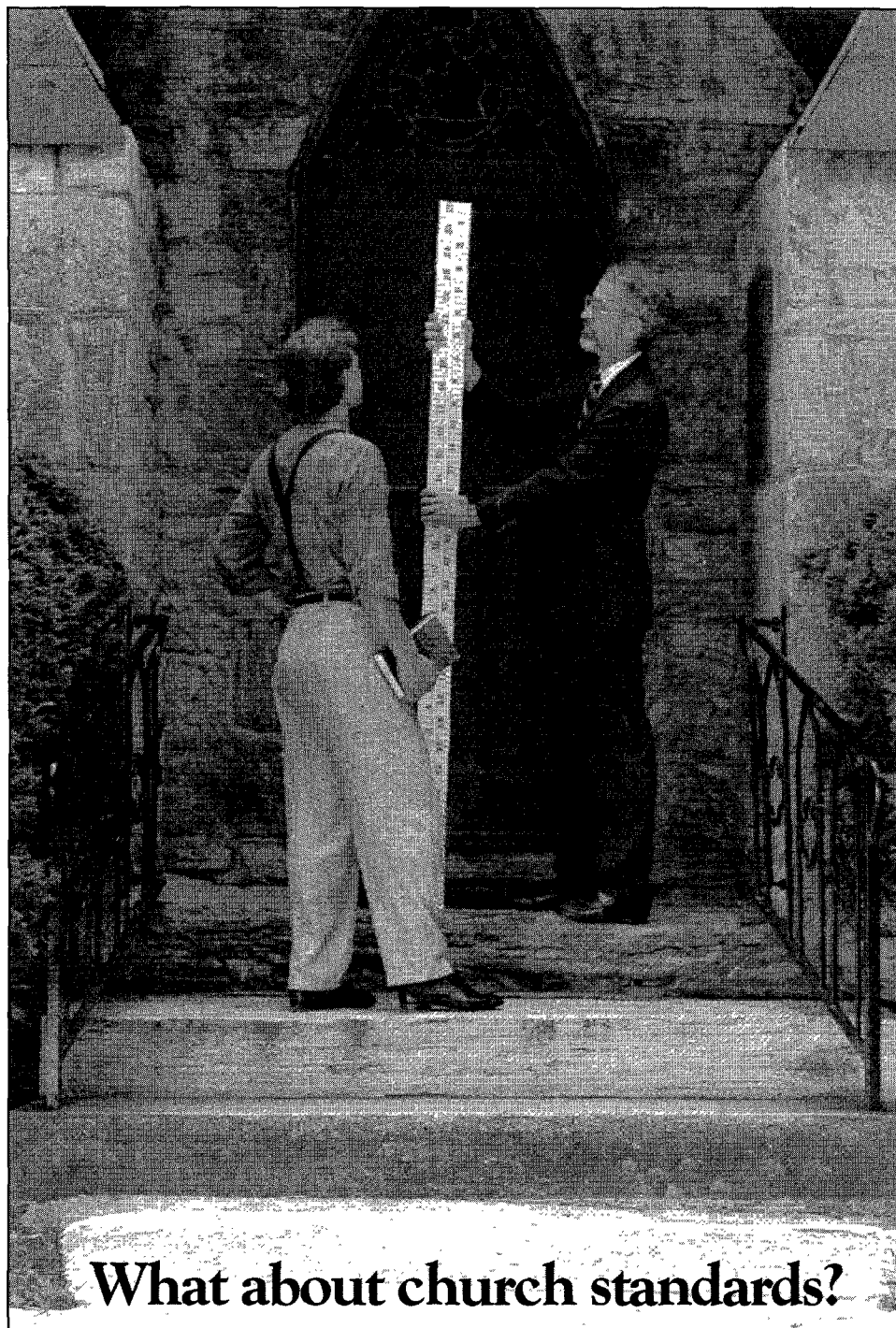


Ministry

International Journal for Clergy

October 1989



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Pros and cons on church structure

I would like to congratulate your bold effort in putting together the *Ministry* journal of June 1989. I am particularly pleased with the article written by Robert S. Folkenberg ("Church Structure — Servant or Master?").

Too often we focus on the wineskins rather than the wine, the structures rather than the mission of the church, the form of the church rather than its goal, maintaining the institutions rather than evangelism. Folkenberg correctly points out that we have destroyed the movement and institutionalized the church in such a way that we have lost the vision of growth. We have moved away from the Missionary Volunteer movement to Advent Youth, from the Home Missionary movement and then the Lay Activities department to Personal Ministries and now to the amalgam of Church Ministries.

Other churches and organizations have been paralyzed by this kind of sociological development. It seems that we have accepted as inevitable the forms of development common to these other institutions and have become unwilling to reform or to live with the prophetic consciousness of our *raison d'être*.

I trust that Elder Folkenberg has begun the needed reformation in his own conference, and that all of us together will follow suit so that God can pour His Spirit on us for a finished work. —D. Robert Kennedy, director, Personal Ministries, Sabbath School, and Religious Liberty departments of the Greater New York Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Manhasset, New York.

■ "Church Structure" (June 1989) was superb. The use of facts, charts, graphs, and statistics gave substantiation to your evaluations. Many of us are greatly concerned regarding the hospital system, particularly the liability of the church for this corporate structure that bears the name *Adventist*.

I especially appreciate your discussion of governance. I agree with you that when we have boards that run 35-50 members we have an overkill situation

with 35-50 different opinions. Such a large body is only as effective as its leader, who has to be strong enough to push things through.

At times people are put on the committees in a conference not because they have expertise in business and management but because they live in a certain section of the conference. This is a challenge to proper governance. —Duane H. Anderson, director of trust services, Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Clackamas, Oregon.

■ It may seem that our subscription books have a 5 to 1 markup. But if we would include in our factory wholesale price about 23 percent for manufacturing, 15 percent for advertising, 9 percent for management/training/follow-up service, and 3 percent for factory incentives, as other reputable companies do, our true markup would be a very nominal 2 to 1.

The vice president of Field Enterprise (the *World Book* publisher) told me that a normal markup for encyclopedias is about 5 to 1 (with about 15-20 percent commission and no fringe benefits to their salespeople). Sears' Book Department said they couldn't handle any book for less than a 2.5 to 1 markup.

In our collecting, dare we mix our highly spiritual, caring appeal in sales with the seemingly less risky strong-arm collection method of the world? Christian HHES workers serve our customers in a way that represents Jesus and His caring church!

We do not do this sacred work [of literature evangelism] because it makes sense from a material standpoint, any more than we return the sacred tithe for business reasons or offerings because the Sabbath sermon in our local church excels one by Elder Vandeman or Elder Brooks that we could obtain on a \$3 cassette tape. We don't support Christian education because it always makes sense financially, the teacher is more qualified, or the facilities are better than the public school down the road. (Or because the struggling church or school is anywhere near to capacity.)

Don't we support the church, the church school, and the literature ministry because we love the Lord, He has asked us to do it, and it is therefore the right thing to do? We want literature evangelists to receive benefits equal to those of other church workers not because it makes sense financially, but because it is the right thing to do. —Paul Jensen, publishing director, Pennsylvania Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Reading, Pennsylvania.

■ As I read and then reread the article, I found myself saying amen again and again. Your clear statements calling us back to the primacy of mission over structure gave encouragement to a pastor of 20 years' service who has too often seen evidence that maintaining our present structures and systems seems to be more important to some people than fulfilling our mission. I was encouraged when I saw evidence of substantial improvement in the ratio between workers in the field and workers in the office during the past 15 years. —Wayne Willey, pastor, Amesbury Seventh-day Adventist Church, Amesbury, Massachusetts.

■ You have made an excellent analysis of the symptoms throughout our church system, but I do not believe that you have located the cause. I cannot speak for the ministry, but as my life was in the literature work from 1928, I have noted the change.

In the early days all we had for sale was a single \$5 book for adults and two \$1.50 books for children, and we needed 50 percent commission for an existence. It was truly missionary work. We would be given a county and we had to see every family—we had record cards, and if they were not home in the daytime we called back in the evening.

A tremendous change came in as sets of books were made. The publishers came to our institutes with the plea that now that we were selling \$200 and \$400 sets of books, we should lower our commission, not taking 50 percent of these large sets but keeping the price down on our publications so more could buy. We
(Continued on page 38)

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Is it true, as an author writing for the *Adventist Review* recently opined, that the reason Seventh-day Adventists have an official position on jewelry but not on abortion is that our standards are by and large a product of the Victorian era in which our church was born?

Is it possible that the way our standards have been communicated in the past has led to pharisaic behaviorism? Do some of our members believe that salvation is based on doing all the right things and refraining from all the wrong things? And is the church allowing them to persist in their beliefs without doing as Jesus did for the Pharisees—calling them to see the large holes in their handwoven blanket of righteousness?

How well are we doing at transmitting the standards of the church to the second-, third-, and fourth-generation Adventists who are teenagers today? Is it possible to have one set of standards that applies equally well in every culture and clime of the world? Do good Adventists eat mustard?

Where did our standards really come from, anyway, and why do we have them in the first place? Who decides which standards are important enough to be transmitted to new Adventists?

If any of the above questions interest you, you're going to enjoy this special issue of *Ministry*. We had so much material this time that we couldn't fit it all into our normal 32 pages, so you've received an extra eight pages—all as part of your regular subscription.

In this issue you'll find answers, or at least pointers to answers, to all of the above questions except one. I threw in the question about mustard just because it seems illustrative of a tendency within Adventism. I was raised with the belief that good Adventists don't eat mustard. At a recent church potluck a yellow substance was provided for spreading on the vegetarian burgers, but the lady who put it on the table made sure that I knew that it was not mustard. Yet pickles were readily available on the same table, and the only basis that I know of for eschewing the eating of mustard is two negative references to it in Ellen G. White's writings. Significantly, both references speak with equal disdain of pickles, yet many Adventists have singled out only mustard to avoid.

My point is that Adventist standards, as they are practiced today, are partially based on a compendium of prohibitions that have survived in the collective memory rather than on values chosen by careful consideration and systematic study.

Is there a better way of establishing standards? We hope to hear from many of you after you have read the articles in this issue.



COVER PHOTO BY JOEL D. SPRINGER

How Adventist teenagers perceive their church

Janet Leigh Kangas
and Roger L. Dudley

A recent survey reveals what Adventist youth think of their church, whether they plan to remain in it, and why.



Janet Leigh Kangas, Ph.D., was a research assistant at the Institute of Church History when she collaborated on this article with Roger L. Dudley, Ed.D., the director of the Institute. Dr. Kangas is now editor of Mission.



The story is told of three young Cub Scouts who were fishing on a riverbank when one of them fell in. The other two jumped in to save him, and after they had pulled him out, one of them ran to inform the victim's mother. "We're trying to give him artificial respiration," he sobbed, "but he keeps getting up and walking away!"

In spite of the church's best efforts, many youth are getting up and walking away as we try feverishly to save them. The questions are, How many? and, What is the problem? Are we initially using artificial inspiration? And when the problems develop, are we using irrelevant methods to draw them back?

To answer these questions, the North American Division has commissioned the Institute of Church Ministry to conduct a 10-year study of randomly selected 15- and 16-year-old Adventist youth. The study will focus on what factors contribute to young members' choosing to drop out of or remain in the church. A total of 1,511 respondents are included in the survey. Only the first year of the study has been completed, but the results reported have revealed some fascinating facts about the youth of our church.

Baptism and membership

More than half the respondents felt positive about Seventh-day Adventism. Fifty-nine percent were positive about their baptism, and 53 percent regarded themselves as active members. Regarding the future, 77 percent indicated that

they intend to remain Adventists when they are on their own.

Of the 41 percent who wished they had not been baptized, 19 percent already identified themselves as inactive Adventists. Twenty-one percent expressed feelings of rebellion, and perceived restraint from parents and other authority figures as contributing to their rebellion.

Some youth felt they needed rebaptism although they were but a few years beyond their baptism. Typical statements were, "I want to get rebaptized, but I need further Bible studies first," "I want to get rebaptized, I feel so sinful," "I was too young to know what baptism means," "I want to get rebaptized, but I must first find my way back to the Lord and I don't know how." These statements reveal a lack of understanding of the developmental nature of sanctification and the purpose of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps these youth have been prepared more for baptism itself than for life after baptism. When the realization settles in that they have lost their "once holy" state, they conclude that they have "blown it" and must start over. Some deal with their problems by explaining, "I was too young to understand the significance" (19 percent). Others admit, "I find myself bucking the system sometimes, or wishing I could" (10 percent), or "I question some Adventist teachings or practices" (7 percent). These responses indicate that youth need continued guidance after baptism.

Eight percent indicated that they wished to compare Adventism with other religions someday. It seems significant that all of the half dozen or so who

volunteered the information that they were interested in another religion specified Pentecostal churches.

Several youth wrote that they would like to see more expression and spontaneity such as clapping, joyfulness, and singing in the services. Others responded voluntarily in their free-response answers that their church is "boring," "unexciting," or "dead."

