

Ministry

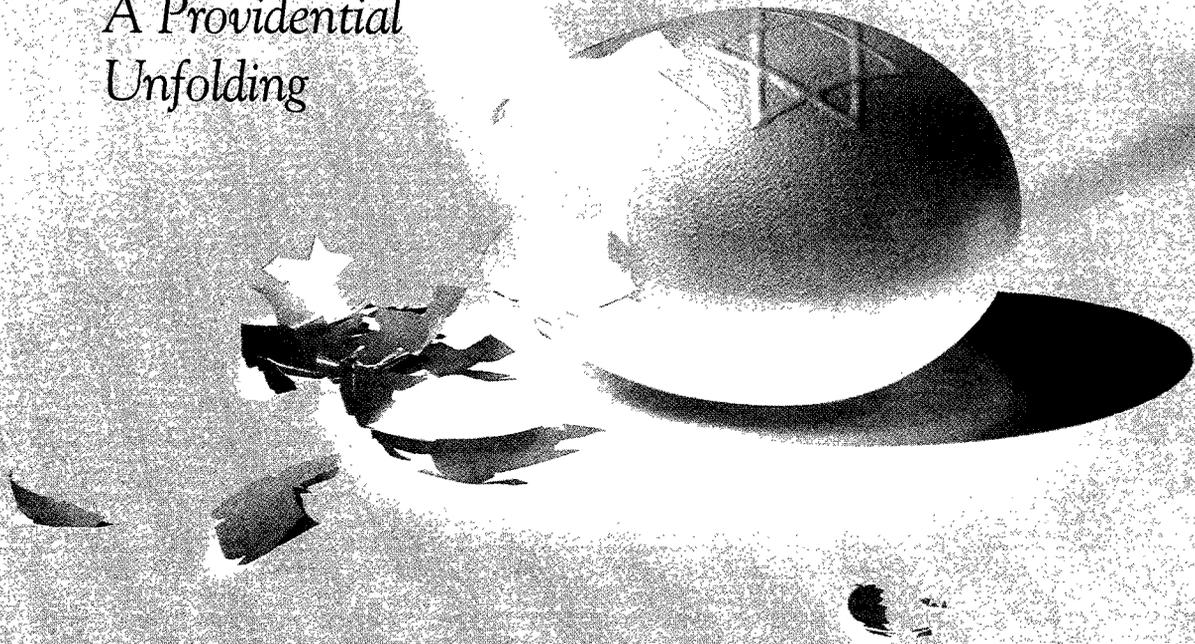
International Journal for Pastors

June 1997



Israel in

*A Providential
Unfolding*



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There is no delay

Mario Veloso makes an excellent point in "There Is No Delay" (December 1996). Some Adventists imagine God as having a celestial signboard next to His throne announcing the date of the Parousia. When things go well in His church, He tells Gabriel to subtract time from the date. When things go poorly in the church, Gabriel adds time. As spirituality, commitment, and service in the church wax and wane, the date seesaws back and forth. This scenario exaggerates the role of sinful humanity in the great controversy. It also diminishes the sovereign Lord of the universe. Let God be God. He knows when He will come, and He will come on time. He foresees the rise and fall of conditions in His church and has given the role of the church an appropriate scale in His master plan of redemption. When the fullness of time has come, He will come.—Gorden R. Doss, Lake View Seminary, Malawi, Africa.

- Veloso's claim of *sola scriptura*, while fine rhetoric, is not fully evidenced in his arguments or conclusion. Is it possible that pride of opinion has led the writer to a technically correct but misleading statement of fact and an incorrect conclusion?

The point that the time and hour of Christ's return has not been set is probably valid. To state that *only* the Father "knows" would be to limit the omniscience of two thirds of the Godhead, something untenable. It is most likely correct to assume that the Father has been appointed the final arbiter of when that event shall occur, although Christ is the One who declares "It is finished" to end His ministry in the sanctuary.

What is misleading is the writer's confusing the *event* with the *time*. Could this not be analogous to our use of the expression "as soon as possible," in which we desire an event to occur but cannot see the exact time when such will happen? God may have desired that Christ return long before this, but has been unable to set

the day and hour because of circumstances. Then the Second Coming would have been "delayed," a concept in harmony with both Scripture (i.e., God's will has been thwarted on occasion) and those "extrabiblical writings" the author chose to avoid but which we as Seventh-day Adventists may avoid with some degree of peril.—E. Stanley Chace, Peoria, Arizona.

- From the day we became a distinctive people, the Second Advent has been a compelling force in our existence. After a century and a half, questions cannot be avoided, and this article raises serious ones. The article proposes that the Lord did not set a date. He did make plain that the "signs" would assure us that it is "near," and He did state that He did not know when He would return but that His Father knew (Mark 13:32). The Father's infinite foreknowledge is not arbitrary chronological predetermination of a day on His celestial calendar, but a divine foresight of how long the sinfulness of the human heart would require before "we" should grow up unto "the stature of the fullness" of our Lord—by faith. The opposite of faith is unbelief; if unbelief has existed and if it still exists, then it is inescapable that there has been a "delay."

There was no delay in the First Advent because it was fixed by the prophecy of Daniel 9, which Paul understood (Gal. 4:4). Revelation 10 makes clear that since 1844 "there should be delay no longer," but that God purposed that those who went through the Great Disappointment should live to see Christ come (verses 6, 7). "The Lord in His great mercy sent" the 1888 message to effect that preparation *in that generation*.

The Father understands the conditions of His redemptive purposes—the *télos* when His people will finally choose to cooperate with the Great High Priest ("then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"). The symbology of Scripture is that of a Bridegroom winning the heart of His Bride. Hosea speaks of a repentant Bride who

finally renounces baal and comes to the true Christ as an unfaithful but repentant wife. Isaiah 54:5 says, "Thy Maker is thine husband." Ezekiel 16 sees the analogy; "she" eventually comes to "know" the Lord.

Finally, Christ bases His message to Laodicea on the symbolism of the Song of Solomon (Rev. 3:20; Song of Solomon 5:16, LXX). When "she" at last opens the door, He is "gone." Surely this is a parable of the repentance God's people will experience when they learn to discern our 1888 history. The divine Bridegroom still pleads, "Be zealous therefore, and repent." At last, "His wife hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:6-8).

It is solemn truth that her unbelief has delayed "the marriage of the Lamb." The Father is the one who "gave"; He knows the price of sin; He only can comprehend fully the condition that must make possible the "wedding." He only can understand the immeasurable risk He took to extricate the universe from sin; He knows that He is not following a calculated Calvinistic script setting a date that excuses our unbelief and removes from us the necessity for the repentance of the ages.

The Father knows that Christ could have returned at any time since 1844 that the Bride should consent to "make herself ready." He knows also when "she" will be willing to forsake all others (our selfish worldliness and infidelity) and cleave to her Bridegroom forever. She will at last appreciate the cost of her salvation as revealed at the cross.

This article presents huge problems that are extremely difficult to reconcile with Adventist history. Everything in the Sacred Record proclaims that there has been a terrible delay. All that the human mind can comprehend in a union of true love between a man and woman is involved in the experience of Jesus. The disappointment of Christ is beyond description. But the delay *must* continue until the Bride hears the knocking at the door and repents.—Donald K. Short, Hendersonville, North Carolina. ■

Free Subscription

If you're receiving Ministry bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 Ministry has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.



Recently my wife and I spent three weeks in London. One significant activity we enjoyed was visiting museums—seeing the old and the new, the traditional and the revolutionary. We witnessed the most creative expression of the human mind. I concentrated on the recent history during my lifetime and was amazed at what had taken place from the mid-1970s to now. Breathtaking changes have emerged in such a short span of time—in transportation, labor, race relations, technology, and politics. One hundred years ago the world was vastly different. People living then could have hardly comprehended the life we see today.

Rapid change, momentous complexity, and a measure of anxiety characterize our future. As we anticipate this brave new world in a brand-new century, we can look forward to a surge in secularism, in indifference to and negation of spiritual values, and in technological supremacy.

What are the implications of this for theology? Is it possible that some of the foundational truths of the Bible will get less and less attention, if not total rejection? Will the preaching of the Word continue to be a powerful force to change the lives of men and women? What kind of church will we have?

These are a few of the questions that arise as we ponder ministerial training for the future. Right now, for example, a plurality of opinion provides for diverse perspectives on any given subject. If this pluralistic trend begins to dominate our ministerial training, and if it impacts our essential doctrinal structure, what will the future of our church be?

The answer could be highly disquieting. Consider the question from another perspective. What kind of seminary graduates do we wish to produce? Ministers committed to God's revealed truth? Ministers devoted to the mission and message of the truth for this time?

Ministers with a local as well as global perspective of the church? Or ministers who in the name of freedom and the search for truth continually cast unqualified doubt on what we believe and why we exist as a church? What basic concepts and attitudes, what fundamental training and outlook, what imperative backgrounds and equipment, may the church properly expect in the new pastoral recruits upon whose shoulders must rest the burden of an eschatological ministry? What is the ideal training that should be brought into reality? Here are some imperatives:

1. *Keep the ministerial training unwaveringly Christian, Adventist, and practical.* The obligation to proclaim the

Ministerial Training for the Twenty-first Century

JOEL SARLI

everlasting gospel to the world, with specific emphasis upon our reformatory message, demands that our pastors be committed to that responsibility. Our colleges and seminaries are called to produce such pastors. This does not mean that our ministerial training should be closed to all other competing views, but it does mean that the Adventist stance will be definite and obviously present.

Our ministerial training must be distinctive and thoroughly Adventist. The church of tomorrow expects that its young preachers will come forth with a basically sound attitude toward biblical truth—the mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The task is not easy, but the magnitude of such a challenge should lead us to a candid self-evaluation of the

ministerial program we are operating to see if we are meeting the basic objectives to which God has called us.

2. *Encourage educators to be practical.* Unless colleges and seminaries engage in frequent ministry of the Word through evangelism and pastoral work, they tend to become theoretical and detached from the imperatives of the workaday gospel ministry. Their teaching will become scholarly, yet remote from the real challenges and practical needs of the people to whom their students must soon minister. Their instruction may be sound, interesting, and true, yet may taste too much of the classroom and the cloistered study.

Educators need not only train students to be good pastors and great preachers but also to be real warriors in a world hostile to the gospel. Ministerial students need to be exposed to challenges in real life, outside the safety of the classroom.

3. *Involve other church units in the formulation of ministerial training.* The ministerial training program must obviously be more than a college or seminary affair; it is a church-wide concern. To accomplish this training, at least three areas of church resource need to be involved: (1) the congregation, and local leaders; (2) the college or seminary; and (3) church administration in general. The church's Department of Education and the Ministerial Association should work together in coordinating this task. The Education Department would be responsible for academic excellence in the ministerial training program, and the Ministerial Association would act as a bridge between the church and the formal education of ministers.

4. *Focus the training on ministry.* While it is critical for the seminary to equip future pastors, with, for example, academic tools to interpret Scripture, its basic focus should be ministerial. Without undermining scholarly pursuits, seminaries should concentrate on how best to feed the flock.

Only then can we face the challenges of the next century. ■

UNDERSTANDING ISRAEL IN PROPHECY

Faitn in Jesus as the Messiah of Israel's prophecies is an essential qualification for the Christian interpreter of the Old Testament. Those interpreters who cannot see Christ at the heart of the Old Testament writings are not able to explain the real thrust of Israel's prophecies (see 2 Cor. 3:14).



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For Paul, the central truth of the Old Testament was not Israel and its national future but rather the Messiah Jesus, the Lord of Israel, the Redeemer of the world (Rom. 16:25-27; Gal. 3:16, 29; Phil. 3:3-10).

The key to the Old Testament: the New Testament

The cardinal point is this: Are Christians permitted to take the Old Testament as a closed unit, in isolation from the New Testament witness of its fulfillment? Or must they accept the Old Testament and the New Testament together as one organic revelation of God in Christ Jesus?

God Himself is the interpreter of His Word. The words of Scripture receive their meaning and message from their divine Author and must constantly be related to His progressive will in order to hear God's own interpretation of His earlier promises in a "Thus says the Lord." Promises concerning Israel as a people, dynasty, land, city, and mountain are not self-contained promises for the sake of Israel, but are integral parts of God's progressive plan of salvation.

The New Testament emphasizes the truth that God has fulfilled the Abrahamic

promise in Jesus and has renewed His covenant with Israel through Christ in a "better covenant" (Heb. 7:22),* introducing a "better hope" (verse 19) for all Christ-believing Israelites and Gentiles (Heb. 8). Thus the apostles testify to a basic fulfillment of the Old Testament promise in Jesus.

