

Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

October 2000



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Ministry

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Children's ministry

I enjoyed your March 2000 *Ministry* articles on ministering to children. However, one "gap" I noticed is ideas and resources for computer curriculum sources and methodology. We are in the process of equipping our church classes with "teaching computers."

Ideas to help enrich this process and listings of CD-ROM Bible teaching disks would be helpful. I'd recommend you explore this area of computers—CD-ROMs as a potential boon to helping children already hooked into the cybernetic age to learn about God's saving love in Jesus Christ.—Robert K. (Bob) Munro, Knob Hill United Methodist Church, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada.

April 2000 issue

What a winner! Your April issue got torn apart like none since Elder Spangler's days.

I'll share Loren Fenton's article with my nominating committee at its first meeting this Thursday. Lael Caesar's insights into the message of Job were fresh, deep, and preachable. Reading Ekkehardt Mueller on revelation/inspiration encouraged me: a new face (at least to me) contending in 21st-century terms for the faith once delivered to the saints. As if that weren't enough "cream" for one issue, I found Wesley McDonald stimulating me with hard data to implement something I've believed in for a long time. Jim Cress affirming the blessings of the gift of prophecy; and then Doug Tilstra wrapping it all up with a true pastoral heartwarmer.

When I was finished, all I had left for the *Ministry* magazine stack were the front and back covers and the

letters page (and I do enjoy the letters page).

Thanks, and keep up the good work. Maranatha!—Dale Wolcott, pastor, Midland, Michigan.

● I thought the article "Teachable Spirit, Teamwork, and *Ministry*" was excellent!—Ken Livesay, ASI executive secretary and treasurer (retired), Paradise, California.

● I enjoyed Julia Norcott's editorial on a teachable spirit in the April 2000 *Ministry*. The point was made effectively. I might add that it takes a certain type of talented person who can take a visionary's (i.e., Jim) plans and then make them reality (i.e., Julia). We appreciate working with both the visionary and the one who implements the vision so effectively. You have a great team at *Ministry*—we value you all and appreciate the opportunity to be a part of assisting in making your projects a reality.—Bob Kyte, president, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Nampa, Idaho.

● Thanks to Dr. Lael Caesar for "Integrity on Trial: A Case Study of Job." Caesar correctly sees vindication of character, for both Job and God. But to complete Caesar's picture, the article might have included one more verse. In the end, despite Job's "intemperate" outbursts, God said to Eliphaz and friends, "You have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has."—Robert Wresch, Guam.

● As a church pastor of Putting Kahoy Filipino Seventh-day Adventist Church at Silang, Cavite, Philippines it is my deepest burden to win souls for Jesus. Our church is being blessed by

monthly and weekly baptisms through the Small Group Ministry and of course it is not possible without God's grace and guidance. However, I do believe that leading souls to Jesus' feet is not an end itself but rather only a beginning. To bring them into the fellowship of the believers is one thing and to nurture them is another. Richard Halversen's article ("Nurturing and Preserving New Converts") is indeed an added answer on how our Church could keep these priceless souls from sliding out of God's fold. When I shared the author's wonderful idea concerning the "obstetricians," the "pediatricians," and the "nursery" in our church last May 6, 2000, it indeed deeply brought home the responsibility of every member as a tender and loving care "pediatricians and nurses."

I do agree with the author when he pointed out that much of our time, effort, and money is being spent in the groundwork and during the evangelistic meetings. But the "follow up side" of this blessed work is left empty-handed. As a young Adventist pastor I can proudly say that we have mastered the art of leading lost souls to Jesus. In fact, we baptize by hundreds, and even by thousands. Nevertheless, we seem to be handicapped when it comes to nurturing. With this article it is now high time to be reminded of our responsibility as "brother's keepers."

Ellen G. White has something to emphasize with regard to this matter: "To labor at considerable expense to bring souls into the truth and then leave them . . . would leave that work far worse than if the truth had never brought to them" (*Spirit of Prophecy*, 1:1926).—Petronio M. Genebago, pastor, Silang, Cavite, Philippines. ■

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.



Not long ago I tumbled into one of those disputes that seem so hard for some of us ministers to avoid (or is it resist?). In

an email to my counterpart I emphasized a couple of relevant Ellen White quotes that I believed would contribute to our warming debate. Knowing him a little, I assumed that he would take these quotes seriously. However, his response to my citations went this way: "Regarding Ellen White statements, let me just say that I am a Biblical scholar and not a denominational apologist. As you well know Ellen White was not an exegete. She never comes to grips with the grammatical, textual, and contextual problems of Bible texts."

It is important for me to say that I deeply value the emphasis of my friend on being "a Biblical scholar." I must also say that at first I appreciated the fact that he had drawn an interesting distinction. He did not say as others have, "Yes, but Ellen White was not a theologian." Instead he said that she was not an "exegete." Yet when I thought again, I wondered about the objective accuracy of his assessment of much of Mrs. White's work. It is simply untrue to say that Mrs. White never grappled with the textual and contextual problems in the text of the Bible. True, she did not do it using the academic tools of the trade, but she nonetheless by all means did it.

As I thought about these things, I ended up feeling compelled to maintain that, bottom line, on the basis of functional definition Mrs. White was both an exegete and a theologian in her own right.

Perhaps that which is most persuasive to me in this was the thought that if one applies either the definition of my friend of what an

"What's a Theologian after all?"

W I L L E V A

"exegete" is, or anyone's definition of what a "theologian" is, so that people such as Ellen White are excluded, one would, by the force of such definition have to exclude people like Simon Peter, Jeremiah, Matthew and Haggai.

The point is, what has one gained, or what light has been shed on a given situation when one makes

What has one gained, or what light has been shed on a given situation when one makes judgments that exclude persons such as Mrs. White from the ranks of exegetes or theologians?

judgments that exclude persons such as Mrs. White from the ranks of exegetes or theologians? Are we not reducing or depriving exegesis and especially theology if we restrict them to the extent implied by my friend? As much as I appreciate how crucial is the responsible use and application of academically disciplined theology, the definitive task of theology must not

end up being confined only to what is done by an elite, important as the role of that elite is.

Along with many others I have felt the significant weight and implications of all that has been said during the last twenty-five years or so within and without the Adventist Church about Mrs. White and her work; particularly about her use of sources and secretaries and her theological and doctrinal authority or lack of it when it comes to settling debated issues. In all of this, I am constrained to maintain my deep respect and admiration for Mrs. White as a theologian.

When, for example, I see what she has to say about subjects such as "the nature of Christ" or the "law in Galatians," I am filled with a sense of esteem and deference for her scholarship, nonacademic as it may have been. As I read her coverage of such themes and observe the level of refinement in her thought, including her recognition of theological and textual nuance, I know that such precise and elegant writing presupposes careful, broad reading and study, even if that study omitted academic exegesis and classic theological discipline. It seems to me that an objective observer, unburdened by baggage from hither or yon, would be compelled to accord E.G. White the title, "theologian."

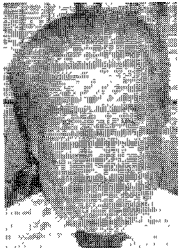
Clearly, one could come up with definitions of theology or of what a theologian is that would exclude persons such as Ellen White. Yet undoubtedly most thoughtful, independent and even academically oriented definitions of theology would embrace Mrs. White as a theologian, even if the far-reaching question of her inspiration was excluded (as we are purposely doing here), along with its role and influence on her as she did her work.

I'd like to come back to my friend

continued on p. 29

ELLEN WHITE, THEOLOGIAN?

It is becoming increasingly common in Seventh-day Adventist circles to think of Ellen White as an inspired and inspiring writer, popular lecturer, wife, and mother, but not as a theologian.



Walter M. Booth, Ph.D., is retired and lives in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

I would like to address this tendency, expressing my conviction that Ellen White was an outstanding theologian.

The character of biblical theology and of any formulation of it should reflect the nature of God. Our theology must reflect the transcendent meaning, which God in His transcendence inevitably gives to His own existence and activity, to human existence, and to all truth. Transcendent meaning is high-level meaning, meaning that requires for its expression the use of superlatives.

Biblical theology must be based on the Scriptures and reflect the full biblical message, which may be said to include four central themes: (a) the existence, nature, and activity of God; (b) the nature and destiny of human beings; (c) the origin, nature, and consequences of sin, human sinfulness; and (d) the plan of redemption.

Ellen White's theology: General characteristics

An important characteristic of Ellen White's theology is its purely scriptural basis. She recognized the Bible as the only rule of faith and was loyal to it without compromise. At its heart, her theology is purely biblical.

Second, her theology is comprehensive. None of the divisions of theology—soteriology, ecclesiology, etc.—that theologians recognize escaped her attention. For all of these areas, and for the four central themes of the Bible, she provided detailed exposition.

Third, she perceived the transcendent meaning of the Scriptures and gave to this meaning comprehensive exposition. Her loyalty to the Bible rendered its transcendent themes accessible to her, and her theology stands on a high conceptual level. Her understanding of this meaning is illustrated below.

Fourth, her theology is dynamic, as will be also be illustrated.

Fifth, her theology is basically positive. She accepted the biblical concept that human beings are radically and universally affected by sin—but she did not overemphasize it. She was more interested in positive elements, such as the love of God and His ideal for human beings.

Sixth, because of her consistent emphasis on love—God's love for human beings and love as an ethical human obligation—her theology is humane and sensitive. In writing about the love and compassion of God, she repeatedly used the language of human affection and

endearment. She understood, however, that the love of God was far more extensive and impressive than human love. She believed that God is deeply sensitive to the needs of every human being and deeply touched with the feelings of human grief and helplessness.

