

MINISTRY

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Ministry Magazine



Thinking Outside The Box

ENGAGING THE POSTMODERN SOUL

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THANKS TO SAMIR SELMANOVIC FOR REMINDING US THAT GOD DOES NOT CALL US TO SEPARATE OURSELVES FROM SOCIETY.

What matters more?

As a minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, I found the article "What Matters More: Container or Content?" (May 2002) very beneficial to me personally, as I understood the author's target to be ministers. Hence, I hope the author does not mind the suggestion that the principles he expounded could also be applied to the Adventist Church corporately.

Because the container (the church, the institution, the organization) is manmade, it will always be susceptible to self-promotion. It is one of the reasons why we go into defensive overdrive worldwide when unacceptable behavior in the lives of some of our members surface. Despite his physical deficiencies, Paul knew that by the grace of God, the gospel of Jesus Christ he preached was sufficient to make him, a weak container, nevertheless a worthwhile vessel. It is my personal wish that we cease talking about our church as *the truth*, and preach Jesus Christ as Lord, the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

—Eddie Erika, Wellington, New Zealand.

Loving the city

Thanks to Samir Selmanovic for reminding us that God does not call us to separate ourselves from society ("Loving the City," July 2002). But if we are to live as part of our society without the danger of losing our faith in God, we must be sure of what we believe. This will not happen by merely accepting what our church has taught us. We must become thinkers, not simply

reflectors of other people's thoughts. We must be open-minded and have the courage to examine viewpoints that differ from our own. We must be willing to accept the possibility of "new light." We need the creativity to see new methods of applying the gospel to the world in which we live. We must live in the present—not the past. Only through such integrity will we be prepared to be *in the world while not of the world*.

—Carrol Grady, Snohomish, Washington.

September 2002

I was refreshed and comforted as I read "Organizational Misconduct" (James A. Cress, September 2002). Not so long ago, the General Conference president visited Jamaica, and I had the privilege of speaking to him about some of my concerns. I was born and raised an Adventist, and am married to a minister-administrator. All that is to allay your fears that I am a critic on my way out of the church!

As I read your article, I felt that my concerns were transferred to your heart. I realized that the lame attempt of our administrators to handle the epidemic has led to widespread disregard and in some cases mere tolerance of [misconduct among] our ministry. The sad thing is that this disregard is heading and in some cases has reached to the level of the administrators themselves. One option that seems to be gaining in popularity is to transfer the offender from the local church to the conference office. This only serves to widen the scope of influence of the erring pastor and by extension the level of disregard.

I have wondered if one reason for the route taken by our leaders is limited options of discipline.

Recently I held a seminar on "Infidelity in the Parsonage" for our Shepherdesses [ministers' wives] in my conference (I am presently the president of our Shepherdess body). One discussion point was the fear of who will be next to fall. Many are overly concerned about what they can do to keep their husbands from straying. But this may not be the answer. It does help to do your best, but this state of panic can lead to compromises not healthy for a godly relationship. Wives have to learn that they are not the reason (in most cases) why husbands sin; it is a manifestation of low spirituality, and the offenders must be responsible enough to acknowledge this fact.

Another signal this sends is the urgent need for the role of the division ministerial secretary to be taken seriously at the local conference levels. This individual must be able to recognize and represent the needs of the local pastor and to provide (not necessarily himself) counseling services for needy pastors and their families. For too long this office has just been filled.

Your article has been brought to the attention of many pastors and administrators, and I continue doing so. Keep setting the excellent example of a sterling, spiritual, and hard-working Ministerial Secretary.

—Patrice E. Williams-Gordon, Mandeville, Jamaica, West Indies.

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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.

Modern and postmodern

Modernism" and "postmodernism" are notoriously difficult to define, so here's a long-standing "parable" that helps to express some of what they embody:

The late spring morning breaks pristine at the door of a lone cottage set in a fertile valley. Out of the ancient front door comes an energetic young man of traditional Greek heritage. To his right he observes a magnificent red rose, in perfect bloom. Its petals sparkle with cool droplets of crystalline dew. It is magnificent. The young man takes the rose, and pulls it toward him, hardly noticing as the droplets fly. He thinks, "I wonder what makes it that shade of red, and what causes roses to be shaped the way they are." He smells it and remarks out loud, "Lovely, but what is it exactly that causes the distinctive odor of such a rose?" To find answers to his questions he begins pulling at the petals, fascinated by their texture and by what is revealed behind them. Soon all that's left is the denuded stem on which the rose once was, and red petals strewn on the cottage steps . . . and more questions than ever in the young man's mind.

Somewhere in time, from the same door and into the same kind of morning steps a bearded patriarch of traditional Hebrew culture. As the sun swaddles him in its warmth, he worships. He looks down into the upturned face of the rose. In the presence of such flawless loveliness, his breath catches in his throat as his soul rises. He smiles and then weeps in awe as he bends to smell the delicate scent. His nose hardly dares to disturb the dew or to brush against a thing of such majesty. When he leaves, the rose seems more ravishing than ever.

The parable illustrates some of the elements present in the modernist world view (the stereotypical "Greek" orientation) versus the postmodernist outlook (stereotypically, the more "Hebrew" ori-

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entation). Each orientation has highly legitimate elements to bring to the table of life.

Modernism may be described as a way of viewing reality with analytical precision. During the past 150 years or so, it has developed into the primary way of deciphering the world. It is basic to our methods of research and the progress of technology. It encourages dispassion and exactness.

Perhaps modernism's most serious flaw is its inclination to lead one human being to view another in terms of matter. It is seen as an effective tool for understanding physical phenomena, and therefore by default many believe it to be just as effective in plumbing the secrets of emotional and spiritual reality. Used indiscriminately in these realms, it can impair human relationships while fanning into flame the age-old fires of loneliness and meaninglessness.

Modernism champions verifiable knowledge and eschews anything inconclusive. It is prone to embrace only the measurable and containable. It likes to confine its interpretations of the world to fully explainable terms. It fits snugly in the world of business and finance and therefore becomes a natural sponsor, subtle or not, of what we call "materialism."

But while modernism has these flaws, it has done great good. Where would we be, for example, without the

application of the modernist mind-set to medical science? Many technological innovations are, of course, useful to humanity. To reject or disparage precision, experimentation, and the exactness so crucial to any kind of research, would be foolish.

When applied to matters of faith, modernism has also been helpful. For example, where would Christianity be without the painstakingly developed heritage of biblical exegesis, that keenly honed tool of interpretation and textual illumination?

Yet the modernist outlook can be destructive to faith. It can largely disable the legitimate thrust of the transcendent phenomena of the Christian faith by engendering merely rational and analytical patterns of thought, all in a desire to crack the code of what is, by its nature, mysterious and infinite; such as the nature of God Himself or the exact function of inspiration.

Ironically, whether with a liberal or conservative bent, modernist presuppositions, without the balance of other means of perception, can wreak havoc in a faith community because they are so naturally subject to prolonging interminable arguments over exactly what "the truth" is at its most inconsequential, unknowable levels.

An unbalanced reliance on an extreme modernist orientation (whether we're conscious of doing this or not) can lead Christians to become exacting and magisterial. An unbalanced modernistic orientation can also encourage a militant allegiance to organized religious structures, be they theological, ecclesiastical, or behavioral, which is notorious for repelling postmodern people.

Right here it is important that we assert the crucial verity that Jesus Himself was, of course, neither modern nor postmodern in His outlook. He

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Process versus instant evangelism

Miroslav Pujic



Miroslav Pujic is the communication director of the Trans-European Division, Hertfordshire, England.

The Western world is in a state of flux; the modern world, stretching back to the Enlightenment, is now crumbling. Postmodernism is no longer merely part of academic theory and classification. It is accepted as part of reality and normality, a phenomenon in popular culture; it permeates popular magazines, television, music, and art. It is also manifested in the workplace and in the way people communicate and relate to one another.

Postmodern people:

- ◆ Reject the stated truth expressed in dogmas and absolutes; they would rather experience truth.
- ◆ Are open to emotion and intuition.
- ◆ Are accustomed to communicating through words linked to images and symbols; they are more comfortable conversing through plain words or simple statements.
- ◆ Are concerned about the global human situation and the environment.
- ◆ Are suspicious of institutions, bureaucracies, and hierarchies; their suspicions run deep, but they like to be part of a community in which they participate and interact.
- ◆ Are at ease talking about spirituality and values.

They suspect claims of certainty and distrust allegations of objectivity; to them the world is much more blatantly a subjective place.¹

Postmodern people like to “mix and

match.” They say such things as, “I create my own version of truth from all sorts of different resources. I have mine—do not try to force yours on me.”

In the postmodern world the first question is more likely to be: “How do you feel?” rather than “What do you think?” Robert Webber says, “Indications of a postmodern worldview suggest that mystery, with its emphasis on complexity and ambiguity, [and] community, with its emphasis on the interrelationship of all things, and symbolic forms of communication, with an emphasis on the visual, are all central to the new way of thinking.”²

Why does Christianity struggle in the Western world?

In this kind of world, with its increasing hunger for spirituality and for finding fulfillment and meaning in life, why is the Christian church still unpopular?

One reason is that when we offer a full alternative world to people, we are acting in the imperialistic style, which postmodern people reject. We present the gospel from A-Z, as a package, and think this remains as a productive way of doing evangelism. But nowhere do we find Jesus or the apostles working with such a model.

In much of traditional evangelism we seem to operate under the premise that we have a “product” (the gospel and/or Seventh-day Adventist teaching) you (the consumer) need; and then we close the deal (conversion and baptism). This approach is not giving us success with postmodern people, who see this “religious sales operation” as a manipulative marketing technique.

Instead, we should be looking to build relationships with postmodern men and women through friendships, which will open the door of trust and confidence. Our approach should be more of relational and contextual rather than confrontational and propositional. The challenge to all churches is how to adjust to societal changes and how to express eternal truth in and through this emerging culture, while we strongly retain solid objectivity and our grasp of normative truth.

Invitation

The Bible says that we “have a great sense of obligation to people in our culture and to people in other cultures . . .” (Rom. 1:14)³ “. . . carrying the everlasting Good News . . . to

the people who belong to this world—to every nation, tribe, language, and people” (Rev. 14:6).

Surely this includes today’s post-modern culture. When the young man who was demon possessed was healed, Jesus told him “. . . go *home* to your *friends*, and *tell* them what wonderful things the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been” (Mark 5:19, emphasis supplied). In this story, Jesus taught us the bedrock principles of evangelism.

He wants us to go back to our *community* and build *holistic connections* with people around us, with those where we live, work, and play. We should share the wonderful *story*—our story—of a wonderful, loving God who has made a difference in our life.

The life-development approach

In searching for a culturally sensitive way of reaching postmodern people in an essentially post-Christian culture, we in the Trans-European Division have developed an approach that is known as LIFEdevelopment.info, or Ldi.

At its heart Ldi is a strategic vision to involve Adventist Christians:

- ◆ In building authentic *friendships* with unchurched postmodern people in our communities;
- ◆ In the *process* of leading them to Jesus Christ;
- ◆ In providing *hope* through support and nurture.⁴

This vision is built on three biblical models that are placed over the “map” of our largely postmodern world.

1. *Belonging before believing.* The traditional, most widely adopted evangelistic strategy is: Teach people about the gospel, see that they behave according to the doctrines taught, and *then* accept them into the body of Christ. Again, this method has proved inappropriate and ineffective in the Western, postmodern world.

“The never-churched need to be enveloped by small communities of believers so that they can see the

impact of the gospel in their relationships and experience some of the benefits through an intentional spillover [from within the small community]. Such was the dynamic that made the pre-Constantinian church so effective. Within the context of the Christian communities, the disillusioned, cynical and uninterested are respected and accepted, and are converted into ‘awakened seekers’, to employ John Wesley’s significant description.”⁵

People are seeking genuine relationships. Jesus is the best example of how to build friendships. “The Savior mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”⁶

This requires planning and sacrifice. We have busy lives. Committing oneself to making friends and building relationships with non-Christians takes time and energy, but if we want to share the love of Jesus Christ we need to step out of our comfort zones. In all relationships, talking and sharing is crucial, and we have to remember that talking includes authentic, attentive listening as well. To help people grasp the story of Christ requires time and patience. We must be understanding, honest, and nonjudgmental.

In fostering such an environment, food and eating together are important components. Shared meals sustain human relationships and symbolize solidarity. Meals express the texture of human associations, the way of life, the norms and commitments. Jesus ate and drank with people, even with the sinners most disdained by the religious establishment of His day. He was criticized for doing this (Matt. 11:19; Mark 2:15-17; Luke 15:1, 2). He knew, however, that being with people around the table would enable Him to build trust, confidence, and friendship, enabling further meaning and depth to develop.

