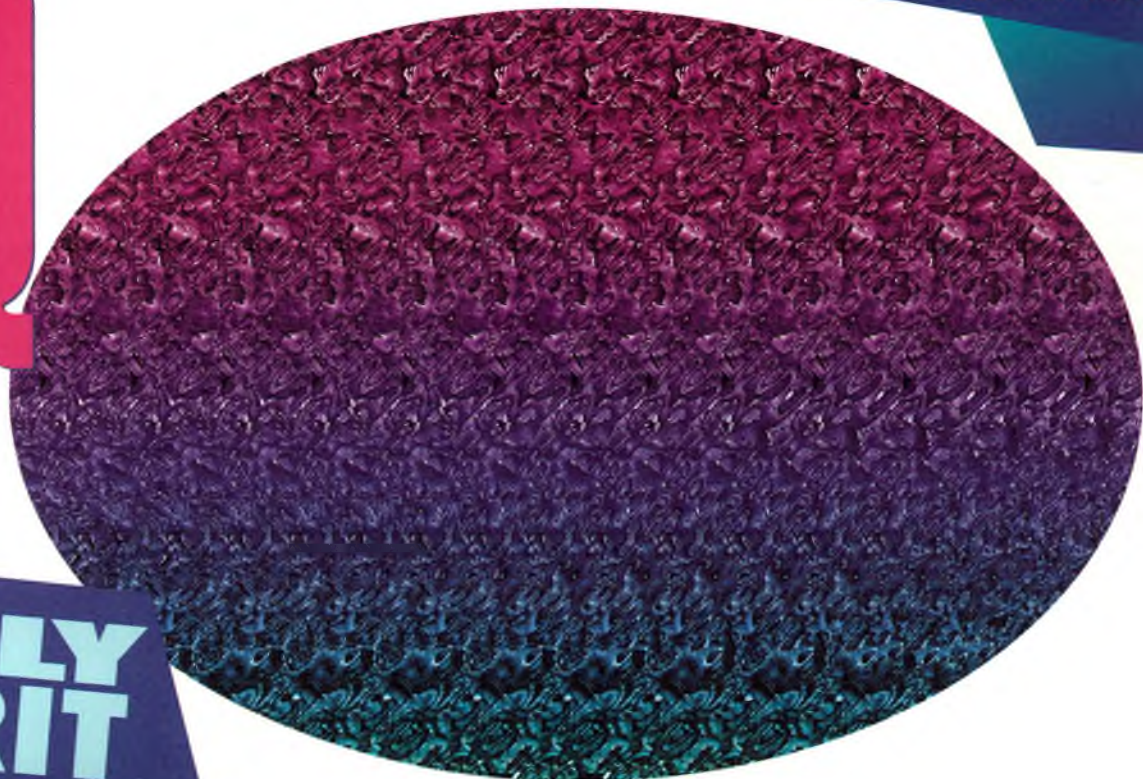


JULY-SEPTEMBER 1995

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COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY



THE HOLY SPIRIT

RAIN IN THE FORECAST



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THE HOLY SPIRIT: RAIN IN THE FORECAST

JULY - SEPTEMBER 1995

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RAIN IN THE FORECAST



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This Quarter's Artist



Vanessa Jensen graduated with an art major and business minor from Walla Walla College in 1980 and continued her studies at the University of Washington, where she graduated in 1981 with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with a concentration in printmaking. Presently she is director of MEEK (Mom Encouraging and Educating Kids), a nonprofit program that she runs in her home in Bothell, Washington. Two students—Erik and Sahale Jensen—are enrolled. Vanessa also teaches children's drawing/art classes in schools in the Bothell-Lynwood area.

This Quarter's Cover

The oval in the center of the cover design contains a three-dimensional illusion to illustrate this quarter's subject: the Holy Spirit. All you need to see the illusion is a pair of eyes and a little patience. Probably the easiest way to do this is to hold the book against your nose and very, very slowly distance the book from your face while you avoid focusing on the design. Though it may take several attempts, if you're patient, the three-dimensional image will appear. The sketch below approximates what you will be looking for.

Special thanks go to Nvision Grafix, Inc., 222 West Las Colinas Blvd., Suite 1840, Irving, TX 75039, for its permission to *CQ* to reproduce this fascinating kind of illustration.



Getting the Most Out of *CQ*

Facts You Should Know

CQ is based on the conviction that the Word of God offers transforming power and that group study is one important way to tap into that power. *CQ*'s purpose is to provide Seventh-day Adventist young adults with a resource for devotional study on mutual topics, which can then be discussed each week in Sabbath School. Many who use the adult quarterly find that because *CQ* deals with the same topics as the adult quarterly it enriches lesson study and discussion as a supplemental aid.

Adventist young-adult groups work together in producing this quarterly. More than 200 individuals contribute to *CQ* each year. The wide variety—and occasional repetition—of the content reflects the great diversity of its contributors around the world as they respond creatively and individually to the subject.

Worldwide circulation of *CQ* is about 59,000.

Pointers for Study

1. Through prayer, open your mind to the Holy Spirit's guidance as you study.

2. The Bible passage on which each week's lesson is based appears in bold type in the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). Read this entire passage in conjunction with the quarterly introduction to give yourself an overview of the lesson.

3. The Bible passage for the week is divided into sections on the "Logos" pages (Monday's portion of the lesson). When studying this section, carefully reread Bible passages indicated in bold headings before reading the comments beneath the heading.

4. Read remaining sections for the week with the perspective you have gained from your own study of the biblical passage.

5. Keep in mind the purposes of each section of the quarterly:

"Introduction" (Sunday) is designed to stimulate your interest and focus your thinking on the week's theme.

"Logos" (Monday), as described above, is a guide for direct study of the Bible passage for the week.

"Testimony" (Tuesday) presents Ellen White's perspective on the lesson theme.

"Evidence" (Wednesday) approaches issues raised by the lesson from a historical, scientific, philosophical, or theological perspective.

"How-To" (Thursday) discusses what the abstractions in the lesson mean for day-to-day living.

"Opinion" (Friday), a personal viewpoint on the lesson, is meant to encourage further thought and discussion.

CQ and the Church

CQ is the General Conference-approved quarterly for the collegiate/young-adult age group. It upholds the beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. *However, its contents should not be regarded as official pronouncements of the church.*

THE POWER AND THE PERSON



“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38).

More Than a Supply of Energy

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Acts 1:8

Martin is an electrician. He loves his work. His job brings much joy to him, especially when he can be creative. In his profession he must make use of many instruments, including an oscilloscope to indicate frequency. Without a calculator, evaluation, planning, and construction are unthinkable. One day the monitors of Martin's instruments remain dark. Even his colleagues are speechless. What has happened? Why don't these instruments function? A short has paralyzed the supply of energy.

The Lord, our supply of energy, has created us with wonderful abilities. He has given us many talents for a fulfilling life. He wants our lives to become and remain highly creative and active. Therefore, our supply of energy by the Holy

The Holy Spirit is more than just a source of divine power.

Spirit must remain intact. A Christian obtains power through the Holy Spirit to fulfill his or her commission here on earth.

But the Holy Spirit is more than just a source of divine power. God Himself comes near us by His Holy Spirit, in order to work in and through us. The Holy Spirit confronts us with our sin (John 16:8). By pointing us to Jesus Christ and His forgiveness, He assures us that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16).

The Holy Spirit builds up the church of Christ and cares for it as it grows and flourishes. He does this by leading us personally. He reveals to us the truth of God (John 16:13). He gives and creates in us new talents and abilities (Rom. 12:1). Finally, the Holy Spirit transforms us through sanctification in accordance with the gospel. The life in the Spirit is a new life. The guidance by the Holy Spirit becomes visible (Gal. 5:22).

By Susanne Zurek, a business-administration and computer-science student in Friedrichsdorf, Germany.

“How Far Does Your Greatness Reach?”

LOGOS

John 14:15-26; 1 Cor. 12:11; Heb. 9:14; Deut. 6:4

“Pretty frightening here in jail to be surrounded by innumerable human beings who don’t believe. On the Jordan they listened to me. Believed me. They reoriented their lives and allowed themselves to be baptized.

“And now, here in chains. Have I supported the right one? Jesus, show Yourself now as liberator! I have baptized as one commissioned by God and proclaimed that a greater one would come after me. He will baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus, how far does Your greatness reach? Are You absolutely sure of Your cause? I languish here in prison with no trace of Your power. . . .”

“John, you push it to the limit.”

My question in 1995 is the same: Jesus, can You really change my life? How can You work here from so great a distance? What is behind this? I need to know!

The Spirit From on High

What does the Bible tell us about the Holy Spirit?

Architect. Creation begins. Planet Earth has been created. But it has not been formed as yet. The Spirit of God “hovers” over the waters above the chaos (Gen. 1:2, NIV).

Place of contact. God leads, instructs, and influences people of all times by His Holy Spirit (Neh. 9:20; Ps. 143:10).

Comforter. Jesus promises His sad disciples a representative, a comforter (John 14:16). He understands us, loves us (Rom. 8:27; 15:30).

Founder. Acts 2 is exciting, breathtaking. At Pentecost the Holy Spirit comes directly from the Father upon the praying believers for all time.

God in us. Praise and joy are spreading. The young church discovers gifts of another world, all to the edification of the church. For the salvation of the world, the church of Jesus Christ is established (1 Cor. 12–14).

God. The Holy Spirit is mentioned with the Father and the Son (Matt. 28:19). The Father wills that all should be saved. The Son dies and rises for the redemption of lost souls (1 Tim. 2:4–6). The Spirit opens people’s hearts for the good news. He enables a decision for Jesus. He brings to life (John 6:63) and leads into freedom (2 Cor. 3:17).

Personality. The Holy Spirit hears (John 16:13). He speaks (Matt. 10:20). He convicts (John 16:8). He imparts love (Rom. 5:5). He can be saddened (Eph. 4:30) and be lied to (Acts 5:3, 4). He prays for us with emotions (Rom. 8:26).

Our study shows that the Holy Spirit is power and person. He will lead us beyond our human limitations. Through Him, we have part in the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and divine power. So He was able to do good, to heal, to free from the power of Satan, and proclaim the good news with authority.

You are a co-heir with Jesus Christ. To you has been promised divine power and authority (Rom. 8:17). The Spirit from on high in you, God within you!

Today, Christians ask, just like John the Baptist, “Why do I not experience the

promised power of the Holy Spirit now?" Formulate a helping answer!

Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "Quench not the Holy Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19, KJV). What can quench the Holy Spirit in your life?

Look for the answer in two areas: In practical everyday life and in diffused and nonbiblical images of God.

REACT

1. Drawing from your own personal experience, how would you describe the Holy Spirit?

"I languish here in prison with no trace of Your power. . . ."

2. In what specific ways can one encourage greater relationship with the Holy Spirit?

3. What is the relationship of the Holy Spirit with the other members of the Godhead?

By Olaf Dammann, pastor in the Homburg District, Usingen, Germany.

Getting Acquainted With a Person

TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 15:26

One speaks of people who accomplish something in life, who hold a high position, and who represent something important. They have become visible through their activities, performances, and successes. Is there a better chance than this to commend oneself in this way?

Jesus says: "The comforter will come. He is the Spirit of truth who comes from the Father. I will send Him to you when I am with the Father, and He will testify of Me" (see John 15:26).

"When you search in the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit is on your side, personating Jesus Christ."¹ We read much in Scripture how the Holy Spirit is active today. He is autonomous and does nothing out of Himself, because He acts in agreement with Jesus and His Father.

"The Holy Spirit is Christ's representative."² A representative works inde-

Without the knowledge of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' act remains without significance.

pendently. He makes decisions, acts, and adapts to the circumstances. His most important goal is to represent and to take into consideration the interests, desires, and objectives of the one who gives orders with the maximum success.

"It is the Holy Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world's redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure."³

Without the work or function of the Holy Spirit, Jesus' act remains without significance. "While Jesus, our intercessor, pleads for us in heaven, the Holy Spirit works in us, to will and to do of His good pleasure. All heaven is interested in the salvation of the soul."⁴

1. *The Paulson Collection of Ellen G. White Letters*, p. 101.

2. *Lift Him Up*, p. 179.

3. *The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, Nov. 19, 1908.

4. *The Signs of the Times*, Oct. 3, 1892.

Who Is the Holy Spirit?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 2:10-12

One of the repeated questions that stimulate discussion is the question concerning the “who” of the Holy Spirit. Especially, of course, because the concept “spirit” (also in the Bible used for incorporeal beings) appears in contradiction to the question of the “who,” for in this way we search and identify persons who are recognizable by their bodily existence.

We have the same problem with the question concerning God. Who is God? As a matter of fact, the Bible leaves this question unanswered, lest we are satisfied with the indication in John 4:24 that He is “spirit.” But then we should have asked, “What is God?” In regard to the Holy Spirit, what or how is He? These questions are clearly answered by Scripture. The following references support this thought:

- John 14:17—the Spirit of truth.
- Zech. 12:10—the Spirit of grace and prayer.
- John 6:63—the Spirit that quickens.
- Gal. 5:22—the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness.
- 2 Cor. 3:17—where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.

The Holy Spirit is the side of God that personally turns toward us.

The following texts show what or how God is:

- | | |
|----------------|--------------|
| ● Exod. 34:6 | ● Rom. 15:5 |
| ● 2 Cor. 13:11 | ● Rom. 15:13 |
| ● 1 Pet. 5:10 | ● Rom. 16:20 |
| ● 2 Cor. 1:3 | |

Result: God and the Spirit of God appear to be most intimately related with each other. God presents Himself as being one. He *is* the life, the hope, the resurrection, the love.

The Holy Spirit is the side of God that personally turns toward us and who would like to be alive in us. The Spirit of love, patience, and forgiveness lives within us and unfolds a concrete effect among us. The question concerning the “who” ends in the material identification, or description. The Bible testifies of a living God, who wishes to be with us in a living connection of trust. Now it is up to us to answer, to experience.

REACT

What differences, if any, do you see between “who” and “what” the Holy Spirit is?

By Heinz-Hartmut Wilfert, public-relations director, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Bad Homburg, Germany.

The Holy Spirit as Life's Partner

HOW-TO

Key Text: 2 Cor. 3:17, 18

An old proverb goes like this, "Tell me with whom you live, and I will tell you who you are." This is similar to a partnership with the Holy Spirit. Where this Spirit moves, something goes into action and dynamism originates. He proceeds creatively and successfully. He does nothing halfway. The Bible is full of excellent illustrations.

The apostle Paul has experienced it in his own body. He knows what he is talking about when as the result of the work of the Holy Spirit he writes in his letter to the Corinthians of the reflecting glory of God in his life. We, too, may be used by the Holy Spirit. The following thoughts may be helpful:

1. Ability and enabling are two different things. On one hand, God wants me to make my abilities available to the work of the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, He enables me to fulfill His commission with new abilities. The most important ability is love (1 Cor. 13:1-3). Think about what His power is to the weak and humble!

2. The Holy Spirit is always there for me. As my life's partner, He stands

"Tell me with whom you live, and I will tell you who you are."

without reservation on my side. He listens to me, comforts me, judges me, strengthens me, and empowers me. He corrects me, tests me, and influences me in a fantastic way. In my helplessness I may ask God for the assistance of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26).

The Spirit always has the right time, and He always applies the right method. He takes over the leading role in the partnership.

3. Where the Spirit works, the fruit of the Spirit comes into being. His work affects the total being, internally and externally. He changes thoughts and past attitudes. Important things become unimportant and vice versa. Jesus Christ has become the central point in my life. From there, my personality receives a new sense of value. The relationship to my fellow human beings is determined by the spirit of reconciliation and love. A positive radiation emanates. A piece of the Lord's glory is reflected in my nature.

REACT

1. Why can I become a useful co-worker with the Lord only in connection with the Holy Spirit?

2. How have I experienced the influence of the Holy Spirit on myself and others?

By Paul Mayer, teacher at a professional school for engineering, Frankfurt, Germany.

The Influence of the Holy Spirit

OPINION

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:4-11

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem "Der Zauberlehrling" ("The Student of Magic") describes the centuries-old dream of humanity to control the spirits. It becomes obvious that the spirit, because of a lack of competence, loses control. The master needs to repair the damage he has created.

Can we control the Holy Spirit? I think we can, but not in the same way as in the above example. It does not happen through our will or by means of a magic formula. This can be illustrated on the basis of the failed healing of the lunatic boy, recorded in Matthew 17:14-16.

The disciples believed they had done everything as they had learned it from Jesus. They were desperate; they wanted to help but were unable to. The disciples asked Jesus where they had made their mistake. He pointed to their lack of faith (verse 20) and prayer life (Mark 9:29). They had exchanged roles and wanted to exert power themselves in order to exorcise the evil spirit. However, the Holy Spirit wants to use us. He would like for us to apply ourselves with the whole

Can we control the Holy Spirit? I think we can.

strength of our faith and prayer. He will support us in this endeavor. Only when we are totally conscious of our weakness does the Holy Spirit become active within us. In 2 Corinthians 12:9 the apostle Paul describes the situation in these words: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

The spirit in the poetry is strong but does not have strength comparable to the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a vast difference between the Holy Spirit and the spirit of magic: the former becomes active according to His will as a representative of God in promoting our eternal welfare. The Holy Spirit divides His gifts according to His own judgment to the one who engages in the service of God.

Are you open to the influence of the Holy Spirit in your life? He is present here on earth and would like to shape your life. Give Him an opportunity!

REACT

How can one open oneself to the influence of the Holy Spirit?

By Siegfried Eberhardt, treasurer, Central Rhenish Conference, Frankfurt/Main, Germany.

EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT



“And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me” (John 16:8, 9).

Whose Job Is It?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 16:8-11

“You need to talk to Shelly. You know she is definitely not living up to our standards.”

Karen sighed as the concerned church member went on and on. Karen and her husband had offered Shelly a place to live while she healed from a painful experience that had left her financially, emotionally, and spiritually impoverished.

Finally, Karen spoke. “No, I don’t feel led to do that right now, but I’ll pray for Shelly, and I would really appreciate it if you would too. My job right now is to love Shelly and to give her a healing place to live. She was raised an Adventist and knows what’s right and wrong. When the Holy Spirit convicts her that what she’s doing is wrong, if she comes to me, we’ll talk about her behavior. Until then, I’ll do my job, and the Holy Spirit will do His job. I need to let Him work things out. He knows what’s best for Shelly.”

The church member left, thinking a confrontation was called for.

Was it? Whose job is it, anyway? One of the Holy Spirit’s many roles is convicting of sin. No one likes this. It’s always uncomfortable and often unwelcome.

When the Holy Spirit confronts me with my shortcomings, I need to look at my receptiveness to His sometimes not-so-gentle prodding. Unless specifically

When someone is being born again, my role is to function as a midwife.

led by the Spirit to speak to others regarding their sins, this is the Holy Spirit’s job. When someone is being born again, my role is to function as a midwife; to provide supportive care. Rushing the process or forcing premature action will usually cause harm and often invalidate the Spirit’s efforts for that individual.

So why are we sometimes so convinced that the Holy Spirit can’t do His job without our help, especially if we haven’t really done our job?

How did the story end? Karen stuck to her guns and said nothing to Shelly. One night Shelly broke down and confessed the rotten misery of her life. “You wouldn’t be able to love me if you knew what I was really doing,” she sobbed. “And you wouldn’t let me live here either.”

Karen wrapped her arms around Shelly and shared how God had sent people to love her and to give her a place to live during a dark part of her life. She shared God’s forgiveness and His transforming power, but most of all, she shared His unconditional love.

Shelly went on to find a loving, Christian husband. Today, they share leadership responsibilities in both Pathfinders and Sabbath School in their local church. How might this story have ended if Karen had tried to do the Holy Spirit’s job? Remember, He only asked us to be fishers of men. He didn’t say we were supposed to clean them!

By Sally Dillon, freelance writer and nurse entrepreneur from Timberville, Virginia.

What? Me Guilty?

LOGOS

John 3:5, 36; 16:8-11; Rom. 7:1-8:10; 1 John 3:3-10; Micah 7:18

Let's listen in on an after-the-Sabbath-afternoon-potluck conversation between two friends as they try to finish a discussion that started earlier in Sabbath School.

"But what's so bad about guilt? It seems our modern culture keeps trying to divorce guilt from behavior. It's like they're trying to make 'Guilt Free' the slogan of the nineties, like 'Fat Free' was so popular in the eighties. Doesn't being guilt free let me off the hook for my actions? Doesn't anybody remember when responsibility was considered a good thing?"

"Yes, but don't forget that a little guilt can go a long way. If we look at the key text for this week's lesson, we find that the Holy Spirit uses guilt to 'convict,' as it says in the NIV, or 'reprove,' as the KJV puts it. It's all based on the Greek word *elegcho*. Ring any bells from all those Greek classes you took in college, or did you sleep through that lesson?"

"Now, wait a minute. Don't make me feel guilty about that too!"

"OK. But let's get back to the text. *Strong's Bible Dictionary* gives a couple of interesting insights. First, 'to convict' generally carries with it a suggestion of shame. Second, conviction has to do with bringing the facts to light. So it seems that the Holy Spirit isn't all that concerned with being politically correct. In fact, He uses guilt quite freely to make the point that no matter how far we've come, we've still got a long way to go."

"OK, does that mean the Holy Spirit administers guilt the way a physician administers drugs? A little may be good, but a lot ain't necessarily better?"

"I think he's got it!"

"So the question really is, how does the Holy Spirit use guilt therapeutically?"

"And that, I think, goes back to the basics of salvation, in which we find that the Holy Spirit must first convince us of our need of a Saviour. Before we can recognize our need for a Saviour, we must recognize our sinfulness. The Holy Spirit uses guilt because He understands the importance of our acknowledging our sinfulness."

"Right. But let's take it a step farther. Did you notice in the text that the Holy Spirit also convinces of righteousness, as well? 'In regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer.' The important thing to note is that the Holy Spirit convinces us not of our own righteousness, but of Jesus' righteousness, which was confirmed when Jesus ascended to the Father after His Easter morning resurrection and His sacrifice was officially accepted."

"Great! That brings us to the last part of the text: the Holy Spirit's role in convincing us of judgment. Get your lexicon out again, because the original wording is important here. The word *krisis* is interpreted as 'a separating, a sundering, selection, or judgment.' And since the Holy Spirit knows that we all will eventually have to face our own *krisis*, it's His job to use whatever means at His disposal to make us aware of the judgment to come. He knows how crucial, and *crucial* is an appropriate word since it stems from the word *cross*, it is for

each person to be aware of the cosmic struggle and his or her part in it.”

“Well, it seems that no matter what, the Holy Spirit spends His time pointing to Christ, whether it be waking us up to our need for Him as our Saviour, the example of His perfectly righteous life, or His right and ability to stand as our Judge. Sure does make me grateful that the Judge adopted me into His family!”

REACT

1. How can we tell the difference between the positive guilt that the Holy

The Holy Spirit uses guilt because He understands the importance of our acknowledging our sinfulness.

Spirit uses to bring us to Jesus and the negative guilt feelings that erode a person’s self-esteem?

2. As the Holy Spirit points out flaws in our character and/or behavior, how can we go about making the necessary changes without falling into the trap of salvation by works?

By Bruce Dillon, a computer consultant, and Marvin Brauer, a physician, in New Market, Virginia.

Office Work of the Holy Spirit

TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 16:8-11

“In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine

“It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character, that we prove our connection with Him.”

nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.”¹

“It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character, that we prove our connection with Him. Whenever one renounces sin, which is the transgression of the law, his life will be brought into conformity to the law, into perfect obedience. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.”²

REACT

Suggest some specific evidences from the following situations in daily life that show the Holy Spirit is present: (a) driving; (b) the work place; (c) the classroom; (d) parenting; (e) the home church.

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

2. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 92.

By Mitzi Lipscomb, certified nursing assistant, Life Care Center, New Market, Virginia.

The Possibility of Righteousness

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Rom. 8:9

Is it too much for us feeble, fallible, sinful humans to expect to be controlled by the Holy Spirit? Even Paul, the stalwart, faithful-unto-death evangelist who broadened the Christian church's worldview beyond the borders of Israel, Paul, the author of the majority of our New Testament Scriptures, admitted that, unaided, he couldn't live the righteous life he desired (Rom. 7:18). Can we, who are so used to the agony of defeat, ever know the thrill of victory?

Yes! It is that same frustrated apostle who shows us the Way.

Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, found freedom in the "law of the Spirit," whereas all Saul, the Pharisee from Tarsus, knew was slavery to the "law of sin and death" (8:2). All humanity has received a human nature that is anti-God as a birthright from Adam (5:12). Without divine intervention, those natural anti-God tendencies would become progressively stronger until all thoughts and actions would be "only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

However, those who exercise their sacred right and choose to let God, through

Paul admitted that, unaided, he couldn't live the righteous life.

His Spirit, remake their thought and behavior patterns will find themselves becoming progressively more in tune with "what the Spirit desires" (Rom. 8:5, NIV). "But if Christ is in you, your body [*the natural, sinful inclinations*] is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of [*Christ's imputed*] righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies [*change your natural inclinations*] through his Spirit, who lives in you" (Rom. 8:10, 11, NIV, italics supplied.)

Old habits die hard, and new ones are not easily formed, but those who are willing to put forth the effort of cultivating and maintaining a relationship with Jesus, who willingly monitor their attitudes and behaviors, submitting those which the Spirit finds offensive to Him for change, will realize Jesus' promise: "For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened" (Matt. 7:8). They will experience the victory that Paul eventually found and that caused him to exclaim triumphantly, "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Phil. 4:13). The process that caused Paul so much inner turmoil (Rom. 7:23, 24) has as its eventual outcome our sanctification; restoration of the divine image originally molded into Adam and Eve, and which, though eroded and defaced, is still present in all of us.