The full theological sense of the history of Israel can be grasped only by those who believe that Jesus is the Messiah, that God's covenant with the 12 tribes of Israel is fulfilled and completed—not postponed—in Christ's covenant with His 12 apostles (2 Cor. 3; Heb. 4). The central thrust of the gospel and its prophetic hope is that the church of Christ is appointed to fulfill the divine purpose of Israel's election: to be a saving light for the Gentiles. In biblical typology it is not Christ alone who is the antitype but *Christ and His people*, united in God's saving purpose for the world.

Israel in the Old Testament

The very first use of "Israel" in the Bible, in Genesis 32, presents an explanation of the origin and meaning of this new name. About to enter the land of Canaan, the guilt-ridden Jacob, out of fear for his life, began

to wrestle one night with an unknown "Man" who appeared to possess superhuman strength. Jacob persistently entreated this Man for His blessing. The reply was given, "Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with men and have overcome" (Gen. 32:28; cf. 35:9, 10).

Later the prophet Hosea interpreted Jacob's struggle as a struggle "with God," "with the angel" (Hosea 12:3, 4). The new name "Israel" is thus revealed to be of divine origin. It symbolizes Jacob's new spiritual relation to Yahweh and stands for the reconciled Jacob through God's forgiving grace. The rest of Scripture never loses sight of this sacred root of the name. Hosea presents Jacob's struggle and trust in God as an example that needed to be imitated by the apostate tribes of Israel (verses 3-6; 14:1-3). In other words, Jacob's struggle with God is set forth as a prototype of the true Israel, as the normative pattern for the house of Israel to become the Israel of God.

Isaiah's prophecies of chapters 40-66 promise Israel's restoration after the Assyrian-Babylonian exile. Here we find assurances of Israel's gathering out of the great dispersion; the prophetic focus is not exclusively on the physical descendants of Jacob. Isaiah envisions that among postexilic Israel many non-Israelites who have chosen to worship God would be gathered. Two classes of people, foreigners and eunuchs, who were forbidden entrance into the worshiping assembly of God (Deut. 23:1-3) are now welcome to worship in the new Temple on Mount Zion on the condition that they accept the Sabbath of the Lord and hold fast to God's covenant (see Isa. 56:4-7; also 45:20-25).

When Gentiles join themselves in faith and obedience to the Lord (Isa. 56:3), the God of Israel will give them "an everlasting name" (verse 5). In this way Isaiah unfolds how God's universal outreach to the world will be fulfilled through a new Israel. The essential characteristic of this new Israel is not ethnic descent from Abraham but the faith of Abraham, the worship of Yahweh. Believing Gentiles will enjoy the same rights and hopes of the covenant promises as believing Israelites.

Jeremiah uses the name "Israel" in various ways, depending on each context. However, Jeremiah does not focus his promises

on the restoration of Israel as an independent political state, but on Israel as a restored spiritual people of God gathered from all 12 tribes. The new covenant that God shall make with the house of Israel and the house of Judah after the Babylonian exile will be explicitly different from the Sinai covenant (Jer. 31:31-34). The restored Israel shall be a praying, worshiping remnant from all the 12 tribes in which each Israelite, individually, has the experience of a saving relationship with God and obeys His holy law with an undivided heart (verse 6; 32:38-40).

Ezekiel, himself deported to Babylon in 597 B.C., also predicted that a new, spiritual Israel shall return from exile in all nations to their homeland. "They will return to it and remove all its vile images and de-

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testable idols. I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh. Then they will follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. They will be my people, and I will be their God. But as for those whose hearts are devoted to their vile images and detestable idols, I will bring down on their own heads what they have done, declares the Sovereign Lord" (Eze. 11:18-21).

These and similar predictions (see Eze. 36:24-32; 37:22-26) stress that God's central concern with Israel is her restoration not as a secular, political state, but as a united theocracy, a spiritually cleansed and truly worshiping people of God.

The postexilic Israel was a religious community centered around the rebuilt temple, not around a royal throne. Although the majority of the returned exiles were from

the tribes of Judah and Levi, this spiritual remnant regarded itself as the continuation and representation of the Israel of God (Ezra 2:2, 70; 3:1, 11; 4:3; 6:16, 17, 21; Neh. 1:6; 2:10; 8:1, 17; 10:39; 12:47; Mal. 1:1, 5; 2:11). The last prophet, Malachi, stressed that those Israelites who "fear the Lord" are the people of God, and that only those "who serve God" are recognized as God's own treasured possession in the last judgment day (Mal. 3:16-4:3). Judah is regarded as the sons of Jacob and the inheritor of God's covenant with Israel (Mal. 1:1; 2:11; 3:6; 4:4).

In summary, the Old Testament uses the name "Israel" in more than one way. First, it stands for the religious covenant community, the people who worship God in the revealed truth and Spirit. Second, it denotes a distinct ethnic group or nation that is called to become a spiritual Israel. The original meaning of the name "Israel," as a symbol of acceptance with God by His forgiving grace (Gen. 32:28), forever remains the sacred standard to which the prophets call the natural tribes of Israel to return (Hosea 12:6; Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 36:26-28).

Whenever the Old Testament prophets portray the eschatological remnant of Israel, it is always characterized as a faithful religious community that worships God with a new heart on the basis of the "new covenant" (Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:12, 13; Jer. 31:31-34; Eze. 11:16-21). This faithful remnant of the end-time will become God's witness among all the nations and includes also non-Israelites regardless of their ethnic origin (Zech. 9:7; 14:16; Isa. 66:19; Dan. 7:27; 12:1-3).

Christ's gathering of Israel's remnant: His church

The Christian church was not created by Paul's preaching among the Gentiles, but by Christ personally within Palestinian Judaism. At His baptism Christ was "revealed to Israel" as the Messiah of prophecy (cf. Isa. 42-53). God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:38) and announced from heaven that He would fulfill the Messianic role of bearing the sins of the world as the Lamb of God (John 1:29-34, 41; Matt. 3:16, 17). His coming to Israel was the highest test for the Jewish nation of its relation to the covenant of God. As Messiah, He was to be the "stumbling stone," the "rock that makes them [Israel] fall" (Rom. 9:32, 33; 1 Peter 2:8).

The test for Israel had come in its reaction to Jesus as Messiah. Christ claimed that all Israel should come to Him to receive the rest of God or they would stand judged. "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matt. 12:30; see also 18:20; 23:37).

Christ announced, "I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (John 10:16; cf. Isa. 56:8).

As the Messianic Shepherd, Christ declares that He was to fulfill Israel's covenant promises of the gathering of Israel. He came to gather Israel to Himself (Matt. 12:30), and more than that, to gather the Gentiles to Himself (John 12:32). By officially ordaining 12 disciples as His apostles (Mark 3:14, 15) Christ constituted a new Israel, the Messianic remnant of Israel, and called it His church (Matt. 16:18). Thus Christ founded His church as a new organism with its own structure and authority, endowing it with "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (verse 19; cf. 18:17).

Christ's final decision regarding the Jewish nation came at the end of His ministry, when the Jewish leaders had determined to reject His claim of being Israel's Redeemer. Christ's words in Matthew 23 reveal that Israel's guilt before God had reached its completion (Matt. 23:32). His verdict was therefore: "I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit" (Matt. 21:43). This decision implied that the Jewish people would no longer be the theocratic people of God and that the true Israel would continue in a people that would accept the Messiah and His message of the kingdom of God.

Which new "people" did Christ have in mind? On an earlier occasion Christ noticed to His amazement that a Roman centurion showed more faith in Him than anyone in Israel had ever done. Then He had said, "I say to you that *many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places* at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven [kingdom of God, Luke 13:28]. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 8:11, 12).

Thus it becomes evident that Christ did not promise the kingdom of God—the theocracy—to another "generation" of Jews in the far future as dispensational writers favor, but rather to Christ-believing people from all races and nations, "from the east and the west."

Only in Christ could Israel as a nation have remained the true covenant people of God. In rejecting Jesus as God's appointed King, the Jewish nation failed the decisive test of fulfilling God's purpose for the Gentiles. Christ, however, renewed God's covenant with His 12 apostles. He bestowed the

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divine calling of ancient Israel on His Messianic flock, to be the light of the world (Matt. 5:14) and to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). God was not dependent on the Jewish nation for the fulfillment of His divine purpose for all people. His plan could not be thwarted or postponed by Israel's rejection of the Messiah. The day of Pentecost proved that God was "on schedule." Precisely when the annual festival of Pentecost had arrived (Acts 2:1; literally: "was completed"), new, dramatic events took place in fulfillment of prophecy. From heaven Christ poured out the promised Spirit on His faithful ones.

The Church as the remnant in Israel's prophecies

The apostles stressed that every occurrence in Christ's life, death, resurrection, ascension, His outpouring of the Spirit of God and His enthronement at the right hand of God were all the explicit fulfillments of Israel's prophecies. Peter explained Christ's betrayal and death as the fulfillment

of "God's set purpose and foreknowledge" (Acts 2:23). Even the persecution of Christ's church in Jerusalem is viewed as what God's "power and will had decided beforehand should happen" (Acts 4:28; with an appeal to Ps. 2:1, 2).

With regard to Christ's ascension to heaven and His enthronement as the Davidic ruler of both Israel and the nations, Peter appeals to Psalm 110, saying, "For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, 'The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.'" Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:34-36).

Peter's application of Psalm 110 to Christ's present kingship is not a literal exegesis of Psalm 110, but the inspired Christological application of David's prophecy. The apostolic method of interpreting the Old Testament is to apply Israel's prophecy in the light of the person and mission of Christ. Then there is no postponement of Christ's kingdom at all, but only new progress and fulfillment (some 3,000 Jews accepted Peter's interpretation and were baptized into Christ and His church, Acts 2:41).

Peter's interpretation of the outpouring of the Spirit as the direct fulfillment of Joel's prophecy for the last days (verses 16-21) confirms the concept that the church was *not* an unforeseen entity in the Old Testament. Rather it was the surprising fulfillment of Joel's remnant prophecy. Thus the church is *not an afterthought or interruption of God's plan with Israel for the world but the divine realization of the eschatological remnant of Israel.*

Shortly after the outpouring of God's Spirit on the church Peter stated categorically, "Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days" (Acts 3:24). In other words, since Pentecost all the prophecies concerning the remnant of Israel have received their fulfillment in the formation of the apostolic church. The church is plainly prophesied in the remnant promises of the Old Testament. Peter addressed the Christian churches of his time, scattered throughout the Middle East (1 Peter 1:1), with the honorable titles of Israel: "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to

God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9; cf. Ex. 19:5, 6).

Although he does not use the name "Israel," Peter applies Israel's calling now to the church. This is his ecclesiological interpretation of God's covenant with Israel (Ex. 19:5, 6). This application is the outgrowth of the Christological interpretation of the Messianic prophecies. The ecclesiological application is the necessary extension of the Christological fulfillment. As the body is organically connected to the head, so is the church to the Messiah. The ecclesiological interpretation removes the ethnic and national restrictions of the old covenant. The new covenant people are no longer characterized by race or country, but exclusively by faith in Christ. This can be called Peter's spiritualization of Israel as a "holy nation." He thinks along the lines of a Passover typology when he stresses that Christians, as "God's elect," were "redeemed" by "the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect" (1 Peter 1:1, 18, 19). Paul also uses this Passover typology (see Ex. 12:5; 1 Cor. 5:7).

Further, Peter's description of the church as being "called . . . out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9) strongly suggests an analogy with Israel's exodus from the house of bondage (Ex. 4:23; 19:4; Isa. 43:21). As ancient Israel experienced its exodus salvation in order to praise Yahweh's faithfulness, so the church experiences her present salvation from the dominion of darkness in order to "declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (see also Col. 1:13). This amounts to saying that the Christian community is the true Israel.

The land promised to the Israel of God

The prophets described the land promised to the patriarchs and Israel consistently in theological terms: as God's gracious gift or blessing to His covenant people (Gen. 12:1, 7; 13:14-17; 15:18-21; Deut. 1:5-8; Ps. 44:1-3). The land itself is called, as it were, to observe the sabbath to the Lord (Lev. 25:2), to symbolize God's ownership of the land. It remained "His holy land" (Ps. 78:54) as long as God dwelt in the midst of Israel (Num. 35:34). The holiness of Israel's land is entirely derivative. The destiny of land,

city, and temple depends therefore on Israel's religious relation to the Lord (see Lev. 26). God's judgment on Israel entails His judgment on their land, because it is His land or inheritance. "The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is mine and you are but aliens and my tenants" (Lev. 25:23). Both the covenant people and its land ultimately depend on God.