If the main purpose of evangelism is just “believing,” then we are under

the limiting and limited constraint to press people into an awareness of the truths they need to know. But when the point is not only what people are coming to know but the way they are coming to know it and experience it, then there is a new and much more effective dynamic.

If the main purpose of evangelism is “behaving,” then we make people focus on themselves and changing their personal habits. But if the point is to help someone who is becoming a true friend; if the main purpose of evangelism is “belonging,” then we make people disciples of Jesus Christ and incorporate them into a vibrant Christian community.

“Belonging before believing” does not mean that the person is spiritually incorporated into the body of Christ but rather accepted into the process of transformation, which is the work of the Holy Spirit.⁷

“A sense of belonging places seekers in the position of observer-participant so that they can learn what the gospel is all about. They can observe at close quarters how it impacts the lives of individuals and shapes a community. Through this process the seeker comes to know when he or she is ready to make a personal decision to identify fully both with the Lord and with the body of Christ.”⁸

People long to belong to a place they can call home. The Western world is going through the shift from modernism, where Enlightenment created self-autonomy, individualism, and isolation, to postmodernism, where people are searching for identity and community. Instead of a scientific discovery, we now have virtual reality, an experience that is real in effect but not in fact.⁹

In the misery of loneliness and the search for identity, Christians should create a community that will embrace these changes and help people find their identity in becoming disciples of Jesus Christ.

2. *Process evangelism.* When Jesus started His mission, He entered deeply into the world of 12 people, identified

with them and their conditions, and committed Himself first of all to begin the process of evangelizing. It took the apostles more than three years to grow up in understanding Jesus; first as a teacher, then a prophet, then the Messiah, then the ascended Son of God with a cause beyond any they had imagined. This suggests a process rather than an event.

Even though we are used to instant food, instant drinks, instant cash, instant messages, we cannot do evangelism instantly, at least not with the generation in which we are a part. Evangelizing is a process. It takes a person on a journey, a spiritual journey that we Christians are on as well, with all its ups and downs.

On that journey our job is to go one step at a time. The Holy Spirit's work is to convince the person and bring them to conversion. Our responsibility is to be available as the tools that God uses to complete His work. It is our objective to simply follow Jesus. Among other things, this will help us experience the miracle of walking on the water, as Peter did (Matt. 14:29).

Six steps in the postmodern conversion process

Jimmy Long identifies six steps in the postmodern conversion process. They are:

- (1) discontentment with life,
- (2) confusion over meaning,
- (3) contact with Christians,
- (4) conversion to community,
- (5) commitment to Christ, and
- (6) a calling to God's heavenly vision."¹⁰

Of course, conversion sometimes doesn't follow this sequence exactly. Time, place, and speed are applicable to the individual. It could be that one person goes through the process faster than the other or jumps over one to another, but it is still a process because the postmodern generation requires time to make any lasting commitment in life.¹¹

The process helps the seeker to see the gospel in action in the setting of

the Christian community. The process shapes the seeker's heart, not only his or her mind. The process leads the seeker into a holistic Christian maturity. The process converts the seeker to become a disciple, not just a "member." The process enables the new disciple to become a disciple-maker.

3. *Narrative evangelism.* As part of this process, "story" has the power to provoke our thoughts, emotions, laughter, and can prompt us into action. A story has the power to create a vision, which in turn produces character. This changes the person's mind and affects his or her attitude, worldview, and soul.

Jesus understood the power of a story, and He used many stories and illustrations to teach as much as people were able to understand. In fact, in His public teaching, He taught only with parables (Mark 4:33, 34).

The concept of story, or narrative, evangelism presents the gospel, not just a mass of data that leads to a logical conclusion. The whole gospel is a narrative in which God's story collides with a human story, and that intersection of human and divine is what makes the difference.

A new generation is seeking to find a viable model through or in which ultimate meaning may be found. When they see Christians who live out their stories in faithful community, albeit imperfectly, they will respond. It will provide hope to a generation without hope. It will support them in their everyday life and nurture them in their spiritual formation.

Golden opportunity

"The Story that there is a God who cares about the individual human being is an old message—but it has been given a new attractiveness, a new plausibility in our time. Our Postmodern generation is more ready than ever to hear this Story with new ears—Why? Because of the emptiness and brokenness of Postmodern life."¹² The very state of "storylessness" among this generation creates a gold-

en opportunity, an open window through which the light of Christ may shine.

The Christian community has unique resources that can be drawn upon to respond to the new cultural situation. Postmoderns are providing a more hospitable platform for spiritual and theological possibility. It is not enough for us to understand our world from a distance, or simply to have a strategy for evangelization. We need to wade in and rub shoulders with those we desire to reach for Christ. We need to be willing to live with unchurched postmodernists on their terms, not ours. This will lay the foundation for real communication to take place. This will provide us with exciting opportunities to deepen our own faith and to allow the Holy Spirit to work through us.

The articles dealing with this theme in this issue of *Ministry* are dedicated to stimulating thought and action in the arenas that are described in them. ■

1 Tony Jones, *Postmodern Youth Ministry: Exploring Cultural Shift, Creating Holistic Connections, Cultivating Authentic Community* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2001), 31-43

2 Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Faith: Rethinking Evangelicalism for a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1999), 35.

3 All Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible, New Living Translation*, copyright 1996. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights reserved.

4 See <www.lifedevelopment.info> for more information.

5 Gibbs/Coffey, 192.

6 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1905), 143

7 Gibbs/Coffey, 194

8 *Ibid.*, 194

9 Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 73

10 *Ibid.*, 206

11 *Ibid.*, 208.

12 *Ibid.*, 190

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Casting a worthy vision

Cecil Perry



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Where there is no vision the people perish” is a universal truism! The unveiling or revelation of ideas and workable concepts is the forerunner of imaginative and creative action.

It takes vision to see a beautiful work of art in a piece of rough marble, and vision for an architect to see a beautiful palace coming to life in the first draft of the plans he sketches.

Foresight, insight, and hindsight are the triple triggers to the fulfillment of any undertaking. Without any one of the three, the others have little focus.

Churches have been studying how to cast an evangelistic vision that is bolder than anything tried in the past.

The regular methods of evangelism that are still relevant need to be broadened to include a greater initiative to reach the millions who have barely any interest in the Christian faith or in the church.

Where Christianity becomes more and more one of the many religious or life options available, we need to seriously and deliberately implement the witnessing methods of Jesus, who mingled among the people as one desiring their good. Though it may not seem so at first, this approach necessitates quite a radical revisioning process.

Revisioning

In this process of revisioning, the British Union of Seventh-day Adventists has embarked on a program of education and training of the church members to practice what Jesus did. Of first priority, it involves making friends with the unchurched and becoming genuinely contagious Christians.

This in turn calls for a cognitive and spiritual shift in mind-set that becomes uncomfortable with having friends only in the community of saints. It envisions having the eyes of our people opened to see the transforming work of God in the life of the lost. It takes a vision greater than ourselves or any plans we have made so far.

The course of action we are taking toward reaching our goal will be long-term, spanning a period of five or more years. We shall not be focusing on quick statistical results but on a meaningful engagement with the people around us, to bring them to Christ.

This venture to befriend those living in a paradigm different from ours will call for patience and the commitment of liberal proportions of our resources, financial and otherwise.

Generally there are risks when a person or organization seeks to chart a new path or veer in a different direction. The risk here is, of course, that the vision could be frustrated. Unforeseen circumstances could cause us to rearrange the way we do ministry in coming months and years.

The imperative of the Great Commission to make disciples of all nations includes God’s assurance of success. Jesus’ promise is “I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20, NKJV). Jesus risked His position in heaven and in the process lost His life to save sinners. His victory becomes ours when we become coworkers with Him.

His vision for the church in Western Europe and the world at large is illustrated in some of His parables: the net cast into the sea bringing in a large shoal of fish; the sower sowing on all kinds of soil, including the good soil, the seeds of the gospel. Whenever, under God, purposeful actions are taken by His disciples to present the gospel to others, a harvest is guaranteed.

We cannot ignore the fact that something has to be done (a) to recover the lost coin buried in the confusion of these times, (b) find the lost sheep entangled in the thicket of a jumbled world, and (c) prepare the church to receive the lost boy estranged in the blind alley of the world from his Father's house.

Resonating with people's need

The church must not only find relevant answers and approaches to the world but it must resonate with its needs. In a world where pleasure and leisure are twin gods and the old Christian values are taken for granted or openly rejected, we as the family of God have a responsibility to make the vision clear as to what is God's will.

Our lives themselves must reflect those eternal values that make us authentic, wholesome Christians.

Our modeling of Christ's love must say that "we are His disciples."

The Life Development approach (see <www.LifeDevelopment.info> on the World Wide Web) described in the themed articles of this *Ministry* issue, is the beginning of a significant journey toward the accomplishment of our God-given mission. We believe that wherever there are people, there are seekers after God. Thousands are behind closed doors at work, in academic institutions, on the streets, and everywhere else. They want answers to their basic needs of love, security, and survival. Who knows, in trying to enter their hearts by satisfying their felt needs, the uninitiated may have a glimpse of God.

Empowerment of God's people by the Holy Spirit gives us courage to interface with the religiously indifferent in redemptive ways.

Jesus' last words to His apostles on the Mount of Olives were, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in the . . . [world]" (Acts 1:8, NIV).

The spiritual gifts given to the church must be harnessed as tools to create pathways for tired feet to take on their way to the kingdom. Only through the Holy Spirit and His gifts to us can we achieve a state of connectedness with those waiting to be saved.

We are assured that whatever we ask Jesus in prayer He will supply. He has given us a vision, and by His grace we are willing to run with it.

Events on our earth, both political and natural, are moving in rapid succession. We need to quickly engage this generation in the eschatological urgency of God's gift of salvation. ▣

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The 10/40 window of the West

Out of light and into darkness

Dwight Nelson



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It was night. Two men under a street lamp were searching for a watch one of them had lost. Down on their hands and knees, they searched the pavement all around the light pole.

"Are you sure you dropped it here?" the helping friend asks.

"Well, not exactly here," the watch loser replies.

"What do you mean," his friend retorts, "where'd you drop it?"

The man points out into the darkness, "About twenty yards over there."

Incredulously the friend exclaims, "You lost your watch out there! Then why on earth have we been looking here?"

To which the man replies, "Because the light's better."

The story came from Gary Krause of Global Mission at the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Krause then thrust home his point: "For too long the Christian church, including Adventists, has been preaching mainly 'where the light's better.' The Christian church has spent the vast majority of its resources on areas where there's already a strong Christian base—where the light is stronger. And we've largely ignored those parts of the world where the name of Jesus has never been heard."¹

And with that he launched into an impassioned appeal for us to embrace the challenge of the "10/40 Window"—an artificial rectan-

gle of earth in which 60 percent of the world's population lives (3.4 billion humans), and where only 1 percent of them believe in Jesus, and less than .001 percent are Seventh-day Adventist Christians.

We must move out into that darkness, he implored. Who would challenge that appeal?

But could it be that in our present preoccupation with the 10/40 Window of the so-called East, we have become blinded to a growing portal of immense darkness—what might be called "the 10/40 Window of the West"—the burgeoning window of Western postmodern paganism?

Could it be that the greatest challenge facing the church in the West in its third millennium is a postmodern society that has rapidly become post-Christian?

Astonishing figures

I was astounded by the figures I learned on a recent preaching trip to England. In this land of the Wesleys and the greatest revival in the history of Christianity, church closures rose to six a week over the last two decades of the twentieth century, until now only 7.5 percent of the adult population attends church! No wonder in one comparative poll the British were ranked as "the most godless" of European nations.

Americans might take refuge in their 37 percent church-attendance figures. But troubling new statistics released by the American Religious Identification Survey 2001 indicate that last year more than 29.4 million Americans said they had no religion—that's 14 percent of the nation, up from 8 percent in 1990.² A no-religion West is on the rise!

How can the church afford to ignore this swelling new 10/40 Window? Our postmodern society in the West is morphing into a post-Christian, essentially pagan reality—men, women, young adults, and children by literally millions who have no connection with the name of Jesus or His faith!

Could it be that the most desperate, most spiritually impoverished, cries of this millennium arise not from the traditional "mission" lands such as New Guinea, India, China, or Africa, but from the secular urban soul of the West?

Does not faithfulness to our mission mandate of Revelation 14—"to every nation and tribe and language and people"—call a growing number of us as pastors and evangelists to

undertake the third millennial risk of moving away from “where the light’s better” into the postmodern darkness of the rapidly increasing post-Christian segment of our society and cities? Must not those of us pastoring and evangelizing in the secular West find new ways to penetrate our western darkness on Christ’s behalf, just as faithfully as our colleagues in the East constantly seek for new methods to more effectively plunge into theirs?

