the expected increase in immigration of Hispanics, Catholics

are likely to continue increasing in proportion with the population. Baptists under 30 amount to 1 percent higher than the national average, and they rank high in evangelism. Therefore, they are also likely to increase their growth percentage. The same with the Mormons. Their under-30 group is above national average, and they rank high in evangelization.

The proportion of those under 30 without any religious affiliation is substantially higher than the national average. But the unaffiliated do not "evangelize." In recent years, the religiously unaffiliated have steadily increased and are likely to continue to do so. Evangelicals are just about at the national average in their share of people under 30, but they are very active in evangelism. This group is likely to increase. The proportion of members of mainline Protestant denominations that is under 30 is well below the national average. These churches are also low in evangelism. Hence Gallup assumes that their proportion of the population will continue to decline. Jews do not evangelize and their under-30 group ranks below the national average, and so they too are likely to decrease.

Syncretistic tendencies

Syncretistic tendencies are noted in the American religious scene.¹⁴ Afloat are synthetic faiths, emphasizing ecology, self-help, transformational psychology, astrology, occultism, New Age movement, holistic health and healing, science and mysticism. Even though the number of Americans who belong to non-Western religions is very small, perhaps

less than 1 percent of the population, the group is growing.¹⁵

However, the growth of syncretistic cocktail religion, or what Chandler calls "spirituality, cafeteria style," should cause concern to committed Christians. Hitherto because of the struggle between political ideologies of democratic liberalism and totalitarian Communism, the battle between competing religious worldviews has been largely obscured. But now as we face the twenty-first century, the struggle for control of human minds and hearts will escalate between believers in a personal God with moral standards, and those advocating either secular humanism or New Age universal mind mysticism with at best relative moral criteria.

Future belongs to the laity

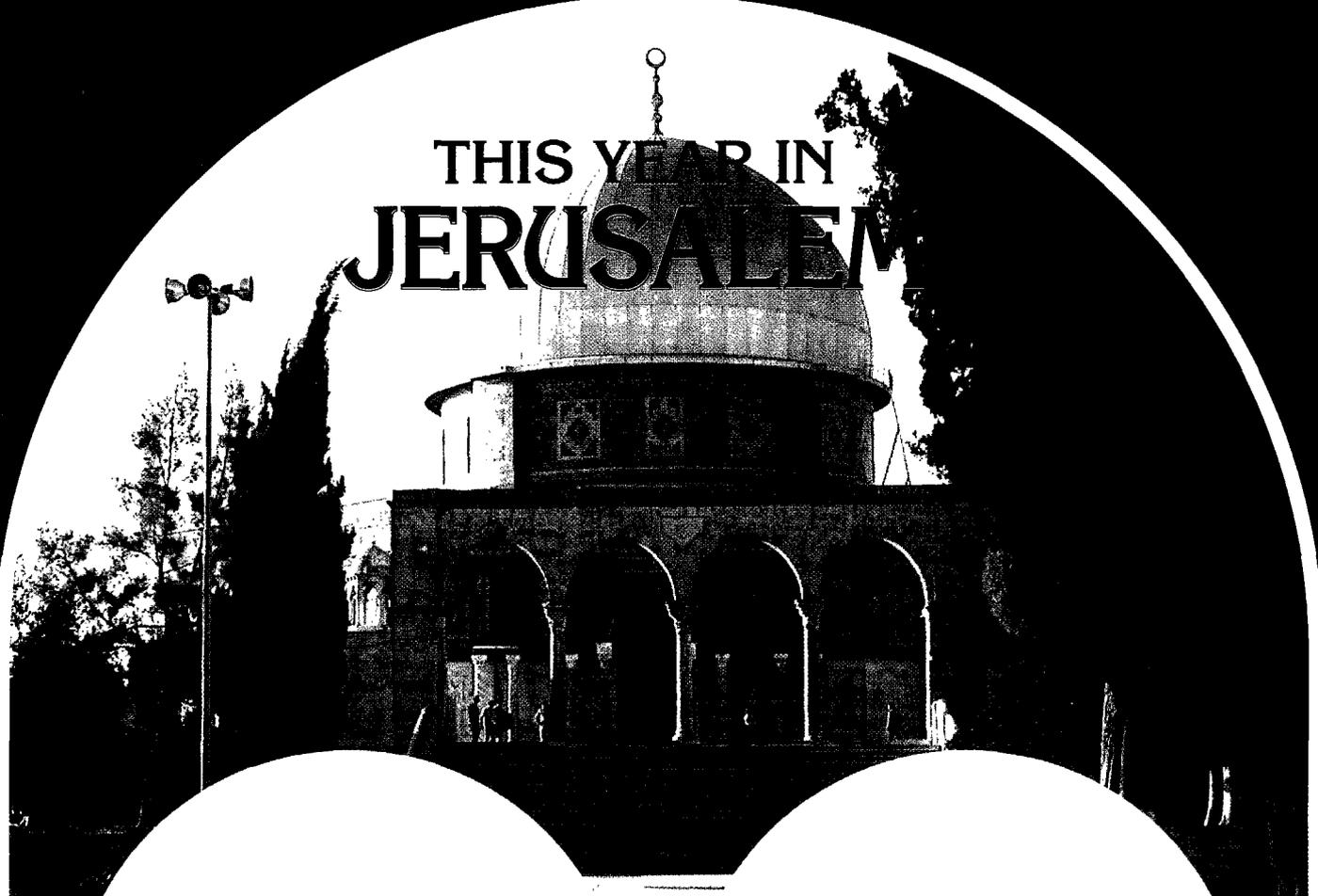
Seminary enrollment has been on the decline recently. This is understandable, since most seminaries are affiliated with the declining mainline churches. However, as Stewart rightly points out, this "clerical downsizing is a stunning opportunity to streamline bureaucracy and increase the role of lay members."¹⁶ The future of the church belongs to the laity. A special survey¹⁷ conducted by Gallup and Castelli asked who should have the greater influence in determining the future of religion in America: the clergy or the people who attend services? By a 6-1 margin, the respondents indicated that the laity should have the greater influence. These findings show rather overwhelming support for a greater lay role in church leadership in the coming decade. For this reason, Gallup asks that the 1990s be appropriately labeled "The Decade of the Laity."

