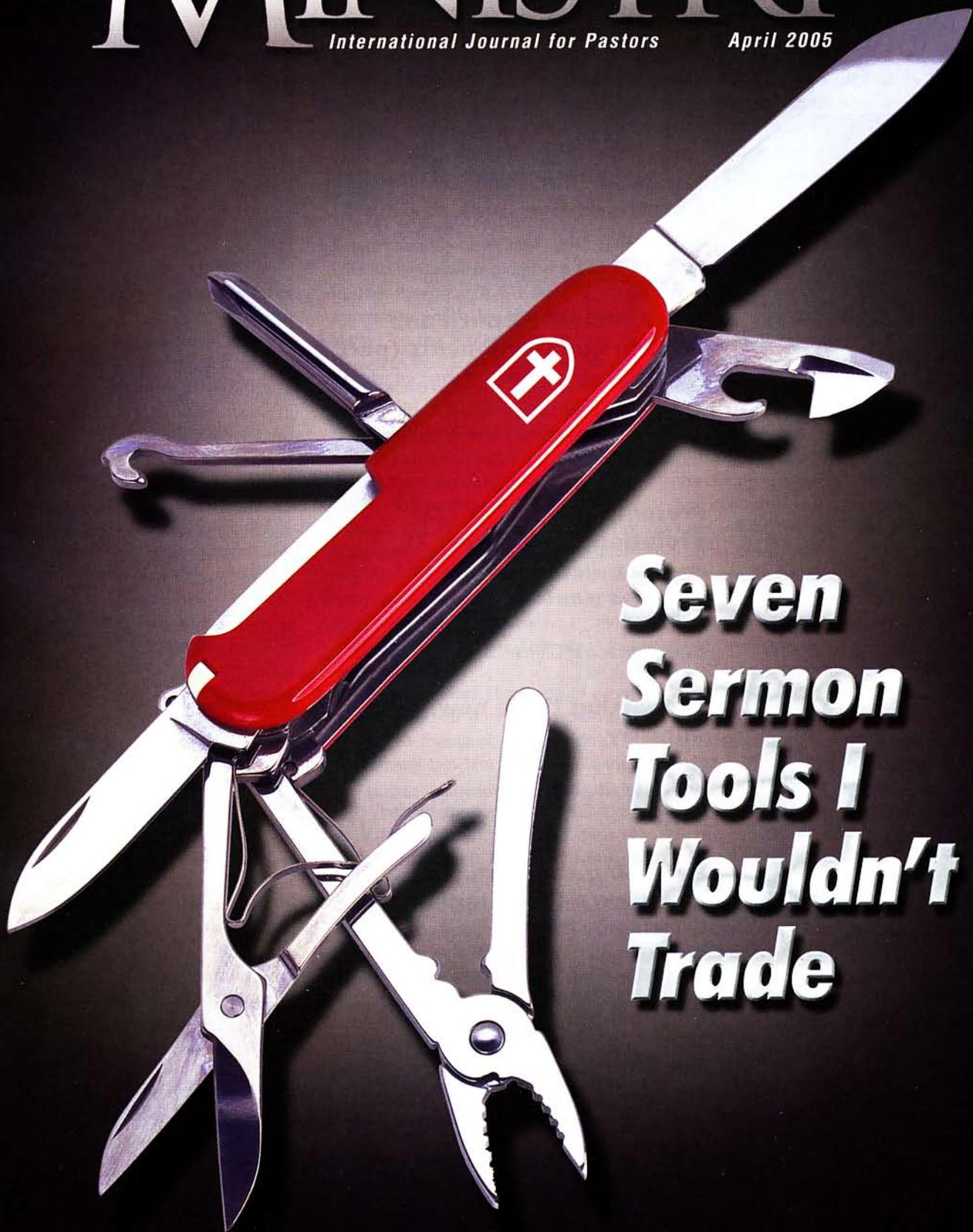


MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors

April 2005



**Seven
Sermon
Tools I
Wouldn't
Trade**

Ministry is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association and has been published since 1928.

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Seven sermon tools I wouldn't trade

Practical suggestions for composing material for sermons

Maylan Schurch

The Stain That Stays: a comprehensive book review

A book review

Herbert E. Douglass

The Apostolic Council and the Ten Commandments (part 2)

Final installment of a two-part series on where the issue of the Sabbath may have fitted into the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15

Tim Crosby

Presenting creation and evolution: How? (part 2)

Final in a two-part series on understanding and communicating the issues of evolution and special creation

Cindy Tutsch and Leonard Brand

Supporting those new to ministry

How may the church, local and corporate, provide better orientation and care for young pastors?

Joe Webb

Preaching the Word: an interview with evangelist Charles D. Brooks

Derek Morris

Political reality and the Holy Spirit: when change confronts the Church

Some of the issues behind leading the church as a spiritual organism rather than a mere ecclesiastical organization

Robert K. McIver

EVERY

Editorial

4

Pastor & Pastor

26

Resources

31

BUT THE ISSUE IS, WHAT QUALIFIED CHRIST'S HUMANITY TO . . . DIE IN OUR PLACE?

None of the letters responding to Oliver Jacques' article on vicarious substitution (February 2005) dealt with the real issue regarding this doctrine. Both the Bible and Ellen G. White make it absolutely clear that Christ died for our sins and in our place. But the issue is, what qualified Christ's humanity to legally die in our place?

The Bible makes it clear that an innocent man cannot be put to death for the guilty (Deut. 24:16; Ezk. 18:20). It is for this reason Vicarious Substitution was accused of "legal fiction" by Roman Catholic scholars in the Counter-Reformation, and today by Muslim scholars. Only when we teach that Christ assumed the condemned fallen nature of the whole human race He came to redeem, can we preach an ethical gospel.

Assuming [Taking upon Himself] our sinful nature did not make Him a sinner, as some would have us believe, since it did not belong to Him but to us. Had He consented to the sinful desires of that nature, even by a thought, He would have become a sinner in need of a savior. —Jack Sequeira, pastor (retired), Oregon.

My response (June 2004) to Roy Naden's (June 2003) article on the *human nature of Christ* has evoked interesting comments in the February 2005 issue. Pastors David Pendleton, Leonard Tolhurst, and John Fowler chide me for noting that Ellen White did not use the word "vicariously." (She didn't.) They suggest that I assert her rejecting of the vicarious atonement of Jesus. Not my intention! As in her writings, I have and do earnestly accept and preach His sufferings and death on my behalf. But in

seeking salvation, I need to know, *as I follow Him to the Cross*, that while He is the Son of God, He is also the "Seed" of Abraham and *thus, my blood Brother*. He accepted my sinful nature but lived a sinless life. The same wonderful relationship affects my understanding of the Resurrection, Second Coming, His High Priestly ministry, the Judgment, and life in the New Earth. Thanks to the *Incarnation*, which was genuine, He shall always be our Brother! He referred to Himself as the "Son of Man." Did He not pray that we would be "one" in Him? In my response to Naden on the subject of *Christ's human nature*, I referred to Ellen White's non-use of the *adverb* "vicariously." There was no "make believe." He took it "for real!" He shall always be one with us. Will He not even "marry" the redeemed? Will it be a vicarious marriage? In reviewing my letter, I see how I was misunderstood. Poor syntax! I joyfully accept the chastisement. . . .

—Oliver Jacques, Fallbrook, California.

Editorial note: Thank you to everyone who shared their thinking on this issue. This thread of correspondence is now closed.

When we speak of Christ's substitutionary death, we do not speak of the physical death He suffered but of the second death ("Nothing But the Blood of Jesus," James A. Cress, April 2004). It was not the physical pain and death which paid for my sins. I may die the physical death, but as long as I am in Christ Jesus, I will never die the second death. There was a purpose in the gruesomeness of the crucifixion, but

that purpose was secondary to the atonement. The torment and humiliation of the cross served to illustrate, for eternity, the enemy's wickedness versus God's selfless love, but *it did not ransom the world*.

When we make Christ's physical suffering our central focus, we are distracted from the real price He paid for us. We may graphically illustrate the crucifixion and still miss the fullness of the atonement. Our estimation of the degree of Christ's physical suffering can never equal what He experienced in the garden and at Calvary. Maybe that is why we are instructed to spend a thoughtful hour each day contemplating the closing scenes of the cross. A lifetime isn't enough to comprehend the magnitude of Christ's sacrifice.

The crucifixion was gruesome. The pain was unspeakable. The humiliation was crushing. But the separation from the Father was unimaginable. Praise the Lord He took it all for me!

—Eric Bates, pastor, Brookhaven, Mississippi.

I regret that reference to Lyndelle Chiomenti's work, quoted in my article "Lost and Found" (December 2004), was omitted during the editorial process. Thoughts from the Sabbath School quarterly and her book that accompanied it, *The Parables of Jesus: Stories of Love and Grace*, were quoted early in my article and should have been acknowledged. Her work was a major influence in my study of Luke 15. ■
—Patricia A Habada, Sabbath School and Personal Ministries department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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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.

Why Christianity?

In a compelling course taught by Gottfried Oosterwal at Andrews University in the late 1960s, we were required to read a potent little volume by Hendrik Kraemer titled, *Why Christianity of All Religions?* As I look back, those 125 pages of wisdom and insight qualify as among the most influential in my life.

With Kraemer we can still ask the provocative question of his book's title, and do it as the book does, on the backdrop of the major religions of the world, such as Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and the animist religions. But as one considers the fabulous thesis of the book (see below), it is even more evocative to ask "Why Christianity?" with a still broader context in mind; not only the classic world religions but the contemporary scientific, technological, materialistic yet postmodern world in which so many of us live.

These influences are arguably basic to much of the prevailing "religion" of many human beings these days, who may consider themselves to have no religion at all.

So what is the thesis of Kraemer's book? What is at the heart of his contribution when it comes to the question, Why Christianity in the light of virtually any significant world view?

In Kraemer's view, a proper answer to this question is "only possible when one gets back to the non-derivative, to what is original, to the primary 'given' of Christianity, to that which produced Christianity and was not itself made or produced by it. Now that is neither a doctrine nor a principle. It is the Person of Jesus Christ. Here, I would say is an objective criterion. . . . That the truth is revealed *in Him* and not just *by Him*, [this] constitutes Himself as the criterion."¹

WILLMORE D. EVA



Considering how long I have known this thesis and understood its inherent power, I still feel profoundly compelled by the truth of it. It remains a living reality that never ceases to move me at the deepest level.

This view of Christ or Christianity does not say, of course, that Christian teaching, doctrine or theology is somehow of questionable value, or that there is little that's worthy in a systematic expression of faith. It is to say, however, that authentic Christianity rests squarely and solely upon a Person, rather than a set of propositions or even teachings.

Christianity's root is not an "it," (as in a body of writing, even the Bible) but a "Him." It is spirit and not just letter, organism rather than organization, "the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12-27) not merely a community of believers (1 Cor. 12:12-27).

Perhaps most significantly Christianity (much less *any* denomination) is not in and of itself "the way" nor is it "the truth" or "the life." But Jesus is. And He is so by his own proclamation (John 14:6). Further, this claim is not Kraemer's, but that of Jesus Himself. To believe otherwise is to reduce and even to destroy the authenticity of the Church, giving it a false and even trea-

sonous identity, on the basis of which, by default it ends up proclaiming itself and some collection of largely humanly fashioned beliefs rather than the crucified, risen, and ascended Christ.

The "phenomenon" of Jesus has a way of cutting through the skepticism, cynicism, and fear of humanity, as we find it today. It is as though Jesus of Nazareth has a potently designed way of shouldering His way authoritatively through the chaos and corruption of my rational mind with all its postulations and dubious probabilities, and presenting Himself as the One for Whom my soul was made, the ultimate point of reference in my sometimes desperate search for certainty and solace in a very confusing world.

While Jesus never bypasses the reason he has so freely given us, He nevertheless presents Himself as the most plausible first cause, and this presentation of Himself touches not only our minds, but our souls also. This is something no other "ism" or "ology" is actually capable of doing.

In order for the "Why" of Christianity to actually mean anything to people about us, we who are His are called to follow Him with integrity and authenticity. We cannot allow our ministry to degenerate into a mere job, some kind of all-consuming career. Our challenge as Seventh-day Adventist ministers is to live Jesus of Nazareth out and thus to proclaim Him authoritatively and convincingly. This we are called to be and do in the face of the unprecedentedly seductive alternatives that constantly intrude upon our faith and that of our people. ■

¹ Hendrik Kraemer, *Why Christianity of All Religions?* (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1962), 72, 73.