What specifically shall we do, and how shall we do it?

Finding common ground

One reality that must inform any strategy is painfully clear—the post-Christian West increasingly is becoming biblically illiterate, which in turn feeds postmodern pluralism, the notion that every truth claim must be valid. In his book, *Truth Decay: Defending Christianity Against the Challenges of Postmodernism*, Douglas Groothuis observes that postmoderns have rejected a capital-T Truth in favor of a plethora of little-t truths.

This “truth decay is a cultural condition in which the very idea of absolute, objective and universal truth is considered implausible, held in open contempt or not even seriously considered.”³ Which is why some of us are developing a passion to connect with this growing pagan, post-Christian segment of our society.

The reality of an encroaching secularism is forcing us to reexamine our present evangelistic strategy, which presumes that the hearers (1) believe in God, (2) have a familiarity with the Bible, and (3) are therefore conversant with biblical prophecy. It is painfully clear by the mounting numbers of westerners who stay away from our evangelistic efforts that we will need to find new common ground on which to engage postmoderns.

What is that common ground? In *ChurchNext*, Eddie Gibbs observes, this generation must first belong before it believes.⁴ “Among boomers and Gen Xers there is an apprehensive craving for community—apprehensive

because people are wary of becoming overly committed and because these two [postmodern] generations have already experienced abuse and betrayal. “They do not want to be exposed to further hurt and harm.”⁵ And our post-September 11 anxieties have only heightened this hunger for belonging, for community, for close proximity with others “who care for me”—the very longing for community that “the everlasting gospel” of Jesus compels us to fill. But how?

How we can do it?

First. “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men [and women] as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. *Then* He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”⁶ Note it carefully: Before the “follow Me” evangelistic appeal there was the “mingling.”

“Present truth” must be presented in the context of “present need.” And the present need of the secular postmodern West is the longing for community. Interestingly enough, while in the last century our *modus operandi* was that before you could *belong* you had to *believe*, in this new century we are faced with the reverse challenge. Third millenniums need to *belong* before they will *believe*. Now more than ever Christ’s method is essential.

While there is a growing corpus of pastoral/evangelistic literature detailing fresh community-building strategies, a new experimental approach within our Adventist community of faith merits observation and study.

Piloted by the church in Great Britain and Europe, it is called “LifeDevelopment.info”—an intentional strategy to reach the postmodern West by *beginning with belonging* and leading to *believing*.⁷ (Many of those writing in this issue of *Ministry* are involved in implementing this potent plan.)

For the next 12 months congregations across the United Kingdom and Europe will form “café groups,” small

weekly social communities for their secular friends and neighbors—enjoying the simple pleasures of food, friendship, and discussion. Following this 12-month community-building process a series of satellite presentations (downlinked from London to every café group) will address postmodern felt needs (hope, freedom from fear, peace, rest, community, etc.) in the context of the everlasting gospel. “LifeDevelopment.info” will pioneer a new postmodern evangelistic paradigm—belonging before believing.⁸

Can the rest of us afford to wait for the results of this European experiment before we act? How can we? Jesus’ passion to “seek and save the lost” postmodern West is not on hold, nor can it be put on hold. Calvary paid too high a price for us to wait until someone else pilots the way.

Instead we must experiment with our own belonging-before-believing evangelistic strategies. We can form our own café groups. We can lead our own congregations in the “mingling” method of Jesus—intentionally living and moving among lost people as their friends, asking the Spirit to make us “contagious Christians”⁹ through whom He can reach their hearts.

We need a new generation of pastors, evangelists, and church-planters who will creatively translate the message entrusted to us into the language and felt needs of our postmodern world—a new generation unafraid to risk boldly for the gospel and experiment repeatedly, unafraid of “failure,” for the sake of loving and saving lost post-Christian people for God.

Old and new

Are the old ways to be banished or abandoned? Hardly. It’s just that in this new millennium, faced as we are with the rapidly enlarging 10/40 Window of the post-Christian, non-Christian, un-Christian West—it is the right time for us as pastors and evangelists to embrace the ambition of the great prototype of today’s postmodern

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Understanding secular minds: A perspective on "life development"

Bertil Wiklander



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Christian mission is communication. It is to make Jesus known by letting God's voice be heard through the working of the Holy Spirit in the minds, hearts, and lives of men and women. Success in mission is therefore an outcome of successful communication. It is conditioned by a balanced interaction between Sender, message, and receiver.

The challenge is, however, that the church and contemporary humans do not seem to "speak the same language"—at least in the so-called Western world. Why?

One factor is our continued neglect of the receiver in the communication process. We uphold the message: The Word of God, the doctrinal truths, and our theology. We pay homage to the Sender: God, and His call to us. And while we may be correct in what we say, teach, or proclaim, truly *adequate* information is not a guarantee for *successful* communication. Success requires that the *receivers* of God's message perceive the Sender as trustworthy. They must understand the message and feel that it is genuinely pertinent to them and that it actually contributes to the meaning and longings of their lives.

This is all too often not the case when the church communicates with secular people.

Reasons for this are many. Often, we tend to see secular values as threats to our faith, and we are trapped in an attitude that resists

change. The church faces the challenge of the secular machine everywhere, one way or the other.

My perspective is European, particularly Scandinavian,¹ since I have my roots there. The reader will find, however, that the modern secular mind-set across the world has many features in common. The process of globalization may, to some degree, explain why this is so, and will increasingly be so.

A post-Christian society

Increasingly, modern secular society is becoming "post-Christian." For centuries, the Christian worldview formed the basis upon which people made choices and interpreted the meaning of life. This disappeared in the course of the twentieth century, under the influence of various philosophies, the disasters of two world wars, and the general unfolding of society.²

As a result, secular people may bear within them a reaction against the established Christian church. They think they have heard what the church has to say, have declined it, and finished with it. The perception is common that contemporary human cultures live in a state of freedom from old and tradition-worn values. They perceive, either consciously or unconsciously, that science and common sense have helped rid them of these hoary shackles.

In some places, Christians are seen to be "intellectually dishonest," and people do not believe that the church is able to give satisfactory answers to their questions. Stating that you are a Christian may therefore prevent communication. The church is not trusted as an institution, and church representatives, including pastors and leaders, are met with distrust or disdain.

The church must therefore seek to make itself legitimately trustworthy on modern terms, while it does not compromise its divine essence. In practical terms, this means that we do not need to have a ready answer to every question, or that we always have to "be right" in everything, but rather that we be human and compassionate.

Because objective truth is seen to be hard to find, and human relationships are highly valued in today's secular world, our commitment to biblical truth must not change, but how we communicate must change by revising our perceptions of the nature of the

sender, message, and receiver, as well as the dynamics of the interplay between all of them.

Church members, rather than pastors, are often met with a greater degree of trust by secular people, for they are seen as voluntary supporters or just “regular people,” and not as church professionals. A congregation that emphasizes discipleship and lay ministry, where the pastor trains the members to use their gifts in ministry, would therefore stand a better chance of reaching the average secular person. More to the point, a group of friends meeting in someone’s home is less threatening and more relational for contemporary people, than meeting with a large congregation in a conventional church setting.

Contemporary values relevant to outreach

Secular society values freedom from material poverty. Such freedom is measured by the average length of life; annual vacation days; number of persons per car and telephone; home computers per 100 people; percentage of households owning a VCR, dishwasher, and microwave; women’s employment and the size of women’s salaries; public development aid; labor union organization; percentage of total private consumption spent on food; and high consumption of ice cream and coffee per person. In view of this trend, we can make three observations.

First, the urge toward financial well-being and independence, which is the basis upon which secular-materialists build their values, creates the need for a job or an income. Thus, unemployment and fear of unemployment become major issues and are, in fact, rated very highly as a vital concern for many secular people.

Churches may reach people by providing the unemployed and their families with a meaningful network of friends or even helping them find another job. There is reason to believe that such service would build vital friendship connections and open the

way for the gospel and Christian fellowship.

Second, when people face the loss of their jobs and income, and thus experience personal financial need and even poverty, they are almost always at a loss to know how to handle their

THE CHURCH MUST THEREFORE SEEK TO MAKE ITSELF LEGITIMATELY TRUSTWORTHY ON MODERN TERMS, WHILE IT DOES NOT COMPROMISE ITS DIVINE ESSENCE.

circumstances. This creates human needs that the Christian churches have the potential of addressing. However, the church needs to make significant changes in its style of communication, the organization of its public and communal life, and the meeting places where it gets involved with non-Christians or the “un-churched.”

Third, modern people spend so much time and energy on earning and spending that building a harmonious family life becomes difficult. This is underscored by the fact that most frequently, both husband and wife work outside the home. Thus, marriage, personal relationships, and children are top rated as strong concerns among contemporary people.

Other high priorities are world peace and environmental concerns. The church has the distinct opportunity to address these needs—and to do it in a creative and fruitful way.

Significantly, however, the concerns that most of our churches seem to prefer to address, such as faith, church, God, the Bible, salvation, sin, and atonement, are those that end up at the bottom of the secular person’s list. While we must, of course, address these absolutely crucial and foundational issues, we need to hold back on these matters that appeal to ourselves and find out what actually appeals to lost, secular people.

Only when we genuinely share in the concerns of contemporary people, will they be willing to move on to deeper levels of faith.

We must therefore see conversion as a process that takes time. If we expect quick results from outreach to

secular people, we will either be disappointed or bring someone into the church who has no roots and may leave us more disillusioned than ever.

Silence concerning the soul

Today, the average urban person finds it difficult to talk about his or her personal inner needs. While the popular art forms of our time sometimes address the issue of dying and the human fear of death, people generally don’t speak to one another on a personal level about such things. Much of the social pressure of today’s cultures pressure people into silence regarding their inner needs. And they secretly wither away with their unspoken questions.

The church could fulfill its Christian mission by finding a way to listen to these silent needs of secular people. But the church seems trapped in its traditional forms of “doing church the way we’ve always done it.”

Again, one striking fact that I have noted in the assessments of the trends of our times is that a very large proportion of secular people need and want to deal with matters of their own personal faith, their doubts, and existential needs, but they want to do this in small informal groups of friends rather than in the setting of an official church context, about which many of them possess that innate sense of suspicion already described.

Thus it is clear that some sort of small-group ministry is a must for every church that wants to reach secular people. And, hopefully, this could also give us fresh approaches to the format of our Sabbath Schools.

gion. Stand-alone psychological prescriptions for peace of mind and emotional well-being abound.

In these new religious forms, two things are predominant, namely the disregard of the Bible and a signifi-

absolute values to hold on to, but each individual is his own boss in regard to values and norms. People live partly in the context of values with which they have grown up and partly detached from them. There are always many alternatives, outlooks, views and lifestyles to choose from, but the amount of optional alternatives *per se* makes it rather unlikely that my choice is the right one. The relativity of values creates a large amount of freedom but also a constantly disturbing uncertainty.”⁵

This opens new possibilities for the church. Human beings today are largely and increasingly alone. We can give them genuine friendship. They are uncertain of what to believe. We can give them assurance. But to do that, we need to be extremely humble, keeping in mind the church’s lack of credibility, and teaching with great sensitivity the authority and holy nature of God and the Bible. We must truly listen to people with patience and respect, entering into conversation and friendship with them. And this must be done while we hold with certainty the firm conviction that the receiver will be blessed by developing a life of faith.

The process of trivialization

The technological change of conditions for human life tends to multiply people’s relations but at the same time render them superficial. The enormous increase of information and knowledge created by the communication and computer age continues to “trivialize” people’s perceptions of God, themselves, the world, and other human beings.

For most people today, there is less training in reading and writing, analytical thinking, and pursuits that engage crucial functions of the imagination. While we talk of being in touch with ourselves and our inner emotions and needs, there seems to be less of that actually happening.

Along with this, or as an integral part of it, there is less time for getting together, for quiet and deep fellow-

THE DOMINATING IDEA OF THE RELATIVITY OF ABSOLUTE VALUES AND AUTHORITIES, HOWEVER, TENDS TO CREATE A PROFOUND PSYCHOLOGICAL ANGUISH IN SIGNIFICANT PEOPLE GROUPS TODAY.

The condition for achieving such a change, however, seems to be that we become willing to step out of our old church structures and try new, functional ways of actually listening to people and becoming one with them as their true, trustworthy friends.

God and the secular mind

Increasingly, contemporary people have no strong definable belief in God. Faith or philosophical variations of all kinds are proliferating. While 32 percent of the people in Western Europe express belief in some sort of personal God, the figure for Sweden is 19 percent and for Poland, 91 percent. In traditionally Christian Scandinavia, about 80 percent of the people stand isolated from any current meaningful Christian influence.