Four strategies—with God as the center

Christians will soon celebrate the 2000th anniversary of Christ's birth. Some ask, "Will there be anything to celebrate?" After a comprehensive survey sociologist Robert Bella concluded that Americans have two overriding goals in life: personal success

(Continued on page 29)

“Clerical downsizing is a stunning opportunity to streamline bureaucracy and increase the role of lay members.”



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Making the most of your time

James A. Cress

The same commandment that instructs us to keep the Sabbath also tells us to work six other days. If God is so interested in our use of His holy day, He also wants us to utilize effectively our ordinary days.

Even though the Christian ethic strongly emphasizes the sanctity of time, I observe far too many pastors failing to organize their time for maximum productivity. If you find yourself too busy, the following suggestions may help.

Organize tomorrow tonight.

Before you go to sleep, invest a few minutes in planning. List everything you hope to accomplish tomorrow. Place a priority number by the most important item and relegate to every task a relative importance. When tomorrow arrives, attack your top priority until it is accomplished. Only then move to the next item. You may not accomplish everything on your list, but you will finish the most important.

Get a notebook.

Record your daily "to do" list in a notebook that you always keep with you. Write memos, messages, and other data in your notebook rather than on scraps of paper. If information is important enough to write down, it is important to preserve it where you can find it. Keep all information in the same notebook—appointments, agendas, addresses and phone numbers, etc. Initially, it may seem awkward not to reach for a scrap

of paper, but you will quickly value your ability to retrieve data after your handwriting has grown cold!

Account for your time.

Keep a log of what you do for three weeks in quarter-hour segments. You will be surprised both by your wasted time as well as by how much you accomplish in short periods. Remember, no day is typical for pastors; so don't expect your log to reflect any "typical" days. Instead, recognize the challenge of making the most effective use of untypical time.

Plan your time.

Set a weekly schedule in which you divide each day into three segments—morning, afternoon, and evening. Make sure to set some time aside for your family and personal duties, and then schedule what you intend to do with the balance of your segments. Of course, emergencies may arise, but if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. Planning will also help you manage two major time-wasters—phone calls and mail.

Tame your telephone.

Don't let others determine your day. Other people can totally direct your time as you respond to their calls. As they set your agenda, you are reacting rather than acting. If possible, get a volunteer or machine to screen your calls. Then answer those that really need a response all at one time rather than responding to each one at the moment someone else thinks you should talk.

Handle paper only once.

