

Ministry

● International Journal for Pastors

December 1995



Dealing with pluralism

While Gerhard van Wyk's "Dealing With Pluralism" (March 1995) helps us to be more open to other points of view, I find it faulty for the following reasons:

1. The first is its definition of pluralism. Cultural and racial pluralism are quite easy to define. Theological pluralism is more complex and so more difficult. Many scholars see two distinct understandings of theological pluralism. The first accepts differences on issues in which the church has no official position. It also allows that the same truth may be stated in different verbal forms and sees no fundamental theological difference in the different verbal forms found, for example, in either the Old or New Testament.

The second definition of pluralism, clearly espoused by the article, claims that no theological or doctrinal statement, being a human construction, can ever claim to be absolute or final (p. 7). If truth statements are not final, then they are conjectural. Consequently, any theological construction may be just as valid as any other.

2. The article fails to acknowledge that pluralism contains within itself a contradictory logic that invalidates its claims. While pluralism masquerades as tolerance, its principles are clearly exclusive. This second definition of theological pluralism claims that "all theological truth claims are conjectural."

However, if all truth claims are conjectural, then pluralism, being a truth claim, is also conjectural. Yet pluralism judges and condemns anyone who does not accept theological pluralism. The article claims that those who maintain specific truth claims by categorizing all viewpoints into two opposite positions—liberal versus conservative—are doing so to "seize power" (p. 7). By its own standards, pluralism stands condemned.

3. The article is faulty because of its very liberal concept of truth, a concept dictated by the article's "perspective approach" to reality, a

concept pregnant with Immanuel Kant's principle of doubt. It is the old colored glasses idea, that if there is any absolute truth we can never know it because our "colored glasses" make it impossible to see reality with any degree of trustworthiness. While the article admits the possibility of absolute truth, it "questions the possibility of humans constructing such a truth."

However, this contradicts the position of the Adventist Church. For us, there are core doctrines that are absolute.

4. Another reason the article is faulty is that it is unbiblical. Any student who reads the Bible knows that it clearly points out what is right and wrong.

5. Finally, the article is faulty because it fails to recognize the position that Jesus took regarding absolutes. If we do not view the Scripture as did Jesus, then we have no right to claim we are Christians.—John W. Fowler, executive secretary, Kentucky-Tennessee Conference, Nashville, Tennessee.

Pastoral counseling

Kevin James (Letters, March 1995) warns against male pastors counseling females unless accompanied by their wives. Too bad Jesus did not know this (John 4). His disciples were astonished that He was so bold and careless about Jewish tradition, but He did it anyway.

Give me a break! On that premise no woman could ever consult a male doctor or psychiatrist. Are trained ministers so subject to sexual temptation that they must never counsel parishioners of the opposite sex?

My wife is not trained to do this kind of work, and usually one desires a one-on-one counseling situation under the seal of confidence. If I were married to a minister, I would not want to hang around when she counsels a man either!

James should have also quoted 1 Timothy 5:1, 2 in addition to Titus 2:3-5. Timothy did not send his wife or an older woman to "exhort the sisters"—H. L. Wipprecht, Cobalt, Ontario, Canada.

Compassion versus confrontation

Bobbie Drake's article "Compassion Versus Confrontation" (March 1995) reminded me of the most painful time in my past when I was wrongfully accused of molesting my daughter. At that time my former wife, a church organist, brought these charges against me. I was arrested as I walked out of church after Sabbath services. I was handcuffed and taken to jail and locked up. My parents put up their home for a bond to get me out of jail.

While married, my former wife withheld information that she had been abused by her father, a very successful professional man. When she accused me wrongfully, she was living with her parents.

I had no history of abuse. I married, had children, worked with youth in the church, and have had an unblemished record in the many years of service to the church I love.

At court, the minister's wife witnessed against me. My 6-year-old daughter recited the accusation like she would recite a memory verse at church. A vindictive former wife had her day in court, but thanks be to God, I was acquitted. She may have been abused, but I was the scapegoat.

I went through great financial loss. Years later I still feel the scar, the hurt, and the pain of false accusation. We need to be careful that we don't hurt an innocent person.—Name Withheld.

Succeeding as an associate

Thanks for Mark Mollidrem's excellent article "Succeeding as an Associate" (March 1995). I was a solo pastor when I received a call to be an associate pastor. I was struggling with some issues that were hindering my accepting this position, but the article helped me make a decision. I can now concentrate on my new ministerial responsibilities. I thank God for *Ministry* magazine.—Jose M. Garcia, pastor, Barstow Bilingual Seventh-day Adventist Church, Barstow, California.

Two distinct differences marked the first Annual Council session of this new quinquennium. First, global impact on the decision-making process of the Adventist Church was more pronounced than ever before because all world union presidents were actually present to participate. Second, the first two days were exclusively devoted to spiritually considering the mission and message of the church. Robert Folkenberg's keynote message plus two presentations on worldview are presented this month.

For nearly twenty years we have provided a bimonthly complimentary subscription to *Ministry* for pastors of all denominations who request the journal. An important feature of this project has been Professional Growth Seminars which provide opportunity for practical workshops and enjoyable interaction.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce our new Director of Professional Growth Seminars, Dr. Nikolaus Satelmajer, who joins our staff January 1, 1996. Nikolaus, a Yugoslavian by birth, comes to us from seven years as senior pastor of the College Park church, Oshawa, Ontario. He has previously served the church as pastor, evangelist, teacher, and departmental director. For 11 years, Nikolaus was the ministerial secretary of the New York Conference, where he was one of the most innovative and creative coordinators for these Professional Growth Seminars. His wife, Ruth, is an educator and development director.



Nicholas Satelmajer

I look forward to adding Nikolaus' practical expertise to our staff and to seeing him multiply opportunities for pastors everywhere to enjoy fellowship and professional growth.

James A. Cress

Cover Illustration: Terrill Thomas

2 Letters

4 Reviewing the *Adventist Review* James A. Cress

5 Editor holds evangelistic series in Pusan, Korea

6 When culture doesn't count Robert S. Folkenberg

10 VOP targets 50,000 Report

12 Importance of our worldview Fernando L. Canale

15 Breaking the barriers of bigotry Willard L. Santee

20 The Trans-European Division world ministers' council: a Hungarian rhapsody Rex D. Edwards

22 Facing frustrations Samuel Thomas, Jr.

25 Worldview and mission Juan Carlos Viera

28 Targeting your audience Ronald L. Preast

31 Shop Talk

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MINISTRY/DECEMBER 1995 3



Reviewing the *Adventist Review*

Our church paper changes to meet the times.

James A. Cress

What do Adventists read? Monte Sahlin, assistant to NAD president Al McClure, has surprising answers. Monte gathers data for the division, and his surveys show that:

- 62 percent of American Adventists state that they receive the *Adventist Review* on a regular basis.

- 57 percent say they get a union paper.

The startling point about these answers is that *all* members in the North American Division receive a union paper mailed without cost to them either once or twice each month! Apparently for many of our people the union papers get lost in the volume of their mail.

The *Review* does better, even though it goes to fewer homes. Probably 90-95 percent of Adventists receive the NAD edition (the first issue each month)—a few conferences aren't on the plan. In four unions the *Review* comes inserted in the union paper, and some members don't recognize it as a separate publication. Nevertheless, more than 60 percent of our members identify with the *Review* on a regular basis.

Monte's numbers contain one other piece of important information. Independent papers such as *Our Firm Foundation*, *Spectrum*, and *Adventist Today* rate very low—only a few percent claim they receive them. That's quite a corrective to the perception that some people have of the influence of these publications. Obviously, the fact that someone may *print* in large numbers does not mean large numbers of Adventists *read* the material.

We live in an information age. The sheer volume of material just about overwhelms us. Think of all those magazines on the racks in the bookstores—and all those books. Those 500 TV channels available.

Libraries accessible through CD-ROM. The cybernetic superhighway. How will the church get its message out? How can our magazines avoid being swamped by the flood of information?

In these fast-paced, fast-changing times, the good old *Review* is changing too. The magazine will turn 150 in a couple of years, but come Spring 1996 the *Adventist Review* will have a new look, a new spin, and will offer new options to subscribers.

WRITING FOR THE ADVENTIST REVIEW

Article Type	Description, Word Length and Editor
AnchorPoints	Fundamental Beliefs for today—1,800 words, Johnsson
Jesus	His life and teachings—1,200 words, Johnsson
Discipleship	Living Christian Life—1,200 words, Johnsson
Theology	Any major doctrine—1,200-1,800 words, Adams
Biblical Study	Reflection on a Bible passage—1,200-1,800 words, Adams
Devotional	Practical, Christian reflections—1,200 words, Adams
Current Issues	Issues in church or world—1,200-1,800 words, Widmer
Education	Encourage Christian education—1,200 words, Widmer
Opinion	Your conviction on a relevant topic—600-1,200 words, Widmer
Lifestyle	Personal, practical—1,100 words, Watts
Reflections	Short inspirational—675 words, Watts
Turning Point	A decisive moment in your life—700-1,000 words, Watts
Faith in Action	Christianity in overalls—1,100 words, Chavez
Health	Practical, factual—1,100 words, Chavez
Story	True, personal, real—1,100 words, Chavez
Book Review	As assigned, Rydzewski
News Report or Feature	As assigned, Medley

Many of the older readers can't think of life without the *Review* every Sabbath. For shut-ins especially, it's their pastor. So the *Review* will continue as a weekly. However, each issue through the month will be focused in a particular way:

Week 1—the NAD Edition (the division paper)

Week 2—World Focus (emphasis on mission in North America and overseas)

Week 3—the Cutting Edge (radical discipleship in today's world)

Week 4—AnchorPoints (our heritage and message)

Every issue will be built on four foundations:

1. *Spiritual food*
2. *The message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church*
3. *Diversity*
4. *Reader interaction*

Subscribers will have an "option pack." They'll be able to subscribe to 12, 24, or 40 issues each year. Can't keep up with all the reading? Can't afford the full price? These options can open up the *Review* to more people.

Adventists outside North America, African-Americans, and Hispanics, and should find the new *Review* much more inviting. Adventist baby boomers will especially look to the Cutting Edge as an issue of high value to them.

And for Adventists who prefer to get their information via computer, the *Adventist Review* is working to develop an on-line edition. This will be subscriber-based and available first on CompuServe and later on Internet. The release date for the online *Review* will depend on staff resources and demand. Watch for the announcement, expected sometime in 1996.

What does all this mean to you and me as pastors? What can we do to en-

courage our people to receive the benefits of the *Review*?

First, we can subscribe to the *Review* ourselves. Money is tight for all pastoral families, but there is probably no better or responsible leadership investment that we can make than to stay current on the news and issues facing our denomination. When I'm receiving the blessings that come my way from our church's general publication, it's easy to be enthusiastic about recommending it to others.

Second, we can encourage our members to become subscribers both by promotional notices in church announcements and newsletters, but also by reference recommendation. Statements such as the following inserted in your sermons or conversations would build readership for the *Review*:

■ "I really appreciated the explanation that our General Conference president gave in last week's *Review* concerning this important issue for our church."

■ "I received a personal blessing from an article on this same topic in last week's *Review*."

When you appear knowledgeable and appreciative of the *Review*, your members will want access to that which has brought blessings to you! One of the most spiritually nurturing things I ever did as a pastor was to telephone each of my church members and personally ask them to subscribe to our church's official magazine.

Third, we can make certain that every new member receives the *Review* for at least one year—and preferably for two or three—through a gift subscription paid for by the church. Personally, I cannot over express my confidence in and appreciation for the stabilizing influence of the *Review* in the spiritual development of new members.

Fourth, we can encourage our members to provide gift subscriptions for those in the congregation who cannot afford to subscribe themselves. Here is a clear example of building up the body by mutual support.

