

# Elders Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Vol. 4 No. 3

HOLY BIBLE

*“Whosoever believes and*

***Baptized***

*Will be saved...” Mark 16:16*

# Elder's Digest

NUMBER SEVENTEEN

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## Don't Rush People Into Baptism

Joel Sarli



**R**ecently urgent inquiries have been reaching us from evangelists, pastors, and church leaders to whether we believe in and foster quick baptisms, and the question is asked: "When should a person be baptized?"

"The General Conference has no plan to rush people into baptism." These words represent clearly the view of the Ministerial Association about baptism and numerical growth to the world field. They present a fact that deserves serious consideration.

It is our firm belief that as soon as a person is truly ready for baptism—no sooner, no later—he should be baptized. This, we believe, is in full harmony with the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy. Baptism signifies death to sin and a new life in Christ. It is the door to the church. We do not baptize people until they give evidence that they are prepared to enter into complete fellowship with Christ and His church.

A distinct warning against the danger of meaningless church membership is presented in many statements in the Bible and the messages of the messenger of the Lord.

In the Special Section of this issue, we present some suggestions on how to be balanced in this question of when to baptize.

I still have fresh in my mind what happened to a young pastor some time ago. The administration was so enthusiastic about numbers that they set very high goals and pushed pastors and elders to reach them. Because of the pressure of the numbers and the system of evaluating, this young minister used a wrong device to fulfill the request of the administration—he simply created names and presented them to the administration as real baptized people in his congregations.

It is not right to do this, nor is it right to rush to baptize just to increase the number of membership with people who are not ready to be belong to the kingdom of God.

We firmly believe that only when the Church is composed of pure, unselfish members, can it fulfill God's purpose. Read this quotation for the inspired pen: "Too much hasty work is done in adding names to the church roll. Serious defects are seen in the characters of some who join the church. Those who admit them say, We will first get them into the church, and then reform them. But this is a mistake. The very first work to be done is the work of reform. Pray with them, talk with them, but do not allow them to unite with God's people in church relationship until they give decided evidence that the Spirit of God is working on their hearts"—*Review and Herald*, May 21, 1901. **E**



### Elder's Digest

A resource for the local church elder

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# Elder's Digest Statement of Mission

# Elder's Digest—Window for Local Church Elder

JAMES A. CRESS

**E**lder's Digest is an international journal mainly for local church elders, published quarterly by the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

As the church experiences rapid growth around the world, increasingly heavy burdens of leadership rest upon local elders. This is particularly true in multi-church districts. The objective of *Elder's Digest* is to help, train, and support local church elders as they attempt to fulfill the gospel commission by nurturing their members and reaching out to their communities. It will do this by:

1. Addressing the elder's spiritual, professional, mental, physical, and social needs.
2. Reviewing the great Bible themes of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, showing how each one centers on the Lord Jesus.
3. Providing resources that will assist in giving strong administrative leadership in their congregations.
4. Giving assistance that will strengthen their preaching skills. This will include sample sermons, outlines, illustrations and ideas for preaching in the journal.
5. Providing instruction that will assist in the nurture of believers and new interests.
6. Encouraging leadership and participation in evangelism on the part of the elders.
7. Providing materials that will assist elders in supporting the pastor they serve.
8. Maintaining a simple writing style in the journal.
9. Including articles from the Spirit of Prophecy relating to the areas listed above.

*Elder's Digest* will be designed to meet the needs of all elders, but specially those serving in small congregations in multi-church districts.

*Elder's Digest* will join *Ministry* in being a prophetic voice calling the church to be faithful to the biblical principle that constitute Adventist truth, ideals, and values.

*Elder's Digest* will encourage elders continually to grow stronger in Christ that they may model faith as they encourage spiritual development in the flocks they serve as undershepherds. **E**

**T**he cover for the inaugural issue of *Elder's Digest* aptly depicted our objectives: illumination, insight, access, spirituality, blessings, and mission.

## WINDOWS PROVIDE ILLUMINATION—THEY LET IN LIGHT

One of our primary objectives is to focus light on the work and ministry of the local church elder. *Elder's Digest* features the best available resources, discusses effective methodologies, and showcases practical, easy-to-use ideas that will promote increasing proficiency for lay leaders.

## WINDOWS PROVIDE INSIGHT—A VIEW OF OTHERS

Windows allow us to see how others deal with their challenges and opportunities. *Elder's Digest* permits elders to view other church leaders ministering in their unique settings. If you have wondered how to face the challenges of a city, you will benefit from reading about others who minister in an urban setting. If you lead a new congregation with plenty of energy but few resources, you will appreciate seeing how other churches cope with limited funds.

## WINDOWS ALLOW ACCESS—WHEN OPENED THEY LET IN FRESH BREEZES

In addition to introducing you to resources and ideas, *Elder's Digest* provides tools you can use right now. Each issue will contain at least one sermon you can preach, plus help in preparing your own sermons.

## WINDOWS SYMBOLIZE SPIRITUALITY—REMEMBER DANIEL

Praying at his open window, Daniel set an example of spirituality for his own people and those who conspired against him. It might have been more convenient to shut the window and hide his convictions, but Daniel wanted all to know of his belief in God. This attitude of openly worshiping God—even at potential personal risk—models leadership at its finest. As a spiritual leader, you find spiritual food for your own growth that will enable you to effectively invite others to follow Christ.

*Concluded on page 22*

# Building the Spiritual Life of the Church

Stanley S. Will

**W**e all long to be more successful soul-winners and to baptize scores and hundreds of people each year. Some of our men have experienced the joy of large baptisms, but not all of us have the gift of continuous public evangelism. "When He ascended up on high . . . and gave gifts unto men . . . He gave some, apostles; and some, pastors and teachers" (Eph. 4:8-11). While those with the gift of evangelism are baptizing men and women in large numbers, those who have the gift of pastoring can also do a large work in baptizing people and saving those already in the church. The faithful elder who leads his flock into a deeper consecration is helping to save souls that have been won through the years and is doing as great a work as the evangelist who baptizes large numbers.

How can one build the spiritual life of the church? There are many angles, but I have singled out three that to me are paramount. They are: (1) the elder's experience, (2) the elder's attitude, and (3) the methods used to build the spiritual life of the church.

## THE ELDER'S EXPERIENCE

The elder must be a man of God. His experience must be genuine and consistent, and in every circumstance he must exemplify the life of the Master. He must "live in conscious, hourly communion with God through prayer and a study of His word. . . . He must plead with God to strengthen and fortify him for duty and trial" (*Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 362, 363).

The conduct of the elder, both in private and public, must always be a credit to the Lord and the cause he represents. He must be an example in word and deed, for his members are watching him and will be influenced by his example. His relationship with God will cause them to either to feel their own need or to feel satisfied with their spiritual condition.

We must first have a genuine experience in order to build the spiritual life in our churches. For a long time the following words have been in view on the top of my

desk, and what a challenge they have been:

"The people will seldom rise higher than their spiritual leader. A world-loving spirit in him has a tremendous influence upon others. The people make his deficiencies an excuse to cover their own world-loving spirit. . . . They should manifest in undying love for souls and the same devotion to the cause which they desire to see in the people" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 342).

## THE ELDER'S ATTITUDE

The elder's attitude must be that of love for Jesus and His people. "Without the love of Jesus in the heart, the work of the Christian minister will prove a failure" (*Ibid.*, p. 183). Speaking about pastors, E. G. White says, "Pastors are needed . . . who cherish a strong unselfish love for those for whom they labor" (*Ibid.*, p. 185). The same is true about elders. The love of Jesus consistently expressed toward the people will soften their hearts.

The heart of the elder must burn with love for sinners. That was the feeling of the apostle Paul and evidently was the qualification that gave him success in winning souls. "Paul's heart burned with a love for sinners, and he put all his energies into the work of soul-winning. There never lived a more self-denying, persevering worker" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p. 367). Hear him express his feeling as recorded in Romans 9:2, 3: "I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren." That is real love!

Having such a degree of love, the elder is filled with grief and anxiety when the sheep go astray. He immediately climbs the steepest heights and goes to the every edge of the precipice, at the risk of his own life, to find the lost sheep. And when the sheep are found, he does not scold or reprimand it, but in love he pleads for it to return to the fold. Yes, with such love he will "tax his resources to the utmost" (*Ibid.*, p. 370).

"Only through sympathy, faith, and love can men be reached and uplifted" (*Education*, p. 78). Of Christ we

read, "Had it not been for the sweet, sympathetic spirit that shone out of every look and word, he would not have attracted the large congregations that He did" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 254). Hearts are won through sympathy.

#### METHODS OF BUILDING SPIRITUAL LIFE

The shepherd elder, being a man of God and having a real love for his sheep, will do everything possible to stimulate a deeper spiritual experience in their lives. And how needful it is that our people have more of a living experience with the living Christ! They will never be able to endure the trials ahead if they fail now to grow into that richer, deeper, daily, constant experience with the living God.

In the year 1893 the following words were written in the *General Conference Bulletin*, pp. 132, 133: "It is a solemn statement that I make to the church, that not one in twenty whose names are registered upon the church books are prepared to close their earthy history. . . . They are professedly serving God, but they are more earnestly serving mammon." Not five out of one hundred were ready to close their earthy history at that time. Could that be true today in our church? If so, what a challenge for elders and ministers to build a more spiritual membership! "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work" (*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887).

The pastor and elders must—in sermon, in personal contact, and in missionary work—point the people to Christ. They must help them to turn their eyes upon Jesus and to put full trust in him, to set their "affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:2). As John the Baptist pointed his disciples to the Lamb of God saying, "Behold the Lamb of God," and "they followed Jesus," so we must point the people to Jesus and help them to see Him, and thus have a living, growing connection with Him.

After they have been directed to the Son of God and have begun to follow Him, their first impulse is to work for others as did Simon Peter and Philip. But even though this is the desire of the newly converted Christian, he often fails to so act, simply because he does not know how to work for others. Therefore, it is the duty of the minister to train the new ones to work.

"Every one who is added to the ranks by conversion is to be assigned his post of duty" (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, 9. 30).

"The greatest help that can be given our people is to teach them to work for God, and to depend on Him" (*Ibid.*, p. 19).

"The best help that we can give the members of our churches is not sermonizing, but planning work for them. Give each one something to do for others" (*Ibid.*,

vol. 9, p. 82).

Why is this the best work we can do for our people? It is simply because an active Christian seldom backslides. By helping others, he is constantly helping himself. He feels his need and continues to grow instead of constantly becoming a religious dwarf. "Many, many are . . . doing nothing, shunning responsibilities, and as the result they are religious dwarfs" (*Review and Herald*, May 22, 1888). A dwarf has little strength. A spiritual dwarf will not have enough strength to overcome temptation. Therefore we must lead the people into active missionary work, so that they will continue to grow spiritually and be able to resist temptation.