A post-Christian society, however, is far from nonreligious. The spiritual needs of people remain, and they are finding new ways of fulfilling them. Thus, there are trends towards the development of an unofficial “private religion,” in which people have their own gods, and there are now Christian books that guide churches on making Christianity private.³

In this context, we often find trends toward mysticism, meditation, and occult practices. Old gnostic and spiritist views are brought back on the scene by the so-called New Age reli-

cantly confused or varied picture of God. This is especially true when it comes to any meaningful regard for the concept of God’s “holiness” and “authority.”

These are, of course, fundamental elements in an Adventist and conservative Christian understanding of truth. But, in many places in the world today, these cultural trends and perceptions increase the distance between us and the target of our mission. Bridging this growing gulf effectively without losing our identity or integrity is a challenge that we must learn to recognize as a valuable opportunity rather than a drawback.

The occurrence of new forms of religion that question any absolute authority and confuse the nature of God are to a large extent the result of the process of “individualization,” which has characterized Europe since the Renaissance and the Reformation.⁴ This established and now maturing way of thinking has produced the “pluralistic” modern society, where there is wide tolerance for any kind of religion but no sure answers relating to values. The dominating idea of the relativity of absolute values and authorities, however, tends to create a profound psychological anguish in significant people groups today.

One analyst says: “There are no

ship with parents, relatives, and friends. The result is an increasing lack of rootedness and identity, and thus a lack of stability and security.

As a result of this, the average modern human is increasingly involved in varying, temporary, and occasional commitments.⁶ The life-long commitment to one kind of work, a local community, or the person with whom one lives, is no longer self-evident. People have several commitments. They are brief, changing, and often new. People are constantly moving and do not like to limit or "imprison" themselves in one particular, binding commitment.

In all of this, the only lifelong project to which modern secular people are committed is themselves, the ideal of self-realization and personal development. Therefore this interest may well be an avenue for the church to use as an avenue of communication with them.

These realizations are indeed foundational to the concepts behind the design of the "life development" approach, featured in this and other articles in this issue of *Ministry*. In this approach we are seriously seeking to understand evangelism in terms of spiritual growth, using friendship as a fundamental cornerstone in such a ministry, along with the home as the chief meeting place.

People with natural gifts for counseling have reported that they receive a multitude of requests for counseling from non-Christians or simply for "time to talk." If our laity would be trained to do this work, according to their spiritual gifts, we are convinced it would be an effective way toward authentic church growth.

Some conclusions

One of the elementary lessons from the monumental study *Church and Denominational Growth: What Does (and Does Not) Cause Growth or Decline* (1993) by Roozen and Hadaway is that the mission of the church succeeds where leaders create a climate where one preaches, thinks, speaks, and plans evangelism, being driven by a clear picture of people's genuine needs and a genuine love for those we seek to befriend and reach.

In view of my observations here, this evangelistic emphasis may go along with the following general recommendations for our mission plans in secular societies:

1. *Church identity*: Safeguard a strong internal Seventh-day Adventist Christian identity, while "remaining an open social network, able to maintain and form ties with [those who are outside our inner circle]."⁷

2. *Mission awareness*: Maintain the belief that the gospel of Christ answers human needs, but let the gospel speak to people in new ways highly responsive to their actual concerns.

3. *Life development*: In church life, focus on ongoing inner spiritual growth, gift-oriented lay ministry, and training for leadership and witnessing along the lines of friendship and the home setting.

4. *Public credibility*: Restore the church's credibility by actively participating in public life (statements, releases, media initiatives), and by making our communication relevant and transparent to the secular world.

5. *Some specific areas of emphasis*:

- ◆ Develop specific approaches to youth and children, families, and single and married people.

- ◆ Underscore relationships rather than activities. Develop meeting places and worship styles where believers come close to new people.
- ◆ Use church members' friendships with unchurched as a tool of evangelism.
- ◆ Develop counseling ministries and equip members to be good friends who can listen and help.
- ◆ Respect secular people's silence about their needs and help them open up in a small-group fellowship in homes.
- ◆ Be sensitive to people's relativity of values and refrain from being perceived as one who always knows best. Make Bible studies discovery oriented.
- ◆ Convey rest and freedom from the urge to earn and consume, using the Sabbath as God's gift to us.

Finally, the attitude we need to adopt as we communicate and execute our mission to secular people must reflect a genuinely Christlike attitude. It is the attitude of incarnation, as described in *Philippians 2:1-11*, by which we empty ourselves in order to serve others, and, as the apostle Paul put it, by which we become "all things to all men, that [we] might by all means save some" (*1 Cor. 9:22*). ■

1 Cf. my case study on Sweden in *Re-Visioning Adventist Mission in Europe*, ed. E.W. Baumgartner (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1998), 70-81.

2 See Leslie Newbegin, *The Gospel in a Pluralistic Society* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. Eerdmans, 1989).

3 See Alan Jamieson, *A Churchless Faith, Faith Journeys Beyond the Churches* (London: SPCK, 2002).

4 See Francis Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1968); Lorenz Lyttkens, *Den disciplinerade människan* (Stockholm, Sweden: Liber, 1985), 55-85.

5 Lyttkens, 153ff. (my translation)

6 Lyttkens, 147 ff.

7 Rodney Stark, "Why Religious Movements Succeed or Fail. A Revised General Model," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 11 (1996), 2:143.

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When thinking BIG means thinking small

Growing communities of faith in a postmodern world

David Cox

Though contemporary Western societies in general are less responsive to traditional evangelistic approaches than they used to be, they still present the church with unprecedented opportunities for healthy growth. We could be just steps away from the *biggest* and most impressive results ever, if we think *small* enough. *Small enough?* If that sounds contradictory, consider the needs of postmodern people in relation to the mission of the church.

People's needs today

Though much has been written about the felt needs of contemporary people, I suggest that postmodern men and women have two basic needs: the need for identity and the need to belong. Most, if not all, the specific people-problems that we address inside and outside the church (except those with a physiological cause) are related to, or symptomatic of, these two basic needs. Besides this, the need for identity and the need to belong are themselves closely related. Because there is a need to belong, there is a need for more definite identity, and vice versa.

Of course, the need for identity and to belong have always been part of human experience. These needs have the same root. Today, however, these needs are more evident than ever before, if only because postmodern people are generally more ready to acknowledge

them than previous generations have been. Postmodern people are more open than their modern predecessors were to explore unconventional ways of satisfying those needs. That's where the church's mission comes in.

Two basic, related tasks

Just as postmodern people have two basic needs, the church has two basic tasks responsive to these needs: to make disciples and to build community. Of course, nothing is quite that simple. We often feel all but overwhelmed with a complex multitude of tasks. But again, in reality, we have only two principle mandates: The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (John 13:34, 35). These mandates comprise the mission of the church: to make disciples and to build community. Like humanity's two basic needs, the church's two basic tasks are related. We cannot properly accomplish one without the other.

Discipleship is the New Testament word that embraces the entire process by which people become and remain committed followers of Jesus, starting long before baptism and continuing for as long as life lasts. The term *disciple* literally means "apprentice," someone who learns a skill or trade by working alongside an expert. So Christian disciple-makers are not experts who know all the answers, because they are and must always be disciples, or apprentices, themselves.

Community, or oneness, was the supreme goal for which Jesus prayed (John 17:20-23). His dream of intimate community ("may they be one just as We are one") was to be the goal of discipleship, while community ("they may be one, that the world may believe") was to be the context in which discipleship took place.

Jesus-followers do not grow well in isolation. God has designed that we grow together. When we are baptized into Christ, we are also baptized into His body, His community, the church. And from Him the whole body grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:23; 4:16). In order to grow "individually and together" we need to be connected with one another. So the Great Commission (to make disciples) and the Great Commandment (to love one another) belong together.

Two tasks, two needs

Thus, the two main tasks of the church in



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the postmodern world and the two main needs of postmodern society go together. As searching men and women become disciples of Jesus, they rediscover their identity—who they are, why they are here, and what they can become through the grace of God. And disconnected people, separated from God and one another by sin, become part of God's new kingdom community and once again belong. It is something like this:

Two Tasks: (1) Make disciples and (2) build community belonging

Two Needs: (1) Need for identity and (2) need for belonging

Christian discipleship is a lifelong journey of discovery that is really all about understanding who we are together!

Connecting resources with needs

The key to an abundant, even unprecedented, harvest in the postmodern context lies in the church's willingness and ability to focus its available resources on its two-task mission. Its available resources are enormous, because they include, on the human level, every member who is a committed follower of Jesus, and on the divine level, the Holy Spirit and all the gifts He gives (to each body member), along with all His angel messengers and their unceasing ministry. After all, their mission and ours are the same.

What is the best way to connect human and divine mission resources with postmodern need? Apart from all available research, which points consistently in one direction, Seventh-day Adventists have their own prophetic directive, which is remarkable in its simplicity: If we want to think BIG, we have to think small!

Here is what I mean: "The formation of small companies as a basis of Christian effort is a plan that has been presented before me by One who cannot err."¹

When Ellen White wrote these words in 1902, she knew nothing of contemporary cultures and their

needs. But such a vision was given to advance the mission of the church; even with the here and now in mind.

What Ellen White referred to as "small companies" was what we would call today *holistic small groups*, which, in the context of this article, means small groups that facilitate the process of discipleship and the building of community. The fact that they should provide "a basis of Christian effort" implies that discipleship and community "happen" better in such small groups than anywhere else.

The genius of the holistic small group

With rare exceptions, churches that experience significant growth in a postmodern context take holistic small groups seriously. That's because they actually do connect human and divine mission resources with real postmodern felt needs. A postmodern church will almost certainly be a small-group church. Specifically, they:

- ◆ are the most effective way of creating authentic, biblical community.
- ◆ have the potential for engaging every believer in gifts-based ministry.
- ◆ serve as an effective base from which outreach and service ministries can take place.
- ◆ provide a bridge for the seeker's journey between the secular world and the church.
- ◆ offer a safe environment and the necessary support for seekers and believers alike to explore issues necessary for growth in their relationship with God.

Besides this, pastors and leaders need this personal-growth environment as much as anyone does!

To think BIG, then we must think small. Significant discipling among postmodern people requires a vessel small enough to contain it. And that vessel is the development of small communities.

Small life-development groups and centers²

By definition such development

groups are actually holistic small groups, as described above, in which several (perhaps three to eight) Adventist believers enter into biblical community with one another, and to which they at the right time invite their non-Adventist or non-Christian friends to join.

In a large church there could be a network of many such small groups linked together in a form similar to the "Jethro model" described in Exodus 18. Small-group meetings usually (though not always) take place in the comfort of someone's home, at any time convenient to the participants.

Involvement of non-Adventists and non-Christians in small groups will happen almost naturally if we:

1. Pray for a heart that is truly concerned for the good of others, and for God-given opportunities to start new friendships or develop new ones.

2. Cultivate unconditional friendships on a one-to-one basis with acquaintances, colleagues, or neighbors, especially through the sharing of common interests (this is not the time for "God-talk" unless our friends initiate it). As it takes time and energy to cultivate meaningful friendships, three for each group member is the suggested goal for the first 12-month period.

3. Introduce friends to other small-group members through social events, felt-needs seminars, workshops and video/discussion groups, or community-service activities.

4. Invite friends to the holistic group when the group begins a new series of discussions/Bible studies on a subject of interest to them.

The small-group community becomes like a second family to seekers who become connected to the church in this way. Like most families, of course, small groups will grow until they are no longer small (more than 12 or 13 people, and it's time to "give birth" to a second group). But the small-group experience remains as a permanent part of the new disci-

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Meeting the secular mind in uncertain times

Jon Paulien



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Lessons must be given to humanity in the language of humanity.”¹ The Bible is a living testimony that God meets people where they are. Every part of God’s Word was given in the time, place, language, and culture of specific human beings.

Paul, with his “Ph.D.,” expresses God’s revelation in a different way from Peter, the fisherman. John writes in simple, clear, almost childlike Greek. On the other hand, the author of Hebrews has the most complex and literary Greek in the whole New Testament (with the exception of the first four verses of Luke).

In Matthew, you have someone who understands the Jewish mind. He uses Jewish terms without explanation. Mark, on the other hand, reaches out to the Gentile mind. Jewish terms are explained to his non-Jewish audience (compare, for example, Mark 14:12 with Matt. 26:17).