Attitudes toward attendance

One of the strongest objective indexes of the teenagers' intentions to remain Adventists was their frequency of church attendance. Those who attend regularly now are almost twice as likely to say they plan to remain active in the church when they are on their own (see table 1).

These statistics do not, of course, prove that teenagers' dedication to Adventism can be doubled by forcing them to attend church. Attendance as used here is merely an index as to whether the youth are church enjoyers or church avoiders.

The importance of church attendance as a measure of religiosity was recognized by Davidson in 1975 when he suggested replacing the classic 1962 "Glock model" with its complicated measuring of the ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential dimensions with a simple index: two years of regular church attendance.¹ And Hartman, who conducted a Methodist study, reported a year later that Sunday school attendance was the best predictor of whether youth would stay in or separate from the church, and that the motivation to separate was failure to feel accepted, loved, wanted.²

The importance of the social element to youth had been recognized earlier by Strommen, a Lutheran, when he made observations relating the absentee and "irreligious" youth: These youth have the same basic longings and aspirations as those who are active, he said. "The principal barrier lies in their feelings of not being wanted, their suspicion of the church, and their lack of confidence in the church's ability to give help."³ In 1972 Strommen elaborated that the "best predictor" of whether a youth will remain in the church is the degree to which the youth "belongs, fits in."⁴ Consuela reported in 1979 that Catholic youth slip away from the church for "lack of identity with it, lack of roots."⁵ And a follow-up study six years after a 1962 New York Billy Graham crusade revealed

that the most important influence bearing on the teenage retention factor was the "acquisition of new friends."⁶

Church's fulfillment of spiritual and social needs

In our study a total of 41 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the church meets the spiritual needs of its youth. Another 25 percent were neutral. Thus only one in three was negative. It cannot, however, be assumed that a neutral response means that a youth sees no deficiencies. It may just mean that he or she has no expectations. And we must not take lightly the fact that the remaining third of the respondents indicated that the church did not meet their spiritual needs.

When the regular church attenders were distinguished from irregular, the regular attenders expressed greater satisfaction with the church's ability to meet their spiritual needs than the irregular attenders. We did not determine whether the church attenders attend because their spiritual needs are met or

Several wrote that they would like to see more expression and spontaneity in the services.

whether their spiritual needs are met because they attend.

Forty-four percent of those surveyed also felt that their social needs were being met in the church, while 23 percent were neutral. Thus only one-third responded negatively. As could be expected, regular attenders were more satisfied than their less frequently present counterparts.

The teens' impressions of certain church-provided spiritual and social activities are shown in Table 2. Only those who actually engaged in these experiences were included in the evaluation.

TABLE 1
Regular Church Attenders Compared With Irregular Attenders

	Percent Who Attend Nearly Every Week	Percent Who Attend Less Regularly
Present Experience:		
Religion is important in my life.	85*	57
I have a love experience with Jesus Christ.	70	51
I'm happy with my religion.	77	49
I want to be the best Adventist Christian I can possibly be.	78	48
Intentions for Future:		
I intend to remain an active Adventist when I am on my own.	81	43
I can't imagine I will ever belong to another denomination than Seventh-day Adventist.	83	51
I want to have personal devotions regularly when I am on my own.	70	45
If I get married, I want to marry an Adventist.	68	32
I want my children to attend Adventist schools.	65	32

*Percentages indicate those who somewhat agree or strongly agree with the statement.

TABLE 2
Enjoyment Level of Church Activities

Activity	Percent Participation	Percent Who Really Liked	Percent Who Really Disliked
Collecting items for needy	77	65	9
Pathfinders	77	64	11
Summer camps	67	63	3
Ingathering	81	61	18
Youth evangelistic meetings	59	52	7
Literature distribution	73	52	18
Church or Sabbath school office	44	39	5
Bible studies to non-Adventists	33	27	7
Sunshine/jail bands	24	19	7

Perceptions of pastors and members

Our survey provides some interesting data concerning which groups of people have the most influence on teenagers. Respondents weighted their closeness to their mother highest, giving her an 83 percent rating. Peers were next at 70 percent, then fathers, 68 percent; sister(s), 56 percent; brother(s), 55 percent; Adventist teachers, 36 percent; Sabbath school teachers, 35 percent; and church leaders, 30 percent.

A corresponding set of data called for weighting of those perceived by the teenagers to be religious role models. These proved to be: parents, 45 percent; pastors, 40 percent; adult members, 35 percent; teachers, 32 percent; grandparents, 28 percent; peers, 27 percent; miscellaneous others, 18 percent; siblings, 15 percent.

An interfacing of the two sets of data reveals that although teenagers reported being close to peers and siblings, the people who have the strongest influence on their ideals are adults. They do not typically look to age mates as spiritual role models.

It appears significant that although pastors were among the lowest category in closeness of relationships, their spiritual role modeling is second only to that of parents. It seems appropriate here to recall the words of Dann Spader of Moody Bible Institute, "Teens determine what's true based on what they experience in relationships. If you want to influence a teenager, you've got to establish a relationship with him."⁷

A religious role model is not enough. A close relationship is not enough. The

study revealed that mothers come the closest to bringing the two qualities together. We suggest that the pastor's (and father's, as well as other adults') spiritual role modeling might have more influence if they were to develop close relationships with teenagers.

One happy youth described the kind of relationships teenagers prefer to have with spiritual leaders: "I'd like to tell you about my Sabbath school leaders. They are so incredible. I don't know anyone who can make religion so fun. Without them I might have stopped going to church. They don't stand in front of us with a Bible in one hand and chalk in the other. They sit with us in a circle, and we just talk. We discuss things rather than listen to lectures. I think it's much better for us to be asked things and talk about them, rather than to just be told 'This is

The strongest influence on teenagers' intentions to remain Adventists proved to be the degree to which they agree with the church's standards.

right,' 'This is wrong,' 'Do this to go to heaven,' etc."

Table 3 reveals the teenagers' perceptions of Seventh-day Adventist members overall. Sixty-eight percent agree that Adventists are God's chosen people and 67 percent believe that Adventists express love, but only 36 percent responded that Adventist lifestyles are superior and 39 percent that there is harmony among church leadership.

More than half expressed disagreement with the negative statements—that Adventists are hypocrites (51 percent), that they serve God through fear of being lost (56 percent), or that good Adventists have less fun than worldly people (57 percent).

Perceptions of members varied. A very representative feeling expressed was "The people have to go. Some of them come so they can find out who did this and that and what happened during the week. See who has the best, newest fashion, and which cost more, and who paid the most tithe." Another summarized the other end of the continuum: "I enjoy church mostly because of the extended family it brings to me; I am so happy with our church. I hope all Seventh-day Adventist churches are like ours. I am totally satisfied." It cannot be overemphasized that teenagers' attitudes toward the church are based on their perceptions of the members.

Attitudes toward church standards

In the entire study the strongest influence on teenagers' intentions to remain Adventists proved to be the degree to which they agree or disagree with the church's standards. (This, however, is an internal, unobservable criterion—an attitude—that is not so objective an index as the measurement of church attendance.)

Even if the alienation-prone teenagers slide through Bible classes without paying attention and sleep through Sabbath sermons, they will still squarely face some practical indoctrination by the church's lifestyle restrictions, or standards. Here the rubber meets the road.

As shown in Table 4, movies, rock music, dancing, and jewelry, in that order, seem to be the four standards least accepted by the teenagers. The fact that one-fourth of them were willing to disclose (anonymously) their disagreement (8 percent) or strong disagreement (17 percent) with the church's position forbidding premarital sex will be alarming to many.

Adults may take heart, however, that not all youth have rejected the standards. One youth wrote, "Our church is one of the better, more loving, caring religions with high standards. And I'm for high standards." Several mentioned that they felt the church's spirituality is slipping and that many members no longer live up to church standards.

Many who wrote about the standards did so in the context of confusion rather than conflict. Some wanted clarification regarding why the church condones wedding bands while forbidding other types of jewelry. Differing adult interpretations of the standards also lead to confusion for the youth.

One rather new trend in free thinking was discovered, but in regard to a doctrine rather than a standard. Several youth lamented that the Sabbath begins at sundown Friday instead of at a time that would not interfere with Friday evening activities such as football games. They proposed that the Sabbath hours be reckoned from midnight to midnight. Most Adventists would probably view this development with alarm.

Necessity of church membership

Many youth seemed to feel that their relationship with the church doesn't really matter, and that all that does matter is their personal relationship with Christ. This was usually expressed in the context of disliking the members. One youth, who did perceive the church body as essential to salvation, wrote, "I wish we could form a new congregation at our church because I want to live with Jesus someday."

One articulate youth wrote, "The church has me closed into a box with many exits, but none that pleases me." Another elaborated this same feeling, "I love it, and I hate it. It holds me back. But if it didn't, things would get out of hand. So then again I like it." Some wrote that although they intended to remain Adventists, their Adventism would be different from the Adventism they experience today.

In summary, Adventist youth perceive the church through the people and perceive the rules through the people who make them. If the people are warm and accepting of youth and the talents of youth, teenagers view the church as a fine place to incubate their religious experience. If the rules are understandable, consistent, and fair, the people are viewed as spiritual role models. If teenagers

TABLE 3
Adventist Teenagers' Perceptions of Church Members
(SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, N = neutral, A = agree, SA = strongly agree)

Perceptions	Percentage				
	SD	D	N	A	SA
Positive statements:					
Adventists are God's chosen people.	7	7	17	20	48
Adventists express love.	3	8	22	38	29
Adventists' lifestyles are superior.	15	18	30	22	14
There is harmony among church leadership.	12	20	28	26	13
Negative statements:					
Adventists are hypocrites.	33	18	26	18	6
Adventists serve God through fear of being lost.	35	21	23	13	7
Good Adventists have less fun than other people.	38	19	20	15	8

TABLE 4
Attitude of Acceptance of Church Standards

Standard	Percent Neutral	Percent Agree	Percent
			Strongly Agree
More agreement:			
Recreational drugs	4	5	69
Tobacco	3	5	69
Alcohol	5	7	64
"Unclean" meats	12	13	50
Premarital sex	13	16	46
Less agreement:			
Jewelry/makeup	20	18	22
Dancing/discos	21	17	18
Rock music	20	17	15
Movie theaters	20	14	12

ers believe the relationships and rules represent the caring and justice of God, their perceptions of the Seventh-day Adventist Church are positive. ■

¹ James D. Davidson, "Glock's Model of Religious Commitment: Assessing Some Different Approaches and Results," *Review of Religious Research* 16 (Winter 1975): 83-91.

² Warren J. Hartman, *Membership Trends: A Study of Decline and Growth in the United Methodist Church 1949-1975* (Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 1976).

³ Merton P. Strommen, *Profiles of Church Youth*

(St. Louis: Concordia, 1963), p. 241.

⁴ Merton P. Strommen, Milo L. Brekke, Ralph C. Underwager, and Arthur L. Johnson, *A Study of Generations* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1972), p. 295.

⁵ Mary Consuela, "Religious Education Forum: The Past of the Church: an Essential for the Adolescent," *Momentum* 10 (February 1979): 13-16.

⁶ Frederick L. Whitam, "Peers, Parents, and Christ: Interpersonal Influence on Retention of Teenage Decisions Made at a Billy Graham Crusade," *Proceedings of the Southwestern Sociological Association* 19 (1968): 154-158.

⁷ Dann Spader, "Tired of Band-aid Approaches to Youth Work?" *Moody Monthly*, January 1984, p. 55.

The historical basis of Adventist standards

Gerald Wheeler

A look at how our standards originated and have changed through the years can help us address the need for change today.



Gerald Wheeler is an associate book editor for the Review and Herald Publishing Association.

During the vacation season travelers in eastern Pennsylvania find the highways clogged with tour buses and out-of-state cars. People from all over the United States come there to see the colonies of Amish farmers.

To the outsider, all of the Amish, with their old-fashioned clothing and horse-drawn buggies, appear alike. But the more careful observer soon discovers that the Amish community has many subgroups, distinguished by such traits as clothing style and buggy design and color. Various factions disagree on issues such as the width of a man's hat brim and whether he should wear one or two suspenders

Such discussions appear trivial and meaningless to the non-Amish. But they are important to the Amish because these issues actually define the nature and boundaries of their community of faith. They define who is a fellow believer and who is not. For any group to exist at all it must have a conscious identity, a self-awareness of who it thinks it is. It defines itself not only by what it believes and does, but also by what it rejects.

Most casual observers assume that the Amish think modern technology and culture are inherently evil. But the more perspicacious Amish leaders recognize and admit that their rejection of contemporary culture is a way of making themselves a distinct, self-identifiable, and cohesive group. They want to be different from the surrounding cultures so they

will know who they are and who belongs to the community of faith and who does not.

Amish men wear beards because during the time of their origin shaving was perceived as symbolic of a militaristic culture. They use only hooks and eyes on their clothing because they want to be distinguished from fellow Mennonites who employ buttons. And they refuse modern technology because they see a need to maintain barriers that will keep them from being absorbed by modern society.

Perhaps some of the principles we observe at work among the Amish can help Seventh-day Adventists in their own current struggles with standards and self-identity.