In dealing with mail, you can choose to act intentionally rather than haphazardly react to the postal carrier's schedule. Nothing demands that you open your mail every day. Choose a time weekly when you open accumulated letters. Try to dispense with each piece as you read it. If a report is requested, get the details now. Respond while the item is fresh. You will work more quickly now than when the letter is "cold." Never type a formal reply if a handwritten note at the bottom of the letter can suffice.

Discard everything possible. If you cannot bear to throw paper away, try this four-step process:

A: *answer* everything possible at the moment you read it.

B: *box* anything that you don't immediately handle and store the box in your closet. The papers are there if you need to retrieve them. When the box is full, start a new box and discard the first box by the time you start a third box. If you haven't needed an item in the months it has taken to fill two boxes, you likely will never need it.

C: *clip* any creative items you want to file and preserve them in a "to sort" box until that time when you plan to file sermon-starters or other ideas.

D: *discard* everything else. Toughen your resolve and throw it away. Never keep any information that someone else is responsible for maintaining. You can always get what you need from them.

Do two things simultaneously.

Listen to cassette tapes as you drive. Shave as you shower. Memorize Scripture as you exercise. Read as you ride the bus or train. Organize and sort items on your desk as you talk on the phone. Jot notes or plan program outlines while you sit in committee meetings.

Begin meetings promptly and end on time.

If you wait for your committee to arrive before you begin, they will show up late the next time too. Start meetings on time. Include a special feature or important item early, and you will train attenders to be prompt. Do everything possible to end promptly. While consensus is a worthy objective, limit the time each person can speak on an issue. Long speeches seldom share more information. They just waste time. Once major points have been noted, ask if anyone has something to contribute that has not been noted and then call for a decision.

Steal minutes.

Sometimes you are at the mercy of someone else's tardiness, or you are waiting for an appointment. Keep a book with you at all times. You would be surprised how quickly you can read a chapter. You can read many psalms in one minute. Many chapters of Scripture can be read in five minutes. Don't waste these opportune moments.

Waste some time.

Plan to give yourself some fallow days. This is not really wasted time. Your mind becomes most creative when you allow it to wander and wonder. Your best ideas will come when you are relaxed and not pushing to finish a list task. "Down time" is essential for optimum performance.

Establish reasonable expectations. You will never accomplish everything you could devise to do. So don't be frustrated when you fail. You will never regret accomplishing less in order to give quality time relating to your family and your God. In fact, the time you spend with Jesus and your spouse will make all your other time more productive! ■

Called in Christ: Our Privileges and Opportunities as God's Children

Robert S. Folkenberg, Pacific Press, Boise, Idaho (1-800-447-7377), 1993, 93 pages, US\$5.95, paper. Reviewed by Wayne Willey, pastor, Seventh-day Christian Church, Bentonville, Arkansas.

Two sentences from the author's preface summarize this book: "Only in Christ can we repent, find assurance, be victorious and compassionate, witness, await His coming, be revived, and triumph. Only in Christ—never in ourselves."

The remainder of the book expands on this message, and loses nothing in that expansion. Robert Folkenberg, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, gives the book a rich texture with his clear exposition and application of biblical principles to human experience.

The author presents his material with sensitivity. When dealing with the concept of "the remnant," he does not identify the remnant as a particular denomination that excludes others. Folkenberg expresses himself well when he says, "I believe the Seventh-day Adventist Church was called into existence specifically to do the work of the remnant." His positive focus on mission rather than structure avoids exalting one church above others.

This well-written and readable book's powerful message will encourage and inspire the reader. For maximum benefit I would recommend reading *Called in Christ* more than once. Folkenberg writes for every Christian who wants encouragement in the life of faith. I find this book and Ellen White's *Steps to Christ* the best and

clearest Seventh-day Adventist presentations of the gospel.

Folkenberg is a gifted writer, and I would like to see him write more books for the spiritual encouragement of the members of the body of Christ in every denomination.

Project Earth

William B. Badke, Multnomah Press, Portland, Oregon, 1991, 166 pages, \$7.99, paper. Reviewed by Norman Yergen, pastor, Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Beltsville, Maryland.