When Israel became persistently unfaithful to their covenant God, the Lord took His inheritance back from Israel (Jer. 17:1-4; 15:13, 14). That meant Israel's dispersion among the Gentiles and the devastation of the land (Isa. 1:5-9; Jer. 4:23-26). With the rejection of Israel as the faithless nation God also rejected her land as no longer under His blessing.

Christ did not
spiritualize away Israel's
territorial promise when He
included His universal
church. He widened the scope
of the territory to include
the whole world.

Christ expands the territorial promise

In His sermon on the mount, Christ promised the kingdom of heaven to "the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3; called the kingdom of God in Luke 6:20); to "the meek" or the humble He promised *the earth* (Matt. 5:5). Two conclusions must be drawn: (1) to His spiritual followers Jesus assigned the whole earth together with the kingdom of heaven as their inheritance; (2) He applied Israel's territorial inheritance to the church by enlarging the original promise of Palestine to include the earth made new. In ancient Israel, David assured the Israelites who endured suppression by "evil men" that God would vindicate their trust in Him: "But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace . . . The righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever" (Ps. 37:11-29).

Clearly Christ applied Psalm 37 in a new, surprising way: (1) this "land" will be larger than David thought; the fulfillment will include the entire earth in its re-created beauty (see Isa. 11:6-9; Rev. 21, 22); (2) the renewed earth will be the inheritance of all the meek from all nations who accept Christ as their Lord and Saviour. Christ did not spiritualize away Israel's territorial promise when He included His universal church. On the contrary, He widened the scope of the territory until it included the whole world.

One hope for Abraham, Israel, and the church

Abraham and his believing descendants were promised not just Palestine, but "a better country" with a heavenly city (Heb. 11:10, 16). In short, they looked beyond Palestine to a new heaven and earth, and a new Jerusalem. Further, this eternal inheritance is not restricted to the literal Israel. All believers will be united in one inheritance: "God had planned something better for us [the church] so that only together with us would they [Israel] be made perfect" (Heb. 11:40; cf. 13:14).

The church of Christ has no other hope, no other destiny, no other inheritance than the one that God gave Abraham and Israel—a renewed heaven and earth (Isa. 65:17). This could not be stated more conclusively than by Peter's words "That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But *in keeping with his promise* we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness" (2 Peter 3:12, 13).

The book of Revelation reassures that God's covenant promises find their perfect fulfillment in the new earth of the age to come (see chapters 21 and 22). The lesson for Christians is profound, as John Bright concludes: "So, like Israel of old, we have ever to live in tension. It is the tension between grace and obligation: the unconditional grace of Christ which is proffered to us, his unconditional promises in which we are invited to trust, and the obligation to obey him as the church's sovereign Lord."†

* Scripture references in this article are from the New International Version.

†J. Bright, *Covenant and Promise* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), p. 198.

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PASTORAL ROLES IN ADVENTISM'S FIRST CENTURY

The Seventh-day Adventist Church did not have a developed concept of a localized pastorate until well into this century. Through the years the pastor's role has changed significantly from what it was in the 1800s to what it is today.



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To understand the beginning of pastoral care issues in the early Seventh-day Adventist Church, we need to look back at our Millerite origins. At the time William Miller forcefully presented his prophetic interpretations, other church pastors often urged their members not to consider Miller's teachings. Those who accepted Miller's message were frequently disfellowshipped. Millerites, in turn, saw the disfellowshipping churches as part of Babylon.

During the first two decades after 1844 Adventists purposely resisted any organization resembling these churches. Nevertheless, by the 1860s the emerging movement had to address organizational questions such as the ordination of pastors, church nurture, evangelism on a national scale, and remuneration of workers.

At the urging of James and Ellen White, organization did take place in 1863 at Battle Creek, Michigan. But the desire not to copy "Babylon" inhibited much organizational growth. For instance, the use of the title "Reverend" was abandoned for the more humble "Brother," later "Elder," and then "Pastor."

However, tying a pastor to a local

Adventist church was considered a danger to be avoided. James White commented in 1858: "Ministers of Jesus, 'preach the word' . . . Point them . . . to our mighty Savior . . . , then leave them to obtain a living experience . . . while you go on your way to proclaim salvation to others. Should you enter into all the particulars of the duty of your brethren, you would be sure to get in the way of ministering angels. . . . And the effect would be, that the church would look to you instead of the Lord."¹

Uriah Smith added other revealing expectations: "We see no reason why ministers cannot labor, sixty hours at least out of every week. . . . He can study with his might five hours, visit from house-to-house with his might four hours each day, and each day preach one hour. . . . He has then left him fourteen hours for sleep, recreation, prayer and meditation."²

Visitation meant evangelistic visits of nonmembers. Members were visited only when ill or in some crisis. Most ministerial efforts involved evangelism, and in particular, church planting in "dark counties," which had no Adventist churches.

A growing church and changing ministerial roles

When the church began to keep official statistics in 1863, it had about 3,500 members, with 30 ministers (22 ordained and 8 licentiates). By 1870 the numbers grew to 5,440 with 72 ministers. By 1880 we had 15,570 members with 260 ministers, including 144 ordained. Ten years later we had 29,711 members, 227 ordained ministers, and 184 licentiates. At the end of the century membership stood at 75,767 with 847 ministers, 510 ordained.

The increased growth inevitably called for increased organization. However, the fear of organization and the tendency to equate it with Babylon persisted. In addition, the fears related to the instituting of local pastorates were bolstered by the strong belief in the imminent return of Jesus. It was difficult for the church to plan anything long-term without someone expressing concern about the shortness of time. Evangelism was most important, not nurture, and financial stability was something for the future. Evangelist-pastors were most successful in debating and not as effective in developing and nurturing congregations.

By the 1880s two key influences emerged that would change the focus of the church. The first was theological, led by E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones. The emphasis on Christ as the believers' righteousness led to an entirely different focus for ministry: following Christ in all things. On this basis, Christ was the Great Physician, so it was urged that the church should operate sanitariums to minister as Christ did. Christ was the Great Teacher; therefore the church should operate schools in a manner reflecting Christ's teaching ministry. And since Christ was the Great Shepherd of the church, we should look this nurturing aspect of at Christ's ministry as the example for our ministers to follow. By its nature this shepherding had to include caring for the sheep already in the fold.

In 1883, at a pre-General Conference ministerial institute, Ellen White pushed for a more Christ-centered approach to ministry: "If you would preach fewer sermons, and do more personal labor in visiting and praying with individuals, your ministry would be more like that of Jesus."³

The second key factor influencing the role of the minister was what may generally

be called maturing influences from within the church. A large second generation of Adventists growing up in the church demanded nurture. Youth, as well as new converts, were dropping out of the church. Church leaders noted and lamented this fact. James White himself said in 1881: "We are evidently losing nearly as much in old fields of labor as we are gaining in the new . . . Should not our ablest men . . . labor where they can accomplish most?"⁴

Yet despite these pressures the original influences against long-term local pastors continued. In 1891 General Conference secretary W. A. Colcord pointed out: "Unlike most other Protestant denominations, Seventh-day Adventists have no located pastors except in certain large cities where they have

A large second generation of Adventists growing up in the church demanded nurture.

missions established."⁵ He spoke of city evangelism centers that had ministers who came the closest to pastoring a local congregation as we understand it today. But these workers were yet essentially evangelists.

Colcord's reference to the difference between Adventists and other Protestants showed his desire to remain distinct from those others by not having "located pastors." A. G. Daniells, one of the church's greatest administrators, said in 1912 to a group of ministers in Los Angeles that he hoped churches would never need local pastors!⁶

But pressures continued to come from the churches to have local pastors, first from institutional ones such as Battle Creek College, and then increasingly from many of the rest. By the 1920s churches had their pastors, despite widespread unhappiness among many denominational leaders.⁷ As late as 1940 General Conference president James McElhany complained in St. Paul, Minnesota, "You brethren and sisters here tonight who are members of our churches doubtless like to have pastors, but do you

know that the majority of our preachers ought to be out preaching as evangelists instead of pastoring you folk? This is the Lord's plan."⁸ Many leaders shared his frustration and saw the trend toward having localized pastorates as both a curse to local churches and to evangelism.

So for the first century of Adventism, pastoral concerns ranged from uniting God's remnant people and overcoming sin in expectation of Christ's soon coming (early period) to providing nurture for young Christians, training them for missionary service, and taking the gospel to every nation (later period). At first laypersons provided this pastoral care, and only later did fixed pastors follow.

Today, the number of local members per ordained minister continues to expand in the world at large. In the late 1800s the number was about one pastor per 130 members. In the past decade it has risen from 463 to 719 members per pastor. In all of this, the role of the pastor inevitably tends to change and expand. Such influences as the expectations of baby boomers and generation Xers will also affect the kind of pastoring expected of ministers in local churches. Add to this the effects of dwindling resources felt in local churches and in the church as a whole, and it becomes quite safe to predict further significant changes in the role of the Seventh-day Adventist pastor. ■

¹James White, in *Review and Herald*, Apr. 1, 1858.

²Uriah Smith, in *Review and Herald*, Aug. 1, 1865.

³Ellen G. White, "Consecration and Diligence in Christian Workers," remarks to ministers at the 1883 General Conference session, *Review and Herald*, June 24, 1884.

⁴James White, "The Cause at Large," *Review and Herald*, July 5, 1881.

⁵W. A. Colcord, in *New York Independent*, October 1891.

⁶A. G. Daniells, *The Church and Ministry* (Riverside, Jamaica: Watchman Press, 1912), in John Fowler, *Adventist Pastoral Ministry* (Boise, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1990), p. 3.

⁷Bert Haloviak, "Longing for the Pastorate: Ministry in Nineteenth-Century Adventism," unpublished paper.

⁸J. L. McElhany, in Fowler, p. 11. This was at the Autumn Council of 1940. He decried the developments he saw in pastoral care: "I wish to call the attention of this assembly to the fact that to a large extent we have departed from the Lord's plan."

INTEGRITY

THE PASTOR'S ULTIMATE ALLY

If you disfellowship my daughter, I will personally make sure that you get no place in this denomination!" Coming from a union conference officer, the threat was not to be taken lightly.



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I was only five years into the ministry and pastoring my first church alone. Whatever my decision, it seemed that either my future or my integrity was on the line.

The phone call came unexpectedly, just two days before the church business meeting. Jan (not her real name) was in her early 30s, married with three children. She was playing up to a widowed church elder more than twice her age and of questionable mental balance. But he had money.

Local church leaders and friends pleaded with them. They tried to reason with Jan: "What about your marriage? your children? the church in this small town?"

She responded, "I know what I'm doing. Leave us alone!" The elder seemed unable to sort it out. He was basking in the sunshine of her attention.

It was one of the few times that I believed serious church discipline was necessary. In a spirit of self-centered defiance she was daring the church to get in her way. Soliciting her father's protec-

tion was probably part of her life's pattern. Surely the threatening phone call would chase the church away from her door.

Did I sleep well for the next two nights? Of course not! Like mental hand grenades the administrator's threat kept intrusively exploding into my thoughts. "Am I doing the right thing? What if he's serious? What could he do? How dare he threaten me! Maybe I don't want to be a minister anyway! I know I don't want to be a hypocrite. There must be an easier way. *What should I do? That which is right, or that which is safe?*"

The church's redemptive responsibility was clear. After several attempts to dissuade them, the church turned to discipline as a last resort of mercy. The business meeting convened, with the couple present. Friends pleaded with them, but they refused to see the point. Finally the business session recommended to disfellowship.

Jan did divorce, and left with the elder. Her children and husband foundered in

the storm she had created. I have not seen Jan or her father since. Years have passed, and I now work thousands of miles away. Has her father attempted to thwart my ministry? I don't know. But I do know that my heart is at peace and the Lord has blessed me . . . and that is enough.

When we reflect upon our ministry, we want to hear not just the final compliment from God, but His words now from within: "Well done, good and *faithful* servant" (Matt. 25:23). That can happen only if we are committed to the principle of integrity. In the crisis just discussed, integrity was at stake. The decision we took was one that *I could live with, even though it put my ministry at risk*. If we can't accept the principle "To thine own self be true," how can we be true to the expectations of the congregation at large?