Historical background of Adventist standards

Ellen White and others brought into the emerging Advent movement an approach to lifestyle based on the writings of John Wesley and other conservative religious groups.¹ Wesley and the early Methodists objected to the ostentatious styles of the wealthy classes. Men and women in the upper classes were expected to dress in a certain way as fitting of their station in life.

Most Methodists came from the lower classes and viewed expensive clothing and jewelry as an indication of vanity, self-indulgence, and an earthly heart. Wesley cautioned his followers to dress in the most simple attire and not "to ape the gentlemen." Because hair style was a part of the fashion mode of the wealthier classes, Methodist men combed their hair straight down over their foreheads in

what came to be considered "the Methodist fashion."

Simplicity and "plainness" gave Methodists a clear identity, both among themselves and in the larger society. Furthermore, Methodism sought to find biblical support for their self-identity. They quoted such passages as 1 Peter 3:3; 1 Timothy 2:8, 9; James 4:4; and 1 John 2:15.

The founders of our own church echoed this desire, even reprinting Wesley's sermons on the topic in the *Review and Herald*.² Adventists could identify with the Methodist perspective because they shared many of the same concerns and also came largely from the lower socioeconomic classes.

Like the Methodists, early Adventists sought to discover God's will for themselves and their lifestyle in the Bible. But they gave their own particular twist to what they found. They saw the present life as a continuous and unending series of tests that each believer must pass. For example, they viewed the parable of the ten virgins as an example of one such test, permitting the five wise virgins to advance to the next test. It was an extremely individual-oriented approach that saw life as a constant weeding-out process. Only a select few could make it to heaven.

On April 30, 1866, the Battle Creek church adopted a series of resolutions on dress (see p. 11). A few days later the General Conference Committee expressed its opinion that the work of Adoniram Judson, missionary to Burma, entitled "A Letter to the Women of America on Dress," was an "admirable exposition of the Scriptures on the subject," and requested the Review and Herald Publishing Association "to append these [the Battle Creek church] resolutions to Judson's work on dress."³

Twentieth-century Adventists might find it more difficult to see the texts quoted by Judson and the Battle Creek brethren as actually addressing some of the items and practices that the early Adventists opposed. Modern readers would interpret the scriptural passages differently. Yet Scripture spoke clearly to these pioneers about the follies of wearing jewelry made of rubber and human hair, of certain hairstyles and hair nets, and of the wrongness of a Christian man wearing a mustache or goatee.

Avoiding class consciousness

In a fascinating book titled *The Light of*

the Home: An Intimate View of the Lives of Women in Victorian America, Harvey Green and Mary E. Perry compare the behavior and stands of the lower, middle, and upper classes on a number of trends reshaping nineteenth-century American society. Many of these trends involved the urgency with which Americans wanted to be recognized as part of the emerging middle class, and in this struggle for recognition we can see the basis of certain Adventist standards.

Nineteenth-century American Adventists were tempted to adopt every new fad and do anything they could to identify themselves as middle class. Where Green and Perry discuss specific topics that Ellen White wrote about, it seems significant that Mrs. White usually sided with either the lower- or upper-class position or attitude and almost always took a stand against the middle-class attitude. Why? Perhaps because she feared that Adventists, by enthusiastically climbing aboard the middle-class bandwagon, would lose their special identity and effectiveness.

This explains why Ellen White opposed bicycles when they were an expensive symbol of identification with the middle class, but when bicycles became primarily a form of personal transportation, she ceased warning against them. Apparently she was concerned about protecting the Seventh-day Adventist identity, avoiding squandering money, and avoiding vanity. But as the bicycle's role in society changed, her reaction changed as well.

Similarly, Mrs. White opposed the corset both for health reasons and because it was viewed as a symbol of wealth and aristocracy. Any woman wearing such physically limiting apparel obviously had a husband with enough money to hire servants to do the housework that she could not do.⁴

In the same vein Mrs. White at one point proposed a certain style of women's dress as more healthful and as a protest against the power of class pride and personal vanity. But her reform dress is not relevant today because it no longer symbolizes a protest against unhealthy and socially arrogant style. At another time she stated that dress was not to be a test.⁵ In taking such a position she was limiting the earlier Adventist concept that everything in life was a test.

Adventists, like a number of other conservative groups, opposed anything that they felt had pagan connotations or

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To Ellen White, simplicity did not exclude decoration if such decoration did not appeal to vanity or class consciousness.

origin. They even avoided calling the days of the week by name because the names were derived from names of pagan gods. For many years the *Review and Herald* employed only First Day, Second Day, etc. Today the pagan origin of day names is of little cultural concern. Few see it as a threat to Christian or Adventist identity.

Taking off the wedding ring also was once a symbol of identifying with the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America. Removing the engagement ring and wedding band was a preparatory step for baptism. However, whether we like it or not, the sexual revolution of the 1970s and society's tolerance of promiscuity have robbed this symbolic removal of much of its power. The much older symbolism of the wedding band as an indication of marital commitment has reasserted itself.

The fact that removing the wedding band never was a global Adventist symbol is also significant for our understanding of the basis of Adventist standards. Australian May Lacey, when she married Mrs. White's son William, had a ring ceremony because of its heavy symbolism to her family. Ellen White supported her daughter-in-law's decision. Later, when May White moved to North America, she stopped wearing the wedding band because she had moved from a culture that saw wearing the wedding band as a symbol of commitment to marriage to America where many saw not wearing one as a symbol of commitment to and identification with the Adventist community of faith.⁶

In Victorian America the "plain,

heavy" wedding band was the recognized middle-class symbol of marriage. Men did not commonly wear wedding rings.⁷ It may be that part of the reason Ellen White spoke against wedding bands in America was her opposition to Adventists adopting the trappings of middle-class status.

In 1905 Mrs. White posed for a family portrait that included her granddaughter Ella White Robinson wearing a long metal chain around her neck and standing beside her husband, who had a heavy watch chain on his vest.⁸ Eight years later Mrs. White again posed with her granddaughter. This time Ella was wearing several strands of a shell necklace that, according to Alta Robinson (Ella's daughter-in-law and a staff member of the Ellen G. White Estate), Ellen White herself had brought to her granddaughter as a gift from the Hawaiian Islands. But even more interestingly, a contemporary eyewitness account of Mrs. White speaking to the Minneapolis General Conference session describes her as wearing "a straight dress of black with nothing to break the somberness, save a tiny white collar about her neck and a heavy metallic chain which hung suspended near her waist."⁹ Such a chain would no doubt be an accessory, a purely decorative element of her costume. In plainer words, it was an item of adornment.

An examination of photographs of Ellen White reveals that she enjoyed wearing pins and brooches. See, for example, those in the article "Heirloom: Leaves From Ellen White's Family Album" in the Spring 1982 issue of *Adventist Heritage*. She wore the pins either on her dress or to pin her collar together. When she visited Hawaii a woman gave her silk material, a silk scarf, and a pin of white stones costing \$10, a good week's pay at the time. Ellen White's first reaction was not to accept the gifts, but seeing that this would disappoint the woman, she took them and wore them afterward. Echoing John Wesley's perspective, she wrote that it was "very plain and serviceable" and "not showy at all."¹⁰ To Ellen White, simplicity or plainness did not exclude decoration if such decoration did not appeal to personal vanity or class consciousness.

Another standard that has been strongly upheld by Adventists, at least until recently, has to do with attendance at theaters. Mrs. White has some strong things to say about theaters and theater attendance, and it appears that she rules

out serious drama. But we need to consider the historical basis of her opposition. Serious drama as we now know it simply did not exist in nineteenth-century America. Theater consisted of melodramatic plays interspersed with "one-act fore- and after- pieces often gingered up with breeches parts for women and licentiousness and buffoonery." Whenever they could, the producers of the plays would slip in lots of women wearing tights or other scanty costumes. A British actor observed of American theater that "modesty seems not to be a necessary qualification in an actress."

Theaters were usually clustered among billiard parlors, saloons, "and other resorts for the profligate and idle." The audiences too often consisted of street rowdies and prostitutes and their potential customers. Thus the theater had a well-deserved bad reputation. It was not until late in the century that plays began to be presented without the musical and other acts.¹¹

Another major form of the theater was the minstrel shows with their black-faced White actors presenting crude racial stereotypes. They were so popular that serious drama could not compete against them.¹²

Taking these factors into consideration, it seems to me that it would be wrong to categorically rule out the reading or performance of serious drama without considering the difference between these and what early Adventism took a stand against.

How to set our standards

What we see in these examples is that early Adventist understanding of right and wrong was strongly conditioned by cultural as well as time factors. We must always learn, as Ellen White did, how to select from culture what is timeless and useful, and reject the transitory and the dangerous. Consider, for example, what we refer to as the eight laws of health. Ellen White did not originate them. We find them extensively enunciated in a wide variety of popular publications of her day. Such articles stressed the need for fresh air, pure water, exercise, and rest, etc. Ellen White called for Adventists to adopt these healthful practices. But she rejected the motivation behind their original publication.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century the White middle-class population felt threatened by their own declining birth rate and a rising tide of

immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. They saw political control slipping from their grasp. The authors of the popular health articles saw in the eight laws of health a means of keeping the women of the White middle class in good health so that they could have more children. They believed that the future of the nation literally rested on the health and fertility of Anglo-Saxon Protestant women. The articles were avowedly racist.¹³ Ellen White could accept their

methodology without adopting their pre-suppositions.

She also shared many concerns, such as the importance of a temperance movement and the advantages of country living, with what we now call the Social Gospel movement in the United States. But she did not accept most of the movement's philosophical conclusions. She could respond to the positive aspects of her culture without adopting the negative elements.

Whether we are willing to admit it or not, the world has changed since our standards were first shaped, and we unconsciously recognize that fact by our continual modification of some practices.

Most Adventists, for example, no longer worry about the impropriety of wearing mustaches and goatees even though the General Conference once took an official stand against them.¹⁴

An example of a standard that many

1866 resolutions on dress

The Battle Creek Seventh-day Adventist Church adopted the following resolutions on dress on April 30, 1866. Those attending the General Conference session of that year liked them so much that they voted to adopt them also, making only a minor change in the wording of point 7 and adding a twelfth point.

"In view of the present corrupt and corrupting state of the world, and the shameful extremes to which pride and fashion are leading their votaries, and the danger of some among us, especially the young, being contaminated by the influence and example of the world around them—we feel constrained as a church, to express our views on the subject of dress, in the following resolutions, which we believe are truly scriptural, and such as will commend themselves to the Christian taste and judgment of our brethren and sisters everywhere.

RESOLUTIONS

"Point 1. We believe, as a church, that it is the duty of our members in all matters of dress, to be scrupulously plain.

"Point 2. We regard plumes, feathers, flowers, and all superfluous bonnet ornaments as only the outward index of a vain heart, and as such are not to be tolerated in any of our members.

"Point 3. Jewelry. We believe that every species of gold, silver, coral, pearl, rubber, and hair jewelry are not only entirely superfluous, but strictly forbidden by the plain teachings of the Scriptures.

"Point 4. Trimming of Dresses.

We hold that flounces, loops,* and a profuseness of ribbons, cording, braid, embroidery, buttons, etc., in dress trimming are vanities condemned by the Bible (see Isa. 3), and consequently should not be countenanced by 'women professing godliness.'

"Point 5. Low-Necked Dresses. These, we believe, are a disgrace to the community, and a sin in the church; and all who patronize this shameful fashion transgress the apostle's command to 'adorn themselves in modest apparel' (1 Tim. 2:9).

"Point 6. Dressing the Hair. We believe that the extravagant dressing and ornamenting of the hair, so common at this time, is condemned by the apostle (1 Tim. 2:9); and that the various beaded and spangled networks, such as are used to contain those artificial deformities called 'waterfalls,' 'waterwheels,' etc., are the 'cauls' of Isaiah 3:18 [margin], which God has threatened to take away in the day of His anger.

"Point 7. We hold that in the matter of shaving and coloring the beard, some of our brethren display a species of vanity equally censurable with that of certain of the sisters in dressing the hair; and that in all cases should they discard every style which will betoken the air of the fop; but while we have no objections to a growth of beard on all parts of the face, as nature designed it, yet where any portion of the beard is removed, we think the brethren greatly err from the sobriety of the Christian in donning the mustache or goatee.

"Point 8. We believe that the extreme fashions of the present day in bonnets and hats, for females, are not to be countenanced; but that the main object to be kept in view in obtaining wearing ap-

parel for the head is covering and protection.

"Point 9. Hoops. We believe that 'hoops are a shame' (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4, p. 68), meaning by hoops anything of the kind, by which from its size, or the nature of the material, the form of the wearer is liable to be immodestly exposed. (See Ex. 20:26.)

"Point 10. Costly Apparel. We believe that Paul by the expression 'costly array' (1 Tim. 2:9) condemns the obtaining of the most costly material for garments, either for males or females, although it may be unexceptionable in other respects.