Last, she recognized the need for a balance between theoretical theology and practical theology. She accorded detailed attention to both of these so that there is no shortage of either practical or theoretical theology in her writings. In an important statement regarding this balance, she advised her fellow believers who had been concentrating "mostly upon the prophecies and the theoretical points of our faith" to become acquainted "without delay" with "lessons of practical godliness."¹

Ellen White and the four themes of Scripture

1. *Mrs. White's concept of a transcendent God* can be illustrated by her use of the phrase "an infinity beyond" and similar expressions. In writing about God's knowledge and wisdom, she stated that "There is infinity beyond all that we can comprehend. We have seen only the glimmering of divine glory and of the infinitude of knowledge and wisdom . . ." ² No one, she said, "can fully comprehend the existence, the power, the wisdom, or the works" of God. Human beings may be "ever searching, ever learning, and still there is infinity beyond."³

An important dimension of her theology was her emphasis on God's love. She believed that theology is "valueless" unless "saturated with the love of Christ."⁴ She described God's love as "unfathomable, indescribable, without a parallel," "beyond any human computation."⁵ The human soul, she said, "was purchased at an infinite cost, and is loved with a devotion that is unalterable."⁶

The dynamic element in her theology of God is illustrated by her belief that God is continuously active: "constantly at work for the good of his creatures," "perpetually at work in nature."⁷

2. *Her views on the nature and destiny of human beings* were positive and

dynamic. She believed that they were of unlimited value to God, stating that, formed in the image of God, they were "very dear" to Him.⁸

She believed human potential for growth and achievement to be virtually unlimited. She said, for example, that if youth would "take the Bible as their guide, and stand like a rock for principle," they could "aspire to any height of attainment"; and that, beyond the reach of their most expansive aspirations, there would "always be an infinity" of

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achievement.⁹ She maintained that the destiny for which human beings were divinely intended was indeed glorious. Included in this destiny were "the wondrous glories" of immortality, imperishable honors and "glory, riches, and honor" of "infinite value."¹⁰ The redeemed, she said, are divinely intended for an endless advance in knowledge and holiness, an "ever increasing" capacity to know, enjoy, and love, and the enduring conviction that there is still beyond "joy and love and wisdom infinite."¹¹

The dynamic element in her theology of humanity is illustrated by state-

ments about human growth and activity and the divine ideal for human beings. God, she said, "works continuously" for human beings and requires them to "work continually" for Him. They "should never rest from doing good,"¹² Christians, she said, must experience "constant growth," "constant progress in the divine life," and "continual striving and constant progress" toward "perfection of character."¹³

3. *Ellen White's theology of sin* is discussed here in terms of the disintegrative effects of sin on human beings and her nonpermissive attitude toward sin.

She believed in the diminishing, demeaning effect of sin on human beings: "Through sin, the whole human organism is deranged, the mind is perverted, the imagination corrupted," and "the faculties of the soul" "degraded."¹⁴

Mrs. White understood that, although God was love, in His holiness, He could not tolerate sin. She herself offered no permissiveness of sin whatever: sin of any kind, sin to any degree. The Scriptures take a hard line against sin. So, also, did Ellen White.

4. *Redemption* was recognized by Ellen White to be the primary element in the meaning of the Cross; redemption rescuing the human being from the guilt and power of sin. But there were other components of meaning in her view of redemption:

She believed that the death of Christ on the cross provided a powerful affirmation of human beings in that it demonstrated incontrovertibly the love of God for them and their value to Him. We can understand these issues far better with reference to the heavy risk inherent in the Incarnation, a risk that Ellen White herself recognized: "Remember that Christ risked all. For our redemption heaven itself was imperiled [sic]."¹⁵ "Could Satan in the least particular have tempted Christ to sin . . . the hope of the human race would have perished. Divine wrath would have come upon Christ as it came upon Adam. Christ and the church would have been without hope."¹⁶

It is clear that, by taking on human nature, Jesus accepted this colossal risk. By accepting this risk He affirmed to

human beings the crucial importance of their existence to God, their value to Him, and His love for them. In going to the cross for them He reinforced this affirmation. In commenting on John 3:16, Mrs. White declared that "Thus he [God] showed to the heavenly universe and to the fallen world the value he placed on man."¹⁷

There was also, for Ellen White, a cosmic dimension in the meaning of the Cross. The eternal existence of morally free beings means that, objectively considered, sin is always a possibility. One of the objectives in the great controversy, however, is to guarantee that evil, once eradicated from earth, will never rise again anywhere in the universe.

Ellen White believed that the plan of redemption would culminate in the second coming of Jesus, the bestowal of immortality and eternal life on the saints, the elimination of sin and the impenitent, and the transformation of this world into a Paradise, in which the

realization of God's exalted ideal for human beings would be carried forward eternally without interruption.

Conclusion

I am convinced that Ellen White's theology satisfies the most essential characteristics of the best in a long line of theological tradition. Again, she has given us a theology that (1) is purely biblical and comprehensive, (2) recognizes the transcendent meaning of divine truth, (3) shows a balance between positive and negative, between theoretical and practical—with heavier emphasis on the positive and practical, and (4) is humane and dynamic.

Surely, had she published a systematic formulation of her theological views, her high standing as a theologian would be acknowledged. I am convinced that, either she was all that she claimed to be or her theological thought must be regarded as one of the most impressive achievements of the human spirit. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948), 3:214.

² ———, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1941), 113.

³ ———, *Patriarchs and Prophets* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1958), 116.

⁴ ———, "Principles of Service" in *Signs of the Times*, May 10, 1910.

⁵ ———, "Our High Calling." *Review and Herald*, February 28, 1888; "Christian Benevolence," no. 1, *Review and Herald*, January 4, 1898.

⁶ ———, "Pray Without Ceasing." *Review and Herald*, October 30, 1900.

⁷ ———, "A Time of Trouble." *Review and Herald*, September 17, 1901; "God in Nature." *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, February 18, 1897.

⁸ ———, "Go Ye Into All the World." *Review and Herald*, June 18, 1895.

⁹ ———, "The Fruits of Faith." *Signs of the Times*, March 4, 1889.

¹⁰ ———, *Spirit of Prophecy* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1969), 2:97; *Testimonies for the Church*, 2:46, 40.

¹¹ ———, *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1943), 55.

¹² ———, "The New Year." *Review and Herald*, January 4, 1881; *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1940), 207.

¹³ ———, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958-1980), 2:222; *Testimonies for the Church*, 8:64.

¹⁴ ———, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1942), 451.

¹⁵ ———, *Christ's Object Lessons*, 196.

¹⁶ ———, *Selected Messages*, 1:256.

¹⁷ ———, "Sacrificed for Us." *Youth's Instructor*, July 20, 1899.

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EVANGELISM AND SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT

Not either/or, both

The question of how to deal with issues of social justice has divided Christians into two camps. One argues that evangelism is the basic solution for common social dilemmas, while the other emphasizes direct social involvement as the true expression of the gospel.



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Ontario, Canada*

David Moberg, observes: "Evangelicals are more inclined towards otherworldly perspectives, while theological liberals give greater attention to conditions and needs of men in contemporary society."¹

How do we reconcile these two competing positions? This article will argue that both social justice and evangelism are biblically mandated, are seen in both the teachings of the Old Testament and in Jesus, and are involved in the final judgment of the nations.

The biblical mandate

The Bible has given to the Christian church two great mandates. The first one is cultural. Once a lawyer asked Jesus the question, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus responded: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the

first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:36-40).*

The second mandate is evangelistic, usually associated with the Great Commission of Matthew 28:16-20. This mandate is given to the new humanity in Christ, the church, which is commanded by the risen Lord to make disciples of all nations.

In a sense, the cultural mandate precedes the evangelistic mandate and both are equally applicable to Christian living today; neither has been rescinded. The Great Commission is our evangelistic mandate, and the Great Commandment is our cultural mandate, and the One who gave the Great Commission is the One who gave the Great Commandment.

Jesus spent much time expounding His theology of love. Love for neighbor

EARL P. CAMERON

is surpassed only by love for God. Nevertheless, the evidence of our love for God is the love we show to our neighbor. There is thus an inseparable connection between evangelism and ethics. Delos Miles, says, "It is a theological mistake to identify either the Great Commission or the Great Commandment exclusively with either evangelism or ethics."²

What is involved in loving God and loving one's neighbor? If we love God completely, without reservation, we cannot but share that consuming love with our neighbors. If we love our neighbors we will not only share with them the Bread of Life, which we have found in Jesus Christ, but we will also share our physical bread. We will minister to human need with both the "now" and the "hereafter" in mind.

One way in which the Great Commission instructs us to make disciples is by "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:20). Observing all things would include the Great Commandment of Matthew 22:38, 39. Love is the fundamental principle upon which evangelism is built. Love meets the total needs of an individual and cannot be limited to any one area—spiritual, physical, social, or emotional. As John Stott notes, "Our neighbour is neither a bodiless soul that we should love only his soul, nor a soulless body that we should care for its welfare alone; nor even a body-soul isolated from society." Indeed, Stott continues, "God created man, who is my neighbour a body-soul-in-community. Therefore if we love our neighbor as God made him, we must inevitably be concerned for his total welfare."³

"The Biblical evidence overwhelmingly states that the will of God is to love him in a way that leaves no room for idols," says John Perkins, "and to love our neighbor in a way that liberates him from poverty and oppression either spiritual or physical."⁴

No wonder the Bible ties together evangelism and social intervention.

The mission of the prophets

This tie-up is evident in the mission of the Old Testament prophets. God

chose Moses as His liberator as well as His lawgiver. Moses went back to Egypt to both free his people from Pharaoh's oppression and establish them as a community where social justice would reign.

Amos was both a religious and social activist of his day. He cried out: "Let justice run down like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). Amos was not quiet about the social order of the day. He was not afraid to thunder against the iniquities of the social system. He recognized he had an ethical and moral responsibility to address the evils of his day. He proclaimed God as One who desires justice for all people.

Micah spoke passionately about the downtrodden and exploited people of Judah. He contrasted the injustice prevailing in Judah with the righteousness and justice Yahweh requires of His people. The prophet indicted Israel and Judah for specific sins, including oppression; bribery among judges, prophets, and priests; exploitation of the powerless; covetousness; cheating; violence and

pride: "Hear now, O heads of Jacob, and you rulers of the house of Israel: is it not for you to know justice?" (Micah 3:1). Micah did not turn a blind eye to the social and political conditions in his society. To have done so would have been a disservice to God.

The prophetic message of the Old Testament carries a clarion call for social justice. Ritual and religion are of no value unless they result in tangible righteousness. Human freedom and human responsibility, human redemption and human restoration are inseparable. Stanley G. Evans summarizes the Old Testament concept of social responsibility in five points:

1. The service of God is ethical before it is ceremonial.
2. God is concerned with corporate morality.
3. A first moral duty is the demand of justice for the poor.
4. The purpose of God is national perfection.
5. There will be no national perfection, or even national survival, while the

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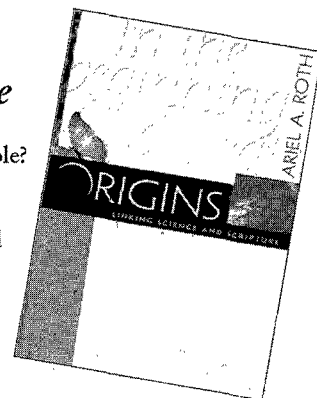
If one accepts the biblical account of origins, does one then have to reject science? Scientist and Christian believer Ariel A. Roth argues that taken together, science and religion give us a more complete and sensible understanding of the world around us, our place in it, and our destiny.