Integrity always

This was not the first threat to my ministry. Four years earlier when I was serving as youth pastor, three elders were hotly engaged in a discussion about the youth. "They always . . ." "They never . . ." "Why can't they . . .?" I happened to be nearby when they turned to me and asked, "Isn't that true, Pastor?"

Within me one voice barked, "No, it's not true! And you're a bunch of dogmatic, judgmental pharisees! I can tell that you don't like kids, much less love them!" This seemed like a good answer if I wished to avoid ordination!

Another voice pleaded, "Yes, kids these days just aren't responsible, as they used to be." But that felt so phony.

Instead, I responded, "I disagree [I sensed in them an immediate defensiveness as they prepared to do battle], but I love you anyway." The disarming effect of that last phrase was amazing. The verbal bullets they had been loading rolled harmlessly to the floor.

I felt good about my answer because it was honest, yet not disrespectful. It opened the door to a productive working relationship. And it's a response I have used many times since. In comparison to the incident with Jan, this was far less threatening but just as telling. Other tests

of integrity have come, and continue to present themselves. When faced with a choice of personal integrity or advancement in ministry, I hope I will always choose the first.

What is integrity?

One dictionary defines *integrity* as "the state of being complete, unified." When we have integrity our words and work match up. We are who we are, no matter where we are or whom we are with. "Integrity binds our person together and fosters a spirit of contentment within us. It will not allow our lips to violate our hearts. When integrity is the referee, we will be consistent; our beliefs will be mirrored by our conduct."¹

When we have
*integrity our words and work
match up. We are who we are,
no matter where we are
or whom we are with.*

I have heard it said often that a minister's success is largely a result of the congregation's perception of his or her credibility. If that's true, then I suggest that integrity is what builds credibility. And to be credible to our congregation, we must first become credible to ourselves. That means that we must believe that our integrity is of greater importance than praise and promotion from others.

Humanness of ministry

I remember that as a young ministerial student I resisted the temptation to "look like a theology major." The stereotype was that of a student in white shirt and narrow tie, leather zippered Bible/hymnal case under arm, serious-faced, and walking very quickly toward the next class. I resisted, not because that look was in any

way wrong. It just didn't characterize me. Plus it seemed to divide the clergy types from the rest of the normal world. That seemed artificial and even dangerous. Pretending can be a temptation for ministers, but it negates integrity.

If ministers act different from the normal church member, then our ministerial effectiveness is compromised. How can I give courage to them on their spiritual journey if I am not on the same journey? How can I help people identify their loneliness and pain if I don't have any or am unwilling to let them think I have any?

I like the imagery of the spiritual journey as a team of mountain climbers. Everyone is struggling. Everyone falls occasionally. Everyone needs the team. Everyone needs encouragement. In this model ministers who see themselves as team members are far more credible and helpful than those who act as if they've been helicoptered onto the mountaintop and to call down, "You can make it. Just work harder. It's really quite easy."

That's why I have difficulty with preachers who act and speak differently in the pulpit from the way they do in real life. The pontifical transformation of voice, walk, and body movement on the rostrum would be almost amusing if it weren't so artificial. I recognize that some congregations or cultures expect preachers to be "different" when they "speak for God" from the "sacred desk." (I don't completely understand this desire, and have some reservations about its effect on integrity.) My experience is that this artificial behavior separates us from (and perhaps elevates us above) the worshipers. This artificiality can breed inauthenticity in one's ministry.

I am not calling for a type of nonchalant informality in preaching. I believe a minister can speak in normal tones and conversational style, yet do it with dignity and passion. I'm simply advocating integrity, honesty, and authenticity.

Sense of humor

One way we can show our members that we are just like them is to have a good sense of humor. I continually caution

myself as part of a ministerial team, "Let's not take ourselves *too* seriously." The ready ability to laugh at ourselves reminds us and our congregation that we are in fact only human. Embracing our humanity reminds us: struggling, sinful human beings relate best to a spiritual leader who is human, like themselves, but has a vision for reaching the peak of the mountain and says, "Come, let's climb together." A minister who can balance the integrity and truthfulness of his or her humanness while encouraging the members to keep climbing will build healthy climbers.

Humor also saves us from getting tangled into fruitless and belabored efforts to explain facts. For example, every minister has heard the question "What do you preachers do all week, anyway?" Let's be honest. Doesn't that question bug you? If they're serious, you think they must really be out of touch. If they're being critical, you really don't want to take the effort to answer. Someone overly sensitive about integrity might attempt to explain the weekly schedule in a detailed, intelligible manner. Good luck! Probably the more you try to explain, the less they will understand. On rare occasions I have said, "Well, you ought to shadow me sometime and see for yourself." But on most occasions it's easier just to say, "Oh, you know us preachers; we work only one day a week!" Integrity without humor can be confining.

The mirror test

The final, uncompromising test of integrity comes when we look into the mirror. No one is watching. There is no one to impress. There are no facades to maintain. It is you looking into your soul and asking, "Am I really who I project myself to be? Do I like the person I see? Do I respect the person in this mirror? Is this person authentic or phony?" John Maxwell says, "Image is what people think we are. Integrity is what we really are."²

If integrity has been our guide we will receive the commendation "Well done." If not, we will restlessly grab for trivial and more measurable tokens of success. Edgar

Guest says it well in a very moving poem, which ends:

I don't want to look at myself and know
That I'm bluster and bluff and empty
show.

I can never hide myself from me,
I see what others may never see,
I know what others may never know,
I never can fool myself, and so,

Whatever happens, I want to be
*Self-respecting and conscience free.*³ ■

¹John C. Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), p. 36.

²*Ibid.*, p. 38.

³Edgar Guest, "Am I True to Myself?" Maxwell's, pp. 45, 46.

CONTINUING EDUCATION EXERCISE

QUESTIONS TO CONTEMPLATE OR JOURNAL ON

1. What area of your life causes you to pretend before your church members? How does that affect your sense of integrity? What will you do about it? When?
2. What would you be willing to give up to maintain integrity? A promotion? Your reputation? What was Jesus willing to sacrifice for integrity?
3. Is there an unresolved conflict in your life that causes you to hide behind a facade? Are you willing to face it? Will you seek professional help or that of a trusted friend?
4. When was the last time you laughed at yourself or your mistakes in front of your church members? What would happen if you did? Would they stiffen up and gasp, or relax and identify with your humanness?
5. What frightens you most about being transparent and honest about your humanness before your congregation? Is it a valid fear? Why?
6. Do you put on a pontifical air when in the pulpit? Why? Is this something God has asked you to do? Did you learn this from Jesus?

SUGGESTED READING

Forbes, Cheryl. *The Religion of Power*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1983. An explanation of what power is and does; its use and abuse; its biblical meaning.

Hybels, Bill. *Honest to God?* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990. Hybels explores 12 manifestations of inconsistent Christian living. His call for authenticity in these areas of life is in fact a call for integrity in ministry.

———. *Who You Are When No One's Looking*. Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1987. A call to Christian self-examination in our attempt to become authentic Christians.

Maxwell, John C. *Developing the Leader Within You*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993. Examines characteristics that set great leaders apart from run-of-the-mill leaders. The chapter "The Most Important Ingredient of Leadership: Integrity" is superb.

Nouwen, Henri J. *The Wounded Healer*. New York: Doubleday Books, 1972. A well-known classic that identifies the suffering in a minister's heart and makes that recognition the starting point of service.

OUTREACH IN THE HINDU CONTEXT

Go” (Matt. 28:19). Christ’s commission to the church is to proclaim the gospel to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Rev. 14:6). “His work is to go forward in cities and towns and villages.”¹



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The Lord has given “to every man his work” (Mark 13:34), and this is to “carry the Word of God to every man’s door.”² “Our work has been marked out for us by our heavenly Father. We are to take our Bibles, and go forth to warn the world. We are to be God’s helping hands in saving souls—channels through which His love is day by day to flow to the perishing.”³

Nearly 2,000 years have passed since Jesus gave His great commission. Yet more than half the people of the world today have not heard the gospel. And of those who have heard, many have only a superficial understanding. With world population increasing at a rate of 90 million annually, there will be more unevangelized people in the world by the end of this century. Consider India. Its population will be close to a billion by the turn of the century. Of this, 80 percent are Hindus and some 18 percent include Muslims and other non-Christian belief systems. Certainly this is a challenge to Christian witness.

Slow church growth in India

Church growth in India has been slow, averaging a little more than 2 percent, or about 21 million in a population of 950

million. Adventists number 225,000, one for every 4,250 people.

India is a land of many religions. It has given birth to Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism, and opened its doors to Islam, Christianity, and Zoroastrianism. Even as these religions and numerous animistic traditions keep religion in the foreground of Indian life, the search continues for life’s ultimate meaning. To such a religious people we need to present the Christ of the Bible as the way of salvation. Christ is “not willing that any should perish,” but that all should come to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:9). Our challenge is to show our non-Christian friends that the gospel of the Saviour is addressed to them as much as to any other group of people in the world.

The issues in mission

The Seventh-day Adventist church in India is 104 years old. It operates nearly 300 educational institutions, 12 health-care units, several welfare centers and service organizations. However, the church faces the challenge of more than 350 population segments of 1 million or more where there is no Adventist presence.

India freed itself from colonial rule in 1947, and since then has come a long way in developing democratically, socially, and economically. Can we say the same about the life and growth of the church in India? One has to be honest: both Christianity and Adventism in India have not grown commensurate with growth in other areas.

Many sincere Christians who want to witness seem unable to relate to persons of different religions and cultures. Even as we coexist with Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists,

Sikhs, and others, why do we find it difficult to share our faith with them? Is it possible that we have not taken time to understand them and their worldview, and not discovered what aspects of Christianity may be in the minds of non-Christians in India? What are the common misunderstandings and hindrances in the minds of non-Christians as Christianity comes to them? In my professional life I have interacted with a number of Hindu professors and scholars, and it was eye-opening for me

to hear some of their views on Christianity.

Following are two main issues facing Indian Christians, and then some suggestions or approaches as we reach out to share Christ with Hindus particularly.

Misconceptions about Christianity

One of the main issues facing Indian Christians is becoming aware of misconceptions non-Christians have of Christianity. Some of these are:

Christianity is an authoritarian religion. Many Hindu friends believe that Christianity is authoritarian, with dogmas and demands whose uncritical acceptance is essential for salvation. The Christian witness must carefully and tactfully handle this misconception and show that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the good news of God's grace in which the operating principle is love and love alone.

Christianity is a Western religion. Non-Christian friends link the Christian religion with the West, particularly its recent colonial past. The Christian missionary is often considered the purveyor of Western political and cultural interests. The Indian church has given possible justification for such a view by Christians adopting some not-too-pleasing aspects of Western lifestyle. But is Christianity a Western religion? Was Jesus born in America or Europe? Is Christianity synonymous with Western culture? The answer is obviously no. Although blunders have been made during the colonial past, projecting a false image of Christianity, the current challenge to Christianity is to show that the gospel is universal and that Christianity came to India in the first century A.D., long before it reached the Western world. The truth is that even today it is easier for an Asian to understand the life, teachings, and character of Christ than it is for a European. In 1898 P. C. Mozumdar wrote a book that has become a classic, *The Oriental Christ*. This book ably defends the Asianness of Christ. The Christian faith is built on the universal Jesus—the Saviour of the world. He is the Lord of all people, every culture and every nation.

The Bible is foreign and meant only for Christians. This is another common misunderstanding. But the Bible, by its very definition, is a self-disclosure of God to the entire human race (see Heb. 1:1, 2). It is true

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that William Carey of Serampur translated the Bible for the first time in Indian languages, and since then it has been available in almost all Indian languages. But modern translations do not make it Western. Its message is universal, and it speaks to the deepest needs of every human being.

Christian practices are baffling. Many non-Christian friends find Christian rituals baffling. The presence of idols, icons, prayer through saints, confession to priests, and other practices of Christianity are confusing to thinking Hindus, who have some similar practices. What's the difference? they ask. The answer lies in looking to Jesus. Christianity is not a system of belief, ritual, or tradition, but is centered on Jesus, the One who loved humanity so deeply that He gave His life for us all.

Christian life is no better. Our non-Christian friends find very little that is better in the lifestyle of most Christians. For the most part Christian witness is hurt by nominal Christians, "having a form of godliness but denying its power" (2 Tim. 3:5, NIV). The church is in need of spiritual renewal. We constantly need the Holy Spirit to stir the church into spiritual action and accountability. Just as Christianity without Christ is dead, so is a Christian without the presence and power of Christ.