Sometimes one faces trouble within the church, and the spirituality of the members is low. What has caused the trouble, and what must the minister do to lead the people into a deeper consecration? The trouble is caused by those "who are not engaged in this unselfish labor who have a sickly experience . . . and cannot go back to the world, and so they hang on the skirts of Zion, having petty jealousies, envying, disappointments, and remorse. They are full of fault-finding and feed upon the mistakes and errors of their brethren. They have only a hopeless, faithless, sunless experience in their religious life" (*Ibid.*, Sept. 2, 1890).

Where trouble arises because some are inactive, what should the minister do? "In laboring where there are already some in the faith, we should first seek not so much to convert unbelievers as to train the church-members for acceptable cooperation. Let him labor for them individually, endeavoring to arouse them to seek for a deeper experience themselves, and to work for others" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 196).

The spiritual leader's influence is far more effective when he goes into the homes and works with the people individually. He can personally direct them to the Lamb of God and lead them into a living experience. Individuals are encouraged to live a better life as they receive personal attention from the spiritual leader.

In building the spiritual life of the church, the elder will, so far as possible, permit no gossip about the members. He will be the shepherd of the whole flock and treat them all alike.

It is a noble and solemn work to be an elder. A heavy responsibility rests upon such a person. There is a mighty challenge for him in soul-winning and soul-saving. May God help us lead the people into a deeper spiritual experience, so that they will be able to stand in the days to come. **E**

*Stanley S. Will, Charleston, South Carolina*

# Caring Eldership for the Aged

James D. Wang

**N**ever before has the United States had so many elderly citizens who are “too old to work and too young to die.” Caring for their spiritual needs constitutes an important and rewarding aspect of the pastoral ministry.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Census there are almost 21 million persons in the United States 65 years of age and older. The steadily increasing life expectancy of our population—up from 48 years in 1900 to 69.8 years in 1956—has resulted in an ever-enlarging number of older patients in hospitals, nursing homes, and homes for the aged.<sup>1</sup>

## **MAINTAIN CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

The Good Shepherd demonstrated pastoral care for His sheep.<sup>2</sup> The twenty-third psalm provides an excellent portrayal of His pastoral work. His keen awareness of human needs made Him sensitive to the unspoken longings of every heart.

The basic needs of aged church members must be adequately met with spiritual insight and an understanding of the special problems of the aged. The following suggestions are designed to strengthen a pastoral-care program for the aged.

## **SEEK OUT AGED CHURCH MEMBERS**

Often names of aged or sick members appear on church records but their whereabouts are unknown. For various reasons these members may have been transferred from home to home or from hospital to hospital. Because of mental confusion and deterioration, they may not be able to recall the name of their pastor or to correctly give the name of their denomination. On the face sheet of the medical record the term *Protestant or Christian* may be used. It is not uncommon to find a blank space.

A certain lay member learned that John W. was a Seventh-day Adventist living in a county nursing home and that his mother, also a Seventh-day Adventist, was hospitalized in a state institution in another county. Their names were not found on the church books, nor was there any record that they had been disfellowshipped. The mother, although very forgetful, maintained a good Christian spirit. The son, who was retired from his work as a cook, knew of no action taken by the church against him or his mother. They had simply been forgotten. When asked about this mother and son, some elderly members of the church said, “We thought they had died many years ago.”

The names of elderly members should never be removed from the church books unless they are really spiritually or physically dead. Sometimes aged members who are unable to attend services regularly or to give offerings may request to have their names removed because they feel rejected or unwanted. The elder should pray for wisdom from Heaven in order to understand the inner motives behind such a request. It may be a cry for help or an unconscious appeal for attention.

## **BRING ELDERLY PEOPLE INTO THE REMNANT CHURCH**

Nursing homes, homes for the aged, geriatric hospitals, and state institutions comprise a new field in which our elders can win souls for Christ. The elder can usually get permission to conduct prayer meetings, Bible study classes, group singing, or Christian worship in these institutions. Such activities can be a great benefit to all. It is not unlikely that some of the elderly people may make their decision to accept Jesus as their personal Savior and follow Him in obedience.

The elder must know how to prepare spiritual food for elderly non-Adventist in a simple but appealing manner.

As an ordained minister and a clinical psychologist, I worked in this field for many years in cooperation with clergymen and witnessed baptisms into the remnant church. It is so gratifying to hear of baptisms from this new field.

One day a 79-year-old woman in a mental institution came to me and said, "I want the Lord to forgive me because I have not kept the Sabbath for so many years." When I asked how she knew so much about the present truth, she responded, "I finished the Bible correspondence course that you enrolled me in." She was soon baptized.

Seventy-one years ago the pen of inspiration wrote: "It is wonderful how many aged people the workers find who need but little labor to lead them to receive the truth, Sabbath and all."<sup>3</sup>

### **RESPECT RETIRED WORKERS AND AGED MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH**

Most elderly people suffer from fear, insecurity, and inferiority. In their dependency they may cling to the elder and pastor as a dependent child to a supporting parent. The old, the disabled, and the feeble require the same warm, emotional relationship as any other person. Therefore, the elder or pastor should provide a church atmosphere as nearly like family life as possible. To address an elderly person as "uncle," "aunt," "grandpa," or "grandma," in a respectful manner will help him to feel that he belongs. His past achievement for God in soul-winning activities may be mentioned briefly in an appropriate way. Once or twice a year, special programs may be given to honor retired workers.<sup>4</sup>

Our senior church members should be visited regularly. When they feel lonely or nostalgic, it is the pastor's duty to help them review the blessings that our merciful Father has bestowed upon them.

### **ASSIST AGED MEMBERS TO OBEY THE LAWS OF HEALTH**

Some elderly people become anxious over unknown dangers. Accelerated heartbeat, flushing, trembling, a lump in the throat, sweating, and tight muscles may accompany this nameless dread. When they are subject to continuous anxiety they cannot get worries off their minds. They may repeat actions, or they may avoid places and people. Loss of sleep, appetite, and energy, and lack of confidence in themselves are typical symptoms. If the highly sensitive needs of the deeply depressed person are not met, he may consider or attempt suicide.

I knew an elderly church member whose husband had been a wonderful local elder for many years. When her

husband died she became so severely depressed that she almost lost her faith in God, in prayer, and in the Advent hope. Another veteran leader of our denomination experienced depression at the death of his wife. Late in life it takes a long time to recover from such traumatic experiences.

Satan takes advantage of the aged person who may lack mental strength, causing him to listen to the voice of a stranger. He may develop some "new light" and tend to accept some "new ideas" that may compensate for his spiritual deficiency. The pastor must be alert to check the tide of "old wives' fables" or dreams.<sup>5</sup>

Temperance in living habits ensures a happy and healthy life. The elder or pastor should draw upon the instructions in *Counsels on Health*, *Counsels on Diet and Foods*, *The Ministry of Healing*, and *Medical Ministry* so that he can encourage our elderly members to eat the right kinds of food. They need to have an adequate intake of protein, minerals, and vitamins, and to avoid the overuse of sugar, fat, white flour, or anything that is not simple, fresh, natural.

### **INTEGRATE SENIOR MEMBERS IN CHURCH ACTIVITIES**

Spiritual growth and development can be realized best through active participation in church services. Factors to consider include their discomfort in sitting still on hard pews for two hours, steps, distance to washroom or drinking fountain, temperature fluctuation, and position for prayer. Many come to fear ceremonial worship in a large church because they have some hidden geriatric problems that most of the younger people are not aware of.

Elderly members need a good audience and more opportunities to express their faith. They want to witness for their Lord. Their frequent and proper expression of faith will greatly enrich their spiritual life. Some may be able to participate in Ingathering work, help in a branch Sabbath school, give Bible studies, and even enter into new-field work.

### **ENLIST THE COOPERATION OF THE ELDERLY**

Help our aged members to be flexible in attitude and cooperative in spirit.

Elderly persons are characteristically conservative and resistant to change, whether of routine, arrangement, manners, morals, or opinions. These tendencies are not to be interpreted as symptomatic of a repressed antisocial attitude; they may be symptoms of physical decline.

Some of the elderly members may think that the content of the sermon preached or some of the church

policies adopted are not in harmony with the principles of the church. They can be quite critical in their attitude.<sup>6</sup> The sympathetic pastor who can explain new things clearly and gradually is able to remove much misunderstanding. In most cases the differences are found in semantics rather than in doctrine and inner conviction.

### **INFLUENCE ELDERLY PEOPLE IN THE CHURCH TO DEPOSIT THEIR MONEY IN THE BANK OF HEAVEN**

One of the personality characteristics of the aged is their strong tendency to hoard material things.<sup>7</sup> Feeling losses keenly, they desire to hold on to whatever they possess. But they should be reminded how to be unselfish and generous.

The local conference has appointed a special agency to provide legal advice on making I out wills and fulfilling Christian stewardship responsibilities. Much instruction along these lines has been clearly given through the Spirit of Prophecy writings. After studying this instruction, the elder or pastor, in cooperation with the conference stewardship secretary, should approach the elderly members about their duty in the disposition of means and property.<sup>8</sup> Their children or close relatives may be invited to join in this confidential circle for consultation and planning. Much prayer is needed in dealing with this important business of our heavenly Father.

### **ENCOURAGE AGED CHRISTIANS TO MAINTAIN PURITY AND HOLINESS**

In old age, sexual striving and excesses may become a source of physical sickness or psychoneurotic disorders.

An old and retired minister suddenly fell into sin with his "maidservant." A conference worker requested that he be disfellowshipped because of an affair with his office secretary. An aged theologian whose mind was preoccupied with sex began to molest a teenage girl to satisfy his psychosexual curiosity. Such tragedies can be prevented if our pastors and elders are faithful watchmen, warning our elderly members, as well as workers, before they fall into the trap of Satan. How to help our senior Christians to be pure in heart in these last days presents a severe but challenging problem.<sup>9</sup>

In principle, it is not best to mix old men and women together. When they are in a mixed group, close supervision must be provided. They should not read fiction. Their conversation must be noble and clean. Instead of sexual materials preoccupying their minds, they must have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts, helping them to continue the work of sanctification

begun in their younger years. The last few years may be more important than the first fifty or sixty years in the pursuit of holiness.

When one of these older ones falls into sin we may recall these words from the pen of inspiration." Aged men, once honored of God, may have defiled their souls, sacrificing virtue on the altar of lust; but if they repent, sacrificing virtue on the altar of lust; but if they repent, forsake, and turn to God, there is still hope for them."<sup>10</sup> Thank God for His mercy and for this reassurance and promise.

### **GET ELDERLY FOLLOWERS READY TO SLEEP IN CHRIST WITH PEACE AND HOPE**

Elderly people suffer from geriatric diseases, general pain and discomfort, and a distinctly ambivalent feeling toward death. They often want die, believing they have nothing live for. They wish for cessation their physical and mental stresses, but when they feel the hour near, they become disturbed and afraid. They cling to others and want someone near at all times.

The precious promises found in Psalm 23, John 14:1-3, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18, and John 3:16 should be repeated often. Pray with the sick, using simple sincere language as a small child talking to his father. Recount the blessings that the Lord has showered upon him in the past. Review with him how he has spent the best portion of his life for the kingdom of God. Never fail to give him opportunity to praise the name of the Lord and to express his trust in His glorious return.