"Point 11. New Fashions. We believe that the people of God should be slow to adopt new fashions, of whatever sort they may be; for if not useful, we ought never to adopt them; if they are, it will be time enough for us to take them after they have been tested, and the excitement of their introduction has passed away; and having once found that which is neat, modest, and convenient, let us be slow to change. See Titus 2:14."—*Published in the Advent Review and Sabbath Herald of May 8, 1866.*

"Point 12. While we condemn pride and vanity, as set forth in the foregoing resolutions, we equally abhor and abominate everything that is slovenly, slack, untidy, and uncleanly in dress or manners."—*Point 12 added by the General Conference Session of 1866; see Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, May 22, 1866.* ■

*"By 'loops,' we mean the custom of wearing long dresses, and then hooking up the skirt at intervals."

Adventist standards must form a fence that protects God's flock, not a barrier that excludes or separates into hostile factions.

Adventists believe has been changed by changes in society involves preparation for the Sabbath. Ellen White urged believers to have their baths on Friday, but in places where getting clean no longer involves laboriously heating water on a wood-burning stove, many Adventists see nothing wrong with taking a quick shower on Sabbath morning.¹⁵ The specific injunction no longer seems as relevant in the modernized Western world, though the absolute principle of Sabbath sacredness and observance remains eternal.

The General Conference and other Adventist institutions now have cars and drivers to transport visitors. In 1902, however, when the administrator of one of our sanitariums inquired whether his institution should obtain an automobile to take patients back and forth from the train station, Ellen White wrote, "My brother, do not make such a purchase." She saw it as setting an irresponsible pattern. Yet three years later she rode in a car from the train station to a sanitarium and expressed her enjoyment of automobile travel. In just three years the situation apparently had changed.¹⁶ What was one period's extravagance quickly became a necessity.

All these types of things are modifications of Adventist lifestyle to changing circumstances.

Like the Amish, we need a lifestyle that gives us an identity, that binds us together as a people. But it must be a fence that protects God's flock, not a barrier that excludes or separates into hostile factions. It must bring out scriptural principles that meet all times and

cultures rather than simply opposing certain nineteenth-century Victorian American practices. And it must learn to recognize that a practice that is a symbolic danger in one cultural context may lose that significance as time and cultural context change. An artificial flower that represents class status in one time and place may be nothing more than a harmless decoration in another.¹⁷

If we do not establish such a set of standards, one that is sensitive to changing conditions, we could become little more than a historical curiosity like the Amish. ■

¹ Several years ago one of our North American colleges sponsored a series of lectures presenting the Methodist heritage in Adventism. Each lecture concentrated on some topic such as health or dress and showed the influence Methodism had on Seventh-day Adventist beliefs and lifestyle. The individual selected to speak on dress became so uncomfortable at finding so many parallels between Ellen White's writings and those of Wesley on the topic that he never gave the lecture.

² See for example the reprint of Wesley's sermon "On Dress" in the July 10, 1855, issue.

³ *Review and Herald*, May 22, 1866.

⁴ *The Light of the Home*, pp. 3, 4.

⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 636, 637.

⁶ See Arthur White, Ellen G. White: *The Australian Years, 1891-1900* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983), pp. 196, 197.

⁷ J. C. Furnas, *The Americans: A Social History of the United States, 1587-1914* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1969), pp. 18, 19.

⁸ The photograph is printed in Arthur White, Ellen G. White: *The Early Elmshaven Years, 1900-1905* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1981).

⁹ "A Female Oracle," *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 21, 1888.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White letter 32a, 1891.

¹¹ Furnas, pp. 564-569, 757, 758; Robert R. Roberts, "Popular Culture and Public Taste," in H. W. Morgan, ed., *The Gilded Age*, revised and enlarged edition (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1970), pp. 285, 286.

¹² Furnas, pp. 516, 517; Roberts, p. 286.


¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 30, 115-117, 132-137, 183, 184. See also Janet Forsyth Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981).

¹⁴ See *Review and Herald*, May 22, 1866; Furnas, p. 665. The combination of mustache and goatee was popularized by a personality cult centering on Louis Napoleon, emperor of France and a major actor in European politics. Adventists could have been reacting to the style's association with him.

¹⁵ See, however, Thomas Blincoe's argument in "The Preparation Principle," *Ministry*, June 1988, pp. 6-8. Blincoe argues that the issue involved here is not how much work getting clean involves but the importance of preparing for the Sabbath before it arrives.

¹⁶ Ellen G. White letter 158, 1902, and letter 263, 1905. Both are quoted in E. G. White *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 1, pp. 394, 395.

¹⁷ Some Adventists may remember the discussion of artificial flowers that went on during the 1950s. The conclusion, as I recall, was that the flowers were acceptable (contrary to the nineteenth-century position) but should not be worn at camp meeting.



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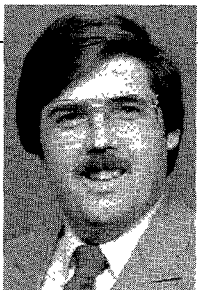
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Church standards today: where are we going?

Monte Sahlin

What function do church standards serve? And what effect does the passage of time and the growth of the church have on the relevance of those standards?



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Most Seventh-day Adventists observe the practice of daily prayer and Bible study. They choose not to use alcohol and tobacco, eat clean meat, or wear jewelry. A little more than half of them tithe their incomes, attend church regularly, and follow a vegetarian diet. An influential minority regularly gives time to community service, donates a portion of income beyond the tithe, and refuses to use firearms or attend the cinema.

In the nineteenth century, during which the Adventist Church was founded, it was common for Protestant bodies to establish church standards—minimum behavioral expectations required for full membership. But what rationale supports continuance of the practice by modern Adventists?

In the past 20 years I have led scores of weekend retreats and small groups in which the participants explored their personal religious commitments and experience. I have also interviewed hundreds of Adventists who no longer attend church. I have learned that church members define church standards in a wide variety of ways, and that their understanding of the nature and function of church standards has a lot to do with their attitude toward them.

Some regard church standards as definitions of sin. One woman told me, "The Ten Commandments were given long ago, and God has now given us a better set of rules for the last days." Those who understand church standards in this way often emphasize their need for simple

rules that define sin clearly and concretely. They are impatient with the abstract theology of sin that is presented in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs and generally taught by Adventist ministers.

For others, church standards form the identity of Adventism. They use such phrases as "Adventists just don't do that" or "The standards identify the true Adventists." This view emphasizes the boundaries of the Adventist community, helping to define what it is and who belongs in it.

Perfectionism shapes the understanding of church standards that some members hold. The standards have become a useful way of defining the sinlessness that they believe they must attain to have salvation. Often this is an unconscious, unexamined belief rooted more in personality traits than in theology.

A few Adventists still relate church standards to social protest. They point out that in its early years the Adventist Church forged its standards around such social issues as the temperance movement. Adding apparent support to this view is the fact that the official statement of standards in the *Church Manual* says that Adventists "shun" secular entertainment, such as the theater and the pool hall. Shunning is a practice still used by Old Order Amish to protest unacceptable behavior. Somewhat like the modern boycott or strike, it is a method of taking a stand on social issues.

Others go further and state that originally the Adventist Church was a countercultural subgroup much like the Mennonites today. For them, the function of church standards extends beyond defin-

Those who are concerned about the quality of their lives with Christ make rules for themselves.

ing sin, demarcating identity, measuring personal perfection, or even raising key issues in the conflict between Christian faith and the secular world. Instead, church standards help form a comprehensive lifestyle that separates the Adventist community from, and opposes it to, the contaminated culture of the outside world. This view arises out of a notion of communal witness not widely understood among North American Adventists today, a notion that views the church's life together as set before a watching world in a larger evangelism.

There is another way to understand church standards that is closer to the roots of the concept but largely lost in the contemporary Adventist Church. Basic to this understanding is the notion of spiritual disciplines.

As have serious Christians in all ages, John Wesley and the early Methodists wanted to live holy lives primarily so that they could more effectively communicate the gospel and influence society for good. They believed that Christ's kingdom permeates the rebellious world largely through the embodiment of His values in the lives of His followers. The "method" of their Methodism involved "class meetings"—small groups in which people encouraged and supported one another in Bible study, prayer, and careful examination and correction of their lives.

Although for centuries "Christian brotherhoods" (orders of monks) had adopted spiritual disciplines aimed toward the same end, it was the Wesleyan groups that gave birth to the Protestant concept of spiritual disciplines. The Protestant concept differed from the Ro-

man Catholic concept in two ways: it was built on the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, and it emphasized living in the world rather than retreating to isolated separatist communities.

Coming primarily out of a Wesleyan background, the founders of the Adventist Church naturally brought class meetings and spiritual disciplines with them. One of Ellen White's articles in the *Review and Herald* (May 30, 1871), "How to Conduct Meetings," teaches the Wesleyan method for small group meetings. Other articles she wrote during the same period address such issues as our duty to the poor, dress reform, temperance, slavery, Christian recreation, and systematic benevolence.

How do spiritual disciplines work?

Christians who see themselves as servants of Christ with a call to ministry in the world want to be prepared for that calling. Much like athletes training for the Olympics, believers develop their personal resources toward the goal of serving effectively in Christ's name. They select certain disciplines or behavior patterns that enhance their awareness of God's will and their ability to do that will. As Richard J. Foster points out in his book *Money, Sex, and Power*, certain aspects of life have great potential for good or bad, and unless they are carefully managed, they tend to get us into trouble. Spiritual disciplines are ways of managing the life of the believer—tools for stewardship of a faithful existence.

It is important to note at this point that spiritual disciplines are not the same as the moral absolutes embodied in the Ten Commandments. These disciplines are practical ways of implementing moral and spiritual principles in one's life.

While disciplines help to prevent believers from unintentionally slipping into unfaithful patterns of living, they serve another, even more important role. They represent Christians' efforts to open and submit every aspect of their lives to Christ. And so by facilitating this more comprehensive submission, spiritual disciplines allow a more effective flow of the Spirit's fruit and gifts into the lives of the believers.

As Richard Lovelace says in *Dynamics of Spiritual Life* and as Ellen White implies in numerous places, all spiritual disciplines contain two primary elements. One of these elements involves the attempt to place under the lordship of Christ one's health, dress, sexuality, pol-

itics, economics, art, culture, professional life, recreation—all one's existence and resources. The other entails being increasingly intentional about every aspect of life, applying the principles of Christ's life and teachings to each element of life in a progressively more careful and thorough manner.

The 14 church standards Adventists have come to accept during the past 100 years resemble the spiritual disciplines that have been accepted throughout Christian history (see the box that accompanies this article). For example, Foster speaks of 13 disciplines: meditation, prayer, fasting, study, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession, worship, guidance, and celebration. And Thomas Merton and Richard Lovelace trace much the same outline.

There seems to be general agreement that in order to live significant Christian lives, believers must communicate regularly with God; they must control their health, money, possessions, time, leisure activities, and sexuality; and they must work actively in the world for faith, healing, and justice. Whether it means nineteenth-century farmers staying out of saloons or twentieth-century yuppies jogging three miles every morning, those who are concerned about the quality of their lives with Christ make rules for themselves.

Starting point of spiritual growth

Some people attempt to live a disciplined Christian life on their own. In fact, privatistic religion has become the norm in modern Western culture. But sooner or later most discover, as John Wesley did, that authentic Christianity is rooted in community.

One of the ways in which a fellowship of believers can support and encourage one another in their spiritual journey is by agreeing on certain minimum disciplines that will undergird their individual walks with Christ. Church standards are minimum spiritual disciplines that all members of a particular Christian fellowship agree to be the starting point for their spiritual growth. Those in that fellowship covenant that they will support one another and hold one another accountable for at least these minimum standards of spiritual discipline.

We should not regard believers who choose not to enter into the covenant as evil or deficient in commitment and fervor. But in making that choice, those believers have also chosen to live outside

that particular fellowship, because the covenant of accountability and encouragement is integral to the fabric of that fellowship.

This approach to Christian living will not work unless each member of the fellowship follows individual spiritual disciplines that surpass the minimum standards. Gordon Cosby, pastor of the interdenominational Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C., points out: "Unless we set a more demanding maximum discipline for ourselves, we will continue to fail at the point of the minimum discipline."

In Adventism the matter of diet illustrates well this principle of setting individual maximum disciplines. The minimum standard, or discipline, forbids the eating of unclean meat. But nearly half of North American Adventists have set a maximum discipline of a lacto-ovo-vegetarian diet, and some have adopted an entirely vegetarian diet or other, more radical standards. These more demanding disciplines benefit us primarily by freeing us from failure to meet the minimum standards.

Why standards are difficult

Many Christians react to the concept of spiritual disciplines and a fellowship with a covenant of accountability by saying something along the lines of "That's a great ideal, but it's almost impossible to do." Admittedly, implementing this concept poses its difficulties.

In the first place, individualism runs riot in our society and makes it exceedingly difficult for any communal structure—even the family—to survive. In this environment it is difficult for one adult to hold another adult accountable without alienating that person. It takes exceptional relational skill to maintain accountability within a Protestant, free-church heritage.

Second, a covenant of mutual accountability for minimum standards of Christian life requires tending. The meaning attached to certain behaviors changes in various cultures and times. As new peoples and new generations are won, they bring their own perspectives into the covenant community. Unless they are somehow allowed to participate in the formation of the covenant, they will increasingly feel that they are being subjected to someone else's definition of spiritual disciplines.