Message among the ruins

New Testament language is quite different from the classical Greek of Plato and Aristotle. In the nineteenth century, many scholars thought New Testament Greek was some sort of “heavenly language,” unlike any other form of ancient Greek. But then in 1895 an expedition to Egypt was organized with the express purpose of finding documents from the ancient world. Reports suggested that the

town of Oxyrhynchus would be a good place to start.

The scholars stumbled upon a massive garbage dump there, with numerous piles as much as 30 feet in height, which included the rubbish of several centuries. In the dry climate of Egypt very little decomposition took place. The scholars found a treasure trove of ordinary documents from everyday life.

Meanwhile, other everyday documents were found in the ruins of houses. Some had been buried with their owners, and some were even used to make painted decorations on the wrappings of mummies, both human and animal. In fact, a cemetery for crocodiles in ancient Tebtunis by itself provided enough documents to produce a large scholarly volume. Among these everyday documents were personal letters, wills, accounts, bills and receipts, and agreements regarding divorce, marriage, adoptions, and the sale of land.

Perhaps the most shocking discovery was that the language of these everyday documents was not the scholarly Greek of Plato and Aristotle, nor the public Greek of law and government. Instead, it was the language of the New Testament, the everyday language of people on the street.

So, the New Testament was not written in a heavenly language, nor in the cultured language of the traditional elite, but in the everyday language of everyday people. *God meets people where they are!*

Form and content

Perhaps even more significant than the unique language and writing styles of the human authors of Scripture is the fact that God adjusted the content of visions in order to communicate more effectively to and through the inspired prophet. In Daniel 2 and 7, the same basic message was presented to two different persons. To the pagan king Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:29-36), God portrayed the future in terms of an idol, something Nebuchadnezzar could easily understand. But to the Hebrew prophet Daniel (Dan. 7:2-14), God portrayed the future in terms of the Genesis story (Genesis 1 and 2), from a turbulent sea all the way to a “Son of Man” who had dominion over the animals! *God meets people where they are.*

Best of all, when God chose to reveal Himself in person, He did not come as “Jesus Christ Superstar,” but as an unassuming first-

century Jew, living in Palestine, who talked in terms appropriate to the local language and culture, and who got dirty, hungry, and tired, who even at times showed frustration, anger, and sadness (see Mark 1:40, 41; 3:4, 5; 6:6; 10:13, 14). God didn't send us a superstar, but someone just like ourselves.

The incarnation of Jesus demonstrates the depth of God's commitment to meeting human beings where they are in their specific time, place, language, and circumstances.

"The writers of the Bible had to express their ideas in human language. It was written by human men. These men were inspired of the Holy Spirit. . . .

"The Scriptures were given to men, not in a continuous chain of unbroken utterances, but piece by piece through successive generations, as God in His providence saw a fitting opportunity to impress man at sundry times and divers places. . . .

"The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God, as a writer, is not represented. . . .

"The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought."²

Meeting people where they are

These are important points. Some think that one mode of outreach is enough. "If secular people don't find our gospel presentation attractive, that's their problem. We warned them. Their blood is off our hands!"

But that doesn't seem to be God's attitude toward struggling humans. He meets people where they are. And He asks us to do the same. This is clearly outlined as a conscious strategy by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

First, we need to meet people where they are because that is how people learn.³ We are only now beginning to discover that what we once considered as smart and stupid is

often only a difference in *learning styles*. Truth must come to people in a form that they can grasp. This includes more than just using the same language. It includes culture,

two. She is a *kinetic* learner. That means she learns best when her body is moving. Guess what she was doing when I read about the bunny hopping? *Boing, boing, boing* she went,

WE NEED TO MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE BECAUSE GOD HAS PLACED WITHIN HUMAN BEINGS A NATURAL BARRIER AGAINST PERSUASION.

teaching style, appropriate use of media and topic selection.

For example, I love all three of my children, but I've learned I can't treat them the same, even though they are all descended from my wife and me. I remember when they were small. We used to sit down in the living room and read together. I would be reading a children's book about a bunny hopping around. My oldest had an annoying habit (or so I thought at the time). Whatever I said, she would repeat it after me. I scolded her repeatedly, "I'm the one reading here, not you. Be quiet!" But it was no use.

Then I discovered that there was such a thing as an *auditory* learner. Auditory learners learn best through hearing themselves talk (know anyone like that?). She was cementing the ideas in her head by repeating them to everyone else! In my well-meaning attempts to discipline her, I was preventing her from the very thing I was trying to accomplish!

My son, on the other hand, is a *visual* learner. When I read about the bunny hopping, he would run over to me, flop onto the arm of the chair, and try to seize the book (against my well-meaning protests) out of my hand. What disobedience! But all he wanted was to see the picture of the bunny hopping. That was how he learned best. And he's never had a problem with spelling as long as he could see the words first. Once again, my instincts as a father ran contrary to the learning styles of my children.

Needless to say, my youngest daughter was different from the other

bouncing all over the room like a rabbit! I hated it, but that's how she learned best.

Imagine a teacher trying to teach all three of my children at the same time! But truth is grasped most easily when it comes to people in the way that God designed them to learn.

Second, we need to meet people where they are because God has placed within human beings a natural *barrier against persuasion*. The stronger the barrier, the more stable the person. When someone comes along with an idea that is radically different from what we think, a psychological brick wall arises, and the more someone pounds against that wall, the more it is reinforced.

The only way around those "brick walls" is to approach people in the area of their felt needs, a point in that person's life where he or she is open to instruction. Students of world mission call this element of felt need the *point of contact*—that point in a person's or a group's experience where an aspect of the gospel intersects with their conscious needs and interests.

Frankly, however, the felt-need principle makes a Christian's life more complex because secular people are as diverse as snowflakes. Without a fresh and creative approach, each situation may appear hopeless. But although the attempt to reach secular people will have its ups and downs, it is a great adventure.

Where to now?

Over the last ten years I have written two books dealing with the

subject of reaching the secular mind. *Present Truth in the Real World* and *Knowing God in the Real World* were both published by Pacific Press Publishing Association and are still available at Adventist Book Centers (see ad below).

Present Truth was about method. How do you meet people where they are? What kind of strategies can open secular people to the gospel? What kinds of barriers prevent the church from being more successful in the developed world than it has been?

Knowing God, on the other hand, is about message rather than method. How do you present the gospel in terms that draw secular people and make it possible for them to understand? How can people have a relationship with God when they can't see, hear, or touch Him?

Are the ideas in these books still relevant, or has September 11 changed everything, in the United States, at least?

I was anxious to find out. In October 2001, I led a Seminary fact-finding team to New York City. We went fully prepared to discover that things had changed dramatically and that secular New Yorkers were now

open to the gospel in ways that they hadn't been before.

However, while some things in New York had changed, we learned that even the most "cutting-edge" churches were reaching few, if any, secular people. We went home convinced that strategies outlined ten years ago were still valid. As the case was then, secular people are still not normally reached by programs, calculated strategies, or high-tech extravaganzas. In the main, they are not reached by religious media or jargon. They remain highly resistant to what most of us call "church."

September 11 notwithstanding, the Western secular people whom I have observed are best reached one-on-one by people willing to live and invest in the neighborhoods and workplaces that they frequent. Secular people respond to relational approaches that meet them at points of felt need.

Secular people require freshness and creativity in those who are attempting to present the gospel to them. They need to hear the gospel in language that is free from parochial clichés. And regardless of how or where we meet them, it takes a lot of

time for secular people to make the transition from reality as they understand it to reality as Adventists and other conservative Christians understand it. Any "program" that ignores these realities is unlikely to have the kind of impact desired.

There is no magic potion. Those who would reach secular people must be prepared to meet them where they are. God's method is still the best method. ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1940), 34.
- 2 ———, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md. Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), 1:19-22.
- 3 See *The Desire of Ages*, 34.

The 10/40 window of the West

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preacher, Paul: "I make it my ambition to proclaim the good news, not where Christ has already been named [read, "where the light is better"], so that I do not build on someone else's foundation, but as it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him shall see, and those who have never heard of him shall understand'" (Rom. 15:20, 21, NRSV).

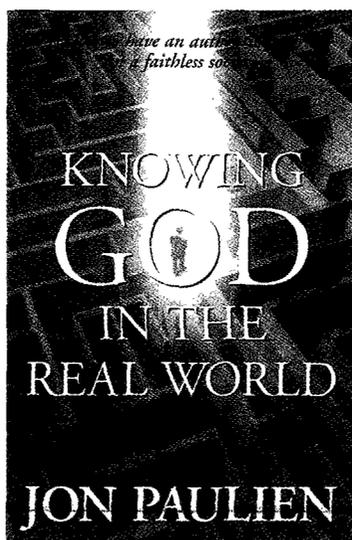
With the ambition of Paul and the method of Jesus, in the immortalized, now well-known, American words of September 11, "Let's roll!" ■

- 1 Gary Krause, Global Missions Offering Appeal, March 2000.
- 2 *USA Today*, March 7, 2002.
- 3 Douglas Groothuis, *Truth Decay* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 22.
- 4 Eddie Gibbs, *ChurchNext: Quantum Changes in How We Do Ministry* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 197.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 200.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1905), 143, emphasis supplied.
- 7 For more information, go to <www.lifedevelopment.info>.
- 8 If you would like to be a part of this postmodern evangelistic strategy, log on to <www.lifedevelopment.info> and register your interest.
- 9 See Mark Mittleberg, Lee Strobel, and Bill Hybels, *Becoming a Contagious Christian: Leader's Guide* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1995). At Pioneer Memorial Church, Andrews University, we are writing a follow-up seminar and book, soon to be available for "the contagious Adventist."

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The apostolic gospel: The master key to Revelation's code

Hans K. LaRondelle

Note: Part 2 of a three-part series on keys for understanding the book of Revelation. Part 3 will appear in the May issue of Ministry.

In the first article (January 2003) we noticed that John alluded consistently to the Old Testament in describing his symbolic visions of “what must soon take place” (Rev. 1:1, NIV). This referral to the Hebrew Scripture contains John’s first theological key for understanding his apocalyptic visions. Such use of the Old Testament points us not only to the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith but also to its Old Testament literary and theological contexts.

The book of Revelation assumes that the God of Israel is the “God and Father” of Jesus Christ (1:1, 6), and that God’s plan for the world will be realized through His Messiah, who participates in the unique identity of God (compare Rev. 1:8, 17; 21:6; and 22:13). From the start the “Apocalypse of Jesus” adopts and redefines the course of salvation history as outlined in Daniel’s book (Rev. 1:1, 19; Dan. 2:28, 29; 10:21).

But how could the Jewish Christians be absolutely sure that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of prophecy and that the crucified Jesus was now ruling from the throne of God in heaven? How could they be assured that Jesus is the King-Messiah while His people were thrown before hungry lions or burned at the stake under Roman rule?

John received this certainty of faith in his inaugural vision: “When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said, ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One. I was dead, and behold, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and of Hades’” (Rev. 1:17, 18, NIV).

Here John testifies that the risen Lord identifies Himself completely with the historic Jesus, whom John had known personally, on whose breast he had leaned, and whose testimonies he recorded in the fourth Gospel. John’s identification is based on the historical resurrection of Jesus from the dead. As “the firstborn from the dead” (Rev. 1:5, NIV), and “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:20, NIV), Christ is the source of the Christian’s faith and hope (see 1 Cor. 15:20-26). A personal testimony from the risen Lord inspired the saints to take courage and persevere in faithfulness to Christ till the end.

The blood of Christ, the Lamb

John begins to praise his Lord as “him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever” (Rev. 1:5, 6, NIV). This doxology recognizes Jesus’ atoning death out of love for humanity. The shedding of “His blood” on the cross has set the believer “free” from bondage to “sin,” a phrase that reminds of Israel’s historic release from Egypt as the house of bondage: “The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt” (Exod. 12:13, NRSV).

John makes his implied allusion to Jesus as the antitypical Passover Lamb more explicit by giving Jesus 28 times the title: “the Lamb” (Rev. 5:6, 7, 12, 13, etc). The symbolic title “the Lamb” affirms the validity of His death as “a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45, NRSV), the heart and core of the apostolic gospel (see John 1:29; 1 Cor. 5:7; 15:1-4; Rom. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:18-20; Heb. 1:3; 9:14, 22). By this main symbol for Jesus, John indicates that the gospel is the controlling theme of the Revelation. Roy C. Naden rightly states: “Throughout the book this symbol of Jesus keeps our eyes focused on our only Source of redemption.”¹

John assures the saints that they will overcome the devil “by the blood of the Lamb and



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by the word of their testimony” in the face of death (Rev. 12:11, NRSV; cf. 6:9), that they are written in “the Lamb’s book of life” (21:27, NRSV), will sing with Israel “the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb” (15:3, NRSV), and shout “Hallelujahs” at the future “marriage of the Lamb” in heaven (19:7, NRSV).