Seven sermon tools I wouldn't trade

Maylan Schurch

To help our Adventist high school in a personnel pinch, I'd been teaching a one-semester journalism class, and this was the end-of-term, correct-the-papers, figure-the-grades week. But by that weekend I also needed a well-muscled 4,000-word sermon on dealing with a particular Bible book.

Desperately I scavenged through past sermons and finally dredged one up from 1985, early in my ministry. I dusted it off, typed it into the computer, hurriedly rehearsed it, and preached it . . . and bombed.

Even as I stood in the pulpit, I knew I was not gripping my flock. That miserable message had almost no illustrations or practical applications, and, besides that, its logic was flabby. Nobody even mentioned it on the way out, and when I questioned my wife Shelley—whose opinion I value above anyone else's—she gently agreed that it was indeed a youthful, well-meaning, and fabulously forgettable effort!

We all grow, of course. Gradually we assemble sermon-preparation kits to help us weed out the weary and the weird, and haul our messages down to where the Goodyear meets the gravel. And as we look back in pity on our earliest congregations, we wish we'd found those tools a lot earlier.

I'd like to share my own particular set. I didn't invent them—they've come from my teaching background, from books on writing

and speaking, and from observing what other communicators do. I've used each of these tools for a minimum of five years, most for much longer. And even though they haven't yet morphed me into Max Lucado II, they've made my 4,000 weekly words a lot easier to prepare. So maybe you can find some of these ideas helpful.

Tools . . .

The vertical illustration file. You won't find this tool in the preaching books, because it flies in the face of all those detailed filing systems we're supposed to be docketing our stories into. My vertical illustration file is simply one long Microsoft Word document filled with sermon illustrations I've collected, *with the most recent on top.*

The reason I form it this way is because of a sermon I heard pastor and wordsmith Floyd Bresee preach many years ago. To make a point, he told his congregation about a trip he'd taken to a grocery store that very week. I was still a layperson then, but two things electrified me as I listened to his dew-fresh stories:

- ◆ how carefully he observed real life around him, and

- ◆ how different his illustrations were from the moldy and probably apocryphal tales most other pastors regaled us with.

So these days, as I drive around, I listen to news radio and National Public Radio. I watch bumper stickers and billboards and people. When I go on my morning walk, when I stop to buy gas, when I walk through hardware stores, I'm always on the lookout for something or someone out of the ordinary to add to the top of the pile in the Word document.

Very importantly, I try to record what I saw or heard without immediately locking the illustration into a hard-and-fast category, because I've found that what I see might have multiple uses for different settings.

Then when I get to work on my sermon, I simply page through the top few screens of the document. It's rare that I won't find something that fits, but if not, I keep paging down until I do (my vertical illustration file is 42 pages long so far).

"Hey, wait," somebody says. "How do you capture those illustrations on the fly?" That's the second tool:

The digital voice recorder. I got this idea almost 20 years ago from fellow pastor Dr. Roger Ferris. Actually, his recorder used a tiny



Maylan Schurch has pastored the Bellevue, Washington, Seventh-day Adventist church since 1991.

tape cassette, but once I saw it, I immediately bought one small enough to fit in my shirt pocket. And as soon as digital recorders came out, I switched over, thus ending fears of tape-tangle at crucial moments.

If you decide to get a digital recorder, spend a bit more cash and make sure you get one like my Olympus DS-330 that interfaces easily with your computer. That way you can download your on-the-fly comments and listen to them on your computer's speakers.

Now if I see something intriguing while driving, or hear an interesting radio interview, or suddenly come up with a personal insight, I merely turn on the Olympus and record as many details as possible.

I also use it to take down directions to someone's house. I mutter to-do items into it. I flick it on at church when someone's playing a new song I'd like to learn. This device's uses are almost endless.

Obviously, what I've mentioned above aren't the only ways to get good sermon illustrations. Another immensely valuable source is—

Tools . . .

Your childhood. There's gold in those long lost growing-up years. I'm talking about much more than the story of how the Lord protected you when chased by a bear at summer camp, or the naughty things you did that received their just consequences. I'm talking about what it was like to grow up in your town, the worries that kept you awake at night, the interesting people you knew, the toys and the pets you had, what your schoolteachers were like, the games you played at recess, what your Main Street or city dump looked like, what your parents argued over, why other kids liked to come over to your house

rather than play at their own.

You'll naturally want to disguise names and other clear identifiers, especially if you post your sermons on your church Web site as I do. But dig deep into your childhood over and over.

Obviously one shouldn't overdo using childhood stories, but I put at least one childhood or youthful reminiscence in almost every sermon I write. People have told me they appreciate these and can identify with them. They make a pastor more of a real person and less of a cardboard cutout.

"Just a minute," I can hear someone say. "Using childhood material is all very well if you have a memory like an elephant. But I remember hardly anything about my childhood." I don't have elephantine recall either. To mine my childhood I simply use the next tool—one of the most fantastic I've discovered. And as you'll see, it's useful in other ways as well.

Clustering. It's also called mind mapping or bubble mapping or speaking. These are different names for a new and very freeing method for outlining and idea-generating. However, don't rush out and buy a lot of expensive books on this.

A number of enlightened school districts are teaching this skill to our kids—so ask them to explain it at supper tonight. The principle is simple, and the more you use it the more you'll like it. I'll explain it below, but if you like you can go to the library and check out *The Mind Map Book* by Tony Buzan or *Writing the Natural Way* by Gabriele Rico.

Here's how I cluster:

I get a sheet of copier paper (I avoid lined notebook paper because it tends to make me think I'm hunched over an elementary school desk, not a good mental posture for free-form

idea generating). I adjust the paper *horizontally* on my desk, because again, placing it vertically makes me think "school" and tightens me up.

Let's say—as I did last week—I'm trying to think of an incident from my childhood to illustrate the idea of "surprise." I draw a small circle in the center of the sheet and write "surprise" inside it. Then I start drawing spokes out from the circle.

At the end of one spoke I write the name of the town I lived in as a child. At the end of another spoke I write "houses," and coming off "houses" I draw three other spokes, each representing one of the houses my family lived in.

Off each house I'll draw a "backyard" spoke, a "my bedroom" spoke, a "kitchen" spoke, and so on.

You can get as detailed as you want, but you probably won't have to. Because suddenly the magic happens—not supernatural magic but the true magic of your God-created brain.

Something will spark, and you'll suddenly remember some event or person that is perfect for your illustrative needs. I once spent 20 unsuccessful minutes trying to think of an illustration with the usual scratch-my-head-and-stare-into-space method. Then I suddenly remembered clustering and grabbed a sheet of paper and started drawing circles. And in less than 30 seconds, I had exactly the illustration I needed.

There's really no mystery about what's happening. You're simply freeing your brain to work efficiently. By simply writing down concepts or places (or whatever) on a sheet of paper and drawing spokes (the speaking simply allows space around each new concept so you can add more details if you want to), you're allowing your brain to relax and examine each option at its leisure.

And clustering isn't merely an illustration generator. Use it to come up with ideas for sermon series, talks, articles, books. Use it with other people to plan your next church outreach project, or to help generate ideas for any other situation in which you need creative ideas immediately.

As a writer and pastor, I consider clustering the most valuable tool I've discovered in the past ten years.

... And more tools!

Another tool which works just as delightfully is—

Freewriting. Again, as with clustering, there's no need to spend tons of money or go to night school to learn this. Freewriting (which is also being taught to your kids—and if it isn't, find out why not) is simply putting pen to paper (or fingertip to keyboard) and writing your way through a mental block.

Here's how I do it—and I do it nearly every week, not only for sermons but for books and articles and other things I need to think through:

Let's say it's getting to be the time of year when I need to decide on next year's sermon preaching plan. I'll take out a smooth-flowing pen and open a little notebook, and I'll write something like this: "OK. What do I preach on next year? This year I'm preaching through the Bible, last year was Bible faith heroes and then a series on David's life, and the year before it was chapter-by-chapter through Luke and then a series on the Psalms. What should the folks in the pews hear next? Come on, Maylan. You're 54 years old, but you can't be that brain-dead. Lord, help me know how to feed Your flock . . ."

And on and on, something like that. Not deathless prose, you'll notice, nothing to save for the memoirs. Just pen-pushing, idea-pushing, talking to myself and to God. Yet time and time again I've found that even murky, clogged sermon-segments start to come into focus once I lay down a series of sentences one after the other.

Which brings us naturally to the subject of—

Notebooks. OK, maybe you're a child of the electronic age and feel easier with a keyboard under your fingernails. Fine—go for it. I'm a notebook man myself, and I always carry a pocket-sized one with me (which you can't always do with a laptop or even a PDA).

There are several varieties, but I prefer one I get at Barnes & Noble, called Moleskine, whose advertising claims that it's an exact replica of notebooks used by Hemingway and other eminent creators. I've filled 12 of these tough little 192-page lined treasures, and I've hoarded another 120, which ought to last me for the rest of my natural life.

As I start each Moleskine, I number the pages (odd numbers on the right-hand page only, to make it easier). Then I start a little table of contents in the front. I use this notebook for taking general notes on a preaching passage (98 percent of my sermons are expository), doing the first rough outline, freewriting through foggy spots, even some tiny clustering, and for making notes on other projects and ideas I'm thinking about.

I can't close this article without talking about—

Reference books. In addition to my Bible reference books—and a good big dictionary—here are a couple of other books I use constantly. *The Synonym Finder* by J. I. Rodale is probably the quickest place to find good synonyms (I consulted it three times while writing this article).

In addition, I keep nearby one of those little spelling dictionaries, the kind with only words and no definitions. That way if I get the irresistible alliterative urge to start all my sermon points with the letter "T," for example, I can have a whole lot of "T" words right there under my eyes.

There you have it—my seven favorite tools. God be with you as you add them to your own toolbox, and may His reputation be enhanced by their use. ■

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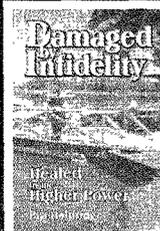
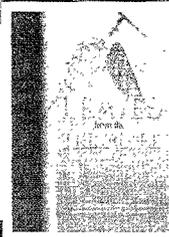
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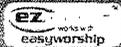
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IT IS WRITTEN



The Stain That Stays:

A comprehensive book review

Editorial Note: During the last year or more, Ministry has published extensively on the important topic of pastors and sexual wrongdoing. Predictably, at least two somewhat disparate schools of thought have emerged among our reader family. While we believe that too much further publication on this issue could prove counterproductive, we do believe it important to publish one further article that would give a somewhat different emphasis from the one given below (look for this further article in the near future). We further feel that it would be productive for the church to carefully reconsider and focus on the way it deals with such issues, designing a more intentional, consistent, and productive approach to these challenging situations.

How could it have happened? He was a well-known pastor, loved and respected not only by members of his own church but by those of other denominations. And yet, what a shock when he openly confessed to an affair with a parishioner. Not only was his family destroyed, and his career ruined, but his church and the faith of many members went through a severe crisis.

Yes, it happens, happens too often too. Why? And what can be done?

A history of infidelity

In a powerful book, *The Stain That Stays* (Chicago: Moody Press), author John H. Armstrong reviews the staggering revelations of moral failure in pastoral leadership that have recently rocked congregations, large and small.

Armstrong reviews how the Christian church through the centuries has dealt with pastoral infidelity. He highlights how the Protestant reformers awakened a towering view of marriage and sexual faithfulness. Moral purity was more than loving one's spouse; for the Christian,

HERBERT E. DOUGLASS



moral purity was a firsthand response to the gospel. Thus, for early Protestants, assigning pastoral leadership to an immoral man would be unthinkable. Further, the idea of restoring sexually immoral pastors was unknown.

Armstrong asks, "Is there any ungodly behavior, engaged in by a pastor, that may disqualify him from the pastorate?" He notes that most of the material dealing with disqualification focuses primarily on restoration. Proponents of restoration follow three lines of reasoning: (1) immediate restoration (within less than 12 months); (2) ultimate restoration after an absence up to three years; and (3) spiritual restoration but not to pastoral ministry.

The three alternatives

1. *Forgive and restore immediately.* Here, according to Armstrong, it seems that no matter what the reasons are for moral failure, a pastor should be forgiven and restored to office. In other words, to be forgiven is to be qualified. After all, God forgives repentant people.

2. *Forgive and restore over time.* This assumes that the pastor will be forgiven but it will take some time to heal the damage in his marital and in his pastoral world.

3. *Nonreinstatement, including the development of an ethical approach.* This alternative sees the New Testament not

as a book of laws with neat summations of specific codes for all decisions. That approach only leads to hasty conclusions and theological debate without consideration for context and the principles behind a given issue. This view means that we need an informed sexual ethic that considers more than pat answers.