The debate in the Adventist Church during the 1970s and 1980s over the wed-

ding band exemplifies this kind of tension. In some cultures it was part of the covenant to define a wedding band as jewelry, while in other cultures that has never been true. Until recently, Adventists in the various cultures had limited contact, so this difference raised little discussion. But as church members began to travel and communicate more and contact increased, the discussion began to grow.

The fact that the younger generation of Adventists in the culture that had historically defined the wedding band as a symbol of unfaithfulness began to see it as a symbol of faithfulness added further complications. The generations that saw the wearing of the wedding band as marking a breaking of faith to the covenant were shaped by a time when the family unit was relatively strong and Adventism was much more concerned about materialism. The new generation has come to maturity in a time when the economic environment has changed and marriage and the family are under attack. The differing historical circumstances have shaped the differing significance these generations attach to this symbol.

Finally, mutual accountability in spiritual disciplines works best in a small group. Face-to-face fellowship makes possible the balancing of the personality and needs of each individual with his or her aspirations for spiritual growth and holy living. But as congregations and denominations grow larger, holding together a covenant relationship built around very specific behavioral standards becomes increasingly difficult.

In many ways the heartrending forces of change in the Adventist Church are the fruits of success. A century ago when a few hundred Adventists, all a part of New England culture, began to hammer out a covenant to support one another in their high aspirations for Christian living and service, things were not nearly as complicated as they must be in a fellowship of 6 to 8 million spread across hundreds of cultures. We could easily solve most of the current issues regarding church standards if we could reduce our movement again to a few hundred thousand members in a handful of cultures.

But the mission enunciated in the three angels' messages of Revelation 14 has called us together. If we were to sacrifice faithfulness to that mission in order to duck the difficult issue of church standards, then our fellowship would be meaningless. In the light of that mission,

we must bring about among Adventists a renewal of covenantal Christian living.

Reforming church standards

There is a considerable need today for a reform of Adventist Church standards, especially in the church of the First World. Those who fear a loss of church standards have grounds for their fears. At least one of the 14 church standards listed in the *Church Manual* (see box p. 16) has been entirely lost in Western culture: the discipline of chaperonage.

Some may argue that, since some Adventist parents in North America require their 15- and 16-year-old children to double-date or group-date, this means that this standard still exists. But parents rarely require this practice of 17-year-olds, and the chapter in the *Church Manual* clearly intends that adults, not other youth, serve as chaperons and that the standard applies to youth as well as children.

Interestingly, even as some standards (such as chaperonage) disappear from the scene, new standards begin to emerge. There is a growing opinion among some North American Adventists that we should take a position against abortion, and much of the discussion of the Davenport affair and other recent financial losses is not so much a criticism of specific business decisions as the emergence of a new standard concerning how faithful Adventists should use power and wealth.

More specific evidence of the erosion of church standards can be seen in a survey of church members conducted in 1988 by the Department of Church Ministries in the Pacific Union Conference. Only 42 percent of active church members there are willing to disfellowship members who smoke, and only 45 percent are willing to disfellowship members who use alcohol. In fact, only the issues of adultery and illegal drug use elicited majority support for disfellowshipping, and then by a very thin margin.

But we must be careful to understand what is going on here. While less than half the active church members supported disfellowshipping church members for any failure in church standards, 60 to 66 percent agree that those who have not begun to live according to the standards should not be baptized. And fully 70 percent believe that the church ought to increase its emphasis on some of the standards.

It is the mechanism of covenant and

accountability, the way the members of the fellowship support one another in spiritual disciplines, that the church is losing—not the values expressed in the content of the standards. Even in the most secularized areas of Western civilization, Adventists still believe in our historic stands. Yet they are uncomfortable with the methods that we have traditionally used to take those stands.

In other words, our problem with church standards is not so much a problem of laxity as it is a problem of diminished fellowship. As the church has become large and institutionalized, members find it increasingly difficult to live in covenant with one another in loving, personal ways.

Slowly, step by step, the march of time and social evolution pushes a radical sect toward becoming a tradition-bound denomination. Through the past three decades, Adventist leaders have repeatedly expressed concern about the impact of this process on Adventism. Each step in this process makes its impact on church standards:

1. In the beginning phases, a small group works very hard at being radically faithful to Bible principles. Those in the group direct much attention to extracting these Bible principles from the encrustation of tradition and institutions. With regard to how each member lives the Christian life, the group allows considerable freedom—and even a bit of anarchy. Fanaticism lurks nearby.

2. As the group grows, the members give increasing attention to ordering their common life. They shift their focus from discovering Bible principles to learning how to embody the Bible principles they have found. They enter into a covenant that may include minimum standards for spiritual disciplines and growth.

3. As time passes, the members of the group begin to focus solely on the embodiment of the biblical principles, losing sight of the principles themselves. Many members can no longer explain theologically why the rules exist, but they zealously observe the rules. At this stage principle surrenders to tradition, and the group becomes inflexible, incapable of change.

4. If sufficient time passes, the group may find itself, without realizing it, using tradition to encourage behavior that now, in fact, violates biblical principles. Churches that have gone this far have reached the apostate condition that the

Standards of Christian living of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

1. Daily Bible study and prayer.
2. Support of all proper efforts for social order and betterment, maintenance of an uncompromising stand for justice and right in civic affairs, and loyal citizenship.
3. Care in guarding the Sabbath.
4. Reverence for the time and place of worship.
5. Intelligent observance of the laws of health having to do with pure air, ventilation, suitable clothing, cleanliness, proper exercise and recreation, adequate rest, a wholesome diet, and abstinence from the use of intoxicants, narcotics, liquor, and tobacco.
6. Modest dress and abstinence from adornment.
7. Simplicity; abstinence from needless, extravagant expenditure of money to gratify pride.
8. Reading only good literature.
9. Discriminating use of radio and television.
10. Shunning of commercialized amusements, social dancing, the motion-picture theater, and theatrical films.
11. Exercising great care in the choice of music, shunning any melody partaking of the nature of jazz, rock, or related hybrid forms, or any language expressing foolish or trivial sentiments.
12. Abstinence from social relationships that might lead to adultery, sexual abuse, incest, or homosexual and lesbian practices.
13. Chaperonage.
14. Not entering into marriage with an unbeliever.

Adapted from the *Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual*, 1986 revision, pp. 141-151.

Adventist Church was raised up to witness against.

Church groups move through these stages because though God's laws remain constant, human culture is continually changing. The church, riding the moving vehicle of human culture, must constantly reposition itself in order to keep its eyes fixed on the unmoving point at which divine principle is enthroned. But sinful human nature being what it is, we find it easier and more comfortable to fix our eyes on something closer at hand that appears not to move—the edge of the vehicle.

For example, the translators of the King James Version of the Bible used *thee* and *thou* instead of *you* and *your*. They did so precisely because these terms were part of the more personal mode of address that they believed best represented the fatherly relationship God maintained with His followers. But in the 1950s I was taught as a child that when praying I must use *thee* and *thou* because they were part of the more formal mode of address that is best in approaching what amounted to an austere, exalted God. Same behavior; different principle.

When a church clings to unexamined behaviors, seeking rationalizations to support unchanged practices, it runs the risk of losing its hold on Bible principles. Certainly modernism and secularization can dilute the faith, but so can an idolizing of “that old-time religion.”

The dangers of conservatism

Ellen White observes that “as real spiritual life declines,” people tend to “become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion,” and “worship they know not what.”¹ She warned the church often of the worldliness that would seek constantly to creep in, but she also feared a “conservatism” that “grieves the Spirit.”²

Her vision of the Adventist Church was that of a vigorous fellowship with a dynamic faith, deeply immersed in a ministry that integrated evangelism, service, and social action. Throughout the formative years of the movement, Adventism's covenantal standards always had both an individual and a countercultural focus.

Adventists “shunned” the saloons and pool halls because of both the personal

spiritual needs of the members and the social evils these institutions represented. Adventists refused to take up arms in the U.S. Civil War not only because they felt it a violation of the sixth commandment but also because they believed the North was not fighting the war for the right reasons. Adventists were willing to break civil law in order to obey the higher law of God that they believed gave human rights to the slaves. Adventists joined the temperance movement and struggled to outlaw the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages. Adventists participated in the movements for health reform, women's dress reform, and other reforms.

In fact, leading social reformers were attracted to the Adventist Church because of its willingness to confront the culture. Mrs. S.M.I. Henry was the national evangelist of the interdenominational Women's Christian Temperance Union when she became an Adventist and, under the sponsorship of the General Conference, launched a program to improve the lot of women. Sojourner Truth, a noted Black activist, is believed to have become an Adventist.

"We are a prophetic people, called to

confront and transform the culture, not merely to reflect it," states Dr. George Akers, director of education for the General Conference, in the May 18, 1989, *Adventist Review*. But for the most part, our church has lost that emphasis in recent years. Very few Adventists realize that one of the church standards enjoins members to work for social justice (see box).³

Because even spiritual growth can become a self-centered activity, an individualistic approach to high standards of Christian living poses dangers. In seeking personal holiness without involvement in social action, the believer runs the risk of a privatistic, selfish faith. This danger has borne its ugly fruit in the modern fundamentalism that teaches that it is because of their laziness that God does not bless the poor, and that, on the other hand, He bestows on the faithful a lifestyle of limousines and mansions.

The renewal of church standards requires a serious recognition of their historic countercultural function as well as their use in supporting the spiritual growth of the individual member. Asking the believer to refrain from a worldly practice makes no sense unless we can

show that the church is actually taking a stand against the world.

In summary, if we want to strengthen our church members' commitment to Adventist standards, we must help them to understand and live in real covenant fellowship, we must constantly seek the participation of every member in reforming the covenant, and we must renew the culture-confronting and culture-transforming aspect of Adventism. We must not fear the process of give and take, because if we submit this process to the lordship of Christ, He will lead in it and speak through it, bringing His faithful people to their destiny in this world and the next. ■

¹ *Counsels to Writers and Editors* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 39.

² *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 1, p. 260.

³ If you consult an old copy of *Bible Readings for the Home* (pp. 641-643) or the original set of evangelistic Bible lessons, Stephen Haskell's *Bible Handbook* (pp. 132, 133), you will see that at one time "our duty to the poor" constituted a part of our basic beliefs. Today no one gives Bible studies on that topic. Our Statement of Fundamental Beliefs discusses church standards only in terms of individual holiness. It does not mention those standards that have a societal orientation.

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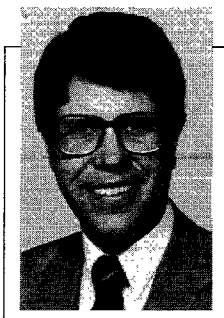
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Standards define relationships

J. David Newman

Are some standards absolute and some cultural? Do we need to change some standards?



J. David Newman is the executive editor of Ministry.

This special issue of *Ministry* describes how we got our standards and how some of them change as generations come and go. We seldom argue over some standards such as not killing or stealing. But others, such as what adornment and music are appropriate, we discuss and debate ad nauseum. How do we decide which standards are applicable and which, if any, are cultural and limited to certain times and places?

Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary defines a standard in several ways, two of which have special significance for us: "Anything recognized as correct by common consent, by approved custom, or by those most competent to decide; a model; a type; a pattern; a criterion," and "any upright timber, post, beam, or rigid support, a supporting piece."

The second definition refers to the support beams in a building. Thus, just as buildings need supports, so do relationships.

Whenever a group of people acts together, those involved need to define how each person will relate to the others. We need both principles and standards to guide our relationships. Principles are universal rules, usually given in the abstract, such as courtesy, obedience, love, equality. Standards are specific applications of these principles. While principles cross all cultural barriers, standards vary from culture to culture except for 10 important exceptions, which we will discuss later.

Thus we may start with the abstract

principle of friendliness. But soon we will need to spell out what friendliness means — we shake hands when we meet, we don't spit on the other person, we knock on the door before we enter the house, etc. These specific applications are standards, and they are given within the cultural milieu of a particular place and time.

Jesus came as a first-century Jew, not a sophisticated Greek. He grew up learning Jewish customs, not Greek customs. Most standards reflect a particular culture and customs, and thus may not be applicable in other times and places.

When God told His delinquent people to cut off their hair and throw it away (Jer. 7:29), He was not defining the exact way people were to show repentance in all ages. He simply used the means of expressing repentance that was understood in that culture.

Some people take Paul's command that women be silent in church (1 Cor. 14:34) as a universal principle, while the majority interpret it as one application of the principle of decorum in worship.

Foundation is love

The foundation of God's government is love. And what is love? One definition stresses the placing of other people's needs before our own. Paul tells us that we should "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3, 4).^{*} Then in the following verses he describes how we should have the same attitude as Christ, who gave up His majesty, His power, to be-

come like one of His creatures and live a life of infinite humiliation.

For countless ages the angels had been content to live a life of service to God and each other, guided only by the principle of love. But somehow Lucifer became dissatisfied with that principle and rebelled against God. He no longer had a perfect relationship with God. And we have inherited that broken relationship.