The visit should be brief and warm. Let the elderly sick feel the comfort and hope that come from the Great Physician and Savior through your facial and vocal expression. How you greet him or how you shake hands with him as you say good-by may convey to him more reassurance than you can express otherwise. Divine touch can reach him through the human hand that is sanctified with the love of God.

These nine areas demonstrate how important pastoral care is to the elderly. A conscientious pastor cares for his sheep and is willing to die for them. When he sees a wolf coming he acts quickly to drive the wolf away. He listens only to the voice of the Good Shepherd and keeps watch over the flock that the Holy Spirit has placed his charge. He is rewarded being able to bring his sheep safely into the fold. **E**

#### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> K. Wolfe, *The Biological, Sociological, and Psychological Aspects of Aging* (Springfield, Ill.: Charles C. Thomas, 1959), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> John 10:11-18; Eze. 34:11-16.

<sup>3</sup> *Evangelism*, pp. 446, 447.

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# The High Price of Eldership

John Oss

**M**any who aspire to positions of leadership in the church are unwilling to pay the full price entailed in this responsibility. Every leader in the Advent Movement should know the necessary qualifications for successful leadership and be willing to live up to the high principles that are involved.

The movements of church leaders are carefully watched; and well they might be, for by accepting a position of responsibility in God's great cause, an individual has dedicated his life to uphold the high ideals and principles for which this message stands. Any leader who by word or action or any inconsistency belittles his sacred trust and calling not only brings reproach upon himself but upon the cause which he had espoused.

In the language of the apostle Paul to Timothy, he should be an "example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12). Any inconsistency on the part of a leader will easily be detected, and his leadership will lose its force and power.

An elder as leader must be strict with himself, even to a point that may at times seem to border on the extreme, in order not to offend the ultraconservative—but withal earnest and self-sacrificing—believers in the Advent faith. It is far better to err on the side of conservatism than to be so liberal that one loses the confidence of many well-meaning people. Not for a moment and under no circumstances can an elder relax his vigilance or cease to maintain the high standards of his sacred calling.

If an elder takes the attitude that because he is leader he may do certain things that he would not be willing to allow others to do, he undermines his leadership, and will not be able to bring about disciplinary action if and when this is necessary. Under no circumstances should he take unto himself privileges that he would not be willing to give to those who follow his leadership. He must be careful and honest in his expenditures and

render an exact report of money spent, the same as he requires of any member under his direction.

We believe that an elder, as well as other members should have a modest home, but a leader who multiplies houses and lands and speculates in property and collects high rentals and shows that the focus of his life is on material possessions definitely needs to reconsider his call to leadership. How can he encourage people to sacrifice for the cause and prepare as they should for Christ's second coming if he does these things? No amount of talking and sermonizing will undo the influence of a leader who is grasping and who is selfishly accumulating an unusual amount of things of this world. Every elder should himself actually be what he urges the people to become.

Gathering a large number of relatives and special friends about one is a definite mark of weak leadership. If a leader has to be surrounded with "yes-men" to maintain his position, he shows thereby that he lacks one of the greatest qualifications of successful leadership—the confidence and support of the people he is to lead. We believe this to be of utmost importance. Elders should be called to that position because of their consecration and ability. Friendship and kinship should not become a factor in such moves.

I once heard a conference president who had a brother-in-law in his conference say that this worker caused him much concern. On one hand, he had people talking about how he favored his relative, and on the other hand, his brother-in-law and family often felt that they did not get a square deal. How much better it is for a leader to be in a position where he can always act as he feels he should under the circumstances. As far as possible, help the nominating committee choose different people in your own congregation or department. This will build for strength, confidence, and goodwill.

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# Reaching the Hearts of Youth

Lawrence A. Skinner

A lecturer was speaking before an audience of parents and children and placed various-sized candles on the long table before him. Some were short, some long, some partly burned, some never used.

"The candles represent the various members of the family," said the speaker, "from the tiny newborn child to the oldest grandfather. Can any of you guess who is represented by this very short candle?"

"I know," volunteered a girl near the front, "that is the baby of the family."

"No," replied the lecturer, "try again." After some silence another voice was heard. "That's my grandmother. She's ninety-one-years old."

"What makes you think this short candle represents your grandmother?"

"Because she's almost all burned out."

"Right!" beamed the instructor. "Now who can be represented by this tall candle which is absolutely new?"

"That must be my new baby brother, Tim. He was born last Saturday. He hasn't begun to shine yet."

Yes, how much like tall, unused candles are the youth in our churches. Their life expectancy makes them so very valuable. They are making decisions which determine destiny. They are candidates to follow the leader who offers the most attractive and permanent future. Their courageous, daring spirit is undaunted before obstacles or opposition. When consecrated to God their exclusively youthful qualities produce sturdy soldiers for Christ. What a privilege it is to enlist and train these potential warriors for God.

Jesus gave many evidences of His love for and confidence in young people and children when He sojourned upon earth. Speaking of the rich young ruler, the record says, "He loved him." He chose several in early life to be among His disciples. Paul chose Timothy, a mere youth, to be a teacher.

"The Lord has appointed the youth to be His helping hand" (*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 64).

"He [Satan] well knows that there is no other class that can do as much good as young men and young

women who are consecrated to God. The youth, if right, could sway a mighty influence" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 204).

Recognizing the high estimate Heaven places on youth, we should realize how imperative it is that faith in Christ be made practical and attractive to them. A church which fails to hold its youth should be deeply concerned. Although thousands of our sons and daughters are accepting Christ and adding their strength to the church, too many are unresponsive to the spiritual appeal. According to surveys in various areas in North America, four to six of every ten young people whose parent or parents are church members either never accept Christ or withdraw during these destiny-determining days.

The elder of a church of 289 members was asked how many young people he had. He replied, "Not enough to conduct a Adventist Youth Society." When an actual survey was made, 229 youths, ages 6 to 25, were discovered. The church officers were amazed at the findings and an intense program was initiated. Statistics prove that two young people are connected with the families of the church for every three church members.

Every elder, no matter what his responsibilities, would be a stronger minister if he were prepared to work successfully with and for youth. Elders, deacons, department leaders, and all officers in the local congregation either attract youth and inspire them in Christian service or are shunned by youth and thus crippled in their ministry.

What are the qualities possessed by men or women who are dealing successfully with youth? First, a God-given love for young people and children. Second, a sincere and fervent fellowship with Christ, including personal victory over sin. Third, a strong, buoyant, cheerful, inspiring personality. Fourth, a patient and sympathetic understanding of youth and their struggles. Fifth, freedom from extremes. Sixth, physical fitness, mental alertness, a knowledge of a variety of skills. Seventh, a natural and developed friendliness and

sociability. Eighth, carefulness in dress and speech. Ninth, a habitual unselfishness. Tenth, a style in personal conversation and public ministry which appeals to young people. There are five distinct fields of youth endeavor to which the eyes of elders and other leaders of the church may be turned.

### EVANGELISM FOR YOUTH

The Adventist Youth secretary is, or should be, essentially a youth evangelist. His objective is to win and train all the sons and daughters of the church in the service of Christ. The late Elder Montgomery said, "There is no more fruitful field than the young people in Seventh-day Adventist homes. The most fruitful field I know of in all the wide, wide world is among our own young people in our churches." Special devotional weeks in our schools and churches should culminate in decisions for Christ and baptisms into the church.

There is another area in which to direct evangelism, and that is the thousands of youth who live in our cities and villages apart from the Seventh-day Adventist church. Some attend the regular evangelistic meetings; some come in through radio and Bible correspondence schools; but rich fruitage would surely result through public meetings promoted and advertised for the avowed purpose of attracting young people. Surely God has His thousands of earnest youth who will hear the message and dedicate their talents to the Advent Movement. The flourishing "Share Your Faith" crusade is developing a legion of experienced personal workers to unite with a man of God whose heart is stirred to evangelize the great masses of youth.

### COUNSELING OF YOUTH

To maintain the ideals and principles set forth in the Bible and befriend youth leads to counseling. Too often young people are misjudged by the attitudes they assume when at heart they are seriously facing sober issues and are desirous of guidance. Those who have ministered in our academies and colleges know of the demand there is for counsel. Men and women should prepare for this

field specifically; it combines very well with public work. There should be a happy medium between the confessional of the Catholic Church and the ultramodern psychoanalysis technique. Youth have snarls to untangle, puzzles to solve; and it is often the unprejudiced, consecrated counselor who brings light out of darkness.

### PASTORING OF YOUTH

During the last few years, some of our larger Adventist communities have secured the services of a young elder.

Usually this is a young man, and his duties have included the fostering of the young people's work. There are great possibilities in this field. Thus the Adventist Youth Society has the sponsorship of a young elder whose expert skill can keep the craft afloat through many a rough sea. This youth elder can guide and contribute to the success of the social and recreational activities of the youth in the area. Furthermore, there are wonderful opportunities for carrying on evangelism in surrounding communities, training and directing the young people as assistants. This opportunity as an elder of youth becomes a most favorable background for broader fields of youth leadership in the future.

### JUNIOR YOUTH LEADERSHIP

Here is a specialized field of endeavor that is assuming larger proportions. Early adolescence is not only the time of restless activity but also the golden hour of decision for Christ.

Statistics reveal that among Seventh-day Adventist more baptisms occur at the age of twelve than at any other point in the development of youth. The successful worker for this age must know how to lead boys and girls to Christ, and at the same time have an exhaustless supply of projects and plans. These must be presented with enthusiasm and changed briskly when necessary so as to keep active minds tied to his leadership.

Men and women who are alert and aggressive find this a fruitful season among junior youth. The summer training camp program of Adventist Youth is now more than seventy years old, and gratifying results are being obtained. Camping is here to stay, but we have not

**"There is no more fruitful field [for evangelism] than the young people in Seventh-day Adventist homes. The most fruitful field I know of in all the wide, wide world is among our own young people in our churches."**

sounded the extent of its possibilities for good. Leaders are needed who will push back the horizons thus far accepted, and discover new frontiers of achievement in these summer camping periods.

Now another area is opening to the junior youth leader. It is the year-round activity program for junior boys and girls. Other organizations have fostered these weekly meetings for years. Civilization in its progress seems to provide children with more leisure time. Parental control and guidance seem to be waning. Into this breach comes a church-centered activity program for junior youth. This plans supplements the church school by affording opportunity for hikes, swims, overnight camping, special events, excursions, crafts, hobbies, and classes in a setting of uniform voluntary enlistment, ceremony, and ritual. Leadership for this new enterprise must be creative and enterprising. When good projects are implemented and properly staffed in hundreds of our church communities, another cord will be woven, binding the youth to the church.

#### LEADERSHIP OF LAYMEN

Standing nobly in leadership responsibility are many laymen. These are men and women with talent and training who carry on their daily work and devote many hours a month to the interests of the youth organization. Many of these gallant leaders regret that they did not secure additional training while in academy or college so they could increase their contribution to the church.