We can at least encourage our members who do subscribe to recycle their copies to older church members whose personal finances keep them from receiving the *Review* now. An attractive box or display rack in the church lobby could be designed so that members could drop off or pick up current copies. With very

little promotion through your bulletin or newsletter, the ministry of the *Review* could be multiplied in your congregation.

Fifth, we could write. As pastor of your church, write! Write a letter to the editor and express your appreciation or your concerns. Write an article for publication. You could expand the blessing of your own ministry to a wider audience by sharing the good things you give to your own members. (See sidebar supplied by the *Adventist Review* editor.) Write a promotional note in your bulletin or newsletter encouraging your members to subscribe and tell them how

to order the *Review* for their own homes.

Finally, for NAD pastors, write to your conference administrators or other church leaders and express your appreciation for the "free" NAD edition of the *Review*. This monthly vehicle, now 10 years old, is helping to meld the North American Division into a unified body.

We need the *Review*. Our members need the *Review*. Right now the *Review* needs us to help them continue providing the blessing of inspiration, current news, instruction, and discussion of vital issues to as many of our members as possible. ■

Editor holds evangelistic series in Pusan, Korea



A typical view of the crowd gathered for an evening meeting at the Pusan Central Church. Will Eva, editor of *MINISTRY* (left, behind Pulpit) was featured speaker. Pastor Oh Choong-Hwan (to Eva's left) coordinator of the Korean Union English Language Schools, was the Korean translator. Pastor Suh Chung-Jun (not shown), senior pastor of the Pusan Church, was coordinator of the series.

"Being the featured speaker for a 10 meeting evangelistic series (October 20-28) among the people of Pusan, Korea was one of the most significant experiences of my life," says Will Eva, our newly appointed editor of *Ministry* magazine.

Pusan is an amazing city. Second to Seoul in size, it gathers around a cluster of impressive coastal mountains and seems to cascade down around them to the Sea of Japan. The city appears to pause only briefly at a gathering of scrambling harbors, before it pours on out to the world.

Here there is a fabulous mix of vibrant people, full of respect, gracious tradition, progressiveness and well-orchestrated industry. Along with these qualities comes an exquisite blend of gently expressed emotion and responsiveness along with cultured hospitality.

Pusan is a city full of Buddhists, Christians, and all kinds of others. The Seventh-day Adventist presence is significant in the city where Pusan Adventist Hospital has been established for 44 years and the Adventist English Language school still flourishes.

Will spoke to a packed Pusan Central Church each evening. Members and nonmembers alike were eager to enter in with a high degree of commitment to what was being done, despite the English that was expertly translated into Korean during each sermon.

On the closing afternoon, 25 were baptized (many of these young people), with the promise of a number of others to come.

Dr. Eva says, "After this experience I have a profound sense of gratitude and renewed commitment to our Lord and to all the people in Pusan, particularly those in the Central Seventh-day Adventist Church there."—James A. Cress, Ministerial Association Secretary

When culture doesn't count

**Robert S.
Folkenberg**

An appeal for Seventh-day Adventists to retain a biblical perspective



*Robert S. Folkenberg is
president of the General
Conference.*

Someone once asked Gandhi, the great leader of India, "What do you think of Western civilization?"

"I think," he responded, "that it would be a good idea."

Considering his background, his life, and the cause for which he fought, Gandhi may not have had much reason to like Western civilization. Beyond that, his reply demonstrates how a person's culture influences not only that individual's opinions of other cultures, but also how he or she thinks and acts.

As with Gandhi, our culture has much to do with the way each of us thinks. William H. Shea, of the General Conference Biblical Research Institute, explains why, for instance, the order of Daniel 7, 8, and 9 may seem inverted. Daniel 7 emphasizes the ultimate establishment of God's kingdom; Daniel 8, Christ's high-priestly ministry; and Daniel 9, the death of Christ. The Western way of thinking would reverse the order and talk about the death of Christ, then His high-priestly ministry, and finally the establishment of God's kingdom—the chronological order in which these things occurred. Yet, according to Shea, the ancient Hebrew mind worked from effect to cause, rather than from cause to effect, as most contemporary minds would see it.

A tribal group in a remote area of South America had what might seem to be a peculiar view of time. When talking about the future, they would point behind them. Talking about the past, they would point ahead. Most of us think it is more logical to think of the future as being in front of us, and the past behind.

Thus, we are impacted to one degree

or another by our culture or environment. From a human standpoint, there is no such thing as absolute cultural objectivity.

The real question is: "How much do our cultures affect our religion?" Consider the way we worship on Sabbath morning. Every member who has traveled extensively within the world church knows that congregations worship differently in different parts of the world. The rhythm of the music and the forms of worship differ as you travel from Russia to Zimbabwe to Australia to Papua New Guinea. My concern, however, is not so much worship style as it is how secular society impacts our basic values and beliefs. Let me share a personal example.

Genetic justification?

Imagine my relief when, a few months ago, I saw a news report suggesting a direct link between chromosomes and weight! Scientists altered the genes of one group of mice and then fed two groups of otherwise identical mice the same diet. The group of mice with the altered genes became obese while the others remained slender and svelte. What comfort! My seemingly endless battle with the bathroom scale was not my fault after all. My chromosomes "made me do it!" Here society offers me an excuse, in effect saying, "Don't worry, be happy."

Society conveys the same message to the alcoholic, the homosexual, and sometimes even to the abusive parent or spouse: "Don't worry. It is not your fault. You are a victim of genetic predisposition, so you cannot be held responsible." Some might call this "genetic justification"!

Yet while biological factors often exert a profound influence in our lives, God provides power to cope with and conquer

these tendencies. By no means are we helpless pawns adrift in a sea of sin and circumstance where, driven by some Darwinian force, we play out our lives beyond lines of personal responsibility. Scripture is explicit, urging us again and again to let the mind of Christ control us, to fight the fight of faith, to struggle against natural dispositions and passions. As the apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: "But I say, walk by the Spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16).*

Ellen White said, "As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of his nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus."†

Great news! We can have victory over our hereditary and cultivated tendencies through surrender to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Certainty of mission and message

My concern is that we not allow cultural differences and biases to divert us from the eternal truths that God is trying to communicate to us. He wants us to look at truth from His perspective. It is this truth that in His perspective has given us our mission, our message, our identity.

I have another concern about culture's effect on our church. In many of the more developed and sophisticated areas of the world, I sense that an increasingly secular value system is negatively impacting many of our members. I sense a growing uncertainty about why we exist as a church and what our mission is. Some all but say it makes little difference what we believe as long as we have an experience with Christ. With such thinking, focus turns inward, truth becomes one's private treasure, cut away from the revealed will of God as defined in God's Word.

This, I suggest, is an example of culture having a negative impact upon us as a people. It is reflective of the contemporary prevailing social view that there is no real, objective truth; there are no universals, particularly in the area of human morality.

Historian and natural rights philosopher Leo Strauss, in his book *Natural Right and History*, summed up this way of thinking with these words: "No view of the whole, and in particular no view of human life, can claim to be final or universally valid. Every doctrine, however seemingly final, will be superseded sooner or later by another doctrine." In other words, do not settle into what you believe too conclusively, because sooner or later someone will

Scripture is explicit, urging us again and again to let the mind of Christ control us, to fight the fight of faith, to struggle against natural dispositions and passions.

come along and prove you wrong. We Seventh-day Adventists must soundly reject this philosophy.

Wherever we live, we must not be content with a cerebral, theoretical faith, with its corollary premise that intellectual commitment to a series of statements is enough. We must have something more. We must have what Ellen White calls practical religion, a "living experience with Christ," no matter in which culture we find ourselves.

Culture's impact on our worldview

Why are contemporary value systems impacting upon our worldview as a church? I see several possible answers.

One may be that our growing membership is affected by the natural centrifugal force that plagues communities who are no longer in intimate interchange with one another. This is a sociological answer. It is true that the larger our fellowship becomes, the

greater will be the tendency to separate into smaller groups. This has been the experience of other church groups, and we should anticipate that tendency. But the character and the eternal perspective of the Seventh-day Adventist message has proved, and must continue to prove, a powerful agent for unity, whatever the culture.

Another influence is clearly the spirit of our times. Increasingly secular and materialistic, particularly in the Western world, we live in larger communities, highly individualistic and distrustful of leaders. The secular world is replete with examples of this, and the church is by no means immune to these influences from society in general.

Another reason is that too many of us are not personally studying our Bibles every day. Whether we live in New York City, Singapore, Havana, New Delhi, or Abidjan, we will suffer if we do not spend regular time in the Word. Our pastors must help us focus on the Scriptures, on the gospel message of righteousness by faith, and on those unique truths that identify us as God's special people.

The Bible is not a source of themes to be debated. It is a feast of revealed truths to be shared among ourselves and with the world around us. The power of God's Word transcends societal values, conventional wisdom, and all cultures. When it comes to the great themes of Scripture—the conflict of the ages, the death and resurrection of Christ, the perpetuity of the law of God—these are above and beyond borders, traditions, and history. On these truths there is no significant cultural difference. Here culture does not count.

I think every Seventh-day Adventist must ask: Can we be faithful to our Lord and indiscriminately allow culture to continue making negative inroads into the church? As leaders chosen by God's people, can we allow the drift to continue? The answer is simple: no.

God's contrasting call and promise

In contrast, God's call to us and His promises are grand. "And you shall be

like a watered garden, like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in" (Isa. 58:11, 12). The context describes a revived people, deeply concerned for those around them, and fully committed to God in their inmost souls. These are a people God can use in an outpouring of His power.

God promises to restore that which once flourished. The final proclamation of truth is a restoration, a binding up of wounds, an invitation to those who will come with us into the kingdom of Christ. It means a revival of practical godliness. This is what we need as a people, whether living in the Australian outback or in northern Norway. We need to revisit the springs of living water. Until we do, there will be an ever-growing tendency to be satisfied with things as they are.

When I refer to Isaiah's springs of living water, I have in mind those mighty efforts for God that resulted in the raising up of the Adventist movement, replete with both their spirit and the unique truths for our time. I am not thinking of mere nostalgia, a gilding of the past, an effort to reproduce today all the details of life a century ago. Such has never been the intent of God. That solid core hewn out by early believers, firmly crafted from the Word of God, remains the core of our message today, wherever we live, however we express ourselves in worship. The adhesive that holds all of truth in one unit is the presence of Christ, who is indeed the desire of all the ages and of all cultures as well.

I firmly believe we stand at the door to the greatest time in all history for the growth of the church and extension of the gospel. Would it not be appropriate for us to come as did Jesus into special communion with His Father? Shall we not drink at the sources, listen to the Spirit of God, then rise to face the final challenges?

What I am saying is not idle speculation. Our minds have become so accustomed to focusing on the fine details

of life that we have lost the overall broad, biblical perspective. Of all Christians, Seventh-day Adventists have the greatest opportunity to measure God's deeds on the grandest of scales. With our under-

We need a spiritual reformation of mind, heart, and soul to be the complete persons we always have talked about being.

standing of the great controversy, we have a cosmic vision of all that ultimately matters. Rather than trying to piece together meaning out of life's jumbled pile of ideas and events, we can go to the source of all wisdom, where God spreads before us the full panorama of His intent.

We Adventists are famous for our multitude of activities and outreaches, for our zeal in pressing forward the gospel into remote ends of the world. We love to do battle for our Lord. From the beginning of time, God's church has been a church of action. Focused action can do what never can be accomplished by scattered activities, and dissipated energies that simply raise dust. At our fingertips lies the biblical, cosmic truth that integrates all human understanding.