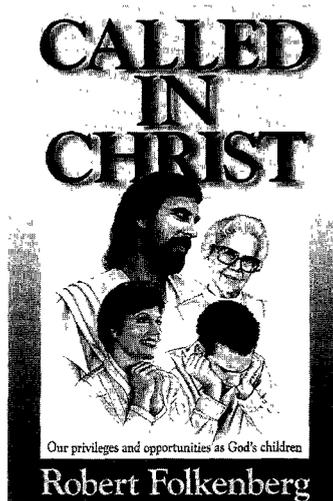
Convinced that Christians need to care about the environment, how should you approach the subject? What resources are available? What are the best biblical arguments in support of ecology?

William Badke's book helps answer these questions. In a readable, anecdotal style the author covers key issues on the topic. He addresses the charge that many ecologists are pantheists. He successfully argues that in spite of pantheistic involvement, preserving the world God created remains a Christian responsibility.

Badke speaks the language of evangelicals. He covers major theological/biblical reasons for preserving the earth. He discusses Old Testament agricultural laws, the ideal of saving not destroying, the witness of nature, how we must behave to reflect the image of God, and more.

The author points out that Christians have often been laggards on issues of justice. He gives several examples such as slave trade, child labor, and racial segregation. He concludes that in preserving the earth, non-Christians are far out in front.

These are times when Christians must end needless debate on irrelevant controversies and come to grips with the serious issues of righteousness and justice. Reading Badke's book is a good first step, and he provides resources to continue the journey.



Give to Live: How Giving Can Change Your Life

Douglas Lawson, ALTI Publishing, La Jolla, California 92037, 1991, 208 pages, US\$11.95, paper, US\$18.95, hard cover. Reviewed by Jeffrey K. Wilson, trust services/development director, Ohio Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Mount Vernon, Ohio.

Tired of complaints of what the church does wrong (the board chose the wrong carpet color, the minister isn't visiting) as excuses for not giving, I felt a more personal response was necessary—how giving benefits the giver.

In *Give to Live* I found an excellent resource filled with human interest stories, medical and sociological studies, and other proof that the happiest, longest-living people are givers.

The author comes with excellent credentials. Methodist minister and president of Douglas M.

Lawson Associates, Inc., of New York and Houston, Lawson provides fundraising counsel for nonprofit groups. He has worked for the Smithsonian Institute, CARE, UNICEF, and the Special Olympics. He helped Robert Schuller raise \$20 million to build the Crystal Cathedral.

Lawson refers to studies of Mormons and Seventh-day Adventists as evidence of how giving can prolong life. Both groups emphasize practical charity. "It may well be that the practice of brotherly love contributes to their members' greater life expectancy as much as their lifestyles." He also mentions his friend and Adventist fund-raiser Milton Murray "whose life as a philanthropist has influenced" him and whose "Giving Is Loving" calendar quotes "have touched the lives of thousands."

Lawson lists 23 advantages of generosity under the headings of physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits.

I took his list, added scriptural references, and used the compendium as a pass-out when preaching on the topic.

At a time when money and what it buys has taken center stage in the lives of many church members, dimming and sometimes snuffing out the flame of charity, pastors need to overcome their reluctance to preach about money and giving. Jesus had no such timidity: two out of three of His parables address the topic, and for every verse in the New Testament on faith or prayer we discover four on money and possessions. As a resource, pastors will find the pages of this book filled with sermon material on generosity.

Lawson concludes, "Giving is living. Without the gift of life from our parents, we would not exist. . . . Everything we are and everything we have is a gift. . . . We are called to invest in each other."

Pastors need to overcome their reluctance to preach about money and giving.

Dynamic Small Groups

W. Clarence Schilt, *Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland (1-800-765-6955)*, 1992, 94 pages, US\$7.95, Cdn\$9.95, paper. Reviewed by Linda Gallimore, CPA and pastor's wife living in Lansing, Michigan.

Dynamic Small Groups can help your church establish and maintain a small group ministry. Clarence Schilt not only utilized small groups during his 23 years as a pastor but continues to train hundreds of group leaders.

Schilt's book is easy to read and understand. He does not merely tell the church leader what to do. The author provides work sheets, evaluation sheets, checklists, forms, sample initiation questions, small group covenants, and more. The book's organization allows you to choose areas that interest you most.

Chapter 3 gives the biblical basis for small groups and makes an ideal presentation for the church family.

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Schilt defines small groups as people gathering together to form close relationships, under the lordship of Jesus, to minister to each other, and to bring praise and glory to God. Schilt emphasizes Christ-centered fellowship and wants to see churches build relationships.