REACT

Which of our natural inclinations does the Holy Spirit want to change?

By Bruce A. Dillon, computer consultant, New Market, Virginia.

Do You Have What It Takes?

HOW-TO

Key Texts: John 16:8, 9; 2 Pet. 1:3, 4

The Holy Spirit is the special gift from God that will enable each person to live a life of victory over personal sin. God has given us His power, the Holy Spirit, to live life in a way that pleases Him (2 Pet. 1:3). The Holy Spirit is the transforming power in the Christian life.

Think of the light bulb. It is a light bulb, whether or not it gives any light. The light bulb is not very useful if it gives no light. It cannot give light until it is put into a socket with the proper wiring and plugged into the electrical outlet. In a similar way, a Christian is not effective in advancing the kingdom of God until the Holy Spirit is invited into the life. One of the actions of the Holy Spirit is to lead the Christian to acknowledge sin in the life, receive forgiveness, and accept empowerment to live a victorious Christian life.

Role of the Holy Spirit in our lives today:

- He leads to the acknowledgment of sin.
- He grants forgiveness of sin.
- He empowers us to overcome sin.

The light bulb is not very useful if it gives no light.

The Holy Spirit is very gentle and will never force us to do anything against our will. We respond to the Holy Spirit with acknowledgment of sin in our thought life, actions, or words.

Once we have acknowledged a sin that the Holy Spirit brings to our attention, we must be willing to receive God's forgiveness. We must be willing to forgive ourselves and let go of any guilt brought upon us. Continued guilt over a sin is not from the Holy Spirit but from the devil. Once the sin is confessed and forgiveness is asked, guilt no longer has any place in our lives.

The final step is to receive again the Holy Spirit into our lives. "So when a born-again Christian, who is already the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19, 20; Rom. 8:11), again invites the Holy Spirit into his or her life, it is actually a reaffirmation of the conversion experience and a new invitation for the Holy Spirit to have complete residential authority."* The Holy Spirit enters, changes, and empowers the Christian with vital life-giving power to live a consistently progressive life of victory over sin.

REACT

How does the Holy Spirit make a difference in my life?

* Garrie F. Williams, *Give the Holy Spirit a Chance* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1993), p. 59.

By Judy L. Brauer, a registered nurse in Edinburg, Virginia.

Here Comes the Judge?

OPINION

Key Text: John 16:8, 9

It was seven weeks after the death of Jesus. The disciples were gathered together. Suddenly, a sound like the roaring of a mighty wind filled the whole room where they were gathered. Then what looked like flames or tongues of fire settled on them, and they were each given a black robe and a gavel so they could sit in judgment.

No, that's not it. Let me try to recall it again.

Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire settled on them and coursed through every fiber of their beings, electrifying their senses and cleansing them of every sin.

No, that's not it either!

Unfortunately, there are many Christians today who believe the work of the Holy Spirit is to create one of the two experiences above. But that's not what John was saying in our key text. The verb *convict* as used in the NIV translation of John 16:8, 9 may be better understood if translated "convince," as is done in the Living

The Holy Spirit gets a bum rap when we associate Him with a Supreme Court scenario.

Bible or "expose," as translated in The Student Bible. These translations of the verb seem to me to be more in line with the other outcomes promised from becoming intimately acquainted with the Holy Spirit. Check out Galatians 5:22, 23 to learn the fruit bestowed by associating with Him.

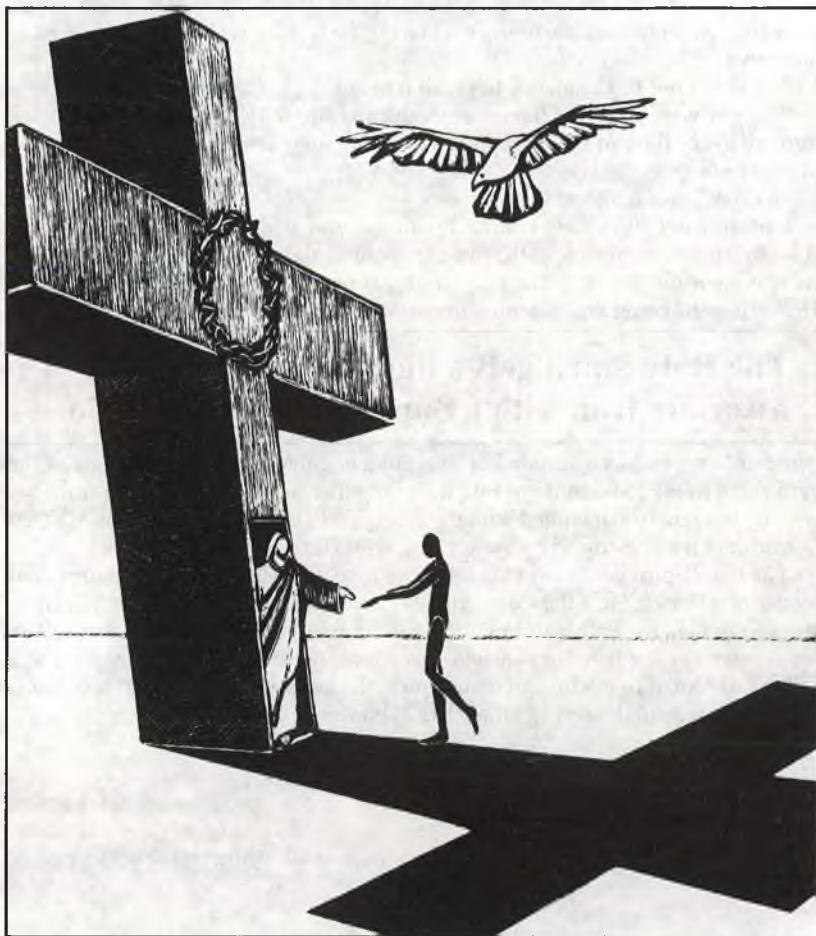
The Holy Spirit gets a bum rap when we associate Him with a Supreme Court scenario. After all, He's the Comforter whom Jesus promised to send, the Inspiration from God the Father through Jesus our Saviour. He's the Spirit that fell on Jesus after His baptism and carried Jesus through the days of temptation that followed. And, through this precious Spirit, the author of our key text was transformed from John the son of thunder to John the Beloved!

REACT

1. What other names, characteristics, or work can you think of that describe who the Holy Spirit is and what He does?
2. How can the Holy Spirit convince or expose sin while still drawing people to God?

By Carole A. Bird, a freelance writer from Timberville, Virginia.

“ROOM AT THE CROSS ...”



“We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3, NIV).

In Fellowship With the Holy Spirit

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Phil. 2:1, 2

“Look how tattered his suit is,” Beverly whispered to her husband as the preacher lifted his arms to pray. “Paul, why don’t you give him your suit? We are returning to the United States, and you can buy another.”

Four years later, Beverly was thinking about the African pastor and felt strongly impressed that he needed another suit. “How can I do this, Lord?” she whispered.

The phone rang, and the local banker’s wife asked, “Do you know anyone who can use some of my husband’s suits?”

The question “Lord, how will I get them to Africa?” was answered by the morning’s mail, which gave news of a doctor who was going to the pastor’s country.

Several months later, the pastor’s wife sighed as she looked at the worn suit

The pastor’s wife sighed as she looked at the worn suit she was going to take to be mended.

she was going to take to be mended. The next morning, just before she left for the tailor, a parcel arrived with five nearly new suits in it. Philippians 2:1, 2 combines the love and unity of Christ’s fellowship. For all of this plan to take place, each person had to be open to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. Not only was the African pastor filled with joy but also each of those who had a part in helping a fellow messenger of the gospel.

Fellowship with Christ and willingness to do His service enable the Holy Spirit to work in our lives. As you study this week’s lesson, look for how the Holy Spirit can call you for fellowship and service.

By Jill Conrad, a sophomore nursing student, Kettering College of Medical Arts, Kettering, Ohio.

All in One and One in All

LOGOS

**Luke 10:25-37; Acts 2:38-47; 4:32-37; 20:17-35; 2 Cor. 13:14;
1 John 1:3, 7; John 13:34, 35; 17:22-26**

One of the ironies of our modern technological society's lifestyle is loneliness. In a world of cable television, modems, electronic mail, satellite systems, cellular phones—which would have astounded people of even a hundred years ago—an empty vacuum remains unfilled for the silent majority. A silence of the soul craves the joy of belonging, the joy of love and acceptance, the peace from knowing that someone will always care. We seldom think in terms of extended families, and even the nuclear family unit has disintegrated in the divorce courts. We live within the "Sound of Silence," consoling ourselves with the thought "*I am a rock, I am an island.*" The Eleanor Rigby question still haunts us: "All the lonely people, where do they all belong? All the lonely people, where do they all come from?"

God never intended that human beings should live alone. We were created to communicate our deepest selves, to share our heartfelt desires, to belong to one another. This is the solution to the human problem of loneliness. Apart from fellowship with God and God's children, there is no enduring answer to the individual's quest for fulfillment. This belonging is possible only because Christ has removed the barriers that stand between us. At Calvary He paid the price for our sins, thus breaking down the walls that keep people apart from God and apart from one another. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christ's provision at Calvary becomes real in our lives.

All From One (John 17:22-26; 2 Cor. 13:14)

Our fellowship, our belonging, originates with God. Jesus prayed, "That they may be one, even as We are one." The fellowship of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is the basis for all true fellowship. It is a belonging founded upon unselfish love, unquestioning trust, absolute righteousness. The fellowship of God becomes the inspiration for all true fellowship at any level of existence.

From One to All (1 John 1:3)

God's fellowship—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—becomes the source and model for the fellowship of God with people. Miracle of miracles, God wants to fellowship with us. He wants us to belong to Him and wants to know that He belongs to us. John 17:21, NKJV, adds, "That they may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us." This sense of belonging is available without charge to as many as accept Christ as their Saviour. In Christ our loneliness and emptiness become things of the past. "Whether it be night or day, close to home or far away, I am not alone, for He is near."

From All to Everyone (1 John 1:7; Luke 10:25-37; John 13:34, 35)

"There's plenty of room in the family." "Though millions have come, there's still room for one. Yes, there's room at the cross for you." God's house is never overcrowded, never too small, and people are never turned away. When we realize

this, it makes a tremendous difference in the way we respond to people! The Samaritan traveler did not allow social or religious barriers to stand between him and making the unselfish, righteous choice to help the man who had been robbed. Jesus made unselfish love the trademark by which men and women could be identified as His children. The call to evangelize the world is a call to bring others into the family of Christ. Above all else, it is a call to live out the love of God in unselfishness and righteousness. There is an emptiness in God's heart when even one of His children has lost the way, lost the sense of belonging to Him. It was this feeling that sent the shepherd into the night, searching for the one lost sheep, rather than staying with the 90 and 9. Do we sense their emptiness and loss in our own lives? Will we make the Godlike sacrifices that will help others know that they belong to Christ and that we care about them?

What a Difference He Makes in Our Lives (Acts 2:38-47; 4:32-37; 20:17-35)

In an age when it is popular to deny the Spirit's power to make real changes in

God never intended that human beings should live alone.

our lives, the acts of the apostles stand as a beacon of hope. The early church was a transformed church, a church where the people were one with Christ and one with one another. This was not a hollow, theological boast. They opened their homes, their tables, and their pocketbooks to one another. This was the result of the converting power of the Holy Spirit so that people were living out the scriptural admonition to "act justly [righteously], and to love mercy and to walk humbly with . . . [their] God" (Mic. 6:8, NIV). The essence of evangelism is allowing the Holy Spirit complete control of our lives so we live out the good news that we talk about. As God accepts us, so we accept others. As God sacrificed for us, so we sacrifice for others. As God opens His home to us, so we open our home to His other children. As He shared His life, so we share the life He's given to us.

REACT

1. What personal sacrifices have I made recently so that the needs of poor believers in my city will be met? How about the needs of believers and orphaned children in Third World nations?
2. What changes in my life would make me more accepting of believers from other racial, religious, and economic backgrounds?
3. How can I be certain that God is with me during times of loneliness?
4. If Christ has removed the "barriers that stand between us," why are there still social, economic, and educational distinctions in the church?

By Dan Solis, chaplain at Kettering College of Medical Arts, Kettering, Ohio.

Penetrating Power

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Matt. 5:13

“Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved in masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. We must come close to those whom we desire to benefit.

“The savor of the salt represents the vital power of the Christian—the love of Jesus in the heart, the righteousness of Christ pervading the life. The love of Christ is diffusive and aggressive. If it is dwelling in us, it will flow out to others. We shall come close to them till their hearts are warmed by our unselfish interest and love. The sincere believers diffuse vital energy, which is penetrating and imparts new moral power to the souls for whom they labor. *It is not the power of the man himself, but the power of the Holy Spirit that does the transforming work.*”¹

“Liberality on the part of the believers was the result of the outpouring of the

“Liberality on the part of the believers was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit.”

Spirit. The converts to the gospel were ‘of one heart and of one soul.’ One common interest controlled them—the success of the mission entrusted to them; and covetousness had no place in their lives. Their love for their brethren and the cause they had espoused, was greater than their love of money and possessions. Their works testified that they accounted the souls of men of higher value than earthly wealth.

“Thus it will ever be when the Spirit of God takes possession of the life. Those whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ, will follow the example of Him who for our sake became poor, that through His poverty we might be made rich. Money, time, influence—all the gifts they have received from God’s hand, they will value only as a means of advancing the work of the gospel. Thus it was in the early church; and when in the church of today it is seen that by the power of the Spirit the members have taken their affections from the things of the world, and that they are willing to make sacrifices in order that their fellow men may hear the gospel, the truths proclaimed will have a powerful influence upon the hearers.”²

REACT

What is happening in my life to diffuse the good news about God’s warm and accepting family?

1. *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36 (italics supplied).

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 70, 71.

By Dan Solis, chaplain at Kettering College of Medical Arts, Kettering, Ohio.

Are You Up for Adoption?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Gal. 4:4-6

The apostle Paul is very clear on this great subject. In Galatians 4:4-6 (RSV) he states, "When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, . . . so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!' "

The word *adoption* is very familiar and popular and is often used in the sense of taking a baby as one's own child. In the Bible context the word signifies the placing in the state and relation of a son/daughter. It is interesting to note that in the writings of John, believers are often called "children" ("born ones"), a word indicating nature and kinship.

Sonship is related to legal standing that comes through redemption. Without the power and presence of the Spirit of God, the new birth is not possible. Without the redeeming blood of Christ, the estate of sonship is not attainable. On the

Without the redeeming blood of Christ, the estate of sonship is not attainable.

day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on redeemed disciples, people who had become sons and daughters through redemption. At Pentecost the Spirit brought the victorious Christ to the world. His promise in Matthew 28:20 (NASB), "I am with you always, even to the end of the age," is realized through the Spirit. No wonder the Holy Spirit is called "the Spirit of Jesus" (Phil. 1:19).

To us, the apostle John states, "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12, KJV). Without the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can do nothing (John 15:5). We are directed today to the great gift of love. Isn't it a wonderful and assuring thought that through the cooperation of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit we can become sons and daughters of God?

REACT

1. How is the story of Nicodemus in John 3 related to redemption, sonship, and the Holy Spirit?
2. How do you consider your status before God?
3. What does "sonship" mean to you?
4. How can I make sure that my love for my fellow believers is greater than my desire for earthly wealth?

By Charles N. Leader, resident chaplain at Kettering College of Medical Arts, Kettering, Ohio.

Developing Your Spirit Wings

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rom. 8:1-17

Scripture tells us that if we want to be great in God's kingdom we should learn to be a servant. This is a nice thought, but let's be real. How many people are born with a deeply rooted desire to serve others without some hope of a return? Only those who are born again, born from above, born of the Spirit!

How does this happen? Well, if people are hungry, they go to a restaurant. If people are spiritually hungry and thirsty, they go to a place where they can receive the Spirit. That is not necessarily a church building! We must remember the reason that Jesus offers us the gift of His Spirit. Acts 1:8 suggests that the Spirit was offered to the disciples so that they could bear witness to Jesus. Those who want to receive the fullness of the Spirit go wherever there is an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus.

Can this really happen in us? Is this only wishful thinking? It can happen in us

**If people are spiritually hungry and thirsty,
they go to a place where they can receive
the Spirit.**

if the Scripture can be trusted. This is the miracle Paul speaks about in Romans 8. In our natural routine we are weak. When we are filled with the Spirit, our weakness is made perfect in His strength. As I talk with my Father daily about His love for me, as I contemplate the love that sent His Son to die for me, by the grace of His Spirit I am changed from inside out. The Spirit makes me a different person. The righteous requirement of the law is completed in us! What are we talking about? Micah offers one of the simplest summations: "What does the Lord require of you, but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?"

Acts 5:32 says that the Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God. Obedience is the sure evidence of trust. Trust is the essence of receiving salvation. I say, "God, You take complete control of my life. You lead me where You want me to go. You show me what You want me to do. You make of my life what You want it to be."

If I am willing to place myself in the service of God, to open my life to His daily leading, and if I'm willing to place all of my decisions in His hands, then I can experience the Spirit life. His Spirit wings offer me a view from above, a new perspective, a new way of living.

REACT

How can I be sure that I have surrendered my life to God completely?

By Dan Solis, chaplain at Kettering College of Medical Arts, Kettering, Ohio.

Feeling and Faith

OPINION

Key Text: John 14:16, 17

There is a lot of emphasis today on being filled with the Spirit. Many Christians become discouraged because they don't feel the Holy Spirit's presence. Is feeling an evidence that one has the Holy Spirit?

"The impartation of the Spirit was the impartation of the very life of Christ."¹ If one receives Christ into the life, that individual receives the Holy Spirit. "To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness."² This means that if you have asked Jesus into your life, the power available to you is limited only by the degree of your surrender to God.

The possession of the Holy Spirit is therefore based on surrender (an act of faith) and not on the way one feels. What if the reception of the Spirit depended on the way you felt. Jesus said, "You know Him, for He remains with you and will be within you" (John 14:17, MRB).

Such a promise is related to the words of Paul: "That Christ may dwell in your

The possession of the Holy Spirit is not based on the way one feels.

hearts through faith; that you, . . . [may be] rooted and grounded in love" (Eph. 3:17, RSV). This indwelling comes when, "after listening to the message of truth, . . . you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise" (1:13, NASB). "In the Holy Spirit He came as the indwelling Christ, to become in the very innermost recesses of their being the life of their life."³

The reception of the Holy Spirit is the reception of a Person, not merely a power or an influence, lest He would be used for our own purposes. To possess and to be filled with God's Spirit, we must be filled with Him. "And this is the evidence: God has granted us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has that life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have that life" (1 John 5:11-13, Berkley).

REACT

1. The Holy Spirit is often thought of in an impersonal way. How significant is the use of the pronoun *He* in John 16:13, 14?
2. How is faith related to the reception of the Holy Spirit?

1. *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 13, 1899.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 49.

3. Andrew Murray, *The Believer's Full Blessing of Pentecost* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Pub., 1984), p. 22.

By Charles N. Leader, resident chaplain at Kettering College of Medical Arts, Kettering, Ohio.

THE HOLY SPIRIT BEFORE THE CROSS



“I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws” (Ezek. 36:27, NIV).

Open Your New Sails to the Wind

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 7:38, 39

Do you like the ocean? Many of you surely do.

As a young student, I lived along the beautiful Italian coast, not far from Rome. The best you could do during the hot season was bathing in the sea. Every afternoon the wind would stir the water. Sometimes, during winter, the waves would become higher and dangerous. Rowing on a windy day would cause serious problems, especially if you were rowing in the direction opposite the wind.

Using a sail made an enormous difference. Of course, the direction of the boat would be dependent on that of the wind, but the result would be much more effective. Having a sail puts you in the position of using the wind's strength. To be moved by the wind, you need a sail.

Jesus invented a new course in the sailing experience of faith. While on earth, He opened and made available a new way of relying on God's strength, just like adding a new sail for an old boat.

Love is the moving force that pushes humanity toward holiness. Jesus' sac-

Jesus invented a new course in the sailing experience of faith.

rifice showed how deep and how strong God's love for us is.

Because of Christ's death and resurrection, the clearest manifestation of God's care, the believer is more likely to give full control of his or her life to Jesus. The Holy Spirit can move your boat more effectively when Jesus' love enlarges the extent of the sail.

Another important factor in sailing is the chosen course, especially if your goal is to go where the wind wants you to go. This simple fact makes everything a lot easier. It would be quite a problem to find your way when you're miles off course. The wind is not so favorable when you are off course. It seems as if it were blowing against only you.

God's action, through the Holy Spirit, has not changed during the centuries. Since Adam and Eve sinned, the wind of the Spirit has always been blowing on the earth. Humanity has not always opened the sail to its fullest extent—to be moved by the Holy Spirit. Calvary helped humanity to understand more deeply God's character and His care for our generation. At Calvary, Jesus invented a new sail so believers may be moved in a new way by the Spirit.

By Marco Menna, pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Cosenza Province, Italy.

The Old Testament Holy Spirit

LOGOS

Ps. 104:30; 143:10; Gen. 6:3; Ezek. 36:26, 27; John 16:13-15

In general, when the Holy Spirit is mentioned, the mind focuses on the New Testament or the period following it. The Third Person of the Trinity, at times incomprehensible, at other times forgotten, is often considered an optional appendix to the good news that Jesus brought to this earth. Reading from various texts (e.g., John 7:37-39; 16:13-15), one may have the impression that the Holy Spirit has sprung fully into action only after the ascension of Christ.

In reality, the Holy Spirit is that person of the Trinity who has always been present on earth, especially after the coming of Christ. The Old Testament makes many statements that underline the personality and the action of the Holy Spirit.

If this is not noticed at first glance, it is because the Holy Spirit's intervention is confused with the direct intervention of God. It escapes us when we read the sacred text superficially, especially when He is not the first person to act. The reason is that, most probably, He appears under a dozen names, all different from those attributed to God.

The Holy Spirit does not act for us or against us, but in us. The analysis of some texts here will help to understand better the scope of the Holy Spirit's action and to describe His personality:

- The Spirit participates in the Creation (Gen. 1:2; Job 33:4; Ps. 104:30).
- The Holy Spirit spurs into action (Judg. 13:25).
- The Holy Spirit may be saddened (Isa. 63:10). Can a power be saddened (Eph. 4:30)?
- The Holy Spirit struggles (Gen. 6:3; Isa. 63:10). The struggle of the Holy Spirit could also be figurative, because He has the capacity to oppose someone.
- The Holy Spirit empowers and leads (Isa. 61:1; Judg. 11:29). Every action that is properly accomplished derives directly from the Holy Spirit. He is the one who animated Gideon, Samson, Othniel, Jephthah, etc.

"The success of the ministry of Elijah was not due to any inherited qualities he possessed, but to the submission of himself to the Holy Spirit, which was given to him as it will be given to all who exercise living faith in God. . . . [Despite] his imperfection man has the privilege of linking himself up with God through Jesus Christ."¹

Before or after the cross, it is always the power of the Holy Spirit that imparts grace. When one is speaking of grace, of the forgiveness of sins, of conversion, one is inclined to think that it is a prerogative of the Christian era, given that the invitation to forgiveness, due to the work of the Holy Spirit, is explicit only after the death of Jesus. The classic text of John 16:8-15 is still proof that the action of the Spirit continues after the ascension of Jesus, at which the action of grace was inaugurated.

But the text does not say that in the past this was not so, that in the past the Spirit did not convict of sin, judgment, and justice. In this regard, it is sufficient to examine a few key verses to find out the effect of the grace of the Holy Spirit, which instills a sense of eternity into the dynamics of salvation.

- The complete rehabilitation of the children of Israel is an example of

forgiveness for repenting humanity (Ezek. 37:14).

● In David's request for forgiveness, he understands that the presence of the Holy Spirit is the equivalent to that of God, thus allowing him to receive the forgiveness he was looking for (Ps. 51:11).

● The renewed heart is at the heart of grace; it is the image of conversion, a consequence of the action of the Spirit of God (Ezek. 36:26, 27).

“When a soul is converted and begins to love God and observe His commandments, he claims the promises of the Lord: ‘And I will give you a new heart and I will put in you a new spirit’ (Ezek. 36:26). The change of heart and the transformation of the character are miracles that attest that there is a Saviour who is alive, ready to save souls. A faithful life in Christ is a great miracle. The sign that

The Holy Spirit does not act for us or against us, but in us.

should always accompany the predication of the Word of God is the presence of the Holy Spirit, who confers on the Word a power of regeneration for all who listen to it. This is the sign that God gives to the world of the divine mission of his Son.”²

1. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1037.

2. *La Speranza dell'Uomo*, p. 289.

The Holy Spirit Revealed

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Isa. 11:2

After Adam and Eve's decision to sin, God continually spoke to them. "By the plan of redemption, however, a way has been opened whereby the inhabitants of the earth may still have connection with heaven. God has communicated with men by His Spirit, and divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants."¹

"From the beginning God has been working by His Holy Spirit through human instrumentalities for the accomplishment of His purpose in behalf of the fallen race. This was manifest in the lives of the patriarchs. To the church in the wilderness also, in the time of Moses, God gave His 'good Spirit to instruct them.' . . . The same power that sustained the patriarchs, that gave Caleb and Joshua faith and courage, . . . has upheld God's faithful children in every succeeding age."²

"[David's] experience was serving to teach David wisdom; for it led him to realize his weakness, and the necessity of constant dependence upon God. Oh,

"The same power that sustained the patriarchs . . . has upheld God's faithful children in every succeeding age."

how precious is the sweet influence of the Spirit of God as it comes to depressed or despairing souls, encouraging the fainthearted, strengthening the feeble, and imparting courage and help to the tried servants of the Lord! Oh, what a God is ours, who deals gently with the erring, and manifests His patience and tenderness in adversity, and when we are overwhelmed with some great sorrow!"³

According to Isaiah 11:2, a particular anointing was necessary to impart the abilities necessary to carry out the demands of the Messiah. This was the powerful action of the same Spirit that had already brought so much good and blessing to Israel. But every son of God had to realize that when he departed from God, it was a bitter experience, which God could overcome only through the Holy Spirit.