While some of us think of the Adventist movement as a people who believe in a collection of individual truths, such as the Sabbath, the law of God, and the Second Coming, in reality we bring to the world a broad and unified package of meaning, which includes these components. All our doctrines fit together into a beautiful mosaic of truth, which when seen as a whole reveals the glorious God of all and His eternal purpose. It is this magnificent overview that I pray we will be able to grasp, for in it is understanding, inspiration, and direction. It is truly a message for all people in all lands, for we all—whatever the color of our skin or hair, the features of our face,

the language we speak, the food we eat—we are all created by the same God. He has made us all of "one blood," investing us with a grand overriding likeness. All the cultural differences in the world will never change that great truth.

What holds God's people in loyalty to Him? They have taken a stand for God, and for His truth. This is an ideal that is not changed by culture, heritage, or tradition. Thus they are out of step with much of society, with culture, and tradition. They are politically incorrect to the maximum and therefore they are scorned, rejected, and hated. Above all this, theirs is the all-possessing vision that they are Christ's people—nothing more is left. Here culture does not count.

With this in mind, we encounter a new dimension of unity, for all is ultimately in Christ, of Christ, with Christ, and beside Christ before the throne of God. We need a spiritual reformation of mind, heart, and soul to be the complete persons we always have talked about being. We want to see the church, the body of Christ, scattered through the miscellany of human cultures and ethnic groups, but with a common cosmic, heaven-oriented vision. Apart from and above these things that divide us, we gather as the host of the Lord, first at the foot of the cross, then on the sea of glass before the throne. No longer are we drifters along the highway of life. No longer are we aliens and outcasts, but the assembly of the firstborn, adopted, transformed into citizens of the kingdom by the utter grace of one who Himself paid the price for our salvation. Now He presents the fruits of His timeless sacrifice before the throne. The cosmic plan of the ages is complete. The best news is, we—from all backgrounds, traditions, and cultures—are there with Him in heaven, where culture does not count. ■

Adapted from his keynote address at the 1995 Annual Council session.

* All Scriptures are from the Revised Standard Version.

† Ellen G. White in *Review and Herald*, April 24, 1900.

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VOP targets 50,000

Recently the Voice of Prophecy embarked on the boldest and most fruitful venture in the history of Adventist evangelism with its South American crusade series. Now the North American media ministry is poised to do it again in the Philippines. Evangelists from the island nation and North America hope to baptize 50,000 people in 1996 with Target: 50,000.

This massive project is a coordinated series of up to 150 evangelistic crusades throughout the Philippines in commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the *Voice of Prophecy* in that country. Lonnie Melashenko, VOP director-speaker, is enthusiastic: "It's mind-boggling to contemplate this largest-ever Adventist evangelistic campaign. But we know that with the Lord's blessing, what seems impossible will become the miraculous."

Project director Jim Zachary, on loan to the VOP from the General Conference Ministerial Association, hopes that 50 to 150 churches across the United States and Canada will adopt sister churches in the Philippines and raise the funds for sending their own pastor and



Carl Johnston with some of the 828 people baptized in the Iloilo City crusade

some lay members to assist with a crusade at the sister church.

Vitally involved in planning and sponsoring Target: 50,000 is the Partnership in Evangelism (PEP) in the Philippines, an organization comprised mainly of Filipino-American Adventists led by Benjamin B. Banaag,

M.D. For many years PEP has organized and sponsored evangelistic crusades in the Philippines. Joining them in serious financial commitment to the 1996 Philippines crusades are the VisionBuilders, a North American group of mostly lay Adventists committed to praying for and financially supporting the various outreaches of the VOP.

Successful model crusade

A prototype of the upcoming crusades was conducted this year in Iloilo City by James A. Cress, director of the General Conference Ministerial Association. Results were most encouraging. More than 1,000 attended the nightly meetings, with 828 baptized during the crusade and in follow-up. Helping Jim Cress were local pastors and 20 third-year theology students, along with Sharon Cress, wife of the speaker and the coordinator of Shepherdess International at the General Conference. Also assisting were two couples from the United States: Carl and Ella Johnston,



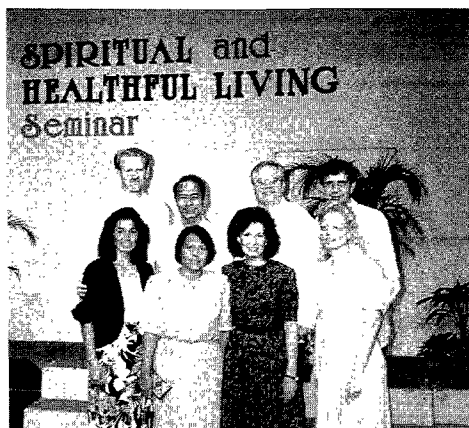
Lonnie and Jeannie Melashenko greeting members of VisionBuilders



VOP speaker Lonnie Melashenko interviews Benjamin B. Banaag, M.D., lay leader of the Partnership in Evangelism of the Philippines.

on behalf of the Ministerial Supply Center and Seminars Unlimited, and Walt and LaBrenda Groff, a pastoral couple from Rocklin, California. Their congregation not only released them to serve in the Philippines crusade, but financially sponsored their travel and participation.

How many churches will do likewise in 1996? The VOP solicits your prayers on behalf of this bold adventure in fulfilling the gospel commission. For information about volunteering for Target: 50,000 or adopting a sister church, write: Philippines Campaign, Voice of Prophecy, Box 2525, Newbury Park, California 91319. ■



The primary evangelistic team in the Iloilo City crusade. From left: Walter and LaBrenda Groff, Gideon and Dorcas Buhat, Jim and Sharon Cress, and Carl and Ella Johnston. Gideon Buhat is president of the West Visayan Mission in the Philippines.



Pastors of Filipino churches in southern California meet at the Adventist Media Center for consultation and prayer with Lonnie Melashenko and Dr. Banaag.



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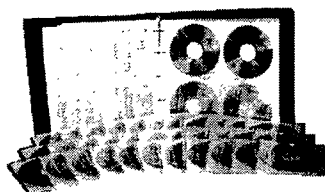
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
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Importance of our worldview

Fernando L. Canale

Our Adventist worldview is biblical rather than theistic—with profound implications for the life of the church.



Fernando L. Canale is a professor at the Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

Is worldview relevant for the life and the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Or is it a needless theoretical distraction from our global mission of proclaiming the gospel? If worldview does matter, what difference does it make whether our worldview is biblical rather than theistic?

Let us review the meaning of worldview and then address its impact upon the theology and the life of the Adventist Church. My purpose is to demonstrate that worldview is vitally linked with theology and life, and also that it must be biblical rather than theistic.

We can define worldview in various ways. Ronald H. Nash suggests: "A worldview is a set of beliefs about the most important issues in life."* In more elaborate fashion, it is possible to suggest that a worldview is an ensemble of ideas about reality that, because of their general nature and broad scope, condition the entire range of human thought and action.

Think of worldview as a pair of eyeglasses. As eyeglasses allow the individual to perceive reality, worldview allows us to see, or understand, the teachings of Scripture. This analogy underlines the fact that worldview functions as the ultimate presupposition involved in the process of thinking and interpreting the Bible.

Worldview also is like a computer program that allows us to interpret the entire range of biblical data without eliminating any piece or ignoring the natural connections. If we extend this computer analogy, we could say that the hardware corresponds to the human brain. The software program to

run the computer corresponds to the worldview. The data being processed or interpreted comes, in our case, from Scripture. The outcome the computer produces—for instance, a printout—corresponds to theology and preaching.

The theistic threat

In contrast to a worldview rooted in Scripture there is the theistic worldview, descended from Plato and Aristotle. In the theistic worldview God limits His activity to the heavenly sphere while humans perform their will on earth. This separates God from the human scene, contradicting the basic biblical view that God dwells and acts within human history. A basic incompatibility is established between the heavenly and earthly orders.

However influential the theistic worldview may have become within modern theological circles, Adventism must reject it to avoid the following pitfalls:

Secularism. As theology becomes assimilated to mainline religious thinking, the process of secularization that such a trend has already brought to most denominations will find no restraint to its universal expansion. Nevertheless, some Adventist thought leaders might argue in favor of secularizing our theology and practices to match the already secular mind of some in our congregations. When it comes to evangelism, they suggest that reaching secular-minded persons requires us to alter our basic outlook and behavior in order to persuade the culture of our times. This is the same argument many Christian theologians have espoused for centuries. It limits

the Bible to the role of an *honoris causa* in the life of the church. Human opinion then replaces the Word of God, which has been entrusted to our corporate stewardship.

Internal divisions. Adopting the theistic worldview would unleash a chain reaction. Theology would depart from Scripture and pay obeisance to the ideas of human beings. The next step would be the fragmentation of our church, as the divisions that the theistic worldview has produced in Christianity are reproduced in Adventism.

Such fragmentation is already occurring within our church. Perhaps some Adventists consider internal divisions as a healthy expression of diversity. But while genuine diversity is healthy and to be encouraged, we must avoid any divisions in our foundational structure of thinking and acting.

Growth decline. If Adventism adapts its teachings to the theologies of Christian denominations working within the same theistic worldview, it necessarily follows that we will not only have the same problems they have but also will become stagnant in our growth. If our theology becomes basically identical to that of other churches, why invite anybody to be "Adventist"? Instead of proclaiming biblical truth, the mission of the church would then be reduced to social involvement, political activism, and the like.

Why is the growth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church stagnant or not as energetic as it should be? Deficiency of consecration? Absence of the Holy Spirit's power? Shortage of methods and human resources? We have emphasized these factors for years. Could it be, after all, that the factor we have been dismissing all along is the real reason for our calling as ministers? Could it be that a clearly developed theology firmly and faithfully grounded in divine revelation as given to us in Scripture is a necessary condition for the reception of the Holy Spirit, the growth of the church, and the accomplishment of its final mission? I am not saying that it is the only factor involved. I am suggesting

only that it be a necessary one.

We cannot systematically neglect a biblical worldview and still expect God's blessings on our human ideas, imagination, and culture. Now is the time for our church to go back to Scripture as seriously as our pioneers did.

Assimilation to the ecumenical movement. If Adventism adopted the theistic worldview, its theology would assimilate to traditional or current

trends. Forgotten would be the biblical doctrines that originated this movement. If this scenario takes place, it should not surprise us to hear poignant arguments addressed to this body in favor of joining the ecumenical movement.

Impact of the biblical worldview

It is not enough for Seventh-day Adventists to reject the theistic world-

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view. We must faithfully apply the biblical worldview to the life of the church. When we do, we may expect the following outcome:

Holiness. Secularization results from the adoption of the theistic worldview; holiness results from faithfulness to the biblical worldview. Christianity then appears as a transcendent option for our present history and culture rather than the reflection of every new social and cultural fashion. Holiness follows in personal experience through the faith-filled act of surrender to the Holy Spirit's promptings. The personal experience of holiness as healthy separation from the world can occur only when theology also is separated from the ideology of the world and is faithful to Scripture.

Internal unity. A deliberate search for, and adoption of, the biblical worldview is a necessary condition for taking "captive every thought" "to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). Christian unity is a unity not only in action but also in mind and thought (see 1 Cor. 1:10). Adventism cannot attempt to achieve internal unity by just working at worship, action, and mission while failing to address the level where unity is grounded, namely, in thinking. The biblical worldview becomes the indispensable tool for grounding the internal unity of the global church. However, unity of thinking is not enough. Unity of surrender to the Lord of thinking must be an ongoing reality in the church. As each of us submits to the thinking of Christ, internal unity will become a reality.

Growth explosion. The identification and utilization of the biblical worldview in the process of understanding Scripture will open the gates of God's treasure house. The richness of biblical gems so far neglected will empower the missionary task of the church around the world.