We as ministers may well suggest to Christian businessmen, housewives, craftsmen, tradesmen, salesmen, and teachers that they dedicate some time each week to youth leadership. To those now in preparation may we suggest that while you are following the training in your specialty, you take time and thought to prepare for youth leadership, either junior or senior. There is a premium on good leaders. The demand far exceeds the supply. Divine predictions point to an important role on the part of youth in the final scenes of the drama of the ages. Note these statements:

“In the closing scenes of this earth’s history, many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power” (*Counsels to Teachers*, p. 166).

“Many a lad of today, growing up as did Daniel in his Judean home, studying God’s word and His works, and learning the lessons of faithful service, will yet stand in legislative assemblies, in halls of justice, or in royal courts, as a witness for the King of kings” (*Education*, p. 262).

What a privilege to be instrumental under God in

preparing young lives to bear their final witness in the great controversy. **E**

*Lawrence A. Skinner was Associate Secretary of the Adventist Youth Department when he wrote this article.*

## Caring Eldership for the Aged

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<sup>4</sup> Lev. 19:32; Prov. 20:29. See also “Aged Believers,” “Aged Gospel Workers,” and “Aged Person(s)” in *Comprehensive Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White*.

<sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. 4:7.

<sup>6</sup> *Evangelism*, pp. 106, 107.

<sup>7</sup> *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 1, p. 423.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 479; vol. 2, pp. 647, 675; vol. 3, p. 116; vol. 7, pp. 295-298.

<sup>9</sup> *Welfare Ministry*, p. 238.

<sup>10</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, p. 84.

*James D. Wang writes from Knoxville, Illinois, where he was the director of the Institute for Purposeful Living.*

## The High Price of Eldership

*concluded from page 10*

There is a dignified honor in being a respected, able leader, but it entails responsibility and a price must be paid. There is more to being a captain of a great ship than being well-groomed or wearing a well-pressed uniform with gold braid and stripes. There is far more to this position than being saluted as captain and receiving the acclaim of the crew and others. In case of a storm or disaster, a true captain must be the last to abandon ship. It is a tradition of the sea that until all on board are taken to places of safety, the captain stays by his ship.

Looked at from this point of view, a position of eldership in the Advent Movement is a grave responsibility. In case of a crisis an elder must stand firm and remain at his post of duty if it demands life itself. As a leader in the Advent Movement, are you willing to pay the full price it takes to make your leadership magnetic and effective? **E**

*John Oss wrote this article when he was working in our publishing house in China.*



### Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .

*“By baptism we confess our faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and testify of our death to sin and of our purpose to walk in newness of life. Thus we acknowledge Christ as Lord and Savior, become His people, and are received as members by His church. Baptism is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit. It is by immersion in water and is contingent on an affirmation of faith in Jesus, and evidence of repentance of sin. It follows instruction in the Holy Scriptures and acceptance of their teachings.”*

Fundamental Beliefs, 14





# When Should a Person Be Baptized?

N. R. Dower

## POINTS FOUND IN THE INSPIRED COUNSELS ON THIS IMPORTANT PRINCIPLE OF FAITH:

1. Only those who are truly converted to Christ and this truth should be baptized.—*Evangelism*, p. 307.
2. Baptism is a sign of entrance into Christ's spiritual kingdom, which is represented by the church.—*Ibid.*
3. No baptism should be performed which fails to connect the candidate to Christ and His church.—*Ibid.*, p. 318.
4. Those who are baptized should be fully instructed.—*Ibid.*, p. 308.
5. Those who are baptized should be not only renewed in heart but reformed in life.—*Ibid.*, p. 319.
6. Accession of members who have not been truly converted and instructed are a source of weakness to the church.—*Ibid.*, p. 313.
7. Satan is pleased when such people are brought into the church.—*Ibid.*
8. Many are baptized who have no fitness for this sacred ordinance.—*Ibid.*, p. 319.
9. All who enter upon the new life should understand before their baptism that the Lord requires the undivided affections, the practicing of the truth.—*Ibid.*, p. 308.
10. The line of demarcation should be plain among those who love God and keep His commandments and those who disregard His precepts. There is need of thorough conversion to the truth before baptism.—*Ibid.*
11. A thorough inquiry into the experience of the candidate is to precede baptism.—*Ibid.*, p. 311.
12. Candidates are to put away erroneous beliefs and ungodly practices in preparation for baptism.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 475.
13. Many are buried alive. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the church.—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White comments on Romans 6:1-4, p. 1075.
14. It would be better to baptize six truly converted people and bring them into the church than sixty who make only a nominal profession and are not thoroughly converted.—*Evangelism*, p. 320.

## APPEAL FOR A PROPER BALANCE

It is evident that this counsel must be followed if church membership is to be meaningful today. We are warned that the devil works to get certain people into the church so that through them he can counteract the work of the Spirit and destroy the influence of the church. Genuine care needs to be taken, therefore, when dealing with these matters.

What we appeal for is a proper balance. Let us make sure that they are properly prepared for baptism and membership in the church. On the other hand, let us not keep them waiting so long that they lose faith and feel that they are not wanted.

## BAPTISM OF CHILDREN

Questions are being frequently asked about the baptism of children. The chief one is: "How old should children be before they are baptized?" The servant of the Lord has said that children may have an experience in Christ that is in keeping with their years. When they are old enough to know what baptism signifies, when they are truly surrendered to Christ, when they understand the principles of faith and the significance of church membership, they are old enough to be baptized. The peak age for baptisms among children of the church is from 11 to 14. This seems to be a safe age spread, and it

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# The Baptismal Service

Orley M. Berg

**T**he baptismal service should be a high experience for the church; everything possible should be done to make it inspiring and beautiful. Although the ordained minister ordinarily officiates at this service, provision is made in the *Church Manual* for the local elder to lead out when it cannot be otherwise arranged. This, however, should always be done with proper counsel. The *Manual* reads:

*In the absence of an ordained pastor, it is customary for the elder to arrange with the president of the conference or local field before administering the rite of baptism to those desiring to unite with his church.—page 59, (1995 ed.).*

Even though the pastor is in charge, the local elder can do much to enhance the baptismal service. First of all, he should be eager, along with the officiating minister, to carefully plan every detail of the baptism: heating the water, arranging the dressing rooms and the baptistry, and the readying the robes and towels. Also, he will want to see that all is properly cared for following the service.

Although these physical arrangements are the responsibility of the deacons and deaconesses, everything should be checked carefully so that nothing is overlooked. The lack of communication at this time can result in some very embarrassing moments.

On these special occasions the minister should be as free as possible to concentrate on the spiritual aspects of the service. This being so, the elder may well make himself available to check the above matters with the deacons and deaconesses. A checklist something like the following can be a useful guide:

## BAPTISMAL CHECK LIST

1. Be certain that the baptistry is in readiness, that it is clean, and that the heating unit is functioning properly. If any repair is necessary, do not risk its attention until the last week or two before the baptism.
2. Have a clear understanding with the candidates and the deacons and deaconesses as to just when in the course of the service the baptism is to be conducted and how it will proceed. This information should be communicated during the week preceding the baptism so that as far as possible, last-minute adjustments can be avoided.
3. Inform the candidates as to what will be expected of them and the clothing they should wear.
4. Have the head deacon and deaconess informed as to the number of candidates (how many men, women, boys, or girls) and their approximate sizes so properly fitting robes may be assigned.
5. Have dressing rooms properly prepared, with the necessary robes hung and ready for use with names attached, along with a towel for each. These should be supplied as far as possible, although it is recognized that there will be exceptions.
6. Arrange for the baptistry to be properly filled with water at a comfortable temperature. If necessary, have a trial filling before the baptism.
7. As candidates arrive for the service, have deacons and deaconesses show the candidates to their respective dressing rooms where they can then leave their baptismal attire.
8. Have deacons and deaconesses meet in the dressing rooms with the candidates to assist them in their preparations and in their entering and emerging from the baptistry.
9. Have the wet garments, floors, etc., properly cared for and the baptistry drained following the baptism.

**DON'T LEAVE IT TO CHANCE**

Some of these details may seem very elementary, but they are at times overlooked. The greatest fault is lack of communication. The deacons and deaconesses appreciate being properly notified well in advance when a baptism is scheduled. Do not depend on their getting the word through a general announcement or through the church newsletter or bulletin. Notify them personally and be sure that they understand what their responsibilities are.

Paradoxically, it often happens that the arrangements for larger baptisms are more properly executed than for smaller ones. This is partly because it is easily assumed that where just one or two are to be baptized, the arrangements are simple and require little attention. But this is not so. There have been too many baptisms where the lone candidate has been left unattended before and after the baptism. The attendant may not be needed for the preparation as such, but far more important is the presence that indicates a personal interest and spirit of helpfulness. The expressions of friendliness and encouragement at this time can be extremely important, offering a feeling of security and real togetherness. If a layperson has had an important part in leading the candidate to this experience, he or she may also wish to be close by at this time.

At the baptism, little extras can set it apart and make it the special occasion it should be. Special flowers should be on hand. Also, a lovely flower is sometimes given to each of the candidates as they emerge from the water. What a beautiful expression of the love from the congregation to the new member!

**FRIENDLINESS**

The friendliness of the church at the time of baptism is crucial. For some of the new members there may already be a lengthy acquaintance, perhaps months and even years of church attendance. For these it should indeed be a great day when the baptism occurs, and usually the prevailing atmosphere is one of joy and hairiness. For others, however, the baptism may come at the close of a series of evangelistic meetings, and the candidate's acquaintance with the members of the church may be quite limited. The meetings may have been conducted in a public hall or auditorium, and the number of times they have met previously with one congregation in Sabbath worship service doubtless been very few. The tendency then may be for the congregation to be less demonstrative in their joy and welcome. On such occasions, amid strange circumstances and people, the baptism can become a very lonely experience.

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## Seven Facts About **BAPTISM**

"In the beginning of Christianity the ceremony of baptism was performed by immersion. In those early days the right was granted only to those of mature age and after being well proven in discipleship."—*Novo Dictionario Encyclopaedia*, ed., Luso-Brasileiro (Joao Grave, Porto, Ldt. Lello).

**1. By Immersion**

Jesus was—Mark 1:9-11 ("much water")  
John 3:23. The same method used for disciples—Acts 8:38, 39. "Native Greek scholars affirm that the Greek word *baptizo* has but one sole acceptance; it signifies literally and always to plunge."—Dr. A. Diomedas Kyriasko.

**2. A Commanded Ordinance**

- Christ declared it so—Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16.
- Peter confirmed—Acts 10:48.

The Scriptural basis for "baptism" is overwhelming: 95 references in the New Testament.

**3. Practiced by the Early Christians**

- Peter baptized Pentecost converts—Acts 2:38.
- Paul was baptized—Acts 9:17, 18.
- Cornelius the Roman baptized by Peter the Jew—Acts 10:47.
- The Philippian gaoler—Acts 16:33.
- True follower will "walk as He walked."—1 John 2:6.