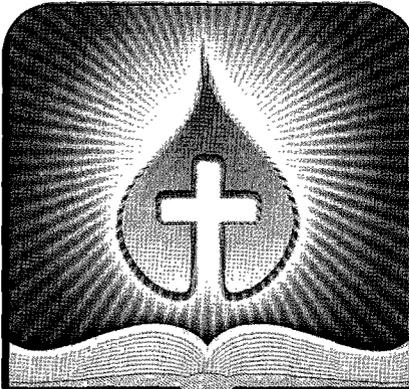
Such an ethic concerns itself with the implication of our approaches for the future of the church, for the future of the people directly affected by the fallen pastor's life, for the effect on the generation of future pastors, and for a genuine New Testament understanding of grace and forgiveness, especially when some seek to restore a fallen pastor to office.

Armstrong points to Paul's warning (1 Cor. 9:24-27) that a lack of diligent and persevering restraint of the flesh should lead to pastoral disqualification. Armstrong believes that Paul is suggesting not that our body is evil but that we must be prepared to deny our flesh continually or we may be led into serious sin with profound consequences.

Given the New Testament concern for purity in faith and practice, especially in the pastors of the church, the clear qualifications required for ministry imply the potential of subsequent disqualification.

Two objections against disqualification

Armstrong refers to contemporary instances in which these arguments have been used. Some strongly urge that "the church needs this gifted pastor." That is, if we disqualify an adulterous pastor, we are denying the church his unique gifts of leadership. At the same time, Armstrong believes that this kind of response takes gospel ministry too lightly and the importance of "gifted" pastors far too seriously.



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- ◆ Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves (Rom. 12:10)
- ◆ Live in harmony with one another (Rom. 12:16)
- ◆ Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Rom. 15:7)
- ◆ You yourselves are full of goodness, complete in knowledge, and competent to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14)
- ◆ Greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16)
- ◆ Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2)
- ◆ Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love (Eph. 4:2)
- ◆ Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you (Eph. 4:32)
- ◆ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21)
- ◆ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves (Phil. 2:3)
- ◆ Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom (Col. 3:16)
- ◆ Therefore, encourage each other with these words (1 Thess. 4:18)
- ◆ Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing (1 Thess. 5:11)
- ◆ Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24)
- ◆ Do not slander one another (James 4:11)
- ◆ Don't grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged (James 5:9)
- ◆ Confess your faults to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed (James 5:16)
- ◆ All of you: clothe yourselves with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)

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Instead the church would be much stronger without its fallen leaders back in authority. The church suffers in many ways when it compromises its moral integrity.

Other arguments focus on *the benefit congregations will gain from "wounded healers."* In other words, men who have suffered deep pain through moral failure can more effectively minister out of their newly experienced agony. This point of view has been greatly urged in the present environment, which has confused biblical grace with what Dietrich Bonhoeffer labeled as "cheap grace."

Popular arguments for reinstatement

Armstrong reviews some common arguments for the reinstatement of pastors.

God forgives all sin after repentance, so should the church. Armstrong reviews the faulty exegesis and theology that lead to the forms of antinomianism rampant in the church today. Not many differentiate between confession and repentance. But God's forgiveness is not the point. God may forgive the repentant pastor, but it does not follow that God necessarily wishes to reinstate the pastor to his former office.

Several biblical texts have been argued for restoration.

First, Galatians 6:1—"restore such a one" (NKJV). However, the larger context concerns restoration to a former spiritual condition of health, not to pastoral leadership. Rehabilitating the sinner, not reinstating the pastor, was Paul's point. Further, Paul uses the generic term for "man" (), which argues for a general use and not a special text referring to pastoral restoration.

Second, 1 Timothy 5:22—"too hastily." Nothing in exegesis or in the writings of the church fathers supports the notion that the reinstatement of a fallen pastor is in view in this text. Rather it refers to one's original ordination to the pastorate—a caution against a hasty initial ordination.

Third, John 21:15-22 speaks of the restoration of Peter. But Peter was not

guilty of sexual immorality (1 Cor. 6:18); his was a character sin that did not "entail the willful hypocrisy, cavalier deception, and gross perpetual disobedience that goes with adultery." Peter's failure was not thought out; not a "series of steps leading up to a colossal and planned sin."

Then there is 2 Samuel 11-12—David's adultery. True, David was not removed from office as king. He was a *middle-eastern, polygamous potentate, not a priest serving God's people in sacred worship.* It would be a stretch to compare David's case with the New Testament standards for a Christian pastor. David was forgiven, but his reign and reputation went downhill fast. Think of the rapid decline of stability and honor within his own family.

The heart of the matter

Armstrong pauses to rethink the argument that the church is in danger of creating a new kind of *caregiver*, the *fallen brother* who can now help adulterers and the sexually immoral *because he has been there.* But he asks, Does such a caregiver really understand sin better than a pastor who has never been personally involved? A pastor who has had to face similar temptations and yet found *grace to help in time of need* knows more than the pastor who succumbed when it comes to really helping his parishioners.

Armstrong summarizes his position as to why a fallen pastor should not be restored to his office:

1. *The pastor's high calling.* The pastoral office requires the qualities cited in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. The entire congregation *should be* above reproach, but the *elder must be* above reproach. The pastor must, through his consistent life and faithful teaching, provide the moral pattern for all.

2. *The pastor as a public figure.* When a pastor's public example and credibility is destroyed by sexual sin, his life will never again be the same as a public leader. The world judges the church by its ministers, whether we like it or not.

3. *A possible relapse.* In recent years, Armstrong observes, we have seen "an

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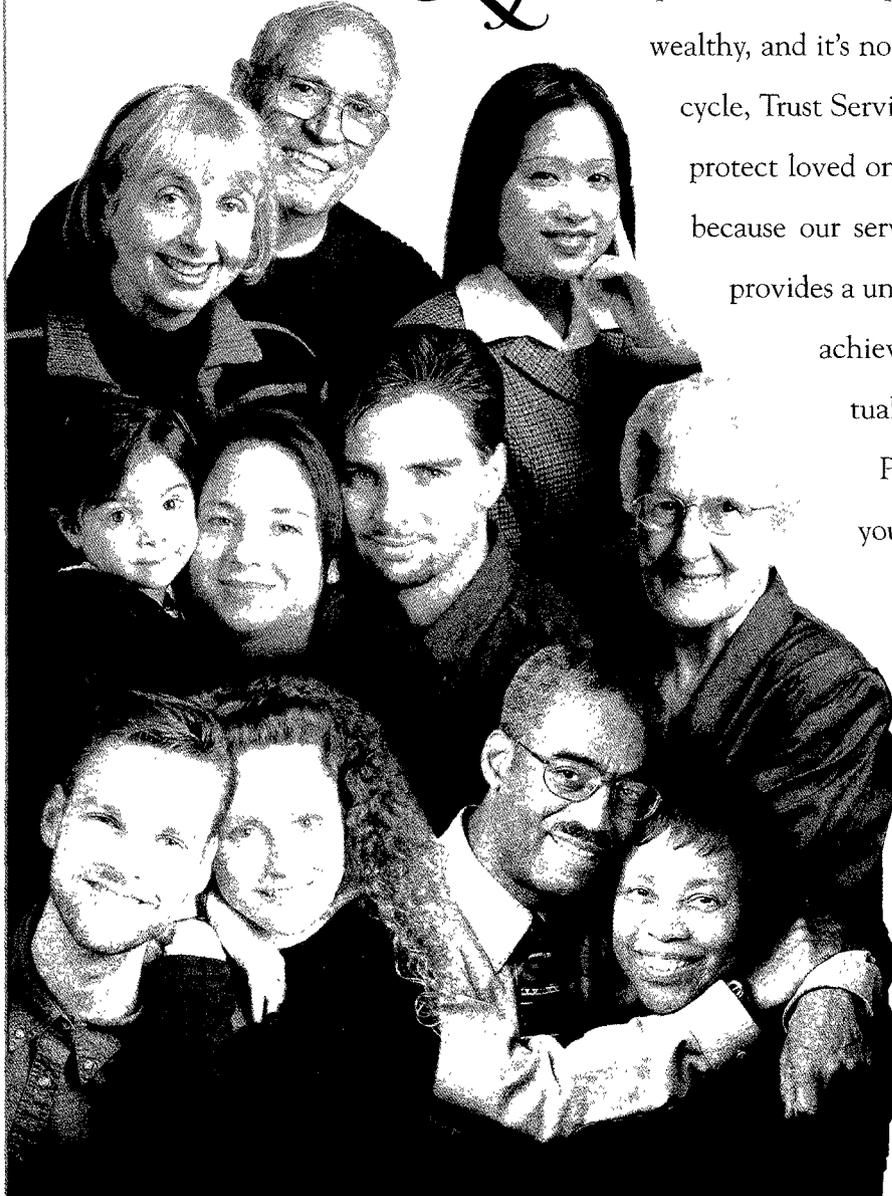
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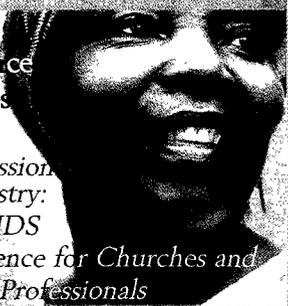
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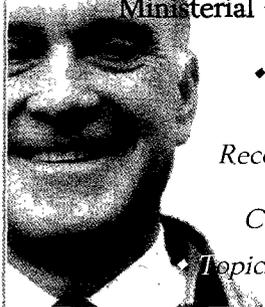
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over-abundance of such cases." Patterns of sexual sin are not easily broken. Rarely does a fallen pastor confess his adultery; the exposure happens because he is exposed or caught. Sexual sins are accompanied by a host of other sins, such as lying, deceit, and hypocrisy. A stain exists that "sears" the conscience and remains imbedded forever.

4. *The pastor as a model.* Armstrong observes that those who have not consistently walked "in the paths of righteousness by the Holy Spirit cannot lead others in the paths he has not followed."

5. *A lack of judgment.* Armstrong notes that sexual sins display a lack of discernment and judgment—exactly what Paul was asking for from all church members (Phil. 1:9, 10). He asks how a pastor who lacks good judgment can shepherd the flock of God when his own life displays a lack of good sense, both morally and ethically?

6. *A stricter judgment.* In view of James 3:1, stricter demands rest on the one who leads and teaches in the church. Armstrong urges all to take seriously texts such as 1 Corinthians 5:12, 13; 11:27-33; and 1 Peter 4:17a. He points out that those who question the reinstatement of fallen pastors are not "generally 'legalists'" but the more conscientious church members concerned with the welfare of the church.

Our author reviews responses from Christian women who were willing to personally forgive a fallen pastor but would not want him to be their pastor. They would find it difficult to feel safe, or to feel their daughters were safe, under his ministry.

Any hope for restoration?

A long-term restoration process may restore the fallen man's marriage and family life, but even here it will be difficult, as it would be for the local church, to regain the trust that has been so abused.

In view of the nature of the fall from trust, evidence does not support the conclusion that simply changing churches would be a positive solution.

The local church can help in the

adjustment. When a man's career has suddenly ended, his skills are not easily transferable to another occupation. The family will need some kind of financial help in the transition. Especially the spouse and children will need a great deal of thoughtful care, not to mention those who may have fallen victim to the fallen pastor.

Armstrong suggests that the pastor's church membership should be a matter of church discipline as it would or should be for any other member. The primary restoration hoped for would be the overseeing of the healing to the spouse and children—nothing would be more indicative of the fallen pastor's genuine repentance.

After assuming that the pastor has put his life back in order, the integrity of the church may suggest some alternative ministry, no longer expecting to reconsider him as a pastor or even local elder.

Responsibility of the church to the fallen pastor

As Armstrong moves to the question of what "restoration" is, questions arise, such as *how much* restored? And restored to *what*? Can a fallen pastor ever be *fully* restored? That is, back to where he was *before* his fall with his church members, with his wife and his children? Armstrong notes that all of the forgiveness from all affected parties will not in fact remove the stain for the rest of his life.

All those affected should *approach the pastor's healing with humility*, aware of each one's sinfulness—"take heed lest he too fall." Fallen pastors should not be treated as public lepers. How spiritual leaders as well as church members respond will have much to do with a broken man's spiritual healing (Gal. 6:1). Do not hurt but help. But the sole issue in the spiritual healing process is not recovery to ministry—that makes an unwarranted leap. Restoring the fallen to practical holiness is the highest goal.