How can the corporate church help the global and local communities in

the task of proclaiming the gospel to the world? Generally we have answered these questions in a practical way. We have pointed to successful communication skills and more efficient equipment as the answers for a successful global mission. Another familiar approach suggests the need to strengthen the spirituality of our lives. After all, we assume that we know we have the truth. What we need are not more theological studies, we say, but more consistent lives and

The future of Adventism depends on the direction we take today. To make no decision reinforces the status quo, which in the end will bring Adventism to absorb the theistic worldview and the chain reaction that it stimulates.

better ways to express the truth that we already possess. But the question must be asked: Does the present generation of Adventists know the truth? Many Adventists know the truth only in a superficial sense, thanks to the impact of the theistic and other worldviews among us. Think about it. Pray about it. Do something about it.

Alternative to the ecumenical movement. When the biblical worldview replaces the theistic worldview, the vast richness of divine truth is made available to everyone as a real alternative to the ecumenical movement. As we know it today, the ecumenical movement is the necessary outcome of pursuing Christian theology under the requirements of the theistic worldview. Conversely, the adoption of the biblical worldview and its consistent application to the life and mission of the church will not only prevent believers from joining the ecumenical movement, but create a formidable alternative to it.

A clear choice

In summary, on one side we can dismiss the worldview issue as another theoretical nonessential to the life and mission of the church. This attitude flows from simple inertia that holds that if we continue the usual routine but pray a little harder or try something a little newer, problems will be solved. This is the easier route. It requires neither effort nor the investment of time and money. As tempting as it might seem, this alternative will lead Advent-

ism to assimilate the theistic worldview of mainline Christianity or some version of the naturalistic or pantheistic worldviews. This is the course some Adventists are exploring at present. If we allow it to continue unabated, the secularization of the church will accelerate in the years to come.

On the other side, Adventism might make a bold move and break away from administrative inertia and cultural determinism. The issue regarding our worldview and its hidden effect on us

could be considered essential to the life and mission of the church so as to be included in its permanent agenda. Retrieving the biblical worldview into the conscious life of the church will trigger a chain reaction that, among other things, will include strengthening the internal unity of the remnant church and intensifying her global mission beyond a simple growth explosion into the eschatological pouring of the Holy Spirit (Rev. 18:1).

The future of Adventism depends on the direction we take today. To make no decision reinforces the status quo, which in the end will bring Adventism to absorb the theistic worldview and the chain reaction that it stimulates. ■

Adapted from a presentation to the 1995 Annual Council session.

* Ronald H. Nash, *Worldviews in Conflict: Choosing Christianity in a World of Ideas* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), p. 16.

Breaking the barriers of bigotry

Willard L. Santee

An award-winning sermon in the 1994 Talent Search in narrative/expository preaching



Willard L. Santee is a district pastor in Oregon and an associate speaker for American Cassette Ministries, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

The popularity of the Nazarene had turned. The majority of those who had openly followed Him now hid in the shadow of their leaders. The seeds of bigotry, sown by religious zealots, had done their work. Only a handful of followers remained.

From Bethsaida Jesus and His faithful twelve made their way across the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee to Capernaum. From here they traveled toward the mountains of Lebanon, which took them west to the Great Sea.

Between this seaway of colors and the rainbow of floral dancing, between the cedars and firs of Lebanon, rests a narrow body of land known as Phoenicia. She extends her delicate hand northward more than 100 miles, grasping the rich coast land with fingers that form islands and bays, creating natural harbors for ships that grace her small towns and villages like pearls laced about her wrist.

From the south her border sweeps up over the Carmel ridge, whose slopes are dotted with dwarfed oaks and wild olive trees. They stand as if reminiscent of a time gone by, when a prophet once stood as a mighty oak yet dwarfed by the multitude of men and women whose hearts beat wildly after other gods. It was from this mountain, rising to a summit of more than 1,700 feet above the dark-blue waters of the Mediterranean, that Elijah had stood in defense of Jehovah—God of Israel.

Today the voice of Elijah has been replaced by the sound of men, men who are tired from their 50-mile journey and the heat of the day. There is the added burden of half-empty skins of water that hang about their sun-darkened necks

and broad shoulders. From each pair of worn leather sandals a different set of prints has been etched on the surface of the hardened earth—each to be changed in time by the ever blowing sand that has long ago erased the footprints of a people who once worshiped the true God.

It was from this land that the Phoenician princess Jezebel had sought to destroy the children of Israel. It was here that the gods of Baal and Astarte were introduced. From the days of the Greeks, four centuries before, the mountain to the south had been called “the holy mountain,” for it had been dedicated to heathen gods. The disciples too considered the mountain to be holy, but for a different reason. Just the thought of walking in the footprints of Elijah filled them with a sense of pride. With these thoughts they trudged on behind Jesus.

Jesus had a purpose

Jesus had brought them here for more than a temporal rest from the biased crowds that had for two and a half years followed them and consumed their emotional strength, producing a physical weariness. He had chosen this time and place for a lesson they would never forget.

As they entered the hill country on the borders of Phoenicia they could see, spread out upon the plain below, the ancient rival cities of Tyre and Sidon, with their heathen temples, their magnificent palaces, and marketplaces. They could see the harbors filled with seafarers who had been trading with Egypt and all the other countries surrounding the mighty Mediterranean.

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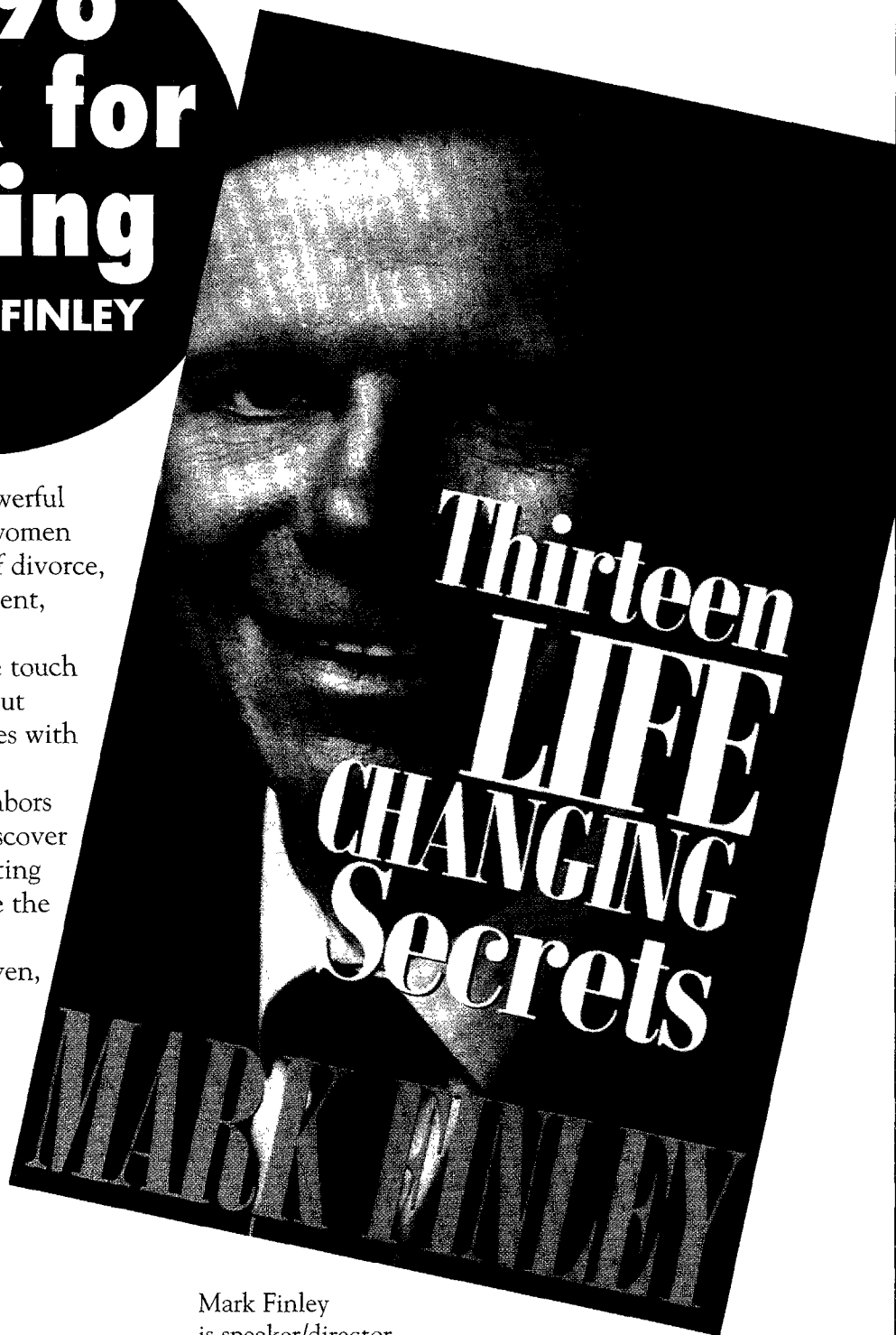
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Mark Finley is speaker/director for the It Is Written international telecast ministry.



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their wares and the common people pressing their way through the narrow streets. They could hear the noise of commerce mixed with the bleating of sheep on the slopes about them. There were people here and there on the path they were traveling. An occasional beast, under a burden imposed by its master, labored past them.

According to Mark, Jesus and His disciples made their way to a home, which undoubtedly was that of a friend. It was perhaps a Jewish home, for many Jews were living at that time among the Phoenicians.

Picture the story with me. Imagine a small house hidden from the village below, nestled neatly at the base of a steep slope of the Lebanon Mountains. There, overlooking the Mediterranean, Jesus and His disciples have found rest with a small Jewish family.

The happy sounds of children running, laughing, and playing fill the air. A small puppy joins in the fun as it nips at its master's heels. There is a delightful aroma of freshly baked bread as it cools on the hearth of a fired brick oven. A warm drink from a goat just milked is offered to the guests as they arrive.

A special assortment of almonds, mulberries, figs, walnuts, apricots, pears, and olives are placed on the long low table in the center of the room. The women of the house artfully place a number of large reddish pomegranates at strategic points to complete the living picture.

Jesus and His disciples are invited to the table, where they recline on rugs made from the skins of animals and woven hair mats. Two young boys sit quietly now, one on each side of their father, who resides at the head of the table. Jesus is next to the younger boy, who insists on holding his treasured puppy close to his chest and secured by his arm.

A moment of silence is broken as the father offers his petition of praise and thanksgiving to Jehovah for the honor of being among the chosen race and for the guests that have entered his dwelling. After seeking protection for those within his care and claiming the

promise of the coming Messiah, who would deliver them from the evil of those about them, he closes his formality.

Without hesitation, Jesus and the disciples join their host in talking, laughing, listening, and eating. The temporal joy that ensued can be understood only by those who, like these men, have traveled over hot dusty roads without a bed to sleep on or a table to sit at for many days.

What is she doing here?

So occupied are their minds, mouths, and hands that only Jesus and the two small boys notice the woman who has persisted in joining them, at the resistance of the mother.

This stranger is not a Jew. The boys can tell by her clothes that she is a Greek or a Gentile. They recognize her as a Syrophenician by race, but it is her heathen ways that has led them to be instructed to shy away from sinners like her. Her type is a reproach to the "true religion" that is held in such high esteem throughout the Jewish system. Without speaking, the boys send a message with their eyes to one another, "What is she doing here?"

For months, perhaps years, this woman has longed to see her daughter set free of the demon that has possessed her. She does not understand these things—where demons come from; that they are fallen angels working under the power and control of Satan, the prince of darkness.

She has grown up in a land of demon worship. They are her gods! She is not afraid of them. They send the rain and make the crops grow. They sustain life and take the souls of those who die into a better world. Yet somehow her daughter has been attacked by an "evil" spirit.

In order to get rid of this demon she has sought help from her heathen gods. She does not know that Satan will not cast himself out, but she tries the things she has been led to believe. Her faith is strong, but pointed in the wrong direction. Her child is no better. There is no relief.