Understanding Hinduism

The second major issue in witnessing to Hindus is a failure to understand the Hindu ethos.

Hindus would like to consider their religion as *Sanatana Dharma*. *Sanatana* means eternal, having no beginning or end. *Dharma* derives from the Sanskrit root "Dhr," meaning "that which upholds." Thus Hinduism makes its claim to be that which upholds the universe from the beginning, without any end. It is a religion that is very inclusive. Even though other Indian-originated religions such as Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism, and other animistic systems may not agree, Hinduism claims them as its own. It involves the entire culture, spiritual values, and general way of life of the people of India.

Hinduism does not have a founder. Adherents believe it came into being when God came into being; as such, no dates can be fixed for its origin. The religion evolved

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through the ages, and its authority is the religious experience of ancient sages.

Hinduism is not based on any particular set of dogmas preached by one person or any set of teachers. It has a number of scriptures, the foundational one being the Vedas. These Vedas did not originate in any historical prophet or person, but in the religious experience of sages of antiquity. Hindus believe that the Vedas are eternal and impersonal.

The most pervasive influence of Hinduism on Indian Christianity is in the area of terminology. Bible translations, worship orders, lyrics, and theological works in various Indian languages bear witness to this. In our conversations with our Hindu friends, usage of these terms would make it easier for them to follow the gospel message.

Approaching Hindu people

In such conversations, how should we regard the admirable qualities and religious beliefs of Hindus? What type of relationship should we cultivate with our Hindu friends?

Paul's ministry in Athens (Acts 17:16-34) gives us a clue. "He was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols" (verse 16, NIV), and "so he reasoned in the synagogue . . . as well as in the market place day by day with those who happened to be there" (verse 17, NIV). Paul's speech was a controlled, carefully reasoned enunciation of Christianity (verses 22-31).

In Paul's approach and attitude to other religions we see that on the one hand there is a firm belief in the wrongness of life apart from Christ. On the other hand, there is a respect for all individuals, because they are intelligent human beings endowed by God with the privilege and responsibility of choosing to accept or reject the gospel. This caused Paul to reason with them. This is an exemplary Pauline model for us to follow.

We also have the cases of modern missionaries who attempted to create a dialogue with Hindus. Roberto de Nobili, a young Jesuit missionary who came to India in 1605, realized that he could never come close to the people of India when he lived a European lifestyle. So he decided to follow an Indian lifestyle. He studied the Vedas, presented Christianity to the Indian people in their own language, made others study Hinduism, and depended for his mission on the support of local people. No wonder he was a successful missionary and regarded thus even by the Hindus.

Then we have Joseph Constantius Beschi, who came to India 100 years after De Nobili. He mastered the literature of Tamil, perhaps the oldest language of south India, and decided to make his own contribution. He wrote a famous Tamil epic on the life of Joseph, *Thembavani*, which employed many Hindu theological concepts to convey Christian teaching. There is also

William Carey, who not only translated the Bible in many Indian languages, but plunged into social reformation, and with the help of great Indian leaders brought an end to child marriage and widow burning. Later Sadhu Sunder Singh, a converted Sikh, did not hesitate to take Hindu parables and illustrations to exemplify gospel teachings.

The time has come to create a dialogue between Christians and Hindus. What does this dialogue involve? First, a readiness to listen to what the other person has to say about his or her belief system. Second, study the Hindu scriptures and try to understand them. Third, meet our Hindu friends *in Christ*, believing that Christ died for them too. Fourth, show them the true face of the unknown Christ.

The vision to venture

The Lord desires that we bear not only fruit, but much fruit. This requires a vision to venture into uncharted waters and non-traditional approaches. I suggest that we go back to the three-step apostolic formula.

1. *Work with accord.* Unity of believers is

the need of the hour. Like the disciples in the upper room, we must gather together with one accord to "make every effort to keep the unity of Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3, NIV). Old differences must be forgotten (Isa. 11:13). All walls of separation that divide us must be broken down (Eph. 2:14). Leaders and members alike must manifest a harmony such as the world has not ever seen. "Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13, NIV), we will have nothing to show to the non-Christian.

2. *Pray for the baptism of the Holy Spirit* (Acts 2:1-4). The promise is sure: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV). "How greatly do the workers need a baptism of the Holy Spirit that they may become true missionaries for God."⁴ "I entreat the church members in every city that they lay hold upon the Lord with determined effort for the baptism of the Holy Spirit."⁵

3. *Seek the empowerment.* Where there is unity and the working of the Holy Spirit, empowerment results. This empowerment led the early church to experience:

- 3,000 baptisms in one day (Acts 2:41).
- Daily additions (verse 47).
- Rapid growth of the church in Jerusalem, involving the conversion of a large number of priests (Acts 6:7; 9:31).
- A commitment to the Great Commission.

As a result, a unified church emerged to take the gospel to the uttermost parts of the world. The task remains the same today. And the essential of doing it has not changed. ■

¹Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 46.

²*Ibid.*, p. 434.

³———, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 9, p. 150.

⁴———, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1938), p. 155.

⁵———, *Counsels on Health* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1951), p. 548.

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ELLEN WHITE AND THE BASICS OF SALVATION

Ellen White writes about salvation in many beautiful ways. But there is one irreducible dynamic and balance to her teaching on salvation: her grasp of the doctrine and practical experience of justification by faith.



Woodrow W. Whidden, Ph.D., is professor of religion, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

While it is true she writes often about sanctification, that truth can never be properly understood or experienced if her teachings about justification are not understood. Even though perfection has been the subject of more controversy than justification, the meaning she gave to justification will have a decisive impact on the final definition given to perfection.

The doctrine of justification by faith is certainly open to distorted interpretations, but the most impressive thing about Ellen White's expositions of this theme is her finely tuned balance. Ellen White taught a powerfully objective doctrine of justification, but one that does not tolerate willful, premeditated, "easy-come-easy-go" attitudes toward sin.

Justification and 1888

One of the best ways to demonstrate the balance and foundational nature of Ellen

White's teaching on justification is to compare her doctrinal development before and after the critical year 1888.

In her early expositions the main concern was to avoid the "cheap grace" implications so common in mid-nineteenth-century teachings on justification; this concern was so strong that it seemed to preclude any positive expression of how justification should play out in Christian experience. So she wrote: "Faith will never save you unless it is justified by works."¹

In the 1870s Ellen White began a more concerted effort to express positively what constituted the basics of justification by faith.

Probably the most original contribution to Ellen White's understanding of justification emerged out of her conviction about Christ as the believer's ever-interceding high priest. The following four concepts are closely related to one another, and I have grouped them as "the intercessory quartet."

In Ellen White's thought, the major saving effect of the intercessory ministry of Christ is always bound up with His "merits." Thus the concept of Christ's merit underlies every one of the following concepts. From 1870 on, there were a host of statements expounding the theme that only the "merits" of Christ could provide the basis of salvation—not works of obedience (including the believer's sanctified successes).

1. *Christ's merits make obedience acceptable.* This concept was built on the conviction that all the good works of sinners (including those of believers) are polluted with sin and need the objective merits of Jesus to be applied to them to make them acceptable. Such an accounting for penitent believers was deemed to be a constant necessity for the balance of their lives.²

2. *Christ's merits make up for "deficiencies."* Closely related to the concept that Jesus is interceding constantly for believers with His merits were three expressions of sinners' needs:

a. As mentioned above, even the good things sinners do are polluted by the sinful nature.

b. Their performance always involves "deficiencies" and failures.

c. In spite of these, Christ mercifully intercedes. But He intercedes only for those who have a right attitude toward their sinfulness, deficiencies, and errors.³

The key issue here is not some antiseptically perfect performance, but that genuine faith in the Intercessor begets perfect loyalty.⁴

3. *Fending off Satan's taunting accusations.* Ellen White views the gracious intercession of Christ, with His powerful merits, as placing Christians on vantage ground, enabling the harried believers to admit their unworthiness and empowering them to challenge the taunts of Satan on the basis of their acceptance of His merits through faith. She employs this concept in her exposition of Zechariah 3, where through Christ Joshua is empowered to challenge Satan.⁵

4. *God's willingness to pardon.* While the three preceding points stress the proper attitude of believers, the fourth one highlights God's attitude.

At the important 1883 Battle Creek General Conference session, Ellen White tried to encourage "many discouraged ones" with the thought that in spite of "mis-

takes" that "grieve His Spirit," when sinners "repent, and come to Him with contrite hearts, He will not turn us away." She encouraged the penitent ones not to wait until they had reformed, but urged them "to come to Him just as we are—sinful, helpless, dependent."⁶

The post-1888 expressions

The close relationship between law and gospel, faith and works, and the expression that sinners are "saved from sin, not in sin" continued with undiminished force during the critical post-1888 years. It was this era that witnessed Ellen White's most vigorous proclamations and explanations of justification. Even though justification was now receiving its most forceful expression, (1) the core of her basic doctrine was unchanged, though significantly clarified, and (2) the remarkable justification/sanctification balance continued.

Not only are
the "defects" and "sins" of
the true believer covered, but
even their prayers need to
be made "acceptable."

The following quartet of ideas growing out of Ellen White's emphasis on Christ's high priestly intercession unfolded in the following manner and formed the heart of her 1888 message:

1. *Christ's merits make obedience acceptable.* Ellen White not only repeats the expression that the merits of Christ make the efforts of believers to keep His law acceptable to God but also clarifies so as to give an even stronger emphasis on objective justification. She not only spoke of Christ's merits making their efforts acceptable, but explicitly called these merits "His perfection."

Consider this statement: "When He sees men lifting the burdens, trying to carry them in lowliness of mind, with distrust of

self and with reliance upon Him" sinners' "defects are covered by the perfection and fullness of the Lord our righteousness." Such humble believers are "looked upon by the Father with pitying, tender love; He regards such as obedient children, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto them."⁷

In the important manuscript 36 of 1890, Ellen White spoke of the "utter worthlessness of creature merit to earn the wages of eternal life." It is not entirely clear from the context if this refers to believers' present efforts, but the strong implication is that this was what she had in mind. She referred to "a fervor of labor and an intense affection, high and noble achievement of intellect, a breadth of understanding, and humblest self-abasement" as needing to be laid upon the fire of Christ's righteousness to cleanse it from its earthly odor before it rises in a cloud of fragrant incense to the great Jehovah.⁸ It is important to note that not only are the "defects" and "sins" of true believers covered, but even their prayers need to be made "acceptable."⁹

In expressing these particular realities, Ellen White probably gave her most arresting depiction of objective justification. She pictured sinners as outwardly doing the right things, while their actions are still in desperate need of Christ's precious incense—"His own merit." This justification is objective in that its power depends on what Christ does in heaven, not what goes on subjectively in believers. What goes on in believers is good and wholly necessary, but without the objective merits of Christ it is never good enough.

2. *Christ's merits make up for believers' deficiencies.* We have already seen examples of what I call the *safety net* expressions: even if believers *sin* after having been forgiven, they have their prayers for forgiveness perfumed with the "fragrance" of the "incense of His own merits." With the power of Christ's merits being offered for the sinful, deficient, sinning but penitent and loyal children of God, they have their "unavoidable deficiencies" made up for them by the "imputed" righteousness of Christ.¹⁰

Once again in this period Ellen White continued to give expression to both of the closely related themes of deficiencies that

need to be made up for, and the forgiveness of sins committed by loyal erring believers that need to be forgiven. But the strength of Mrs. White's expression was increased with the declaration that these deficiencies are "unavoidable," a qualifying term not found during the pre-1888 era. Furthermore, she referred to the merits that humans would seek to produce, not just as merit, but as "creature merit"—a more strikingly negative expression.

The expression "unavoidable deficiencies" needs a further comment. Ellen White supplemented this expression with other striking terms and phrases, such as:

"His perfect holiness atones for our shortcomings. When we do our best, He becomes our righteousness."¹¹ "The sinner's defects are covered by the perfection and fullness of the Lord our righteousness," and they are regarded as "obedient children."¹² "When we are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, we shall have no relish for sin." Such believers "*may make mistakes*," but they will "hate *the sin* that caused the sufferings of the Son of God."¹³ "If through manifold temptations we are *surprised or deceived into sin*, He does not turn from us, and leave us to perish. No, no, that is not like our Saviour."¹⁴

The collective force of these expressions certainly envisions a reassuring "safety net" in view of the reality of human failure. It is also an unmistakably powerful expression of objective justification. It should also be noted that the phrase "unavoidable deficiencies" demands special consideration for its contribution to any final definition of what Ellen White meant by "perfection."