Forgive and forget? Armstrong notes the fallacy in the argument that remembering a past scandal is a "lack of forgiveness." Certain sins have inherent consequences that last throughout

one's lifetime. The New Testament has examples of church leaders who turned back to the world from all that they had professed—and became morally bankrupt. We are specifically talking about the pastor, not the ordinary church member.

Restoration with God. After a proper understanding of forgiveness, the fallen pastor needs to be restored to God. Confession is not repentance. If there is true remorse, the pastor realizes how completely hypocritical he has been. He realizes that he cannot trust himself. Quick healing is never desirable, lest the wound not be cleansed by God through the Word and the Spirit (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

Restored to the family. The sexually fallen pastor has sinned against his wife and children, whom he has hurt the most. However, the wife may accept his confession but choose not to reconcile to him as a marriage partner. The marriage has been broken or severely damaged. Glossing over a husband's sin too easily for whatever reason can only lead to more damage for all concerned.

Restoring church and community

The third step in the recovery process is the pastor's public confession to the extended church family. This need not require detail, but the pastor should apologize for the embarrassment he has brought to the church, expressing clearly that he accepts that he is not qualified for further pastoral duty. "His lack of cooperation with the process of restoration through honest confession and repentance conveys the

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deepest sort of pride and personal deception."

If the pastor's wrongdoing has become public knowledge, the pastor should not evade public confession on the basis of "right to privacy." In reviewing biblical examples, Armstrong notes that "God isn't concerned about the reputations of immoral pastors being exposed. . . . God is far more concerned with his own holiness and with the purity of the church . . . than with the cover-up of a pastor's scandalous behavior."

An important caution

Of course, a pastor *charged* with sexual impropriety may not be guilty! A clear process for handling such charges must be in place by the appropriate bodies so that all concerned are treated accurately and helpfully (1 Tim. 5:17-20).

Armstrong talks about how Christians in general and pastors specifically can take preventive steps regarding sexual misconduct. Each step should be carefully reviewed. Today, especially in view of potential legal problems, the church must be exceedingly clear as to the standards expected of their pastors. Further, "churches have a moral and legal obligation to disclose substantiated incidents of sexual misconduct when a prospective employer inquires about a former minister's employment record," says Armstrong.

How could it have happened? We don't know for sure. We do know that it did. The question is, Now what? ■

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The Apostolic Council and the Ten Commandments (part 2)

Tim Crosby

The Ten Commandments are not mentioned at all in Acts 15. As we saw in the first installment of this series, the apostolic command to abstain from fornication (*porneia*) refers to Leviticus 18—not to the seventh commandment, which forbids adultery (*moicheia*). These two distinct terms are used rather consistently in Jewish Greek literature; the word *porneia* is rarely applied to the seventh commandment.

Does the lack of any mention of the Decalogue in Acts 15 imply that the Ten Commandments were no longer binding on Christians? Did the apostolic council assume that it was now acceptable for Gentile Christians to worship other gods, take God's name in vain, break the Sabbath, kill, steal, commit adultery, bear false witness, and so on?

Clearly, this is absurd. Without question all parties took for granted the continuing obligation of the basic ethical behaviors and duties enshrined in the Decalogue, which explains the many prescriptive allusions throughout the New Testament—from the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:17, “If you want to enter life, obey the commandments” (NIV), to the description of the saints in Revelation 14:12 as those “who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus.”

We must remember that the leader of the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council was Jesus’ brother James, who had the highest regard for the

law. This is clear not only from his dialogue with Paul in Acts 21 but also from his epistle, where he calls the Decalogue the “perfect law,” the “law of freedom.”¹

James the Just, whom Christian tradition remembers as a pious traditionalist, vegetarian, and teetotaler,² would never have supported any move to lessen the authority of the Decalogue.

The Sabbath

As we have seen, some Jews believed a proselyte might worship God without being circumcised. Rejection of circumcision, then, did not necessarily imply wholesale rejection of the law. And even rejection of the Mosaic legislation did not imply rejection of the basic, primordial rules of morality and worship enshrined in the Ten Commandments. As universal principles going back to Creation, these precepts would apply to all people.

Genesis 26:5 says that Abraham kept “my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.” That the Sabbath was one of those laws is clear from Genesis 2:3, Exodus 20:11, and 16:23-30. Particularly interesting is Exodus 16:28f, where God, prior to the giving of the law on Sinai, says, “How long will you refuse to keep my commandments and my laws? Bear in mind that the Lord has given you the Sabbath.”

It is clear from reading the New Testament that Jews of Jesus’ day regarded the Sabbath as a creation ordinance. The Jesus movement clearly held the precedents affirmed in Genesis in high esteem. It is fair to say that the theology of Jesus tended toward restorationism (“back to Eden”), in which the material presented in Genesis was given a guiding authority along with, but even surpassing the authority resident in later Mosaic and covenantal legislation. For example, Jesus in Mark 10:2-12 dismisses a Mosaic law allowing divorce by arguing for the priority of the creation ordinance of marriage.

In Matthew 22:23-32 Jesus again trumps a law of Moses by citing an earlier patriarchal tradition from Genesis (cf. John 7:22). A third example: Jesus defends the fifth commandment against later Jewish legislation that nullifies it in Mark 7:8-13.

The point is, if Jesus tended to exalt creation law over later Mosaic legislation, it is unlikely that His followers would have turned their backs on the Sabbath.

Nor was there any reason to dismiss the



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Sabbath. Roman emperors routinely issued decrees allowing Jews to celebrate the Sabbath in peace.³ Indeed, the Sabbath had become an accepted reality, at least in parts of the Roman world. According to Josephus (*Against Apion* 2.282, Loeb), "The masses have long since shown a keen desire to adopt our religious observances; and there is not one city, Greek or barbarian, nor a single nation, to which our custom of abstaining from work on the seventh day has not spread."

Around A.D. 200, Tertullian reproaches pagans for adopting the Jewish custom of resting on the Sabbath: "You have selected one day [Saturday] in preference to other days as the day on which you do not take a bath or you postpone it until the evening, and on which you devote yourselves to leisure and abstain from revelry. In so doing you are turning from your own religion to a foreign religion, for the Sabbath and *cena pura* [special supper] are Jewish ceremonial observances" (*Ad Nationes* 1.13).

Since *Dies Saturni* (the Sabbath) was widely accepted among the Romans as the day of rest, it is more than safe to say that Sabbath keeping never became an issue in the early church. That is why, of course, it was not a contended issue in the New Testament Church.

After the Jerusalem Council, Paul still continued to worship on the Sabbath (Acts 17:1, 2; 18:4), even where there was no Jewish synagogue (Acts 16:13). *It is no more reasonable to assume that the apostolic council abrogated the Sabbath than to assume that it abrogated marriage, which is also a Torah command and which is also omitted from the stipulations of Acts 15, and which also has its origin in the Genesis account.*

The creation ordinances which antedated Moses were simply not under discussion. Any decision to change the day of rest would have generated so much controversy as to make the circumcision debate look like a tempest in a teapot. Just compare the relative amount of attention

given to both commands in the Old Testament. Yet we have no record of such controversy.⁴

Was the Sabbath binding on Gentile converts?

The council of Acts 15, then, concluded that while the law of Moses as a whole was not binding on Gentiles, those laws pertaining to "aliens among you" were. This reality provides us with another argument for the ongoing relevance of the Sabbath in New Testament communities.

The Sabbath commandment in Exodus 20:10 is the only one of the ten explicitly worded so as to apply to Gentiles as well as Jews: "The seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, . . . nor the alien within your gates" (i.e., "in your towns" as in the NRSV; the gates belong to the city).

In both Hebrew (*ger*) and Greek (*proselytos*) the word for "alien" here is the same as in Leviticus 17 and 18. In the LXX—the "authorized version" of the Scriptures for Greek-speaking Christians—the fourth commandment requires Gentile proselytes living within the community to observe the Sabbath. That the Sabbath is for Gentiles is elaborated in Exodus 23:12 and Isaiah 56:6, 7.

The Christian church did set aside one class of laws which were binding upon aliens. The law of Moses required the alien (*ger* in Hebrew; *proselytos* in the LXX) to participate in the ritual sacrifices (Num. 15:27-29, 19:10) and the annual festivals that were closely tied to them (Lev. 16:29; Deut. 16:11, 14). Yet the early Christians, along with other reform movements within Judaism, held that the Jewish sacrificial services were no longer acceptable to God.

Hebrews 10:8, 9 explicitly states that God has "set aside" the "sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings."⁵ The death of Jesus, the Lamb of God, made the sacrifices obsolete. But they did not set aside the laws of Leviticus 17 and 18 or the Sabbath.

In summary, in the world of the New Testament, the Sabbath was seen by some as a creation ordinance. It had become well known and was quite widely observed as a prevailing custom. Therefore, like marriage or the particular ban on murder, the apostolic council of Acts 15 passed over it in silence. Furthermore, the council held that those parts of the Torah that applied to proselytes, with the exception of the sacrificial service, were applicable to Gentile Christians—and the fourth commandment explicitly says that the Sabbath applies to proselytes.

We may therefore safely conclude that the apostles and their Gentile converts continued to keep the seventh-day Sabbath after the apostolic council of Acts 15. ■

1 See James 1:25, 2:8-12, 4:2, 4, 11, 5:12, where he cites specific commandments of the Decalogue

2 Hegeppus says James was "holy from his mother's womb, and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh" (Fusebus *Hist.* 2:23:5). Augustine agrees. Other disciples may also have been vegetarians. Clement of Alexandria: "It is far better to be happy than to have your bodies act as graveyards for animals. Accordingly, the apostle Matthew partook of seeds, nuts and vegetables, without flesh" (*The Instructor*, 2:1). Peter was also vegetarian, according to the Clementine *Homilies* (12:6) and *Recognitions* (7:6), second-century works purportedly based on the teachings of St. Peter. It is interesting that there is no mention, at the Last Supper, of the traditional Passover lamb dish. Abstinence from wine and meat is advocated in a book that may have been familiar to the disciples, the *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs* (Test of Reuben 1:10, Test of Judah 15:4, Test of Issachar 7:3). *Four Ezra* 9:2 also advocates vegetarianism. This was clearly an issue in the early church (Rom. 14:21).

3 Josephus cites some of them in *Antiquities* 14:10.

4 The Sabbath controversy in the Gospels has to do with how the day should be kept, not which day is the rest day. The earliest Sabbath controversy I know of in the Christian era is the persecution of the Jews at Antioch around A.D. 66 (after the deaths of James, Peter, and Paul) by one Antiochus, a Jewish renegade who "became a severe master over his own citizens, not permitting them to rest on the seventh day, but forcing them to do all that they usually did on other days" so that "the rest of the seventh day was dissolved not only at Antioch, but the same thing was done in other cities also" (Josephus, *Wars* 7:4, Whiston). This sort of thing was one of the causes of the Jewish war with Rome A.D. 66-70.

5 Some Pauline passages regarded as referring to Sabbath observance refer instead to sacrifices, such as Colossians 2:16: "Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day." Whenever these phrases ("festival, new moon, Sabbath") are used together in the Old Testament, they refer to the burnt offerings on those days (1 Chron. 23:31, 2 Chron. 2:4, 8:13, 31:3, Isa. 1:13, 14, Ezek. 45:17, 46:4-11, Neh. 10:33, Hos. 2:11). Nehemiah 10 is particularly interesting, because this chapter speaks of both Sabbath keeping (verse 31) and of Sabbath sacrifices (verse 33), but only in verse 33 in reference to the sacrifices do we find the threefold phrase used in Colossians. This phrase refers to the annual, monthly, and weekly sacrifices of Numbers 28 and 29. Numbers 28:2 reads, "My offering, my food for my offerings by fire, my pleasing odor, you shall take heed to offer to me in its due season." There follows a description of the daily sacrifices (verses 3-8), the weekly Sabbath sacrifices (9-10), the monthly new moon sacrifices (11-15), and the annual festival sacrifices (28:16-29:38). This interpretation is the only one that makes sense of Colossians 2:17: "Which are a shadow of things to come, but the body (*summa*) is of Christ." It is the sanctuary service that is a shadow (Heb. 8:5). The closest parallel is Hebrews 10:1-9, which uses many of the same phrases: "The law is only a shadow of the good things that are coming—not the realities themselves. For this reason it could never, by the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, make perfect those who draw near to worship. . . . Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a *body* [summa] you prepared for me.' He sets aside the first to establish the second." Colossians 2:16, 17, then, is a condensed version of the argument of Hebrews 10. Even the "food and drink" of Colossians 2:16 relate to the sacrificial service (cf. Heb. 9:9, 10, Num. 28:24).