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The author, who has been the editor of the journal *Origins* for 23 years has had worldwide experience in the ongoing discussion about science and the Bible. The book is well illustrated and documented with more than one thousand references. It includes a glossary and comprehensive index. Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, 1998. ISBN 0-8280-1328-4. Hardcover, 384 pages, \$24.99.

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people forsake the ways of God.⁵

The same responsibility confronts us today as it did ancient Israel. Who will be a voice for the voiceless? Who will care for the less fortunate? Who will ensure that justice shall roll down like waters?

The mission of Jesus

When we turn to the mission of Jesus the focus is clear. The inaugural sermon in Nazareth sets the tone for justice and freedom. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18, 19).

Jesus deftly combined the evangelistic and the cultural mandates. He describes His work in terms of preaching, healing, and releasing prisoners. Some preachers talk profusely about the gospel and describe in detail its theological features, but in doing this they often offer only the priestly half of that gospel. They neglect the prophetic half, which is to become involved with the sufferings and needs of people. The church that exercises its prophetic min-

istry must put on its working clothes.

The "acceptable year of the Lord" (Isa. 61:2) is the year of jubilee. In Hebrew life and thought, the year of jubilee came every fifty years. Throughout the year, the Hebrew people sought to raise a bulwark against slavery and other social evils. Bells of freedom and justice rang throughout the land when the year of jubilee dawned.

Jesus came to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. He came to proclaim the year of jubilee. His message was that people should be set free—not just from sin but from social injustice and oppression as well.

Jesus practiced what He preached. He showed compassion for the poor and hungry when He fed the five thousand, healed the paralytic, cared for the widow, made the leper whole, gave sight to the blind, and life to the dead. His life was one clear testament of translating redemption from theory into meaningful, hands-on practice. The Sermon on the Mount was a charter for the kingdom people—an outline of what to believe and also what to do.

Two familiar parables of Jesus seem to provide a summary statement of a theology of active Christian compassion. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), the latter was in dire

need. The rich man showed no concern as he dined sumptuously. After his death, he found himself in a place of torment but Lazarus, when he died, found himself in a comfortable, secure place.

The rich man cried out to Father Abraham to send Lazarus to relieve him of his torment, but Abraham replied, "It is too late." He then requested Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to minister to his five brothers who were in need of escaping the place of torment. But Abraham answered: "If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31).

The rich man did not extend appropriate assistance to Lazarus because he did not heed the law and the prophets. The five brothers could not be evangelized unless they would hear and heed the law and the prophets. Neither Christian social involvement nor evangelism will occur unless people hear and heed the word of God. Delos Miles says, "Only our obedience to the word of the Lord will result in balanced evangelism and symmetrical Christian social involvement."⁶

The parable of the good Samaritan takes the point one step further. In this parable, Jesus shows that true love knows no boundaries. The Samaritan, with whom no Jew would have any social contact, showed what true love is. Unlike the priest and the Levite who passed by the wounded person, the Samaritan stopped to help. It did not matter that the wounded person was a Jew; all that mattered was that he was one of God's creation and that he was in desperate need. Jesus pictured the Samaritan as a man of ethical and social sensitivity, of mature spiritual stature.

At the heart of Jesus' teaching is the truth that if one fully loves God, one will show divine compassion and concern. Knowing the commandments is not enough. Saying we love God is not enough. We must love others as ourselves—even at the risk of our life as the parable shows.

Finally, Jesus' parable of the judgment (Matt. 25:31-36) establishes clearly the connection between evangelism and Christian social ministries. The judg-

ment takes into account not what one professes but what one does with that profession. Both those who did and did not do the deeds were surprised at the judgment. The Master summarized His discourse by saying: "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40). Mark explains how Jesus describes the less fortunate in society: "the least of these My brethren." If we are unwilling to share with others those things which do not last, how shall we share that which is everlasting?

Evangelism: a total ministry

For some, evangelism may be an attempt to escape personal social involvement. For others, social concern and involvement may be an attempt to circumvent spiritual regeneration or build God's kingdom without God. But this kind of dichotomy need not be. Both evangelism and social concern go hand in hand. Neither is a substitute for, nor escape from, the other.

One evangelical writer says, "Recon-

ciliation with man is not reconciliation with God . . . Nor is political liberation salvation, nevertheless we affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. . . . When people receive Christ they are born again into His Kingdom and must seek not only to exhibit, but also to spread, righteousness in the midst of an unrighteous world. The salvation we claim should be transforming us in the totality of our personal and social responsibilities."⁷

To be socially concerned is not the same as to embrace the tenets of the social gospel: Walter Rauchenbuch's social gospel is not the same as the biblical model of evangelism. In the biblical model, there is no separation between feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, ministering to people's social needs, and communicating the gospel. Good deeds must be coupled with the preaching of the Word if evangelism is to be complete.

A church that insulates itself from social involvement will do a poor job of communicating the gospel. Such a

church says very little to the world about the virtue of Christianity. Most people will be willing to listen to a church that not only preaches salvation by grace, but is also actively identified with the outcome of the gospel: ministering to all the needs and concerns of humanity. ■

*All Scripture passages in this article are from the New King James Version.

¹David Moberg, *The Great Reversal* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1972), 47.

²Delos Miles, *Evangelism and Social Involvement* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 28.

³John Stott, "The Great Commandment . . . The Great Commission," *World Evangelization*, Information Bulletin No. 23, June 1981, 5.

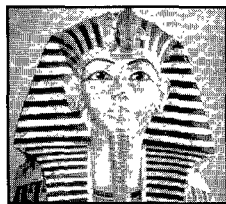
⁴John Perkins, *A Quiet Revolution* (Waco, Texas: Word Books Pub., 1976), 3.

⁵Stanley G. Evans, *The Social Hope of the Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 19.

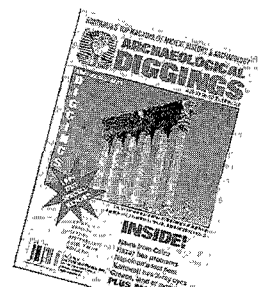
⁶Miles, 34.

⁷Vinay Samuel and Chris Sugden, eds., *The Church in Response to Human Need* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), 175.

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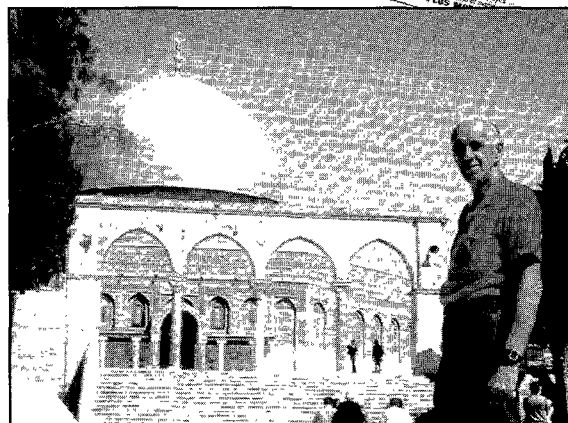
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INDICATORS OF MINISTERIAL RESILIENCE:

The dropout dilemma

The August issue of *Ministry* carried the first part of a report on *Project Seventh-day Adventist Clergy: Stage II*. Here is the final part of the Stage II study.



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Project Seventh-day Adventist Clergy: Stage II, consists of a 1997 study of the fulfillments and frustrations, problems and experiences of the cohort¹ of young ministers who commenced their ministry in the United States and Canada in 1987. This concluding part of the report focuses on those who entered ministry in 1987 but dropped out before 1997.

The ministerial dropout dilemma

Our study reveals a heavy attrition from the Seventh-day Adventist Church's ministerial ranks. The magnitude of this phenomenon, plus the pain and bitterness manifested by those involved, warrants serious examination.

Just over a third (34 percent) of those 1987 cohort members who actually entered the ministry dropped out (either resigned or were dismissed) by mid-1997. A casualty rate of this size in a military unit would usually be unacceptable.² Some of the "surviving" ministers in this study group may also

drop out in the future. Seventy percent of Ministerial Persisters reported that they have considered dropping out of the ministry (see Table 1).

No doubt, some will contend that these findings are not typical and that very few Seventh-day Adventist ministers question or withdraw from their "calling." However, in the absence of data-based research findings to the contrary, we have confidence in our conclusions. In fact, the situation may be more serious than portrayed in this report. Another independent study in Australia and New Zealand found that "as of 1990, approximately 44 percent of graduates who enter SDA ministry do not continue in it."³ We hypothesize, therefore, that the attrition experience of our 1987 cohort is replicated in other years and other places and, taken together, ministerial resignations are alarmingly high. Yet few concerned voices are raised over this loss of trained human resources—even at a time when many churches lack full-time pastoral leadership.

JACK E. BYNUM AND DOUGLAS R. CLARK

The social and psychological costs to dropouts

In the narrative sections of the 1997 survey questionnaire, many of those who had resigned or were dismissed from the ministry painted a picture of severe economic hardship for their families as they struggled to find new jobs and meet their living expenses. However, Ministerial Dropouts declared that the social sanctions they received from the Church outweighed, and even contributed to their economic difficulties. They often commented on their surprise and pain as "a curtain of isolation and marginality enveloped [them] as damaged goods." The following two quotes from ministerial dropouts are representative:

"I wrote a lengthy statement about what led me [to] getting out of the paid ministry and sent it to my Conference President and to the General Conference. Two years have passed and still no response."

"After years of work for the denomination, when I left, they wouldn't give me a letter of reference to even collect garbage! They were through with me!"

These comments are similar to those from an earlier study done in Australia and New Zealand, of which the following quotes are representative: "It was not so much the fact of leaving the ministry, but the experience of rejection, marginalization, and exclusion from the Adventist community that stands out in ex-pastor narratives. The majority of ex-pastors found this social censure difficult to cope with when they were already faced with the prospect of finding alternative work and a home, making new friends, and establishing a new social identity."

"According to ex-pastors, the Adventist community stigmatizes leavers as outsiders, strangers, fringe dwellers. You're always a second-class citizen or backslider. . . . Ex-pastors . . . describe . . . their alienation: 'I felt that I had been pushed straight down the sewer'; 'I was dying to talk with someone about my leaving.' One compares his experience of isolation to being in a 'little boat that was turned away from shore . . . into the sea

and you didn't know where you were going."⁷⁴

Predictability

One of the most desirable but elusive objectives of empirical research is predictability. In the context of this study, *predictability* is the ability to project future behavior of our ministerial subjects after a systematic analysis of past and present behavior. Predictability is more difficult to achieve in the social sciences than in the physical sciences, although they share the same scientific method, because human beings are among the most complex of all variables. Nevertheless, in Tables 2 and 3, we have identified a set of factors arising from this longitudinal scrutiny of data that can be correlated with persisting in the professional ministry of the Church, or conversely, with dropping out of that occupation.