On the basis of His accomplished work of redemption, Jesus calls His followers to be His witnesses in all the world (see Acts 1:8). To the church at Pergamum He assures: “I know where you are living, where Satan’s throne is. Yet you are holding fast to my name, and you did not deny your faith in me even in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan lives” (Rev. 2:13, NRSV).

Jesus as priestly “Son of Man”

In his inaugural vision, John saw Jesus ministering in the midst of “seven golden lampstands” as one “like a son of man,” dressed in a priestly robe with a golden sash across His chest (1:13, NIV). Remarkably, John adopts Daniel’s description, “one like a son of man” (Dan. 7:13, NIV), to identify his risen Lord who ministers as a King-Priest for His church on earth. This priestly application of Daniel’s “Son of Man” is a gospel interpretation that was new to Judaism. Clearly, John is not applying Daniel’s Son of Man exclusively to the final judgment. He is commissioned by the heavenly Priest to write in a book “what you see” and to send it as a prophetic-apostolic letter to seven local churches located in the Asia Minor of his time (1:11).

The Apocalypse of Jesus thus had immediate relevance for the church in John’s time as well as for the church of all times “until” the Lord comes. Christ’s emphasis on “holding fast” what the church had received, was His reference to the apostolic gospel (1 Cor. 15:1, 2). Faithfully holding fast to this gospel will enable each believer, by the “keeping” grace

of Jesus, to be victorious in the trial that will come in the end time “on the whole world to test the inhabitants of the earth” (Rev. 3:10, NRSV).

Those who are losing sight of Jesus in self-righteous complacency and are living in a spiritual self-deception, are urged to invite Him back as their Savior and Lord. Especially the Laodicean church is in serious danger of losing the gospel itself (Rev. 3:14-21). As the “faithful and true witness” Christ pleads with them: “Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking” (3:20, NRSV). He counsels “to buy from me gold refined by fire so that you may be rich; and white robes to clothe you and to keep the shame of your nakedness from being seen; and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see” (3:18, NRSV).

Seventh-day Adventists and the gospel emphasis

Seventh-day Adventists at first gave a one-sided emphasis to the law of God, without giving due emphasis to the gospel in their oft-cited, mandating Scripture verse: “Here is a call for the endurance of the saints, those who keep the commandments of God and hold fast to the faith of Jesus” (Rev. 14:12, NRSV).²

When many in 1888 began to recognize the fundamental importance of the “eternal gospel” in their mandate, Ellen White wrote in 1892: “The Laodicean message has been sounding. . . . Justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ are the themes to be presented to a perishing world,”³ and, “He invites us to buy the white raiment, which is His glorious righteousness; and the eyesalve, that we may discern spiritual things. Oh, shall we not open the heart’s door to this heavenly visitor . . . ?”⁴

This concern of the heavenly Christ places the apostolic gospel at the center of His letters to the church. Such is the priestly ministry of Christ for His church: to make it a shining light of saving and sanctifying truth in all the world (cf. Matt. 5:14; Rev. 18:1).

The gospel connects Revelation’s early messages with its later visions

John first describes Jesus as one “like a son of man” (1:13, NIV) ministering as our Priest in heaven during the church age. Later John views the future coming of Daniel’s “one like a son of man” with a golden crown on His head and a sharp sickle in His hand, as the divine King-Judge (Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-15). John thus distinguishes between two different offices of the heavenly “Son of Man”: His priestly ministry of intercession and assurance during the church age, and His concluding work as the Judge of all men at His second coming. This twofold application of Daniel’s “Son of Man” to Jesus’ work as Priest and Judge unites the letters and the visions in an indivisible unity.

John must send the entire Apocalypse (“what is now and what will take place later” [1:19, NIV]), the seven letters together with the visions, to those churches that in their spiritual condition represent the church universal. Each letter contains Jesus’ pastoral counsel to “hold fast to what you have,” “only hold fast to what you have until I come,” “until the end” (2:10, 11, 13, 25, 26; 3:11, NRSV). John testifies that he himself was banished to Patmos for holding fast to “the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (1:9, NRSV).

Recent studies have shown that both sections of the book of Revelation illuminate and interpret each other. Roberto Badenas concludes: “A comparison of the letters to the seven churches (2:1-3:22) and the vision of the New Jerusalem (21:1-22:5) demonstrates that the links between the two passages are many. . . . What the letters promised to the members of the churches is fulfilled in the citizens of the New Jerusalem, according to Revelation 21-22.”⁵

Along with this, G. K. Beale observes that the seven letters are integrally related to the visionary body of the book: “The concluding

promises of the letters overtly anticipate the end of the book and the final paradisaical vision (cf. chs. 19–22).⁶ He calls the letters “the literary microcosm of the entire book’s macrocosmic structure.”⁷ This implies that the symbolic visions of chapters 4–22 function as interpretative portrayals of the warnings and promises stated in the letters to the individual churches that come in chapters 1 and 2.

Such a substantial correlation between the letters and the visions affirms that the apostolic gospel remains the unchanged test for the church age from the beginning till the very end. The last generation is explicitly commissioned to revive the “eternal gospel” as the last warning message to the world (14:6, 7; 18:1). The last generation of God’s people must again express their loyalty to the apostolic gospel, just as the first generation of Christians did by being faithful witnesses to Christ and His testimony (compare 1:9; 2:13; and 12:17; 20:4).

Connecting Daniel and Revelation, Son of Man, and Judge

John concludes the prologue of his Apocalypse with the climactic theme of his book: “Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye will see him, even those who pierced him; and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail” (1:7, NRSV).

Here John evidently alludes to Daniel’s vision of the world judgment in chapter 7. Daniel saw “one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven” to the Ancient One in the heavenly courtroom, where He will receive the authority to execute the final judgment over all humankind (Dan. 7:13, 14, 27, NRSV).

Revelation 1:7 gives Daniel’s “Son of Man” an end-time fulfillment in the second coming of Jesus. That identification of Jesus with Daniel’s celestial figure had been introduced already by Jesus during His earthly ministry, when He gave this testimony under oath before the high priest

Caiaphas: “From now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64, NRSV).

John now reaffirms the coming of the Son of Man “with the clouds” from heaven to earth (Rev. 1:7). That future “coming” expands Daniel’s vision, because Daniel had seen the Son of Man coming only to the Ancient of Days in heaven. Now John sees Him coming as the King-Judge to planet Earth, where every living being will then witness the awesome splendor of His appearance as the King of kings and Lord of lords (also 6:12–17; 19:11–21).

John repeats this end-time fulfillment of Daniel 7, when he describes a later vision: “I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one ‘like a son of man’ with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand” (Rev. 14:14, NIV). This vision vividly portrays Jesus’ return as both King and Judge: He wears “a golden crown on his head” and has a “sharp sickle in his hand” to reap “the harvest of the earth” (14:14) and to gather “the clusters of the vine of the earth” (14:18, NRSV).

The feature of a “sharp sickle” is an apparent pointer or allusion to Joel’s judgment vision that portrayed Yahweh’s world judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat: “Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Go in, tread, for the winepress is full. The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great” (Joel 3:13, NRSV).

This creative blending of different judgment visions in the Old Testament into a new Christ-centered consummation illustrates John’s interpretive approach. He gives Daniel’s and Joel’s judgment visions a Christological fulfillment that exalts Jesus to divine glory and redefines the test of truth as faith in Jesus as the God-sent Messiah and obedience to His testimony (see Rev. 1:2, 3, 9; 12:17; 14:12; 20:4). John thus reformulates Israel’s judgment prophecies

by means of his Christological gospel principle.

John’s universalizing hermeneutic

Six times John stresses that the final harvest will be a harvest of “the earth” (see Rev. 14:14–19, NRSV). John thus unmistakably teaches a universal fulfillment of the national and Palestinian portrayals in the Old Testament. Revelation 14:14–20 is a telling example of the worldwide extension of God’s judgment because of the global witness of the gospel by the faithful church (see Matt. 24:14; Rev. 14:6, 7; 18:1).

Another illuminating example of John’s gospel key is his allusion to Zechariah’s judgment vision, when he announces that “every eye will see him, even those who pierced him,” along with the universal mourning because of him (Rev. 1:7, NRSV). Some five hundred years before Christ, Zechariah had predicted: “And I will pour out a spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that, when they look on the one whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. . . . The land shall mourn, each family by itself” (Zech. 12:10, 12, NRSV).

Zechariah announced a shocking event in Jerusalem’s future: She would reject and “pierce” her own Messiah, and afterwards “mourn for him as one mourns for an only child” (Zech. 12:10). John alludes to this remarkable Messianic prediction, and adds his universalizing emphasis: “every eye will see him” and “all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him” (Rev. 1:7, NIV).

John explicitly expands the original meaning of Zechariah’s prophecy to a worldwide scale. To reject Israel’s Messiah and because of Him to “mourn” or “wail” is no longer limited to Israelites. John extends

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Why should Jesus be both divine and human?

Seventh-day Adventist statement of faith #3:

"God the eternal Father is the Creator, Source, Sustainer, and Sovereign of all creation. He is just and holy, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness. The qualities and powers exhibited in the Son and the Holy Spirit are also revelations of the Father. (Gen. 1:1; Rev. 4:11; 1 Cor. 15:28; John 3:16; 1 John 4:8; 1 Tim. 1:17; Exod. 34:6, 7; John 14:9.)"

Seventh-day Adventist statement of faith #4:

"God the eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. Through Him all things were created, the character of God is revealed, the salvation of humanity is accomplished, and the world is judged. Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God. By His miracles He manifested God's power and was attested as God's promised Messiah. He suffered and died voluntarily on the cross for our sins and in our place, was raised from the dead, and ascended to minister in the heavenly sanctuary in our behalf. He will come again in glory for the final deliverance of His people and the restoration of all things. (John 1:1-3, 14; Col. 1:15-19; John 10:30; 14:9; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:17-19; John 5:22; Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb. 2:9-18; 1 Cor. 15:3, 4; Heb. 8:1, 2; John 14:1-3.)"—Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, 7, 8.

It was Jesus' truly amazing claim: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him" (John 14:6, 7).¹

It is hard to imagine how Jesus could

WOODROW W. WHIDDEN



have been any clearer in His claim of profound identity with His Father. But the full force of this astounding self-assertion did not seem to register on Philip: "Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.'" Jesus' response is even more astonishing: "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 14: 8, 9).

To know Jesus is to know the Father. To study the person of the Son in His incarnate self-revelation is to see the most accurate portrayal of the divine person of the Father. So when we confess that God the Father is "immortal, all-powerful, all-knowing, above all, ever present," and "infinite and beyond human comprehension," we firmly hold that He has supremely shown Himself "through His self-revelation" in the incarnate Person of the God/Man, Jesus Christ. Therefore, what the Bible reveals about the divine Jesus, is also the revelation of the divine nature and character of the Father.

Is Jesus "forever truly God," "the Eternal Son," and "also truly man"? Seventh-day Adventists have forthrightly confessed that Jesus is both "truly God" and "also truly man."² What is the biblical evidence for affirming Christ's full deity and genuine humanity? Why is such affirmation so essential to the effective carrying out of the Trinity's great

effort to reconcile the sin-alienated human race?

The full deity of Christ

The Bible presents three major types of evidence to show that Jesus possessed an inherently divine nature that is the same as that of His Father:³ (a) The New Testament expressly refers to Jesus as God; (b) Jesus applied to Himself titles and claims reserved for the God of the Old Testament; (c) the New Testament writers apply to Jesus Old Testament names and titles for God.

The New Testament expressly calls Jesus God. Hebrews 1:7, 8 says that while God made the angels to be "spirits and His ministers a flame of fire," "to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.'" Hebrews 1:8 is only one of seven direct New Testament applications of the Greek word for God (*theos*) to Jesus (the other six are in John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Rom. 9:5; Titus 2:13; and 2 Peter 1:1).

Let's be clear as to what the New Testament writers, especially the author of Hebrews, are saying in these verses: They are referring to Jesus as "God," and in Hebrews the writer is interpreting the Old Testament by applying to Jesus a psalm (45:6) originally addressed to the God of the Old Testament.

And let's make no mistake about the grammar of Hebrews 1:8—the expression "O God" is clearly in the Greek grammatical case of direct address (called the vocative case). In other words, the biblical writers are expressly applying the title "God" to Jesus.

Jesus applies divine titles and claims to Himself. The most singular example of this is John 8:58: "Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.'" Jesus was telling the Pharisees that He is none other than the God of the Exodus, and He applied

Exodus 3:14 to Himself: "And God said to Moses, 'I AM WHO I AM.'"