"The Spirit of God revealed its presence unto those who, irrespective of the fear or favor of men, declared the truth which had been committed to them. Under the demonstration of the Holy Spirit's power, the Jews saw their guilt in refusing the evidence that God had sent; but they would not yield their wicked resistance. Their obstinacy became more and more determined, and worked the ruin of their souls. It was not that they could not yield, for they could, yet would not."⁴

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. v.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 53.

3. *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 657.

4. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 74.

By Francesco Mosca, pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Jesi, Italy.

The Prompting of God

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 16:13-15

Palestine is dominated by a capricious nature. Drought and rain have taught the Hebrews to pay attention to nature. They have thus distinguished between the fatal *hebel* and *ruah*, the wind that brings rain. *Ruach*, Spirit of God, in the Old Testament, maintains the dynamic character of the rain wind, strongly tied to the struggle for existence. If *ruah* is "principle of life," it becomes God's instrument of sustenance, material and moral. His presence made concrete and efficient. This is the central concept from which is derived the use of *ruach* in the key text for this week.

1. Principle of life. It is the power that sustains the entire universe, the vital nucleus and quintessence of its existence. It is also at the root of the human being; a person is created in the "image of God." *Ruach* is the seal of His apparition. The connotations of *ruach* are interesting: (a) the source of the highest human quality (intelligence, wisdom, art); (b) the reproduction of the moral character of God in the conscience. The result is a complete action, integrating the intellect, the will, the creative powers, all a part of being created in the image of God.

2. Principle of election. It guides to the accomplishment of God's plan for

Israel was in the past the instrument of divine revelation.

humanity. Thus, as *ruach* directs the universe with its breath, the history of the individual in its totality responds to its influence. Israel was in the past the instrument of divine revelation, a prophetic nation, because it was chosen as the representative of God: *ruach* was the soul, guiding the mouth of God in favor of humanity. When Israel lost the mandate, the mission of the Spirit was placed on the church.

3. Means of communication. As a dynamic element, *ruach* consists of a power that acts as an influence, creating a living contact (in the historical sense and not in the abstract). It manifests itself through the words and actions of the prophets: it is the instrument of intervention of God in the reality of humanity.

4. The seal of the Messiah. The appearance of the Messiah and of the prophets replaces Israel in its role of representative of God on earth. The Spirit, first sign of one's election, comes on every person. It is proper, however, that *ruach* assumes the all-powerful activities that we have seen, as well as becomes the manifestation of the divine prompting of humanity. The Holy Spirit follows the Messiah all through His life, as a seal. He makes the Messiah's mission official at baptism. The action of the Spirit therefore continues in the Bible and responds to the orders, which have remained fundamentally unchanged, applying Himself to diverse subjects and engaging Himself in the unfolding of God's plan for humanity.

By *Manuela Casti*, student in biblical philology, Florence University, Italy.

Free to Act for What Is Good

HOW-TO

Key Text: Ps. 143:10

All of us are conditioned by habits, which is not necessarily negative. A lot of these habits do not require important mental and physical energies. Turn on the light, warm a pot for cooking, drive a car, or play football—all are results of assimilated acts that we accomplish automatically.

Among all these habits, others pertain to the limits of a captive moral conduct. They are the results of choices that in our lives are subject to and encouraged by a weak human nature that, according to Paul, is expressed thus: “The flesh does what it wants.” It does what is already injected in our mind—by choice, genetics, and environment.

When we reject the automatic aspect of these actions, contesting their apparent nature, we are awakened to the initiation of a struggle within us: an uneven struggle that points to the spiritual prison in which we live.

The Holy Spirit is the freeing agent. His action enables us to act according to what we want and according to the example that Christ has given us. To be under

The Holy Spirit enables us to act according to the example that Christ has given us.

His influence does not mean to act under a new external dominion that takes possession of our mind, but to operate, finally, according to what is good and according to what are our ideal aspirations, which in the absence of the Holy Spirit appear faraway and utopian.

Here are some suggestions for our personal life that allow an incisive action of the Spirit:

1. Self-critique. Each night, make a balance sheet of the day, singling out episodes that reveal your weaknesses in terms of things or thoughts that are not in harmony with the Christian ideal.

2. Prayer argument. Once these negative elements are identified, present them to the Lord in prayer, requesting that they be eradicated from your mind.

3. Friend of Christ. The Holy Spirit is sent from God because He prolongs the experience that the disciples had known with Christ. To investigate one’s actions means, therefore, to cultivate a dialogue with Jesus through daily prayer, confronting Him with the problems you are having and listening to the solutions that He proposes.

REACT

1. How can I recognize a habit that makes me act against the will of God?
2. How do I explain the action of the Spirit in the mind?

By Ennio Battista, editor of Vita e Salute, Florence, Italy.

How Does the Holy Spirit Work in Us?

OPINION

Key Text: Ps. 51:6, 10, 11

Are you familiar with expressions like “Give your heart to Jesus,” “Jesus lives in your heart,” “The Lord speaks to your heart,” etc.? Have you ever wondered where Jesus really is, right now? We are told that He is in heaven (wherever that is), yet He is in the heart of all people who accept Him! Strange, isn’t it?

Since His incarnation, Jesus has limited Himself to a body; that’s why He chose to send the Holy Spirit to be with us and in us forever (see John 14:16, 17). We use similar expressions all the time without realizing that they are metaphorical, but there is nothing wrong or false in that. It is correct to view Jesus operating in our minds through the Holy Spirit, who is the true and authorized representative of the Son of God. But we need to know what we are doing. The world out there is not ready to accept stereotyped phrases and concepts without question. Unless as Christians we are talking only to ourselves. But this is not our mandate.

Gerald May, a Christian psychiatrist, writes that “God often speaks to us and works in us through our psychological experience.”¹ He adds that four forces

Have you ever wondered where Jesus really is, right now?

impinge on our spirituality: (1) our spiritual longing for God, (2) God’s longing for us, (3) our own internal fears of and resistances to spiritual realization, and (4) evil spiritual forces.² Dr. May also believes that “excessive preoccupation with psyche and evil . . . fosters a degree of self-consciousness and self-importance that is very likely to eclipse the ever-present mystery of God’s truth.”³

E. G. White writes that our feelings and emotions are not really trustworthy because they vary according to external circumstances⁴ and that we should ask the Spirit of God to produce in us “holy tempers and emotions.”⁵ Most people today tend to uphold freedom and assertiveness and despise obedience and surrender. Yet Paul says, “I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal. 2:20, NIV), and Christ was no quitter or weakling!

REACT

How would you explain the difference between “feelings and emotions,” as Ellen White described them, and “holy tempers and emotions”?

1. *Care of Mind, Care of Spirit* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 41.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 24, 25.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

4. *Mind, Character, and Personality*, p. 126.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 601.

By Lucio Altin, director of the family-ministries department, Italian Union, Rome, Italy.

TRANSFORMED BY THE SPIRIT



“Jesus answered him, ‘Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above’” (John 3:3, NRSV).

Spiritual Flames

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 3:3

As I grew up and entered high school, all the Christian teachings I'd had over the years began to fall to the wind. I began using alcohol and drugs, and God was put on the back burner. I continued to push thoughts of Him out of my head and denied my feelings of guilt that arose every time I took a drink or a toke. I pushed those feelings so far down that after a while I hardly experienced them. Instead of bringing me contentment and satisfaction, my lifestyle brought me emptiness, shame, loneliness, and depression.

It had been so long since I'd talked with God I didn't even know how to do it or where to start. Each time I tried, a well of tears would overwhelm me, and I would push the feelings down again and be drawn back into the sinful web in which I felt trapped. I began to doubt God and many times even questioned His existence. I wanted to change my lifestyle, but I was determined to do it on my

We are flames that, without the oxygen of the Holy Spirit, will soon die out.

own, so I failed.

I couldn't admit to God my failures, my powerlessness, and my desperate need for His help. This self-righteousness made it impossible for the Holy Spirit to intervene, and before I knew it, my life was spinning out of control.

Slowly the Holy Spirit was convicting me to turn my life over to God and admit my faults and shortcomings to Him. After three car wrecks, jail time, and other experiences I'd like to forget, I made the best decision in my life—to allow God to take control and lead me with His Holy Spirit. I believe it was because of the unseen power and protection of the Holy Spirit, together with prayers sent up from my grandfather and other family members, that I am here today. I lead a healthy, sober life that I have chosen to dedicate to the One who has given me a second chance.

We are flames that, without the oxygen of the Holy Spirit, will soon die out. The Holy Spirit is a gift from God that we need in order to live and grow in our spiritual walk with the Lord. Are you allowing your flame to burn by daily inviting the Holy Spirit into your life, or are you trying to light it on your own?

By Elizabeth Fleck, nursing student at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Free Mountain Gear

LOGOS

John 3:1-21, 34-36; Titus 3:5-7; Rom. 8:9, 10; Col. 2:6; 1 John 5:2-5

Have you ever been in a situation in which you felt very safe and comfortable but were actually in grave danger? That's what countless numbers of individuals do when they risk themselves by going rock climbing. The experienced climber learns to have fun while clinging to the tiniest of cracks and crevices. Looking up, he sees his goal and is comforted in the thought that he will, or may, reach it in some short time. That's the way it is for many of us in our spiritual lives. We see that heaven is very near and are expecting to be there one day. As we inch our way up, we cling to the most obscure rules and traditions, which offer very little support.

This is the situation Nicodemus had been in when he came to talk to Jesus (John 3:1-21). As a member of the Pharisees, Nicodemus had believed that being a Jew and performing certain rituals and traditions was the key to salvation. The Pharisees hoped that by their good works they would be able to establish a good relationship with God. But they were blind to the fact that it takes more than that, that it actually takes a convicting and transforming work of the Holy Spirit to produce the new-birth experience they were looking for.

For most of my life, I've been a traditionalist in my faith. I've always gone to church, kept the Ten Commandments to the best of my ability, and have even gone so far as to maintain "healthful" living standards (which in my case meant abstaining from pork). But it never went beyond that: Christianity for me was just a once-a-week gig. Sure, I always thanked God for all my meals and prayed before my most excruciating tests, but my relationship with God never lasted beyond sundown Saturday. In fact, I depended on my own strength to get me through the week. And yet, I always felt assured of having salvation; after all, I did manage to do a kind act every now and then.

Christ told me different. "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5, NASB). Though our bodies are dead because of sin, Christ promises a gift that will bring our spirits back to life. What a fantastic promise! But how can we receive this gift? The Holy Spirit is "poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that being justified by His grace we might be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:6, 7).

If we are willing, we can be transformed by this gift. "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Col. 2:6). In contrast to the times when we depended upon ourselves for support, Christ becomes our travel guide, leading us through our life. Once more, using the mountain-climbing analogy, the Holy Spirit is like a rope that God lets down to us. His strength pulls us up, not ours. Letting go of the rules and rituals that have bound us allows more time to concentrate on our ultimate Goal. Jesus appeared before His disciples and "breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'" (John 20:22, NIV). Jesus provided the Spirit so that they would be able to carry out His work long after He was crucified. Christ's hope is the same for us. He desires that, after

having received the righteousness of Christ from the Spirit, we will be convicted to serve Him in greater depths. In Romans 6:13 we are instructed to become “instruments of righteousness” to God.

Since I’ve reexamined my commitment to God, He has truly transformed me. As I write this, I’ve just come back from a mission trip in which I talked to students at a university about God. This was something I thought I was incapable of doing,

It never went beyond that: Christianity for me was just a once-a-week gig.

yet God used me and reaffirmed my faith in His Word.

Can God use you? Will you accept the mountain gear Christ provides to climb the rock of life? Anything is possible through God.

REACT

1. What are some possible rituals or traditions that many Adventists practice in order to have a better relationship with God?

2. Do you think Christianity places too many standards/rules on its followers? Why? How?

3. What are some struggles to conquer even after receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit?

By Brian Afuso, a sophomore English major at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Lifeline

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Gal. 2:20

“Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin. And we cannot even repent without the aid of the Spirit of God. The Scripture says of Christ, ‘Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.’ Acts 5:31. Repentance comes from Christ as truly as does pardon.

“How, then, are we to be saved? ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,’ so the Son of man has been lifted up, and everyone who has been deceived and bitten by the serpent may look and live. ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ.”¹

“‘If thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us.’ How many

“The pitying Saviour’s answer is, . . . ‘All things are possible to him that believeth.’”

a sin-burdened soul has echoed that prayer. And to all, the pitying Saviour’s answer is, ‘If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.’ It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, ‘Him that cometh to me I will in nowise cast out.’ John 6:37. Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, ‘Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.’ You can never perish while you do this—never.”²

REACT

If we do not deserve the credit for our faith, why are we responsible when it fails?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 175, 176.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 429.

By Tim Alcon, broadcast-communication major at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Gifts From the Holy Spirit

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 3:1-21

As an archaeology student, I studied evolution and was convinced by it. As I began to come back to Jesus, I had many questions that had to be answered before I could believe fully. Science is hard to dispute, but the questions were answered. If I would have become a Christian again without attempting to seek answers, my walk with Jesus would be weaker today.

Nicodemus, a member of the Sanhedrin, chose the night hours to talk with the Lord. Nicodemus knew he would have been ridiculed by the Pharisees he worked with. In fact, Nicodemus was a brave man; he knew that Jesus was the Messiah, but he had questions (like many of us have today). He approached Jesus to see whether the questions could be answered. He didn't seek answers from the Pharisees; he looked for answers from the source that stimulated the human questions that he had—he questioned Jesus in person. Although Nicodemus questioned Jesus, he was blessed by the Holy Spirit.

Many of us today are questioners and often feel that we are not, nor can become, better Christians because we have these questions. To the contrary. A few months

Although Nicodemus questioned Jesus, he was blessed by the Holy Spirit.

before Jesus was crucified, the members of the Sanhedrin met to convince themselves that Jesus was an imposter. Nicodemus stood in defense of Jesus and asked why they condemned before hearing His evidence. If Nicodemus had not questioned, then Jesus wouldn't have had someone to stand for Him that day. It is incredible that this man who questioned Jesus was now the man who stood in His defense. The Holy Spirit surely lived within Nicodemus, regardless of his questions. The Holy Spirit gave Nicodemus the gift of *faith* (1 Cor. 12:7-11). What a blessing from the Holy Spirit that Nicodemus publicly stood for Jesus.

Of all the followers of Jesus, Nicodemus had the privilege of preparing Christ's body for burial. His experience with Jesus is symbolic for our lives today. We are scared to question God, but if we heed the words of Jesus, "I tell you the truth, unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3, NIV), we will surely be blessed and will experience a complete transformation of our lives. Jesus used Nicodemus's questions to establish spiritual strength for him.

REACT

1. By using Nicodemus as an example, how can you confront Jesus for answers to your questions?
2. How has the Lord answered your questions of faith?

By James T. Walsh, Jr., a senior archaeology major with graduate studies in special education, Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Is the Holy Spirit in Us?

HOW-TO

Key Text: Gal. 5:22, 23

How can we know when we've been born again? Can a person even know at any given time that the Holy Spirit is in him? Unfortunately, no little light comes on when we receive the Holy Spirit, but there are signs only slightly less subtle that He is working in us.

In Galatians 5:22, 23, Paul listed the "fruit of the [Holy] Spirit": love, joy, peace, longsuffering (patience), gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance (self-control). The Bible uses "fruit" analogies quite often: "I am the vine, ye are the branches" (John 15:1-8), and "Ye shall know them by their fruits" (Matt. 7:16). This analogy illustrates perfectly how one's nature is exhibited quite clearly in one's behavior.

This is not to say that works bring us the Holy Spirit, much less salvation. As I once explained to a non-Adventist Christian friend of mine who thought Adventists believe in salvation by works, we aren't saved by obedience; rather, we obey *because* we are saved. Just like a branch being unable to earn a place on the vine by first sprouting a cluster of grapes, neither can we earn the Holy Spirit by

In the world of gardening, any branch not producing fruit gets cut off.

obedience, much less even obey without Him. On the flip side of the coin, eyebrows are seriously raised when someone claims to have the Holy Spirit and yet shows no fruit. In the world of gardening, any branch not producing fruit gets cut off, and Christ said He'd do the same in the spiritual world (John 15:2).

How does a person receive the Holy Spirit? We know that we receive the Holy Spirit at baptism and that daily devotion is essential for keeping Him in us, but we also know how easy it can be to think or act in a worldly way at our jobs, classes, and choices of recreation. Paul said, "Whatsoever things are true, . . . honest, . . . just, . . . pure, . . . lovely, . . . of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Phil. 4:8). Paul knew that love, joy, and peace won't come out of a mind dwelling on the impure and the ugly. This is not to say that we get the Holy Spirit through positive thinking. We can't even do this without His help! Therefore, we must ask His help, then *choose* to focus our minds on what He gives us, making it a habit to dwell on these things, just as Paul said.

This, however, is only a small part of the bigger picture. How else can we see the Holy Spirit working in our lives? How else can we give our lives to His power?

By Dwayne Kidwell, a graduate psychology student at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

Born Again Before Baptism

OPINION

Key Text: Matt. 28:19, 20

Why should a person be baptized? I wanted to be baptized because I believed in Jesus Christ and in the truth of the Bible. Before baptism, I had to complete a series of Bible lessons. Instead of being a newborn Christian *after* baptism, I felt as if I needed to be a very mature Christian *before* baptism. So what does it take to be baptized? A complete understanding of the church doctrines? Or should it be the belief that Jesus Christ died on our behalf to save our souls? (John 3:16-18; Mark 16:16; Acts 10:42, 43.)

A person doesn't have to be a perfect Christian prior to baptism. Neither is it essential to believe that E. G. White is inspired or that we have to lead healthful lives. The Holy Spirit will guide a newborn Christian to what is right or wrong and will show new testimonies to help the person grow. Baptism shows a person's understanding of his or her past sinful life and prompts the desire for a new and sinless life. In the Bible Philip preached the gospel to an Ethiopian treasurer. The

A person doesn't have to be a perfect Christian prior to baptism.

Ethiopian immediately asked to be baptized, saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). A Philippian jailer was baptized soon after hearing Paul and Silas tell him and his household about the Lord. Referring to the jailer's conversion, Acts 16:34 tells us, "[He] rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."

After baptism, the Holy Spirit guides the newborn Christian through spiritual growth. Spiritual growth continues as the convert studies the Scriptures.

REACT

1. What does baptism symbolize?
2. What is the relationship between baptism and the Holy Spirit?

By Kris Michalies, industrial-design student at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington.

BEING WHOLE IS THE GOAL



“God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13).

Made Holy by the Spirit

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 2 Thess. 2:13

Almost four years ago, I sat down to watch Walt Disney's *The Little Mermaid* with my three-year-old cousin. She was enthralled by the animated characters singing and spinning their way to a glorious ending, and so was I. I was most intrigued by the story line involving the main character, Ariel. She was the loveliest of all mermaids and a daughter of Triton, the powerful king of the merfolk. To top off her practically perfect life, Ariel had by far the most beautiful voice in the kingdom. Despite all of these assets, she was displeased with the whole package. Her one desire and virtual obsession in life was to be a part of life on land, to be human. She could not keep from thinking about how great it would be to be human, to live in the warmth of pure sunlight.

What would this world be like if we all desired to be in heaven as much as Ariel desired to be human? How much closer would we be to the coming of Christ if our daily desire would be to sever the barrier between heaven and earth and to walk in the pure light of heaven? What would *your* life be like if you were constantly focused on the true love of Jesus Christ?

Once Ariel made the decision to become human, she received a pair of legs

You have a lifelong personal training coach, not to mention an entire heavenly fan club.

to replace her fin, and lungs to replace her gills. Her life was changed, and she had to start out learning to walk and breathe. The same happens in our experience. When we decide to become Christians, we are given a brand-new start. We have to learn how to walk with our new legs and changed heart. Fortunately, we don't have to do it alone. Just as Ariel always had Sebastian by her side, we have been given companions also. Both the Holy Spirit and our guardian angel are our constant companions. They are there to guide, to listen, and to help us in our journey to full maturity. We could never do it alone.

If it is your desire to do the Lord's will and to claim your heavenly treasure, then you have the chance to use your life to grow in Christ and be made holy by the Spirit. It is a process that starts with your decision to become a Christian; maybe the process is already in action. From that point on, you have a lifelong personal training coach, not to mention an entire heavenly fan club. Learning to use new legs won't be a picnic. There are bound to be some injuries and down times, but when you reach the finish line, you can stand with Paul and say: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day" (2 Tim. 4:7, 8, RSV).

By Tracy Cummings, assistant chaplain, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Getting a Handle on Holiness

LOGOS

Rom. 6:19-22; 1 Cor. 2:12-16; 6:11; 2 Cor. 3:18; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2

“Just as you used to offer the parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness” (Rom. 6:19, NIV).

Few words in the English language have been more misunderstood and misused than *holy* and *holiness*. To some, holiness is a skinny ascetic in a remote mountain cave. To others, it is an out-of-touch octogenarian who hasn't had a sinful thought in years, much less the energy to act upon it. It seems remote, mysterious, maybe a tad hypocritical, certainly not the place where most folks dream of spending their next vacation.

What pictures come to mind when you think about holiness? Why?

A Warm Embrace

The truth about holiness is that it is filled with life and relevance for contemporary people. It is a warm embrace for a dear friend whose arrival you have awaited with great anticipation. It is savoring every word of a letter you just received from your best friend.

Holy derives from the same Old English words as do *whole* and *healthy*. Closely related are the ideas of completeness, well-being, good fortune, and excellence. When John prays that we might “prosper and be in health” (3 John 2), he is actually praying that we might be holy. Holiness is quality of life. It is an engraved invitation to excellence.

What is the relationship between holiness and prosperity? Holiness and wellness? Holiness and balance?

Second-rate Substitutes

The problem with those who engage their bodies “in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness” is not that they live it up too much and need to back off. The problem is they are living too little and have missed out on the very life they sought. They have bartered life for a few pleasurable sensations. And the biggest problem of all is that they cannot keep from being continually short-changed.

Why do you think certain substitutes are so appealing? What can we do to make them less attractive?

Freedom to Pursue Excellence

“But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:22, 23, NIV).

“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us” (1 Cor. 2:12).

The pursuit of excellence appeals to rational people, but rationality alone does

not enable them to achieve it. The gospel is first the bad news that we are enslaved to our own worst interests as a result of sin before it is the good news that God has provided a way out.

Just as Christ's death on the cross replaces sin's sentence of death hanging over our heads, so His resurrection becomes a means of our rising up "[to] walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). The assurance of our possession of eternal life is secure in Christ and need never be questioned as long as we meet God's conditions (1 John 5:13). So, too, is the assurance that in Christ the choke hold of sin has been forever broken in our lives.

The gift of the Holy Spirit, which is given to everyone who believes in Christ for eternal life, enables one who was once locked into sinful, self-defeating attitudes and behaviors to pursue a life of holiness: i.e., fullness, completeness, wellness, and excellence.

What is the relationship between grace and wholeness? Grace and works?

Friends With One Who Is Truly Complete

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being trans-

To some, holiness is a skinny ascetic in a remote mountain cave.

formed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:17, 18, NIV).

God is holy because He alone is truly whole—complete in every way. When David celebrates God's excellence (Ps. 8:1), he is actually celebrating God's holiness, His completeness. Jesus came in the form of humanity to show us what wholeness really is. Through caring relationships and putting people first, through avoiding the popular excesses and fanaticisms of the day, through exercising freedom from the common encumbrances of life, through close communion with His Father, and through His robust engagement in the mainstream of life at parties, banquets, weddings, and corporate worship, Christ challenged the contemporary notions of holiness. He brought holiness down to earth, rooted it in relationship, and made it an everyday pursuit of quality living.

The Holy Spirit's role is to remind us of everything Jesus stood for (John 14:26). The Spirit enables us to visualize a life of wholeness, much as the champion skier visualizes a perfect run before beginning the course. Such "looking unto Christ," when empowered by the Spirit, is transforming. By removing the veil of sin and selfishness from our eyes, the Holy Spirit helps us keep our attention focused on Jesus so that we may become more healthy and complete every day—like Him by beholding His wholeness, that is, His holiness.

Where in your life do you need to improve balance and wholeness most? How can you begin to experience it now? How does the pursuit of your own wholeness relate to the well-being of those around you? How can you best help others experience holiness? Do you think holiness is more like a destination or more like a journey? What do you think is the difference?

By John C. Cress, chaplain of Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

If at First You Don't Succeed . . .

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Phil. 1:6

"God who began the good work within you will keep right on helping you grow in his grace until his task within you is finally finished on that day when Jesus Christ returns" (Phil. 1:6, TLB).

What would you say to me if I told you I was going to run the Los Angeles marathon this month? Well, if you knew me and my level of physical fitness, I'm sure you would tell me that I had better do some more training and get in better shape first.

Like me, most people tend to have overly ambitious expectations when they first start something new or purchase something new. Remember your first new car, the one that you were determined to wash every week? Yeah, right! And remember that New Year's resolution about exercising four times a week?

All of us, in our most ambitious state, make promises we don't keep and have goals we don't achieve and habits we just can't seem to break. You know you will never lose those 10 pounds if the first time you indulge in one Toblerone bar you

Remember your first new car, the one that you were determined to wash every week?

decide you've blown it anyway, so why not have three more. Yet many of us tend to meet one failure with another, and the downward spiral begins.

So when we fail, how do we pick up the pieces, develop a new strategy, and get on with life? One step toward overcoming failure in all types of situations is to remember that living a victorious life is a process, not a pinnacle we will someday reach. If applying this principle to our exercise habits and our study habits is effective, how much more effective will it be when applied to our Christian experience.