Data in Table 2, though based on a single cohort and far from conclusive, suggest a troubling finding: The college attended by an aspiring minister may markedly increase or reduce one's chances of entering full-time, professional ministry.

For example, the production of ministerial graduates is itself an obvious variable. College G produced only two graduating ministerial students in 1987; colleges A and F graduated just four each. At the same time, Colleges D and I produced 12 and 14 ministerial graduates respectively in 1987. Certainly, getting through the college course of study and approaching the job market has a lot to do with entering the ministry.

The percentages of rejections for ministerial graduates at the various colleges also differ widely. Column 3 of Table 2 shows that College A had three of its four ministerial student graduates (75 percent) passed over for employment as ministerial interns. (This unenviable institutional record for 1987 is underscored by the fact that the one graduate from College A who received a ministerial appointment later dropped out.) Similarly, College B also records a large proportion of rejections among 1987 ministerial student gradu-

Table 1. Reasons why persisters may drop out of ministry

One item in the 1997 survey item asks persisters the question: "Have you ever considered dropping out of the professional ministry of the Church?"

Yes	70%
No	18%
No response	12%

What are the reasons given by persisters for considering dropping out?

Church politics	33%
Lack of conference support	21%
Theological differences	12%
Personal finances	9%
Personal family problems	9%
No response	18%

ates (56 percent), though the dropout number was among the lowest. On the other hand, Colleges F and G had no Rejects in 1987, though half of their graduates entering the professional ministry later dropped out.

Ministerial Persisters from the various colleges and universities are tabulated in column one of Table 2. The highest scores are credited to Colleges C, D, and H that registered 80-85 percent survival rates for their graduates who entered the ministry in 1987. The worst Ministerial Persister records belong to Colleges E, F, G, I, and K where 40-50 percent of their ministerial placements became Dropouts.

The data in Table 3 offer additional explanatory and predictive insights regarding the statistical probability that ministerial students will fall into future Persister, Dropout, and Reject subgroupings.

The search for predictive demographic variables has produced the nine moderate-to-strong early indicators of future Persisters and Dropouts listed in Table 3. Moderate-strength predictive variables in our 1987 senior ministerial students are Racial/Ethnic background and Political Preference. The racial/ethnic composition of the original 1987 cohort is compared with subsequent 1997 subgroupings. Notice that the 1997 Reject and Dropout groups contain proportionately higher percentages

Table 2. Colleges attended by 1987 ministerial graduates and their 1997 ministerial status

SDA College or university	Ministerial Persisters	Ministerial Dropouts ²	Ministerial Rejects ³
College A	0 (0%)	1 (25%)	3 (75%)
College B	3 (32%)	1 (12%)	5 (56%)
College C	4 (57%)	1 (14%)	2 (29%)
College D	6 (50%)	1 (8%)	5 (42%)
College E	4 (50%)	3 (38%)	1 (12%)
College F	2 (50%)	2 (50%)	0 (0%)
College G	1 (50%)	1 (50%)	0 (0%)
College H	4 (44%)	1 (12%)	4 (44%)
College I	6 (44%)	4 (28%)	4 (28%)
College J	2 (40%)	1 (20%)	2 (40%)
College K	3 (38%)	2 (24%)	3 (38%)

¹ Ministerial Persisters are those individuals who entered and "persisted" in ministry.

² Ministerial Dropouts are those who entered ministry and later "dropped out" of denominational employment through resignation or dismissal.

³ Ministerial Rejects are those 1987 ministerial student graduates who never entered the professional ministry of the Church.

of Black subjects, resulting in a moderate increase in the proportion of White Ministerial Persisters in 1997.

Political Preference demonstrates a similar pattern. Over time, proportionately more Democratic than Republican sympathizers became Rejects and Dropouts, resulting in an 11 percent increase in Republican supporters in the 1997 Persister group. By extension, we may assume that more conservative ministers are in the numerical ascendancy.

One of the most interesting predictive variables is Secondary School education, which compares the educational background of the 1987 cohort with the three 1997 subgroups. In our 1987 report⁵ we expressed some curiosity and concern over the fact that SDA academies produced just a little over a third of the prospective ministers in 1987. Paradoxically, the 1997 data reveal that ministers with a public high school background are significantly more likely to drop out of the ministry than those with SDA academy education.

The strongest and most impressive early indicators of future Ministerial Persister or Dropout behavior are Age at College Graduation, Sibling Birth Order, College Grade Point Average, Number of SDA Parents, and Parents' Marital Status. The older members of the 1987 graduating cohort were more likely to be Ministerial Rejects or Dropouts by 1997. Ministerial Persisters had

the youngest average age of 29 years at the time of their graduation. Birth Order data show that first-born children were much less likely to drop out of ministry than those born later in the birth order.

This study revealed College Grade Point Average (GPA) to be one of the strongest differentials between Ministerial Persisters and Ministerial Dropouts. The cumulative average GPA of 1987 cohort members still serving as ministers in 1997 was 3.53 while Ministerial Dropouts had an average GPA of 3.00.

Ministerial Persisters are much more likely to have two Seventh-day Adventist parents than Ministerial Dropouts. Ninety-three percent of the parents of Ministerial Persisters were married and together, while just 40 percent of the parents of Ministerial Dropouts have intact marriages. Taken together, these two variables focusing on the religious and marital solidarity of parents may offer the most fruitful clues to the subsequent survival of ministerial careers.

Based on the predictive variables presented in Tables 2 and 3, it would be easy to construct statistical and demographic profiles for "Ministerial Students Most Likely to Persist" and "Ministerial Students Most Likely to Ultimately Drop Out." However, we will resist the temptation—even though the data are often convincing. Such profiles

are useful guides, but should not be imputed with absolute authority. There are many Ministerial Persisters and Ministerial Dropouts whose educational and demographic backgrounds do *not* correspond with the statistical patterns of the most typical candidates. Thus, it is prudent to acknowledge that God, in His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge, can call even the most unlikely individuals to successful ministry or other special service (see 1 Sam. 16:7; Acts 26:16; 1 Cor. 1:26, 27; 2 Cor. 10:10, 12:9; 1 Tim. 1:12-13).

Confronting the Ministerial Dropout issue

While the phenomenon of ministers leaving their profession or calling has long been a focus of attention in other denominations, it is becoming a concern of many contemporary Seventh-day Adventists. To assume that a kind of ongoing "weeding-out process" is normal and necessary to purify the ministerial ranks is an oversimplification, and generalizes all the responsibility on every faltering minister. In addition, such a position could force us to entertain the premise that large numbers of sincere young Adventists are mistaken in thinking that they have been called to ministry and hence poorly directed for years in pursuing that goal. This line of reasoning could also compel us to explore the idea that God and the church are somewhat capricious in issuing and encouraging "holy orders" when it comes to ministerial service, as evidenced by the growing number of discarded and disillusioned ministerial dropouts and rejects.

After reviewing the candid comments of the Ministerial Dropouts in our 1997 survey (along with those of many potential Dropouts still in the ministry), we suggest a different approach. Let us realize, first, that the preparation of ministers is a task in which the entire church participates—families, conferences, congregations, and colleges. Second, let us not be surprised or unforgiving when we discover that those who preach to us have "feet of clay." Like everyone else, those who serve the Church as clergy are hu-

man: They, too, face discouragements, experience temptations, make mistakes, and can become alienated. This reality does not discount the seriousness of their errors or suggest that incompetence or character flaws should be free from negative sanctions and consequences. The lowering of ministerial standards of performance and conduct is *not* a viable or constructive response to the Ministerial Dropout problem. At the same time, it is God's prerogative to determine the ultimate value and usefulness of an individual, to withdraw all hope of reconciliation, and to make final closure in the case.

Seventh-day Adventists—in their concern for souls—cast a very large net. One has only to peruse Adventist publications to see concern and compassion generously extended to nearly every imaginable group—both inside and outside the church. An amazing proliferation of outreach programs have been developed to meet the spiritual and social needs of former Adventists; incarcerated felons, alcoholics, drug addicts, homosexuals, the physically handicapped, military personnel, ministers of other denominations, Adventist students attending secular universities, retired persons, the unmarried and lonely, the poor, and every age, social class, and racial/ethnic minority.

Conspicuously absent in this list of groups in need of our corporate attention is the large and ever-growing number of Ministerial Dropouts and potential dropouts still in the ministerial ranks. It is conceivable that a vigorous and empathetic outreach program on behalf of these former ministers could conserve, retrain, reintegrate, and rehabilitate many more of them.

As Alfred C. McClure, recently retired President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has said: "People sometimes look at us and see trash. . . . Yet God looks at us and sees beauty. Jesus showed the same principle in His dealings with Peter. A tough fisherman, a boisterous chameleon, a person too easily swayed by the crowd, Peter was still a gem to Jesus. That which could have been discarded became a source of

Table 3. Demographic factors associated with persisting or dropping out of ministry

	Ministerial Persisters	Ministerial Dropouts	Ministerial Rejects
Average age at time of college graduation	29.0	30.3	31.2
Birth order			
First child	37%	10%	21%
Middle child	37%	56%	51%
Last child	26%	34%	21%
Only child	0%	0%	7%
Racial/Ethnic composition			
1987 original cohort			
White	71%		
Black	21%		
Hispanic	3%		
Oriental	5%		
1997 subgroupings			
White	78%	66%	65%
Black	11%	29%	30%
Hispanic	3%	0%	5%
Oriental (Korean, Thai, etc.)	8%	5%	0%
College grades (average GPA)	3.53	3.0	3.45
Political preference (an indicator of conservative/liberal orientation)*			
1987 original cohort			
Republican	43%		
Democrat	35%		
Other or none	22%		
1997 subgroupings			
Republican	52%	45%	31%
Democratic	31%	39%	38%
Other or none	17%	16%	31%
Secondary school			
1987 original cohort			
SDA Academy	36%		
Public high school	64%		
1997 subgroupings			
SDA academy	44%	23%	35%
Public high school	56%	77%	65%
SDA parents			
Both	51%	17%	45%
One	12%	44%	10%
None	37%	39%	45%
Parents' marital status			
Married and together	93%	40%	77%
Separated	0%	10%	10%
Divorced	7%	50%	13%

*Canadian subjects indicated political equivalents.

great leadership and strength to the church. . . . God sees value in you and me. He sees not what we are, but what we can become. . . . He sees the church leader locked inside Peter. He hears music in discarded people."⁶

example, a group born, married, or graduated in the same year).

² Charles C. Moskos and Frank R. Wood, *The Military: More Than Just a Job?* (Washington, D.C.: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1988), 191.