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Cindy Tutsch is associate director of the Ellen G. White Estate in Silver Spring, Maryland.



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A literal interpretation of Genesis 1 affirms a personal God who created our earth and life on it in six consecutive 24-hour days. In this account, we find God acting much like a father who loves his children and therefore creates an environment of beauty and safety for His children.

Some believe that the Genesis account is symbolic, or mythological, and that human beings evolved over eons, through a gradual process that may have begun with a living cell that somehow came to lodge in a mire that through millions of years progressed to the sophisticated and complex human system we know today.

The person who has experienced God as a loving being may find it difficult to reconcile that kind of God with the impersonal, uncarving process that ends in sorrow and death for all. Thus, a basic premise for the theistic evolutionist—one who believes God used evolution as His way of creating life—is that God was dependent upon death as part of the evolutionary process. In this paradigm, God, not Satan, is the source of death. But would a God of love choose millennia of brutal and cruel death and dying, suffering and trauma, as the means of creation?

Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages, or results, of sin is death. According to Romans 5:12 (NKJV), death entered the world when Adam sinned, and thus “death spread to all

men, because all sinned.” So death entered the world, according to the biblical record, as a result of sin, not as part of God’s progressive creation.

Science and interpretation

Scripture is clear about creation and death, but what does science say? Both creation and evolution can be supported by considerable complex data. The basic difference between the two paradigms is *how the data are interpreted*.

Let’s look at a couple of examples:

1. *The fossil record.* Fossils are usually found in a stack of rock layers, one layer on top of the other. The stack is something like a history book, with the oldest page on the bottom. The fossils occur in a specific order in this sequence of rocks. The lowest layers are mostly marine invertebrates. Mammals and birds do not appear until much farther up in the rock sequence, and humans are found only in the youngest rocks; that is, the ones at the top. In other words snails, clams, and starfish were fossilized first, and humans not until the end of the sequence.

In *the evolutionist* interpretation of the data, starfish come in the fossil record before humans because they evolved 500 million years before humans did. Different animals became buried and fossilized as they evolved, and there were no humans until almost all other animal groups had already come.

The creationist, however, looks at the data and says that humans and all other major types of animals were created at the same time as starfish. But as the global flood began, starfish and other animals living in the sea were killed first and buried in the lower rock layers. Humans, though, lived on land, in a different area of the earth, and they survived until near the end of the flood, when they were buried in the highest rock layers.

The sequence of fossils does *not* record a sequence of evolution; it shows, instead, when different animal groups died and were buried in the catastrophic global flood.

Because we don’t have all the evidence, and consequently can’t demonstrate a correct explanation, both creationists and evolutionists find some evidence difficult to explain.

Problems for evolutionists. Most groups of animals or plants are not linked together in the fossil record by series of evolutionary intermediates, as would be expected with this paradigm.

Problems for creationists. A few groups of fossils do look like good evolutionary intermediates. Also, it is difficult to explain how the different animal groups came to be arranged in such a detailed sequence in the rocks. Why didn't the flood waters carry a few mice to the edge of the sea and bury them with the starfish?

2. *Radiometric dating.* Fact: In the stack of rock layers, certain radioactive materials are more abundant in lower, older rocks, and less abundant in upper layers. In the upper rock layers they have changed, or decayed, through time to a form that is not radioactive. This radioactive decay takes a long time—thousands of years for carbon 14, and millions of years for other elements.

Evolutionist interpretation of the data: The radioactive materials indicate that the older rocks are hundreds of millions of years old. Consequently the life forms fossilized in those rocks are also that old.

Creationist interpretation of the data: Life has been on earth for only thousands of years. This means the radioactive decay has occurred much faster than most scientists think.

Problems for evolutionists. Some evidence in the rocks seems to require a much shorter time period for the formation of our world. For example, in a number of cases radiometric dates for rocks, as such dating is understood, require the ground surface to have been exposed for millions of years with little or no erosion of the soil and rocks. This does not happen in nature today. What normally happens is that over time, rivers and streams erode the land into hills and valleys and canyons. This seems to indicate that the radiometric dating is wrong.

Problems for creationists. The physics of radioactivity has been extensively studied, and we do not know what would cause radiometric “clocks” to be so seriously wrong as the creationist paradigm requires. A creationist must propose that unknown factors yet to be discovered will explain the radiometric evidence.

Naturalism, natural laws, and design

Many scientists have accepted the paradigm of naturalism, which denies any supernatural action in history. Naturalism is a controlling paradigm in science today. Everything is understood to be working by natural law alone. Any kind of miracle should never be used to explain the data that is observed. However, if we accept this limitation, does it leave enough room for an adequate, fully plausible explanation?

Take an example: Our automobiles work by the operation of natural law. We don't believe there are supernatural spirits inside the engine pushing the pistons. Yet is that a good reason to deny the possibility that there may have been intelligent beings involved in the origin of the car?

Look at the human cell. Proteins are an important building block in every cell in our body. Proteins are long strings of small molecules called amino acids. An amino acid is a particular combination of carbon, oxygen, hydrogen, and nitrogen.

Thus, if we mix these elements together under the right conditions, the laws of chemistry will cause them to combine in such a way as to form amino acids. Does that mean life could easily begin by this process?

To answer, we must also consider the concept of “information.” Information is a way of expressing ideas. Words written by a poet are information. Or information could be precise, technical instructions on how to make an automobile.

Are there any natural laws that could produce the information in a book of poetry or in the automobile instruction manual? Is there any natural way for a machine to use the laws of nature to produce meaningful, original information in a book?

No. Information is the product of intelligence. No law indicates whether D should come before M, or S after K. The order of letters and words in a book result only from intelligent thought. A well-established metaphor

is highly relevant and worthy of repetition at this point: Imagine the probability of a dictionary coming together by random accident, or from throwing millions of letters into space.

The paper in a book is held together by a particular application of the laws of chemistry, but the words and sentences—the information—in the book did not result from natural law. Information results from intelligent thought and initiative. Why is that so important? Because life itself is based on particular information.

About 20 different amino acids join together, like links in a chain, to make a protein. If we make a protein from a series of amino acids, the letters that represent them could look like this: ADGOCITBLERACKBNSK—and that's just an easy one. The specific task of the amino acid in a protein is determined by the sequence of amino acids, just as the sequence of letters determines the meaning of a sentence.

Compare the information content in these two letter sequences: (1) RFOBROIBPODEMOP; (2) GOD LOVES YOU. The difference in meaning is dramatic.

Similarly, the function of a protein, if any, is also determined by its sequence of amino acids. However, *no law in nature contains the information concerning what the sequence of amino acids should be in any protein.* The sequence of amino acids is information and not governed by natural law.

How does the living cell know how to make the correct protein? The cell contains instructions in its DNA that tell exactly what sequence of amino acids will make the correct protein. Where did the DNA get that information? *No natural law* dictates the information in DNA or protein—it had to be invented.

The difference between law-governed processes and information is a key to understanding what life is.

Our bodies are made of innumerable “machines”; mechanisms like the heart and thousands of microscopic

molecular machines in each cell. The operation of each machine is governed by understandable natural laws. But the instructions that allow the body to make all those little “machines” is information, and information does not arise from natural laws.

Life can exist only because of *information* that controls the manufacture of the millions of parts of a living thing. When we study the construction and functioning of our automobiles, we understand that the instructions for making all of its parts are the result of the intelligent effort of an inventor. Doesn't the vastly more complex information that makes a living animal indicate that the origin of these animals was dependent on an intelligent Inventor? It would seem so.

The origin of major life forms

Even if we accept the possibility that life could have been created, how did the many different forms of life come about? After God created the first living microorganisms, with all the information to make more living things, did the evolutionary process of mutation and natural selection gradually change it into different types of life?

Living things do change. Consider all the different races of humans that have come from one original type of human. Even a creationist must recognize that changes have occurred within the groups that were created. Science also calls this type of change

evolution (microevolution).

But evolution also attempts to explain how completely new types of animals or plants can originate. What would it take to evolve from invertebrates to warm-blooded mammals that bear live young? That would require evolving new DNA information, instructions for making a skeleton, lungs, brain, and other new organs that did not exist before.

This would be adding many new chapters of precise information to the “instruction manual” for making life. If there were not intelligent action in designing living things, all of these volumes of new information would have to gradually arise through changes resulting from random changes in the DNA, called mutations, and through natural selection.

Can we prove that this cannot happen? No. No one can prove what happened long ago; we can only explore the possibilities. The evolution of new information begins with mutations that change nucleotides in DNA, which may change an amino acid in a protein (“changing the letters” in our simple protein).

In the evolutionary model, these changes are random—the mutation process does not know what the animal is going to need. Naturalism assumes that random mutations and natural selection will produce whatever is needed. But is this realistic? Will this process evolve new, previously nonexistent complex organs and tissues, or would random

changes ultimately be destructive?

If some caribou in Alaska are too slow to outrun a wolf, natural selection will eliminate them and their offspring. Some scientists believe that natural selection can eliminate *only* these weaker individuals but will not produce any new organs or new types of animal life. In fact, science has not demonstrated the existence of a genetic process that can evolve any basic new types of life.

Conclusion

Though plenty of evidence for creation is supported by credible scientific research, unanswered questions remain for creationists as well as for evolutionists. What should we do if, as certainly is the case, we don't have the answers to all of our questions?

The answer may depend on our *personal experience* with God. Though God wants the believer to think, analyze, discover, and research, the bottom line may be, Do we trust Him and His Word? Do we believe that He knows more about ancient history than we do, since He was there when the earth was formed (Job 38; Ps. 33:6)? Can we literally take Him at His Word?

Seven times in the creation account, God states, “and it was so.” In speaking of his literal return, Christ says, “If it were *not so*, I would have told you.” If earth and humanity's origins differed from the biblical account, would Christ not have told us so as well? ■

Recommended references

- ◆ Michael J. Behe, *Darwin's Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution* (New York: The Free Press, 1996).
- ◆ Leonard R. Brand, *Faith, Reason, and Earth History* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1997).
- ◆ *The Creation Hypothesis: Scientific Evidence for an Intelligent Designer*. J. P. Moreland, ed. (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994).
- ◆ *Origins*, and *Geoscience Reports* (journals published by the Geoscience Research Institute). For subscription requests or to order back copies, contact: Origins, Geoscience Research Institute, 11060 Campus St., Loma Linda, CA 92350.

Illustrations

The following Web sites have useful illustrations, or scan illustrations from the book listed above by Leonard Brand:

- ◆ http://www.blc.arizona.edu/Molecular_Graphics/DNA_Structure/DNA_Tutorial.HTML
- ◆ <http://www.genome.iastate.edu/edu/doe>
- ◆ <http://www.accessexcellence.com/AB/GG>

Supporting those new to ministry

Joe Webb



Joe Webb, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Avondale Memorial Church, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

How can we help new pastoral families settle into ministry with their faith, work, and family intact? While we rightly expect those who enter ministry to look after themselves, like anyone in a new situation, they need help in a number of areas because of the pressures involved and the perceived expectations of the church and the conference. Many pressures would be lifted if leadership could provide some initial direction in at least four significant areas: the initial move, the new congregation, a review period, and a continuing strategy.

The initial move

Ministry almost always involves a move, a move away from the familiar. When a pastor's family moves to a new place, they have to find new schools, doctors, bargain shopping, and the list goes on. As a result there is stress and tension. The pastoral couple should be aware of the stresses that anyone normally experiences under such circumstances, and take intentional steps to work through them early in their ministry.

When first moving into ministry, or moving to a new parish, the family must take a realistic amount of time to set up house and organize life in the new location. This should not be left to the nonministry spouse while the minister races off each day to get acquainted with the church folk and become

immersed in all the intricacies of ministry.

The time needed to settle down may vary from family to family, and from place to place. On average, one to two weeks is sufficient to get the home organized enough to be able to focus with some degree of comfort on church work.

It took us a number of years, and many moves, to work out that my wife does not move well. In fact it takes a good six months or more for her to be sufficiently settled, to begin getting involved in the new church. We both understand this every time we move, and I don't ask her to join me on the rostrum on the first Sabbath, or to stand with me at the door after the service. Neither do we accept invitations to lunch in the first few months at a new church.

This is not to suggest that every family that enters ministry or moves should do as we do, but it is important that every family feel they have the reasonable right to take time and to settle in.

Some young ministers who spend a few weeks each year at youth and teen camps consider this as part of their holidays. Who are they kidding? They may really enjoy what they do, but this is their work, not a holiday. Families need to realize the importance of holiday times and guard them, knowing it is crucial and completely legitimate to do so.

The new congregation

Pastors know that if they are not careful about family time, church work will take up all their time.