Though she is ignorant of Isaiah the prophet, his inspired thoughts are fulfilled in her. She has consulted the



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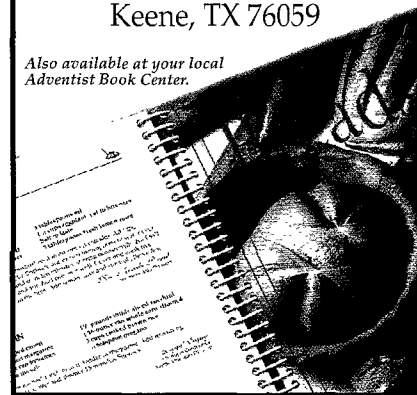
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mediums and the spirit guides of her day. As a result she has passed through the land, "hard-pressed and famished." Now she looks to the earth, "and behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish" and she is driven away into darkness (Isa. 8:21, 22, NASB).

It is in this loneliness of soul and rejection by even her own gods that she hears of the Nazarene, the Man who heals all manner of disease. He makes no distinction between rich and poor. If only *she* could go to Him!

She knows that He is a Jewish teacher and she a Canaanite. But she is also a mother, a woman having flesh and blood and a heart that yearns to see her little girl set free from the supernatural power that controls her. How can she concern herself with such things as national pride, ethnic barriers, or religious prejudice!

Will the Galilean choose to heal?

Yet the one question that, perhaps above all others, robs her of her potential joy is "Will the Galilean choose to heal her daughter, or is He prejudiced too, like all the rest?"

Her thoughts play hide-and-seek with her mind. She vacillates between acceptance and rejection, between belief and unbelief. Then today! In her village word has spread that Jesus is there. *He has come to her!*

Has it been in answer to the unspoken prayer of a mother's heart, even though she knows not how to pray? Can it really be for her that He has come? It does not matter. All her plans for that day are forgotten. Leaving her little one in the care of another, she rushes from her house. A prayer is on her lips. She runs, while at the same time trying to walk like a lady with dignity. There is a throbbing in her breast that she cannot hide. It is like a new song waiting to be released and a thousand instruments of praise, each fighting among themselves to be the first to send it forth into the world.

Her eyes, filled with tears of expectancy, fail to focus on the familiar eyes

Children . . . have a sensitivity that reaches out to people who are hurting. They have a natural tendency to trust people and accept them as they are. They are also quick to learn by example.

that stare back at her from above the veils of those who pause in wonder along the way.

She is determined not to lose her only hope. Jesus must heal her child! It is her resolute purpose to present her case to the only One left who can. Nothing can stop her now, not all the hosts of hell, for no one can choose to take even one step toward the Master without Him hastening to enfold them in His arms (see Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 206).

When she arrives at the home of the Jewish family she finds them talking and eating. Her excitement cannot be hidden, though her small frame is lost in the large size of the open doorway.

She is recognized by the woman of the house, who quickly takes her place in front of the uninvited guest. Before she can be confronted she cries out, "Which one is Jesus?" Her eyes move quickly from one face to another as she excitedly stumbles through her rehearsed excuse for being there.

"I must speak to Jesus!" Her eyes stop when she sees the Man near the head of the table, the One seated near the little boy holding the puppy under his arm. There is something about that Man. She cannot explain it, but she is drawn to Him. She sees in Him a compassion that He is powerless to hide. She moves quickly past the hostess, who chooses not to stop her for fear of making a greater scene.

The stranger throws herself at the feet of the Master, crying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Son of David! My daughter is severely demon-possessed." Jesus does not answer. He refuses even to look in her direction. He continues to eat as though she does not exist. This is an embarrassing situation for the hosts. Their guest is being compelled to listen to the senseless sobs of a Canaanite woman.

Why this woman?

Angry looks are transferred from the priest of the home to his wife, who should

have prevented this unnecessary intrusion. The wife stands at a distance, twisting a woven cloth about her fingers, not knowing exactly what to do. She waits for a command from her husband, who chooses to glare at her instead.

The children observe it all. They see the looks that flash like jagged emeralds from their father's eyes. They sense the fear and strain being placed upon their mother. Children are like that. They have a sensitivity that reaches out to people who are hurting. They have a natural tendency to trust people and accept them as they are. They are also quick to learn by example.

The woman moves to one of Jesus' disciples. Getting his attention, she tries to enlist his help in presenting her case to the Master. He argues with himself, saying, "If Jesus treated her with indifference, it is because the prejudice of the Jews against the Canaanites is pleasing to Him, so why should I do anything to help this heathen dog?" He turns from her and resumes eating as though nothing has happened.

One after another the disciples are pleaded with, until every person is aware not only of her presence, but of her incessant whining. The pleasant fellowship has stopped. Every eye now, except for two, looks with contempt upon her.

The disciples turn to Jesus and plead with Him to send her away. They have not come these many miles to deal with her type—or have they?

Jesus speaks. His words are short and to the point. "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." At first the disciples understand Jesus' words as a rebuke to the woman, for she is not of the chosen seed, she is not an Israelite.

The rebuke, however, is intended for the disciples, as a reminder of what He has often told them, that He has come into the world to save all who will accept Him. For whoever comes to Him, He will "in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

I see the little children watching the face of Jesus with rapt attention, while the disciples study the words just spoken for a deeper or hidden meaning.

The woman returns to Jesus and prostrates herself at the Teacher's feet. She raises up just enough to take His hand and worships Him by kissing it, much like a dog licking at its master's hand. Again she sobs, "Lord, help me!"

Lord, help me

Jesus responds by saying, "It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs." He is asserting that it is not just or right to lavish the blessings that belong to the favored people of God upon strangers and aliens. She is not an Israelite. She has no right to Israel's blessings. She is a dog!

The woman's head drops from the gaze of Jesus' eyes. Yet there is something about His eyes; they seem to search out every corner of her heart where she has hidden pain, guilt, anger, prejudice, and fear. Strange but true, His eyes are unlike the eyes of men—they are free of condemnation and seem to overflow with compassion for her and her little one. It is as if He is trying to tell her something. His words still ring in her ears. "What is He saying to me?"

Through her tears of frustration she sees the little puppy resting quietly near its master's heart and enfolded in his arms. "That is what He is trying to tell me!" His words are an invitation for a response. This is her opportunity. It is the little lad, the little fellow who is sitting so close to

10 STEPS to Narrative Preaching

1. **Select your story.** Read it in at least six versions (from literal to loose paraphrase).
2. **Check your words.** Look up all words you do not understand. (Make note of all "special meaning" words.)
3. **Get your setting.** Study the culture of the setting. (Note the geography, history, landscape, etc.)
4. **Use your "sanctified" imagination.** This is a powerful tool if properly disciplined.
5. **Write your theme in one basic sentence.** Four questions that will help in writing your theme: a) *What is the general concern?* b) *What is the specific need?* c) *What questions need to be asked or answered?* and d) *Is this a single message or part of a series?*
6. **Outline your structure.** Your story should be based on four questions:
 - a. "What?" Define the issues.
 - b. "Why?" Explain or enlarge.
 - c. "How?" Justify or apply.
 - d. "What then?" Promises, hopes, or consequences.
7. **Write your sermon.** All narratives need to be written out before delivery. This helps to preserve your thoughts and keep you within your time limits.
8. **Plan your appeal.**
9. **Rehearse your sermon.** Use your pulpit as a place for practice delivery. Record your sermon and listen to it as a visitor.
10. **Talk with your God.** Make sure you are both in agreement as to: a) *the need for the message;* b) *the timing of the message;* c) *the audience who will receive the message;* and d) *the heart of the one who will give it.*

Jesus. The Teacher must have seen the little boy wipe the crumbs from the table onto the floor for his puppy to eat.

With a new hope in her heart and faith reflecting in her eyes, she looks up at her "new" Master and says, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little pups eat the crumbs that fall from their (young) masters' table" (Matt. 15:27, Amplified).

Great is your faith

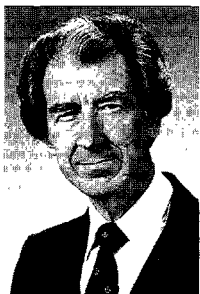
"O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you wish" (verse 28, Amplified). The Scriptures record that her daughter was cured, permanently, from that moment on.

After thanking her Master again and again, and bowing before Him for the last time, I see her turning for just a moment to squeeze the little hand that strokes the puppy's head; as she does, I

picture the little pup reaching out and licking at her hand as if to say that he too understands what it means to be fed by the Master's hand.

Nothing could hold back the music in her heart. All the strings of heaven must have picked up her melody that day as she returned home, leaping and singing, and praising God—her God—the God of Israel.

The partition wall that Jewish pride had erected and had kept the disciples from showing sympathy with the heathen world had been shattered—and Jesus was satisfied. He had tested the faith of the woman. By His acceptance of her, He had shown the disciples that this very one whom they had regarded as an outcast from Israel was no longer to be considered an alien, but a child of God's household, having a God-given right to sit at the banquet table in His kingdom to come. ■



The Trans-European Division world ministers' council: a Hungarian rhapsody

Rex D. Edwards

They came from Estonia in the east and England in the west, from Iceland in the north and Israel in the south. They came from Amsterdam and Athens, Tirano and Turku, Riga and Radom. They came from 22 countries that constitute the Trans-European Division.

More than 850 pastors and their spouses crowded into the main auditorium of the University of Technology in Budapest, Hungary.

What brought them together? General Conference president Robert Folkenberg answers, "Recognizing the loss of not having a General Conference pre-session, the Ministerial Association was wise enough to move into that vacuum and provide a division-wide gathering as a very effective substitute."

The gathering in Budapest from August 28 to September 2 provided a model for subsequent gatherings around the world during this quinquennium. *Review* editor William G. Johnsson (who taught a workshop titled "Pastor, You Need to Write!") captured the spirit of this gathering. "Rarely have I wit-

nessed," he said, "such sustained intensity of interest. Delegates and spouses came early to meetings, entered into discussions (many of them via simultaneous translation), took copious notes, and stayed late. They seized the day provided for them."

What bound them together? The answer was expressed in the council theme prominently displayed as a platform backdrop, "The Truth as It Is in Jesus." This theme unfolded like a symphony each day in five movements, beginning with the morning devotional—"Whom We Need." The second and third plenary session movements—"Whom We Experience" and "Whom We Believe"—reaffirmed our theological heritage and its application in the life and mission of the church. After a luncheon the fourth movement, "Whom We Serve," offered 18 concurrent seminars. The subjects covered a wide range of interests, such as "Motivating the Laity," "Facing the Muslims," "Pastoral Ethics in an Unethical World," "Conflict Management in the Church," "The Gift of Prophecy Today," and "Biblical Preaching for Today."



Pastoral spouses attending Shepherdess plenary sessions



E. Lonnie Melashenko lectures one of the 18 "Biblical Preaching for Today" workshops.



Breakout session during Sabbath school

The fifth movement—"Whom We Proclaim"—prefaced by an evening musical program, climaxed the day with a preaching service that turned once again to the "Truth as It Is in Jesus."

What is this truth? In his keynote address Bertil Wiklander, incoming TED president, explained. It "has to do with Christian living, whereby one's life becomes a new thing created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." Thus, it is "God's life . . . it is God's gift to us." With earnestness he reminded the audience that in a division with so much geopolitical diversity "we need the divine gift of unity!"

A unique feature of this council was the presence of several hundred pasto-

ral spouses. Special meetings were held for them by Shepherdess coordinators Sharon Cress of the General Conference and Gaya Currie of the division.

General Conference Ministerial Association secretary, Jim Cress, says, "I was encouraged to see so many pasto-

ral spouses eager to be involved in team ministry and utilizing their unique talents to hasten our Lord's return. It was both encouraging and enlightening to hear the evangelistic endeavors of those whose partnership in ministry is a choice more than a vocation."