3. *Fending off Satan's taunting accusations.* Ellen White finds in the dramatic dialogue between the harassed sinner and the taunting devil (Zech. 3) a marked application of a justificationist buffering against human failure: "Jesus is perfect. Christ's righteousness is imputed unto them, and He will say, 'Take away the filthy garments from him and clothe him with change of raiment.' Jesus makes up for our unavoidable deficiencies."¹⁵

Note that this use of Zechariah 3 is employed in relation to the thought that Christ's imputed righteousness makes up for "our unavoidable deficiencies." Furthermore, Ellen White places this dialogue at

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least twice in the context of Jesus' ministry in the Most Holy Place, thus connecting it intimately with the investigative judgment: "Satan will accuse you of being a great sinner, and you must admit this, but you can say: 'I know I am a sinner, and that is the reason I need a Saviour. Jesus came into the world to save sinners.'¹⁶

Four paragraphs later in the same article she declared: "Jesus stands in the Holy of Holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself."¹⁷

This statement certainly presents the work of Christ in the Most Holy Place as having to do with objective justification, a justification that must be constantly ministered to His defective people, who are presented "moment by moment" as "complete in Himself."¹⁸

4. *God's willingness to pardon.* The expression of God's willingness to pardon continued in much the same fashion as found in the previous era, with no marked development.

The sum total of these four critical expressions regarding the intercessory ministry of Christ is that believers need objective justification all the way through their experience. Justification always runs parallel to, or concurrently with, sanctification.

Believers must be constantly looking to

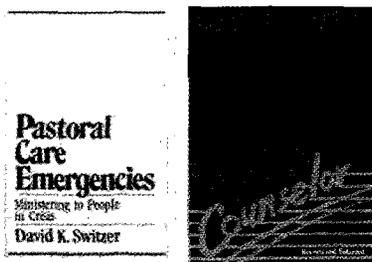
Jesus as the sole, objective source for their merits. There is simply no stage of development in the believers' Christian experience in which they can begin to focus on themselves or on anything they do as being sufficient to present to God.

The sobering practical implications

To ignore these concepts, inherent in the intercession of Christ in heaven, seems to lead inevitably into a tendency to collapse justification into sanctification. Such an unjustified merging steers us inexorably into making the fruits of sanctified obedience a part of the meritorious basis of believers' acceptance with God. The practical danger in such a tendency would be to return believers to the severe spiritual bondage that John Wesley experienced before he came to a clear understanding of the relationship between justification and sanctification. It was only when he came to realize that his best works lacked merit that he found real victory over sin: "He continued his strict and self-denying life, not now as the ground, but the result of faith; not the root, but the fruit of holiness."¹⁹

If it is true that the sanctified fruit of obedience becomes the ground or basis of our acceptance with God, the question then becomes Just how much obedience would it take to make God's children feel assured that they are accepted? The answer to this

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question becomes especially acute when we recall Ellen White's profound statement: "The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes."²⁰ For the truly spiritual saint, assurance based on personal spiritual growth is a constantly receding horizon. How could we ever have the assurance of Christ's acceptance and pardon if that assurance is based partly on what Christ does through or in us to the exclusion of what He is for us?

Is it not more true to the Bible and Ellen White to say that the Christian's faith and confidence are based on the knowledge that Christ accounts us accepted on the basis of what He has done (in His life and atoning death) and is now doing in His high priestly intercession in reckoning us constantly perfect by faith in the accounted merits of His objective righteousness?

If we see anything else, such as our obedience, as the basis of our acceptance with God, it subtly opens the door to self-dependence and self-righteousness. We are always much less righteous than we think we are. If I have to look to what I do for assurance, I am open not only to a gross state of self-deception, but also to a subtle temptation to concentrate on the sinful "me," rather than the sinless Christ.

What about sanctification?

It is clear that Ellen White's understanding of justification by faith had almost every legal or objectively forensic element that the sixteenth-century Reformers Martin Luther and John Calvin argued for. Yet she did not get caught in "cheap grace" implications, because of her clear Wesleyan emphasis that true saving faith will also be a faith that has sanctified fruit that vindicates and confirms the justifying root. Her presentations on salvation were a feast that consisted of all the redemptive delights that both the Lutheran and Wesleyan traditions have passionately hungered for, with very little dislike for what they both tended to neglect.

Such an experience is retained only when faithful loyalty to Christ is maintained. We simply will not have Jesus as justifying Saviour without having Him as sanctifying Lord. It is this side of the balance that the justification advocates usually need to reflect and focus on with greater intensity,

while the sanctification advocates need to concentrate on the wonder of Christ's merits being accounted ours apart from any behavioral cause.

Summing it up

It seems that the best way to sum up Ellen White's balanced view on faith, merit, and obedience is to say:

Believers are justified *evidentially* by works of obedience. But they can be justified *meritoriously* only through faith in the perfect life and atoning death of Christ, which He accounts to us by His constant intercession. Sinners are saved in *experience* by faith, *in merit* by the grace of Christ accounted to us, and obedience is the essential *evidence* of faith's acceptance of Christ's precious merits. ■

¹Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 2, p. 159. All subsequent references are from the writings of Ellen G. White.

²In *Review and Herald*, Oct. 5, 1886.

³In *Youth's Instructor*, May 14, 1884, and in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 22, 1884.

⁴*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 474, 475.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 472.

⁶In *Review and Herald*, Apr. 15 and 22, 1884.

⁷*The Ellen White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), vol. 1, p. 402; and *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald, 1967), p. 23.

⁸*Faith and Works* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1979), pp. 23, 24.

⁹In *Review and Herald*, Mar. 1, 1892; this theme would subsequently receive its clearest treatments in *In Heavenly Places*, p. 79, and *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn.), book 1, p. 344.

¹⁰*Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), book 3, pp. 195, 196.

¹¹*The Ellen White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1980), vol. 1, p. 242. (Italics supplied.)

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 402.

¹³In *Review and Herald*, Mar. 18, 1890. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁴*Ibid.*, Sept. 1, 1891. (Italics supplied.)

¹⁵*Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 195, 196.

¹⁶In *Signs of the Times*, July 4, 1892.

¹⁷*Ibid.*

¹⁸Cf. *The Ellen White 1888 Materials*, vol. 2, pp. 868, 869.

¹⁹See *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 256.

²⁰*Steps to Christ* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1956), p. 64.

THE LEADER UNDER STRESS

In the film *Falling Down* Michael Douglas plays a character who has reached the proverbial end of his rope. In the opening scene, this stressed-out man sits in his car on a hopelessly congested California freeway, trapped on all sides by other frustrated commuters.



Doug Burrell, a Baptist pastor from Rome, Georgia, is the director of Discovery Resources.

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Ministers about to explode too—what can be done about stress in ministry?

A similar scenario is being played out in churches around the world. Ministers find themselves trapped in a jammed freeway of responsibilities and expectations. Their world and the rules for operating in it keep changing. The competition for the minds, hearts, commitments, and imaginations of their parishioners has made it difficult to see success. The demands of wounded families, declining resources, and the need for more diverse speaking and leadership skills have many ministers drowning in a sea of stress. Add to these the increased stress of family life, the difficulty in making ends meet financially, and you can better understand why many ministers are “taking their briefcases” and leaving the pulpit.

What can ministers do about the stress they face in ministry? Are burnout and

blowups facts of life that the church and ministers just have to live with? Is there anything you can do to keep from “falling down”? What follows are several insights I have gained from my own journey in ministry and from working with ministers who are seeking to be more effective.

First, recognize the reality of stress

Stress is a fact of life, and higher stress is a fact of modern life. But that doesn't have to mean disaster. Stress can be constructive or destructive—it's how we deal with it that counts. When you think about it, stress is an expression concerning the pressure of opposing or competing forces. A stress point may be found at the intersection of two activities competing for the same amount of time. It may be that stress develops around two competing ways of responding to a question or request.

A certain amount of stress is healthy. The pressure to choose creates a vitality needed to be creative. It builds character. In physical therapy and body building, stress is intentionally introduced to produce a greater range of motion, greater muscle mass, and a healthier body. Likewise, strength is developed in facing the competing forces (stress) and by resolving the issue at hand (making

the choice). Greater and more destructive pressure and anxiety can actually be created by putting off these choices. These small, everyday “unresolved griefs” can, over time, create a tidal wave of pressures that lead to depression, rage, and burnout.

But stress is constructive only to a certain point. Too much stress can be destructive. Athletes learn to manage stress—to use it where it is helpful—but also to listen to their bodies to find the healthy balance between stress and Sabbath.

Second, make a choice

Ministers can choose to deal with stress in a constructive, healthy way! Of course, we can also choose to be devoured by the pressures. It is important to realize that you are not helpless. In many ways our society has become a society of victims by transferring responsibility for our well-being or health or financial condition on to someone other than ourselves. It's easy for ministers to do that also. If we are not careful we can blame the church when we are highly stressed. It's not too unusual to hear ministers comparing experiences and saying something like

“My family just doesn't understand” or “The church members expect too much from me.” But managing our lives and our ministries is our responsibility. We cannot be satisfied with the response of the steward who hid his talent out of fear. God has made us stewards over our ministry and our lives. We can choose foolishly, or we can choose wisely. But we are the stewards, and we make the choices. It is our responsibility to address the stresses of ministry in healthy ways.

Third, train yourself to cope with stress

There are several critical coping skills that ministers would do well to develop. It's possible to be intentional about training yourself in these skill areas. Here are four coping skills to begin with: flexibility, problem solving, communication, and intimacy.

Flexibility: People who are rigid and uptight (inflexible) are going to have more problems with stress than those who learn to “go with the flow.” The issue that gets many ministers is the issue of control. You and I might as well learn to live with the fact, there are many things about ministry and about life that are beyond our control.

Practice “letting go.” Exercise your flexibility. Try to do things differently on purpose. Who knows, you might like it.

Problem solving: Face it. In ministry we are in the problem-solving business. Dealing *directly* with difficult problems and making *positive* changes to get them resolved will help you avoid a backlog of anxiety and the buildup of tension. It will also enhance your leadership stature and the respect others have for you.

Communication: A large percentage of conflict and misunderstandings arises out of poor communication skills. It is important that ministers be intentional in their *communication practices*. *Sharing your thoughts and feelings with others in a way that brings about greater understanding is important, even when it is uncomfortable.* If you have trouble here, seek out someone to coach you, or to give you honest advice.

Intimacy: The saying “No man is an island” is true. One of the great danger signals in ministry is isolation. I use the word “intimacy” here to indicate “closeness” or “trust.” Every minister needs to develop trusting relationships as a supportive system for dealing with stress, grief, anger, and disappointments, and for the investment of our positive energies. We need to have close relationships outside of our congregations so that our judgment and that of our trusted friends will not be clouded by our fiduciary responsibilities as ministers.

Finally, attend to your spiritual needs

Jesus' spirituality brought Him peace to face an otherwise overwhelming stress. He dealt with that stress by attending to His relationship with His heavenly Father. Sometimes we in ministry are so busy taking care of others that we forget to take care of ourselves.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of time away from the pressures of ministry. Jesus regularly withdrew to a “lonely place.” Jesus sometimes withdrew from the crowds and the demands of ministry. Surely we are not greater than our Lord. It is OK to take care of yourself. You will have greater vision and keener insights, and be able to experience more fully the “joy of your salvation.” ■

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How do you handle hate mail when the senders are too cowardly to identify themselves?

Recently three people filled their pens with poison and targeted me. Praise God! At least when they were attacking me they were not after you. But although aimed at me, these letters actually landed in my trash can. That's the final resting place of all unidentified mail that comes my way.

Normally anonymous letters don't arrive in my office three at a time. But whatever their frequency, I learned long ago to disregard them and even avoid reading them. Thoughtful Christians may disagree strongly on a point and still respect each other; but I never respect someone who expects me to invest my time pondering their misguided missile without the courtesy of allowing me the opportunity to respond.

Here are a few suggestions for the occasions when you receive unsigned, unsolicited letters:

- Remember that your supporters may fail to speak. Many who appreciate your ministry overlook the importance of affirming you, since we usually express frustration more quickly than satisfaction.
- Unsigned letters typically tear down rather than build up. Of course, criticism has its proper place, and every leader needs honest input concerning shortcomings. However, appropriate criticism is constructive, meaning to construct, to build. Its aim is to improve the situation, not to blame or shame.
- Don't take it personally. Even though the attack upon you may be vicious, remember that conviction without courage is cowardice of the

highest order. Refuse to become its victim.