³ Harry Ballis, "Adventist X-Files: The Truth Is Out There" in *A Time for Healing* (based on "Leaving the Adventist Ministry: A Study of the Social Process of Exit," Ph.D. Thesis, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia, 1995), 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁵ Jack Bynum and Douglas Clark, "Project SDA Clergy: Part I," *Ministry*, April 1993, 18.

⁶ Alfred C. McClure, "When the Worthless Become Valuable," *Adventist Review*, October 1998, 6.

¹ A cohort, as commonly used in research, denotes any group sharing a common factor in chronological time (for

PASTORING LARGE DISTRICTS

An African Perspective

Pastoring a large, multiple-church district is a challenging job. The difficulties vary, depending on the nature of the district.



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For example, if the church is in an urban area, with a membership that includes highly educated professionals, the difficulties will be of one kind. If the district is a rural one, comprising many churches separated by long distances and if the pastor's transportation is inadequate (as in Asia or Africa), or if the membership is largely illiterate, there is another set of difficulties. One district may have prosperous and educated members, but be largely unwilling or unmotivated to take on church leadership duties. Another district may have willing people, but lack professional skills and financial resources. How does a pastor handle such churches, especially if the district is far-flung and unwieldy?

Here are some thoughts about this from my background as a pastor in Africa. Recently, for financial reasons, the pastoral workforce in our mission was downsized. Eight of our 21 district pastors were dropped. Whereas once we had

21 pastors, the same work now had to be covered by 13. Some pastors are now having to handle three districts with a total of more than 100 congregations.

I am presently pastoring 53 congregations. This is likely to double in two years' time because of the success rate of our outreach and evangelism ventures. The challenge is twofold: One, caring for the congregations so that our people remain faithful, growing in all the practical aspects of their love for the Lord they have found. Two, easing the work of the lay pastors so that they do not become victims of burnout and they have sufficient time to care for their families and tend to their professional and spiritual lives. The following suggestions may help in meeting these challenges:

Inreach and outreach

While evangelism must always remain the watchword of the church, the need for inreach should not be ne-

SAVIOUR CHIMFWEMBE

glected. We often bring in hundreds of souls each year, but soon they are nowhere to be found. They come in one way, and they go out another. Unless outreach is balanced by intentional inreach, our churches cannot be strong.

Inreach should include not only spiritual and doctrinal nurture, but also such matters as stewardship and especially lay leadership training so that the care of the church is properly maintained. It is neither necessary nor important that every church have a salaried pastor. Where members are trained and are willing to assume leadership, that church will be healthy in both evangelism and sustained growth.

Believing and living

Pastors need to take the time to study the many congregations within their district. What makes one strong and another weak? What contributes to the dynamism of one and the stagnation of the other? Are there unresolved conflicts with sister churches? How is the tithe inflow of each church? Which churches are not doing well and why? Do the churches in a district realize that believing a set of doctrines is not enough, and that a community of faith goes beyond mere doctrine and that it should embrace living out the faith in action so that others may see and follow? We must lead our congregations to discover the delicate balance between believing and living. A congregation that lives out its belief will find a way to work out its problems.

Vision and mission

A living church is a visioning church. It asks itself some significant questions. What is our mission within the frame-

work of our belief and faith? How does this mission affect interpersonal relationships within the church, leadership of the congregation, and relationships to other congregations in the district? How are we related to the mission of the conference or the local field? Where do we want our congregation to go during the next five or ten years—what do we want it to look like then? What is our responsibility to our children, teens, families, and seniors? How will we involve them in the life of the church? A church that has a vision and mission map cannot remain stagnant and troublesome. It will be so busy caring that it has no time for quarreling.

Planning and empowering

Out of a clear statement of vision and mission, both long-term and short-term planning strategies can be devised for a district. To help develop these strategies, a district planning committee may be organized. This committee should ideally include the key leaders of the church, representing the elders, deacons, deaconesses, departmental persons, thought leaders, and experts in various areas. The committee should be responsible to the church board. It should deal with specific time-bound issues of planning, training, and empowering. The committee should define the tasks, one by one, that the church family should be involved in. These tasks should cover the areas of nurture, outreach, stewardship, finance, building facilities, and human resources.

The committee can break down the large mission objectives into smaller tasks, assigning responsibilities, providing training (which may include bringing in specialists from elsewhere), drawing

up an accountability chart, setting dates for the completion of tasks, and empowering the people involved so that they may complete their work with joy and a sense of ownership. If the district is too vast and spread out, organize the district into zones (A, B, C, etc.), and have a planning committee for each zone.

Hindrances and opportunities

Church districts, large or small, have joys and concerns, opportunities and hindrances. The most significant hindrance is what may be called the Sanballat-Tobiah syndrome, illustrated by the life and times of Nehemiah. Every church manifests this syndrome. There are always some who feel constrained to play the role of Sanballat, presiding over the seat of criticism and pointing the accusing finger at those who are doing something in the church. The answer to them is the same as Nehemiah's: "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down" (Neh. 6:3, RSV).

In addition to human hindrances, financial constraints, logistics, time management, and group procedures may not be exactly what you desire in carrying out your mission. But when the challenges are great, so are the opportunities. A strong church district is being built that can be self-sustaining in human, financial, and spiritual resources. The process will ultimately bring satisfaction and fulfillment to the congregation. It is our privilege to emphasize the positive.

The church is the Lord's family. We are only stewards. If we choose to do His bidding in ministering and administering the district, our leadership will develop into much more than just a one-person affair. ■



FACING DEATH IN THE PARSONAGE

When my wife, Allie, died two years ago I was poorly prepared for the intense grieving that followed.



Steve Willsey, D. Min. is an associate pastor of the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Spencerville, Maryland.

As a pastor of 35 years, I had regularly supported members who had lost loved ones, and I had grieved when my own parents died several years ago. But losing my wife was far more horrible than anything I had ever experienced. Like many of my generation, I had not been taught how to deal with such severe emotional pain. After the first few weeks, I seemed to be managing quite well, but it was only the numbness of shock. A deep depression soon followed, and I knew that I was in trouble.

Allie was diagnosed with ovarian cancer two years before her death. After surgery she began regular chemotherapy. Through it all, she maintained her dignity and normal lifestyle. As a budget analyst for the Administrative Office of the Federal Courts, she had heavy responsibilities, including travel to courts across the country. Although her treatments did not slow down we were able to maintain our own normal family schedule, including vacation trips to Arizona and New England, where we loved to hike in the mountains.

By the end of the first year of treatment, the test used by her oncologist to determine the progress of the cancer in-

dicated that cancer cells were still building. Despite new chemotherapies, the results were meager. Her physician communicated little other than concern, though he never indicated that we should prepare for the worst. He was highly regarded in the medical community and kept current with the latest studies and treatments. We believed that he would find a successful treatment. Often, when we left his office, Allie would shed a few tears of disappointment, but the next day her normal positive attitude would return, and at times it seemed that the cancer was all but forgotten.

Our own research suggested that this cancer was difficult to cure, so as the disease continued to spread, we began praying earnestly for divine intervention. Until then, we had never really come to expect a miracle of healing. To be honest, too many experiences from my pastorate had left me with the impression that God rarely responds these days to the desperate cry for physical relief. Allie had reluctantly accepted my skepticism until she read a book loaned by a friend at work in which the author claimed that God can still be counted on to heal. I read the book as

STEVE WILLSEY

well, and became as convinced as Allie that God would honor our request. We simply would not accept that our lives could be interrupted by death. We came to firmly believe that if the treatment of the physician could not arrest the cancer, the Lord would.

The end

It was at Christmas, near the end of the second year after the original diagnosis, that Allie finally began to really suffer. At first we believed that her symptoms were from unusually strong doses of chemo that another new approach mandated. Feeling sick enough to stay home from work, Allie spent most of her day on the sofa in our living room. A couple of weeks later, she was unable to leave our bedroom, and there she remained until two days before her death.

As her condition deteriorated, I of course became apprehensive, but my faith and hers remained strong that the Lord would, after all, heal her. I believed that her present condition was only

temporary. Even when the physician suggested that it was time to call in hospice care, I was not ready to accept that we were nearing the end. During the two years of her illness, we had only casually discussed the possibility of her death; now she was too sick for any meaningful conversation.

When the hospice nurse came, I was still refusing to believe that my wife (who had rarely been sick throughout her life) could be dying. But this health professional was trained to assist families in denial and came straight to the point. "Your wife is only days from death," he said.

From that moment, I entered a foggy existence where I reacted to the needs of the moment, leaving until later the emotions that were gradually building in me. That night, Allie began struggling to breathe (a pulmonary embolism had developed). When we were unable to make contact with Hospice Care, her physician sent her to the hospital.

Thirty-six hours later, she was dead.

The beginning

With my children by my side, I called family and friends, planned the funeral, received guests, and made it through the week. The service was on Wednesday evening and the following weekend I was at the church performing my regular activities. On Monday I was in the church office ready to get on with my ministry. Friends urged me to take a few days off, perhaps go somewhere, at least slow my pace, but I felt no need of changing the pattern I had followed for so many years.

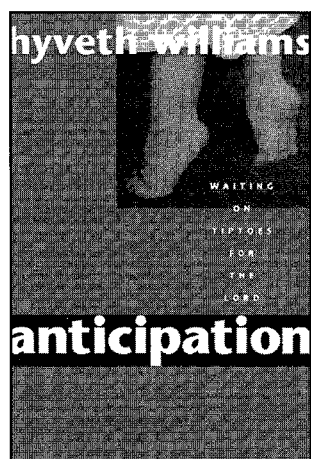
That is, until a few weeks later, when depression began to reach the point where it could no longer be ignored, denied, or sublimated.

I had been visiting the cemetery frequently and crying at the grave. Sometimes I wished I could be occupying the space beside my wife. Standing there, I realized that I really had no desire to live anymore. I began to recognize that I could be in serious trouble.

At that time, I began seeing a coun-

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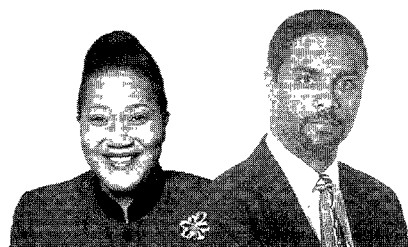
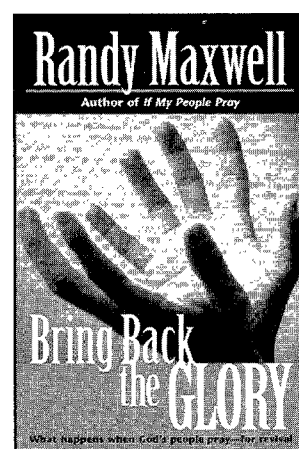
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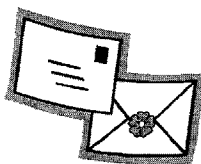


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selor who helped me understand my reactions and guided me through the unfamiliar pain. When an invitation came in the mail to participate in a study of grieving among "older persons" (I was 59) at the National Institute of Health, I volunteered. There I met regularly with counselors, social workers, psychiatrists, and other professionals and was nurtured through the most difficult experience of my life.