"The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts." It is reassuring that God knows your heart. He knows what you're trying to do even when you fail. And what a comforting thing it is to know that God has the best grasp on "the big picture" of anyone around.

So when you fail—and you will—don't give up. God sees through your failure to what He has in store for you, and He will never give up on you.

REACT

What is the appropriate Christian response to failure? To success?

* *Steps to Christ*, pp. 57, 58.

By Kimberlie Strobel, associate director of the office of college relations, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

The Unformula

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 2 Cor. 3:18

The quest for holiness has long driven human beings. In this age of science, the quest for it among Christians has frequently caused individuals to define holiness in terms of a formula that starts with the given (me) and ends up with the proper product (saint). Something like:

$$\sqrt{\text{Me} + 2 \left(\frac{\text{daily worships}}{\text{AD}} \right)} \times \text{obedience} \div \text{serving others} = \text{sainthood.}$$

But holiness is not the product of a formula. Holiness is far closer to poetry than to mathematics. The language of all the texts in this week's lesson is metaphorical and emotive: slaves bearing fruit (Rom. 6:19-22); "natural" people vs. "spiritual" people (1 Cor. 2:12-16, KJV); sanctified and justified (6:11); and sprinkled with Jesus' blood (1 Pet. 1:1, 2). This is neither scientific nor literal language. Trying to develop some formula based upon it would require leg irons, ghost detectors, truth in labeling, and a heavenly Red Cross bloodmobile.

Holiness is kin to miracle. The kind of miracle that makes caterpillars form chrysalises from which to break free as butterflies (metamorphosis = the Greek word translated into English here as "transformed." (See Kafka.) Or one might say holiness is akin to art (image). The "glory" of God is another way of speaking of God's creativity. People were created in the image of the Creator. Then being in God's image implies creativity. People are called to live as persons participat-

Holiness is far closer to poetry than to mathematics.

ing in the wonderful work by God (metamorphosis), which changes them into the work of God's hands.

Look at the text selected for today. The language is that of "as," not "is" ("as in a mirror"). Holiness means to live in creative ways. No two artists are alike. No two Christians should be either. Holiness means being real and transparent, not wearing masks to hide who one is ("with unveiled face"). Holiness chisels away masks and lets people live as careful observers of the miracle worked by God (metamorphosis). This observing, coupled with creative work, changes people into God's image (Godlikeness).

Artists learn by seeing and doing. This text speaks of intensified observation (beholding). It might even be called staring. While one cannot stare at the Creator directly, one can focus on God's glory, which is seen in the creation as through a mirror. (Don't think in terms of twentieth-century mirrors. Mirrors in New Testament days were pieces of metal polished and buffed until one could see a reflection. In that sense one sees the glory of the Lord in creation, though that glory is distorted. Focusing on the Creator and the creation changes people into the image of God.)

By Ronald L. Jolliffe, professor of New Testament, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Receiving the Gift

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 John 4:13

God expects us to act like Christians. Sometimes it seems as if this is next to impossible in the world we live in. God gave us a gift that would help us deal with our lives in a Christian way. He gave us His Spirit.

Yet it sometimes seems that this Spirit was dropped in our laps without an instruction manual. What do we do with it? The Bible gives some ideas:

1. Realize your need. The Spirit will help us in our weaknesses (Rom. 8:26). God's Spirit is willing if we realize our need. Oftentimes, we run around, complaining about the state of our lives. We just don't see what we can do to make it better. That is the problem. We *can't* do anything. Only God through His Spirit can help restore order to our lives. If we realize our need of God's Spirit, we have completed the first step in having a more Christlike life.

2. Ask God to fill you with His Spirit. Whatever we ask for will be given to us (Matt. 7:7). We are implored to pray in the "Spirit" (Eph. 6:18). Once we realize our need for God's Spirit, the next step is to ask God for this amazing gift.

I enjoy receiving gifts most when I have asked the gift giver for something

You can't run down to the corner market and pick up a 12-ounce jar of God's love.

specific and he or she gives the requested item to me. I also enjoy giving gifts if I know the receiver will truly enjoy them. God likes us to ask Him for things. If this is true, why should we not ask for the greatest of all His promised gifts, His Spirit? By asking God for His Spirit, we can come yet one step closer to receiving this gift.

3. Believe that God will give His Spirit to you. Christ instructs us to receive God's Spirit (John 20:22). If we have realized that we need God's Spirit and asked God to bestow Him upon us, we must now believe that this will happen. We will receive God's Spirit.

Belief is difficult for humans. It is hard for us to realize that not everything comes with this proof. Some things you just have to believe in. This is especially true of God's love. You can't run down to the corner market and pick up a 12-ounce jar of God's love. You must just believe in it.

If we do believe in God's love, we can also believe that God will give us His Spirit. Once we have realized our need and asked for the gift, the only thing left is to believe God will give it to us.

As we receive the gift of God's Spirit, we can go forth into our world and make changes for the better. We can act like the Christians that we are. We can do all things through His Spirit, because He strengthens us.

By Kirsten A. Hicks, freshman business major and music minor, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

Motivator and Strengtheners

OPINION

Key Text: Romans 8

When words like *righteousness*, *justification*, and *sanctification* are presented to me, the first thing I think of is a radical lifestyle change. When I first began attending the Seventh-day Adventist Church, preachers always used those big words, and I was clueless as to what they meant. I also used to look around the church and say, “There is no way I want to be like that individual,” or “There is no way I can be like that individual.” I felt so weighed down by all the bad habits I had that Christians shouldn’t have, I felt that there was no way I could be good enough.

Then I came across this passage of Scripture: “In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness” (Rom. 8:26, NIV).

When I was in high school, I played for the varsity basketball team. There was a lack of senior leadership that year, so the coaches called in some junior varsity players to fill up the starting line. Although I was young, I had a coach who believed in me. I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that he knew I could play well. Because I knew this, I worked on my game and tried as hard as I could in practice

I used to look around church and say, “There’s no way I want to be like that individual.”

to make him proud. I believe this is the same motivating factor Paul tried to use in his letter to the Romans: “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory” (Rom. 8:14-17, NIV).

I know I am a son of God, and I submit myself daily to God, asking Him to bless me with His Spirit. Therefore I am motivated to stop anything in my lifestyle that the Holy Spirit convicts me to stop, and I have the benefit of the Spirit, who strengthens me.

REACT

1. What things in your life do you feel need to be changed by the Holy Spirit?
2. How else do you feel the Spirit makes you righteous, holy, and sanctified?

By A. J. Grant, sophomore theology major and secondary-education and physical education minor, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

SAVED FROM THE WAVES



“All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us” (1 John 3:24, RSV).

At the Beach With My Father

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 John 3:24

When I think of Jesus and His efforts to keep us from sin, it reminds me of my father and me at the beach. At the age of four or five, I loved to walk along the beach at the very edge of the waves. It was a game of sorts: how close could I get to the water without actually getting my feet wet?

But all little children who walk next to the water run the risk of being knocked over by the biggest waves. And it seems as though the biggest waves are also the fastest; an unsuspecting little imp running down the beach can easily be soaked or swept away. That's the way it is with sin too. The biggest sins often take you by surprise, long before you have time to move out of the way.

My father was usually the one to make sure I didn't get carried out to sea. He would walk along beside me, his long strides easily keeping up with my short

I loved to walk along the beach at the very edge of the waves.

running steps. While I was staring in fascination at every new shell and rock I saw along the beach, he was watching the waves. Whenever he saw one of those big, fast waves, he didn't wait for me to notice it and move by myself. He would reach over, grab hold of me, and swing me up onto the other side of him, up on the safe, dry sand. Suddenly, he would be between me and the waves.

Jesus does the same thing. Through His Spirit, He reaches down and swings us out of the way of sins' waves, even before we notice they are there. And His long steps can always keep up with our frantic running. All we have to do is ask.

By Kristin Bergman, nursing major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

John's Survival Manual

LOGOS

Gen. 17:1; Matt. 5:48; Rom. 14:23; 1 John 3:24; Jude 24

Survival

"And this is his commandment, that we should believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. All who keep his commandments abide in him, and he in them. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us" (1 John 3:23, 24, RSV).

Writing from his vantage point as the last living member of the original 12, John is in a unique position to create for us a survivor's manual on how to remain faithful and secure in the midst of trying times. Outliving Nero, Domitian, the hot-oil tubs, and exile, he stresses a certain central skill in his training. It is the mutual abiding of Christ, He in us and we in Him. This is a concept that Jesus clarified for John and the others the night before the trauma of the crucifixion.

Do you remember that gnarled old grapevine Jesus stopped beside on His way to Gethsemane to stress to the disciples how they could survive the terror and chaos of the coming hours (John 15)? John certainly did. And because he remembered, he was somehow able to remain close to Jesus as he went through the various court appearances and to be with Him as He died. So how can we, too, stay close to Christ through these troublesome times of waiting for His return?

Abiding in Christ

By talking about our being grafted to Christ, the Vine, John uses a concept that conveys a constant, continuous connectedness. Abiding in Christ is to enjoy, right now, the enduring safety and security of Christ's perfect love—covering, sustaining, and surrounding us. So that we may enter this experience, John points out our need to believe in and to confess Christ's identity as God's Son, acknowledging Him as Lord of our lives (1 John 3:23; 4:15).

We also own and confess our identities as sinners, declaring our trust and dependence on His loving forgiveness, which takes away our shame, restores our innocence, and gives us our guilt-free standing before Him (1:9). And finally this connection is evidenced by His Spirit working out His ways of love in our lives as we live in obedience to His mandate of love (1:3; 3:23, 24). On the basis of this daily, continuous connecting with and abiding in Jesus, the True Vine, John assures us that we have eternal life (5:12, 13). What more could we want or need! Yet there is more.

Christ Abiding in Us

In another place John uses the prospect of Christ standing at the heart's door, knocking (Rev. 3:20). And if we open the door, He comes in and takes up residence with us, sharing meals in an abiding fellowship with us. What a beautiful picture of the new-covenant promise of God, writing His law as a transcript of His character, His loving ways, into our hearts. And those positive qualities of His character that we choose to have sovereign in our lives powerfully impact the way we think and act (2:1-6). Daily maintaining our connectedness to Christ, the True Vine, we give His Spirit access, permission, and authority to lift us above our natural

tendencies toward selfishness, in order to live loving lives that invite others to accept and love Him the way we do.

Continuous Readiness

For John, continuous readiness is how we successfully survive in this world as we wait for Jesus' return. As the disciples were walking out of Jerusalem that last time on their way to the Mount of Olives, from which Jesus would ascend, Jesus stopped again by that old vine and reiterated the survival lesson that John learned so well. When we daily take time to give Jesus access to our minds so that He can write His words, His commandments, there to sustain and hold us until His appearing, we, too, can live through terrible separation, loss, and pain or the temptation to compensate through power and materialistic prestige or whatever this world

For John, continuous readiness is how we successfully survive in this world as we wait for Jesus' return.

may throw at us. We, too, can choose a vital character-transforming relationship of continuous trust and dependence upon Christ. We, too, can be assured of our readiness for His return as we join John in saying, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20, NIV).

REACT

1. From John's illustration of our connection with Christ as with the parts of a vine, what do you understand to be our role, and what do you understand to be Christ's role? Be specific.

2. What do you think John is trying to teach us about how we meet the requirements for entry into heaven, i.e., about perfect obedience to the law of God?

By Larry Veverka, associate professor of pastoral care, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

The Holy Spirit: Our Victory and Strength

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Titus 3:5-7

Sin is a problem for all Christians, new and old alike. We all struggle with temptation and sinning; even people in the Bible struggled with sin. David was often tempted to follow his own plan for his life instead of God's plan and in some situations gave in to these temptations. God always forgave David for his shortcomings. After God forgave David, He offered him the power to overcome these temptations and sins through the power of His Holy Spirit. Ellen White talks about how David endured the temptations of Satan and how today that same kind of controversy is being waged while all of heaven watches. The angels are ready and waiting to lift up those who are struggling with the tug-of-war controversy of serving God and being tempted by Satan. Not only does God enlist the work of the Holy Spirit to make us victorious, but He sends His angels to hold us fast in times of trial.

God and His Spirit are strong where we are not. We are asked to give the Father our very best, but when we can give no more, when we are too weak to go on, the Holy Spirit is at our side to give us victory over our sinful natures. "Through the

God and His Spirit are strong where we are not.

grace and power of Christ, you may march on to victory, not in the rear, but in the forward ranks. But the holding of this position will depend wholly upon your own course of action. It depends on whether or not you will be ever in covenant relation with God and with His adopted children, knowing your oneness with Jesus, our exalted Head, who hath delivered us from the powers of darkness."

Silently, God waits for us to ask Him for the removal of sin in our lives. After we ask, we must then do our part to overcome sin, and when we can do no more, it is then that the Holy Spirit makes us victorious over our sinful ways. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us victorious through Christ.

REACT

1. In what specific ways does the Holy Spirit make His presence known in our daily lives?
2. What would our relationship with Christ be like without the Holy Spirit's workings in our lives?

* Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 15, p. 86.

By Rebecca Schwartz, mass-communications major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

How to Be Perfect

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 John 3:24

God has a problem with us because we're not all alike. For some, life causes its own pain. They're troubled about themselves, wishing they were different from what they are and wondering what God expects of them. Guilt prone and miserable, they become severely stressed over anything about obedience and perfection.

Others don't seem to care much. They're either not bothered by their failures or aren't aware of them. Or else they believe God doesn't really care, so why should they worry? If they're interested in spiritual things at all, they overreact to messages of God's acceptance and forgiveness.

So how does God motivate the unconcerned to pay attention without the guilty ones' listening and feeling even worse? And how does God remind the guilty that forgiveness is a gift and salvation comes by faith, not because of works, without the unconcerned ones' using that message to reaffirm their inattention?

On the one hand, we can't escape the fact that we need to exert effort to gain most any worthwhile thing. On the other hand, forgiveness doesn't necessarily mean taking away the natural consequences of our choices, and sometimes those

How does God motivate the unconcerned to pay attention without the guilty feeling even worse?

consequences are painful. Balance is tricky, and it is done best by focusing attention and accepting limitations.

First, set your hearts and minds on things above, Paul says (Col. 3:1, 2). Don't pay attention to the world around you. Fix your eyes on Jesus. And not just once. Paul used a verb tense that indicates repeated action. Over and over and over again, keep on focusing your attention on heavenly things, not earthly things. Focus your attention on Christ, not yourself. That's your "work."

Second, accept your limitations—and God's perfect forgiveness. Regardless of your failures, He will see you to the other side. Three months before she died, Ellen White said: "I do not say that I am perfect, but I'm trying to be perfect. I do not expect others to be perfect; and if I could not associate with my brothers and sisters who are not perfect, I do not know what I should do." (See Phil. 3:12-14.)*

REACT

1. Which comes first, the Spirit or obedience?
2. How perfect is good enough? How perfect does God expect us to be?

* W. C. White to editor of *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 23, 1915, published in *Pacific Union Recorder*, April 29, 1915.

By Darold Bigger, associate professor of religion and social work at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

The Journey of a Lifetime

HOW-TO

Key Text: 1 John 3:24

Do you ever become tired of trying to be good? It's no wonder. Holy living is not something left for us to do in our own strength. It is the work of the Holy Spirit living in us. When we accept Christ, we begin life again, only this time we're not alone. God has given us the gift of the Holy Spirit, and through this gift we become more like Christ, and we know that Christ also abides in us.

We know the Holy Spirit is working in our lives as we become more like Christ in character, holiness, and love. We can never be all that Christ is, but through the Holy Spirit we can aspire to be more like Christ. Living a holy life verifies that the Holy Spirit is present in us, and our love for God is expressed by obedience to His commandments. It is also expressed when we avoid doing things that will get in the way of spiritual growth. And finally, our devotion to God leads us to love

Do you ever become tired of trying to be good?

and care for others. We love others as God loves us.

We can't expect to become like Christ and live a holy life overnight, but we can trust that we will grow if we allow the Holy Spirit to lead us on the lifelong road to spiritual maturity.

What can you do to foster this relationship? Try these suggestions:

1. Commit your life to Christ every day.
2. Confess to Him any un-Christlike actions or attitudes that the Spirit, through your conscience, reveals to you. Accept His forgiveness.
3. Serve and love others as Christ does.
4. Obey the leading of the Spirit.

REACT

What is the difference, if any, between telling a Christian that he cannot be good by trying and telling a child that he should always try to be good?

By Rosa Jimenez, communications and research director for advancement, Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

That Forgotten First Step

OPINION

Key Text: Rom. 7:19

“For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing” (Rom. 7:19, NIV).

Over the past year, I’ve done considerable research into the 12-step group known as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). While not an alcoholic, I have nonetheless attended some of the weekly AA meetings, read countless stories of AA recovery, and have reached a surprising conclusion: Every Seventh-day Adventist ought to be a recovering alcoholic.

Come again?

Yes, that’s right. Every SDA ought to be a recovering alcoholic. Why? It’s simple: A recovering alcoholic knows he’s got a problem—and that he can’t fix it (this is “step 1” of the 12 steps of AA). This admission of powerlessness is the alcoholic’s entry into a new life. Yet if I’m confronted with *my* sin problem, I’d often just as soon play hopscotch in a minefield as admit I’m powerless to fix the sin in my life.

The lesson this week has considered how sin can be overcome by claiming the

Every Seventh-day Adventist ought to be a recovering alcoholic.

grace of God on a moment-by-moment basis. But the hard facts are that all the claiming of God’s grace I can muster is useless *unless I admit my powerlessness to expel sin by my own unaided efforts* first.

Overlooking this first step in removing sin is what slowed my own walk with God to a pathetic crawl. For years, I tried to claim the power of God over sin without first accepting that I was powerless. I dutifully tried to “fight the good fight,” never realizing that my fight was not first *against* sin, per se, but against my own perceived power *over* sin.

The long-term members of AA consider themselves lucky to be alcoholics. Their addiction constantly reminds them of their powerlessness. I share in their joy, for their stories of recovery have reminded me of what I often forget: I *need* victory over sin, and that need can begin to be filled only when I first accept my powerlessness over sin.

REACT

1. Is powerlessness over sin a decision or a condition? How does your answer affect the idea of “trying harder” to surrender all the sin in your life?

2. Are there some “little” sins that you can erase on your own? Why or why not?

By Shane Anderson, senior theology major at Walla Walla College, College Place, Washington.

THERE'S RAIN IN THE FORECAST



“He sends you abundant showers, both autumn and spring rains, as before” (Joel 2:23, NIV).

Last Year's Raindrops?

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Joel 2:23

The young preacher writhed in agony, as if on a bed of nails. His life would not last long in this difficult world. He knew he would soon be free of pain, but for now, he was lying in the chronically-ill ward at Watson Memorial Hospital. It would not be long before he would be sleeping to await the awakening sight of his Lord and King.

In his 10 years of dedicated service, not once had Pastor Beauie had the privilege of baptizing a soul for the Lord. Discouraged? we may ask. Naturally, one would expect him to be—never to see the fruition of one's life endeavor. Finally, with a peaceful sigh, the preacher breathed his last.

As his family sadly packed his belongings, they uncovered a neat package of sermons. A note was attached to the collection of sermons: "Where has the influence gone of all these sermons I have preached?" On the other side was his answer: "Where are last year's sun rays? They have gone into fruits and grain and vegetables to feed humanity. Where are last year's raindrops? Forgotten by most

In his 10 years of service, not once had Pastor Beauie had the privilege of baptizing a soul for the Lord.

people, of course, but they did their refreshing work, and their influence still abides."

Pastor Beauie had realized something we often forget. We are sowers of our Master's crop. That is the point! It's God's crop—we sow, He reaps. We may never see the earthly evidence of our witnessing and endeavors. Yet the Lord knows. He is the only One who may see into the heart of humans. Our influence may change the life of someone years from now.

The promise of rain is real. We must recognize this. The Holy Spirit has an influence that we cannot limit or measure. As the rain provides nourishment to germinate seed, to cause plants to grow until the harvest, "so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth."

Pastor Beauie saw no results from his work. The Lord's plan, however, is continued and impressing in the lives of each of us around the world. We, too, can be an aid to the Holy Spirit through the promise of rain.

* *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 506.

By DiAnne Newman, senior English major at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Disaster and the Goodness of God

LOGOS

Joel 1, 2; John 14–16; Acts 1

“The fields are ruined, the ground is dried up; the grain is destroyed, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails” (Joel 1:10, NIV).

The dust slipped easily through Joel’s fingers and was swept away by a dry wind. Once, it had been topsoil in a field sown with barley. The green shoots had broken through the moist soil, and in record time grain was forming on the slender stalks. There was the promise of a bumper crop—until the enemy swept into the land. Locusts, voracious and indiscriminate feeders, ravaged every green and edible thing in sight.

Now it was summer. Winter rains had ended, and seasonal streams ceased flowing. Tufts of grass fueled brush fires. Famine was a reality, hunger the only item on the menu.

Joel squatted and felt the rising heat of the earth as he scraped a handful of dust. With prophetic insight, he understood the reasons that God had permitted disaster to strike. He saw a people too drunk with the love of material wealth to acknowledge God as its source (Joel 1:5), too stupefied to love God wholeheartedly for the blessings they had received. It was as if the people were a spiritually green and fertile land that had not prepared defenses against an enemy. The attack made by spiritual nominalism and materialism had come; the people were laid waste and ruined (verses 6, 7). Joel stood up and mused, “I wonder whether they know that their hearts are as arid as the swirling dust.”

A vivid picture flashed into Joel’s mind, of God’s people as a wealthy, arrogantly self-assured nation, brought down to its knees by disaster. The elders were at the town gate debating, trying to comprehend the enormity of what had happened (verses 1-4). The priests mourned but still needed urging to cry out to God and declare a time of fasting (verses 9, 14). Only when material well-being was snatched away did the people wake up and weep in the way a young woman weeps whose fiancé is dead (verse 8).

The prophet released another handful of dust into the hot wind. “Will they repent, will they desire spiritual rain and renewal or sit in the dust of self-pity?”

“Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He has given you the former rain faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you—the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil” (2:23, 24, NKJV).

The Spirit moved within Joel. Pictures of a green and fertile place flashed into his mind. Scenes of fields of barley, olive trees loaded with fruit, and goatskins full of new wine became realities in the prophet’s mind (verses 19, 22, 24).

It was as though the prophet was gazing through a window in the space-time continuum, to some point in the future. It was the same field, but another time, a time in which the blessings of the Lord had been restored to the land and the people.

In vision Joel pushed his way through the barley fields and stood on a small

hillock. As far as the eye could see, the land was productive—not a locust or enemy in sight (verses 20, 25)! Joel focused on the people for a moment. They were well fed and rejoiced in the Lord (verses 21, 26).

The prophet contemplated the spiritual significance of what he was seeing. Could this be the same broken people he had seen only moments before? What had changed this people from a self-serving nation to this spiritually restored people, rejoicing in the goodness of the Lord?

Spirit-inspired thoughts cascaded down into the prophet's consciousness like a heavy rainstorm in spring. At once, the images snapped clearly into place for Joel. It was the summer and autumn rains that had refreshed the land. The Lord had poured out the rains upon the earth, and they had revived the land and the people (verses 23, 24). Clearly, it would be the raining down and pouring out of God's Spirit that would refresh and revive the people spiritually. It was the Spirit who would restore to them the riches made available by a faithful relationship with the Lord (verses 28, 29).

The voice of the Lord pierced through the vision and jolted Joel's mind into instant attention. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (verse 32, NIV).

Joel found himself back on the barren field in the dry midday heat. But the

Famine was a reality, hunger the only item on the menu.

prophet had a new perspective since hearing the Lord's voice. At the very instant God had spoken, Joel recognized that the key to being saved, to being renewed and restored, lay in "calling on the Lord." It meant that the people needed to recognize that God had acted first to bring about their salvation by allowing the locusts and enemies to attack. It provided them an opportunity to see themselves as they really were, to see how much they needed renewal and revival. It meant returning to God with all their hearts (verse 12). It meant real remorse for past attitudes and actions, not just outward displays of pseudo-repentance (verse 13). It meant hungering for and desiring the outpouring of the rain of the Spirit.

The prophet walked back across the field to the people. He must tell them of the promise of salvation, the message of repentance, and the Spirit's rain of renewal. Would they listen? Would they repent and long for the promise of rain? These questions still remain, but they have taken on a much more personal quality. Will I repent in the face of God's freely offered salvation? Will I long for the promise of rain?

REACT

How do you view personal disasters? Are these times for deepening your relationship with God or times of doubt about His goodness? What experiences have helped you form this view?

By Steve Green, senior theology major at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Can We Get Off the Roller Coaster?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: John 14:1

Many times in my life I have found myself stuck on a religious roller coaster—the high points being those times I’ve honestly asked for the Holy Spirit to enter my life and work in me, the low points being when I could see no evidence of His having ever entered or done any work. Yet God says that whenever we ask, the Holy Spirit will be given to us abundantly. Like many Christians, we profess to claim Jesus’ promise and talk about the work of the Holy Spirit, yet we receive no benefit. What we have been failing to realize is that to receive the results of any promise, necessary conditions must first be fulfilled.

We must first understand His work. “We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us.”¹ In our modern lives, we try to mould the Holy Spirit to fit our present needs and wants, when really the Holy Spirit is poured upon those who want to work toward achieving the Holy Spirit’s needs and wants. We would rather manage ourselves and control what the Holy Spirit intends for us than submit to His will. This is why we do not receive the heavenly gift.