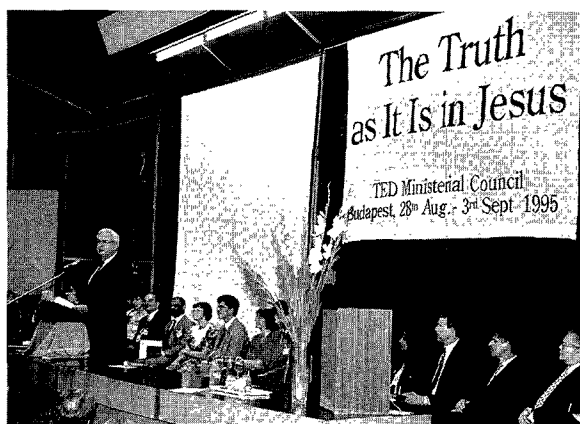
As the meetings concluded, the delegates left in a spirit of unity. General Conference undersecretary Athal Tolhurst states, "We came away with a new commitment to treasure God's Word, to love one another, and to finish the work of the gospel as soon as possible." ■



Review Editor Bill Johnsson and plenary speaker Peter Roennfeldt discuss evangelism strategies for reaching the secular society.



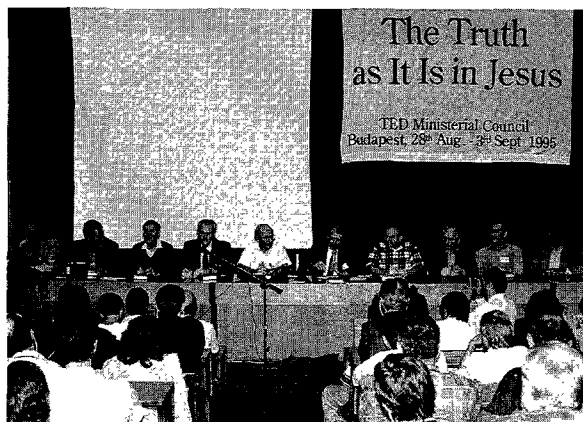
Attendees representing 22 countries join hands at the final ceremonies as a symbol of solidarity.



Left: Robert S. Folkenberg addressing the council during the Sabbath morning worship service



Right: Bertil Wiklander (left) honoring Jan Paulsen (second from left)



Left: Evening panel discussion

Right: Council attendees enjoy an evening on the Danube.



Facing frustrations

Samuel Thomas, Jr.

How to overcome the vacuum in your ministry



Samuel Thomas, Jr., is senior pastor of the Capital City Seventh-day Adventist Church in Sacramento, California.

Upon entering the ministry, many of us feel a deep vacuum—a vacuum between what we know to be our commitment to Christ and the employment of that commitment in the local parish. Somewhere in the middle of our hopes, dreams, and aspirations are the frustrations, demands, and realities of meeting the expectations of the church and the members. We find ourselves somewhat like Jeremiah: “When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me” (Jer. 8:18).

The problem hits us at one time or the other. How do we overcome that feeling of not reaching the fulfillment we want to reach? How do we overcome frustrations in our ministry? I suggest a few simple steps.

Keep your vision constant

Jesus in His ministry faced frustration and rejection by keeping before Him the vision of what He should be doing. Consider how vision sustained Him in the face of Nazareth dilemma and how it helped Him affirm His own mantle: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor; he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted and to announce that captives shall be released and the blind shall see, that the downtrodden shall be freed from their oppressors, and that God is ready to give blessings to all who come to him” (Luke 4:18, 19 TLB).

A call perceived in that context and pursued in that spirit leads pastors to enter the reality of human suffering. The periodic realization of this call upholds the pastor’s level of motivation in the face of the pressures and stresses that are inevitable when one confronts the

host of the powers of darkness. These pressures are sometimes externally imposed by the demands of our professional life and the expectations of the institutional church. Sometimes they come from within “representing the tasks and crises of the success stages of psychosocial development.”¹

Cecil R. Paul captures the tension between the personal and the professional in the pastor’s life: “The pastor is expected to have his life together and to be untouched by the human element in his personal life. On the other hand the media has erected a picture of the clergy as weak, lacking in normal human sensitivity, and out of touch with the realities of man’s sin and sickness. . . . [The pastor] is caught in the middle of unrealistic expectations and distorted stereotypes.”²

Keep Christ as your model in ministry

Don’t let pressures swallow up your calling. Have before you a ministerial model. And what better model than Jesus? As Leighton Ford argues, “Long before modern managers, Jesus was busy preparing people for the future. He was not aiming to pick out a crown prince, but to create a successor generation. . . . [He] carefully . . . picked, named, and developed his inner core and let them share the center of his life. When the time came for him to leave, he did not need to put in place a crash program of leadership development—the curriculum had been taught for three years in a living classroom.”³

How did Jesus accomplish this superb task of training His disciples for leadership? Ford points out three distinctive ways: “First he allowed them to fail, and then He reinstated them.

... His strategy was not to cast them off, but to confront them, reinstate them, and entrust them with an even bigger task. ... [Secondly] in praying for them ... Jesus shaped his successors. (Luke 22:31, 32) ... [Finally] what we often fail to note, however, is that Jesus seemingly planned to allow for dissent among his successor/leaders."⁴

This model of leadership calls for fair play and inclusion. How many of us as pastors exemplify this model? If we don't, how can we empower the people we work with? To get "our way" we often dramatize, plot, scheme, manipulate, coerce, and stack the deck (i.e., the board, etc.). Robert Waterman, a management consultant, observes: "Renewing companies treat everyone as a source of creative input. Their managers define the boundaries and their people find out the best way to do the job within these boundaries ... All the renewing companies are busy taking out layers of management ... , learner organizations set the stage for renewal."⁵

Aren't we in the biggest renewing business in the world, renewing people? We can renew and be renewed only by empowering people—like Jesus did.

Find empowerment

Achieving success in ministry is not determined by control but by clearly defined expectations and empowerment. Where that atmosphere exists the vacuum between the call and the fulfillment in ministry disappears. Peter Drucker suggests that a clear way of reducing or even eradicating the vacuum is to "manage the boss." Now that's a new twist! He suggests what we should do and what we should not. "Do: Make sure the boss understands what can be expected of you, what the objectives and goals are on which your own energies and those of your people will be concentrated, what your priorities are, and equally important what they are not. Don't: expose the boss to surprises. Don't: underrate the boss."⁶

This makes good working sense!

However, it is not easy to resolve the emptiness, frustrations, and misgivings we have in ministry. Paul Tillich's question often rings in my ears: "Who heals the helper?"⁷ Yet within our frustrations we may find the resolution. As Cecil Paul says: "Such confrontation with his [the pastor's] own needs holds potential for personal growth and the renewal of his ministry. It puts him in touch with the realities of man's pilgrimage and pain. It brings him to a point of dependence on the Source of all healing, placing him in a position to be ministered to."⁸

Achieving success in ministry is not determined by control but by clearly defined expectations and empowerment.

Often the tensions from the parish and the institution leave us with the feeling that they are enemies. Too often we hear comments from fellow pastors, such as: "You really can't trust the members, they will desert you when you need them most"; "The organization is out of touch with what we are doing." Perceptually these statements can be very true, but conceptually they are very false! Personal viewpoints and perceptions get skewed by our prior experiences or the influence of others or just our tendency to jump to assumptions. Overcoming these limitations within ourselves takes empowerment—not so much from outside but from within.

How can we find that inner empowerment? Stephen Covey lists four essential steps for the development of personal empowerment: (1) be proactive; (2) begin with the end in mind; (3) put first things first; (4) think win/win.⁹

Focusing on the fourth principle, Covey suggests three character traits essential to this paradigm: "1. Integrity; 2. Maturity; 3. Abundance Mentality."¹⁰

Practice integrity

Integrity is often thought to be less essential because of the apparent lack of it in leadership. The evidence for its lack is all around us: greed, political posturing, autocratic leadership, closed or narrow mindedness. Integrity is certainly not the catchword of the day. But it ought to be! People everywhere are looking for leaders, pastors, managers with a high sense of value. They are looking for "individuals who develop self-awareness and independent will by making and keeping meaningful promises and commitments."¹¹

The world and the church will soon forget individuals whose self-centered ambition exhibits itself in limiting others, stifling talent, inhibiting objective communication, and growth. Soon forgotten too will be those who make statements such as, "He is too inexperienced," and "He is too young," and "I have been an administrator for 25 years or more and I can't see myself doing anything else."

Individuals who think win/win will be remembered because they understand that true power comes from the empowerment within and the empowering of others! That means true leadership is not in the maintenance of control or position but in adapting to change and proactively motivating for growth. ■

¹ Cecil R. Paul, *Passages of a Pastor* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), p. 12.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 13.

³ Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values, and Empowering Change* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), pp. 280, 281.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Robert H. Waterman, Jr., "The Renewal Factor," *Business Week*, Sept. 14, 1987, p. 104.

⁶ Peter F. Drucker, *Managing for the Future: The Nineteen Nineties and Beyond* (New York: Dutton-Truman Talley Books, 1992), p. 168.

⁷ Paul Tillich, *New Being* (New York: Macmillan Pub. Co., 1955), p. 41.

⁸ Paul, p. 18.

⁹ Stephen R. Covey, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1989), p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 217-219.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

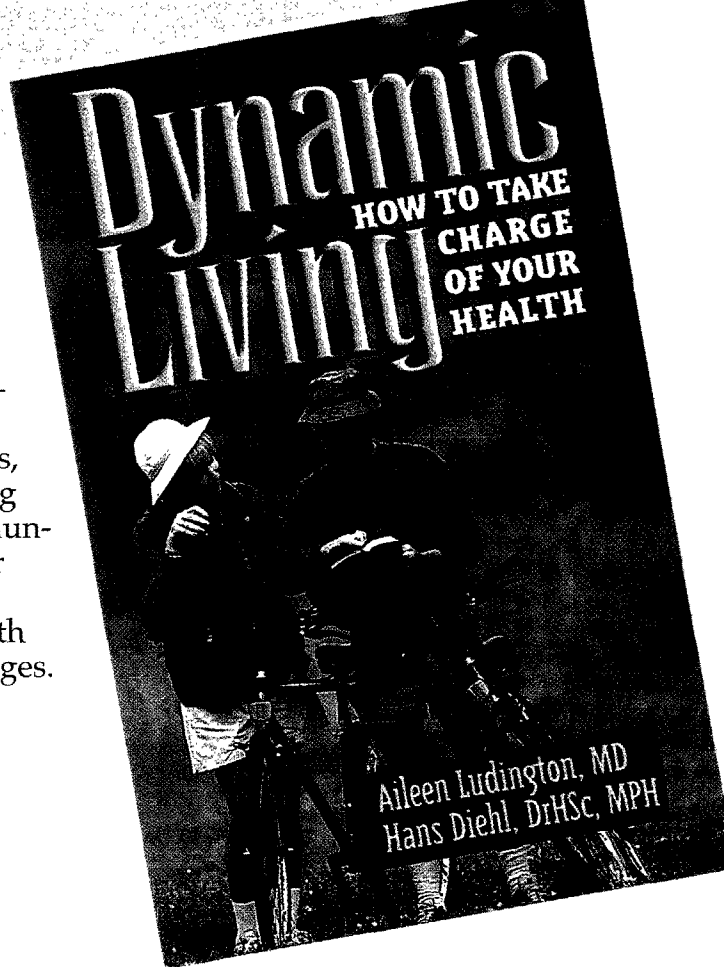
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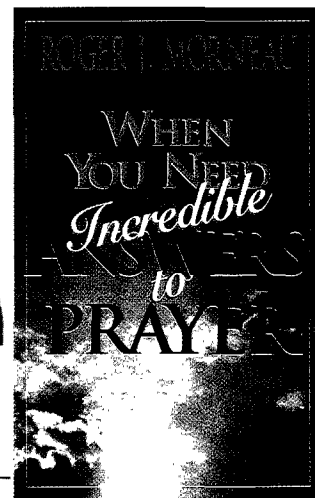
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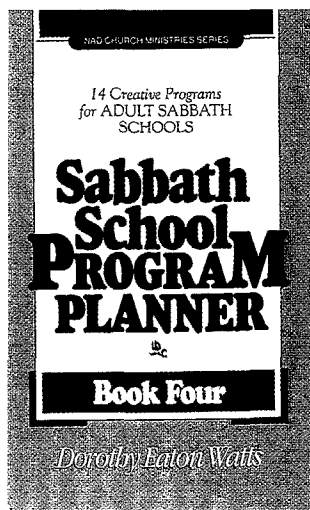
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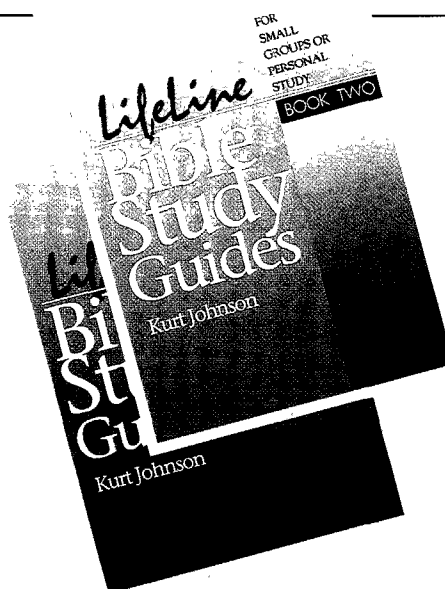
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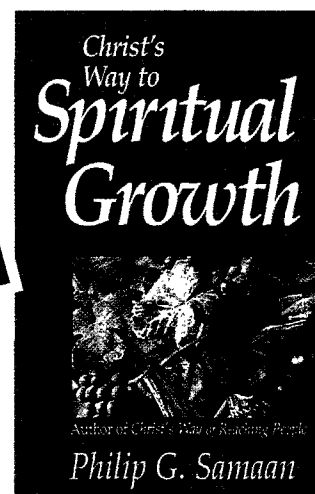
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Worldview and mission