I was placed on an antidepressant that gave me the extra boost I needed. Though I was contributing to a store of mental health knowledge, I came to de-

pend on my visits to the counselor assigned to my case, so that I received as much or more than I was giving.

My life today

Yesterday was the second anniversary of Allie's death. I still cannot believe how much pain the loss has created, and I now know that I will never have what is so easily called "closure." I have become reconciled to Allie's death and am learning to cope, but the pain does not go away. Of course, I have hope, and the promise that I will see her again gives me strength for each new day, but I miss

her now. I have learned the meaning of sadness. I have also learned how to weep and not be ashamed of it. I know much more about the value of life and relationships. I have far greater compassion for my members who are grieving; in fact, I have begun a grief recovery group for our members and anyone in the community who would like to join.

Our need as a church

We had never entertained the idea that death could invade our family as it had. When it did, I asked, "Why would the Lord allow this to happen to me?" Now I understand that death is a natural part of the human cycle on this earth.

I wish deeply I had been better prepared. I have shared my experience with our congregation. My hope is that they have learned from me and my experience. I am happy to share with them, too, the blessed hope of a coming Lord that continues to buoy up my spirit.

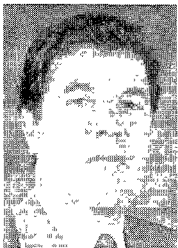
Yet, one lesson that I have learned from this trauma is that, as a church family, we need to do more to train both pastors and laity in how to help prepare people for death, which sooner or later strikes every home. Death is something we can be sure will come. How negligent can we be as churches and denominations if we don't do more to help our people cope with one of the most painful costs of sin?

Allie's death showed me how unprepared I, a spiritual leader and counselor, had been. What about others? I wish profoundly that my church could have had some sort of program, something, anything, that could have helped me better deal with what happened. How I wish there would be something more that we could have that could help me aid the inevitable others that death will cast before my path.

We must take some responsibility in preparing our church families for the loss of loved ones. At the time of a death, there should be many opportunities to effectively minister to those left behind. Our congregations need to be involved in learning how to help one another. This is uniquely, I believe, our special work as the community of the Life-Giver. ■

THE RATIONALISM OF LIBERALS AND CONSERVATIVES

However radically different their conclusions, the extreme “left” and the extreme “right” within the church show a surprising similarity: In their approach to the Bible, both depend heavily on an unwarranted rationalism that ultimately leads to a distortion of Scripture.



Enrique Espinosa, Ph.D., is director of the theology department at River Plate University in Argentina, South America.

The 18th century, the era of the Enlightenment (or *Aufklärung*), created a radical shift in Western thought. There was a tendency to break with all the authoritarian or absolutist systems. Religious traditions and faith were especially weakened in this flux, giving way to the authority of reason.

The criteria of scientific and historical research, not ancient texts, ultimately became the decisive arbiters of truth. The church especially, and religion in general, lost their standing as essential to the search for truth. As these changes took root, the supernatural was no longer deemed real, while “contradictions” in the Bible were seen as proof of its non-divine origin. God and the Bible were rejected or, at best, relegated to the background of human interest.

Earlier, during the 17th century, the Jewish philosopher Benedict Spinoza

had already used a strict deductive rationalism to construct a system of what might be considered higher criticism. Spinoza limited truth to what is self-evident or mathematically knowable, which is why he had difficulty with the “contradictions” in Scripture. For instance, Samuel denies that God ever repents (1 Sam. 15:29), while Jeremiah states that God does repent (Jer. 18:8-10). Because these two texts are “directly contradictory,” Spinoza believed that one cannot affirm that the Bible is the Word of God. Rather, he said, “the Bible merely *contains* the Word of God.”¹ Later, this notion would become basic to the classical liberal formula.

The liberal school and Neo-orthodoxy

As an answer to the rationalistic, naturalistic, and even atheistic views that began to dominate, some Protes-

tants of the 19th-century attempted to meet such forces on their own ground and began to look at the Bible through similar eyes. This may be seen as the beginning of the more liberal schools of thought.

Frederick Schleiermacher has been considered the father of this theological current. Protestant liberalism did not attempt to oppose rationalism; rather, it directed the attention from the “errors” in the Bible and from the “unbelievable narratives” to the broader field of biblical ethics. If the miracles sounded too incredible for the modern mind to accept, liberalism stressed the religious experience that could be nourished by the depiction of these miracles. In other words, what was seen to be important wasn’t the miracle itself (which might not even have happened) but the spiritual lesson one can draw from it.

Liberals, for instance, were not willing to accept the factual veracity of the stories of the Flood, of the Creation in seven days, of the supernatural conception of Jesus, of the bodily resurrection of Christ, and so on. They preferred, instead, to stress the moral or spiritual values taught through these “myths,” while they viewed the “errors” and contradictions as proof that the Bible is as human as every other book, even if its spiritual or moral value remained helpful.

The liberal approach denies both the historicity of biblical miracles and the factual reality of many of its narratives, particularly those related to our origins (Gen. 1–11). In brief, the rationalism that stands behind the liberal approach has caused this movement to reject the supernatural nature of the Bible as it is depicted in Scripture. Thus, it separates what is to be believed from what is not to be believed, with rationalism or human reason being the sole arbiter in deciding these distinctions.

In the 20th century another theological trend was born within Protestantism, the so-called Neo-orthodox Movement. These theologians (mainly Karl Barth and Emil Brunner) returned to the Bible as the main witness to God’s revelation, even if they could not dispose of the liberal’s rationalistic presupposi-

tions. Thus, they too found it difficult to accept all the supernatural interventions of God claimed by the biblical authors. Neo-orthodoxy is also characterized by its denial or rejection of some supernatural biblical features. In neo-orthodoxy, the Bible is not God’s revelation but a witness of that revelation instead.

Fundamentalism

Simultaneously, during the 20th century another trend flourished within Protestantism. This school has fought against both neo-orthodoxy and liberalism (to them, neo-orthodoxy is merely a

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softened version of liberalism). This trend has been called fundamentalism because it attempts to defend the *fundamental* beliefs of Christianity as presented in the Bible. Fundamentalists are also known as “conservatives” (of the “extreme right”) because they are interested in the conservation of the faith traditionally taught by the church. Obviously, the fundamentalist defends the historicity of the biblical narratives and believes in the miracles and other supernatural features of the Bible. However, they share with their theological adver-

saries a common element: Their submission to rationalistic presuppositions. Unconscious as this tendency may be, fundamentalists have not been able to escape the influence of rationalism. Their rationalistic presuppositions cause them, and all adherents on the “extreme right,” to deny certain traits or features of the Bible that originate with the humanity of the Bible writers themselves.

While the liberal cannot accept as true that Christ multiplied the loaves and fishes, for example, the extreme conservative cannot accept that God tolerated divorce or slavery or that some inspired biblical writers may have made some rather serious mistakes.

The syllogistic way of reasoning on the “extreme right” is as follows: “God cannot make mistakes. The Bible is the Word of God. Therefore, the Bible contains no mistakes.” Obviously, they forget that the Bible presents a human element as well as a divine one. Furthermore, these Christians cannot accept the possibility that the human traits and the individual characteristics of the inspired writers appear in the Bible.

In order to accept the Bible, these conservatives demand the infallibility of the human instrument. It is almost as though they say: “We are going to believe the message of the Bible only if it can be proved to our reason that the messengers who brought forth the truth of Scripture are infallible and inerrant.” This is insisted upon even when the Bible gives many evidences that God’s messengers were, in fact, neither infallible nor inerrant. Sometimes God had to correct their mistakes; in other instances, the mistake remained, even when the basic message itself was not lost.

An Old Testament example of this kind of mistake in a prophet is found in 2 Samuel 7:1–13. The counsel of Nathan to David was to build a house for the Lord. The prophet had evidence that the Lord was on the side of the king (7:1, 3). Nevertheless, the will of God was that David’s son, Solomon, was to build the temple. In this case, God corrected the error of reasoning and the mistaken counsel of the prophet. From this we can infer that if it is important for the mis-

take of a prophet to be corrected, God will step forward to correct it.

A New Testament example of a mistake on the part of the apostles is found in Luke 24:1-11. When the women announced that the Lord's promise of His own resurrection had been fulfilled, the apostles did not believe in the women's proclamation and stated that these women were mad. Imagine what would have happened if this statement by the apostles had remained without correction? But the Lord rectified the situation; He promptly appeared to two disciples on the road to Emmaus and then to the others who were in the room (Luke 24:13-48) in order to give clear witness that He had indeed resurrected.

Avoiding the extremes

It has been said with thoughtful definitude that "the Bible, with its God-given truths expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human."² "The Bible must be

given in the language of men. Everything that is human is imperfect."³ The same author says that skeptics and infidels "talk of the contradictions of the Bible, and question the authority of the Scriptures."⁴ Putting both these statements together would suggest that both extremes, that of the "left" and that of the "right," cannot be properly held on biblical grounds.

The most sound position to take is proposed in yet another quote from the same author: "take the Bible just as it is, as the Inspired Word. . . I believe its utterances: in an entire Bible."⁵

We may indeed be confident in God's leading, and also in God's way of giving us His Word. We can trust the human instruments used by God to give us His instructions, not because of the characteristics of the human instruments themselves, but because of the One who has selected them and continues to use them.

In all of this we must allow God to

be God. This means that we should allow Him to act according to His will and not according to our rationalistic presuppositions. God's human instruments, although finite and fallible, were endowed by the Holy Spirit to give us His Word. In spite of the inaccuracies (very few indeed are of any doctrinal consequence) and human mistakes, there is an "underlying harmony"⁶ in the Scripture that will speak to each of us if, relying on the Holy Spirit, we avoid the extreme rationalism that comes from either the "left" or the "right." ■

¹ Benedict Spinoza, *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes, vol. 1, *Introduction, Tractatus Theologico-politicus, Tractatus politicus* (London: George Bell, 1883), 194, 165.

² Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 1:25.