For the Holy Spirit to enter us, Ellen White believes we need only to give our-

It’s what I can do for the Spirit, not what He can do for me.

selves to God, after which the removal from our character of any traces of envy, jealousy, boastfulness, or selfishness will create more room for the Holy Spirit to fill up. We must be humble to the utmost, praying earnestly for, eagerly wanting and pleading for, the Holy Spirit. In doing this we make ourselves available for the Holy Spirit to work in us and fill us up. So God promises that He will take any opportunity we give Him.

“If the fulfillment of the promise isn’t seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be. If all were willing, all would be filled with the Spirit.”² So really, the onus is on me. If I really want the Holy Spirit in my life, I must fulfill the condition of submitting my will to the Spirit’s will. It’s what I can do for the Spirit, not what He can do for me.

REACT

1. Are the conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit feasible for me or my church, or do they expect too much of me?
2. Do I want the Holy Spirit enough to give up my will for my life in favor of the Holy Spirit’s will?

1. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

2. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50.

By Lorelei Saunders, a senior mathematics major at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Who Cares About Apathy?

EVIDENCE

Key Text: John 14:26, 27

“She’ll be right, mate” is an Australian phrase that embodies a whole spiritual ethos. Whatever the issue, it will work itself out, and there’s really no need to worry about it. Spend time on the important things in life . . . cricket, tennis, surfing . . . and *football*. But don’t think too deeply about where you actually come from, what you are doing, where you are going, and what it all means. It will work itself out. Australian culture can be a huge spiritual wasteland, as arid as the legendary out-back of this great land. Perhaps this reasoning prevails in other places too.

But in the quiet times, when life baffles you, how do you find peace? You usually turn to someone you can trust and someone who has a genuine interest in your welfare. Family and friends can often help cast a new light on old issues. Sadly, guidance is rarely received with complete gratitude; the human spirit has a nasty independent streak that works against what is best.

It is usually easier to take the cool approach and ignore the issues gnawing at you, but the easy road is a short one. Eventually, you have to face the music in your

Eventually, you have to face the music in your own mind and make a firm decision.

own mind and make a firm decision. On whom can you depend for guidance? You can recognize a trustworthy guide only by knowing what he is like and spending quality time with him. You would never accept the guidance of a stranger over that of a personal friend.

“But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 14:26, NIV). God has given everyone access to the Counselor. He has sent this amazing source of wisdom and guidance to all who would take notice.

It’s usually the “she’ll be right” attitude of basic apathy that stands in the way of true guidance from the Holy Spirit. Other things seem more important, and while our vision becomes cloudy, our souls become more restless.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (verse 27). Of all the human pursuits, the most illusive has been true peace of mind. Yet God hands it to anyone who chooses to believe with the right attitude. The Holy Spirit will give that peace to all those who allow His power to work in their lives. Our own attitude that “she’ll be right, mate” is generally the only thing that stands in the way.

REACT

If it’s not apathy in your life, what is it that stands between you and the abundant showers of rain from the Holy Spirit? Where are your priorities?

By Sylvia Sretenovic, a senior music major at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

All We Have to Do Is Ask!

HOW-TO

Key Text: Luke 11:1-13

Jesus' teaching is mostly practical. In His interesting parable about prayer in Luke 11:1-13, for example, a friend comes at midnight to borrow some bread. When he arrives, the whole family is asleep. The householder does not want to get up, because it would disturb everybody. We can understand his reluctance to get up; most of us don't like getting up out of bed either! But because his friend is persistent, this man eventually gets up.

This is an unusual parable to tell about prayer. Does it mean that to get something from God all we have to do is to keep asking, rather like a persistent child? No, instead, the parable is about the contrast between us and God. We give good things to our children when they ask. So Jesus concludes: "If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (verse 13, NRSV).

God wants to give us good things. In the Old Testament, He gave the promise of rain so desperately needed by the farmers and their families. In the New Tes-

God does not have to be persuaded to give us good things.

tament, He gives the promise of the Spirit, so desperately needed by the church and its members.

Unlike the sleepy man in the parable, God does not have to be persuaded to give us good things. We are evil, but God is good. He wishes to give us the Spirit that will bring power to the witness of the church, reconciliation between members of the church, and love for each other that will show we are truly His disciples. How do we get this Spirit? Jesus says, "Just ask," because God wants to give it to us.

REACT

1. Which of your friends sincerely desire the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? Are you comfortable around such friends? Why?

2. Sometimes groups claiming the gift of the Holy Spirit show strange behavior and fanaticism. Although this is clearly a counterfeit of the true gift of the Spirit, it does raise the question of how we can truly seek the Spirit without courting this danger. Furthermore, how can we distinguish the true gift of the Spirit from the false one?

3. What differences do you think the Holy Spirit would make in your life and in the life of the church?

4. One of your friends regards regular prayer for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as evidence of fanaticism. How would you go about convincing him or her otherwise?

By Robert K. McIver, New Testament professor, Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

Can We Learn From the Pentecostals?

OPINION

Key Text: John 14–16; Acts 1

Seventh-day Adventists look forward to the promise of the “latter rain,” when the Holy Spirit will be poured out as it was at the beginning of the gospel era. They know the conditions for the fulfillment of that promise are the same now as they were for the disciples at the first Pentecost, i.e., “persevering supplication to God in faith—faith that leads to entire dependence upon God, and unreserved consecration to His work.”¹ Perhaps we are seeing the fulfillment of the Pentecostal promise in some parts of the world. Tens of thousands are being converted in Russia, to the extent that the church is embarrassed for lack of church facilities and infrastructure to care for the influx of new members. The story is similar in Papua New Guinea and many other parts of the world.

By way of contrast, SDA church growth in the Western world is slow, yet some denominations in the West are experiencing explosive church growth as a result of involvement with neopentecostal and charismatic movements.

A Seventh-day Adventist teacher recently did some relief teaching at a local Pentecostal school. Here, she found an acceptance such as she had never experi-

She said she could understand why they had chosen to join the Pentecostal Church.

enced in the Adventist system. She also learned that a number of staff members were ex-Adventists or had Adventist family connections. She said she could understand, to some extent, why they had chosen to join the Pentecostal Church.

Maybe we can learn something from the Pentecostals’ methods of personal evangelism. Are we so busy praying for a future outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain that we fail to recognize the work He longs to do in and through us right now? The same Jesus who promised, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8, NIV), also said that the work of the Holy Spirit is to remind us of Christ’s words: “This is my command: Love each other” (John 15:17). After all, “the strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian.”²

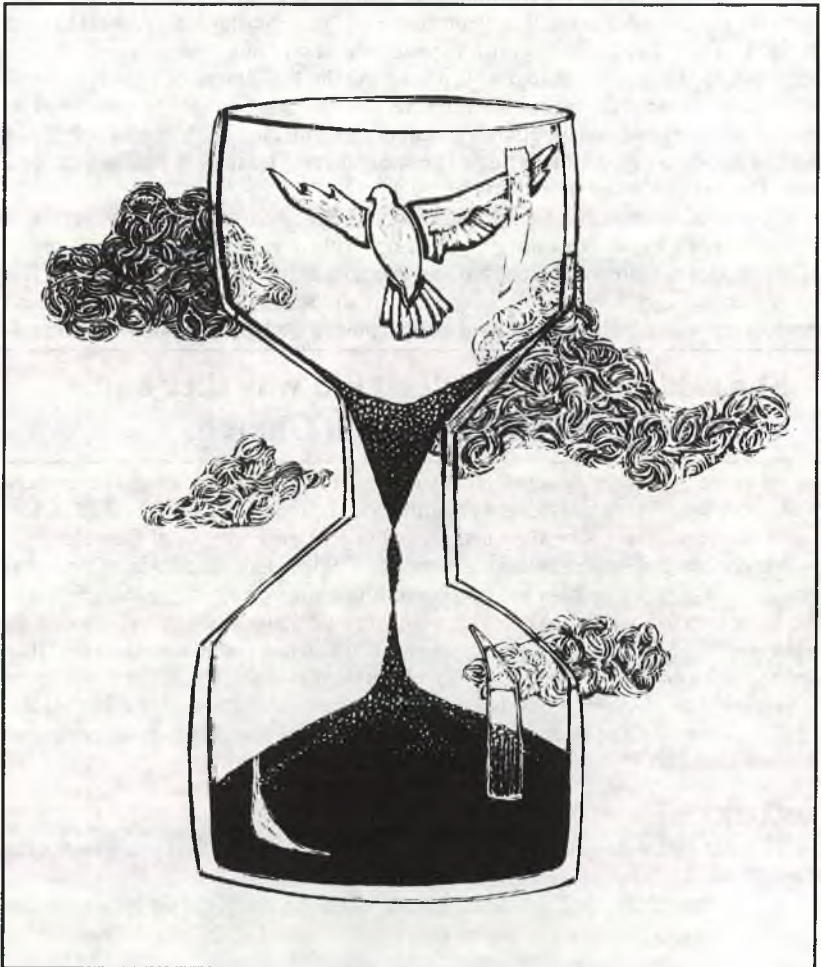
REACT

To what extent do you sense that the Holy Spirit has qualified you to work for Christ?

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1. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 56.
 2. *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470.

By Merle E. Bruce, a lecturer in education at Avondale College, Cooranbong, New South Wales, Australia.

WAITING FOR THE RAIN



“For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:39, RSV).

A Time of Drought

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-21, 38-42

A quiet hush fills the room, and drops begin to splash on the pane. A long dry season has left the lawn and fields dry and the earth beneath them cracking. The cool, moist air is invigorating and delightful. The rain is most welcome.

It was the same at Pentecost. An infant church faced a new challenge. How could they spread the message of victory when they felt so inadequate? The Romans and the rabble had removed Jesus—the source of their victory—from their midst. Like the parched earth needing rain, they needed the renewal of hope, courage, and power to fulfill their divine commission.

A timid Thomas was among them. He needed personal power to carry the message of a risen Master. Impetuous Peter needed new courage to challenge waves of a different kind. James and John were different from what they had been when they wanted to call fire down on the irreverent. All present felt a sense of loss and insufficiency. They had placed all their hopes and resources in one Man's mission.

They now must finish the mission without the Man.

They now must finish the mission without the Man. Who would be their counselor?

The waiting grew intense as friends, and estranged friends, sat restlessly, then quietly. Days passed, replacing frantic regrets and fears with a calm willingness to look at the future with resignation. At last, it was possible to remember some of the Master's words without tears and anger and bewilderment. He had said, "Wait." They had done so. How would they know when they need wait no longer? The empty calmness was the only change that marked their tarrying.

Then came the rain. Not in soothing, restful showers, but in tongues of flame—energizing, empowering, cleansing, compelling. Though the refreshing was not in the form of cool drops of moisture, every heart felt the powerful release from the dreadful, dull lethargy. How alarming the thought! They might have failed to wait long enough. They might not have recognized the rain in this strange form. They might have waited with impure hearts and missed the anointing touch. We also wait. Is it with pure hearts, desiring power and renewal?

By Stella Thompson, a homemaker in Duncan, Oklahoma.

A Teacher of Righteousness

LOGOS

Joel 2:23; Acts 2:1-47; 4:23-37; John 3:5-7

When God led Israel into the Promised Land, He instructed them to be faithful by obeying His commandments, statutes, and judgments. Obedience would bring God's blessing upon them (Deut. 4:6-8).

One of the blessings God promised Israel was the needed rain to produce and sustain their agricultural way of life. God told them He would give them both the former and latter rain in due season. This promise, like others, was conditionally based upon Israel's faithfulness to abstain from idolatry and to worship Yahweh alone (Deut. 11:13-17). God faithfully fulfilled His word to them, providing the necessary rain despite the sporadic nature of Israel's obedience. However, there are recorded judgments against Israel for its rebellion and apostasy. Droughts ensued because of continued wickedness (1 Kings 17:1-18:2; Isa. 5:5-7; Jer. 14:1-12).

The book of Joel also records God's judgment against Israel. Joel states the seriousness of conditions in that there will be no grain or wine offerings. As a remedy for Israel's sins, Joel issues a call to repentance. The call is first given to the religious leaders (Joel 2:17). It is a call to turn from their sin and lead their people to turn from their sins, as well. God will then respond favorably with the assurance of restoration and prosperity.

Joel records God's promises to restore Israel (verse 22). For the agriculture to produce again, rain is needed. Joel says God has given them "the former rain moderately," and "he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month" (verse 23).

The word *rain* appears four times in Joel 2:23, and three different Hebrew words are used in this text. The first is *moreh*; its literal meaning is "teacher" or "to teach." *Moreh* is a derivative of the root word *yara*, meaning "to throw, cast, or to shoot (*Qal*); teach (*Hiphil*)."¹ "*Yara* is also a root of *torah*, the word commonly translated 'law' in the Old Testament (see on Prov. 3:1)."² "The word *Tora* means basically, 'teaching' whether it is the wise man instructing his son or God instructing Israel."³

Yoreh in Hebrew means "early or former," also a derivation of *yara*, and *lise-daqaqah*, which is translated "moderately" in English, meaning "righteousness or rightness." "Literally, 'with respect to righteousness,' or 'for righteousness.' The word for 'righteousness' (*sedqaqah*) occurs more than 150 times in the Old Testament, but nowhere in the sense of 'moderately,' as we commonly understand that word, unless this is the exception."⁴

When all these words are translated from their literal root meanings, there is sufficient evidence and reason to believe that Joel is saying, "The gift of rain is actually a metaphor for God's promise to pour out His Spirit like rain as 'a teacher of righteousness' on 'all flesh'" (verse 28). Was this prophecy fulfilled in Joel's time, or is it prophetic in nature?

Just before Jesus was betrayed, He told His disciples His Father would send another Comforter (John 14:16). He would "teach them all things." He would also "guide . . . [them] into all truth" (16:13).

After His resurrection, Jesus again met with His disciples and breathed on them

the Holy Ghost (20:22). Just before His ascension, He told them to wait for the promise of the Father; albeit, the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4). Ten days later, the promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost (2:4). The gift of tongues was given to the disciples, and every person heard the gospel in his or her own language (verses 6-8).

The Holy Spirit taught the people at Pentecost about sin: "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you. . . . And you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death" (verses 22, 23, NIV). Of righteousness, because Jesus would go to His Father and not be seen anymore by them (see John 16:10). "God has raised this Jesus," and He has been "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:32, 33, NIV). "Of judgment: because the prince (ruler) of this world is judged: 'The Lord said to my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet.'" Therefore Israel was to know "that God has made him both Lord and Christ" (verses 35, 36, RSV). After the Holy Spirit brought conviction to all those at Pentecost, they then asked the question "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter's answer was, "Repent, and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (verse 38, RSV).

The outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost accomplished two things: First, the Teacher of righteousness came down upon the infant church to prepare them to sow the gospel seed. The disciples were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke

The gift of tongues was given to the disciples, and every person heard the gospel in his or her own language.

with holy boldness the Word of God (4:31). Second, the former rain also prepared the hearts of those who would hear the gospel in their own language.

After the stoning of Stephen, the disciples went everywhere, preaching the word of God (8:4). Their preaching had such an effect on those who heard it that they were accused of turning the world upside down (see 17:6). The apostle Paul said that the word had been preached in all the world "to every creature under heaven" (Col. 1:5, 6, 23, NIV).

"Through the cooperation of the divine Spirit the labors of the humble men whom Christ had chosen, stirred the world. To every nation under heaven was the gospel carried in a single generation."⁵ There yet remains the complete fulfillment of Joel 2:28, when God will again pour out His Spirit "upon all flesh." For it is by the Spirit that we wait for the hope of righteousness by faith (Gal. 5:5, KJV).

1. R. Laird Harris, editor, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute, 1980), vol. 1, p. 403.

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 945.

3. Harris, *Theological Wordbook*, p. 404.

4. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 945.

5. *Education*, pp. 95, 96.

Rain and Growth

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Deut. 4:29-31; Jer. 29: 13; 1 John 3:1-3

Seven weeks after the Passover, the feast of Pentecost was celebrated. At this feast “the Jews were required to . . . present the first-fruits of all the harvest, thus acknowledging their dependence . . . and their obligation to render back to God, in gifts and offerings . . . that which he had intrusted to them.”¹ Upon this day, those gathered together in the upper room fulfilled that command. “On this day of divine appointment, the Lord graciously poured out his Spirit on the little company of believers, who were the first-fruits of the Christian church.”² The men and women who had chosen to die to self, as seed planted by Jesus for harvest, were now ready to bear fruit.

Open the scene in a room upstairs, the same room, probably, in which Jesus and His disciples had met for the Last Supper. Now imagine many people waiting, praying. They are with true repentance humbling their hearts and confessing

Open the scene in the same room, probably, in which Jesus and His disciples had met for the Last Supper.

their unbelief. Their earnest prayers are “for a fitness to meet men, and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ.”³ The previous days were of preparation, of searching their hearts. They realized their spiritual need. They asked for a vigor and warmth that would prepare them for the privilege of soul saving. “They did not ask for a blessing for themselves. . . . They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls.”⁴ It was for this purpose that the assembled group waited and prayed. The Spirit, when poured out on the waiting disciples, was full and penetrating, reaching every heart. This now-unrestrained power brought words of confession and repentance, praise for sins forgiven. We are told that all heaven bent low to behold and adore the wisdom of matchless, incomprehensible love. Lost in wonder, they grasped the imparted gift. “Herein is love!” was their exclamation.

REACT

1. How did those gathered in the upper room prepare for the promise?
2. Why do we need the former rain in our lives before receiving the latter rain?

1. *Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 265.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 37.

4. *Ibid.*

By Stephanie Michelle Thompson, a senior at Gift Mountain Academy, Duncan, Oklahoma.

Life-giving Rain

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Joel 2:23; Acts 2:28

The promise of rain meant life and growth in Israel. The Holy Spirit, like the rain, enabled the life and growth of the early Christian church.

Joel 2:23 contains three words for rain, two refer to time periods of rain. Strong lists *mowreh* as early rain and *malqowsh* as spring rain.¹ The early rain referred to the autumnal rain, which beginning at the end of October prepared and rehydrated the fields for planting. The latter rain fell in March or April, brought the plants to life, and sustained that life until harvest. Similarly, the coming of the Holy Spirit brought growth to the early church. When Jesus had ascended to present His sacrifice to the Father, that promise was to be fulfilled. The disciples waited actively in anticipation: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house" (Acts 2:2). The Greek word for wind used here is *proe*, meaning "respiration."² Like a respiration, the Holy Spirit breathed life into the church. He activated and empowered individuals to realize what

The Holy Spirit, like the rain, enabled the life and growth of the early Christian church.

Christ's sacrifice meant. Then He enabled them to do the work Christ called them to do, to do and to speak as they never had before. They came into active existence. While Christ died so that we might live, the Holy Spirit empowered that life.

The Spirit by the former rain prepared the infant church for growth, as the soil was prepared by the early rain. The rain continued to nourish the early church, and the good news to humanity was spread to thousands who were converted. Today, growth still takes place in the church. Yet we wait for the latter rain—to sustain the church to the second coming of Christ. The promise of rain, the early and the latter rain, means life to the church.

REACT

1. How have you grown in the Spirit?
2. How has your church grown spiritually?
3. How will we know when the latter rain has come to refresh us?

1. Strong, J., *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1980), no. 4175 in Strong's Hebrew Lexicon.

2. *Ibid.*

The Choice Is Ours

HOW-TO

Key Text: Acts 2:28

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

Have you ever stood on a busy sidewalk and watched people as they go by? Look at all the sad faces, the angry faces, the don't-talk-to-me-I'm-in-a-hurry faces! Smile at people as they go by, and you will be surprised at the very few who smile back. Some may even look at you as if you're insane, wondering why you are smiling.

1. Joy within will be seen without. The Lord will glorify those who are joyful. To Christians, this is good news! We can go out into the world and tell people of the peace and joy that we have inside us, so that they will want to know God and feel the joy we feel. What better way to glorify God than through smiles! Smile even if it hurts. Smile through the tears. It is almost impossible to smile without becoming happier as you feel the effects of that smile. We should show that the

What better way to glorify God than through smiles!

Spirit is inside each of us. Do you know that 826 texts in the Bible say we should be happy or joyous? Live the Word of God!

2. We should feel joy especially when we talk to the Father. “Then I will go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God” (Ps. 43:4). It makes the Lord happy to see His people praying with joyful hearts. If we pray only about our problems, our trials, and our difficulties, do we have the true picture of our Father revealed through the Spirit? Though these things are important, there is much more to pray about—like peace, joy, and thankfulness.

We should not always look at our problems, but at our solution—Jesus. The Holy Spirit was given to us to bring joy in a world of sadness. As we bend our knees in prayer each day, the joy of salvation should be revealed in us. We have many reasons to be happy; one of which is the joy and thrill of communing with the Father one on one.

REACT

1. How can you tell whether a Christian has the spiritual fruit joy?
2. Why should our joy be seen in actions, as well as words?

By Shannon Siffles, a senior at Duncan (Oklahoma) High School.

Waiting for the Rain

OPINION

Key Text: John 7:38, 39; Acts 1:4, 5

I need the Holy Spirit in my life to guide me into all truth. I would not want to consider how uneventful my Christian experience would be without the indwelling of the Spirit. Anything worthwhile is worth waiting for.

All of my life, it seems, I have been waiting for something. First one thing, then another. Why wait? Why can't I have it now? are common human questions. Once, God gave me a dream that He was sending me a true friend. It took two years of waiting until I met that person. I have cherished our friendship since that time, and we are still best friends.

The Spirit can and will be our truest friend if we allow Him to be—someone to lean on, to talk with, to cry and laugh with, to go through the good and bad times with. He will never forsake us. Oh, what loss the apostles would have experienced if they had grown tired of waiting and left Jerusalem! They would have missed out on one of the greatest encounters of their lives—Pentecost, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is given to each of us when we believe, but to have so many

Once, God gave me a dream that He was sending me a true friend.

people experience His power at one time had to be extraordinary! To have witnessed it would have left me speechless; to have been a participant would have been beyond my wildest imagination. What power! I think waiting for it to happen must have been the hardest part. People normally aren't patient, yet patience is a virtue. It is a "must" in the Christian character.

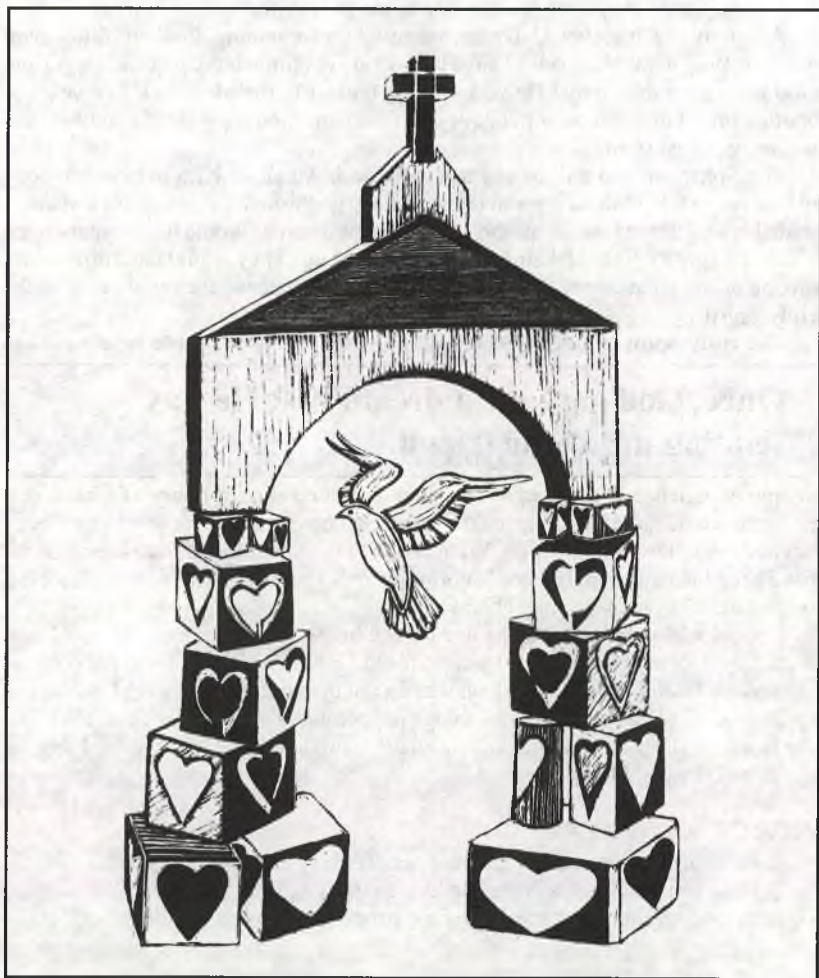
Consider Moses; how long he had to wait before leading the children of Israel from Egypt. Noah preached and waited for the Flood for 120 years to see only his immediate family spared. Abraham was an old man before God gave him the son he desired. God has a purpose for things happening at a particular time. "Wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the Lord" (Ps. 27:14).

REACT

1. In what situations have you experienced the power of the Spirit?
2. How can the Spirit's power be hindered?
3. Why does the Spirit speak to some people more often than to others?

By Marty Siffles, a homemaker from Duncan, Oklahoma.

YOUNG, GIFTED, AND CHRISTIAN



**“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.
There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord”
(1 Cor. 12:4, 5, NIV).**

Without One, There Is No Other

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: 1 Cor. 12:4, 5

“This church doesn’t need me.”

We all know someone in our church who voices this same feeling about remaining an active part of the church family. It is either that the church doesn’t *need* him, or perhaps it’s a case in which she can find another place where her talents will be more appreciated.

What many members fail to realize is the importance of *each* member. As our text states, there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but all the gifts come from the same Spirit. Everyone knows the effectiveness of a basketball team that has each coordinating player following plays set according to the designated position.

The Sabbath School teacher is no more important than the hospitality director.

Just as obvious are the workings of a car—the transmission, the engine, and the radiator, functioning together. If not, no progress is made.