The remaining six chapters and two appendixes provide specific tools for leading groups. They tell how to start a group, keep it healthy, find leadership, communicate, and keep Bible study lively. The author discusses purposes, ground rules, types of prayers, and sharing questions.

I recommend this book as an excellent guide for small groups.

Religious critiques: two approaches

The following reviews were written by Ella M. Rydzewski, editorial assistant, Ministry.

Gods Within: A Critical Guide to the New Age

Michael Perry, SPCK, London, England, 1992, 178 pages, £11.99, also available from Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tennessee (1-800-251-3320), US\$26.95, paper.

What attracts some of your church members to New Age ideas? Why do secular people, who may seriously consider Christianity, turn instead to Eastern-inspired religions? Questions like these must be asked before churches can react responsibly to the New Age movement.

Michael Perry, archdeacon of Durham in England, has studied the

middle, he brings a careful and critical assessment. Perry presents his critique not merely for information but to encourage the church to reach out to those mesmerized by New Age thought and show them "a better way." We start by understanding them.

God's Within examines the various manifestations of the New Age movement and objectively surveys why so many people find it attractive. According to Perry, there are at least three primary reasons. First, the movement speaks to the "disenfranchised of the church," such as women, devalued and unrecognized by traditional religion, and to those who feel bereft of power, meaning, and purpose within mainstream denominations.

Second, the New Age movement promises healing through its message of body-mind interconnection. Although Adventists

have taught a relationship between body and mind within the framework of God's creative design, the New Age movement stresses the enormous power of self-affirmation: you can do it, you can be perfect now, and you can find your own salvation.

Third, traditional churches have often been accused of repressing individual spirituality, and the movement claims to offer freedom from this repression.

One may not agree with all of Perry's analysis, but he writes with clarity and openness, pointing out that the real truth lies in Jesus our Saviour. His best contribution may be in the final chapter, "The Stigma of Dogma," which lets Christians know what New Agers think of Christianity and why. He shows how unwittingly the church has created a situation for pagan spiritualism to make a comeback.

Organized religion's tolerance of the slave trade and other social issues has caused a backlash against Christianity. And the church's current neglect of ecology has driven many to look for user-friendly beliefs.

In light of the spreading onslaught of New Age beliefs, Perry challenges us to critique our failures in committing ourselves to the Christian call-

The church's current neglect of ecology has driven many to look for user-friendly beliefs.

New Age phenomenon at close range—talking to New Age people. He feels that Christian response to this movement has taken two extremes: hysterical condemnation and paranoia to enthusiasm and integration. Neither of the extremes will like Perry's book. But to those in the

Rekindle the Pioneers' Fire - the Love of the Truth

E.G. White urged:

We are to repeat the words of the pioneers in our work, who knew what it cost to search for truth as for hidden treasure, and who labored to lay the foundation of our work.
- RH 5/25/05 (CWE 28)

By beholding we become changed.
II Cor 3:18

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ing. He also wants us to reach out compassionately to those deceived by the New Age belief system.

Angels of Deceit: The Masterminds Behind Religious Deceptions

Richard Lee and Ed Hinson, *Harvest House, Eugene, Oregon, (1-800-547-8979), 1993, 261 pages, US\$8.99, paper.*

Just when the Seventh-day Adventist Church is becoming comfortable in its general acceptance by other Christians, along comes a book like this. *Angels of Deceit* does not have a chapter on Seventh-day Adventists but lumps them with other groups in a section called "A Crash Course in Spiritual Deception," in which the authors accuse them of "exclusive salvation." The authors borrow from Adventist enemies such as erroneous ideas as believing "Revelation 14 requires the observance of Saturday Sabbathkeeping to guarantee eternal life." But strangest of all, they state that Seventh-day Adventists teach that at a special resurrection other Christians will be raised and given "another chance" to accept the Sabbath. "But all who refuse will suffer annihilation!" Obviously someone has confused Seventh-day Adventists with another group.

Evidently the authors have not talked with the groups they claim to warn us about. The book is sensational, sometimes harsh, and hardly scholarly. How else could one explain its attempt to include Seventh-day Adventists, Mormons, the New Age, Eastern religions, and satanism all under one sweeping generalization?

If what Lee and Hinson say about Seventh-day Adventism indicates the accuracy of the rest of the book, it is poorly researched. After reading parts of the volume, I sent the authors and the publishers the latest Seventh-day Adventist doctrinal book for them to check out their errors. I have heard from neither. One finds it discouraging and a little frightening that a major publisher, even one who often leans to the sensational, let this material get through.