**4. Teaching to Precede—Matt. 28:19, 20 "all things."**

- Age of the candidate is dependent upon whether one can: **Believe**—Mark 16:16.
- Pray**—Romans 10: 13.
- Confess**—Romans 10:10 . . . Therefore:

**5. Infant Baptism is Unscriptural**

- It is without Bible command and example.
- It conflicts with the teaching of Jesus—John 6:44.
- It is needless. Infants are not lost—Ezekiel 18:20.

**6. Symbolizes Christ's Saving Work for Man**

- In baptism man is identified with Christ in redemption—Romans 6:3, 4.
- "While the candidate for baptism in water is immersed, the death of Christ is suggested; whilst immersed and covered with water, the burial of Christ is shown forth; whilst he is raised from the waters, the resurrection of Christ is proclaimed."—Cardinal Paulus.
- Baptism is the grave between an old life of sin and a new life in Christ—Colossians 2:12.

**7. Marriage Ceremony of the Christian—Galatians 3:27.**

**One Lord, One Faith, One Baptism**—Ephesians 4:5.

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# How to Perform the Ordinance of Baptism with Grace

Wilson Kenerly

**M**any elders hesitate to perform the rite of baptism because they know little or nothing about the technique or the significance of the ordinance of baptism by immersion.

This article is written to aid elders who have had no instruction in the performance of this ordinance so that they may observe it with grace, dignity, and beauty. It also suggests to elders who practice baptism how to improve their method of observing the ordinance so as more perfectly to “demonstrate the gospel” as commanded by our risen Lord (Matt. 28:19-20).

## A SUGGESTIVE BAPTISMAL SERVICE

- Call the congregation to worship and preparation for the service of this ordinance with the singing of a hymn, such as “Faith of Our Fathers,” whether the baptism is to be performed at the beginning of the service or after the sermon has been preached.
- After the singing of the hymn, the elder’s voice is heard from behind the baptistry, clearly and plainly saying:

*The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare ye the way of the Lord, and make his paths straight (Matt. 3:3).*

The elder moves slowly toward the front of the baptistry until he faces the congregation, still speaking:

*Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand (Matt. 3:2).*

*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, “I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?” And Jesus answering said unto him, “Suffer it to be so now: for thus it*

*becometh us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:13-17).*

Baptism was evidently in deep water, because John, recording the baptisms by John the Baptist, said,

*John was baptizing in Enon near to Salim, because there was much water there (John 3:23).*

Paul the Apostle gives a picture of the significance of baptism in the Christian’s experience when, in Romans 6:3-5, he declares:

*Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.*

This ordinance is to be observed until Christ comes again. For Jesus says,

*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world’ (Matt. 28:19-20).*

Furthermore, brethren, Jesus would not have us consider this to be a military command, with penalties

attached. It is, rather, a loving appeal from our loving Lord asking us to willingly, voluntarily, and enthusiastically give Him our full allegiance. The Lord Jesus Christ asks for our obedience through the impelling and propelling and compelling power of love. He says:

*If you love me, keep my commandments (John 14:15).*

Beloved friends, this ordinance preaches the complete gospel in one act. Notice how much of the Gospel it covers:

When Jesus was baptized He declared, by His burial in the watery grave and His rising there from, that He would die and rise again. For “Christ died for our sins and rose again for our justification.” The death of Christ and His resurrection are the heart of the atonement, which is the center of the gospel of salvation. Thus at the beginning of His ministry He proclaimed the purpose of His coming to the world. Moreover, the Scriptures state that before the New Birth man is “dead in trespasses and in sin.” After conversion he “passes from death unto life.” Of this also baptism is a symbol.

Baptism also symbolizes the union of the believer with Christ in His death and resurrection experience. It also programs the sinner’s death to the “old life” and his resurrection to the “new life” in Christ. Brethren, we should, therefore, listen again to the appealing word of our Lord and Master:

*If ye love me ye will do the things I say, for ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you (Rom. 6:3a).*

- **Prayer**—This prayer should be for the candidates, that they may have a growing Christian experience and have courage to witness for Christ and become faithful and loyal members of Christ’s body on earth.
- **Hymn**—The congregation or the choir will then sing some familiar and appropriate hymn, such as “Where He Leads Me I Will Follow.”
- **In the Water**—The elder turns to the candidate entering the baptismal waters and holds out his hand to receive the candidate and guide him to the proper position in the baptistry.

The candidate, on reaching the appointed place, gives a handkerchief to the minister, who places it in his robe in readiness to wipe the water from the candidate’s face after the immersion.

The candidate clasps his hands across his breast.

The elder, standing just behind the candidate, asks: *My brother (sister), do you believe that Jesus is your Lord and Savior?*

The candidate answers: *I do.*

The elder (raising his right hand in blessing) says: *Brother John Smith (Sister Mary Jones), on the profession of your faith in the Lord Jesus and in obedience to His divine command, I now baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Lord Jesus the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

The congregation or the choir sings softly as the elder steadily lowers the candidate into the water and raises him from the water. If this song is carefully synchronized with the movements of the minister, there will be no noise of splashing water, which so often detracts from the beauty of this service.

When the candidate stands erect, take the handkerchief from your robe and wipe his face. Present the candidate with a rosebud, carnation, or whatever flower is provided.

The elder moves between the candidate and the audience as he helps the candidate to the steps leading from the baptistry.

After having accomplished the first baptism, turn around slowly and deliberately to receive the next candidate, and follow the same procedure until all the candidates are immersed.

- **The Last Hymn**—When the last candidate has been baptized, ask the congregation to stand and sing “My Jesus, I Love Thee” or some other appropriate hymn.
- **The Call and Blessing**—The elder follows with a prayer of thanksgiving and blessing. He closes the service of baptism somewhat as follows:
 

*Lord, it has been done as thou hast commanded; yet there is room. If there are any here who would follow Christ in baptism we extend to you our heartiest and most earnest invitation to do so. After the sermon we shall give you an opportunity to come forward to express your willingness to follow Christ through the waters of baptism. I shall gladly meet you at the altar.*
- **The Sermon**—The elder will then conclude the service with the sermon and invitation and benediction.

There is an advantage in having the baptism at the beginning of the service. It is unnecessary to duplicate the Scripture reading and prayers, since they have

*Concluded on page 24*

# Three Qualities That Make a Good Usher

Oscar Fonceca Jr.

**T**he three qualities of good men, explained by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, could not be more applicable than they are to the ministry of church ushers.

## SALT OF THE EARTH

First, the ministry of ushering is like salt which makes everything more palatable and which serves as a general preservative against deterioration. Jesus did not say, "Ye ought to be the salt of the earth;" He said, "Ye are" (Matthew 5:13).

Ushers enjoy the ministry of a constructive influence. Paul said, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt" (Colossians 4:6). A good usher adds a tang of joy to a churchgoer's Sabbath morning experience instead of a tinge of drabness.

Also, the ministry of an usher is like salt because salt can never do its work until it is brought into close contact with the substance on which it is to make its influence. The church ushers, pastors, musicians, or teachers, come into direct contact on an individual basis with more people in a given service than anyone else who ministers to them. The ministry of salt is silent, inconspicuous, and sometimes completely unnoticed. But it is there—in a powerful and useful way.

## A CITY UPON THE HILL

Also, a good usher is like "a city set upon a hill" (Matthew 5:14). While ushers are like inconspicuous salt, they also may become like a city on a hill. They become landmarks to churchgoers who learn to depend upon them.

Stability helps overcome many other weaknesses in the priority of qualifications among ushers. The first glimpse of an usher on whom a churchgoer has come to depend brings an internal sense of welcome repose; they think,

"Someone is on hand who is interested in me!"

It is not uncommon for an usher to become an advisor, a source of information, counselor, or better yet, an intermediary between the needs of a specific person and the resources available through the pastor, musicians, and teachers of the church.

## A LAMP ON A STAND

Third, a good usher is like a lamp on a stand, not put "under a bushel but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house" (Matthew 5:15). A lamp brings warmth and welcome to all who are in the room. One flickering candle in a room can brighten the conversation and bring an inner feeling of warmth and joy.

As a lamp dispels the darkness and brings emotional warmth to a room, so the ministry of an usher can make a similar intangible contribution to all who experience the inner light of pleasure in people which he allows to shine through himself.

Jesus concluded this discussion on the character of a good usher by saying, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

It is the nature of Christian character to radiate; it cannot help but shine. But the radiance of this glory is not for "self" but for the Kingdom of God. The ministry of an usher is not intended to bring glory to himself but to God. Just as a pastor preaches in the Spirit and a musician sings in the Spirit, the usher must do his work in the power of the Holy Spirit—bringing glory to God in the Lord's house on the Sabbath the Lord's day. **E**

*Oscar Fonceca, Jr. wrote from Portland, Oregon.*



# The Child Dedication Service

## SUGGESTED ORDER OF SERVICE

- Organ Prelude
- Processional Hymn
- Call to Worship
- Invocation and the Lord's Prayer

## DEDICATION OF CHILDREN:

- Hymn: "I Think When I Read That Sweet Story of Old" or some other appropriate children's hymn.
- The superintendent of the Sabbath School Children's Department, senior deacon, or an elder leads the parents with their children to the altar of the church, where they face the pulpit.
- The minister or chosen elder takes his place before the pulpit, facing the audience.
- After the hymn has been sung, the minister or the chosen elder reads Mark 10:13-16, the story of Samuel, or some other appropriate Scripture, and also Matthew 18:1-6.
- Then the minister or elder says: Dearly beloved, throughout the ages godly parents have presented their children to God in dedication and thanksgiving. In bringing your child (children) to this temple to present him (her or them) to our wonderful Lord, you are following a noble heritage. Believing that this child is a gift from God and as a token of your thanksgiving to Him, do you promise to train up this child in the fear and admonition of the Lord?"  
The parents answer: "I do."
- The minister or elder says: "Believing in the words of God, 'Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it,' do you promise by your faith, example, and precept to guide this child so that when he (she) comes to the age of discretion, he (she) may more surely accept Christ as his (her) Lord and Savior and unite with God's people, and by his (her) witness help to make known the blessed Gospel to all the world?"

The parents answer: "I do."

## PRAYER

*Our Father, lover of children, knowing that "as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him," with confidence we come to Thee to ask Thee to accept this (or these) blessed gift (gifts) whom we now dedicate to Thee and Thy service. We therefore open our hearts to Thee and with the dedication of this child (children), we would dedicate anew ourselves to Thy service.*

*Grant to these parents wisdom, strength, and courage as they endeavor to train this child in the way he (she) should go; and may they have the superb joy of leading him (her or them) to confess Christ as Lord.*

*May this child (these children) be given faith, courage, and strength to meet the exigencies of life victoriously. May he (she or they) always be clad in the Christian's armor and "having done all; may he (she or they) stand in the liberty wherewith we are made free." In Jesus' blessed name we ask these things. Amen.*

- The congregation sings: "When He Cometh to Make Up His Jewels" or another appropriate dedication hymn, after which they will be seated.
- The officiating person leads the way for the parents and their children. Then the minister or elder returns to the pulpit to continue the service.