Early in my ministry I tried to get through all of the church work. In reality I never did, and I never have. There is always a list of tasks to do. Those new to ministry must realize that to complete the tasks at the top of a carefully prioritized list each day is ample achievement.

Church members don't intentionally set out to burn out their pastor. Generally they simply don't see the big picture that is involved in ministry, nor can they really be expected to see it as the pastor does. Therefore, the congregation needs to be made aware of what is important to the new minister, and where his or her priorities lie.

Over a period of time the ministerial family and the congregation will get to know each other. It is important, though, that the minister spell out how he or she operates.

This needs to be done as soon as possible after arrival at a new parish.

What specific things should be mentioned?

As soon as I enter a new parish I make some points to the congregation just before my first sermon. This only takes a few moments. After a very brief review of my family I tell the people what is important to me. I stress that my family is very important to me. Special family days such as anniversaries and birthdays are important. I point out that by God's grace I will serve this congregation as faithfully as I can, but that it is important to me that I hold the initiative to decide on the priorities and scheduling of my work, 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Time management is a skill in which all ministers must be exceptional. If they manage time carefully, they should always have time set aside to spend with family. The biggest problem for ministers, however, is not time management, but time protection. Having set aside certain times for family and other personal pursuits, many pastors do not honor this commitment, and again and again this time is the first to be sacrificed when an extra meeting needs to be called or something else that seems urgent or compelling comes up.

There is no law that says ministers must be out late every night. Schedule two nights a week to be home. Likewise no law requires that every hour of every day be devoted to church work. Some ministers have suggested that each day can be divided into morning, afternoon, and evening. They say that one of these periods should be spent at home. Let me hasten to say, however, this is not at home doing ministry work. It is easy to be in the house, but not be at home.

Set aside a full day each week for personal and family activities. Plan to do special things with your spouse and children. Of course, if your spouse works and/or your children are at school, you must set aside other times to be with them. And remem-

ber again not to just set aside time, but to guard it.

Emergencies do, often enough, demand that we deviate from the best-laid plans. Our partners understand that these unavoidable times and circumstances are part of our work. But if an emergency takes away planned family time, that time must be replaced as soon as possible.

I remember what it was like when we first entered ministry. We all want the conference to see that they have made a good investment in us. We want them to understand that we are handling ministry very well. We certainly do not want bad reports reaching the conference president from church members. Concerns such as these prompt those new to ministry, and even some not so new, to slide into the mold of trying to be all things to all people, in all situations, all of the time. That is, all people except their families and friends.

It is good for congregations to be told where you as a minister are coming from. I have received nothing but support from the church family when they understand the importance of my immediate family.

We must stress the fact that if pastors do not organize themselves in these areas, and learn to protect their family and personal time, becoming comfortable with their priorities, there will be constant, stressful pull between family and work. When at work we will feel guilty because we are not with family; and when with family we will feel we are not doing the best in ministry because we aren't at work.

A review period

Anything that is worth implementing is worth evaluating. It is easy to assume that all family members are adjusting well to the ministry task. It is wise to set aside a period when you will, as a family, evaluate this new experience.

Perhaps one month after the assignment is a good time to sit down and ask some questions about how

each family member is coping with all that is new.

Of course this is not a time to discuss if you want to stay or pack up and go. Although you may have felt that way during the past month, which is perfectly normal, this evaluation is a time to review and possibly readjust.

Total honesty is needed at this time. If the spouse is not coping with the initial move into ministry, this must be stated.

In our early years in ministry, my wife felt very isolated from family and friends, and even from me. Occasionally, when I asked how she was, she would say everything was fine. She did not want to add to my burdens and thought it best that no one in the church or conference know that the pastor's wife was having a personal struggle.

A review period is not just a time to get things off your chest, although such an experience can be good. If evaluation does not lead to adjustment in areas that have a revealed need, then such periods will be a waste of time.

A continuing strategy

Those strategies that help new ministers and their families cope with the stresses of entering ministry can also, with some modification, help them continue to cope with transfers and other life stresses, such as when a child leaves home to gain employment or to go to college.

It is highly regrettable that for me that it took so many years in ministry, as a clergy husband and father, to assign the importance to these areas that they by all means deserve and need. With a continuing strategy comes the ever-present focus on time.

Manage it and guard it. ■

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special gift or is every preacher called to preach evangelistic sermons?

CDB: I believe that there is the special gift of “evangelist.” That is not something that I chose. But I also believe that everyone who is called to preach is called to preach the truth of God’s Word.

DM: I have noticed that many young preachers are skeptical about evangelistic preaching. They have been told that the days of public evangelistic preaching are over. Some are convinced that people won’t come to a public meeting and listen to someone preach. How would you respond to that skepticism?

CDB: This idea that it won’t work didn’t come from God. The best days of evangelism are before us. We are going to see thousands baptized in a day. And it’s happening now. I was holding some meetings in Chicago and about fifteen young preachers were assigned to work with me. Some of them were skeptical about evangelistic preaching. But those young preachers worked with us and more than two hundred individuals committed their lives to Christ and were baptized! Those young preachers found a passion for evangelistic preaching.

DM: I’ve noticed in your evangelistic sermons that you challenge your hearers to think. Here’s an excerpt from one of your sermons on the theme of salvation: “Our subject tonight deals with a question that is so vital, I don’t know how to impress you with its importance. Friends, please do this, for your own sake. When you came in you were given a blank piece of paper. We wish you’d use that piece of paper to write down the Scriptures we give you, and any notes you might like to take. You’re going to hear things from night to night as you continue attending that you perhaps have not heard before and you need to check to see if I’m telling you the truth. Do you know, one of the reasons there’s so much confusion in the Christian church today is folks just sit and swallow everything that preachers say. Now you don’t know me. So check and see if it’s there. And if it’s not there, you don’t have to believe it.”¹

That’s a refreshing approach. You challenge your hearers to think with you. Did you learn that approach from other evangelists or did

Preaching the Word:

an interview with evangelist Charles D. Brooks

Derek J. Morris



Charles D. Brooks is speaker/director emeritus of Breath of Life Television Ministry and general field secretary (retired) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.



Derek J. Morris, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Forest Lake Academy Church, Apopka, Florida.

Charles D. Brooks has preached the Word for more than half a century. As a result of his evangelistic preaching, thousands have accepted Christ as their personal Savior. For 23 years, he served as director-speaker of the Breath of Life television ministry.

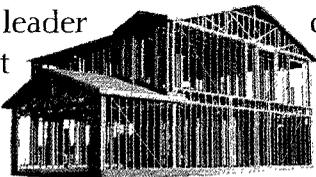
Derek Morris: For more than fifty years, you have preached the Word of God with holy boldness. Just like Timothy, you have done “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:2, 5). Through your ministry God has touched thousands of lives. When did you first hear the call to preach?

Charles D. Brooks: I had no intention of becoming a preacher. I had already been accepted into a predestinistry program, and two weeks before classes began the Lord spoke to me. I was sitting in Earl Cleveland’s evangelistic tent, by myself, and the Lord impressed my mind in a most definite way: “*This is what I want you to do and I will help you to make truth clear.*” I spoke to my mother about this and she said to me, “Son, when you were born, I gave you to the Lord. Now, He’s calling you.” And I have never looked back.

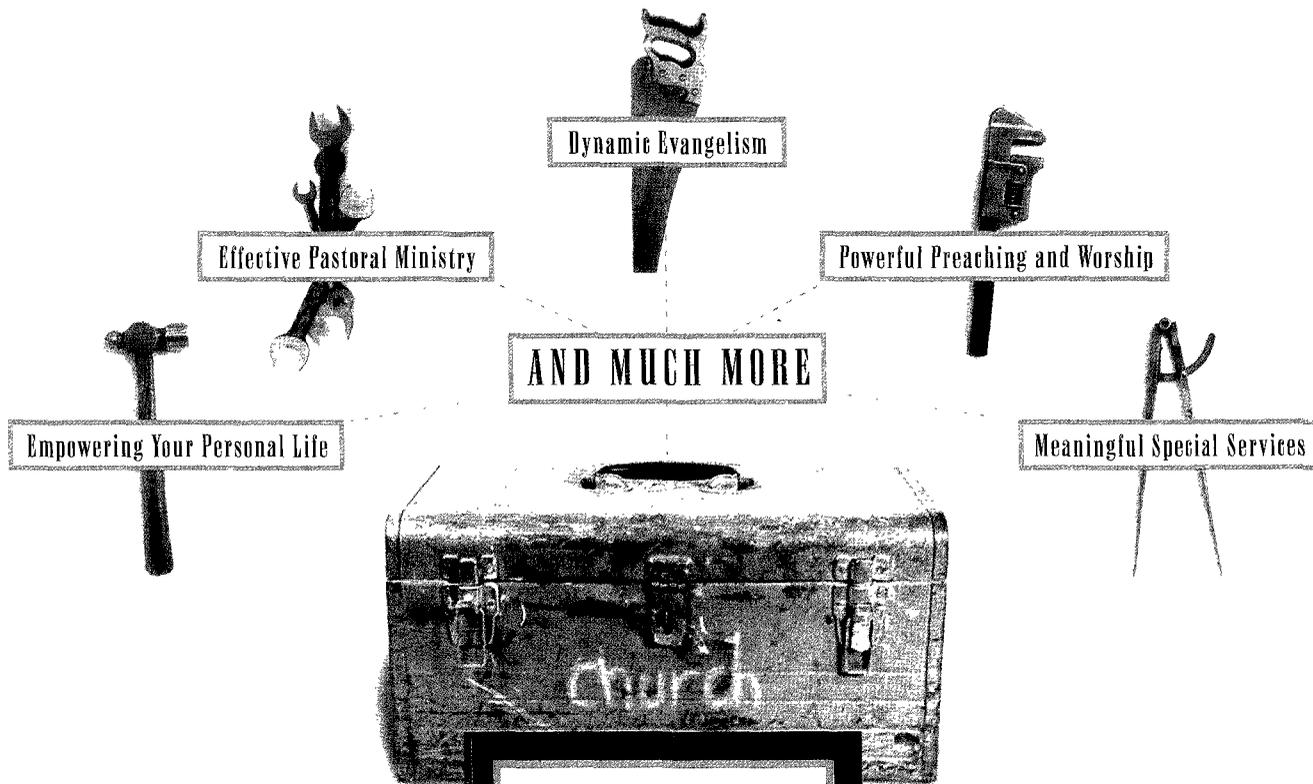
DM: When I was a young preacher in Pennsylvania, I listened to your evangelistic sermons. I had never heard anyone preach the Word with such boldness. It was as if there were fire in your bones! Is evangelism a

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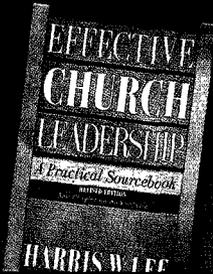
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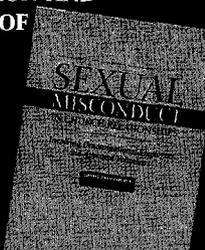
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you develop that style as a result of personal experience?

CDB: To be honest with you, I don't think I've given five minutes thought to style. This is just the way my mind is influenced to work. I was taught that because truth is offensive to unbelievers, we have to be wise in presenting it. I will often present a proposition that demands scriptural proof. I believe that there is power in the Word.

There was a mother in Columbus, Ohio, who picked up one of my handbills and began reading the topics. She then called her daughter and said, "Let's go and see what this fool is talking about!" They came to the meeting, and while I was preaching the sermon, I saw a whole row of people stand. As they stood, I thought, *Lord, have I offended these people? Are they walking out?* But instead of walking out, they turned and started walking to the front. When they got closer, I saw that it was this mother and her daughter, and their children. No appeal had been made. There's power in the Word of God!

DM: Evangelistic preaching involves calling people to make life-changing decisions. That's intimidating to some preachers. What counsel would you give to preachers about calling for a response as part of evangelistic preaching?

CDB: I've had some preachers tell me that they become so nervous when they call people to respond to the Word of God that they are actually falling apart! I would say to them, "When you feel that you are responsible for how people will respond, you are actually taking on a responsibility that is not yours."

Our responsibility as preachers is to give our hearers an opportunity to respond. What happens in the heart of the hearer is between that person and God. If you give an invitation for people to accept Christ and no one responds, don't feel bad. Maybe

everyone is saved already! Don't be afraid to give an invitation.

DM: Can you give us an example of an invitation that you might give for people to accept Christ as their personal Savior?