A perfect relationship needs only principles and a few standards to define it. The more mature and trusting the relationship, the less there is a need to spell out every detail of that relationship. A divorcing couple suddenly needs all kinds of rules to define how they must deal with their possessions. In a stable marriage husband and wife do not need many rules to tell them how to manage their money and other possessions. However, once the relationship is broken, multiplied rules (standards), sometimes court imposed, are needed to show how that relationship should continue to function.

What does it mean to love God? Loving God was simple for Adam and Eve. They were "to be fruitful and multiply;" they were to "subdue and rule over the earth;" they were to eat "of every tree in the garden" but "of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" they were not to eat. However, they disobeyed God and He expelled them from the garden.

After they had broken their relationship with their Creator, He gave them rules that more specifically described how they were to relate behaviorally to Him and to each other.

Levels of standards

There are three levels on which behavioral standards exist: absolute, temporal, and cultural.

1. *Absolute standards* are rules that apply at all times, to all peoples, and in all circumstances. As stated earlier, while principles are universal, standards are local. There is one exception to this definition—the Ten Commandments are absolute behavioral requirements. Covetousness is always wrong. Adultery is never permissible. Worshiping false gods is indefensible. These rules apply in Africa just as much as in America. Educated people need them just as much as the ignorant. If nations were to follow just these 10 simple rules, it would revolutionize international relationships.

Absolutes imply no exceptions. It is true that God sometimes overlooks in-

fractions, but that does not nullify the absolute. We may be sympathetic with the father out of work and penniless who steals to provide food for his family, but that still does not make it right. Bearing false witness is still wrong even when done from the purest of motives.

Because our faith is defective, we cannot keep the absolutes perfectly. So God has made salvation available to us through Jesus, outside of our "works." But that does not mean that the absolutes themselves are defective. They still express God's will for us—and as Christians, we will take them seriously. Justification, which we accept by faith, is God crediting Jesus' keeping of these absolute standards to our account, which we accept by faith.

Sanctification, on the other hand, is the lifelong process of learning to live by the absolutes. As long as we look to Jesus, He will give us the power to constantly overcome and keep every absolute.

2. *Temporal standards* are mandatory for God's people everywhere but not for all times. For example, no male could become a Jew, part of the people of God, without being circumcised. And all Jews celebrated the Passover no matter where they lived. But today neither circumcision nor keeping the Passover is a requirement for Christians. Abstaining from meat offered to idols constituted an absolute for all Gentile Christians at one time, yet within a few short years it had lost much of its significance (compare Acts 15:29 with 1 Cor. 8:1-13).

Examples of temporal standards for Seventh-day Adventists would include baptism by immersion, foot washing, and the Communion service. You cannot become an Adventist without being immersed unless physical infirmity makes it impossible. And foot washing, the use of unleavened bread, and nonalcoholic wine are universal within Adventism. These will remain until the coming of Christ, yet none of them were mandated before the time of Christ.

3. *Cultural standards* concern practices that may be local or universal and sometimes overlap with temporal standards. I was forcibly reminded of a local absolute when, one unbearably hot Sabbath in a tropical country, I attempted to preach without a coat. I was told that in that particular culture no one could preach from the pulpit without wearing a coat and tie.

Cultural standards often refer to items such as dress and adornment standards.

Once the relationship is broken, multiplied rules are needed to show how that relationship should continue to function.

In the past the General Conference in session prohibited goatees and mustaches, but in current culture these do not convey the negative message they did in the culture that banned them. Later the church banned high heels and lipstick. The wedding ring is frowned upon in some areas but considered essential in others.

Universal cultural standards are sometimes confused with temporal standards that are also universal. And at times there may be some ambiguity. Temporal standards usually do not change unless there is a major change in the system: the end of Judaism, the end of the world.

Requirements and teachings

Who decides what are the appropriate standards: the local church, the conference, the union, the division, the General Conference in session? Can a local church decide absolute and temporal standards on its own? Does a standard like noncombatancy voted at an Annual Council have the same force as a standard like abstention from alcohol voted by the General Conference in session? And where do we go to find a list of all the standards? The chapter on standards in the *Church Manual* is not exhaustive.

W. H. Branson, former president of the General Conference, suggested some answers. He published an article in *Ministry* titled "What Are Our Tests of Fellowship?" (October 1951, pp. 12, 13) that distinguished between the requirements for church membership and the teachings of the church. For him the minimum requirements for entering the church were the 11 questions on the back of the baptismal certificate. (These 11

We are criticized as legalists if we talk about standards, while if we talk about love and relationships, we are judged permissive.

have since been expanded to 13. Numbers 8 and 10 in the current list were not part of the questions in Elder Branson's day.)

Branson wrote: "There are of course many things taught by the church that are not covered by the above list of questions. These things are important, but are not *required* of those coming into the church. The observance of these additional points of teaching must be left to the individual conscience and not become a matter of *requirement*." He cites vegetarianism, tea, and coffee as examples of teachings but not requirements. He then adds:

"In order to maintain the unity of the church, each minister and leader should always carefully distinguish between the *teachings* and the *requirements* of the church. No minister or church elder has the right to set up standards of his own that have not been made standards by the general church body. To do so could only result in confusion. There would be as many sets of standards as there were leaders."

However, there is one significant exception to the list that Branson cites. The removal of jewelry is taught as a requirement for church membership, but nowhere does it appear in the list of questions that Branson cites, neither does it appear in the 27 fundamental doctrines (only the principle is given). It would appear that it is a teaching of the church that has somehow been made a requirement. If it is indeed a requirement, then it should be so listed along with unclean meat, tobacco, alcohol and narcotics. †

Ellen White spoke to the issue of tests and requirements: "Some had been bringing in false tests, and had made

their own ideas and notions a criterion, magnifying matters of little importance into tests of Christian fellowship, and binding heavy burdens upon others. Thus a spirit of criticism, faultfinding, and dissension had come in, which had been a great injury to the church. And the impression was given to unbelievers that Sabbathkeeping Adventists were a set of fanatics and extremists, and that their peculiar faith rendered them unkind, uncourteous, and really unchristian in character. Thus the course of a few extremists prevented the influence of the truth from reaching the people.

"Some were making the matter of dress of first importance, criticizing articles of dress worn by others, and standing ready to condemn everyone who did not exactly meet their ideas. A few condemned pictures, urging that they are prohibited by the second commandment, and that everything of this kind should be destroyed" (*Evangelism*, pp. 215, 216).

The basis for standards

Whenever we discuss standards we must tread a narrow path. On one side we are criticized as legalists if we talk about standards, while on the other hand, if we talk about love and relationships, we are judged permissive.

If ever there was a people who cared about high standards, the Jews of Jesus' time were that people. The Pharisees were so concerned about seeking God's approval that they had hundreds of standards to guide them. Jesus showed that it is not an "either/or" but a "both/and": "You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former" (Matt. 23:23).

Yes, Jesus said, standards are important—but so are relationships. In fact that is the whole point of having standards. If they get in the way of deepening relationships, then we have a problem with the standard. Of course this is nothing new. God had for centuries been trying to teach His people how standards fit into the plan of salvation. Too often people made them ends in themselves. God initiated the sacrificial system as a vehicle for His people to develop a relationship with Him. He became angry when they exalted the standards over the relationships:

"Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6-8).

Do people or standards come first? Were the Pharisees exalting an absolute standard over a relationship when they brought the woman taken in adultery before Jesus? And didn't Jesus, by the way that He dealt with the woman, show that we don't always have to follow the absolute?

Not at all. Jesus did forgive the woman and He did not exact the full penalty, but that did not nullify the law. Paul wrote a whole epistle—Romans—describing how grace and law do not cancel each other out. Many of the patriarchs lived in constant violation of the seventh commandment, but God still blessed them. And while blessing them, He still hoped for the day when His people would keep that commandment.

When we love God, we want to do all that He wants us to do. But our maturity level, our culture, our biases, prevent us from seeing at once the totality of God's will. That is why salvation is a gift, freely bestowed upon people who are repentant, who are growing in the perfection of Christ, but who still do not follow absolutely every requirement of God. When in Christ we want to do His will, we will not look for escape routes. As we grow in Him, those standards that may at one time have seemed irksome become precious to us. We will recognize them as essential to our peace, joy, and happiness in the Lord.

Ellen White, who is often criticized for being harsh when it came to matters of dress and adornment, actually had a wonderful attitude. In the following quotation she summarizes the problem and supplies the remedy.

"There are many who try to correct the life of others by attacking what they consider are wrong habits. They go to those whom they think are in error, and point out their defects. They say, 'You don't dress as you should.' They try to pick off the ornaments, or whatever seems offensive, but they do not seek to fasten the mind to the truth. Those who seek to correct others should present the attrac-

*How To Have
Dynamic
Lay Leaders*

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Local Church Officers Handbook



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to recruit,
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the key lay leaders in your
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Education Secretary
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tions of Jesus. They should talk of His love and compassion, present His example and sacrifice, reveal His Spirit, and they need not touch the subject of dress at all. There is no need to make the dress question the main point of your religion. There is something richer to speak of. Talk of Christ, and when the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off. It is only labor in vain to pick leaves off a living tree. The leaves will reappear. The ax must be laid at the root of the tree, and then the leaves will fall off, never to return" (*Evangelism*, p. 272).

Jesus solves all life's problems. He yearns for us to display His love. His identifying mark is not the absence of certain traits but "the love that we have for one another" (see John 13:35).

Standards and people

This special issue reveals that standards vary and cultural values make their contribution. However, the church seems to have no formal method by which it evaluates which cultural standards need to be changed. In the process the other standards suffer. If some are not followed, it lessens the force of the other standards. "Maybe we shouldn't follow

them, either," some may say.

Once every generation (20 years) the church should appoint a special committee to study the list of standards in the chapter on behavior in the *Church Manual* and ascertain what needs to be dropped and what needs to be added. Chaperonage may need to be dropped and a standard on abortion or the environment added. In fact, abortion may need to be placed in the absolute standard category.

The church needs to always keep clear which standards belong to which of the three categories: absolute, temporal, and cultural.

Since we all mature at different rates, we must expect the most exacting standards of ourselves while expressing the greatest toleration for others. Peter reminds us that we must "love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). While love never excuses sin, it does not look for every fault and expose every failing.

Paul counsels, "Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters" (Rom. 14:1). Later in the same book he says, "Accept one another, then, just as Christ ac-

cepted you, in order to bring praise to God" (Rom. 15:7).

This is the tension—upholding the law, the standards, while loving everybody. When we preach Jesus and live Jesus, the Holy Spirit will do His work of convicting those around us as to what standard they need to be following at their level of maturity. And the Jesus who ate with "sinners and publicans" will eat with us today. Yes, Jesus wants us to keep His law, His standards, and He gives us power to do so. But let us never forget that it is only by His magnificent grace that any of us will make it to heaven. ■

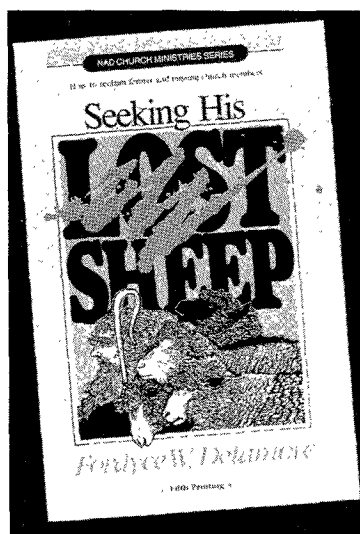
*All texts are from the New International Version of the Bible unless otherwise indicated.

†Some may try to use this statement to show that our stand on jewelry is wrong. The issue of jewelry is far larger than a matter of rings and necklaces. In many people's minds a gold chain ceases to be a necklace when you place a watch on it. The issue is not jewelry but adornment and economy. As Christians, simplicity should characterize our homes, automobiles, and vacations, as well as our dress. A tiepin or brooch is jewelry just as much as an earring or necklace. But because we have chosen to list only certain items, many feel that anything not on the list is OK. We either need to make an exhaustive list or have no list and teach just the principles.

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types of missing members—difficult types like busy professionals, and those easy to reclaim, like victims of a habit.

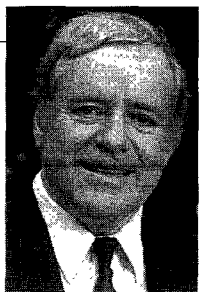
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Gospel, culture, and mission

Gottfried Oosterwal

The applications of the same biblical principles vary in differing cultures. These differences, which Scripture warrants, comprise part of the fertilizer that stimulates church growth.



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Whenver God reveals Himself He does so in the cultural dress of the people who are the recipients of His message. That was true in Old Testament times. It was also true in the New. God uses the language of the people, employing their modes of thought and metaphors. He speaks through their natural environment—mountains, sheep, water—and makes use of their social institutions. All of Scripture bears evidence to the fact that “the Word became flesh” (John 1:14, RSV).

This does not mean, of course, that God is limited to the existing forms of culture. Revelation has often brought about change—even radical change—and sometimes introduced new elements of culture. Though it takes on the diverse forms of human culture, God’s truth itself comes from outside that culture. It sometimes stands above it, sometimes over against it. But whether in or above or over against culture, it always transcends it. Revelation and culture, integrated as they are, relate to each other as substance to shadow, meaning to form, content to the vessel that carries it.