## WORSHIP SERVICE CONTINUATION

- Anthem by choir
- Offertory
- Sermon
- Consecration hymn
- Benediction

When this service is conducted early in the morning worship service, the children are usually less tired and restless.

*Concluded on page 26*

# Focus on Faith— The Crisis Over Scripture

Robert S. Folkenberg

**W**e have taken note of the influence of the creation/evolution debate on our church. We listened to Ariel Roth who wrote that “the history of other major Protestant churches suggests that were we once to lose confidence in the authenticity of the creation account, we would soon lose confidence in the validity of Genesis 1 through 11 . . . [and in] the Bible as a whole.”

Unfortunately, this is exactly what is happening in some places in our church today. Accommodationists are trying to reconcile the Bible with contemporary scientific thought, including the reinterpretation of the six days of creation to represent millions of years. As a result, questions are being raised not only in regard to the creation story but also concerning the historicity of the first eleven chapters of Genesis. Some Adventists no longer believe in a worldwide flood. They explain Genesis 6-9 with a local flood in ancient Mesopotamia. However, the question has to be asked, if the flood was only in one part of the world, why did God tell Noah to build the ark? All he had to do was to tell Noah to move elsewhere on the planet.

A second reason for the crisis over Scripture in the Adventist Church is the gradual acceptance of a modified form of the historical-critical method by some of its scholars.

The historical-critical method is an offspring of the Enlightenment in seventeenth-century Europe. The French philosopher Rene Descarte raised doubts to a universally valid principle and changed philosophical, scientific, and religious thinking forever. The Enlightenment taught that all truth—including truth contained in Scripture—is rational, and what is rational is capable of proof. The historical-critical method, therefore, sought the eternal truths concealed in biblical history by purifying it of all inadequate forms.

In the process Scripture was stripped of all supernatural elements since they are not verifiable by rational proof. **E**

*Robert S. Folkenberg is the president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

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## Elder's Digest—Window for Local Church Elder

*concluded from page 4*

### **OPEN WINDOWS BRING BLESSINGS—GOD PROMISES TO HONOR FAITHFULNESS**

Our purpose is to motivate and inspire faith-filled living. *Elder's Digest* encourages faithful discipleship, bringing our time, energies, skills, and funds in obedience to our Lord. As a result the windows of heaven will open and pour out abundant blessings on those who serve our local congregations as spiritual leaders.

### **OUR WINDOW SHOWS THE MISSION—NOTICE THE CROSS!**

Above all, *Elder's Digest* must lift up Jesus as the only solution to humanity's need. Just as the cover of the first issue pictured the cross in the center of the window, so our central theme of *Elder's Digest* is the salvation in Jesus, the theme of every doctrine, sermon, and service.

So we are preparing *Elder's Digest* thinking of you, my dear elder. We hope you welcome it in your ministry. **E**

*James Cress is Secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

# Differentiate Between Sacred and Secular

Richard Lewis

**T**he subject of music for church is an old yet ever new topic, and one on which complete agreement can scarcely be expected. In the hope of contributing to peace and unity, we offer analytic suggestions. The bases of musical classification are manifold. A few of these are applicable here.

Some music is elevating. Other music is recognized as being Satanic in origin. Its effect upon the emotional nature is to stir the base passions, to stimulate sensual thinking. We may call this distinction a moral one. Where the distinction is obvious, there is no debate about church usage. Satan's music has no place in our secular lives, much less in the sacred service. On another axis the distinction is not moral but intellectual. Here some of the most heated arguments center. Here we need peace and unity.

When Jesus talked about love He told three stories: The Lost Sheep, The Lost Coin, and The Lost Son. When Paul discoursed on love, he wrote the highly rhetorical, intellectual, penetrating analytical thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians. Jesus chose the more universal appeal, but that does not invalidate the writings of Paul, which the majority of Christians do not fully understand. But it is good to read his writings, even if we do not fully understand them. To Christian scholars Paul's writings are supreme expressions of Christian truth.

All worshipers can appreciate "My Jesus, I Love Thee" and "I Need Thee Every Hour." The melodies are sweet and pathetic, and the harmonies simple. Not all can appreciate a Gounod "Sanctus," or a Bach "How Shall I Fitly Meet Thee?" These are eminently appropriate and may be deeply spiritual to those of musical discernment, to whom they may convey far greater meaning and uplift than the simple songs. The distinction here is intellectual rather than moral.

The musically untrained can gain something by listening to music that is above them, and they should

refrain from attributing ostentatious pride to those who sing arias from oratorios for the sacred service. The question of the wisdom of such selection is another matter.

On the other hand, the musically educated are in danger of exhibiting this same ostentatious pride, and never more so than when they cease to find spiritual value in such hymns as those previously mentioned. Simply because a man finds his highest musical fulfillment in listening to a somewhat sentimental rendition of "When They Ring the Golden Bells," we need not hold him devoid of spiritual understanding, though we may well hope for his advancement in religious penetration. And the man himself needs to recognize that he should one day grow up to greater musical maturity.

Understanding and tolerance should lead to peace on this particular musical front. Where no moral values are involved, where the music is all sacred and appropriate for worship, intellectual distinctions should not be allowed to form a basis for friction and division.

A third axis of distinction separates the sacred from the secular. Here the differences are less obvious and the decisions more difficult. We shall have to recognize that some music is sufficiently equivocal in effect to serve more than one purpose as far as its innate character is concerned. Hymns have been sung to the tune usually associated with the love lyric "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes," and certainly there is nothing inappropriate in the musical structure itself. The only objection arises from a connection with the secular song, but this association is so widespread that the music has become unusable for church.

Fewer people are disturbed when listening to "Give of Your Best to the Master" than by hearing echoes of "Take Back the Heart That Thou Gavest." Some may object to the *Christ in Song* musical setting for the "I Think When I

Read That Sweet Story of Old” because of remembering the words of “Fair Harvard.” Thus secular associations may render an appropriate musical setting unfit for sacred use.

In a different direction an “Ave Maria” may be musically perfect as an instrumental selection for worship, for the Catholic Church has a centuries-old tradition of producing musical liturgy that inspires the spirit of worship. But the Bible

Christian cannot comfortably worship to a musical setting which suggests subversive doctrine. Shall the organist use music that was composed to un-Biblical words, or composed from a Catholic service? In the case of Schubert’s famous and beautiful “Ave Maria,” which has been concertized under that title throughout the world, the answer must be No, for everyone at once thinks of the title upon hearing the melody.

On the other hand, Henselt has composed a very fine “Ave Maria” which few Adventist church members would recognize. Shall the organist refuse to use it because it was composed for the Catholic service? Here is a church bulletin listing as offertory “Andantino” by Henselt. Is his “Andantino” any better than his “Ave Maria” if you don’t know the name? As it turns out, the offertory actually is the “Ave Maria” wisely disguised under the technical term. Surely no one should object to hearing this lovely and fitting music for an offertory.

It seems obvious that the safe course lies in being guided by good taste and musical discernment, making the character of the music the basis of judgment and being careful to eliminate any selection that has secular associations or unbiblical suggestions. On this basis such songs as “The Rosary” or the barcarole from Offenbach’s opera *The Tale of Hoffman* should be left out of the sacred service. Such unsecular sources, such as “My Jesus, as Thou Wilt,” from von Weber’s *Der Freischutz*, several adaptations from folk melodies and the like. The character of the music rather than the point of origin must be the guide.

There is still room for disagreement on the character of the music itself. It should be recognized that music for the church does not always have to be slow and melancholy. Handel’s “Hallelujah Chorus” is eminently sacred but is rhythmic, spirited, and syncopated. Gounod’s “Unfold, Ye Portals” has tremendous verve and movement. But music such as this has a dignity arising from its melodic and harmonic maturity and excellence

that makes it highly appropriate for worship and that sets it far apart from the cheap chorus song which has little else but rhythm and syncopation.

There is no solution to this ultimate problem of selecting music for church aside from good taste and musical sense. There is no rule of thumb. There is only the indispensable discernment between the sacred and the common, the sensitiveness to spiritual values which tells

the listener when he is being carried into the spirit of worship.

Finally, then, by being careful to close our ears to the devil’s music at all times, by being tolerant and understanding when distinctions are purely intellectual, by avoiding all music with objectionable associations, and by cultivating sensitivity to the difference between the sacred and the common, we may come to please God in the musical part of our worship. ¶

*Richard Lewis is an associate professor of English at Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.*

## How to Perform the Ordinance of Baptism with Grace

*concluded from page 19*

been covered in the introductory remarks of the baptismal service.

Moreover, the elder can give an invitation at the close of the sermon without being unduly hurried. Also, the candidates can return to the auditorium in time for the sermon.

When the people know there is to be a baptismal service at the beginning of the service they usually are present at that time.

There is no more beautiful or meaningful ordinance of the church when baptism is properly observed. Therefore, plan every detail of the service with the utmost care and perform the ordinance unhurriedly and determine to “demonstrate the gospel” with beauty, precision, and spiritual dignity. ¶

*Wilson Kenerly writes from S. Paulo, Brazil where he serves the local congregation as an elder.*

# What is Expository Preaching?

Lourenco Gonzalez

**T**he true purpose of all gospel preaching is to uplift Christ, to bring men face to face with His claims, and to lead them into the liberty of the gospel. But preaching methods differ. For example, doctrinal preaching usually aims to set forth some particular point of belief. Various texts from different scriptures may be used in order to get a composite picture, and thus give the full revelation of God on the subject.

Expository preaching, on the contrary, seeks to develop some particular portion of scripture, perhaps a whole chapter, or even an entire book. It cannot be undocctrinal, or antidocctrinal—for no revelation from God can be divorced from doctrine—yet the process of development will largely be within the environment of the Scriptural passage itself, an unfolding of the message of the writer. Such features as the historic aspects of the book, the political, economical, social, and religious conditions at the time of writing, the influence of the writer upon subsequent history—all these and other factors are taken into consideration.

The one great purpose of all true Scriptural exposition is to interpret God and His will to man. And though the analysis is stronger if it is developed in relation to the historic setting of the *past*, in order to appeal to the human heart *today*, the application of that revelation must be brought in the setting of the *present*.

If it is recognized that “the whole Bible is a manifestation of Christ” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 250), then the expository student will find the Savior in every scripture. Just as in England they say “All roads lead to London,” so every book of the Bible, every chapter, in fact every verse, links with a highway that leads to Christ.

A noteworthy example of this type of preaching is the apostle Peter’s Pentecost sermon. Notice how he brought the message in the setting of Joel’s prophecy but applied it to his own generation. Another classic is Philip’s study with the Ethiopian official. He “began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.” In each case the reaction on those who listened was immediate. Men found the way of salvation and were baptized into Christ.