- Anonymous writers often lack full information. Armed with ignorance and undeserved fury, they fire at the nearest, most visible target: too often, the pastor.
- Rejoice that you are the target rather than someone else. I remember an unkind note slipped under my office door one Sabbath. The unsigned author ranted that the young people should have stayed away from church rather than to perform the music they had sung that morning. Although their music was not of my preference, I rejoiced that they were participating in worship. Had the anonymous animosity hate mail reached them, it might have discouraged them to the point of

Anonymous Animosity

JAMES A. CRESS

abandoning their music ministry and perhaps the church itself.

- Develop a distanced perspective. If you permit vicious criticism to sink in, it will gnaw at your psyche and destroy your self-confidence. And this is precisely what your attacker wants. So let such messages roll off your back rather than sink into your soul. Another coping technique is to remember that members need to vent their frustrations from time to time and that you provide a real pastoral service when you are their focus for "recreational griping." This perspective also helps to shrug off bitterness that could easily germinate and take root in your soul.
- Refuse to be paralyzed by the pessimists. Never permit an invisible

minority, hiding behind code words such as "everyone agrees," "they all say," or "many believe," to affix a wrong conclusion to your mind. Be proactive more than reactive. If you pander to the naysayers, little effective ministry will occur. Instead, keep close counsel with your elders and other church leaders and then move ahead to accomplish God's vision for your church without stopping to worry about those who are forever chasing after you to bark at your wheels.

- Model appropriate confrontation. If you want to reduce hidden messages or veiled threats, it helps to be open and aboveboard in your own dealings. Don't think problems will disappear if you let them go unchallenged. Follow Christ's counsel in Matthew 18 and speak directly to those with whom you disagree.

- Seek appropriate anonymous input. Sometimes anonymous input is desirable. When surveying the opinion of the entire congregation or seeking input regarding the "buys in" of your members on a planned program, soliciting anonymous input is healthy and informative.

- Dispel rumors with humor. Several years ago when false accusations abounded alleging that many pastors were using hypnosis to control congregations, I answered with humor. Pointing to the financial statement, I remarked to my members, "Here is positive proof that you're not getting hypnotized. If you were, you would be giving lots more money!" The humor dispelled the rumor more effectively than any complex explanation to an unfounded accusation.

Real friends will confront you when something needs correction. In fact, confronting that is "care fronting" is an expression of love. The Bible says, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Prov. 27:6). ■

CATCH THE VISION

The letter was distressing enough. That it was from a *young* man made it more distressing. He wrote at length about his spiritual journey. It had been long, hard, and unfulfilling. He had obviously sought hard for deep, inner satisfaction.



Don Shelton pastors the Goldsboro, North Carolina, church and is the Eastern Carolina ministries director for the Carolina Conference.

He described how none of the worship services in his Adventist church had helped him. He had tried the Sabbath school and the divine service. His church seemed to lack life and vitality. The fellowship seemed dull and the preaching came short.

After pouring out his feelings, the young man ended: "I'm no longer attending our church. Where I am now I get the gospel, the fellowship, the love and warmth of what Christianity is all about."

This man's experience is not uncommon. Many young Adventists tell similar stories, and some more seasoned by the years comment from time to time about the lack of vitality they see in their churches. Across a wide spectrum of congregations and individuals, we are hearing appeals for renewal. Pastors, lay leaders, and church administrators all look for a new vision from God.

The need to see a vision and move forward

What is vision? How do we get it? What will it do for our lives? How will it transform ministry?

"Where there is no vision, the people perish," says Solomon (Prov. 29:18). Unless we possess a clear understanding of where we are heading, we tend to adopt a fortress mentality. We become afraid of going anywhere, and in the process end up going nowhere! Instead of moving forward, a

visionless congregation focuses on protecting its own flanks, and shoring up the protective walls of what has become an ecclesiastical fort instead of a vibrant spiritual organism. Instead of possessing a vision that propels the church, lack of vision causes stagnation and a spirit of resistance to genuine progress. Enthusiasm and excitement fade and apathetic inertia born of fear takes over.

Often churches that have been planted by visionary leaders lose the vision that originally stirred the hearts of those who heard the message fresh with passion and insight. When the founders of a church are gone, when the zeal that sparked the soul of the people dissolves, when the children of the church come to the fourth and fifth generations and *no longer* have a sense of mission, when the vision is lost—then only the organizational forms are preserved, and the church no longer moves forward with the drive of those who began it.

Adventist pioneers in America were involved in the issues of their time. They spoke out against slavery. They rallied with drive and confidence against the liquor industry during the great temperance movement. They fought Sunday laws right up to the nation's capital. They spoke out for the right of women to vote.

Most of the founders of the Adventist Church were young when they assumed leadership positions. They knew what they

D O N S H E L T O N

believed. They caught a vision from God Himself of what could and should be and moved forward in the power of God.

A fading of the fervor

Unfortunately, the exciting truths that are the foundation of this church and the issues that moved our pioneers have lost too much of their appeal among subsequent generations. Teachings that have grown out of the experience of our founders have not been greatly valued by later generations. To many, they have become mere hand-me-down traditions.

It hasn't helped matters that some well-intentioned saints, in trying to maintain the look and feel of days gone by, have tried to bind younger generations to the church by artificially enforcing tired lists of do's and don'ts. Yet these same saints have refused to involve themselves in current issues such as abortion, world hunger, racial justice, and the equality of all God's people.

Many among the younger generations of the church have sensed the emptiness and inconsistency behind much of this constraint. The walls of the fortress, built to keep corruption out, to them feel like walls built to keep them in. They perceive the church as constricted and constricting, with no meaningful future. We urgently need a vision directly from God to stir ourselves and these young Adventists so that they become the "movers and shakers" that plant new churches, conquer new frontiers, catch a prophetic insight and communicate the essence of Christianity and Adventism.

"Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3:10) was one of the first verses of Scripture many of us learned. Samuel was just a boy working in the Temple with Eli the priest. Things were not going well in Israel, and so "the word of the Lord was rare, there were not many visions" (verse 1).

Things are not all that different in the church today. Deep in ourselves we identify with this description of Israel, and with the cause-and-effect relationship between the word of the Lord being rare, and there not being many visions, or much vision. Another way of saying it is that the vision that we have is too narrow, often focusing more on the negative than on the positive. There are very few all-encompassing visions that inspire the church to march forward with a

renewed sense of purpose. It is not coincidental that in the direct context of the description of the rareness of visions in Israel, Samuel's life sets off a new prophetic impetus for the nation, beginning with the words that bring vision: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."

Vision and mission

We need a vision that assures people that God has a plan for our lives and our church. They need to hear that there is an eternal reason behind our existence. The youth need to hear and to know that the church has passion and energy, and wants to unleash it to accomplish a divinely directed mission.

At the heart of Samuel's story is a young man running to a priest trying irrepressibly to get a clear sense of who is calling him, and what that calling is. It is interesting that Eli was not called, but that he realized that God was present to give Samuel a vision for ministry. And so the priest tells Samuel to say the one thing most needed: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Then the vision begins to break into consciousness for the young man. God speaks to him because he is listening. He is listening now not to a voice he has assumed to be human, but one he now knows is divine. With the hearing of the voice comes a strong sense of vision and direction.

Today we must prepare ourselves to hear this voice and to receive a vision from God. Any true and worthwhile ministry begins with this kind of vision. For a Christian leader—an individual chosen by God to move His people forward—vision is not to be regarded as an option. Vision is the insight that instructs leaders and directs the destiny of the whole church. *If we attempt to lead God's people without God's vision for us and our ministry, we are simply playing a game. Without vision, ministry is no longer a calling but merely a profession.*

Catching God's vision

Catching God's vision is not a new concept. Paul's story is clearly not one of a man who had nothing better to do with his life or who had limited options. "Five times my own people gave me thirty-nine lashes with a whip. Three times the Romans beat me with a big stick, and once my enemies stoned me. I have been shipwrecked three times, and I even had to spend a night and a day in

the sea. During my many travels, I have been in danger from rivers, robbers, my own people, and foreigners. My life has been in danger in cities, in deserts, at sea, and with people who only pretended to be the Lord's followers. I have worked and struggled and spent many sleepless nights. I have gone hungry and thirsty and often had nothing to eat. I have been cold from not having enough clothes to keep me warm" (2 Cor. 11:24-27, CEV).

Paul was a well-educated, articulate leader. By virtue of his background, he was a man with options. And yet he was determined to serve Christ and to endure outrageous suffering and personal sacrifice as a result of this decision. There can be only one reason for this courage and tenacity. Paul was an individual driven to fulfill a vision for ministry that God had entrusted to him. In 2 Timothy 1:11 Paul indicates the nature of his calling—to be "a preacher, an apostle and a teacher" (NKJV). This remained clear to Paul throughout his life.

In the latter half of Acts the chronicle of Paul depicts a man preaching, teaching, admonishing, and planting churches with a kind of fervor not found in a person who is merely earning a wage. Paul was convinced of God's vision for his life, and he worked tirelessly to fulfill God's calling. He was compelled by God's vision to commit his life to working out that vision in his daily life.

The Bible is the story of people possessed with a specific vision that defined a clear mission constraining them to follow and fulfill it.

Vision makes the difference between health and sickness

Vision has flourished beyond the lives of biblical characters. Our century is filled with numerous examples of people who, by human standards, showed little promise for greatness and little hope of being able to change the lives of people around the world. These people, having captured God's vision for their lives, have lived with a power and energy undeniably capable of transcending their natural capacities. They have lived with an intensity of commitment that far exceeds anything they had previously demonstrated in their lives.

A church led by someone who has caught

Continued on page 29



Doing effective Christian ministry for the native peoples of the Americas seems virtually impossible. At rousing Christian rallies, native people don't rally. At evangelistic meetings they are resistant. They have a hard time focusing on explanations of biblical truth. In church they feel boxed in and disdained.

As in many situations around the globe, this resistance has understandable historical roots. For centuries Europeans considered native people savages and their cultures valueless, even abhorrent. During much of this time Christian leadership was a convenient and effective agent for government policy which controlled native territory and aspirations. Together the church and government have prevented native self-education, self-government, and self-sufficiency. Chief Sitting Bull said, "It is not necessary that eagles should be crows." No honest view of history can deny Christian culpability in the unwarranted decimation of native cultures.

Reasons for native distrust

Any dislodging of this unholy alliance of the Christian church with government coercion has come only within the past few decades. It should be no surprise that native peoples are skeptical when the church now proclaims new insight into native cultures and professes purified motives. The evidence of genuine repentance is sparse. From the native perspective, Christians are doing their denominational ministry in much the same old way.

Another valid reason for distrust is the disparity between the average Christian's life and the average life of a native person.

Roadblocks to Native American Ministry

KITTY MARACLE AND
KEN VAN OCHTEN

Can insights into the American scene be applied in other situations?

The life expectancy of a native is 12 years less than that of the average nonnative Christian. Violent death is three times more likely. Suicide is six times the national rate. Unemployment in a native community may be 50 to 70 percent. Heart disease is twice the national average. In many native communities as many as 50 percent of homes have no plumbing, sewage disposal, or electricity. Half of all deaths are alcohol-related. In some areas in Canada, native inmates comprise up to 40 percent of the prison population, even though they make up only about 6 percent of the Canadian population. In very recent times only about 60 percent of eligible native children attended school, and only 6 percent of those who did go to school completed high school.

Radical cost of discipleship

The term *dispossessed* is well chosen. An effective ministry to native people demands a radical cost of discipleship. The person who would be a pastor must be dispossessed of most of the possessions that identify him or her with Caucasian middle-class Christianity. There must be a genuine incarnational giving up of the niceties that surround most Christians in their society, in exchange for a very earthy

experience. Effective native pastors must be earthy in the sense of sometimes being itinerant wanderers, sometimes homeless, usually broke, because the poor are always near. They will often be dependent on the help of friends and strangers, the associates of drunks, the uneducated, the coarse, and various assorted sinners. Theirs must be a life something like the one Christ undertook for you and me. Such thoughts bring admiration for the pioneering Jesuit missionaries who left the comforts of Europe to live out their lives and their faith among "savages."

Among North American Native people, as among other similar peoples, effective ministry is impossible until we care enough to learn their language and their ways. When we come with our ethnocentric assumptions, we make it impossible for them to hear us. The way we listen ensures that we will never hear them. The way they are always late annoys us. The way we make them sit all day in class facing the teacher closes up all their avenues of learning. Our authority devolves, theirs evolves. Their traditions are oral, ours written. Things that are important to us are of minor consequence to them, and vice versa.