There’s a second biblical-theological axiom to be noted in connection with the relationship between gospel and culture. Not only does God reveal Himself in the cultural dress of the people to whom He is reaching out with His message, He also urges people to respond to His message in their own cultural ways.

In Old Testament times, people praised God with “joyful noise,” “with

timbrel and dance,” and “with loud clashing cymbals” (Ps. 98; 150, RSV). New Testament Christians of Hellenic culture expressed their praise in much more sober forms. Similar differences are characteristic of Adventist worship today. Some of us make a “joyful noise” in loud and rhythmic singing, the clapping of hands, the playing of the organ, drums, saxophones, and guitars, while others prefer worship more characterized by “silence before the Lord.”

While obviously it is not true that anything goes, none of these forms of worship can, in themselves, be considered more devotional, more worshipful, than any others. They are all biblical. God expects us to express our awe and praises in forms that fit our own culture. He wants the church to be a place where people feel at home. No one church, therefore, has the right to superimpose its own particular cultural forms upon sister churches in other cultures.

Because of our common heritage, organization, and fellowship and the oneness of the message and mission that we share, we have a common order as well as unity of faith. But we must practice and celebrate that unity through a oneness in Spirit expressed in our own cultural ways rather than through maintaining some kind of uniformity.

As all history of mission teaches us clearly, *the greatest barriers to the advance of the gospel and to a rapid growth of the church are not religious but social and cultural!* Unless a church couches the eternal gospel in the language, patterns of thinking, forms of behavior, values, and institutions of the people it is trying to reach, and unless it allows them to ex-

press their response to the gospel in their own cultural ways, there will be no universal mission and effective church growth.

Judaism failed to reach out in this way. That's why it never became a worldwide missionary movement. The Jews gradually came to identify the forms and ways in which God's truth was expressed with the truth itself. Their traditions and cultural values, though God-approved, became the barriers that prevented the conversion of the nations.

A similar situation threatened the missionary outreach of the early Christian church. Jewish Christians insisted that Gentile believers express their response to God in Jewish cultural ways. Of course, like most people, rather than realizing that these expressions were cultural, they considered them part of the whole divine revelation.

The issue at the Council of Jerusalem (see Acts 15) was not just the practice of circumcision or the keeping of dietary laws. The question was whether the forms and expressions of the message shaped by one culture determine the ways and the means by which converts from other cultures should experience and express their faith. And, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the early church answered with a clear and unmistakable no. Any other answer would have slowed the rapid advance of the gospel. It would also clearly have denied the heart of all of God's revelation: "the Word became flesh."

Like no other in the early church, the apostle Paul again and again, in deed and in word, powerfully pleaded for this freedom, nay, this right of believers from different cultures to experience and to express their newly won faith in Christ in terms of their own culture. So all-important was this issue to the apostle that he was willing to disrupt the unity of the church. Of these conflicts Scripture uses such expressions as "Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and debate with them"; "after there had been much debate"; "why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples?"; "false brethren"; "when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to the face, because he stood condemned"; and "the rest of the Jews acted insincerely, so that even Barnabas was carried away by their insincerity" (Acts 15, RSV; Gal. 2, RSV). Paul drove home his point with the question, "How can you compel the Gentiles to live like the

Jews?" (Gal. 2:14, RSV).

So, guided by the Holy Spirit, the brethren made the irrevocable ruling that the church must not require believers from different cultures to abide by the forms of the culture that first gave them the message. And that means that even such divinely ordained institutions as circumcision, a sign between God and His people Israel, or the eating of meat that was offered to the idols, or the washing of hands, or the wearing of a veil, or women not speaking in public should not be considered absolutes for all cultures and for all times.

"So send I you into the world"

When the fullness of time had come, God revealed Himself again in a special way and let the whole world know that He was about to begin the final phase of the restoration of His kingdom. Though He spoke through people from diverse cultures—Europe, Latin America, Asia, Oceania, and Africa—God chose in particular to reveal Himself to people conditioned by the American culture. Again, God has no favorite people and no favorite culture. But the basic values of the mid-nineteenth-century American frontier offered the best possibilities for a rapid and universal spreading of the message. So God willed that the language, thought patterns, and values of the United States of America should shape the great Advent movement.

God's special revelation to our pioneers did bring about changes in their attitudes toward a number of elements of the American culture—from food to clothes to concepts and practices of health and hygiene. Yet, for the most part, the Adventist Church in America reflected and embodied—even "sanctified"—basic norms and standards of the American frontier. As the church developed, these cultural elements became more and more part of the whole life and fabric of the movement. So much so that by the early part of this century the divine message and the cultural forms became one integrated whole. The next generation of believers inherited this Adventist culture as a total, indivisible, gift from God: message and organization, standards of behavior and mission. And when the church began to extend its work to other countries and cultures, it did so in the same forms and manners as "back home": evangelists pitched tents even in the middle of medieval European towns where tents had a totally different

connotation than they did on the American frontier; sermons and publications followed American style, using American images, metaphors, and stories; American hymns and styles of worship were introduced; Christian education became identified with American educational practices and philosophy; proper dress and adornment were stressed, reflecting frontier tastes and values. In other words, many of our American habits and means and methods became the model of Adventism around the world.¹

The Adventist Jerusalem Council

Soon after the arrival of the American missionaries in Europe, serious dissension arose over these American forms and ways and means. So the Adventist Church held a series of missionary councils (1883, 1884, 1885) that fulfilled the same role for our church as had the Jerusalem Council of A.D. 50 in the early church. Both the issues and the emotion-laden dissensions were the same: Should the form of the message, shaped by the culture of the American frontier, be the same for all cultures, everywhere, and for all times? Or should the particular cultures—concepts, languages, attitudes, values, modes of thought, patterns of behavior—of the people who are the recipients of that message shape the ways of communicating it, the forms of worship, and the standards of Christian behavior?

Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists preserves the accounts of those meetings. Many of the American missionaries were arguing that the European believers should not rewrite the important truths in terms of their own culture "since [these truths] are the product of the best thought and most thorough study of men who have been longest connected with this work" and that "for this reason it will doubtless be the case that the work of preparing the truth in foreign tongues will ever be quite largely one of translation from English."²

But Ellen White, who attended and addressed the Basle council of 1885, held the view that "all through these countries there is precious talent that God will use; and we must be wide awake to secure it."³ "No one should feel that his judgment is faultless, that his ideas are above criticism. . . . The third angel's message is not a narrow message. It is worldwide. . . . The history of God's work in the past shows that some have an understanding of one thing; others of another. It is His

plan that there should be counseling together.”⁴ “I have been shown that souls here in Europe have been turned away from the truth because of a lack of tact and skill in presenting it,” that is, by a lack of cultural sensitivity. “Agree with the people on every point where you can consistently do so.”⁵

The same message of adapting the message and its priorities to the cultural conditions of the people rings through in all of Mrs. White’s “Practical Addresses” given at the missionary council of 1885. As to church life, standards, and norms, she wrote, “When the mission fields in this new country were opened before me, I was shown that some things in every branch of the mission needed a different mold. . . .

“The impression was given to unbelievers that Sabbathkeeping Adventists were a set of fanatics and extremists, and that their peculiar faith rendered them unkind, uncourteous, and really unchristian in character,” Sister White writes. “Some were making the matter of dress of first importance, criticizing articles of dress worn by others, and standing ready to condemn everyone who did not exactly meet their ideas. . . . These one-

idea men can see nothing except to press the one thing that presents itself to their minds.”⁶

As the council concluded, Mrs. White made a passionate plea not to limit the truth of the everlasting gospel to only one form, or the believers’ responses to the message to the American way only. “What these brethren need is elevation of thought, and refinement of character. They need to make the Bible their guide; the study of God’s Holy Word will strengthen and expand the mind. But they must learn the truth as it is in Jesus.”⁷

Giving the same answer

The answer at which our church arrived at these missionary councils was as clear and unmistakable as the one given in Jerusalem and Antioch—and exactly the same! Sister White totally and wholeheartedly defended the position that paralleled that taken by the apostle Paul; she pleaded that the Adventist message, shaped by the American frontier, be adapted to the needs of the people of other cultures, and that these people be allowed to respond to that divine truth in their own diverse cultural ways!

Wherever the church follows this biblical principle, it advances the gospel rapidly and sees tremendous growth in all dimensions.⁸ Where it does not, however, the work stagnates, the church becomes a foreign institution, there is isolation and withdrawal and little or no growth, resistance to the message is strong, and apostasy is high, very high. Both the history of Adventist mission and current studies on Adventist church growth around the world confirm this.

While Mrs. White lived, she guided the church along the lines of the actions taken by the Jerusalem Council and the Adventist missionary councils. When she was shown the lack of progress in Africa, where the church had the potential of reaping large harvests through people movements toward Christ, she wrote to a leading missionary in Africa: “Too many of the methods and habits and fashions have been transported from America to Africa, and the result is not favorable.”⁹

We all know what she was talking about! When we missionaries came to Africa, for instance, we forbade the institution of the *lobola*, the presentation of gifts by the bridegroom’s family to that of

Differing Adventist practices

In some areas Adventists express their awe before God by demanding that people take off their shoes when they enter the sanctuary; in other areas custom requires that women wear hats in church, and in still others that men and women sit in separate areas of the sanctuary.

In some countries (even in the tropics) those preaching from the pulpit absolutely must wear suits and ties no matter how hot it is. Others allow a formal shirt open at the neck.

North American Adventists generally call an ordained individual “Elder” and a licensed minister “Pastor.” In Britain, an ordained person is called “Pastor” and a licensed minister “Brother.”

In some places local Adventist understanding of modesty and simplicity of lifestyle demands that no gold or silver be worn in any form, that women not wear pants, and always cover their arms and legs, never cut or curl their hair, and enter the sanctuary behind their husbands or fathers.

In other areas women enter the sanctuary first, and in yet others they may wear certain “ornaments” as part of their dress in honor of God and celebration of their salvation in Christ.

In some countries, Adventists who marry non-Adventists are disfellowshipped. In some others, women who marry non-Adventist men are disfellowshipped, but men who marry non-Adventist women are not.

In some areas Adventists think nothing of going mountain climbing, driving their automobiles to church, riding bicycles, or using public transportation on Sabbath—activities that Adventists in other areas frown upon if they don’t outrightly condemn as transgressions of the fourth commandment.

In some areas Adventists express their obedience to the fifth commandment by absolute submission to the wishes of their parents in all major decisions of life, from the choice of a career to that of a spouse to where they should live and to how they spend their money. In many of those areas, church members regard as a sin

someone’s putting his or her parents in an old people’s home or nursing home.

In some areas Adventists celebrate Christmas with all the trappings required by the local culture, whereas Adventists in other areas think such celebrations heathen and idolatrous. But many of the Adventists who reject such practices think nothing of celebrating life and reconciliation at the graves of their ancestors on the days demanded by their culture, activities that Adventists elsewhere often consider at least as heathen and idolatrous.

In some areas Adventists regard dating, holding hands, and even kissing in public as acceptable Christian behavior. In others they reject these practices as outrightly immoral, even adulterous. There Adventist men and women would not even think of publicly touching each other’s hands or sharing food together, which is considered the most intimate form of relating to each other.

the bride. We were of the mistaken opinion that the institution was purely an economic transaction: the buying of a bride. We interpreted the Africans' behavior in terms of our own values, and then insisted that they adopt ours. Fortunately, when we began to consider the institution within their own culture, we saw things differently and withdrew that prohibition—at least in Africa, where it is a powerful cement of marriage. In Papua New Guinea, however, the church still forbids that highly respected indigenous custom, even though Mrs. White herself, using Scripture, makes a powerful plea for its practice.¹⁰

In one East Asian country with very little growth, a worker from the West recently remarked, "If we [missionaries] would all leave, the church here would soon become a heathen Adventist church." To that, a national church leader replied, "As long as you [Westerners] are here, we will never have a church where we feel at home."

In 1957 David Lin, secretary of the China Division, wrote a critical evaluation of Adventist missionary policies and practices in that country. He made it very clear that it was precisely because of the lack of indigenization that the work in China could not advance and that the church had practically collapsed. "The Adventist Church in China," he wrote, "was a foreign institution." Its organization, church life, and institutions were transplanted from America. The church had no roots in the cultural soil of that country's hundreds of millions of people. And when an evil wind began to blow, the transplant toppled.

Now the church in China is entirely a native plant. And its growth is explosive. The same can be said of the church in a number of other areas in Asia and around the world.

These biblical and Spirit of Prophecy guidelines challenge us on two levels of cross-cultural mission: on the geographical level and on the cultural-dynamic level. The first deals with the communication of the Adventist message from one area to another, from Brazil to Uganda, for instance. The second deals with its communication from one culture to another, or from one generation to the next within the same area.