Religion in America: change and continuity

From page 23

and vivid personal feelings. Has America turned her back on God and chosen her own gods? One could well argue that we live in an addicted society—addicted not only to chemicals but to possessions, to success, to wealth, and to an easy, self-indulgent lifestyle.

But there is hope. George Gallup points to four strategies, essential for a vibrant church.¹⁸ These were first articulated in *Christianity Today*. First, zeal for sharing faith and hope regarding God's redemptive love in Christ, through neighborhood evangelism, or global mission. Second, a reclaiming by the church of its long tradition of providing refuge to the needy and oppressed. Third, a need for Christians to recover their identity as a "peculiar people," thus resisting the currents that drift toward materialism, secularism, and fuzzy new ageism. Fourth, the need for

"prayer" to receive God's unchanging resources generated through worship and Bible study. We will then no longer suffer from the delusion of being at the center of the universe either individually or nationally. Instead, we will joyfully celebrate God as the center of all things. ■

¹ George Barna, *The Frog in the Kettle: What Christians Need to Know About Life in the Year 2000* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1990), p. 130.

² Thomas A. Stewart, "Turning Around the Lord's Business," *Fortune*, Sept. 25, 1989, p. 116.

³ George Gallup, Jr., *Religion in America 1990* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Religion Research Center, 1990), p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Stewart, p. 116.

⁸ Russell Chandler, *Racing Toward 2001: The Forces Shaping America's Religious Future* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 159.

⁹ See Chandler, p. 159.

¹⁰ Barna, p. 141.

¹¹ Gallup, pp. 6, 7.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Chandler, pp. 195-198.

¹⁵ Gallup, p. 10.

¹⁶ Stewart, p. 120.

¹⁷ George Gallup and Jim Castelli, *The People's Religion: American Faith in the '90s* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1989).

¹⁸ Gallup, *Religion in America*, p. 12.

BLACK WEDNESDAY

Millennial Fever

by George Knight

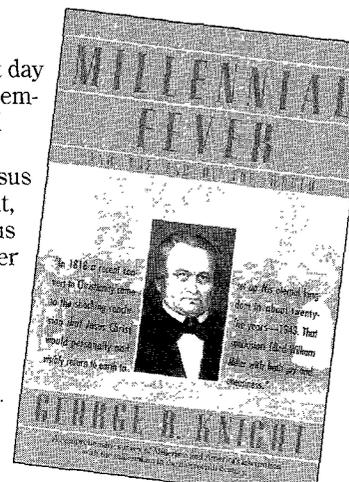
October 23, 1844. This was to have been the first day in heaven. Instead, the advent believers found themselves still chained to earth, reeling in shock and grief.

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The genius of this series is combining those two approaches in the same volume. Personal exploration accompanies expert professional explanation. Beyond that, the series also addresses the application of discoveries for Christian living. The result is a unique Bible study experience that combines devotional study with cognitive growth and life in the real world.

Personal exploration

Each volume in the

Amplifier series is sectioned into chapters based on the natural divisions found in each Bible book. For example, a typical chapter in the volume on Matthew's Gospel might run from chapter 3:1 to 4:16. That passage, even though it ends in the middle of a biblical chapter, has the advantage of capturing the entirety of the first gospel's treatment of preparing King Jesus for service. The *Amplifier* series attempts to study every major section of a biblical book in the context of the entire book and to view individual verses in their immediate context.

Each *Amplifier* chapter has five components. The first is Getting Into the Word, which launches a personal study of the passage under consideration. Readers need a few minimal study tools, such as a Bible with maps and marginal cross references, a concordance, and a Bible dictionary. While a *Cruden's Concordance* is adequate, it is highly recommended that readers invest in the *NIV Exhaustive Concordance* (edited by E. W. Goodrick and J. R. Kohlenberger), which is not only a more adequate concordance but is also based on the Bible version used in the series. Of course, Young's *Analytical Concordance* and Strong's *Exhaustive Concordance* are a great improvement over Cruden's in doing the Getting Into the Word exercises. A Bible dictionary provides access to extra-biblical information that enlightens the historical background of the Bible.

A typical exercise in a Getting Into the Word section suggests reading the selected Bible passage carefully at least twice, following that up with questions and/or assignments. For example, part of the Getting Into the Word component for Matthew 1 reads:

"1. Would you start a book with a genealogy? Why do you think Matthew began his Gospel that way? In particular, according to verses 1 and 17, what is he seeking to prove by his genealogy?"