In applying the message of the Scriptural passage, a

real expositor will be accurate as well as informative. We could wish that all preaching reached that standard. It is a rare privilege to hear the Word of God expounded and interpreted within the framework of historic accuracy and correct textual exegesis. It requires more than merely a concordance, a denominational commentary, and a set of doctrinal beliefs to develop in this form of preaching, for the Scripture becomes more than merely something to prove a point or build up a case. Instead it is an avenue along which we traverse in the revelation of God.

The expository preacher pursues his study along these lines: (1) the writer himself; (2) the book’s objective; (3) its influence upon contemporary and succeeding generations; and (4) its application to the problems and experiences of today.

A knowledge of history and archaeology, a familiarity with Biblical languages, and adherence to sound principles of Scriptural exegesis are all essentials in expository study. If, as preachers, we determine to live with the Word of God and seek for the guidance of the Spirit of Christ, then the Lord will quicken our imagination and help us to unfold and communicate to our hearers messages often hidden in the mine of truth.

“The minister who makes the word of God his constant companion will continually bring forth truth of new beauty. The Spirit of Christ will come upon him, and God will work through him to help others. The Holy Spirit will fill his mind and heart with hope and courage and Bible imagery, and all this will be communicated to those under his instructions” (*Gospel Workers*, p. 253).

These are wonderful words, and the expression *Bible imagery* is particularly significant. What is Bible imagery? What purpose can it serve in making truth live? An old elocution teacher used to say, “Always talk to a picture.” Why a “picture”? Because only as men see will they act. Moses “endured, as seeing Him who is invisible.” The preacher’s work is “to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery” (Eph. 3:9). How well the Master understood this! “Through the imagination He reached the heart” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 254).

“With clearness and power He proclaimed the gospel

message. His word shed a flood of light on the teachings of patriarchs and prophets, and the Scriptures came to men as a new revelation. Never before had His hearers perceived in the word of God such depth of meaning" (*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 21, 22).

He was able to take the plain dead letter of the law and make it the voice of the living God. But more! He promised that "every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven" will be able to do the same (Matt. 13:52). He too can bring forth "things new and old." The scribe of that day was an interesting type, so trained in his art that every detail of the transcription must be relayed with minute exactitude. He dare not introduce anything new. He lived with dry parchments and the dead letter. But even such as he, if instructed in the methods of Jesus, could bring forth new revelations from the old settings. In exposing his soul to the imagery of the Word he was copying, he would discover a new pulsating life. And coming forth from the warm rays of divine light, even a scribe could become the voice of the living God. But this promise is also for the heralds of truth today.

It requires much more study, however, more general knowledge, and a deeper consecration to develop in the field of expository preaching. But if we would fulfill the apostolic injunction to "preach the word," we must expound the Scriptures. Our Lord was first a student of the Word, then an expounder of the divine revelation. We surely are not aiming too high if we suggest that the Adventist preacher in a community should become known as a sound evangelical expounder of God's Word, not merely a lecturer on certain subjects. This method of study and ministry is more difficult, but it promises more inspiration to both preacher and congregation. **E**

*Lourenco Gonzalez writes from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where he serves the local congregation as elder.*

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## The Baptismal Service

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How important then that extra effort be put forth to literally envelope them in the atmosphere of love. They may be leaving a host of dear friends in their former church. How unnecessarily heartbreaking if the new church family shows little personal interest or care. This must not happen. Let all officers and members of the church be on their best behavior, making the baptismal day a day of beauty and happiness, one long remembered and cherished.

### MY PRAYER

*Dear Father, do help us to be especially mindful of the feelings of Thy children as they enter into the blessed experience of baptism. Help us to show the interest and concern that we should and do all that we can to make the baptismal day the high day that it ought to be, not only for those being baptized but for every member and friend of the church. Amen. **E***

*Orley M. Berg was associate editor of Ministry when he wrote this*

## The Child Dedication Service

*concluded from page 21*

### SOME OBSERVATIONS ON CHILD DEDICATION PROCEDURES

Some people like to take the child up in their arms. It seems best, however, to leave them in their parents' arms, where they are less likely to become disturbed or agitated.

Provide a well-worded and attractive certificate. Have it completely filled out and present it to the family before they leave the church auditorium. If you have an assistant, he or she can make the presentation. Moreover, the assistant should direct the family to their proper positions for the service.

Keep a complete record of these services including time, place, and participants and date of child's birth, etc.

Visit the family before the service.

Visit the parents after the service. It is good to show young parents that their spiritual leader desires to be their friend as well as their preacher. Let them know that your church offers much to meet their spiritual and intellectual needs. **E**

# The Triumph of the Cross

## I. INTRODUCTION

It was the cross, that instrument of shame and torture, which brought hope and salvation to the world. The disciples were but humble men, without wealth, and with no weapon but the word of God; yet in Christ's strength they went forth to tell the wonderful story of the manger and the cross, and to triumph over all opposition. Without earthly honor or recognition, they were heroes of faith. From their lips came words of divine eloquence that shook the world.—Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, p. 228, pr. 2. *Basically there are three great teachings in Colossians.*

### A. The incarnation of Jesus Christ

1. He was a real human being of flesh and blood and bones, not an apparition as some of their false teachers had said.
  - a. He was God in all that God is and not just an intermediary being as others had taught them.
  - b. The high-water mark of the New Testament is this: "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (2:9).

### B. The supremacy of Jesus Christ.

1. He is supreme in creation and over all created beings (1:15-16);
  - a. He is supreme in the church (1:18);
  - b. He is supreme over all principalities and powers (2:10, 15).

### C. The crucifixion of Jesus Christ and the meaning of it.

In two ways these heretical teachers had attacked the Christian teaching of redemption through the death of Christ on the cross.

1. "Christ did not have an actual physical body," some of them said. "He only appeared to have." Therefore they maintained that the Crucifixion was not an actual event but only a non historical apparition.
2. Others among these heretics said, "Christ had a real physical body, but He was not God's Son. An Aeon, called 'Christ,' came upon Him at His baptism and departed from Him on the cross. Hence," they contended, "the Crucifixion, though a historical event, had no saving power."

## II. THE FACT IS THIS: THE TRIUMPH OF THE CROSS.

Notice the phrases Paul piles upon one another to emphasize this: "Having forgiven us our trespasses . . . having blotted out the bond . . . having despoiled the principalities and powers, . . . he triumphed over them in it" (that is, in the cross).

### A. The triumph of the cross is a historical fact.

1. That Christ died an actual death on the cross cannot be disputed. "The blood of his cross" (1:20) was an actual, witnessed, historical event (John 19:34). "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Cor. 15:3b).

### B. The triumph of the cross is a theological fact.

1. This is a fact of great significance. In his first epistle John tells us: "The blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin" (1:7b).
  - a. Look at Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane, with the shadow of the cross falling across His very being. What did He do with it? He laid hold of it. He wrestled with it. He lifted it up in His mighty passion. He transformed it. He made it an instrument of redemption.
2. The communion ritual has this idea. It tells us that Jesus Christ suffered "death upon the cross for our redemption and made thereby the offering of Himself, a full, perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world."

### C. The triumph of the cross is a spiritual and personal fact.

1. "And you, being dead through your trespasses . . . , you, I say, did he make alive together with him having forgiven all our trespasses" (Col. 2:13).
  - a. This triumph of the cross becomes a personal victory in our lives when by faith in Christ we accept what He has done for us on that cross.
  - b. That is the fact of our text, "The Triumph of the Cross."

## III. THE SCOPE: THE VAST REACHES OF THAT FACT.

This fact has both a legal and a spiritual aspect.

### A. The legal aspect of the triumph of the cross.

Verse 14 tells us that the sentence of our condemnation was the sentence of death. That sentence has been taken

from us, satisfied by another, canceled forever. By the cross three things have been done about this sentence of death.

1. "Having blotted out the bond . . . that was against us, which was contrary to us." The debt is canceled, marked Paid, like a canceled check; and we have peace with God.
2. "He hath taken it out of the way." It's gone, thank God! That sentence is over our heads no longer. It is removed! How could it be taken from over us? The perfect law of God must be satisfied. Nothing can thwart it, escape it, or rewrite it.
3. "Nailing it to the cross." What does that mean? It was customary for the Romans to nail the crime for which one had been condemned on the cross of the one being crucified just above his head. Over Jesus' head Pilate wrote: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS" (John 19: 19b). But that was not the real indictment. Had Pilate known, he could have written: "Crucified for the sins of men."

**B. The spiritual aspect of the triumph of the cross.**

1. Listen to Paul: "Having despoiled the principalities and the powers . . . triumphing over them in it" (that is, in the cross).
  - a. What appeared to be the defeat of God and the triumph of the powers of darkness proved instead to be the triumph of God and the doom of Satan and sin. The cross was God's field of victory, the implement of His triumph.

**IV. CONCLUSION**

Let us ask this question in closing: "What is or what should be the significance of this great fact, 'The Triumph of the Cross' for our own personal lives?"

**A. Negatively.**

We ought not to serve those things from which we were set free by the cross. "We who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" (Rom. 6:2b).

**B. Positively.**

We ought to follow and do and think and say those things worthy of a life redeemed by His blood. This is the way to victory.

**V. ILLUSTRATION**

The relation to Christ, the meaning of our atonement, the risk one runs to have God at his elbow, the inevitable concomitant of our salvation means that at this cross there is no place for observers. There is no detached ground; there are no uninvolved ones. We are caught here. Cross means nailed here. There are no spectators . . . we are all on stage. You are in it: the drama of the redemption of the world. But not alone—there are no single crosses anywhere, anymore. All our crosses participate in His. (Carlyle Marney, *The Carpenter's Son*).

The cross is the only ladder high enough to touch Heaven's threshold. (George Dana Boardman)

It may take a crucified church to take a crucified Christ before the eyes of the world. (W. E. Orchard)

**Ellen G. White Quotations**

In this life we must meet fiery trials and make costly sacrifices, but the peace of Christ is the reward. There has been so little self-denial, so little suffering for Christ's sake, that the cross is almost entirely forgotten. We must be partakers with Christ of His sufferings if we would sit down in triumph with Him on His throne.—Ellen G. White, *God's Amazing Grace*, p. 90, pr.3.

When Christ died on the cross, Satan triumphed, but his triumph was short. The prophecy was made in Eden. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel" [Gen. 3:15]. Christ was nailed to the cross, but thus He gained His victory. Through death He destroyed him that had the power of death. By becoming the Sin-bearer, He lifted from the human race the penalty of transgression. In His own body He paid the penalty of that on which the power of Satan over the human race is founded, even transgression.—Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 398, pr. 2. **E**

**When Should a Person Be Baptized**

*concluded from page 15*

might serve as a general guideline. There will no doubt be exceptional cases where some may properly be baptized a bit earlier.

The inspired counsel to this church, however, indicates that when children are baptized, especially those at an early age, parents must accept responsibility, along with the pastor and teachers, for their spiritual growth. (see *Evangelism*, pp. 309, 310).