CDB: I might say something like this: "Jesus has gone to prepare a place for you in the heavenly city. And some day soon He's coming to take you home. And the gates of that city are going to swing open. The saints are going to go marching in. Ladies and gentlemen, who are these people? They are rotten, no-good sinners who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. We're going to glory to be with Jesus. That's what lies just ahead, and it's ours by faith, because Christ has opened the way. I want to be saved. I want to go to that place where the tree of life is blooming, where there is rest for the weary."

"Somewhere in the fields of Eden God's people can get together. I want to see you there. I want you to see me. I want to shake your hand in the kingdom. Most of all, Jesus wants to see you there. Jesus died that you might be there. He shed His precious blood that you might be saved, that your sins might be washed away and that you might have power to live for Him."

"My question tonight is, How many of you want to accept what Jesus has done for you and want to be saved in His kingdom? If you do, I want you all to stand with me right now as we pray."

Here is another example: "It's decision time. It's time for full surrender. It's time to let Christ take those wrong desires and make something new out of you. If you want to let some things go now, and have your life converted so you don't even miss them, if you want to stand at the foot of the cross this morning and fully surrender your life to Jesus, I want you to stand up right now as we talk to the Lord."

DM: Your examples remind me of an invitation at the conclusion of a

sermon by Billy Graham titled "Conversion." He concluded his sermon with these words: "I tell you, when you come to Christ—I do not care when it is, I do not care where it is, how it is—when you come, you will have to come by repentance and faith, trusting in Him and His death and resurrection alone for salvation. If you haven't come, if you haven't met Christ there, I am asking you to do it tonight. You may be a member of the church. You may be a choir member. You may be an usher here. You may be a Sunday school teacher. But you are not sure that you have actually met Christ and been converted. You want to be sure, and you want to settle it. I am going to ask you to get up out of your seat and come here and say, 'Tonight I will receive Him. I will repent. I will give my life to Christ.'"²

CDB: That's a good example of a simple invitation. As you listen to evangelistic sermons, you learn that there are many ways to give an invitation. Billy Graham used to say, "I'm just going to stand here. You come." The goal is more than merely an emotional response. I tell people, "I want you to think. I would rather you think than just shout and become excited."

DM: When you invite people to respond, I have noticed that you aren't just reciting words off of a piece of paper. Your words, intonation, and body language communicate a heart-felt concern for your hearers.

CDB: That's important! People can tell if you are real. I remember the first time I did extensive evangelistic preaching with an interpreter. I was in Egypt. I got a note one night written in Arabic and I asked the interpreter to translate it. It said, "Dear Pastor, We listen to him, but we watch you! And we can tell by your eyes that you mean what you say." I've never forgotten that. I don't preach anything that I don't believe. I don't preach anything that I can't preach with conviction. People can see it. They can

feel it. They know if you're just up there doing a job. I want people to feel that I am under the control of the Holy Spirit, and they are too. And it's never to me that they respond. It's to Him.

DM: I hear you saying that it is vitally important to really believe what you are preaching. Your hearers can tell if you are genuine or not. Is there any other counsel that you would give to a preacher who senses God's call to preach to lost people?

CDB: There is the danger of wanting to come across as extremely erudite. But the Bible says that Jesus talked to common people and they heard Him gladly. Read all you want. Fill your head. But when you preach, be simple, honest, direct. People will absorb the message better. They will feel more at ease with you. Don't try to impress your hearers. Be interested in them, and love them.

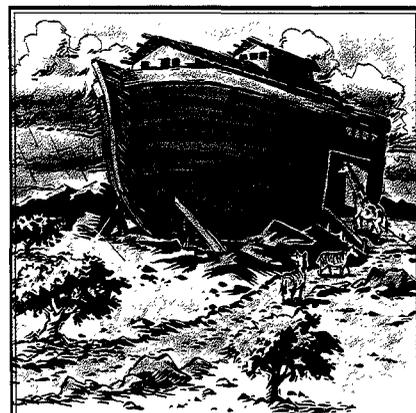
When you're preaching, effective eye contact is extremely important. I like to look at people and see how they are being affected. And always remember that you are simply a messenger. Nothing of self is to be projected. People are not to be won to you.

DM: What word of encouragement would you give to preachers who sense the call to preach evangelistic sermons?

CDB: When you preach evangelistic sermons, you are doing what God called you to do! God doesn't call you to entertain. He doesn't call you to be witty. God calls you to preach the Word. So make sure that you know the Word yourself. And when you preach the Word, it's going to have an effect! ■

1 From an audio recording of the sermon "Claimed and Kept" by Charles D. Brooks. This Breath of Life series of evangelistic sermons is available through ACM at 1-800-233-4450.

2 Billy Graham at the Charlotte, North Carolina evangelistic crusade in 1958, <<http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/archives/docs/bg-charlotte/1003.html>>.



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The peril of playing one note

Increasingly suspect both individuals and entities that seem unable to move beyond the one note they have perfected. Rather than engaging a wide range of options— theological, practical, or liturgical—these “same songers” seem content, even committed, to repeating over and over their one noise until the brassy clanging become so familiar that volume is valued over substance.

“For in fact the body is not one member but many . . . But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased . . . And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you . . . there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually” (1 Cor. 12:14-27).

Recently, I have observed a few breakaway groups whose singular focus appears to be removing themselves farther and farther from the established body as they strive (and strife is typical of the process) to establish their independence. Unfortunately, those who embark on these ventures, typically slalom the same downhill slopes.

First, although they proclaim their intentions only to reform, they assert their own greater trustworthiness over established structures to manage tithes and offerings. In reality, their independence is from management and oversight by church leaders and policies rather than independence from the financial support by church members.

Then, in hopes of maintaining the initial surge of enthusiasm which seems to swarm like yellow jackets to warm lemonade, these groups begin to subtly distinguish their more pure theological

JAMES A. CRESS



views or enhanced applications of various doctrines or missions. The more convoluted their reasoning, the more successful they appear.

One such group, in the process of legally establishing itself as separate and independent from church structure has already abandoned the great commission of going to the world with the gospel and, instead, has begun to focus on going to various unions and conferences with initiatives to recruit the “already saved.” Despite protestations to the contrary, these zealots, perhaps well-intentioned, are far more adventurers than adventists.

In addition, I also see the following dangerous deficiencies:

- ◆ No organizational or doctrinal unity among individual congregations.
- ◆ No organizational or doctrinal accountability. Heresy may freely develop in one congregation of such loosely-linked fellowships with no power by others to call for repentance or reform.
- ◆ No support for pastors except by local congregations.
- ◆ No security for properties, buildings, institutions, etc.
- ◆ No safeguarding of initial theological educational processes for ministers.
- ◆ No plans to professionally develop or continually educate the clergy.
- ◆ No equitably-balanced financial remuneration policies for pastor in large versus small assignments.

- ◆ No retirement system or health-care benefits.

- ◆ No educational benefits for PKs and no parochial schools for any of the church’s kids.

- ◆ No coordinated method for transferring, calling, ordaining, or disciplining workers. Everyone does what is right in their own eyes.

- ◆ No financial accountability to constituency sessions.

- ◆ No broad-based emphasis (i.e., laity training, family ministries, women’s ministries, health-ministries, publishing, etc.) in support of common values.

- ◆ Little stabilizing discipleship of new converts into responsible members focused on a world view more than local growth. This neglect of steady spiritual discipline in favor of that which is most new and exciting venture of the moment metastasizes uncontrolled, spreading here or there but seldom creating a vision beyond the borders of local province.

Why the impetus to self-directed independence? Individuals will often more easily pursue a course of action which they would have previously eschewed if a root of bitterness over perceived slights is nurtured and allowed to flourish. Life is always unfair this side of God’s new creation and the urge to separate and operate independently of the authoritative body flourished even in paradise with Lucifer’s rebellion.

Perhaps the saddest reality of these self-determined ventures is the probability that they will self-destruct under the weight of their own lack of accountability. Not because either their original intention or their intended processes were evil, but because any narrowly-focused group, by definition, suffers from tunnel vision, unable to see beyond their self-established boundaries. That narrowed vision becomes the true selfishness of playing one note. ■

Political reality and the Holy Spirit: when change confronts the Church

Robert K. McIver

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is changing. As it grows and as the world around it changes, it too must change. One interesting change taking place in several places around the world is that some conferences, unions, and divisions are in the process of incorporating a series of limited liability companies that will carry out much of the Church's administrative function.

With change comes opportunity and danger. Change also makes us think about what is important about our Church. Are there things we should not change? Are there things we should change?

In this article, I plan to approach these questions by looking at two aspects of Church: first, political realities, and then the leading of the Holy Spirit. Toward the end we will come back to the issue of limited liability companies.

Business and politics in the Church?

In recent years I have come to a surprising conclusion: our Church governs itself more like a political party than like a business. To point out this reality is not to say that the Church must be sheltered from the kinds of realities that dominate the decision making processes of business: It must raise funds to conduct its activities and act with financial probity in the best allocation of these funds to achieve its goals. Yet there are many decisions

that would have had a different outcome in a business world.

Take one, albeit rather sensitive, example: small churches.

Despite howls of protest, banks spent much of the 1990 decade shutting down many branches in small towns all across Australia. There were good business reasons for this—both population and business activity have been moving, especially from the country to the larger cities. Technology has changed in such a way that many banking services can be delivered without keeping open expensive and unprofitable branches. That these closures had a devastating effect on towns might be unfortunate, but if you were a business or a bank, these considerations would not be enough to overcome business considerations. And so the branches closed.

The same trends that have caused the banks to close these branches have also had a serious impact on the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has a strong presence in regional Australia. Yet only a handful of churches have been closed down because of them. Certainly, the population trends and their fallout are felt in many of the local churches. While there are some exceptions, many country churches are growing smaller,¹ and like the population of the towns that they are found in, their membership is aging.

This impacts local churches at many levels. The church knows it is *shrinking*, and this affects the morale not only of the members but also of the pastors who find themselves looking after such congregations. With shrinking membership, and with the remaining members earning less as more of them retire, the tithe and offering base is eroding. Many of these churches cannot afford a fraction of a pastor, and the scattered nature of the Australian population places a physical limit on how many of these churches can be maintained by one pastor.

If the Church were a business, these inefficient and economically nonviable small local churches would all be quickly closed, especially those located in cities. The pastors and other human resources associated with running these churches could then be diverted to the areas of population growth where local churches are flourishing, and where there is an economic base on which to further expand the Church.

Yet hardly one local church has been



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closed. Nor am I advocating it! The Church has a mission to the whole world and needs to keep a presence in as many places as possible, although there is a need to think seriously about how the future pastoral needs of these churches will be met.

There will be need for more volunteers and for more support of local church leadership that must continue without the presence of even a part-time pastor. Economic realities will see to that. Yet it will not be an easy process, and over time, some small churches will not survive.

Political reality and church organization

Why has such an economically obvious thing as closing nonviable small churches not happened? Because the Adventist Church makes its decisions on grounds other than pure economics. The Church is actually a politically driven organization.

Is this a good or a bad thing? There is something a bit distasteful about politics. It is hard to feel comfortable dealing with the kinds of compromises that are politically necessary if one is fully devoted to following the truth whatever the cost.

Yet our modern distaste is nothing compared with the outright suspicion of any church organization felt by the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. And rightly so, in their case, because most of them had been disfellowshipped from existing churches for following their own conscience. Yet practical considerations led the Church to organize formally and legally. Ministers were not getting paid and had to take on other full time work. The church lost buildings constructed at considerable sacrifice, but which had been built on land owned by individuals who became disgruntled.

The pioneer church had to organize, but they did so reluctantly and with great suspicion of all church organization, especially centralized organization. An example of this suspicion is revealed in the crucial decision as to who is or is not a Seventh-day Adventist. This authority was given to the local church, and there it has remained.

All the structures of the church have been carefully designed so that there are balances between the competing interests of the different parts of the Church, and so that no one

individual has too much power. This means that while the local church has a leader, usually a pastor, it is the business session of the local church that has the authority to add and drop names from the church roll and to act in major financial and other matters.

Local churches are grouped together in a sisterhood of churches called a conference. They send representatives to a conference session, where they elect conference officers and departmental directors, and an executive committee. Usually, these elections take place every three or four years, but under special circumstances, the local churches can call a special session and vote in a new set of leaders.

Power is shared in a very interesting way in the conference itself. There are three officers: president, secretary, and treasurer, although sometimes for economic reasons, one person takes on the combined secretary-treasurer role. Each of these officers ultimately answers to the executive committee, not to the president. While the president probably has the most actual power because he chairs the executive committee, he cannot do anything if the financial officer will not release the funds, nor can this happen unless it is within the budget set by the executive committee.