"2. Read the genealogy of Jesus in Luke 3:23-38. In what ways are the two genealogies alike, and how do they differ? In particular, note the earliest (in terms of history) name in each genealogy. Why do Matthew and Luke start the ancestry of Jesus with different men? What might that say about the differing audiences of their Gospels?"

"3. What four women (excluding Mary) do you find in Matthew's genealogy? List them on a piece of paper. Now, through the use of a concordance and/or your Bible's marginal cross-references, see what you can discover about these women in the rest of the Bible. In particular, what kind of people were they? What were their racial backgrounds? What were their professions or ethical experiences?"

"4. Was it common for Jews to include women in their genealogies? In answering that question, you may want to examine such Old Testament genealogies as those found

in Genesis 10 and Ezra 2. Why do you think Matthew included the particular women he selected, rather than people like Sarah, Rebekah, or Rachel?"

"5. As you read verses 18 to 25, pick out the text that you believe comes closest to stating the mission of Jesus. What connection, if any, do you think there might be between that text and the four women listed in Matthew's genealogy?"

The aim of such an exercise is not only to acquaint people with study tools, but also to teach them to read more carefully the Bible itself. In particular this involves examining the structure and meaning of the passage in comparison with other scriptures. The purpose is to get readers thinking about the Bible and its meaning, wrestling with the ideas of the Bible before reading human commentary.

Of course, the Bible does not contain all the information of value to its readers. A good Bible dictionary is helpful. An example of such an exercise for the Getting Into the Word section on Matthew 2 is a request to look up Herod the Great in a Bible dictionary. Then follows a question about how that reading helps in understanding the chapter. Those already familiar with Herod's extrabiblical history know that such information throws light on the Bible statement of his attitude toward the purported new king of the Jews, but such insights come as a revelation to many Bible students.

Exploring and applying

The second component on each biblical passage is entitled Exploring the Word, which explains the passage just studied. Here we come to the traditional role of the commentary, but not with a verse-by-verse treatment. Rather, the major themes in the passage are addressed.

The third component in the treatment of each biblical passage is Applying the Word, designed to implement the lessons of each passage in daily life.

The fourth and fifth components are optional, for advanced students.

Researching the Word is for delving more deeply into the Bible passage under study or the history behind it. The last part is

a list of recommendations called Further Study of the Word.

Pastoral and personal uses

The *Abundant Life Bible Amplifier* volumes, 40 in number when complete, will help both pastors and laypeople, whether studying alone or in a group. Besides being a seedbed for sermon ideas, this series has devotional and in-depth study potential for individuals and families. Additionally, it can be useful for midweek study and discussion groups.

The first four volumes just released are:

Exodus: God Creates a People, by John L. Dybdahl, an Old Testa-

ment scholar and director of the Institute of World Mission.

Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom, by George R. Knight, professor of church history at Andrews University and general editor of the *Amplifier* series.

Timothy and Titus: Counsel for Struggling Churches, by Charles E. Bradford, retired president of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists and a man who has functioned as Paul to many young Timothys and Tituses.

Hebrews: Full Assurance for Christians Today, by William G. Johnsson, editor of the *Adventist Review* and a New Testament scholar who has

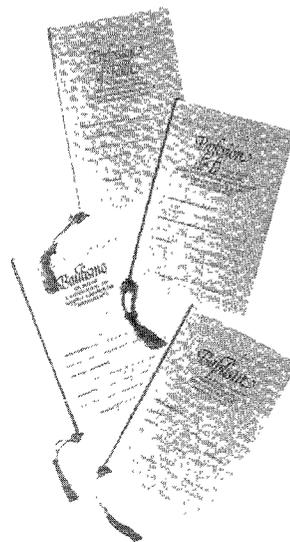
specialized on the Epistle to the Hebrews.

Forthcoming volumes will include treatments of such biblical books as Daniel, by William Shea; Acts of the Apostles, by Nancy Vyhmeister; the Gospel of John, by Jon Paulien; Peter and Jude, by Robert Johnston; Romans, by John Brunt; Joshua, by Roy Adams; the books of Samuel, by Alden Thompson; Ezekiel, by Robert McIver; James, by Pedrito Maynard-Reid; and Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah, by Angel Rodriguez.

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