It is an impossible environment for traditional ministry. The more we intensify our efforts, the less they can hear and respond. When—if—they are ever provided an opportunity to express themselves, we have little ability to hear them. So we are always responding in ways they did not seek or desire.

Christians *do* religion. They use it, speak it, manipulate it to satisfy personal or corporate motives (deliberately or unwittingly). Some ministers do not live it, and after enough time, the paltry motives become apparent to native people. In many cases the denominational objective is to teach natives the dogmas and a procedure for being religious. The curriculum is how to use religion, to put it on at least once a week, to capture the magic and to ritualize the teaching. It is often far removed from the lifelong

commitment to the law of respect for God, for all people, animals, and creation, which is at the heart of native spirituality.

Hardly anywhere is there a Christian non-native pastor willing to commit to all the necessary hardships to live incarnationally among one of the innumerable native nations. It is even more rare to find denominational support for such a pastor, who must be allowed to work without the imposition of short-term goals. Quite possibly the only ministry that can be successful in this context is one in which the life of Christ is lived out slowly and quietly, reflecting God's caring and character to a native community.

Reflecting Christ

People around the world, among them Native Americans, have long been waiting to see Christ's life wholistically demonstrated to them; Christ Himself integrated into their whole life and culture. They long to know a Christ who is not above their culture, dictating foreign terms of engagement and entitlement, but *in* their culture. Christ is all they dream of being, living out their hope of glory.

Genuine native ministries by modern Christian ministers are virtually impossible because our history is too suspect, our motives overly denominational, and our methods too quick and too demanding. The time allotted to spend among the people is too short for learning their way of talking, listening, and being. The full, lifetime commitment is not present. The minister tends to answer to church structures rather than to Christ.

In North America today there are about 400 native nations left (some have been entirely obliterated). Each has its own distinct history, language, culture, and customs. Christ's commission to reach *every nation* is awesome in the face of such diversity. These nations are almost entirely unentered in terms of effective Christian ministry. Will we ever live down the history, the disparate lifestyle, and the noncommunicative methodology of traditional Christian ministries?

The most promising possibilities in

ministry center on the engagement of native ministers to live out Christ's life in their own communities. Natives should be educated for native ministry rather than simply through conventional seminary curricula. Natives should be trained by native pastors in native territory. The ability to tell a good moral story in the longhouse circle is as valuable and honored as any ability to support a doctrinal proposition.

Such ministry is a fearful prospect to many, because our own Christian ethnocentricity demands control. We are afraid of the emergence of a native Christianity—one that may not fit comfortably into some of our rigid boundaries. Native Christianity is likely to be more foundational, more experiential, less scholastic, and more practical than Euro-American expressions of Christianity. Its theology may be more oral than written. Its authority may be more consent-oriented than ecclesiastical. It will be more all-encompassing and less fragmented, with its boundaries less identifiable than those of traditional churches.

The test of sacrifice

Letting this Christian way emerge with our blessing may be the sacrifice that will test the church's recent claim to repentance and its longstanding commitment to freedom of conscience. Native ministries by native pastors may even have the audacity to look for the support of fellow Christians while finding their own voice and vision.

Columbus and other European explorers vowed to Christianize the savage lands they discovered, but after hundreds of years it is obvious that in North America, the mission has all but failed. Maybe God is calling us now to let go so He can approach His native children in North America and elsewhere with a voice they *can* hear and a face they *will* recognize. ■

Kitty Maracle is pastor of the Native Indian Seventh-day Adventist Church in Vancouver, British Columbia.

Ken Van Ochten is a retired attorney who has worked in native ministries for more than seven years.

Catch the Vision

Continued from page 27

God's vision brims with confidence. It is a church that serves the Creator and Sovereign of the universe. It is a church that relishes rather than retreats from a stiff challenge. A church built on vision knows it can make a difference in the world. Such a church is one that has higher expectations and therefore performs at a higher level. It is a church that is not content with just being present.

A healthy church—one that is positively impacting the community in which it is located; one that is also reaching out to the world in a tangible manner; one in which the membership is growing in Christ—is a church that has a leader or leaders who have caught the vision of the Lord for their ministry.

A visionless church is inevitably diseased. It is a congregation that is not growing spiritually or numerically. It naturally prefers simpler yesterdays to uncertain tomorrows. The healthy church grows and is renewed by its visions and dreams. The diseased church doubts and questions itself to death.

Time to dream again

It is time to dream again. We must not prevent ourselves from doing it, or allow anyone from within or from without to deter us from it. We need visionaries who are listening to the Lord and have a vision for God's work in their neighborhood, nation, and throughout our world. We need people who can specifically see and articulate a revitalized future for the church. It doesn't take much to see the problems in the church. Anybody can be a critic. The challenge is to transcend all of this, moving the church to fulfill its God-ordained destiny.

It takes a Spirit-filled individual who is close enough to God to hear His voice, dream His dreams, and catch a focused vision for a revitalized church. Vision is about change. God wants leaders who are change agents. Vision is about stretching reality to extend beyond the existing state. A living, contemporary vision, based on divine direction, empowers us, in the face of any environment, to implement the call of God. ■

*The author would like to give George Barna and his book *The Power of Vision* credit for inspiring this article.*

BOOKS

Welcome! Your Church Family

Album. Ken McFarland. Art direction, illustrations, captions, and design by Lars Justinen. Color Press, College Place, Washington, 1997, 104 pages, hardbound. \$24.95. (See ad on back cover.)

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever." That was my first reaction as I flipped through the glossy pages of this beautiful work of art, family, theology, love, joy, and hope. Each page has its attraction; each picture has a message; each chapter meets a definite purpose.

Welcome! is Ken McFarland's creative way of letting every newly baptized person know in printed form what the Adventist family is all about. His crisp writing style, simple biblical exposition, lively description of how Adventism began and where it is heading, and practical hints on Adventist values and resources make the book the most helpful orientation to the exciting world of Adventism. But *Welcome!* is also sunshine, rainbow, and beauty. Every illustration grips you with color and contrast, some old, some new, 200 of them in all—each designed to hold the reader's interest to the past and the present, the struggle and the victory, the hope and the fulfillment, the humble origins and the majestic destiny of Adventism. The book, in effect, is both an introduction to the local church family and the global eschatological community. As Robert Folkenberg says in his foreword, *Welcome!* "is a valuable resource to assist you in understanding the uniqueness of God's remnant church and your role as a member of this worldwide movement."

Ken McFarland has teamed up with Lars Justinen to produce this beautiful book to be given as a gift to new members at their baptism. So the book begins with the meaning of baptism, and links the birth experience of faith with growth. Often our church emphasizes birth and either neglects or remains indifferent to growth. Without growth and nurture, the result is a silent walk out through the back door or an indifferent warm-up of the pew. In either case the church suffers and

the member atrophies. And so what good is baptism? Plenty in every way, the author argues, if we consider baptism as "ordination to ministry." That may come as a new thought, tinged with some heresy, to some who have a hang-up on the word "ordination." But the point is simple: no



one who has entered the family through baptism can remain silent about the business of the family—which is to share the good news of Jesus, its precious possession, with others. At baptism each person is ordained to share Jesus.

McFarland carries a serious burden. He wants everyone to understand what this family is all about. From the experience of salvation by faith to the experience of sharing a common fellowship, from understanding Adventist origins to anticipating the Second Advent, from learning the 27 fundamental beliefs to being familiar with Adventist language and lifestyle, and from knowing church organization to supporting its worldwide mission, the book is a primer for the newly baptized. I wish I'd had this book when I was baptized.

The book helps in many small ways. But the main thrust is its spirit—a spirit of genuine welcome into God's family. "The foundation of our fellowship," says the author, "is love." And God's family, the church, has the privilege of radiating that love, making it a safe and caring place where everyone, particularly the newly baptized, will "feel accepted, valued, respected—and loved."

Use *Welcome!* to welcome someone into your church family. The gift and the giver will never be forgotten.—John M. Fowler, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Foot Washing in John 13 and the Johannine Community. John Christopher Thomas. Sheffield Academic Press

(JSOT), Sheffield, S10 3BP, England.

Thomas has published a notable and eminently useful book that can be of great benefit to Christian ministers who are interested in both the pursuit and proclamation of truth. His book is based on many years of research, including the most recent scholarly findings from American and European universities.

Seven special discernible reasons for the ordinance of foot washing are identified and conclude strongly in favor of foot washing as a means of baptismal renewal (as indicated by Jesus in John 13:10), and as the primary, divinely appointed purpose of this ordinance.

What is particularly unique about Thomas's book besides advocating the restoration of the practice of foot washing as an ordinance provided by our Lord, is his recommendation that the seventh-day Sabbath should be considered for restoration by contemporary Christianity in place of Sunday worship.—Victor Pilmoor, treasurer, South England Conference, Watford, Hertfordshire, England.

Can You Drink the Cup? Henri J. M. Nouwen. South Bend, Ind.: Ave Maria Press, 1996. ISBN 0-87793-581-5. Softcover. 111 pages.

When Henri Nouwen died prematurely last year, pastors everywhere lost a kindred spirit. Many of his 30 books and various articles were addressed to pastors, and he was a frequent speaker at pastoral gatherings.

Can You Drink the Cup?, a classic for pastors, was published shortly before his death. Nouwen, who taught at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard, became tired of the competitive atmosphere of academia and sought peace at a home for those with disabilities and spent the last 10 years of his life as a pastor and personal caregiver. *Can You Drink the Cup?* is a moving challenge based on Jesus' question to His disciples in Matthew 20:20-23. Nouwen says, "I want to tell the story of the cup, not just as my story, but as the story of life" (p. 19). In the autobiographical material I found it easiest to understand what drinking the cup means for my own life.

The disciples recklessly claimed that they could drink the cup. Early in our ministries most of us probably would have done the same, feeling ready for anything that life might offer. But nearing the end of our ministerial career, we might not be so sure, nor would we agree quite so readily to taking everything we may have been dealt through the years. Nouwen, however, helps us come to accept our particular cup. "Drinking the cup," he writes, "is the way to salvation. It is a hard, painful way, a way we want to avoid at all costs. Often it even seems an impossible way. Still, unless we are willing to drink our cup, real freedom will elude us" (p. 91).

Nouwen suggests three disciplines that may help us drink our own cup. I was surprised to discover how silence, speaking, and acting can become disciplines of grace. Read this small book of 111 pages and be blessed as you practice these disciplines for yourself.—Steve Willsey, associate pastor, Spencerville church, Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Art of Theological Reflection.

Patricia O'Connell Killen and John de Beer. New York: Crossroad, 1994. 145 pages. Softcover. \$14.95.

One of the pastor's crucial roles as spiritual guide to the congregation is to help people make sense of their lives. But how often have pastors been frustrated by the inability of good Christian people to meaningfully connect legitimate biblical insight to the experience of this process! Doctrine is often learned as information and not in the light of answers to universal human questions. Theological reflection can help to reclaim the realities of Scripture and place them in dialogue with daily experience. And if experience can be a valued starting point for reflection, and if it can be brought creatively into play with Christian heritage, an openness to the Holy Spirit, and in a genuine community of faith, mere church membership might break out into genuine Christian discipleship! As the authors describe in their introduction, this book "helps us access

the Christian tradition as a reliable source of guidance as we search to discover the meaning of what God is doing now in our individual and corporate lives" (p. viii). This volume carefully lays out the process for theological reflection, with examples of how it works, both for individual and group process. This slim volume will help pastors, educators, and other Christian leaders who are serious about the implications of their faith for daily living.—Andy McRae, associate pastor, Sligo church, Takoma Park, Maryland.

SHOPTALK

Clarification

The Adventist Pioneer Library's "Words of the Pioneers" CD-ROM, released in 1995, is the second and most recent edition of this material (see February 1997 issue of *Ministry*). For more information, write to P.O. Box 1844, Loma Linda, California 92354-0380. Phone and fax (909) 824-1361.

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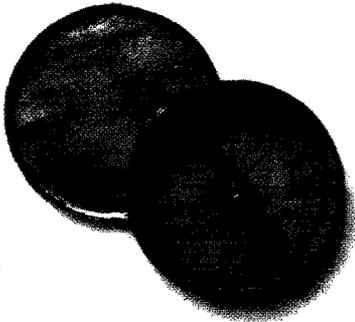
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