Juan Carlos Viera

Suggestions for a mission theology



Juan Carlos Viera is director of the Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.

In the 1970s, a new theology of mission erupted in Latin America: liberation theology. Many considered it basically a political movement, as evidenced by violent riots led by priests and pastors, yet behind the scene there were theologians—both Catholic and Protestant—working out a new theology of mission resulting in a nonbiblical worldview.

The liberation theology movement is a prime example of how certain contemporary worldviews are able to distort a Christian view of mission. Involved in the Latin American theology was the formation of an unscriptural theology of mission. To avoid similar pitfalls in our own mission theology, the Seventh-day Adventist Church must have a biblical, Christ-centered worldview. Establishing and maintaining this worldview and thus preserving our global mission is the subject of this analysis.

To set the stage for this analysis, let us take a deeper look at what happened to the worldview and mission of the liberation theology movement. Before the actual reshaping of ecclesiastical mission came the undermining influence of an ill-founded theology. The doctrines most affected were ecclesiology—the doctrine of the church, Christology—the doctrine of Christ, and hermeneutics—the interpretation of the Scriptures. We examine each in turn.

Aberrations of liberation theology

Ecclesiological claims. One liberation theologian asserted: “A radical review of what the church has been, and presently is, becomes necessary.”¹ The church was condemned as too rich,

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too hierarchical, and too silent. The object was for the church to share its riches with the poor, abandon its high position, and come closer to the people. Beyond that, liberation theologians challenged the church to be a "prophetic" church, denouncing, as the prophets of the Old Testament did, the injustices against the poor and the oppressed. They even questioned the concept of the church as "the people of God," rather considering all humanity as "God's people."

Christological claims. Liberation theology purported to bring back the Christ of the Gospels; the Christ walking among the people; healing and feeding them. In reality, it undermined both of the biblical images of Christ, namely, the suffering Christ on the cross and the conquering Christ coming on the clouds. It challenged the first one for its connotations of failure and defeat and the second one for its closeness to the earthly kings and governing powers. We all realize this is political language following a political agenda. The point here is to illustrate how the liberation theology movement needed to challenge the message of the church to reach its goal.

New hermeneutics. For liberation theologians, Bible study is useless unless it starts with the comprehension of the reality that surrounds us. In other words, the starting point for doing hermeneutics is not the sacred text itself, but the situation in which the majority of humanity lives, that is, in poverty and oppression. Only then—the liberation theologians say—can the history of the Exodus, or Israel's return from the Babylonian captivity, have new meaning for the people who are now in similar situations.

A Christ-centered mission theology

The case study of liberation theology is one of many new theologies of mission that have burst onto the scene. Some of them challenge proselytism as one of the evils of Christianity. Others advocate Christian presence instead of

Christian churches. Still others consider the social responsibility of the church as more important than the spiritual service the church may offer to the world.

In all of this, the only safe path to a sound theology of mission is a biblical, Christ-centered approach. Both modern missiologists and the prophetic writings agree that Christ's mission is the model for the mission of the church.

"In both these sentences [John 17:18; 20:21] Jesus did more than draw a vague parallel between His mission and ours. Deliberately and precisely He made His mission the *model* of ours,

The only safe path to a sound theology of mission is a biblical, Christ-centered approach. Both modern missiologists and the prophetic writings agree that Christ's mission is the model for the mission of the church.

saying 'as the Father sent me, so I send you.' Therefore our understanding of the church's mission must be deduced from our understanding of the Son's."²

"The followers of Christ are to do the same work that Christ did when He was in the world."³

Cosmological dimensions

Christ's view of the world makes that world the object of divine love. This principle of love for the world was fundamental for the mission of Christ (see John 3:16) and is basic for the mission of the church. True, there seems to be a theological tension between "God so loved the world" and "love not the world" (1 John 2:15), but it is clearly improper to conclude that God would have us disassociate ourselves from the world in terms of our mission. In God's worldview, the world is a place to save, not to condemn, for the judgment of God upon the world has the ultimate

goal of salvation, not condemnation (see John 3:17-19).

Depending on our worldview, we will see the world "as a garbage heap of Satan or the recyclable of God."⁴ Christians with a skewed worldview find it easier to condemn the world than to do something for its salvation.

Beyond making this planet an object of His love, Christ's own worldview made it the place for Him to be incarnated. The incarnation principle is the single most important principle for the formulation of a mission theology.

"He [Christ] did not touch down like a visitor from outer space, or arrive like an alien bringing His own alien culture with Him. He took to Himself our humanity, our flesh and blood, our culture. . . . It is surely one of the most characteristic failures of us Christians, not the least of us who are called evangelical Christians, that we seldom seem to take seriously this principle of the Incarnation. . . . It comes more natural to us to shout the gospel at people from a distance than to involve ourselves deeply in their lives, to think ourselves

into their culture and their problems, and to feel with them in their pains."⁵

As we follow the example of Christ, the world also becomes the place of our own incarnation. The impact of this upon mission theology is basic and fundamental: Christ's commission is not only going to the world, but being in the world (see John 17:15-17). Any attempt to separate the church from the world is against the incarnation principle set by Christ for His church.

Anthropological dimensions

Christ's view of the human person fosters a holistic approach to the human being. His mission was oriented to the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of people, as well as the social needs of the community, and all of that surrounded by compassion (see Matt. 9:35, 36). In performing His acts of mercy, Christ was "doing hermeneutics"—living out the right interpretation of the gospel.

"Constantly He [Christ] went about doing good, sympathizing with the weary, the heavy laden, the oppressed, feeding the hungry and healing the sick. By His loving words and kindly deeds, He interpreted the gospel. . . . The gospel is the power of God unto salvation when it is interwoven with the practical life, when it is lived and practiced. The union of Christlike work for the body and Christlike work for the soul is the true interpretation of the gospel."⁶

This statement confirms that hermeneutics, the interpretation of the gospel, is done not only in theological and academic circles—essential as that is—but in the daily lives of simple Christians sharing compassion in every day situations.

Theological and ecclesiological dimensions

With His presence and His compassion, Christ brought the kingdom of God closer to the people. He expects His followers to do the same in ministering to the sick, the hungry, and in comforting the weak (see Matt. 10:7, 8; Luke 10:9). As Seventh-day Adventists, we place a strong emphasis on the eschatological dimension of the kingdom of God, and that is good. In regards to forming a mission theology, limiting our view of the kingdom to the eschatological may be faulty. In Christ's view, the kingdom of heaven was present and real among the people. The theological tension between the "already" and the "not yet" seems to fit into the concept of the kingdom. Without abandoning the preaching and the teaching of the Second Coming, we can enrich the lives of people with the present blessings of God's kingdom.

In the illustrations Christ used to clarify the mission of the church, we may find important missiological connotations. For example, He spoke of light, salt, and leaven. It is true that to illuminate the world the church needs to stand on a higher plane, "on a hill" (Matt. 5:14-16). To avoid any misunderstanding, the wise Lord accompanied this illustration with the concept of being "salt" (verse 13). In being the "salt" of the earth, or the "leaven" in the loaf (see Matt. 13:33; Luke 13:21), the church has to descend

from the hill and mix itself with the "dough" to produce the transformation from within. Once again we find the incarnation principle at work.

A church on the move

Recently our church had a paradigm shift when it moved from a geographical worldview of mission to a more anthropological approach. Until 1985 the church reported its world advance using a territorial chart. The number of countries entered was the standard by which we evaluated how far we were from a finished mission. At the 1986 Annual Council in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, the church moved to a new focus: specific segments of population within those countries. This, of course, is more in tune with the biblical worldview of mission, which represents the message going not only to nations, but also to every "kindred, and tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6).

"Go," the first word of the Great Commission, is considered by many missiologists to be one of the most important

missiological breakthroughs of all times. It was the starting point of a new concept of mission. Jesus envisioned a church on the move, from the center out to the borders. His church ever moving farther and farther. He saw it as a community that never settles down, never satisfied with what has so far been reached. It is a church that always has new goals, new territories to enter, and new population groups to reach. This is in line with Christ's own worldview and mission. ■

Adapted from a presentation at the 1995 Annual Council.

¹ Gustavo Gutiérrez, *Liberation Theology: Perspectives*, p. 322.

² John Stott, *Christian Mission in the Modern World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1975), p. 23.

³ Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Mar. 27, 1894.

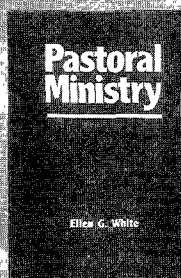
⁴ Harvie Conn, *Evangelism: Doing Justice and Preaching Grace* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1992), p. 107.

⁵ Stott, p. 25.

⁶ Ellen G. White, in *Review and Herald*, Mar. 4, 1902.

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Targeting your audience

Ronald L. Preast

Ten principles to help you discover and reach an audience



Ronald L. Preast is an evangelist for the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists in Bothell, Washington.

Driving down the highway, you switch on the radio. The music begins. The first song is a conservative Christian song by George Beverly Shea. Next is a country and western ballad about a man losing his wife to someone else. This is followed by hard rock, with the guitars so loud you can't understand a single word the singer is yelling, and what you do understand isn't appropriate for the airwaves. Then comes the final song, a rap with lyrics that are more than you can take. You turn off the radio and travel on in silence.

The chance of you finding a radio station like this is highly unlikely. Radio marketers recognize one important marketing tool: you must play music for the particular audience you are trying to reach. If you enjoy classical music, the country and western station is not for you. If you prefer the sounds of Nat King Cole, those playing hard rock know and accept that you are not going to tune in to their stations.

In the same way, discovering a specific target audience and aiming for that target can greatly increase the effectiveness of your ministry. It will help you to discover what type of people live in your community and what your church can do to attract them to your services. More important, you will discover how your church can best meet the needs of the people around you.