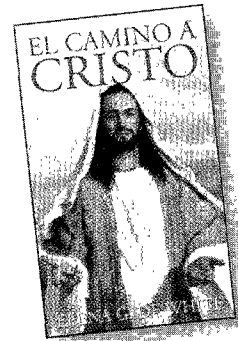
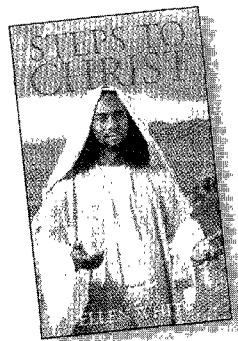
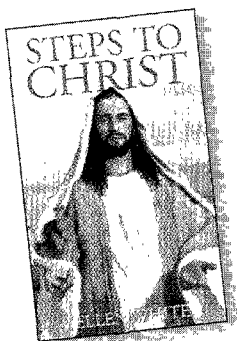
³ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19, 20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 25.

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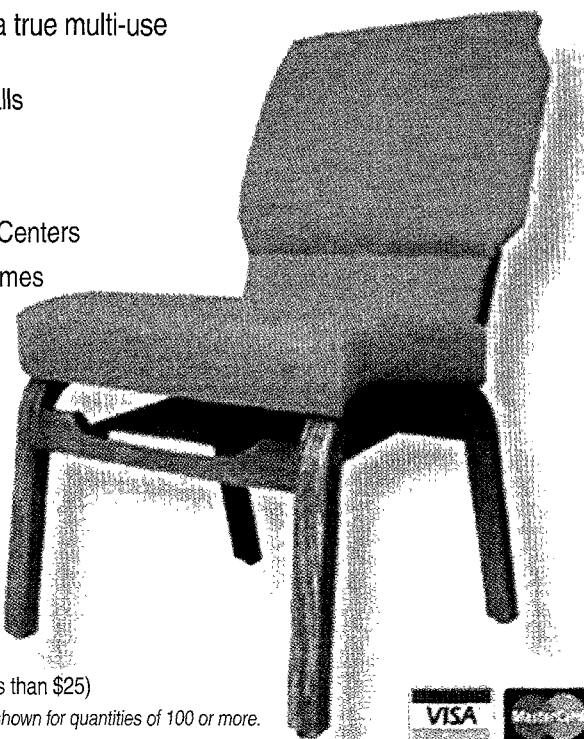
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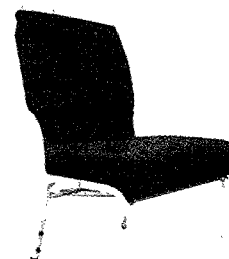
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We may have a dance at our Adventist school! We have voted in our faculty meeting to send a proposal to

our school board to allow our students to plan a supervised dance.

Perhaps this will shock many who have been brought up to believe that dance is wrong. Many of us have been told for years that the Old Testament dancing was only “unto the Lord” and/or cultural. Or that we are living in a “different” time and there is the constant challenge to keep up and keep balance.

Before throwing down this article, try to imagine the incredible responsibility of being a faculty member of a school supported by fifteen constituent churches all with varying opinions, an institution made up of teenagers with equally strong viewpoints, not to mention the parents who pay good money for Christian education. If you have been in some position of leadership within the Church you can relate to this kind of dilemma.

It is so easy and so human to jump into criticizing the decision of a neighboring school or church. As human beings we are constantly changing, desirous of progress, yet we are all creatures of habit and tradition. It is astoundingly difficult to try and make sensible decisions, while at the same time endeavoring to genuinely respect the sincere beliefs of the constituency and stand for principle and truth.

As an academy teacher I often have the privilege of being, as they call it, “invited” to serve on various auxiliary committees. Accordingly, a few months ago I received an invitation to be part of what was called a dress code committee. I quickly realized that the “school dress code” was a kind of euphemism. The real

What matters most?

YVETTE J. NORCOTT

agenda, the greater part of the concern and discussion centered around the locally hot issue of wearing or not wearing jewelry.

To my surprise, I found this particular group to be quite stimulating. There we sat around a square made up of four tables each the size of those used for the typical fellowship dinner. We were made up of an equally divided group of pastors, teachers, parents, and students, evidently chosen to represent varying interests and opinions. I highly recommend a similar experience to anyone who feels passionately on any controversial issue in the Church. There is nothing like sitting amidst a group of sincere Christian people with strong, yet differing, opinions.

There were people on the committee who were honestly concerned, based on the recent Value Genesis survey. These people had in fact spoken with a few of our students. They were troubled that young people are leaving the Church because church entities are enforcing such “dead rules” as “no nonfunctional jewelry.” Though you may not have agreed with their view, you would not have been able, I think, to doubt their sincerity. At the same time, of course, there were other equally sincere committee members who wholeheartedly felt convicted that wearing jewelry is simply wrong and that we are doing our students a serious disservice by allowing them such attire. I believe that if you had been there you would have been convicted that these people were just as sincere in their views and motives.

A changing church

Again, whether we like it or not our world, and thus to some extent our Church, is changing before our eyes. Although change is frightening we must find just and helpful ways of relating to it. Because of the change, we feel the need to “progress,” and that without being unnecessarily dictated to by the rules of our ancestors and the approaches that were suitable to their societies. On the other hand, by quickly deciding that the rules are the problem, and adjusting them, are we not in essence doing the very same thing—making the rules themselves the issue? Whether we are for particular rules or against them, when the rules themselves are made the central issue, we tend to become rigid, inflexible, and adamant, regardless of which rules we happen to favor.

We need to get at the heart of the matter. Do we actually believe that if we give the students all their demands right now, in the next Value Genesis study there will be fewer young people leaving the Church and there will be more satisfied members in our churches? I, for one do not believe that. We will never have consensus on everything. It is the characteristic of the adolescent to question boundaries.

We the liberals. And, we the conservatives. I wish we could simply throw out those terms, and say, we the people. The people, that is, of God.

What is the Church anyway? The Church is the people. And who is the Leader? Obviously it is Christ. He is our “Head.” Until we reach heaven, it is essential that we remember that it is God who judges the heart. He judges the heart of the sincere Christian who is worried that we have frustrating rules that don’t make any sense to young people today; He judges the heart of the sincere Christian who is not willing to compromise in favor of comfort or popularity. With that in mind, until He comes again, we’ve got to remember that and thus respect the

beliefs of other people. We do not want to teach our students to be special interest, "cause" people, who band together with like-minded students and parents and force their issues. The more of this we do the worse things are going to become in the Church.

If jewelry and such issues are really dead issues, as so many claim them to be, then why worry? If we are raising a group of young people to respect God first, and the hearts of others next, and such issues remain "dead" issues to them, won't relevant change come to pass naturally? Why must we become all but obsessed with demanding our way if indeed such things don't matter? Change takes place through discussion, through the sharing of ideas, and it takes time, especially if we are to do it together.

What matters most

Oh, but they do matter, many say. Fair enough. But what matters more is that we actually love our Father in heaven, that He is the Father of all of us, that we have respect for each other because we are all children of God. If we are honest, warm, communicative, and open to one another, and if we at the same time teach teenagers to go about things with patience, that there is a right way of settling differences, that it is better to wait rather than offend hearts, then and only then will the next generation remain in the Church. Then and only then can we remain together as a Church.

I was raised not to wear jewelry, and it has not been detrimental to me to be without earrings for almost thirty years of life. When I was a teenager, to wear certain forms of jewelry would have suggested rebellion on my part. Symbols do matter and nothing should be so important to us that we come to the point of indignantly saying "I don't care what people think. . ." After all, the world is essentially made up of people, just people. At my first teaching job I would not have worn earrings because

as a teacher there I would have offended too many people. It is one thing to speak openly of one's feelings, saying that some rule is "ridiculous," it is quite another to let it stand in the way of one's ministry.

I recently heard of a pastor who would not accept a call to a certain church because some of the leaders there would not let him wear his wedding band. Perhaps it is good that he chose to go to another church, but if one feels called to a certain place, taking off a ring should be a small enough thing to do.

W *hether we
are for particular rules or
against them, when the rules
themselves are made the
central issue, we tend to
become rigid, inflexible, and
adamant, regardless of which
rules we happen to favor.*

If such studies as Value Genesis say anything it is that our focus on rules has caused us to lose sight of our goal—and here I am again speaking of a focus on rules, whether we happen to be for a certain rule, or against it. No matter how right we are, Jesus taught us that the rules themselves are never the path to salvation. We know that our interpersonal struggles over them are not the way to peace. "I am the way, I am the truth, and the light," Jesus said.

Perhaps rather than merely updating the rules, we should reevaluate the methods, the means and especially the principles. Maybe we should also be listening more to our teenagers, really listening. Perhaps we could be honest and not simply invent ways to justify what we ourselves do not in all honesty agree with in our hearts and souls. Perhaps we should simply admit that some things are traditions and openly explain their backgrounds and the reasons for their existence among us. Maybe we should learn to be more communicative and share openly when we also recognize inconsistencies. But along with all of this, one thing is certain, we need to communicate more warmth to our young people. Most of all, we should teach them that values are what matter, and that people are more important than things, for all of us have been created by God.

It is hard not to judge by what is tangible. It is natural to make assumptions. Let's be slow to judge the decisions made by leaders in different areas. Judging them insinuates that one has all the answers. We must continue to create an environment where people are comfortable to express themselves without feeling shut out. And in each of our individual areas, we can progress, while we are slow to make certain changes when they come to matters close to the hearts of others as sincere as ourselves. So what if we don't allow jewelry at our academy for ten years? We will survive, and as one Church, so long as we remember to respect the hearts of others. Then, together, we can look forward to an eternity in heaven where there will be no invitations to committees with difficult decisions to be made! ■

Yvette J. Norcott is the English teacher for grades 9-12 at Orangewood Seventh-day Adventist Academy, Garden Grove, California.



Perhaps no evangelist in history has preached to more people in more countries than Billy Graham, who, during

more than a half century of public ministry, has avoided even a hint of scandal or impropriety.

When nearly eleven thousand itinerant evangelists recently gathered for *Amsterdam 2000*, a great evangelism council sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, the attendees learned of a 55-year-old plan for maintaining high standards in public evangelism.

Billy Graham's long-time associate and song leader, Cliff Barrows, described the *Modesto Manifesto* which grew out of a council that the embryonic evangelistic association held in order to establish and maintain their credibility. Dr. Graham and his colleagues gathered to discuss why public evangelists were so often criticized. They focused on four major issues that every public preacher should emphasize.

Financial integrity. Never should a hint of impropriety surround the way in which finances are collected, reported, accounted for, or dispersed. Simony, or ministering for money, has no place in Christian evangelism.

Wise evangelists will make certain that others count and verify the income and that appropriate policies and procedures are followed for expenses including securing appropriate receipts and reporting audited statements in order to assure donors that their contributions have been properly handled.