Furthermore, this "God" who speaks in Exodus 3:14 goes on in verse 15 to further clarify His identity as "The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." In other words, Jesus not only claimed to be the God of the Exodus but also the "Lord" (*Yahweh*) of the patriarchs. Is it any wonder that the unbelieving Pharisees "took up stones to throw at Him" (John 8:59)—the punishment for blasphemy?

Another startling claim, which was also considered to be blasphemy by the Jewish leaders, is found in John 5:17. The context is the accusation of Sabbath violation because Jesus performed a miracle of healing on the Sabbath. "Jesus answered them, 'My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.'" His opponents and John clearly understood Christ's response to be a claim of divine equality with God the Father: "Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God" (verse 18).

Application of divine names to Jesus by New Testament writers. Hebrews 1:10-12 applies the supreme Old Testament title for God (*JHWH* or *Jahweh*) to Jesus. The author does this by applying Psalm 102:25-27 to Jesus. It was not unusual for the New Testament writers to do this; but what is striking about this application is that Psalm 102 was addressed originally to the "Lord" (*Yahweh*) of the Old Testament. Thus the New Testament author is quite comfortable in applying passages that were originally addressed to the self-existent God of Israel to Jesus. The strong implication is that Jesus is the "Lord," the *Yahweh* (*JHWH*), of the Old Testament.

In Revelation 1:17 Jesus identifies Himself as "the First and the Last." John here is drawing on Isaiah 44:6: "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the First and I am the Last; besides Me there is no God.'" What are we to make of

this terminology that the writer reports as coming from the mouth of Jesus? Is it not obvious that John is telling us that Christ, our High Priest, is none other than the Lord, that is, *JHWH*, *Yahweh*, or *Jehovah*, of the Old Testament?

The divine Christ is fully human

While Seventh-day Adventists have forthrightly declared Christ's essential and substantive deity, they have also made it abundantly clear that His deity did not in any way compromise His full humanity as the incarnate God/Man. Scripture witnesses to the full humanity of Christ.

The most often cited passages are Hebrews 2:14 ("as the children have

while Christ's humanity was "affected" by sin (He was "weakened"), His human will was not "infected" with the animus of evil or sinful "bents," "inclinations," "propensities," or "tendencies" to do that which was contrary to His Father's will; that while He took *upon* Him our weakened sinful human nature, yet *in* Him Himself there was not the least taint of sin or sinfulness.

Theological implications of Christ's deity and humanity

The deity implications. The full deity of Christ is deemed to be absolutely essential to the efficacy of the Trinitarian effort to redeem sinful humanity. This involves not only the great provisions of Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins

THE DEBATE AMONG ADVENTIST THINKERS HAS NEVER BEEN OVER CHRIST'S HUMANITY, BUT OVER HIS SINLESSNESS.

partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same") and Romans 8:3 ("sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh").

Besides these verses, Adventist writers have often employed numerous other passages, such as: Hebrews 4:15 ("He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin"), Hebrews 2:17 ("in all things He had to be made like His brethren"), Hebrews 4:15 (He was "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" [KJV]), Hebrews 5:2 (He was "compassed with infirmity" [KJV]). Then there is Matthew 4 (the temptation of Christ) and Luke 1:31-35 (the Annunciation).

With such forceful evidence about the reality of Christ's humanity and His temptations, the debate among Adventist thinkers has never been over Christ's humanity, but over His sinlessness. While all affirm that He never sinned (neither in act nor thought), there has been much discussion about the proper interpretation of the phrase "likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3).

There is a growing consensus that

but also the work of the divine Son (by the Holy Spirit) to effect character transformation.

First, before the Trinity could bring the efficacy of Christ's saving life and death to bear on the salvation of sinful human beings, there was the urgent need to reveal to sin-alienated people what God is truly like. And the only Being who could offer such an arresting revelation of the divine nature would be God Himself. This was the primary mission of Jesus, the divine Son of God.

It was and is this self-revelation of divine love that reaches out to the sodden senses of the lost race and brings them to an awareness of what Christ has done, is doing, and will do to bring about a full reconciliation between God and struggling humanity. And only One who is fully divine could truly represent what the Godhead is all about.

When it comes to the actual provision for salvation, especially in His atoning death, only One who is equal with the Father in divine nature could offer a sacrifice that would fully satisfy

God's divine justice. And only the fully divine Christ would be powerful enough to re-create scarred human beings into the likeness of divine nature.

In other words, only the divine Son could effect the conversion of the new birth and bring about character changes consistent with the divine likeness. To sum it up, only the Son, who is love incarnate, could manifest such a transforming "love, so amazing, so divine."

The humanity implications. What is it about Jesus' full humanity that is so acutely essential to the saving efficacy of His life, death, and intercession, and the dynamic application of personal salvation to responsive sinners? The divine self-revelation had to be clothed with humanity or the raw presence of deity would destroy sinful humans. Thus, Christ "clothed His divine nature with the garb of humanity, and demonstrated before the heavenly universe, before the unfallen worlds, and before the fallen world how much God loves the human race."⁴

God's love was thus manifested in the following ways:

First, the climactic revelation of divine love came at Calvary. Since deity cannot die (1 Tim. 6:16), it was absolutely necessary for Christ to take on human nature if He was to offer Himself in death as a sacrifice for sin. This unique combination of deity and humanity formed the basis of a powerful sin offering: Though His deity did not literally die, it consented to His human death every step of the way. Therefore Christians can truly confess that, in a very special sense, "God died." The sacrificial death of the Man was given divine value because of the constant consent of His deity.

Second, Christ's humanity was absolutely essential to His work as our great Exemplar. Since God cannot be tempted (James 1:13), Jesus had to become a human in order to experience temptation and give us the effectual example of His own victory over the wiles and deceptions of our arch enemy.

Adventists have consistently made two key points: (1) The temptations of Jesus were as real as His humanity (with the possibility of His yielding to them); and (2) the key issue in all His temptations was whether He would rely on His deity or trust solely in the imparted power of His Father. His inherent divine power made the temptation to trust self (the heart of all temptation) much more difficult to resist.

Third, the sinlessness of His human nature and perfect obedience (His character) were essential to the efficacy of His atoning sacrifice. One trace of sin would have disqualified Him from being our atoning substitute and sacrifice.

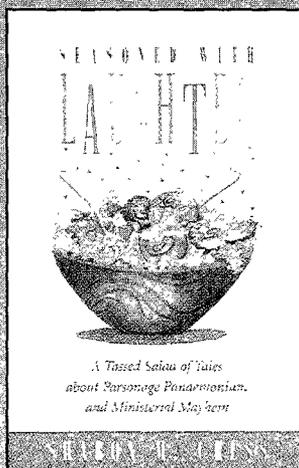
Fourth, the profound union of both His victorious humanity and self-sacrificing deity uniquely fitted Him to be the "one mediator between God and men" (1 Tim. 2:5, KJV). Only one who is fully human could give empathetic help to fallen humanity and only one who is fully God could stand before the Father as our victorious Advocate.

In His role as our divine/human Advocate and High Priest in heaven, Christ has forever immortalized Calvary as the effectual plea of redeeming love for the doomed race. Could there be a greater manifestation of love than that which has been personified in the Person of Christ, our great Substitute and Surety before the Father? And could there be any greater, more comprehensive or effective plan for saving fallen human beings, than the one conceived of and offered in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ? ■

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

- 1 Unless otherwise stated, all Scripture passages are from the New King James Version.
- 2 All the expressions in quotation marks in this and the two previous paragraphs are taken from the two fundamental beliefs that lead off this article.
- 3 For an extensive discussion of the evidence, see my chapters in Section One of *The Trinity: Understanding God's Love, His Plan of Salvation and Christian Relationships* (Hagerstown, Md. Review and Herald Pub Assn. 2002), 16-119. These chapters also deal with passages that are most often cited by anti-Trinitarians to deny the eternal deity of Christ. See especially chapter 6 and its Supplement 92-112.
- 4 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 5:114.

Seasoned With Laughter



This book has been described as a "tossed salad of tales about parsonage pandemonium and ministerial mayhem." Author Sharon Cress has collected hilarious tales from pastoral families around the world and compiled them in this book. Proceeds from *Seasoned With Laughter* will be used to help pastoral spouses spread the gospel in their own neighborhoods.

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Visitation revisited

JAMES A. CRESS



Several months ago we discussed the power of a visit in the life of a non-attending friend who was reclaimed to the church by the initiative of a caring pastor. Expanding on this concept, I encourage you to implement the following concepts:

Prioritize time for visitation. If you fail to plan, you're not likely to visit. Some chance encounters can have an impact, but intentionally scheduling blocks of time allows you to target who you should visit and to organize a systematic approach.

Visit by appointment. Demonstrate the value you place on time both for yourself and those you visit by establishing an advance schedule. Although some people welcome "drop-in" guests at any moment, most prefer notice. Also, when a person knows that you will visit, the Holy Spirit can prepare their mind for a spiritual discussion.

Keep it short! Like sermons, pastoral visits need not be everlasting to make eternal impact. Jesus' interaction with people demonstrates how much can be accomplished in short encounters.

Don't visit alone. For your own protection, especially when visiting someone of the opposite sex, always take a visitation partner. "Two-by-two" is Jesus plan. Request a mature member to serve as your visitation partner. If you enter a home unaccompanied, your reputation is at risk from what someone might say happened. False accusations are nearly impossible when two go together.

Find assistance. You cannot and should not do all the parish visitation yourself. Recruit lay elders to specific responsibility for visitation. Train elders by having them accompany you and then empower them to find their own visitation partners and to accept responsibility for nurturing an assigned group of congregants plus potential members.

Expand your staff. Teach your members that a visit from their assigned elder constitutes a pastoral visit. Provide each elder with your own business cards and ask them to begin each visit as your delegated representative, an extension of your pastoral care. "Pastor asked me to visit and pray with you."

Go with an "apparent agenda." Give a Bible tract, encouraging booklet, church bulletin, or study guide to each person. This establishes that your visit is intentional, not casual, and immediately focuses the conversation on spiritual matters. Your elders should begin each visit by presenting your card and the "apparent agenda" gift. "Pastor requested that I bring you this tract."

State your specific purpose. After setting a spiritual framework with your "apparent agenda," move directly to your specific reason for coming by asking an open-ended question which cannot be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, "How do you feel about your relationship with God at this time in your life?" or "What have you observed in our church that encourages your faith or causes challenges for you?"

Ask questions for specific needs. To an inactive or non-attending member: "How can your church better serve your needs?" To those who should be involved in church activities: "What areas of service for Christ would interest

you if you received training to accomplish the task?" To those who have influence in the community: "Who could you introduce to me so that I might invite them to our church services?" To those who know a lot of people: "What special events could you help us design and implement to which you would invite your friends?"

Meet special needs. For those who are grieving: "Please tell me the story of your loved one's impact on your own life." To those who are sick, "How can I pray for you to assure you of God's love, forgiveness, and promises?" To the elderly: "Tell me how God has led you and what provides you assurance of His value for you personally?" To parents: "What would you like me to pray for concerning your children?" To volunteers or leaders: "I want to praise God in appreciation for the contribution you make to His cause."

Respect confidentiality. Never gossip about information you receive. However, never promise confidentiality to those who victimize others with physical, emotional, sexual violence and abuse. In fact, in most jurisdictions clergy are legally required to report any knowledge or suspicion of sexual violation of children or teens. Never fail to follow your professional, ethical, moral, and legal responsibility to protect the innocent from predators.

Enjoy social events. Every person needs to relax and enjoy festive occasions such as parties, weddings, luncheons, and birthday or anniversary celebrations where you will likely meet new and interesting individuals. Pleasant conversation can be followed with your business card or a brief note of encouragement as an excellent way to initiate a new relationship. Remain observant for those who would welcome the opportunity to visit with you further. ■

Letters *continued from page 3*

I was disappointed to see the lack of biblical support for Rex Edwards's position on democratic leadership ("Spiritual Leadership or Baptized Secularism," September 2002). Perhaps it is because none exists? Servant leadership was indeed Christ's teaching on the subject of authority to His disciples (later, apostles). But does such teaching mandate a democratic process within the local congregation or other governing body? Were the apostles voted into authoritative leadership positions? Did the Jerusalem Council include the voice of all Christians in the city? I can't help but wonder, what will be the result in asking all the official church members—some of which are actually the tares of Christ's parable, without spiritual life, yet formal members—to help make the most important spiritual decisions within a congregation? The democratic process within our American government arrives at watered-down legislation because all have a voice. How sad if God's direction for His church is similarly compromised!