The Bible likens spiritual gifts to the human body. All can identify with its complex workings. The heart is no more important than the lungs. Without one, there is no other. In the summer heat, it becomes apparent that the efficient V6 engine is no more important than the coolant that prevents overheating. Without one, there is no other.

As Christians serving God, we must realize that we have beautifully varied gifts. The Sabbath School teacher is no more important than the hospitality director; nor is the elder more important than the smiling greeter at the entrance. There are different kinds of service, but all have the same Spirit. Without one functioning part of the church body, there is no other.

By Glenda Lee, senior journalism student, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

The Spirit's Gifts

LOGOS

Gal. 5:22-26; Rom. 12:1-21; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1-16

The work of the Holy Spirit in the plan of salvation is to communicate the gospel and its power to humankind. This work is a threefold mission: (1) to the world (John 16:8-11), (2) in the life of the believer (2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Gal. 5:22-26), and (3) in the life of the church (1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:1-16). In our weekly key text, Paul is dealing with the third work of the Spirit, the church. In 1 Corinthians 12:4, he reminds his readers that the gifts of the Spirit vary but have a common source, the Holy Spirit. Then in verse 7 (NIV) he describes the purpose of these gifts: "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good." Finally, in verse 5 he tells us that while the various gifts involve different functions, all believers live and serve the same Lord, Jesus Christ. For the gifts of the Spirit to fulfill their objective, every believer needs to understand clearly what it means to be a Christian.

What It Means to Be a Christian

When by faith we receive Christ as our righteousness, the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the body of Christ: "For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks [Gentiles], slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" (1 Cor. 12:13, NIV). Thus the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, through the new-birth experience, becomes the connecting link that unites all believers to form one body of Christ, the church. Therefore, the first thing we must realize as Christians is that within the body of Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:28). Second, as the human body is one, so also "we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others" (Rom. 12:5). Within this context, we can truly understand the purpose and function of spiritual gifts.

The Work of the Spirit in the Life of the Church

Through the corporate life of the church, Christ is to be manifest to the world. The various gifts of the Spirit are for this very purpose. These gifts may be divided into two basic categories: first, you have those gifts whose specific function is to develop the body of Christ "until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:13). Such gifts are for prophets, pastors, and teachers, etc. (Eph. 4:11-13; 1 Cor. 14:3, 4). Second, the Holy Spirit bestows gifts upon the church in order that it may demonstrate and witness the power of the gospel to a lost world. These gifts are miracles, healing, tongues, etc. (1 Cor. 12:8-11; 14:22).

Making It Happen

The above goals are not realized automatically. Without the cooperation of the individual believer, the church becomes paralyzed in its mission. As members of Christ's body, we find it is important that every believer is fully aware that the law or principle of the body demands we live entirely under the authority and dependence of the Head, who is Christ (Eph. 5:23). Just as the various parts of our human

body are under the full control of the head for it to function properly, so we Christians must live under the full control and direction of Christ's Spirit. This is what Paul means by living in the Spirit (Gal. 5:16). In order for this to happen, every believer must keep a living connection with the Head by prayer and Bible study. Further, every member must realize that while all members have not the same gifts, *all* members have a vital part to play in the mission of the church.

"We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him

Through the corporate life of the church, Christ is to be manifest to the world.

govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully" (Rom. 12:6-8, NIV). In such a church every believer will be active and have great regard and respect for the work of all the fellow believers (see 1 Cor. 12:25, 26).

Reflection

After almost 2,000 years of church history, it is both sad and unfortunate that neither has the church matured into the fullness of Christ, nor has it fully manifest the life of its Lord. The Bible, however, does predict that before the end comes, this earth will be lightened with Christ's splendor (Rev. 18:1). This is the great challenge modern Christianity faces. The good news is: "The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it" (1 Thess. 5:24).

REACT

1. Why are some of the gifts of the Spirit not clearly seen in the church today?
2. Is the church today able to "turn the world upside down," as the early Christians did? Explain your answer.

By Jack Sequeira, senior pastor, Capital Memorial Seventh-day Adventist Church, Washington, D.C.

Gifts for Everyone

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 12:8-11

“The talents that Christ entrusts to His church represent especially the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit. ‘To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will.’”¹

Who Receives the Gifts?

“All men do not receive the same gifts, *but to every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.*”²

“The gifts of the Spirit are promised to every believer according to his need for

“To every servant of the Master some gift of the Spirit is promised.”

the Lord’s work. The promise is just as strong and trustworthy now as in the days of the apostles.”³

How Are They Received?

“Not until through faith and prayer the disciples had surrendered themselves fully for His working was the outpouring of the Spirit received. Then in a special sense the goods of heaven were committed to the followers of Christ. . . . The gifts are already ours in Christ, *but their actual possession depends upon our reception of the Spirit of God.*”⁴

Why Are They Given?

“God has placed the gifts in the church that the church may be benefited by them.”⁵

“The knowledge of God’s grace, the truths of His word, and temporal gifts as well—time and means, talents and influence—are all a trust from God *to be employed to His glory and the salvation of men.*”⁶

1. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 327.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *The Desire of Ages*, p. 823.

4. *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 327.

5. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 328.

6. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 731, 732.

By Cecil A. Franklin, university registrar, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Unity Without Uniformity

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Corinthians 12

One of the more interesting aspects of Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians 12 is his discussion of how receiving the gifts of the Spirit should lead one to behave. We often hear the phrase "unity without uniformity" in today's world. There is a continuing need for harmony among peoples who differ in culture, language, and disposition, especially when they desire to live together and to share similar goals. How much variety is permissible within the context of church worship? Must lines be drawn, and, if so, where?

Paul outlines the governing principles in 1 Corinthians 12. He points out that while spiritual gifts are many and varied, they have only one source, the same Spirit. Gentile converts to Christianity from pagan backgrounds (the majority of the church at Corinth) were to understand that the fervor and enthusiasm that sometimes characterized pagan worship should not be taken as reliable indicators of genuine worship. Therefore, the Holy Spirit would never lead a believer to curse Christ in the ecstasy of worship. Confession to the Lordship of Jesus is primary,

God works through individuals in many cultures whose conventions may vary widely.

and not the excitement of the worshippers.

At the same time, Paul also makes it clear that spirituality is not one uniform experience. Gifts of the Spirit can be manifest in many varieties of conduct. God works through individuals in many cultures whose conventions may vary widely.

The church at Corinth was criticized because its members did not seem to be superior in demeanor to the ordinary citizens of the community. It seems that the gifts of the Spirit produced varieties of service and varieties of "working." Apparently, this defied the notion of a stereotypical Christian, displaying the same mannerisms and speech patterns as the other brethren. Could it be that the church was indeed meant for all kinds of ordinary folk who have in common a need for the inspiration and courage that worship brings? Paul is saying here that the church is not "too good" for folks from any culture or background, but that these are the people for whom Christ came.

REACT

1. In what specific ways can a local congregation encourage new thinking about the equality of all spiritual gifts?
2. In what ways can the Seventh-day Adventist world church encourage change in such thinking?

By Emory Tolbert, chairman of the department of history, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Maximize Your Gifts

HOW-TO

Key Text: Eccl. 9:10

Some people feel that their gifts are minor or of lesser importance than those of others. Others complain that their friends are multitalented, while they possess only one special ability. There are others who feel that the things they can do are not true talents because most other people do those things also. If you fit into one or more of the above categories (and even if you do not), you can maximize your spiritual gifts in the following ways.

1. Be thankful for the gifts you have. A children's song admonishes: "Be thankful for the good things that you've got. The good things that you've got are for many just a dream, so be thankful for the good things that you've got." Gratefully accept your gifts as blessings from God, knowing that the way you use your talents and their impact on others will be specially unique.

2. Seek professional training. God wants us to be the best we can be. He wants us to develop our talents to their greatest potential. He deserves our best. Professional training helps us to perfect our special abilities. This can range from pursuing a Ph.D. degree in marriage counseling to attending a one-day seminar or workshop for choristers, ushers, elders, Pathfinder leaders, and the like. These are

You are not operating in a vacuum when you use your talents in the cause of God.

offered by your local church or conference from time to time.

3. Be willing to serve. A well-known maxim states: "If you don't use it, you will surely lose it." Do not wait for the big occasions like a Community Guest Day, a concert, or a Master Guide fair to use your gifts. Talents develop with continuous and consistent practice. Your day in the sun will come. In the meanwhile, remember, "The heights by great men reached and kept were not attained by sudden flight."

4. Be aware of "the big picture." You are not operating in a vacuum when you use your talents in the cause of God. The exercise of your spiritual gifts is part of God's grand design of giving you the privilege of helping in the plan of salvation—not only the salvation of others, but also your own.*

REACT

1. Give examples of how the use of spiritual gifts can degenerate from glorifying God to showmanship.
2. How would you help someone discover his or her spiritual gifts?

* See *Seventh-day Adventists Believe*. . . , pp. 208-211 for an exposition on "The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts."

By Learie Luke, a graduate history student at Howard University, Washington, D.C.

Asset or Liability?

OPINION

Key Text: Eph. 4:1

“Walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1).

Have you noticed how those faraway places of yesteryear have crept stealthily into our family rooms and that the strange people we read about in geography texts and mission stories now call us brothers and sisters? The entire globe has been remarkably reduced in size and has become too small for anyone to “do his or her own thing.”

It’s a little like the fable of a group of people crossing a deep river in a ferryboat. Halfway across, one of the passengers decided to drill a hole in the floor of the boat. “What are you doing?” shouted the other passengers frantically. “What do you care?” the man casually replied. “I’m drilling the hole under *my* seat.”

Likewise, every Christian is a crew member on the *Old Ship of Zion*, with daily chores to perform. What one person does or does not do affects the welfare of all on board. And it is the unequivocal verdict of our Lord that it is better not to live than to be an obstacle even to one of His trusting children in this broken, troubled world (see Luke 17:2).

Charles Peguy points an accusing finger at you and me when he observes about

One of the passengers decided to drill a hole in the floor of the boat.

some Christians, “Their hands are clean, but they have no hands!” The naked truth is that a loving involvement in the lives of others cannot be confined to material gifts, obliging someone else to do *our* dirty work. It may very well be required that *our* feet get muddied, *our* space and time be invaded, and *our* personality masks removed so that others may receive God’s personal touch through *our* hands.

How does one get started? Look for a need you can fill, and without trumpet, satisfy it! The only criterion for your engagement must be, Is this something Jesus would do? I guarantee that doors to service both in the church and in the world will swing wide as you approach and will enable you to recognize and settle into your unique place of consecrated sharing.

As much as lies in our power, let us redeem our missed opportunities to develop our natural and spiritual gifts and to occupy our God-assigned places. “Children, it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18, RSV).

REACT

1. How can you rearrange your weekly schedule and routine to make room for a church-related activity?
 2. What are some personal talents you observe in church members that Satan can easily divert to his purposes?
-

By Esther Ottley, administrator in the graduate school of arts and sciences, Howard University, Washington, D.C.

TONGUES OF FIRE



“‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to me with all your heart, with fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments” (Joel 2:12, 13, NIV).

CNN Headline News

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Hos. 6:3

Did you catch the news the other night on CNN? Chuck Roberts reported that a strange phenomenon was occurring around the world.

It was something about tongues of fire alighting on the heads of people belonging to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Seems that a spokesperson for the SDA Church stated that this was what was known as the “latter rain,” spoken of in the Bible, which had been promised long ago to members of the church that had experienced the “early rain.”

As a lifelong church member myself, I must say it caught me a bit flat-footed. Yes, I have heard of the early rain and the latter rain and understand that these

Chuck Roberts reported that a strange phenomenon was occurring around the world.

two rains are metaphors for the early and latter outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The actual tongues of fire are a physical demonstration of this phenomenon. (See Acts 2:3.)

CNN went on to report that this was occurring because, according to the spokesperson from the church, we were in the “last days” and that this extra measure of godly power had been given to these select people to help them testify on behalf of Jesus Christ.

Having heard all this through a legitimate news source, I found myself asking these questions: Do I really believe this report? Could this really be happening now? I mean, are we really that close to the last days? And, finally, just how did these people receive the latter rain? What did they have or do differently from me or my church?

By the way, if you missed this report on CNN, don't worry, it never happened. But aren't we promised it will?

By Neal Woods, an insurance agent in Santa Cruz, California.

Rain Block

LOGOS

Jer. 3:13-15; Joel 2:12-17; Acts 1:8, 14; 4:32

In the Canaanite religion, Baal was the storm god who brought rain and fertility. It was his death at the hand of Mot, the god of drought, that ended the spring rains of March-April, resulting in the parched, barren land of summer. His miraculous resurrection at the end of the long dry summer prompted the October-November rains and began the new growing season. Thus, Baal supposedly gave the early rain, which sprouted the seed, and the latter rain, which brought the harvest.¹ Further, since rain was seen as the result of Baal's sexual activity, his worshippers engaged in sexual acts² with temple prostitutes that, it was hoped, would excite Baal. This kind of worship was an overwhelming temptation to God's chosen people.

They grew up reading the words of Moses, singing the songs of David, and listening to the wisdom of Solomon. Not only did they know about the burning bush, the Red Sea, and the walls of Jericho; they also had the prophet Jeremiah among them. Yet they still stooped to the most degrading acts in the name of worship.

God likens their sexual worship to spiritual adultery in Jeremiah 3:1, 2. Graphically He portrays His people as a wife who becomes an eager prostitute, seeking clients all through the land and then brazenly returning to her husband.

The result? "Therefore the showers have been withholden, and there hath been no latter rain" (verse 3). Without these rains, they would have neither grass for their livestock nor food for their table. Their frenzied efforts with temple prostitutes for rain ended up in depriving them of the very rain that they needed. Not only were the lands parched, but they desperately longed for something to satisfy their souls. No wonder God says, "Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this . . . , for my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (2:12, 13). They were drinking from mud puddles, while God offered cool spring water.

God says Israel³ and Judah⁴ are like two sisters (3:6-9). God's divorce (verse 8) from the prostitute Israel was tragically carried out by the Assyrian invasion and the destruction of Samaria in 722 B.C.⁵ With amazement in His voice, God says that Israel's sister Judah sees all this and yet "fear[s] not" and commits adultery throughout the land. Archaeology attests that idols of every description have been found in Israelite ruins.

They saw nothing wrong with worshipping both Yahweh and Baal. God cites Mosaic law (verse 1) prohibiting the remarriage of a previous wife: "But thou hast played the harlot with many lovers; yet return again to me."⁶ With hurt and amazement, He says they have lusted after everything with a heartbeat and have "a whore's forehead, [and] . . . refusedst to be ashamed" (verse 3). Judah professes that she loves Him, but God says that she "hath not turned unto . . . [him] with her whole heart, but feignedly" (verse 10). In spite of the idols, in spite of the visits to cult prostitutes, God's people still thought they were OK!

Only one solution remained. First, they were to come back to Him with submission (Joel 2:12, 13). The Hebrew is a play on words. Literally it should read "turn back, O backturning Israel."⁷ In Israel a husband wouldn't think of marrying

a previously divorced wife and especially one who prostituted herself, yet God longed for the affections of His chosen people. He wasn't worried about where they'd been; He just wanted them back. Next, they were to tell Him their sins (1 John 1:9). With those simple steps, they were in harmony with Him. That's it—no works of mercy, no donations of money, no self-inflicted punishments.

It was this returning and continual submission that would bring the rain. In 1995 we may have our own idols and be committing our own spiritual adultery, but God is every bit as eager to shower us with this rain as He was in the case of Israel of long ago. This rain is not made of hydrogen and oxygen but of the personal presence of Jesus.⁸ The Holy Spirit's purpose was to give Jesus to a thirsty world. Jesus was the true water of life, and this rain is nothing but His life, His power, and His love! When we are willing to lay aside our idols and with broken heart come to

They were drinking from mud puddles, while God offered cool spring water.

Him, He will pour into us His fullness. "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass: as showers that water the earth" (Ps. 72:6).

REACT

1. What are the similarities between the Israelites of the seventh century B.C. and Adventists of the twentieth century A.D.?

2. What would you do with Israel if you were God? How would you get their attention?

3. How does God deal with Laodicea? What are the similarities between God's people here and those represented by the church of Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22?

4. How might God's people today think they are OK, when God might consider them a prostitute?

5. How graphic should you be in a confession to God? To your spouse? To your best friend? To the church at large?

1. Siegfried H. Horn, *SDA Bible Dictionary*, see "The Climate of Palestine" under "Palestine," 1960 (vol. 8 of *The SDA Bible Commentary*) along with "Baal" in the same volume.

2. John Gray, *The Legacy of Canaan*, 2nd rev. ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1965), pp. 101, 102.

3. Ten northern tribes.

4. Two southern tribes.

5. John Bright, "Jeremiah," vol. 21 of the Anchor Bible (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc.), p. xxxi.

6. There is ambiguity in the verb *shub*. The KJV translates it as an imperative, while the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) sees it as a question. (See *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 364, 365, on this text for more information.)

7. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 366.

8. The Holy Spirit's purpose was to be Jesus' personal representative after He left. Jesus said, "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:14).

By Marlan Knittel, youth pastor, Santa Cruz (California) Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Being Prepared

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 Cor. 10:13

“Five minutes, Doctor.” This was an answer to a question Dr. Painter did not even need to ask. The question was “How soon can you be ready for surgery?” In the veterinary clinic where I work, this is a question I answer several times in a morning. It comes right after the patient has been anesthetized as the doctor is leaving the room. But why does he not just go straight into surgery? The patient has been anesthetized, so what still needs to be done? The area where he will make his incision must be prepared.

If the patient is not prepared correctly, a routine dog spay can turn into a life-threatening procedure. First, the patient must be shaved. Then there is a series of scrubbing with Betadine scrub and alcohol as a rinse. This ensures that the surgery site will be sterile. But suppose I did not bother to get the patient ready? What would be the result? A serious infection, such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, could follow, possibly resulting in death.

The difference between being prepared and not being prepared was a life-and-death matter for that dog. We also need to be prepared, not for surgery, but for the

The question was “How soon can you be ready for surgery?”

latter rain. How do we prepare for the latter rain? Fortunately, God has told us how to prepare.

The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost.¹

Are our supplications ascending to God in living faith? Are we opening the door of the heart to Jesus and closing every means of entrance to Satan? Are we daily obtaining clearer light and greater strength, that we may stand in Christ’s righteousness? Are we emptying our hearts of all selfishness and cleansing them, preparatory to receiving the latter rain from heaven?²

These are very specific and direct questions. Are we keeping the door closed to Satan? It is tough. In fact, it is impossible without God’s help. But we are promised, “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able” (1 Cor. 10:13).

1. *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 507.

2. *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1177, 1178.

By Ted Driver, a veterinary assistant from Santa Cruz, California.

Thrashing Out and the Holy Spirit

EVIDENCE

Key Text: 1 Cor. 15:31

My brother awoke with a start at 4:30 in the morning to the sounds of desperate thrashing coming from his pool. It had happened once before. A deer had fallen into the pool, and after destroying the \$350 plastic liner it had died.

This time, my brother was determined to avoid another unnecessary expense. What started out as purely financial motivation soon turned to pity. The absolute terror in the eyes of the deer gave my brother a mission. He tried reaching out and grabbing the deer, but slashing antlers and kicking hooves made it impossible. Sticks, boards, and even makeshift ramps were tried, all to no avail. At sunrise, fatigue had set in for both man and beast.

The deer was in total exhaustion when my brother finally realized that trust would never develop. He watched it let out its last breath and sink to the bottom. Now my brother jumped in, lifted out the limp body, and flopped it onto dry ground. The beast sneezed and sputtered a bit and seemed to be coming around. Warm towels and a thick layer of blankets were placed over its trembling body. That

The terror in the eyes of the deer gave my brother a mission.

night, the deer was gone; evidently, it had survived. It would go on living with no knowledge of what had actually happened.

Paul says, "I die daily" (1 Cor. 15:31). It would seem that God is trying everything He can *right now* to save us, and we just don't let Him. Possibly we are too busy "kick[ing] against the goads" (Acts 26:14, RSV) to let Him accomplish what is necessary to bring about true healing. I think we all have a pretty good understanding of what went on at Pentecost. It was well defined, and things took off within the infant church. The infilling of the Holy Spirit was permanent, the effects immediate and repeatable! But most important, they were practical. The gift came with the ability to communicate intelligently with whomever was listening (1 Cor. 12:1-12; Rom. 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11, 12).

Will the latter rain be just as well defined as the early rain? Has it hit yet? Are we thrashing around, trying to save ourselves while totally ignoring God's outpouring of help? Is its manifestation contingent upon our own preparedness, and must we return to Him, fast, mourn, and rend our hearts (Joel 2:12) before He pours out the Holy Spirit?

These two outpourings seem to define the start and finish of the work with His church, but in John 16:7-13 Jesus states that although He will be leaving us physically, "the Counselor" (NIV) will remain behind to convict the world of *all* truth. He *is* doing *all* He can to reach us! And when we are right with Him, as at Pentecost, the Spirit will blow us away, and our own endeavors will pale. What we need is to provide fertile ground within which He can operate.

By Cyrus Oster, a dentist from Santa Cruz, California.

Effective Witnessing

HOW-TO

Key Text: Acts 1:7, 8, 11; 1 Pet. 2:11, 12

We are supposed to be aliens in this world (1 Pet. 2:11), but we are also called to spread the Word of God. The two almost seem to contradict each other. How can we witness if we don't fit in?

We are not the first to wrestle with this challenge. In Acts 1:7 and 8, Jesus addresses the apostles as they prepare to spread the good news. He says we must be filled with the Holy Spirit. How? Luke writes that the early apostles joined together constantly in prayer (Acts 1:14). We must do the same and daily commune with God. Before we can expect to reach others, we must examine ourselves and be transformed by the Spirit.

Jesus tells His apostles that "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NIV). Notice, He says Jerusalem first. That is their home. We are called to do the same. When we are filled with the Holy Spirit, we are called to witness to the people close to us—our family and friends. After we have addressed our family and friends, we can begin talking with acquaintances and strangers. Then, like the apostles, we are commissioned

How can we witness if we don't fit in?

to carry the gospel message "to the ends of the earth."

I grew up attending public schools, where a majority of my peers were not Christians. The truth is, I seldom mentioned Jesus' name outside of Tuesday-night youth-group meeting. But the important thing is I didn't deny Jesus in my own life or compromise my Christian walk. Every team sport I played had games on Friday night or Saturday. As a Seventh-day Adventist Christian, I chose not to participate on Sabbath. Though I seldom lost my starting position on the team, it was difficult for me to know that my team was playing without me. Nevertheless, for the four years that I attended high school, I never played a game on Saturday.

So what does this have to do with witnessing? I constantly had to explain to people why I couldn't participate on Sabbath, but more important, it showed a strength of character that I wasn't even aware of. To this day, former classmates tell me how they respect my beliefs.

So wherever it is that you are or whatever your manner of witnessing may be, you should "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Pet. 2:12, NIV).

REACT

Are there friends and family members with whom I have not shared my faith? How am I going to reach out to those close to me?

By Raven Osborne, student in Latin American studies at University of California, Santa Cruz.

The Communal Spirit

OPINION

Key Text: Acts 4:32-37

From his bed Vladimir could see people walking in the huge snow-blanketed plaza below. Each person was going about his or her business, surviving to see the next day. He knew them. They had come and listened to his fiery speeches in that very square. Many had followed him into a revolution that they had all hoped would end their oppression. But that dream was fading, brutally fast.

The movement had started with a small group of dedicated men, all of whom he had trusted. Now many of those men were dead, and his own death was not far off. They had been united in purpose, but now that same corporate body was stricken with paralysis. All that the usurper and his bureaucratic machine were waiting for was this man's death. Without the dream's creator, the process of restructuring society and the spirits of his people would be complete. He was full of silent anger. For like the corporate body, he, too, was paralyzed. There was no way for him to correct what was happening. His one-time "brother," the usurper, had him isolated in a small room. What could he do?

Another Revolutionary faced a similar dilemma when He was nailed on a cross. How could He save the people He was leaving behind? His answer was to send

From his bed Vladimir could see people in the huge plaza below.

the Holy Spirit, who moved powerfully among the members of the early Christian church. In fact, people were overwhelmed by His presence.

All those individuals who believed in Christ became one in spirit. They prayed together, worshiped together, lived together, worked together, and sang praises together. Examples of believers' unity are given throughout Acts. Those people were not isolated from their revolutionary leader. He, the Son of man, was with them all along, even after He died; for God's power transcends death.

Today, Jesus' Spirit is moving in the lives of believers. We have appropriated many of the beliefs of the early Christians. Daily, we step out of our comfort zones to work with, sing with, pray with, and give our possessions to our neighbors and our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Spirit is moving our hearts and minds.

Just like the Holy Spirit, our communal group of believers is highly mobile. We are confined only by the restrictions we place upon ourselves. Each of us needs to give, without prejudice and insincerity, our talents and energies to transform all humanity. *Gloria a Dios y al Espiritu Santo!*

REACT

How far beyond the safety of comfort are we willing to give so the needs of our communities are met?

By Jeffrey Osborne, a graduate student in education at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

WHAT ARE YOU LISTENING FOR?



“Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father’s name written on their foreheads” (Rev. 14:1, RSV).

Sealed by the Spirit

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Rev. 22:17

A native American was visiting downtown New York, walking along with his friend, who lived in the city. Suddenly he said, "I hear a cricket."

"Oh, you are crazy," his friend replied.

"No, I hear a cricket. I do; I'm sure of it."

"It's the noon hour. People bustling around, cars honking, taxis squealing, noises from the city. I'm sure you can't hear a cricket."

"I'm sure I do." He listened attentively and then walked to the corner, across the street, and looked all around. Finally, on the other corner, he found a shrub in a large concrete planter. He dug beneath a leaf and found a cricket.

His friend was astounded. But the native American said, "No. My ears are no

Every head within a block turned.

different from yours. It simply depends on what you are listening for. Here, let me show you."

He reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of change—a few quarters, some dimes, nickels, and pennies. And he dropped them on the concrete.

Every head within a block turned.

"You see what I mean?" the native American said, as he began picking up his coins. "It all depends on what you are listening for."

As you seek to live a life of excellence, a life of godly intensity and verve, may you have eyes to see and ears to hear the Spirit saying, "Come!" and let the Holy Spirit reign in your heart. With His help you can clean your soul temple of every defilement, to receive the seal of God. May you have the wisdom to know what to look for and to listen to.

By Hector Ramal, assistant professor of applied theology, Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

Sealed by the Spirit

LOGOS

Eph. 1:13, 14; 5:27; Rev. 6:9-11; 14:1-5

The Initial Reception of the Spirit

"In him you also, who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and have believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, which is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory" (Eph. 1:13,14, RSV).

In the passage quoted above, the apostle Paul makes clear that all who have embraced the gospel, and in so doing have believed in Christ as their Saviour, have been sealed with the Holy Spirit. Every sincere follower of Jesus has the Spirit as his or her personal possession. This endowment of the Spirit is probably described as a sealing because this is a way of indicating that the believers are God's possession.

On the other hand, it is also a sign that those who have the Spirit are children of God. The apostle John is sure that "by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit which he has given us" (1 John 3:24). And also: "By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit" (1 John 4:13). Paul even states: "Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him" (Rom. 8:9). And he is certain that "all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God" (verse 14), and "the Spirit himself bearing witness . . . that we are children of God" (verse 16).

However, the apostle Paul indicates that this concession of the Spirit to the believer is an *arrabon*, a down payment, an initial guarantee. This pledge assures and certifies that the Christian has a sure and certain inheritance in the future (see 2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5). It is a wonderful thought that we, as Christ's disciples, do not have to live in uncertainty. His Spirit is the initial guarantee that we are His possession.

Walking in the Spirit

"[That he might] present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or any thing of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish" (Eph. 5:27, NRSV).

It is the divine purpose that those who have received the gift of His Spirit might keep it and be led by it. God's ideal for His church is very high and can be achieved only through His Spirit, which is God's sanctifying power in the life of the believer.

But there is always the danger that those who once received His Spirit might turn away from His leading. For that reason, the apostle Paul admonished the Ephesian Christians not to "grieve the Holy Spirit of God, in whom you were sealed for the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30), and he advised the Thessalonians: "Do not quench the Spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). In the same way, the author of Hebrews spoke of those who "outraged the Spirit of grace" (Heb. 10:29).

For Paul, the solution to the problem of sin in the Christian life is to walk in the Spirit, which means not to walk according to the old man, but in harmony with the new creation made by the Spirit (Gal. 5:5, 16).

The Final Sealing

"Then I looked, and lo, on Mount Zion stood the Lamb, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1, RSV).

This human possibility of rejecting the Spirit given initially by God and turning away from His leading is what makes a final sealing necessary. For it is not only he who receives the first endowment of the Spirit, but "he who endures to the end [who] will be saved" (Matt. 24:13). The mere fact that to the believer is given the Spirit as a guarantee already points to a necessary consummation. As we know, this final stage is realized in connection with the second coming of Christ.

It is not a wonder, then, that the people of God have to go through a final experience that the book of Revelation identifies with a sealing (Revelation 7). The terminology here does not specifically associate the Spirit with this sealing. In chapter 7, the servants of God had to be sealed on their foreheads (verse 3). Later, in chapter 14, the company of the saved is described as having "his name and his father's name written on their foreheads" (verse 1). It is obvious that what is

There is always the danger that those who once received His Spirit might turn away from His leading.

emphasized here is that those sealed are property of God and the Lamb. The Spirit is not mentioned as the sealing agent. But later on, the seer identifies those sealed as "spotless" (verse 5). This ethical element brings to mind the works of the Spirit as God's sanctifying instrument (see 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13; Titus 3:5; Eph. 3:16; Rom. 8:11, 13; 2 Cor. 3:18; Gal. 5:22). Therefore, these redeemed ones are those who allowed the Holy Spirit to bring victory to their lives. They are represented as overcomers, and their final sealing is the symbolic act by which God declares them His possession.

REACT

1. What does it mean, in the everyday life, to walk according to the Spirit?
2. How is it possible for a person, initially sealed by the Spirit, to abandon His leading later?

By L. Eloy Wade, chairman, religion department, University of Montemorelos, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

How Can Victory Be Ours?

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Rev. 14:1-5

Victory! It's a tremendous word. It speaks of obstacles overcome, trials, hardships, problems confronted during the long pilgrimage of God's people on earth. This victory was possible because God loved them, and by His Spirit He gave them power to overcome. What could they have accomplished without the Spirit? Victory was possible for them, because they had been sealed by the Holy Spirit.

Ellen White gives some insights about being sealed by the Spirit before the close of probation: "The seal of the living God is upon His people. This small remnant, unable to defend themselves in the deadly conflict with the powers of earth that are marshaled by the dragon host, make God their defense. The decree has been passed by the highest earthly authority that they shall worship the beast and receive his mark under pain of persecution and death. May God help His people now, for what can they then do in such a fearful conflict without His assistance!"¹

But listen! To be sealed by the Holy Ghost, every one has to pay attention to the following statement: "The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of the ambitious, world-loving man or woman. It will never be placed upon the forehead of

"The seal of God will never be placed upon the forehead of an impure man or woman."

men or women of false tongues or deceitful hearts."²

"Those whose hands are not clean, whose hearts are not pure, will not have the seal of the living God. Those who are planning sin and acting it will be passed by."³

"Not all who profess to keep the Sabbath will be sealed. There are many even among those who teach the truth to others who will not receive the seal of God in their foreheads. They had the light of truth, they knew their Master's will, they understood every point of our faith, but they had not corresponding works. These who were so familiar with prophecy and the treasures of divine wisdom should have acted their faith. . . . By their lack of devotion and piety, and their failure to reach a high religious standard, they make other souls contented with their position."⁴ There is only one way we can be sealed unto the day of redemption; that is, by the Holy Spirit. It must be a daily sealing from the first waking moment of each day.

1. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 213.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 216.

3. *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 445.

4. *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 213, 214.

By Francisco Flores, assistant professor of denominational history and director of the White Estate Research Center, Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

Fooling Around With God's Seal

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Gen. 38:18

“And he said, ‘What pledge shall I give you?’ And she said, ‘Your seal and your cord’ ” (Gen. 38:18, NASB). Judah, fourth son of Jacob, here entrusts his seal to a stranger in exchange for sex.

Judah is, apart from Joseph, the most riveting character of Genesis 37 to 50. First, he conceives of and accomplishes the sale of Joseph (37:26-28). Seventeen years later he persuades Jacob when Reuben cannot (43:3-5, 8-14; see also 42:36-38). Then, in the electrified atmosphere of Joseph's house in Egypt, his masterful pleading confounds Joseph's calculated callousness, reducing him to the weak ordinariness of a long-lost boy, crying years of rivers of tears, at joy to be home again (Gen. 44:14-45:4). This powerful man sells his seal for sex that impregnates his daughter-in-law, the woman disguised as a prostitute (Genesis 38).

In that time long ago, plebeians owned no seals. The signet ring strung on a cord around Judah's neck bespoke his class. It may have carried his name. Seals sometimes did. Whether so or not, impressed upon any document, or even on stone, they proclaimed their owner's authority (Dan. 6:17; Matt. 27:66). They attested his ratification of terms of a document (Dan. 6:7-9), affirmation of its completion,

She could confirm all kinds of fraud with this fairly stolen Gold Card.

declaration of its inviolability (verses 10, 12, 15; Esther 8:8). Unbroken seal impressions verified the integrity of contents.

Calculating daughters-in-law, privileged with seal-stamping signet rings, might purchase much more than the favors sold in exchange for such a prized item. Judah's seal in Tamar's hand meant access to every caprice that caught her fancy. She could confirm all kinds of fraud with this fairly stolen Gold Card.

God does not fool around with His seal. For information on the character of those who bear that holy imprint, consult Revelation 14:1-5. The Bible's first seal (Gen. 38:18) and its last sealing (Rev. 14:1-5) exhibit an intriguing concert and contrast of concept and conduct. In Genesis as in Revelation, purity constitutes the issue. But in Genesis, Judah trivializes his authority and compromises his soul. In Revelation God announces, by His sealing, the victory of His mercy over our disgrace, the vindication of His way of love, the ratification of a pact of eternal holiness with us. For all ages to come, we shall remain inviolably His, representations of His grace-bought purity to the infinite reaches of His awed domains.

REACT

Why do you think God often seems to adopt materially insignificant symbols as objects of high importance?

By Lael O. Caesar, professor of Old Testament, Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

The Character Issue

HOW-TO

Key Text: Matt. 25:1-13; Rev. 3:14-18

Martin Luther wrote: The devil held a large assembly where he called his agents to report the outcomes of their work. One said, "I set some wild desert beasts on a group of Christians, and now their bones are bleaching in the desert."

"So what?" said the devil, "their souls were saved."

"I," another said, "provoked an east wind against a boat full of Christians, and all of them drowned."

"So what?" said the devil, "their souls were saved."

"For 10 years," said another, "I have been trying to make a certain person not worry about his soul, and I finally succeeded. Now his soul is ours." The devil then gave a loud yell, and the hosts of darkness sang with gladness.

The sin of negligence and carelessness has weakened the church to a greater degree than persecution or the sins of vice that we so often condemn. "As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept" (Matt. 25:5, RSV). Because of the bridegroom's delay, many who await the second coming of Christ have turned careless. "When the sentence for a crime is not quickly carried out, the

"So what?" said the devil, "their souls were saved."

hearts of the people are filled with schemes to do wrong" (Eccl. 8:11, NIV).

Thus, our enemy's strategy is the promotion of a commitment-free religion. Lukewarm spirituality and indifference toward what God expects of us make us unable to receive the oil of the Holy Spirit and to prepare a character for heaven and thus be sealed for the time of trial (Eph. 4:30).

"In the parable, the foolish virgins are represented as begging for oil and failing to receive it at their request. This is symbolic of those who have not prepared themselves by developing a character to stand in a time of crisis. It is as if they should go to their neighbors and say, 'Give me your character or I shall be lost. Those that were wise could not impart their oil to the flickering lamps of the foolish virgins. Character is not transferable. It is not to be bought or sold; it is to be acquired. The Lord has given to every individual an opportunity to obtain a righteous character . . . , but He has not provided a way by which one human agent may impart to another the character which he has developed.'"

REACT

Is the sealing something in the future, or is it taking place today?

* *That I May Know Him*, p. 350.

By Jorge Dzul Trejo, assistant professor of practical theology, Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

“In God We Trust”

OPINION

Key Text: Isa. 43:1-7

United States currency bears the nation's motto “In God We Trust.” Many coins and bills may have passed through your hands, yet those words may not have much meaning for you anymore.

A similar situation could also happen with the reading of the Bible. It is so common to own a Bible that one tends to appreciate its message less than when it is difficult to buy one. As a consequence, the trust in God may not be as strong.

A trusting relationship is important in our daily lives, but this will be more evident as we come to the sealing time. The sealing time is not only a future event, experienced by those who live at the time of the end, but also as a Christian experience that we *all* go through in our lives; therefore, I see in it at least three very important aspects: (1) “settling into the truth,”* (2) security, and (3) salvation.

Settling. I have to understand who God really is and to accept Him for what He is. I have to be convinced that there is no way of salvation other than through His Son, Jesus Christ. That if I confess Him as my Lord, it is because the Holy Spirit

He looks at me, and his little computer starts working very fast.

has helped me to do so. Repentance, confession, acceptance, righteousness, sanctification, redemption, glorification, faith, hope, love—all come from Him.

Security. Living in an insecure world makes it tough for us all. We pass our insecurities on to the spiritual realm and *learn* to mistrust God. But if the biblical message is to have any meaning at all in our lives, we have to *learn* to trust God. Since humankind broke their relationship with their Creator, God's message has been “He who is coming to Me, there is no way I will cast him out!”

Salvation. Why has God gone through all the trouble to save me? I feel I don't really deserve it. Yet I am grateful to know He loves me, and I think there is nothing greater in this world that could match spending eternity with Him.

My grandson, Charlie, Jr., is one of my greatest teachers. As he is learning to walk, I say, “Come to Grandpa, Charlie.” He looks at me, and his little computer starts working very fast: “Can I trust this guy? Is he safe?” Then he looks at me. He knows who I am. With his beautiful smile, he starts a journey that to him may appear to be endless, even though he is only two feet away. Every little step brings him even closer now, until finally he feels my arms embracing him, and he hears my words of commendation saying: “Bravo, *Charlito!* We are together again.” It is a beautiful experience to know that in God We *Can* Trust.

* *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1161.

By Jaime Cruz, a professor of Greek and applied theology, Montemorelos University, Montemorelos, Nuevo Leon, Mexico.

HOPING FOR THE RAIN



**“I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory”
(Rev. 18:1).**

The Man on the Bridge

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: Jer. 12:15

One evening my sister and I were on our way to our usual workout at the gym when we saw a young man standing over the railings of a bridge. As we approached him and asked what he was doing, he said, "What does it look like? I'm going to jump!" My heart raced. I had never encountered someone who actually was considering taking his life.

We decided one of us would call the police while the other tried to talk to him until the police arrived. I ran as fast as I could to the nearest phone. "Not to worry," the officer said. "Help is on the way."

By the time I returned to the bridge, my sister had the young man talking about what drove him to the state of mind he was in. He told us how his family thought

"What does it look like? I'm going to jump!"

he was no good. He had broken up with the woman he loved and had no one to talk to. No one would listen.

In a few minutes the authorities arrived and handled the situation. The young man came down off the bridge. An officer came over to me and said, "You and your sister just saved someone's life." I could not believe it. We helped save a life—a soul.

That night I truly thanked God for my family and friends. It's sad to think that young man felt he had no one to whom he could turn. I hate to think what would have happened if we hadn't stopped and shown some concern and compassion for him. What an experience, what a feeling it was to assist in saving a life, no matter how small the part. I can only imagine how Christ felt dying to save millions.

Too many times we ignore the cry, the plea for help. We as Christians need to be more compassionate. Everyone needs someone. Don't be ashamed to ask for help. It does not make you weak. It only makes you human.

By Jennifer S. Black, business-administration graduate from Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

The Latter Rain

LOGOS

Jer. 5:18-31; Joel 2:28-32; Rev. 18:1-5

The Bible is a record of various peoples who were abused and overwhelmed by enemies and suffered shame and destruction from evil ones. These peoples who suffered included Abraham's descendants and the New Testament church. The attackers included Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, and Rome, as well as many other less prominent kings and rulers.

Many times the suffering came as a direct result of the evil deeds of the people of God, as stated in Jeremiah 5:18, 19: " 'Yet even in those days,' declares the Lord, 'I will not destroy you completely. And when the people ask, "Why has the Lord our God done all this to us?" you will tell them, "As you have forsaken me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own"' " (NIV).

The judgment came as a direct natural consequence of what they had chosen to do. The model presented is one of cause and effect. The people abandoned God, God abandoned the people, and the people suffered at the hands of their enemies.

The cause-effect model does not end there. The all-powerful Lord will give His people yet another chance. After the captivity, or retribution, the people of God will repent and seek forgiveness. Then the Lord will restore them to their inheritance (Jer. 12:15).

This model of sin-reprisal-repentance-restoration occurred several times throughout Israel's history. It was, in fact, established at the time of the covenant between Moses, Israel, and the Lord (Deuteronomy 28-30). The promise of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit was an integral part of this model. The meaning of this promise appears in the writing of Joel.

The preface of the words of Joel 2:28-32 clearly indicates that the promise of the Holy Spirit's outpouring is part of a larger model. "*Afterward*, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (verse 28, NIV, italics supplied). The word *afterward* sets the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit as a part of a larger sequence of events. The pre-events to the outpouring include: an invasion of locusts that will devastate the land as a consequence of the sins of the people (1:1-12); a call to repentance from the Lord (verses 13-20); the further devastation of the land by locusts sent by the Lord (2:1-11); an emotional call from God to repentance (verses 12-14); the communal repentance of Israel led by the priests and leaders of the nation (verses 15-17); the Lord's response, acceptance, and restoration to a privileged place among nations (verses 18-27). The end of this section is a solemn declaration by God that this desolation will not be repeated. "Then you will know that I am in Israel, that I am the Lord your God, and that there is no other; *never again will my people be shamed*" (verse 27, italics supplied).

The human-divine drama that precedes the outpouring of the Spirit of God is in total harmony with the covenantal relationship as outlined in the compact between Israel and the Lord (Deuteronomy 28-30). The summary of this drama can be outlined as a cycle of repentance and forgiveness.

The outpouring of the Spirit will be the step that will break the cycle forever. In Joel's prophecy, prior to the breakthrough of the cycle, the signs of total conse-

cratation and total commitment are manifest. These signs are all-inclusive. As a consequence of the outpouring of the Spirit, instead of having one prophet or even a school of prophets prophesying, all young men, all sons and daughters, all female and male servants, will receive the Spirit and become prophets for God. What a difference that ought to make! Instead of hearing the message from one prophet, all people will be receiving the message from God.

Nature is another element that will assure that the cycle has been broken forever; there will be wonders in heaven, sun, moon, and skies. It will be impossible to ignore the fact that God would interrupt human history forever. The central message of this passage from Joel is given in the form of a salvation formula: "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, among the survivors whom the Lord calls" (Joel 2:32).

The central character of the whole plot was, is, and will be the Lord Himself. Whoever calls on His name had, has, and will have salvation. There is no other way out of the cycle of human history but the way of the Lord. To call on the name of the Lord implies a change of heart, a total commitment to the Lord God.

The result of this experience will be a battle, the final battle between good and

The outpouring of the Spirit will be the step that will break the cycle forever.

evil on this earth (3:1-21). In this battle the central figure will be the city of Zion and the King of Zion (verses 16, 17).

As a direct result of this final battle, a new eternal Zion will be established, where the Lord Himself will dwell forever (verse 21). This new Judah will no longer go through the cycle of sin-repentance-forgiveness. Through the shedding of blood (verses 19, 21), a new covenant will be established that will reflect bigger, more encompassing dimensions. There will be no more brokenness, no more sin, no more violence. A new era of God's sovereignty will begin. The cycle will be broken.

The message of the outpouring of the Spirit of God is one of bright promise for a people who are overwhelmed by enemies and seduced by sin. God is the only hope humans have, the only hope the church has. Revelation 18:1-5 is the message of that hope. There will come a time when finally Babylon (as a symbol of all other oppressive powers) will fall forever! The message of hope says, "People of God, do not despair. I am in full control; I will deliver you; you will be safe in Me."

Are you going to accept this message? Are you going to accept the gospel message as presented in the promise of the outpouring of the Spirit of God?

By Johnny Ramirez, religion professor, Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Nothing to Fear

TESTIMONY

Key Text: Hos. 6:3

In the Middle East the early and latter rains were necessary for crop success. The early rain softened up the soil, creating an environment in which the freshly sown seed could germinate and take root. The latter rain referred to the last rain that ripened the grain for harvest. These rains are symbolic of the Holy Spirit's two great events (Acts 2) and will be poured out on those who are asking God for this special gift.

"The work will be similar to that of the Day of Pentecost. As the 'former rain' was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the 'latter rain' will be given at its close."¹

We are encouraged to seek this latter rain (Hos. 6:3) by acknowledging or knowing God and asking for its outpouring. "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain.' Do not be satisfied that in the ordinary course of the season, rain will fall. Ask for it. The growth and perfection of the seed rests not with the husbandman. God alone can ripen the harvest. But man's cooperation is required. God's work for us demands the action of our mind, the exercise of our faith. We

Many are anxious or fearful about the latter rain, but we are to be consoled.

must seek His favors with the whole heart if the showers of grace are to come to us."²

Many are anxious or fearful about the latter rain, but we are to be consoled: "We need not worry about the latter rain. All we have to do is to keep the vessel clean and right side up and prepared for the reception of the heavenly rain, and keep praying, 'Let the latter rain come into my vessel. Let the light of the glorious angel which unites with the third angel shine upon me [see Rev. 18:1-8]; give me a part in the work; let me sound the proclamation; let me be a colaborer with Jesus Christ.' Thus seeking God, let me tell you, He is fitting you up all the time, giving you His grace."³

You see, the latter rain is necessary for the ripening of souls and completion of the gospel commission. It is nothing to fear. If we pray for the latter rain, we are praying for the final vindication of God, and we are praying for His soon return.

REACT

Beyond praying, what can I do to prepare for the latter rain?

1. *The Great Controversy*, p. 611.

2. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 508.

3. *The Upward Look*, p. 283.

By Gregory P. Whitsett, Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Preaching Through All People

EVIDENCE

Key Text: Joel 2:28

Latter-rain appeals appeared to be directed to the thoroughly churched Seventh-day Adventist. God gave this final call through Scripture (SDA interpretations), preachers (again SDAs), writings in the *Adventist Review*, and Ellen White.

But solid evidence suggests that God's last attempt to have a happy, healthy, and holy people prepared to receive the latter rain and ready for the second advent reaches well beyond our parochial borders and utilizes much broader avenues of appeal.

Joel's words are to be especially noted: "*Afterward*, I will pour out my Spirit to all people" (2:28, NIV, italics supplied). For earth's harvest to be just, abundant, and complete, the latter rain will fall "on hearts all around us."¹

Of particular interest, therefore, are books like *The Pursuit of Happiness*, by David G. Myers. Myers sifts through the best evidence of what psychologists and other social scientists have found out about achieving personal and societal well-being. Along the way, he exposes current cultural myths as to how happiness is achieved, "most notably the idea that more money, and the pleasures and possessions it buys, will make middle-class people happier."² Charting the downfall of

Noting survey after survey, Myers ticks off the best predictors of solid happiness.

materialism as dominant ideology, Myers speaks directly to the spiritual vacuum at the heart of much of today's society. Quoting Scripture repeatedly, Myers dares to ask in a scholarly, popular book whether for our mental health and overall well-being biblical religion is helpful or hazardous.

He answers in the healthful affirmative. Noting survey after survey, scientific investigation after social-science finding, Myers ticks off the best predictors of solid happiness, pointing out their rootedness in (or at least similarity to) ancient, scriptural propositions. He shows the impressive scientifically verified links between religious faith and mental health.

Living in the preparation time for the sealing and latter rain, we must give thanks for "preachers" like social psychologist David Myers, who proclaims that "to take a leap into active faith is to bet one's life on a world view that makes sense of the universe, that gives meaning to life, that offers hope in the face of adversity and death, that provides vision and courage for living in the present."³

1. *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 506, 507.

2. David G. Myers, *The Pursuit of Happiness: Who Is Happy—and Why* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1992), p. 176.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 204.

By Richard Trott, campus chaplain, Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

Don't Wait Till the Battle Is Over

HOW-TO

Key Text: Rev. 18:1, 2

One night while I was watching my favorite TV show, my friend and I made a bet. Each of us was supposed to figure out how the show would end. As the show progressed, I repeatedly told her what I believed the ending would be. When the show was finally over, she wanted to know what clues I had picked up on to predict how the show would end. I told her I knew the outcome from the beginning because it was a rerun.

When it comes to the greatest battle ever fought, the great controversy, we know who is going to win. "After these things I saw another angel coming down from heaven, having great authority and the earth was illumined with his glory. And He

Each of us was supposed to figure out how the show would end.

cried out with a mighty voice, saying 'Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!'" (Rev. 18:1, 2, NASB).

To be sure you win the battle, you must:

1. Accept Christ and develop your relationship to God by spending time and talking to Him;
2. Love God with all your soul, and love your neighbor as yourself.

When we accept Christ, we have victory over sin and hope that through the latter rain, Christ will finish His work. Don't wait till the battle is over. Shout out that you know who's going to win in the end!

REACT

1. How can you be prepared for the latter rain?
2. How can you help your church prepare for the latter rain?

By Diane J. Ellington, a biology major and religion and secondary-education minor at Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

“Why Are You Building This Church?”

OPINION

Key Text: John 17:21-23

The city building inspector and I stood on the concrete slab that formed the foundation of a new church building. The black congregation I pastored had been forced to sell the previous church building to the city as part of its urban redevelopment plan, thus requiring us to rebuild. The inspector, a Jehovah’s Witness, turned to me and asked, “Don’t you have a church a few blocks away? Why are you building this church?”

I was chagrined to realize that he referred to the nearby white Adventist church that sat three-quarters empty Sabbath after Sabbath.

He continued, “You Seventh-day Adventists think you know the truth, but at least we Jehovah’s Witnesses know how to worship together.”

At that moment, none of our doctrinal truths—not the Sabbath, the sanctuary, the 2300 days, or the state of the dead—could outweigh the relational life of our segregated community.

This experience raises several questions: Is unity among believers within the church a prerequisite for the outpouring of the latter rain? Will division in the church preclude the reception of this special gift of the Spirit?

Adventism has traditionally emphasized personal preparation for the latter rain,

Is unity among believers within the church a prerequisite for the outpouring of the latter rain?

i.e., the building of each individual’s character. May I suggest the necessity of a corporate preparation for the latter rain that leads to unity among believers. As He gave His disciples the promise of the Holy Spirit, Jesus prayed that they be one and indicated that through their “complete unity” (John 17:23, NIV) the world would know that God had sent Him. Note also that when the former rain fell on the church at Pentecost, “They were all with one *accord*” (Acts 2:1). Does being in “complete unity” or in “one accord” challenge our church today? Does unity and oneness have anything to do with breaking down barriers that are based on age, ethnicity, class, and gender?

Ellen White writes: “Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it.”*

**Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 506, 507.

By Gregory J. Allen, assistant professor of theology and religion and associate chaplain, Atlantic Union College, South Lancaster, Massachusetts.