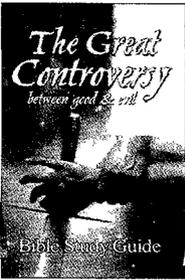
At the same time, the power of the executive committee is more limited than is usual in other management structures because the executive committee does not hire the president, although under certain circumstances, they can remove a president from office and call a special conference session to elect a new one, or elect the one recently deposed.

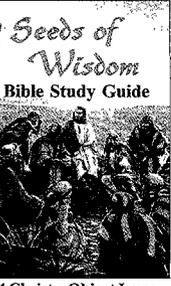
There is a balance of power between the conference and the local churches. Tithes are centralized at the conference level, which enables the Church to act strategically, which is a good thing. It is the conference, not the local church, that employs the pastors and other church leaders, and decides where they may best be used.

Of course, in the conference session, the various groupings of local

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churches and other institutions of the church ensure that they are represented in some way on the executive committee. The conference has other powers, although the most important power, the power to admit or eject a local church from the sisterhood of churches, remains vested in the conference session.

Representation on the "upper" levels

A sisterhood of conferences makes up a union, and for historical reasons, unions have been for some time the important administrative building blocks of the Church. Together they make up the General Conference.

At each level—conference, union, division, and General Conference, the Church runs sessions made up of representatives from lower levels and various of the relevant church institutions. These sessions elect presidents, secretaries, treasurers, and executive committees, who must work together to run that level of the church.

Each level is somewhat independent of the level above it—for example, the division or union cannot replace any local conference president without calling a special session of the conference. Nor can the constitution of a conference, for example, be changed without the vote of the conference in session. The conference and union executive committees can make their independent recommendations to their sessions, but only the conference session has the right to change its constitution, and that requires a two-thirds majority vote.

The only real power that exists is to exclude a conference, union, or division from the sisterhood of conferences, unions, or divisions.² I am unaware that this has happened in practice, though some conferences have come close, and there have been a couple of notable examples of conferences that have been lost to the church.

In summary so far, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is designed so that a significant number of people need to

agree on something before anything is done. It is, in other words, a political organization. And by and large, I am happy with this.

Saying it is a political organization means that large numbers of people have input into important decisions, which is a good thing. It can be very

16:6-10). And this is but a selection of the occasions that the Spirit is said to be active in the early Church in Acts.³

Yet that is not quite the whole story. Disputes can arise even between Spirit-led believers, and even between Spirit-led leaders. Paul and Barnabas had a falling out over whether John-

EVEN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH . . . NEEDED SOME LARGER DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES THAT EXTENDED BEYOND THE LOCAL CHURCH.

frustrating at times, but on the whole, we would need to be very worried if we lost this kind of balance of power in the way we do business.

But where is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit has not been mentioned in all that has been written thus far. This is in dramatic contrast with the description of the work of the early Church found in the book of Acts. The actions of the apostles were decided not by a committee but because they, and the early believers around them, received power from the Holy Spirit and became witnesses to the whole world (Acts 1:8).

Peter spoke to the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law because he was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:8). Leaders were chosen because they were known to be full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3-5). The Spirit led Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:29). During a time of "peace," the Church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria was strengthened and encouraged by the Holy Spirit and grew in numbers (Acts 9:31).

The Spirit led Peter to Cornelius the centurion and his family (Acts 10:19), and, perhaps most importantly, the Spirit asked that Barnabas and Saul (Paul) be set aside for the work to which the Spirit called them (Acts 13:2). Paul's missionary journeys were directed quite specifically by the Spirit on important occasions (e.g., Acts

Mark should accompany them on a trip. The dispute was fierce enough that the two thereafter went their separate ways (Acts 15:36-40).

This dispute, between individuals, was apparently quickly settled, but there is one major dispute that involved the whole Church. The issue was whether a Christian convert should be circumcised. This was an important matter, because at stake was whether or not Christianity would always remain a subgroup of Judaism.

"No small dissension and debate" arose between Paul and Barnabas and those who advocated circumcision for converts, so much so, it was decided that the dispute needed to go to Jerusalem and be heard by the "apostles and elders" (Acts 15:1-3). After much discussion, a decision was made on how to deal with the matter "with the consent of the whole church" (Acts 15:22).

Thus is revealed another aspect of the way the early Church organized itself—there was strong local leadership, but larger matters were brought before the whole body of the Church. Furthermore, we have, appearing beside the apostles, those unique companions of Jesus: a group of elders.

Paul (and Barnabas) appointed elders in the new local churches they established (Acts 14:23), and alongside the elders, deacons were likewise appointed (Acts 6:1-7). The appointment of such individuals became

commonplace in the various Christian communities. Paul even goes so far as to give instructions about the type of persons that might be considered for the tasks (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9).⁴

Most likely, the early Church took over the way a synagogue was organized—with most decisions being made by a board of elders. Indeed, James 2:2 even calls a gathering of Christians a synagogue. Thus, in the New Testament, we have a system of local congregations, loosely organized and run internally, but with the occasional need to send delegates to a general meeting to discuss matters that could not be resolved at the local level.

It was along these lines that the early Adventists organized themselves. The local churches were very strong and had a fair amount of independence so that the Spirit might freely lead in their activities. Yet there were some functions best located at a “higher” level.

Even the New Testament Church, as strongly led by the Holy Spirit as it was, needed some larger decision-making processes that extended beyond the local church. Such decisions were made with wide consultation and under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

It is clear and deeply significant that in the earlier discussion room needs to be made about the realities of Church politics and organization, for the activity of the Holy Spirit. Ideally, each individual who is part of the consultative process will be led by the Spirit, which will guide the resultant outcomes.

What is driving the Australian Church to incorporate?

What does this have to do with the opening statement of this article that tells of a desire, in some locations, for the Church to “incorporate a series of limited liability companies?”

A number of factors have led parts of the Adventist Church to the place where it is inevitable that they will set up a number of companies to carry out

significant elements of its operations. Two stand out as very important.

One is the kind of litigation that has been plaguing the American Catholic Church over sexual-abuse cases, many of which date back a number of years. This and other liability matters create the possibility that, without incorporating the various Church entities, an adverse court decision could cost the Church a significant amount of its assets, and that this would affect more than just the local school or local church in which it took place.

The second most important reason for the felt need to incorporate is government requirements. One of the state governments in Australia, for example, has insisted on incorporation of the Adventist school system in that state as a requirement for receiving any state funds. Similar pressures exist in the area of nursing homes for the aged.

There are other reasons motivating this sort of incorporation, not the least of which is the fact that because of our unincorporated state, there are an increasing number of cases before the courts claiming damages from accidents and the like that name each member of a conference executive committee in the court action.

Thus it is that much of the time and energy of the leadership of the Australian Adventist Church is being devoted to the matter of turning many of its various components into companies limited by guarantee. There are undoubted benefits to this process, but also this danger: that in doing so the Church will adopt a business model of governance.

It is possible to structure these corporations in a way that closely mirrors the excellent model that we have developed for Church organization, and it is important that all involved in the process remain vigilant in ensuring that this is the case.

Many of the same matters that are forcing the Australian Church to incorporate are also true in other countries of the world Church. Each

country has slightly different laws, traditions of governance, and even local church traditions.

In every case it will be important to keep what is good about the current structure of Church governance: that power resides at the lowest level of Church organization, and that any major decisions are made only after wide consultation.

Conclusion

The Seventh-day Adventist Church will change. This is inevitable. But in doing so, it must take care to maintain those elements of its current structure and practice that serve it best: (1) We need to ensure that important decisions are made only after widespread consultation; and (2) we need to allow much freedom of action so that the Holy Spirit can still act to guide in both the lives of the individual members and also in the movement as a whole.

Both of these considerations mean that close attention needs to be given to what powers are given to higher administrative structures. They need enough power to allow the Church to coordinate its activities in pursuing its worldwide mission. But this power needs to be limited so that important decisions are only taken after widespread consultation, and so that enough freedom of action is left at each level of the Church's activities thus allowing the leading of the Holy Spirit. ■

1 One of the most successful pastors in my present conference spoke to me of his time in a church in a medium-sized center of population. He needed to baptize 10 to 15 new members a year just to keep the church numbers steady at about 120 attending each week. Some died, some moved away, and some stopped coming. Ten to fifteen new members out of a shrinking town population that has had a long-term Adventist presence are not easy to find, and it is the rare pastor that is able to do this.

2 The Australian Church has a holding company in which all the properties of the church are placed. This means that when a church or conference or union is placed outside the sisterhood of churches, they lose title to all their properties, which remain with the parent Church. If such arrangements had been in place, the Church would not have lost Battle Creek Sanitarium and perhaps the Kellogg's factory during the Kellogg Crisis of 1903-1907.

3 The word “Spirt” is found in 61 separate verses in Acts.

4 The term overseer/bishop (episkopos) used in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 appears to be synonymous with the term elder (presbuteros) used in Titus 1:5-9.

BOOK REVIEW

The Battle for the Bible by David Marshall, 197 pages, published by Autumn House 2004, price 6.95 English pounds. ISBN 1-903921-23-6.

Seventh-day Adventists used to be known as the "people of the Book." Regrettably today though the worldwide membership of the church exceeds 14,000,000, biblical illiteracy is widespread. This is tragic for many reasons, not at least of which that the Bible is God's word to man and offers eternal salvation in Jesus.

A stimulating incentive to recapture interest and appreciation of God's Word is the reissue of David Marshall's 1991 book *The Battle for the Book* with a revised title and updated content.

The past few years have seen nearly a dozen new books published on the Bible: its history; the issues in its printing, translating, and publication; and the characters involved, not least William Tyndale, Thomas Moore and Kind James I. Marshall's book touches on these and other aspects but is more comprehensive and relevant in scope.

He divides the contents into sections: "Where the Bible Came From," "The Battle for the Bible," "Archaeology and the Bible," and "In Conclusion." This is a fine book, the reading of which will have many benefits. Though Marshall wears his scholarship lightly, he offers substantial and objective reasons for believing and trusting the accuracy of the Bible and its claim to be a divine book offering a divine Savior.

The style of the book makes it easy to read. In parts it held this reader in suspense. The retelling of the story of William Tyndale and the translation of the New Testament into English is deeply moving. We are reminded that

we enjoy the freedom to read the Bible but at a terrible price paid in human sacrifice and frequently martyrdom. Likewise the discovery of the Codex Sinaiticus by Count Tischendorf and its subsequent purchase by the British Museum is a detective story in its own right.

The author has done the Christian church a valuable service in writing this attractive and very readable book. His dating of the Exodus in 1450 B.C. may raise a few eyebrows but it is well argued and in harmony with the chronology of 1 Kings 6:1.

One cannot recommend this book highly enough for personal benefit and as an excellent book to place in the hands of anyone interested in finding out what the Bible is, how reliable it is, and what is its message.

—Patrick J. Boyle, pastor (retired), Watford, England.

We Can Keep Them in the Church, compiled by Myrna Tetz with Gary L. Hopkins. ISBN: 0816319987. (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn.). Paperback, U.S.\$14.99.

I like the title of this book. It's so positive! And so timely! It forces the church to rethink their attitudes toward the current generation of children and young people. Research points to the alarming fact that nearly half of our young people are leaving the church. Can we arrest this trend? Yes, says the book.

The formula is: surround our children and young people with caring adults who simply love them for what they are. The how-to is skillfully expressed through stories, interviews, and personal testimonies by church leaders, children's and youth ministries directors, youth pastors, and lay members. The book offers excellent suggestions on building a genuine rela-

tionship with our children and young people, loving them and accepting them for what they are. Some stories are heart wrenching, while others challenge our thinking, but they all explain how mentors are making a difference in the lives of young people; how they are able to help them through those years of "storm and stress."

Easier said than done. Unfortunately, in the past the church has been overly critical and harsh with our young people, condemning their clothing, music, and hairdos. We focus on the bad and fail to see the good. We look for the stain rather than appreciating the entire picture of the sunset. However, church leaders Ryan Bell, Steve Case, Karl Haffner, Jose Rojas, and Aileen Andres Sox offer the possibility of reversing the trend of high church-dropout rates among our youth. They share powerful ways of mentoring and involving our young members within the church community, making them feel a part of the great family of God. Barry Gane's experience of "Coming Home" brings home the vital message that love and acceptance are crucial to a young person's decision to return to God and to the church.

Every church member and leader from the local level up should read this book. If the church will embrace the suggestions made, it is possible to change our church from a formal institution into a loving, warm, and accepting family. That should make our young people stay. ■

—Linda Mei-Lin Koh, Children's Ministries Director, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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