The other danger we face is in delaying the baptism of our children so long that they come to believe there is no need or place for them in the church. This, too, is a great mistake. We need our children and youth. They are our precious treasure, and God is using them in a marvelous way to help finish His work. Let us prepare them properly for baptism, yes, but then let us baptize them. Give them the blessing and security of church membership, and then utilize their talents and energies in the service of Christ. **E**

*N. R. Dower, former Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference, lives in Ooltewah, Tennessee.*

# Baptism and the True Test of Discipleship

by Ellen G. White

**T**he test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether those who profess to be converted are simply taking the name of Seventh-day Adventist or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord's side to come out from the world and be separate and touch not the unclean thing. When they give evidence that they fully understand their position, they are to be accepted. But when they show that they are following the customs and fashions and sentiments of the world, they are to be faithfully dealt with. If they feel no burden to change their course of action, they should not be retained as members of the church. The Lord wants those who compose His church to be true, faithful stewards of the grace of Christ.

The son of these last days is upon the professed people of God. Through selfishness, love of pleasure, and love of dress, they deny the Christ that their church membership says that they are following. I thank God that Jesus Christ knows every impulse in the heart of the believer. Many profess to be children of God who do not follow Christ. Their frivolity, cheap conversation, want of high-toned piety, and low aims mislead others who would pursue a different course were it not for the example of these deceptive characters, those who do not love Christ or do His will but simply follow their own imaginations.

Jesus is acquainted with every heart that is humble, meek, and lowly. These have trials and make mistakes, but they are brokenhearted because they grieve the Savior who loved them and died for them. They come humbly to His feet; they fight His battles. In meekness and lowliness of heart they seek to do good to others. They seek to advance the cause of truth in good and earnest endeavor.

The Lord Jesus loves those for whom He has given His life; and when worldly influences are allowed to come in

between them and their Helper, when idols are chosen before Christ, when His appeals to the human soul are regarded with indifference and there is no response, Jesus is grieved. He knows that they are meeting with great losses, for they are stumbling blocks to sinners. They are not gathering with Christ but scattering from Him. But when through great affliction the Spirit of God touches their hearts and they turn to Him, He will hear their prayers. Christ knows the capabilities He has given to every soul to serve Him for his present and eternal good. He desires that these souls shall not disappoint Him. He wants them to shine in His kingdom. Those who will be the most highly honored are those who take up their cross daily, and follow Christ. *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p.128.

Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meekness, and hope. Every soul united to Christ will be a living missionary to all around him. *Letter 55*, 1886.

It is the grace of Christ that gives life to the soul. Apart from Christ, baptism, like any other service, is a worthless form. "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 181 (1898).

Baptismal vows are a pledge to win souls. God's people are to feel a noble, generous sympathy for every line of work carried on in the great harvest field. By their baptismal vows they are pledged to make earnest, self-denying efforts to promote, in the hardest parts of the field, the work of soulsaving. God has placed on every believer the responsibility of striving to rescue the helpless and the oppressed. *Australasian Union Conference Record*, June 1, 1903.

The preparation for baptism is a matter that needs to be carefully considered. The new converts to the truth

should be faithfully instructed in the plain "Thus saith the Lord." The Word of the Lord is to be read and explained to them point by point.

All who enter upon the new life should understand, prior to their baptism, that the Lord requires their undivided affections. . . . The practicing of the truth is essential. The bearing of fruit testifies to the character of the tree. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts. There is need of a thorough conversion to the truth. *Manuscript 56, 1900.*

There is need of a more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of more faithful instruction than has usually been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth. None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. We are not only to say "I believe" but to practice the truth. 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, I 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. The light of the Word carefully studied, the voice of conscience, the striving of the Spirit, produce in the heart genuine love for Christ, who gave Himself a whole sacrifice to redeem the whole person, body, soul, and spirit. And love is manifested in obedience. *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 91, 92. (1900).

Parents whose children desire to be baptized have a work to do, both in self-examination and in giving faithful instruction to their children. Baptism is a most sacred and important ordinance, and there should be a thorough understanding as to its meaning. It means repentance for sin and the entrance upon a new life in Christ Jesus. There should be no undue haste to receive the ordinance. Let both parents and children count the cost. In consenting to the baptism of their children, parents sacredly pledge themselves to be faithful stewards over these children, to guide them in their character-building. They pledge themselves to guard with special interest these lambs of the flock, that they may not dishonor the faith they profess.

Religious instruction should be given to children from their earliest years. It should be given, not in a condemnatory spirit, but in a cheerful, happy spirit. *Evangelism*, p. 309.

## MAKE A REALITY OF TRUTH

The Lord Jesus demands that every soul make a reality of truth. Show that you believe that you are not half with Christ and half with the world. Of all such Christ says: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth." He who appreciates the love of Christ will be an earnest worker with Christ to bring other souls as sheaves to the Master. Thorough work is always done by all who are connected with Christ. They bear fruit to His glory. But indolence and carelessness and frivolity separate the soul from Christ, and Satan comes in to work his will with the poor worldly subject. We have a great truth, but through careless indifference the truth has lost its force upon us. Satan has come in with his specious temptations and has led the professed followers of Christ away from their Leader, classing them with the foolish virgins.

The Lord is coming, and we now need the oil of grace in our vessels with our lamps. I ask, Who will now be on the Lord's side? Before Jesus went away, He promised that He would return again and receive us unto Himself, "that where I am," He said, "ye may be also." We are strangers and pilgrims in this world. We are to wait, watch, pray, and work. The whole mind, the whole soul, the whole heart, and the whole strength are purchased by the blood of the Son of God. We are not to feel it our duty to wear pilgrim's dress of 'just such a color, 'just such a shape, but neat, modest apparel that the word of inspiration teaches us we should wear. If our hearts are united with Christ's heart, we shall have a most intense desire to be clothed with His righteousness. Nothing will be put upon the person to attract attention or to create controversy.

*Christianity*—how many there are who do not know what it is! It is not something put on the outside. It is a life inwrought with the life of Jesus. It means that we are wearing the robe of Christ's righteousness. In regard to the world, Christians will say, "We will not dabble in politics." They will say decidedly, "We are pilgrims and strangers; our citizenship is above." They will not be seen choosing company for amusement. They will say, "We have ceased to be infatuated by childish things. We are strangers and pilgrims, looking for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 130. **E**

*Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she produced more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her works continue as a normative prophetic voice within the Adventist church.*



Put this information in your file. It may be useful to you in the future.

### SLEEPING SIGNAL MAN

There was danger ahead! The midnight express was approaching, and the engineer didn't know that the track had been washed out as a result of a flash flood in a mountain pass. The train rushed by the place where the signal man stood and plunged headlong into an abyss. Its derauling caused the death of many of the passengers as well as that of the engineer.

Did the signal man fall asleep? The signal man was questioned: "Did you hear the approaching train?" he was asked. "What did you do as it came closer to your position?" "I waved my lantern back and forth as I stood on the track in front of the train."

The judge came to the conclusion that if the engineer had missed such a clear warning signal, he must have been asleep at the controls of his locomotive. On the way from the courtroom, the signal man was heard to say to one of his friends, "I'm so glad that he didn't ask me one more question. He didn't ask if the lantern was lighted. I had fallen asleep and was startled by the approaching train. Yes, I waved the lantern, but I didn't have time to light it first."

### SIR ERNEST SHACKLETON

The most important part of this message is the need for every Christian to be ready for His soon coming.

In 1914 an expedition led by Sir Ernest Shackleton set out from England to cross the continent of Antarctica in the ship, *Endurance*. Pack ice closed around the ship and split it in two. For five months the members of the expedition drifted around on large ice floes. Then, with the help of small boats they had salvaged from the *Endurance*, they made their way to Elephant Island. The nearest human habitation was 800 miles away on the island of South Georgia.

Shackleton, with five of his men, faced the mountainous waves in his little whale boat and managed to reach South Georgia. Soon a rescue attempt was organized. The first attempt failed. The pack ice closed in and the rescue ship had to turn back. A second attempt was organized and failed. A third attempt was made, and once again the ice was the victor.

Only after four rescue attempts could Shackleton find a way through to Elephant Island. As he

approached that wilderness of snow and ice, he wondered what he would find. Would anyone still be alive after those months of waiting? Would there be, perhaps, a few survivors gone mad with the silence and the waiting?

Shackleton found every man alive, in good condition, and in good spirits. How had they survived? The secret lay in the leadership of the man he had left in charge. Every day he would say to his men, "Get ready, boys, the boss may come back today."

And every day they got ready. Every day they prepared themselves. Every day they watched. Every day they waited. And despite the long silence, despite the great odds, one day Shackleton did come back. We need to watch and pray every day. And one day soon, Jesus will come back to rescue us. His admonition to us is: *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.* (Matt. 24:44)

### THE KING IS COMING!

Come with me down memory lane! I grew up in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada. We lived in a small town and didn't get to the city very often. This was a very special day. Our whole family was going to the city of Saskatoon to participate

in a singular event. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth would be visiting our city. We arrived early. Preparations for this royal visit were evident everywhere we looked. Buildings were wearing new coats of paint, lawns were freshly mowed, flowers were blooming, flags were flying, banners welcomed the coming King and Queen.

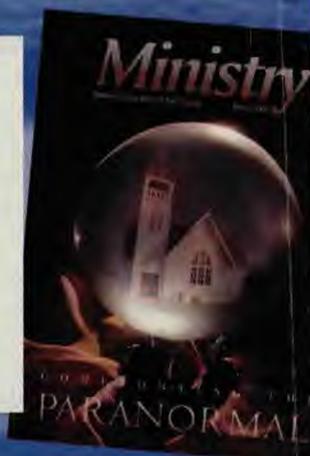
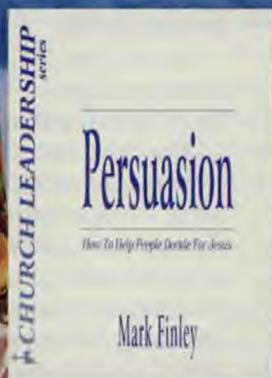
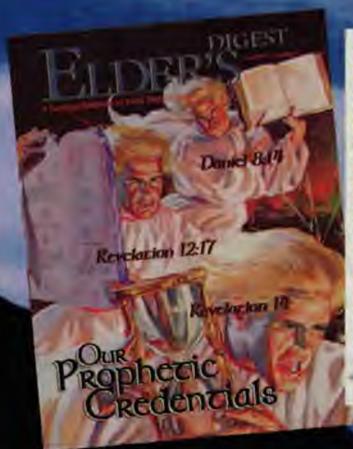
Along the crowded street, we managed to find a place to wait for the coming parade. Time seemed to hang in space as we waited. There was so much for a little boy to see. All eyes were watching as a band came marching down the street. I had never seen a live band. I was filled with wonder. I especially remember the big trombones. Then came the motorcade. Shiny black convertibles, city officials, members of the provincial government, the Prime Minister of Canada, all of them looking dignified and official. Then, there they were! Slowly they moved past us, the King and Queen of the British Empire. Just as they passed, the King looked at me and smiled. There was so much for a little boy to see, but only one thing seemed important now. Everyone was looking at the King.

I believe with all my heart that the King is coming, and that He is coming very soon!

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