The following guidelines will help you discover and reach a target audience. Try not to make these steps a theological issue. These are only ways to help make your ministry more effective.

Pray for a desire to reach the unsaved

Church growth demands that the pastor must want the church to grow. As Peter Wagner says: "The most formidable obstacle to growth that I know of is a pastor who thinks negatively and who is pessimistic about growth opportunities in the community. Such a pastor generally feels that the basic task of the church is to care for those sheep already in the fold rather than to concentrate on winning lost sheep and constantly incorporating new ones into the flock."¹

I know what it is like to pastor a church where your only goal is to survive. I know what it is like just to maintain a church, waiting for the day you can move on to somewhere else. Go to your knees and pray and pray and pray. This is the first and most important step in reaching the lost. Pray that you and your congregation will have the willingness and the desire to reach out to those who do not know Jesus Christ.

Look at your geographic area

On a map of your city, pinpoint the location of your church. Draw three circles representing one-, three-, and five-mile radii around your church. This is your target area. The people living in this area will be most likely to drive to your church. With your one- to five-mile radii drawn out, determine the population. You can figure that at least 50 percent of the people in your defined community are unchurched; that is, they do not attend any church on a regular basis.

Understand your community demographically

Now you want to determine what type of people live in this area. What

type of work do most of the people do—white collar or blue collar? What is the average number of children living at home and their average ages?

Demographic studies are very helpful in finding this information. You can get those studies at a low cost from the U.S. Census Bureau. Check your local library. The county and city planning departments also keep statistics. Church Information and Development Services (CIDS), 3001 Redhill Avenue, Suite 2-220, Costa Mesa, California 92626-9664 (800-442-6277), collects commercial demographic data and packages it specially for church leaders.

Understand people culturally

Don't rely on demographic studies alone. Spend time with people to sharpen the focus of your ministry and become more efficient. We often blame lack of response in advertising to a poor handbill or lack of spiritual interest in the community. While some of this may be true, we may have failed to touch on a felt need in the area.

A door-to-door survey I adapted from Rick Warren of the Saddleback Valley Community Church in California has proven very beneficial in discovering a target audience and their needs. The survey is a series of nonthreatening questions:

A. Are you currently active in a local church that you have attended in the past six months?

I have found it important to ask if they have attended the church in the past six months. Once a woman answered yes. But in the course of conversation I discovered that she hadn't attended church in two years. If they answer yes to this first question, I ask them what attracted them to the church. I am interested in what other churches are doing that people find appealing. With this information I end the survey and go to the next door. If they answer no to question 1, then I proceed to the other questions.

B. What do you feel is the greatest need in our area?

C. Why do you think most people don't attend church?

If you ask people why they don't

attend church, you are questioning their beliefs. Here you are only asking their opinion about other people. Most likely they will tell you why they don't attend.

D. If you were looking for a church, what kind of things would you look for?

E. What advice would you give me as a pastor of a local church? How could I best help you?

This survey helped me discover facts I would never have known on my own. I found out that the first thing people seek in a church is quality child care. Children's church is no more an option for the people I want to reach; it is a necessity. I also found out that some people miss church simply because of work schedules. Many work weekends and cannot attend on a Saturday or Sunday morning. To meet this need we hold Friday night services.

Get out and meet people. Listen to their needs, wants, criticisms, and complaints. Some information you will be able to use. Some of it your church will not be able to fulfill. Keep an open mind and really listen to what the people have to say.

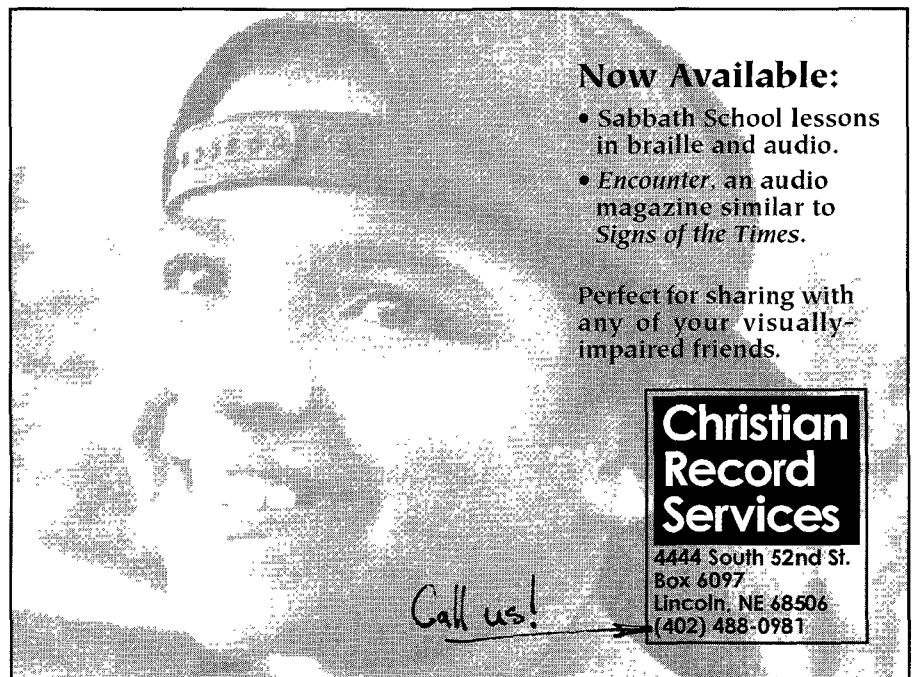
Understand who you are

Look at yourself. You will attract people who are like you. What is your

background? Around whom do you naturally feel comfortable? If you grew up in a blue-collar family, that is whom you are going to attract. If you came from a white collar family and find yourself pastoring in a farming community, you will probably find a certain amount of frustration. It is not a matter of one group being right or wrong, better or worse; we are just different. Different people and programs appeal to different people.

Look at who is already attending your church

Take a good hard look at your church and ask, "What kinds of people already attend here?" It helped me to understand people and churches immensely when I discovered the homogeneous principle. "A 'homogeneous unit' is simply a group of people who consider each other to be 'our kind of people.' They have many areas of mutual interest. They share the same culture. They socialize freely. When they are together they are comfortable and they all feel at home."² People are attracted to those who are like themselves. This does not mean that you are not going to minister to those who don't fit your desired target audience. The issue, as Logan suggests, is "Whom will you structure



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your church to attract? If you structure your church to attract blue collars, and white collars come, God bless 'em. But recognize that God has called you to put your time and energy into assimilating and developing the blue collars (or whatever is the description of your intended target audience), and don't apologize for it. . . . Effective pastors realize that their church in a socioculturally complex society must be a specialist rather than a generalist."³

Determine the felt needs

Paul did this in his ministry. His preaching met the needs of people. Listen to him: "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

"To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. . . . To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings" (1 Cor. 9:19-23, NIV).

We can do no less. Unless our preaching and ministry meets the felt needs of people, we cannot succeed. "This is the only known way to open closed minds. Gearing your message to the felt needs of any audience is the key to unlocking closed filters. In fact, extensive research and documentation confirm that 'people will not listen to the gospel message and respond unless it speaks to felt needs.'"⁴

We must do whatever it takes (within the confines of biblical principles) to win the lost around us. If you live in a retirement area, you must have programs for the retired. If you live in a Spanish-speaking community, your services should be in Spanish so those coming will understand the gospel. If you live in a baby boomer community, your worship service must speak the language and meet the needs of the baby boomers.

Jesus used this approach 2,000 years ago. "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the

people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"⁵ Every ministry in the church should be examined to see if it is meeting the needs of the people you are trying to reach.

Determine how your church can meet people's needs

With the information you have gathered, consider how your church can meet some of the needs in your community. Remember, you don't have to be like the big church down the street. Your church has some unique gifts of its own and will attract people who will not find those needs met anywhere else. When you begin to meet the needs of people, doctrines are easily accepted. You will find people asking you to teach them what the church believes. Remember the adage "People don't care what you know, till they know that you care."

Expect opposition

Moving a church away from a maintaining mode to an evangelistic mode is no easy task. The older the church, the harder this can be. People get comfortable, and change does not come easily. If you try to turn a church around and seek to reach out to the community, don't be surprised if you receive lots of opposition.

Move slowly

Take your time. Too often pastors do the research, attend seminars on church growth, and come into the church and announce that things have got to change starting today. The members are left aghast, not knowing what has gotten into their pastor. The only thing they can figure out is that they are being pushed out of their comfort zone, and they don't like it. So move slowly.

If you go to a seminar on church growth, share the information you received with the members. Help them to understand many of the concepts

that are working elsewhere to bring souls to Jesus. Study the demographic research together so that everyone begins to get a feel for the people in their community at the same time. Let key members accompany you with the door-to-door surveys so they can hear what people are saying. Then they will come back to the church and share this with others.

Most important of all, pray and pray and pray and then pray some more. Winning lost souls for Christ is a spiritual battle, and spiritual battles can be fought only through spiritual warfare. As Bounds states: "Prayer is not preparation for the battle, it is the battle." Never stop praying for the growth of your church. As you pray, God will begin to open doors and show you better ways to reach those around you. ■

¹ C. Peter Wagner, *Your Church Can Grow* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1984), p. 52.

² *Ibid.*, p. 127.

³ Robert E. Logan, *Beyond Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1989), p. 72.

⁴ Dick Innes, *I Hate Witnessing* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1983), p. 155.

⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.



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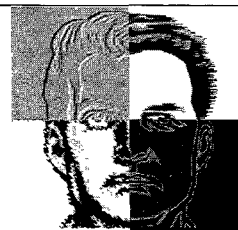
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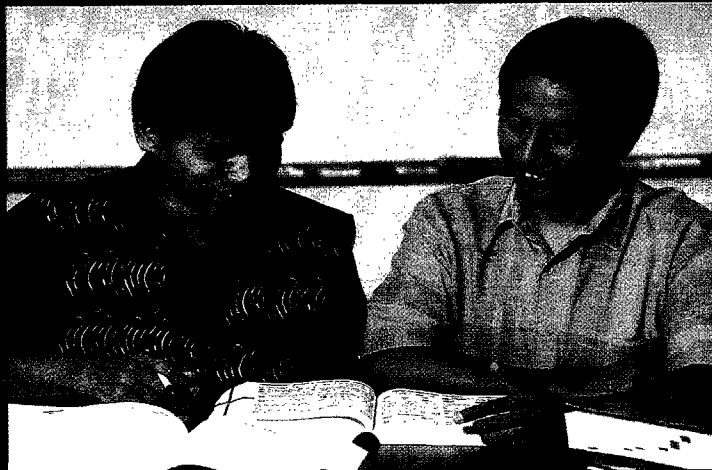
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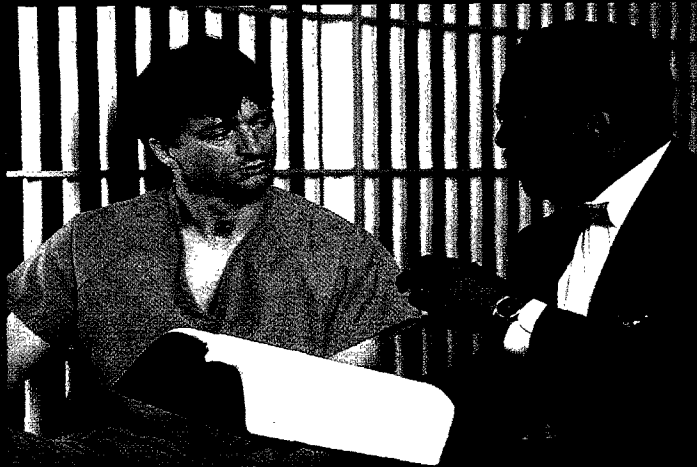
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