Spiritual leadership, however defined, can never be autocratic; it would then cease to be spiritual. Biblical leadership seems to be a top-down appointment, rather than bottom-up election. Individually, prophets and apostles led with theocratic authority rather than elected power. God's church may use the democratic process to great advantage at times. We must be careful, though, not to silence God's voice through His chosen leaders while they remain true to both the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy.

—Brant Berglin, pastor, Anchorage, Alaska.

November 2002

My name is Willie Hucks, and I teach Introduction to Pastoral Ministry at Southwestern Adventist University in



Keene, Texas. I have most recently been a subscriber to *Ministry* since the spring of 2002, and, as previously, I enjoy the magazine immensely.

I was extra impressed with the November 2002 issue, dealing with Children's Ministries—most specifically, the need for pastors to come to the level of where the children are, so as to teach them.

This has been a deep burden, a passion of mine for a long time. I insisted on overseeing "Children's Chapel" in all my pastoral districts, and I know from experience the lifelong connections that are formed as a result of those five minutes during each Sabbath spent in telling that story.

The purpose of my writing is to inquire as to how I can obtain 15-20 copies of that issue. My Pastoral Ministry students *must* have it, for it is a keeper! I cannot emphasize enough to them how important the children are, for not only are the children won to Christ [through applying these principles], but so are their parents and so many others.

—Willie E. Hucks II, Keene, Texas.

The November issue of *Ministry* was very refreshing.

I was surprised by the cover, though, which said, "Start By Learning Their Names!" (Ron and Karen Flowers). Pastors must do more than know the names of the children in the church. Pastors must see these children as individual members of the body of Christ—each child is equal in importance to any adult in the congregation. Pastors must be interested even in the seemingly unimportant details of the lives of children. Pastors must be willing to listen to each child. Pastors must respect the individuality of each child. Children are more than faceless and nameless "trophies" on the pastor's record of baptisms.

The most important article in this issue was Melynne Johnson Tooley's compelling call, "Pastor, You Tell the Story." I agree wholeheartedly with the message in this article. I would have changed the fourth point from "You

can control the content" to "You can link the story to your sermon." I often developed the brief outline of the children's story into a more detailed illustration in the sermon. I used the Bible as my primary source for stories. I found the children were more attentive during the sermon because they wanted to hear "the rest of the story." Telling the children's story was the most useful tool I found for developing strong relationships with the children in the churches I served as pastor.

I found that "altitude influences attitude." I told the children's story from a sitting position so I was able to communicate at "eye level" with the children sitting on the front rows of the church. I wanted the children to recognize that I was their friend, not some intimidating authority figure who towered over them. I spoke in a quiet, conversational tone. A wireless microphone linked to the PA system enabled adult members of the congregation to hear the children's story. Each story was chosen as an example of God's loving care.

Pastors must become strong "advocates" for the children in their congregation.

—Wayne Willey, pastor, Bentonville, Arkansas.

The writer in the November 2002 article "Making Children Feel Welcome" made some good points. However, my own experience has been that many good teachers and preachers of adults do *not* make "good" teachers of children! However, I as one adult often gain understanding as I listen to a good children's teacher.

It is not enough to transfer good teachers or preachers to the teaching of our young. It is essential for the teacher to "translate" the biblical story from adult thought patterns to the modes of thought by which children are able to perceive these same stories. It takes a special adult to do this work, and few people have this ability as a natural gift. Visual aids cannot make up for this deficit. Thank God, it is possible to learn to do this kind of translation! ■

—Margaret Turner, Kettering, Ohio.

The apostolic gospel

continued from page 23

Zechariah's prediction to all nations. He thus enlarges the traditional concept of "Israel." What Zechariah predicted for the 12 tribes of Israel, John transfers to all the "tribes of the earth" (Rev. 1:7, NRSV), who assume the role of either a repentant or a remorseful Israel.

John's systematic universalizing of Israel's covenant promises teaches a generally overlooked principle of prophetic interpretation. John discloses that the apocalyptic consummation will not be Israel-centered but Christ-centered, no longer Palestine-centered but worldwide in its extension for the church of Jesus Christ!

The Christological fulfillment of Israel's Messianic prophecies implies the ecclesiological fulfillment of Israel's election.⁸ Christ explicitly confirms that His church is the true Israel of God when He declares: "The seven lampstands [of the Hebrew temple] are the seven [Christian] churches" (Rev. 1:20). Israel's divine calling to be the light of the world is now by Christ's divine authority renewed for the Christ-believing Israel of the 12 apostles, the church of Jesus, the Messianic people of God. They are called to testify of the saving light of His gospel "as a testimony to all the nations" (Matt. 24:14, NRSV).

The purpose of the Hebrew symbols in the Christian Apocalypse is to reassure the church of her continuity with Israel's calling (see Isa. 49:6) so that God's eternal plan for all humanity will be gloriously fulfilled. God knows no failure because of Jesus! Jesus is the "guarantee" of God's covenants with Israel (see Heb. 7:22).

The two complementary keys

In summary, the book of Revelation affirms two indissoluble keys for understanding its symbolic portrayals: (1) The symbols receive their theological meaning from the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) and Israel's salvation history; (2) the

Hebrew terms and images of that Bible and the literal nation of Israel receive a christological, ecclesiological, and universalizing fulfillment through the apostolic gospel.

Some interpreters of the book of Revelation apply only the first key, that is, they acknowledge John's use of Hebrew imagery and terminology but then literalize those ethnic and geographic portrayals to the Jewish people and their national enemies in the Middle East for our time. Such "absolute literalism" in prophetic interpretation is defended by Dispensationalism and popularized in the *New Scofield Reference Bible* (1967).

Other interpreters apply only the gospel key and ignore Daniel's root context and John's portrayals of "what must soon take place."⁹ Such extreme interpretations point up the need for a comprehensive key that unites both Testaments in an indivisible unity. John has added a summary key as a safeguard against any one-sided interpretation. All he had seen in his visions he summarized in this significant phrase: "the word of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ" (1:2, NIV). ■

The concluding part of this series will appear in Ministry's May issue.

- 1 Roy C. Naden, *The Lamb Among the Beasts* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1996), 25.
- 2 See George R. Knight, *A Search for Identity: The Development of Seventh-day Adventist Beliefs* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2000), 108, 109.
- 3 Ellen White in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1953-57) 7:964.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Roberto Badenas, "New Jerusalem: The Holy City," in *Symposium on Revelation*, book II, *Daniel and Revelation Committee Series*, vol. 7, F.B. Holbrook, ed. (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1992), 264, 265. see his diagram on 265.
- 6 G. K. Beale, *John's Use of the Old Testament in Revelation*, JSNT Suppl. Ser., 1998, 299.
- 7 Ibid., 300.
- 8 For an in-depth treatment of the Christological, ecclesiological, and universalizing principles of interpretation, see H. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation*. Andrews Univ. Monographs Studies in Religion, Vol. XIII (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 2001), 10th pr., chapters 5, 7, 9.
- 9 For an example, see G. Goldsworthy, *The Lamb and the Lion* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Pub., 1984), 146, 147.

Modern and postmodern

continued from page 4

viewed His world in His own third-dimensional way, and this is the view we must seek to know, and will know as we encounter Him deeply and honestly. While Jesus was truth (John 14:6), He was wise in His choice of where, when, how, and before whom He made truth assertions though make them He did.

In this issue of *Ministry*, we are presenting a bouquet of articles that address the theme of reaching postmodern people with the gospel. We have chosen to feature the work of key people in the Trans-European Division of Seventh-day Adventists, and some others, where the Church struggles to engage a potent form of postmodern culture.

The European approach is named and finds further expression on the Web site, <LIFEdevelopment.info>. . . so, log on! ■

When thinking big means thinking small

continued from page 17

ple's growth toward maturity and to fuller involvement in the congregation of the church.

Welcome to the big adventure

Growing such small life-development communities as a significant part of your church's strategy to reach people with the love of God in Christ may be one of the most challenging things you and your congregation have ever attempted. My guess, however, is that it will also be one of the most exciting and rewarding. This is a BIG, BIG adventure that happens by thinking small! ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 115.
- 2 For more details on how to form small life-development groups and centers, visit the <LIFEdevelopment.info> Web site.

SHOP TALK

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Your text for the week is the Transfiguration in Mark 9, packed with allusions to God, tabernacles, the Law and prophets, and a voice from a cloud. You could spend hours—even days—following the threads that appear in this passage, moving from English translation to Greek text, to dictionary, concordance, commentary, back and forth, and back again!

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In the corner of the Passage Guide window is a list of other power tools for studying the passage. Clicking "Exegetical Guide" brings up a report showing every Greek lemma (root) in the passage, each one fully parsed/declined and glossed, with links to dictionaries and lexicons that I can click to study each lemma. Soon I'm deep into

the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Kittel), gaining insight into the Greek word *oëci* that Peter uses in his offer to build "tabernacles" for the three figures. I stop and realize I've already accomplished more in a few minutes than I could have in an hour of shuffling paper books.

Some tools in the software do things not even possible with paper books. For example, I enter "six days" into an Internet-style search box and get results equivalent to having a phrase concordance. I can construct complex morphological searches or search only the words of Christ. The Compare Parallel Bible Versions tool lines up multiple versions of the Bible (of my choosing) and visually highlights the differences between them.

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Bonding with children

Arriving in a new church with many children who found it difficult to sit through the worship hour, I obtained a

glass pitcher that would hold a bag of M&Ms. The next Sabbath, I mentioned during the story time that I would have something for each child who listened quietly in church. I told them they would be given a "happy pill."

As I stood greeting at the door, my wife handed me the pitcher. The first child came by, and I asked if they had tried to listen. They responded, "Yes" and received a single "happy pill." Word spread quickly, and I gave each child one "happy pill" that morning. (Proximity to lunch and the single small candy did not upset parents.)

The next week, several children saw me before the service and told me they would be good and ready for their "happy pill" after church. Sure enough, the service was quieter and the children more attentive.

Soon the children began to cluster around me everywhere I went in the building. We talked as I learned their names. I gave hugs and received enthusiastic hugs in return. I had become "their" pastor.

Adults began to ask for "happy pills" because they were listening. I told the adults, deliberately, in the presence of the children, that these were "kid doses" and would be harmful to adults, especially those deacons who lounged in my study during service and raided the pitcher! "Happy pills" became something between the children and myself, adults excluded.

Seventeen years later and after nine years of retirement, when we visit that church on a Sabbath, children now adults come and ask if I brought any "happy pills" for them. By and large the majority of those children, still living in the area, are active in the church. I still get hugs! Bonded indeed! ■

—Roger H. Ferris, Seattle, Washington.

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Tuesday, April 1, 2003

MINISTRY | PROFESSIONAL GROWTH SEMINARS

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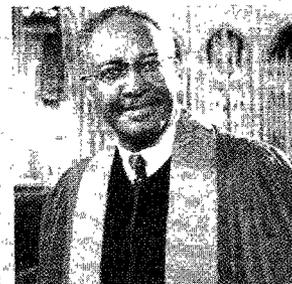
He's preached assurance to anxious souls from Hollywood to the halls of Congress. **Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie** is one of the world's most dynamic and trusted communicators of God's Word.



Dr. Randy Roberts of the University Church of Seventh-day Adventists in Loma Linda, California, brings a rich background as a teacher, pastor, and family therapist to this probing look at how pastors need to internalize the messages of acceptance and assurance that they carry.



Peacemaking demonstrates hope in human community, and **Dr. Hyveth Williams** has rebuilt hope in the diverse, multi-racial and multi-ethnic urban congregations she has served in Washington, D.C., Massachusetts and now in southern California.



In the heart of a hurting New York City neighborhood, **Dr. James A. Forbes, Jr.**, leads a congregation famous for its civic involvement and interfaith vision.

Here's how you can sponsor this live three hour seminar for pastors, chaplains, seminarians, lay preachers and administrators in your community.

REGISTER IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:



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FIND A DISH

Get access to satellite equipment through your church, college, seminary, hospital, or library. If you have questions about the equipment needed, contact us.

EQUIPMENT NEEDED:

North America:
C-band analog or ACN digital (MPEG2)

Africa, Mideast/South Asia:
PAS-7/10 C-band digital (MPEG2)

Europe: NSS-7 Ku-Band digital (MPEG2)

South America: ADSAT

Pacific Rim: PAS-2 C-band digital (MPEG2)

APRIL 1, TUESDAY

North America:
1:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m. EST
(Adjust for your time zone.)

**Africa, Europe, Mideast/South Asia,
Central & South America:**
18h00-21h30 GMT

APRIL 2, WEDNESDAY

Repeat Broadcast
Africa, Europe, Mideast/South Asia:
16h00-19h30 GMT

Pacific Rim: 00h30-04h00 GMT

live by satellite

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