Moral purity. The highest standards of conduct should accom-

Restoring evangelistic credibility

JAMES A. CRESS

pany the ministry of any pastor, but especially the ministry of itinerant preachers.

When an evangelist ministers away from home and family, temptations multiply and opportunities for unethical and inappropriate behavior abound. In his personal autobiography,

E*very*

minister is Satan's special target and it is our responsibility to avoid even the appearance of evil in both our public ministry as well as our private conduct.

Just As I Am, Graham describes how the tabloids would love to discredit the ministry and influence of any public personality. For that reason, he has carefully avoided being alone with any woman other than his own spouse. He describes how he never even enters a hotel room before someone from his team has checked that no one lurks inside to discredit his reputation.

Every minister is Satan's special target and it is our responsibility to avoid even the appearance of evil in both our public ministry as well as our private conduct. Counseling sessions should never occur behind locked doors. An open-to-view window safeguards the pastor's reputation.

Cooperation with local churches. Every itinerant evangelist must remember that the harvest is only conserved to the extent that the local church assimilates and discipless new converts. Evangelism and follow-up must be inseparable. In fact, Peter Wagner, asserts that any evangelistic scheme which separates follow-up from proclamation has already built its own defeat into the system.

It is spiritual child abuse to invite people to make a spiritual decision for Christ and then abandon the newborn believers without providing appropriate nurture, encouragement, training, and inclusion. We are held accountable by heaven not just for the numbers that are baptized, but for the disciples who are built as fruit from our labor.

If an itinerant preacher ignores the local church or bypasses established believers, apostasy of newly-won souls will be that evangelist's legacy. If a preacher builds himself up rather than strengthening the local church leaders, then we should not be surprised when new converts are unwelcomed and unnurtured by the church members who were given no significant role in their accession into the church.

Honesty in publicity. Credible evangelists will not promise more than can be delivered. They will not employ sensational advertising or unsavory publicity stunts to attract an audience.

Some things that are done in the name of publicity are a disgrace to the gospel. These things tend to attract sensation seekers who are most

resistant to becoming responsible disciples, if they even stick around long enough to make a decision for Christ or the church.

If you are tempted to attract people by resorting to speculative and sensational topics or by employing inappropriate artistic portrayals, remember that Jesus calls His ministers to simply "Lift Him up." Of course we need attractive advertising to attract the masses to hear the sermon, but the methods we use to get the crowd must not be incongruent with the message which we proclaim.

Likewise, honesty in evangelism demands that the only reward offered for conversion is the free gift of eternal life. Potential converts never should be led to believe that employment, education, enhanced social standing, or financial gain will result from their baptism.

A simple gospel presentation made by a minister who demonstrates the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in his or her own life will make a far deeper impact than any resort to personality, programs, publicity, or promises.

As our own General Conference President, Jan Paulsen, convenes a denomination-wide Commission on Evangelism and Witness, I believe we can restore and enhance the credibility of evangelism and evangelists as we adhere to these principles. ■

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"What's a theologian after all?"

continued from p. 4

and where it seems his view of Ellen White as a nonexegete or nontheologian, seems to lead him. Taking what seems to me like a rather extreme position, has caused him to discount the essential theological thrust of what a thoughtful, leading, divinely placed person has said about

an issue in which she has been deeply involved. My friend has thus come to discount and essentially ignore crucial theological insights about important subjects. This has, I think, impoverished his own life and theology and potentially that of the Church.

Mrs. White was a person to whom the community of faith has consistently looked for thoughtful, biblical, and most certainly theological reflection on many issues. While I hope I would be

among the first to disallow Mrs. White's writings any ultimately definitive or formative doctrinal role in the overall scheme of things (this role, by her own declaration is reserved for the Bible and the Bible alone) I hope I would be among the last to reduce, discount, or demean the massively valuable gift that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been given when it comes to the theological work of Ellen G. White. ■

S H O P T A L K

Timing a project

It's tough to concentrate when you're working on a sermon or some other project; it's even tougher when you've an appointment coming up. Keep checking the clock, and you'll lose your focus. Stop checking the clock, and you risk getting so caught up in your work that you end up missing your appointment!

That was my experience, anyway, until I bought a digital timer—the same kind that cooks use to keep track of how long cakes and pies have been in the oven. Unlike its wind-up cousins, a digital timer is quiet. It's accurate. And it's cheap (I found mine for less than U.S.\$10.00 in the kitchen gadget section of a local discount store).

So now whenever I start a project, I begin by setting the timer. While it's counting the time to my next appointment, I'm free to concentrate. When it rings, I'm off.

I hope someone finds this as helpful as I have!—Greg Brothers, Lincoln City, Oregon.

Outreach for mothers and children

Instead of having a Holiday [Vacation] Bible School this summer, we tried something different and were surprised at the response!

We ran a Parent-and-Toddler group for a week, inviting parents also to bring their older children up to the age of 10. We had the usual toys and play equipment for the younger children and had four different craft tables for the older ones. At the end of the one-hour session, we sang nursery and Bible songs and then shared a Bible story. This was told in a different way each day so as to involve the children. We had enough helpers so that we could make friends with the parents as well as the children that week.

The parents and children loved it. In fact, each day our group increased with the parents inviting their friends.

We ended the week with parents asking us whether we were planning to continue the program after the summer, as they would be interested in coming.

This is an ideal program to run if you struggle with manpower in your church. It also gives you a chance to befriend parents and children at the same time, and it meets a need as Parent-and-toddler groups tend to close down in the summer. Try it for yourself and see if it works for you.

—Mary Barrett, Peterborough, Cambridgeshire, England.

Sabbath Roots—The African Connection, a unique interfaith conference exploring our common African roots, is scheduled for November 8-9, 2000, at the Davidson Center, University of Southern California in Los Angeles. This dynamic study event will consider how the human family relates to God, to each other, and to the concept of Sabbath rest.

Charles E. Bradford, author of *Sabbath Roots: The African Connection* and former president of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America, will be featured.

Register now! \$75 until Oct. 1; \$100 after that. Call 1-800-732-7587; online, <plusline.org> Visa/MasterCard accepted. Or write to: Hands Up CA! 1535 East Chevy Chase Drive, Glendale, California 91209.

B O O K R E V I E W S

Transforming Prayer by Richard O'Ffill. Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1999. ISBN 0-8280-1397-7. Paperback, 134 pages. ^{US}\$11.99.

We all know the ABC's of prayer: pray every day, acknowledge blessings, admit wrong doings, remember others, ask in Jesus' name. But Richard O'Ffill is here to tell you that prayer is *more* than doing, saying, and even believing. The primary purpose of prayer, says

O'Ffill, "is not to *get* but rather to *be*"—to be more like Jesus every day, to be "imitators of God" (Eph. 5:1), "to discover the will of God and to receive the grace to obey it."

True to its title, this book shows how prayer can *transform* your life in dynamic ways. Each chapter deals with issues of life and relationships that can be solved through a Bible-based prayer life. Using personal experiences, the Scriptures, and the Spirit of Prophecy, this book gets straight to the issues, compelling the reader to do something.

It would be surprising if such a change-inspiring book left your soul untouched. However, in the event that that happens, what you will find at the end of every chapter is sure to move your heart. Each chapter concludes with three applications: (1) "a reality check" that consists of provoking questions to help you examine your personal prayer life; (2) tasks to "fine-tune your prayer-life" that suggest specific ways to strengthen your prayer life; and (3) "a prayer" that zeros in on the crux of the issue.

Pastors will find the book helpful not only in their personal life, but also in leading the congregation to a better understanding of the dynamics of prayer.—Fylvia Kline, assistant director, General Conference Stewardship Department.

A Plain Man's Guide to Daniel and the Revelation by

Ernest W. Marter. Grantham, Lincolnshire, England: The Stanborough Press, 1997. In the United States, call any Adventist Book Center, 800-765-6955) to order this book, or order worldwide via the Internet at adventistbookcenter.com.

In simple language Ernest Marter presents a guide to understand and to link the books of Daniel and Revelation within the overall history of the great controversy. The book takes the reader through the major prophecies of Daniel and Revelation, dealing with

peoples and kingdoms and eventually leading to an understanding of the central and overarching figure of history: Jesus Christ, the Redeemer, Intercessor, Judge, and King.

The great controversy and the pressure of human kingdoms against Jesus Christ and His followers as presented by Daniel is followed by a careful study of chapters 12-14 of Revelation. The study methodically leads the reader to the final triumph of the King of kings, and the destruction of sin and death through the capture and destruction of the beast, the false prophet and the dragon.

The author focuses on the sanctuary whose ministry gives assurance of salvation to worshipers. This focus contrasts with the declared destiny of the worshipers of the beast and his image.

The book captures the central theme of Daniel and Revelation without inundating the reader with a mass of historical data. The book that lends itself as a tool for the average



person who wants to know what awaits in the progression of the great controversy as it moves on toward its culmination. Both pastors and lay persons will

find the book helpful in their study and work.—*Enrique Becerra, associate director, General Conference Education Department.*

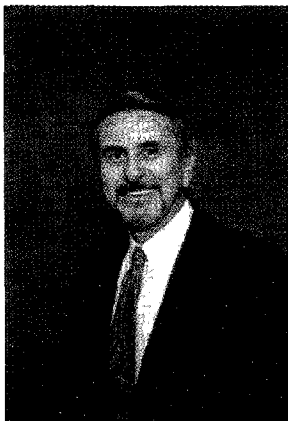
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Attention Preachers!

The Annual H.M.S. Richards Lectureship on Biblical Preaching will be held at Andrews University on Sunday, Oct. 29 and Monday, Oct. 30, 2000!

Featured Speaker: Dr. Frank Ottati



Frank Ottati comes to us with a rich background of pastoral, administrative, and evangelistic experience. He was president of the Adventist University in Costa Rica and has served as ministerial director in the Central American and Columbia Unions. Ottati's "first love" is evangelism as evidenced by the many crusades he has held in South-, Inter-, and North America, resulting in over 3,000 baptisms. He is a popular camp meeting and revival speaker and is in demand as a presenter on the topic of making preaching more effective — the subject of his D.Min. research. Currently Dr. Ottati is pastor of the West Houston SDA Church where his love and enthusiasm for the Lord is contagious.

SCHEDULE & TOPICS

Sunday, Oct. 29, 2000

1:00 P.M. Lecture #1

"Seven Steps for Effective Communication"

4:30 P.M. Lecture #2

"How to Make Your Preaching Practical"

Monday, Oct. 30, 2000

10:30 A.M. Worship & Preaching Service

"The Keys of the Kingdom"

3:30 P.M. Lecture #3

"How to Preach for People to Remember"

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