THE GREAT OMISSION?



“Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 10:32).

Beyond the Ditch

INTRODUCTION

Scripture: John 20:21

Go!

An order.

A command.

A commission
turned omission,
optional mission,
by modern Christians.

Go ye! Go ye!

Clergy . . . laity . . . everybody.

Preach . . . teach

Organize . . . advertise

Mobilize . . . baptize.

Lead them to Truth
as you follow
the Spirit's footprints
into all the world.

Side by side

up a rocky lane

on foreign soil

they grunt and strain

pickax in hand

hand in pain

love in eyes

digging a ditch

to bury the pipes

and water tough land

and quench poor souls.

Mission. Youth mission.

From northern clime
to southern isle:

Kids helping adults,
working with people
they've never met before
and never will again.

They spread the gospel—
Nineties style.

So what if it hurts?

The calluses,

the blisters,

the blistering sun
beating on city backs?

What's a little pain
to spread His name
and help them know

He loves them so.

"As the Father sent me,

So send I you," He'd said,

before they laid Him

in a ditch

to end the agony

on Calvary.

Beyond the ditch

Above the roar

The Spirit soars

to rich and poor,

Go follow!

By Royson James, reporter with the Toronto Star, Toronto, Ontario.

Salvation in Skin

LOGOS

Luke 4:16-21; Acts 1:8; 1 John 4:13-15; Rev. 18:1-5; Dan. 12:3

Luke 4:16-21

Someone once said that the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 should be called the “great omission,” because so many seem to have forgotten this aspect of their spiritual journey. Christ came to earth to obtain our salvation and to show us how to depend completely on the Father through the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 4 Jesus teaches that He allowed the power of the Spirit to guide Him in reaching out to the disenfranchised and the hell-bound. He preached freedom from suffering and offered salvation to all. But Christ not only preached, He lived out His message of deliverance from physical, social, and spiritual bondage. He was salvation in skin. Jesus walked His talk. He allowed the Holy Spirit to work through Him to relieve personal and social pain. Jesus accomplished His mission to banish suffering and sin because the Holy Spirit was continually at work in His life.

Being the God of the now, Jesus proclaimed to those in attendance, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” His dramatic announcement of this prophesy’s personal application through His ministry left all in attendance in the synagogue amazed, their eyes fixed on the Deliverer. They had a difficult time accepting His mission and messiahship.

Our Spirit-anointed ministries of love for others will surely testify of Christ’s power to give the gift of salvation. Today, the Spirit wants to fulfill Scripture through us.

Acts 1:8

In His ascension talk, Jesus offered His disciples divine power to share what they have seen, heard, and experienced as they developed their relationships with Him. Jesus had been anointed with the Holy Spirit at His baptism, which marked the commencement of His ministry. Now the disciples in a similar way were to receive the gift of the Spirit as they started their ministry without the Saviour. From then on, “Christ filled their thoughts; the advancement of His kingdom was their aim.”

God’s Spirit worked in a special way through the early believers. This special manifestation of the Holy Spirit we sometimes refer to as the beginning of the early or former rain. Through the presence of the Spirit, the followers of the ascended Saviour were able to testify with power, and great results were experienced.

In this, the close of time, a special outpouring of spiritual grace is promised to pave the way for Christ’s second coming. This spiritual shower we compare to the latter rain. It is God’s design that we pray for this spiritual refreshing, and “he will cause to come down . . . the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain” (Joel 2:23).

1 John 4:13-15

Being in a perfect union with God is knowing “that we live in him and he in us” (verse 13, NIV). This reciprocal relationship (John 14:20; 1 John 3:24; 4:13, 15) originates with the Holy Spirit making the first move. It is only as the Spirit im-

presses us that we realize that while we were still in sin Christ died for us. God's Spirit makes us conscious of the state of our relationship with Him. What a tremendous thought: Christ crucified for our sins and our salvation. The Holy Spirit prompts us to respond to His unfathomable love. It is the Spirit who enables us to testify of the saving grace of Christ in our lives. And it is the same Spirit who gives us the power to do God's will. Surely we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit in all our witnessing endeavors.

Rev. 18:1-5

In this age when no one needs to be confused about spiritual truth, when many are doing what they think or feel is spiritually right for them, God calls the citizens of His kingdom to speak up with a clarion voice. He wants us to be His Spirit-actuated witnesses, calling out to others, warning them of sin's deception that leads to destruction, and inviting them to accept Christ's way of salvation.

Since the Spirit is the means by which we are to receive power, why do we not

Someone once said that the great commission of Matthew 28:19, 20 should be called the "great omission."

hunger and thirst for the gift of the Spirit?

Daniel 12:3

The Holy Spirit is the agent of the Godhead who prompts us to share the gospel with others. Those who have insight into the things of God will eagerly spread the good news of God's grace. This wonderful end-time message needs to be proclaimed more broadly than it is already. The Holy Spirit is challenging all to accept the commission to go and tell the story of Christ's gracious offer of salvation. Have you responded to the call?

REACT

1. What reasons or excuses do I give for not witnessing?
2. In what specific ways can I better position myself to witness in my day-to-day life?
3. How do I respond to someone who says, "Living the Christian life [lifestyle witnessing] is enough of a testimony"?
4. How would I respond to a personal call for Christian service in a different location, by the denomination, even though I am not a denominational worker?
5. How have you seen the Holy Spirit active in one of your witnessing experiences?

** The Acts of the Apostles, p. 45.*

By Cyril Millett, youth pastor, College Park Seventh-day Adventist Church, Oshawa, Ontario.

Spirit In, Word Out

TESTIMONY

Key Text: 1 John 4:13-15

The great commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 is a literal command for us to “go . . . and teach all nations.” Many times we read this text, but for some reason we fail to acknowledge that it requires action on our part. The work of sharing the gospel is not to be left entirely to pastors and missionaries in remote corners of the world.

Knowing the magnitude of the job He has set before us, Christ does not leave us without the necessary training. In the working world, no employer expects his employees to do a job without proper training. The training we receive from God is of the highest caliber. He has promised that the Holy Spirit will be with us at all times. Our training does not end after two weeks or two months or even two years! The Trainer, the Holy Spirit, is with us at all times.

“God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, quickens all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God, develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfil

The work of sharing the gospel is not to be left entirely to pastors and missionaries.

the requirements of God.”¹

Unfortunately, we often limit the Spirit by underestimating what we can accomplish. *We* determine who wants to hear about God and who doesn't. *We* choose which of our talents we want to use for Him and which are useless to the cause. “The promise of the Spirit is not appreciated as it should be. Its fulfillment is not realized as it might be. . . . If they are connected with Christ, if the gifts of the Spirit are theirs, the poorest and most ignorant of His disciples will have a power that will tell upon hearts.”²

As in the days of the early Christians, the Spirit is still at work today, teaching, guiding, prompting, comforting those who will allow Him. (See Acts 2:43-47; 4:31-33.) If the Spirit is dwelling in you today, I challenge you to let the Word out.

REACT

1. Imagine yourself with no reservations about witnessing. What would you be like? What gifts would you utilize?
2. Do we as a church underestimate the Holy Spirit? If so, how? How might this be rectified?

1. *Gospel Workers*, p. 285.

2. *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 328.

By Marsha Birkett, a teacher with the Toronto (Ontario) Board of Education.

Corporate Mergers

EVIDENCE

Key Texts: Luke 4:16-21; Acts 1:8

When God created us, He chose to weld distinct units together to make a new whole. The individual parts became merged into one corporate entity (corporate: from Latin *corpus*, "body"). God joined the physical body, made of the same chemical elements as the ground, and the breath of life, the Spirit (from Latin *spirare*, "to breathe") to create a living soul (Gen. 2:7).

God also created us as a merger of male and female into one flesh (Gen. 1:26, 27; 2:24). On another level, we are merged into one body, Christ's church (Rom. 12:5). The last images of the Bible even speak of a marriage. It is a symbol of the coming merger between all humans and God (Rev. 21:2, 3).

God intended us to be whole physically, spiritually, emotionally, and socially! Few have experienced all that God designed for us. Sin has interfered with our mergers. Sin generated the unequal powers of men and women in our society (Gen. 3:16). It is the root of sexism, racism, and disunity. None of these is in God's plan (Acts 17:24-27; Gal. 3:28).

The sin schism affects us on the deepest level, the joining of body and breath to produce life. Without this union, the soul is spiritually and physically dead (Ezek. 18:4). Redemption allows the restoration of our unions. When redeemed we can

God intended us to be whole physically, spiritually, emotionally, and socially!

carry out the corporate mergers that God planned for us.

Christ's words in Luke 4:18 proclaim His complete merger with the divine Spirit. The life and power in that union make it possible for Him to teach us, to heal us physically, and even to help us in our mergers. He told us that we might achieve our reunion with the divine Spirit (John 10:10; 14, 16, 17). After His resurrection, He returned to His disciples, physically providing them with the divine Spirit (John 20:22). He then promised them that more Spirit and therefore more power was to come (Acts 1:8).

Sin is at the root of all our broken relationships and failed mergers. Our redemption and reunion with the divine Spirit provide a way out. That is the gospel. That is good news!

REACT

1. What mergers has God intended for you to achieve? How do you know?
2. What mergers should the church encourage? How?

By Roger R. Blenman, a public high-school teacher from Ajax, Ontario.

Not I, but the Spirit in Me

HOW-TO

Key Text: Acts 1:8

I attended a public university with an enrollment of about 40,000. During my four years there, I met fewer than 10 people who were openly Christians. I didn't do a lot of witnessing either. In fact, I generally steered away from the topic of religion. I thought that if I lived according to my own standards, people would see something different about me and ask why; then I would witness. I didn't witness much. Since then, I've learned a few things:

1. You can't witness without the Spirit. Witnessing is sharing what Christ is doing in your life with others. If Christ isn't in your life, what do you have to share? In university, the only advantage I had over my classmates was that I could take a 24-hour period off from studying without feeling guilty. Christ didn't have any role in my day-to-day life; I didn't have a daily relationship with Him. I had nothing to share. I couldn't have been a true witness even if I had tried. Christ instructed His followers to be witnesses in Acts 1:8. The procedure is very clear. First, you must receive the Holy Spirit. Then and only then you will receive the

Whenever I find a great restaurant, I have to tell just about everyone I know.

power to witness. Without the Spirit, there is no power.

2. Jesus provides the incentive to witness. They say that the best advertisement is a satisfied customer. I'm a classic example of that. Whenever I find an excellent product or a great restaurant, I have to tell just about everyone I know. I want them to be able to share in my discovery. Witnessing is the same way. When we have our own daily personal relationship with Jesus, we are able to see Him working in our lives, and we just can't remain silent.

3. Witnessing is a natural expression of the Holy Spirit working in us. If the thought of witnessing makes you cringe, maybe it is time to change your concept of witnessing. God doesn't want you to represent Him by doing something you're uncomfortable with or that goes against your personal style. Each of us has our own unique way of letting God's love shine through us, and it is by doing what comes naturally.

God is waiting to give each of us the power of the Holy Spirit, so that we may be witnesses to those around us; we just need to open our hearts to Him.

REACT

1. How can you know whether you have the Spirit or not? What are the signs that God is working in your life?

2. What is happening in your spiritual life that you just *have* to share?

3. What, if anything, about witnessing makes you uncomfortable? What could you do that would be more natural for you?

By Eileen Dahl, a senior chemistry major at York University, Toronto, Ontario.

Random Acts of Kindness

OPINION

Key Text: Acts 1:8; 2:42-47

During the pastoral prayer, I became aware that the church member to my left was crying. The prayer and tears continued while I debated with myself what to do. Should I reach out and let her know I empathized? Would my offer of comfort be rejected? Would she be embarrassed? Before reaching a decision, the prayer ended, and an opportunity to witness was lost.

This incident reminded me of the times the Holy Spirit impressed me to send an encouraging note, speak a friendly word, apologize, or make a phone call. I did not act on these promptings, because of fear. Then something happens, and I wish I had followed through; I chide myself for not responding, or I resolve to do so next time.

It is not of our own efforts or good intentions that we witness, but through the gift of the Holy Spirit, who compels us to care and to share regardless of our own feelings or desires. Witnessing is usually directed to people who we believe do not know of God's love or His plan of salvation. But how dare we witness to the "world" when we are afraid to witness to a fellow believer? Witnessing by the Spirit begins

During the pastoral prayer, I became aware that the church member to my left was crying.

in the family, and through experience we gain confidence to share with others.

It's easy to donate to the food bank or go on a two-week mission trip; it's difficult to ask the name of the member who sits next to you in the pew each week. For our witness to be effective, however, we must replace the need for self-preservation with the risk of vulnerability. Witnessing in the church is as much an imperative as the commission to go elsewhere.

"God's voice is heard . . . through the appeals of His Holy Spirit, making impressions upon the heart." As these impressions come and as they are acted upon, our witness becomes more credible and acts of kindness less random because they are the result of the Holy Spirit's promptings and not of an occasional feeling to do good. 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts' " (Heb. 4:7, NIV).

REACT

1. What role does gender and racial difference play in hindering or enhancing one's ability to witness?
2. How can our churches become safe environments in which members share needs and are sure these needs will be met?
3. List the ways in which you can witness to church members and to the larger community.

* *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 512.

By Paulette A. McLean, teacher-librarian, Crawford Adventist Academy, Toronto, Ontario.

Next Quarter's Lessons

Incarnation of Grace

If you have not yet received a copy of *CQ* for fourth quarter 1995, here is a summary of the first two lessons:

Lesson 1: The Time for Grace

Scripture: Rom. 3:9-18; 5:15-21; Heb. 4:14-16; John 1:14-17

Theme: Considering all the New Testament instances of the term *grace*, we can define it as God's infinite love for lost humanity and all that His love leads Him to do for our salvation. God's grace freely gives us what we are unable to provide for ourselves.

Lesson 2: A Messiah Is Promised (Part 1)

Scripture: 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Isa. 9:2-7; 11:1-5; 40:3-5; 42:1-4

Theme: When the time had come for the Messiah to arrive, Isaiah's prophecies confirmed that Jesus was the fulfillment of the sinner's hope.

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Please take the time to answer the following questions for us. In this way we hope to get better acquainted with the interests of CQ's readers. Thank you.

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8 12 13 14 15 16 17 18

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More Than Mountains

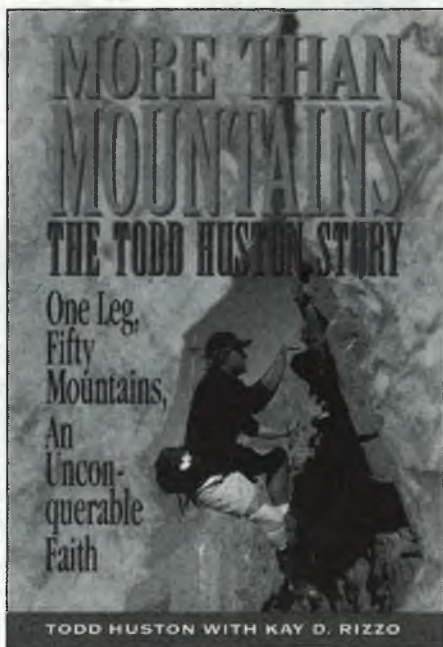
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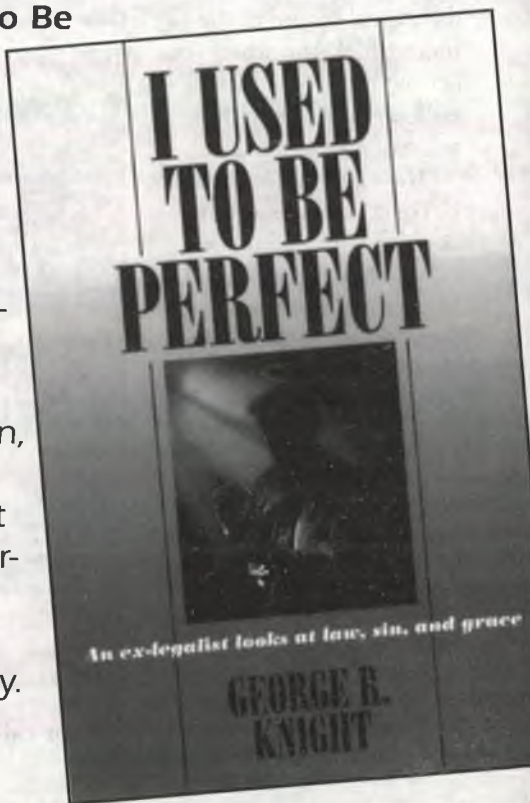
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Conquering the Dragon Within

by Marvin Moore

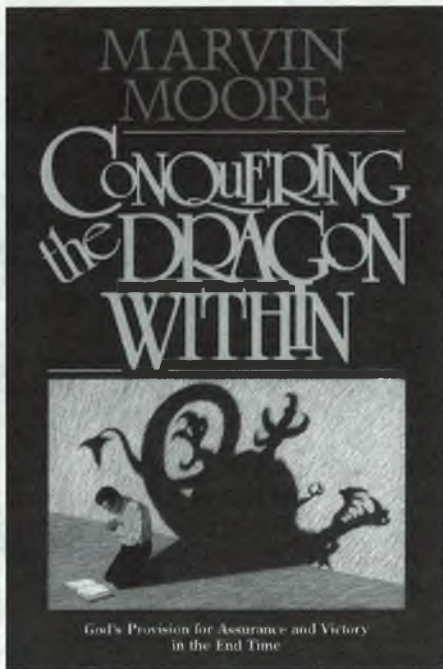
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An escape from a world of darkness

DARK REFUGE

by Andy Demsky

As Anita lay trapped in the darkness of the shed, her mind raced over the events of the past several years. What had happened? Where did she go wrong? Terrance Malle, the charismatic cult leader, had lured her into his world, and now her life was at stake.

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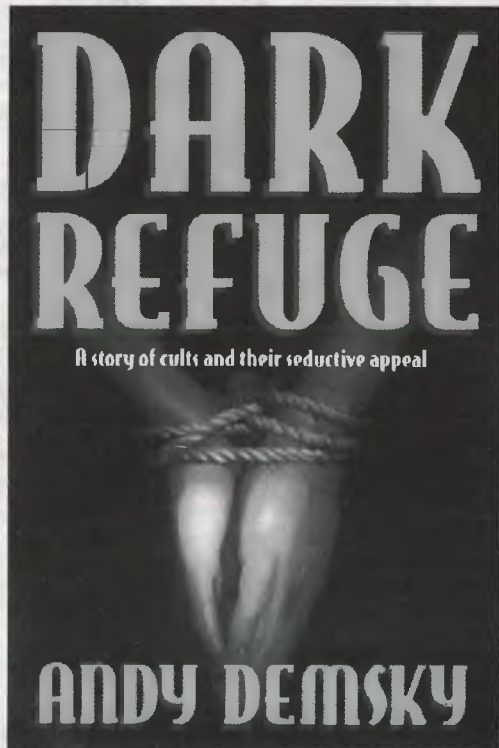
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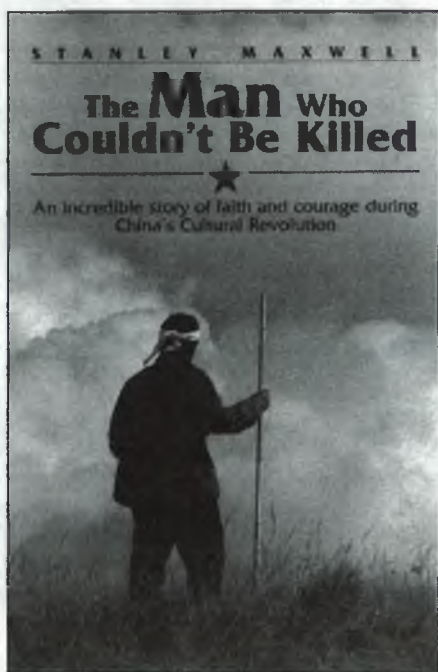
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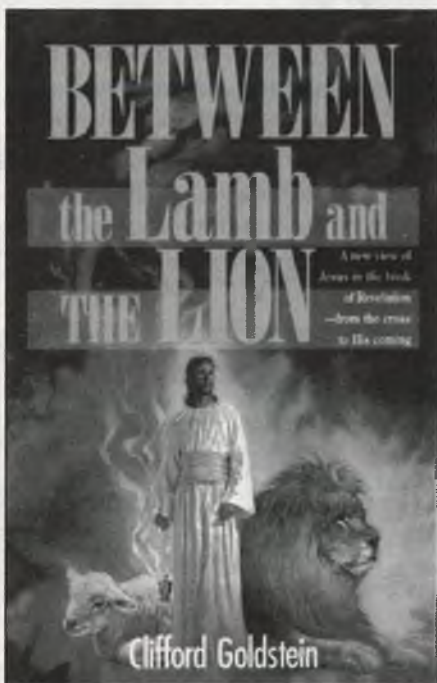
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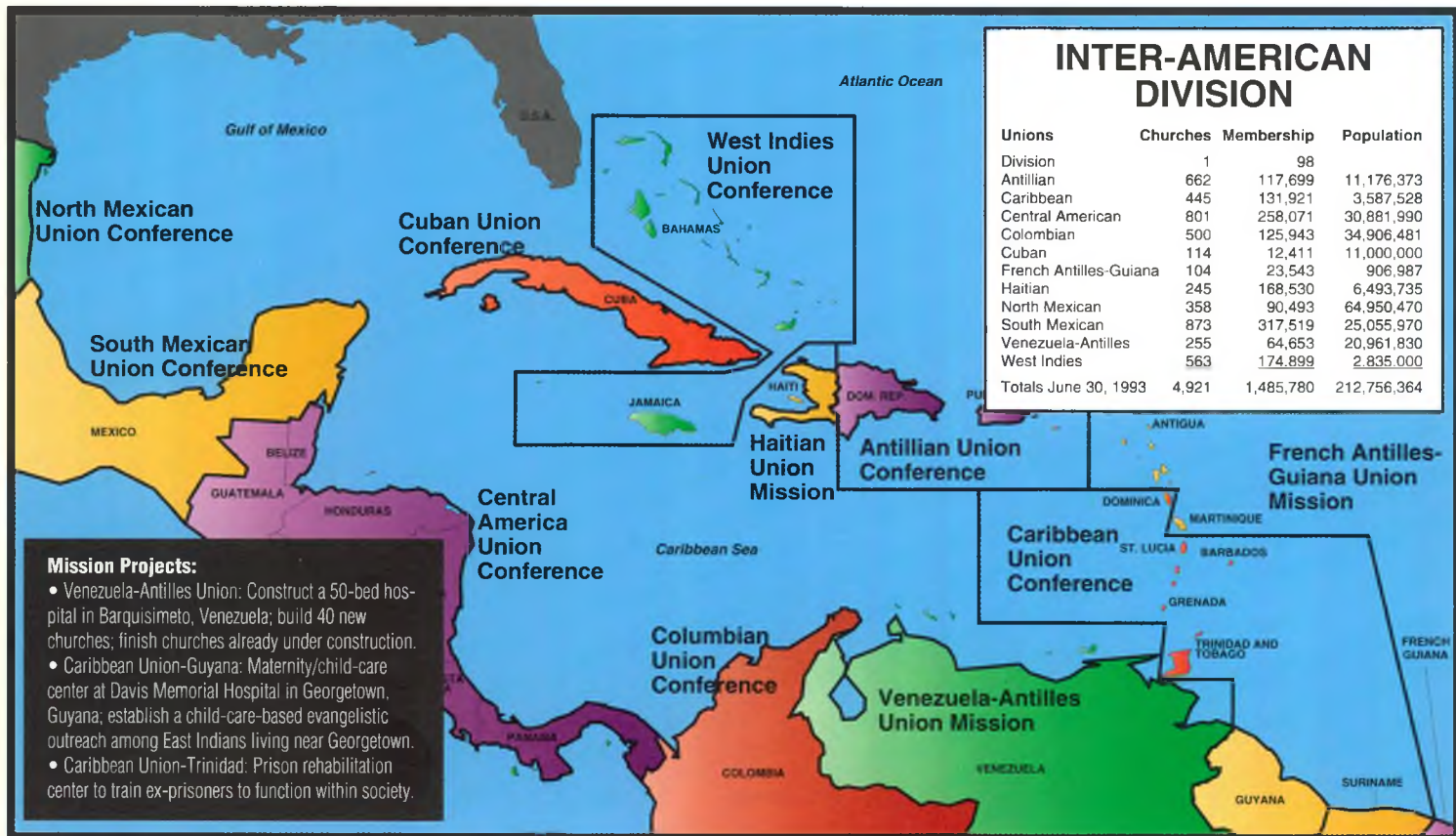
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INTER-AMERICAN DIVISION

Unions	Churches	Membership	Population
Division	1	98	
Antillian	662	117,699	11,176,373
Caribbean	445	131,921	3,587,528
Central American	801	258,071	30,881,990
Colombian	500	125,943	34,906,481
Cuban	114	12,411	11,000,000
French Antilles-Guiana	104	23,543	906,987
Haitian	245	168,530	6,493,735
North Mexican	358	90,493	64,950,470
South Mexican	873	317,519	25,055,970
Venezuela-Antilles	255	64,653	20,961,830
West Indies	563	<u>174,899</u>	<u>2,835,000</u>
Totals June 30, 1993	4,921	1,485,780	212,756,364

Mission Projects:

- Venezuela-Antilles Union: Construct a 50-bed hospital in Barquisimeto, Venezuela; build 40 new churches; finish churches already under construction.
- Caribbean Union-Guyana: Maternity/child-care center at Davis Memorial Hospital in Georgetown, Guyana; establish a child-care-based evangelistic outreach among East Indians living near Georgetown.
- Caribbean Union-Trinidad: Prison rehabilitation center to train ex-prisoners to function within society.