All that has been said about the need to share the message in terms of people's specific cultural conditions, needs, and circumstances applies with equal force also to the communication of the gospel

to our own youth. They are part of a culture that in many ways differs radically from the one that shaped the Adventist Church yesteryear. Large—all too large—percentages of Adventist young people are leaving the church. They do not reject the message. To the contrary. Research indicates that the vast majority of them leave because they do not feel at home in this church. It represents to them a culture that no longer exists. Its forms and ways are foreign to them, and hold no appeal. And if they do respond to the message and want to experience and express it in their own way, many of the older members cannot accept them.

The issue of gospel, culture, and mission is of such enormous consequence for the life and growth of the whole church that it deserves a world conference. The Adventist Church must consider this issue and develop guidelines for its work in all the world. Too much is at stake here: the salvation of the billions of people

who now cannot even hear the message because of social and cultural barriers; the growth of the church in all its dimensions, which captivity to specific cultures threatens; the salvation of our own youth; and the finishing of God's work in this generation through a conscious attempt to make the one everlasting gospel relevant again—that is, to make it present truth in the diversity of cultures. ■

¹ See *Historical Sketches of the Foreign Missions of the Seventh-day Adventists* (Basle: Imprimerie Polyglotte, 1886).

² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 125.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 122.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 212.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁸ See D. A. McGavran, *Understanding Church Growth* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980). The whole literature on church growth confirms this sound biblical principle.

⁹ Ellen G. White letter 188, 1899.

¹⁰ See *The Adventist Home*, pp. 92, 93, where she deplors the fact that we in the West have abandoned this practice.

How shall we decide?

With such a diversity of forms of church life and expressions of faith, how can this church be kept together as the one Body of Christ?

First, through sermons and seminars, special meetings, and publications, we must inform all members of the relationship between gospel and culture.

Second, as in Antioch, Jerusalem, and Galatia in the past, or Basle, Washington, or Asia in our time, let the whole church, "all the saints," counsel together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must conduct this council on the basis of equality and mutuality. No one group within this universal sisterhood of churches has the right to dominate, let alone legislate, the proper behavior or thought forms of the others. The only absolutes for worldwide faith and behavior are those that clearly emerge as a result of the Holy Spirit's work of illumination in the fellowship of believers.

The criteria for such absolutes are:

1. Is the practice biblical? What forms does it take in Scripture, and what was its meaning there?

2. Does it advance the gospel, and in what ways? (See 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, where Paul writes that he

submitted himself to the cultural practices of different people groups in order to win as many as possible.)

3. What associations does the particular value or activity have with other (negative) aspects of the culture? (Wearing a beard, though biblical, can have a negative connotation. So can a particular form of music.)

4. How does it affect the image of the church in a given area? (Proclaiming peace or social justice or liberation of the poor and the oppressed may enhance the status of the church in one area, but may lump it together with rebellion and revolt in another.)

Since cultures constantly change and the church must therefore continually respond to those changes in the light of Scripture, this activity of counseling, studying, and praying together must never end.

Third, in all the discussions, even dissensions, let the attitude prevail: If this practice harms my brother or sister in any way, I won't do it (see 1 Cor. 8).

If it does not help or build up, why insist on it? "Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor" (1 Cor. 10:24, RSV; see also verses 31-33).

Struggling with standards — we're not alone

Ella M. Rydzewski

What can Seventh-day Adventists learn from other groups that are coping with the question of standards?



Ella M. Rydzewski is editorial assistant at Ministry.

In the early 1900s when my grandfather left the peaceful farmland of Juniata County, Pennsylvania, for Michigan, he turned from his Mennonite identity. Gradually, the family's connection with that church dissolved. Discarding cultural standards, his daughters stopped wearing traditional head coverings and his sons drove cars with unpainted chrome bumpers (their branch of Mennonites felt chrome to be too decorative). But basic Mennonite values remained. My father, for instance, never expressed racial prejudice. He continued to be a pacifist and embraced many Mennonite standards when he joined the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In an increasingly secular world, Seventh-day Adventists and others struggle to uphold Christian standards, morals, and values. How can a church meet this challenge and minister to the spiritual needs of all people? I have examined three non-Adventist groups to see how they are coping with the problem of standards and what we can learn from them. We will see that one group treats standards as a means of identity, another views standards in a conservatively progressive manner, and the third attempts to present standards solely in the context of Christian love.

The Mennonites

We find 19 Mennonite groups in North America, the largest and oldest being the Mennonite Church. The Mennonite Confession of Faith, adopted on

August 22, 1963, relates the distinctive standards followed by the denomination today.

Article 9 states: "The church should witness against racial discrimination, economic injustice, and all forms of human slavery and moral degradation."

Article 14 states: "Symbols of man's headship are to be his short hair and uncovered head while praying or prophesying, and the symbols of woman's role are her long hair and her veiled head."

In article 16 Mennonites are instructed to refuse an unequal yoke with unbelievers and manifest only love toward other races, cultures, and economic levels. They must avoid harmful drugs, alcohol, and tobacco. Adornment as beauty of spirit is expressed in modest, economical, and simple attire. Recreation should be consistent with the Christian walk.

Article 17 forbids taking oaths and opposes membership in secret societies. Article 18 prohibits participation in military service or in law enforcement.¹

Mennonite history — uniqueness as survival

In the early 1500s a group of Anabaptist men met in Zurich, Switzerland, to discuss the rediscovery of the Bible truth of adult baptism. For the next 150 years the sect suffered persecution and excommunication for this and other beliefs. Many fled to other parts of Europe and to America. The more conscious the group became of being strangers in alien lands, the more they emphasized conformity in dress, language, and ethnic customs for the sake of survival.²

A schism among seventeenth-century

Swiss Anabaptists occurred between Jacob Ammann and moderate leaders. Ammann insisted on consistent application of the ban (shunning) on persons violating church standards. His followers became known as the Amish. Other Dutch and Swiss Anabaptists took the name Mennonites (followers of Menno Simons). This event set the stage for one way this church has dealt with differing ideas in doctrine and lifestyle—by

merely forming other Mennonite churches. Since then there have been 25 schisms, many concerning the “issue of plain dress.”³

In the 1920s, men ruled on women’s restrictive dress codes. In 1921 not one woman served on the committee that drew up a statement on “dress.” Wearing the wrong headgear became grounds for excommunication. Ministers refusing to excommunicate these women lost their jobs. Not until the 1950s did the situation change.⁴

Threatened by a changing society, the church in 1956 reaffirmed its positions. Simplicity characterized both personal lifestyle and corporate worship. Neither men nor women wore jewelry. The church forbade theater attendance, smoking, and drinking. They rejected oath-taking, lodge membership, participation in politics or war, membership in labor unions, and divorce. Women always appeared in prayer veils. Musical instruments had no place in worship. Two decades later the list remained intact, though with some prohibitions no longer observed.⁵

The Mennonite Church today

Today a different climate exists for North American Mennonites than for their seventeenth-century forebears for whom uniqueness meant survival. Contacts with other Christians have opened Mennonites up to other aspects of the Christian faith. But Mennonite customs and attitudes have caused barriers to communication.⁶ The article that sparks the most disagreement today is number 14, which implies that women must have long hair and must veil their heads during worship. According to Daniel Hertzler, editor of the *Gospel Herald*, the denomination’s primary journal, “liberated” Mennonite women consider this problematic. He feels that members widely support the other articles on behavior and relationship to social and political orders.

Studies published in 1975 by J. H. Kauffman and Leland Harder indicate that most Mennonites do observe church standards. These two scholars concentrated on the five largest Mennonite groups in North America. Their study does not include cultural standards, such as the wearing of jewelry and the prayer veil, which vary in the five groups. The accompanying table gives the results of a portion of this study. The results are similar to what researchers discovered in a

High standards produce stress if not balanced with faith.

study done among Adventist students in 1984.⁷

Variables cross-tabulated with age, residence, education, and income in the Mennonite study show that age makes the biggest difference in members’ reaction to church standards. Increasing age means greater restrictiveness, except that teenagers are more restrictive than young adults in their 20s, who hold the most lenient views.⁸

In a comparison with Lutheran racial attitudes, the Mennonites show significantly less racial prejudice. Attitudes against premarital sex and abortion predominate. The former varies with educational level. Overall, 84 percent state that sex between unmarried persons is never justifiable. The proportion of those who believe this varies from 90 percent of those with an elementary school education to 75 percent among those who have attended college. Most favor abortion only if the mother’s health is threatened (73 percent). About half approve of legalizing abortion for pregnancies resulting from rape or when the baby is likely to be defective. Strong opinion dominates against legalizing abortion for economic or personal preference reasons.⁹ Mennonites draw attention to ecological issues in the church press with a fervor sparked by their religious views. “It is time to scrap the consumer society and build the conserver society . . . to bring our influence and actions, our way of life and use of resources, into harmony with the mind of God in creation,”¹⁰ writes one author in the *Gospel Herald*. However, some feel that increasing influence by conservative fundamentalists threatens the Mennonite emphasis on social concerns.¹¹

High standards produce stress if not balanced with faith. According to Al Dueck, a professor at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, California, Mennonites experience depression at a greater-than-average rate. A case

Mennonite Studies

by J. H. Kauffman and Leland Harder—1975

Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Evangelical Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren Church, and Brethren in Christ Church

Always Wrong:

- Drinking—97%
- Tax evasion—90%
- Reckless driving—89%
- Smoking marijuana—87%
- Homosexual acts—86%
- Gambling—75%
- Smoking—64%
- Dancing—50%

Moral Behavior Scale

- Tobacco: Never used—46%
- A few times—39%
- Past use—10%
- Regular use—6%
- Drinking:
- Never used—36%
- A few times—46%
- Past use—5%
- Regular/occasional use—13%
- Dancing:
- Never—62%
- A few times—22%
- Occasionally—12%
- Frequently—4%

Devoted to a common cause, members seek to live a simple and wholesome existence in the manner of their Saviour.

presented at a psychologists' conference found one individual's depression related to her belief that her church's rigid ethic did not allow for creativity and individuality. Guilt and perfectionism may also contribute to depression. Another factor may be that rituals of forgiveness have been deemphasized in Mennonite churches, resulting in forgiveness not being felt on an emotional level.¹²

The Nazarenes

While Mennonites have shown a tendency to divide into new churches, Nazarenes have a history of adding new groups to the main body. Nazarene history goes back to the Wesleyan holiness idea of entire sanctification.

The movement grew out of organizations begun in the eastern United States in the 1880s that promoted this doctrine. In 1885 Phineas F. Bresee and J. P. Widney, M.D., formed a small holiness group called the Church of the Nazarene in Los Angeles, California, with 135 members. In 1908 groups from the East and South joined with them to form the denomination as we know it today. By 1958 seven other holiness groups had joined.

Nazarene Church standards and values

The 1985 *Manual of the Church of the Nazarene* includes general church standards in its constitution, section 26.2. Members shall evidence their commitment to God "by avoiding evil of every kind, including: taking the name of God in vain, profaning the Lord's Day, sexual immorality, health-destroying habits, quarreling, returning evil for evil, gossiping, slandering, and dishonesty; the indulging of pride or immodesty in dress or behavior; or music, literature, and enter-

tainment that dishonors God."¹³

A "Special Rules" section discusses avoiding the motion-picture theater and certain types of television programs, lotteries and gambling, membership in secret societies, dancing, use and trafficking in alcohol or tobacco, and unprescribed use of drugs. Subsequent sections condemn homosexual practices and uphold marriage (divorce and remarriage being allowed only in the case of adultery). Abortion is permissible only if the mother's life is endangered.¹⁴

An appendix section examines current moral and social issues such as racial discrimination, tobacco, dancing, pornography, etc. Members may register as conscientious objectors in the military. The *Manual* urges exercising Christian judgment in the matter of swimming or sunbathing in public places.¹⁵ In accordance with the requirement of simplicity as interpreted at the time of their origin, Nazarenes did not wear jewelry for many years. But this restriction never appeared in the *Manual*.

The General Assembly is the doctrinal and lawmaking body of the Church of the Nazarene. This grass roots group, composed of ministerial and lay delegates, meets every four years. The *Manual*, regularly updated to include new issues, contains decisions of that assembly.

Nazarenes today

Talking to those involved with youth provides valuable insights about the life and direction of a religious organization. An interview with Ronald Fox, director of admissions at Point Loma Nazarene College in San Diego, discloses recent trends in the Nazarene lifestyle. Several years ago this college moved from the more conservative Pasadena area to the casual atmosphere of San Diego. The change in environment altered dress codes to a more casual style. "It would be inappropriate," Fox says in discussing regional standards, "to dress in the Midwest the way students dress here—the climate and the atmosphere of the community are different."

Regional differences indicate that some standards are cultural. Robert W. Smith, assistant professor of religion, noted that as a child he never played sports or ate out on Sunday, as most Nazarenes in southern California do today. "Sundaykeeping practices are very regional," he says. He personally feels one should allow Sunday to be unique by cur-

tailoring activities that direct away from God.

Is there a loosening of morals among Nazarene youth as in society? Fox replies: "We are more open in discussing issues than in the past. We have no secondary school system, and some students come from public schools with a problem accepting authority." Fox noted the trend beginning in the early 1970s. "There are a lot of young people with psychological problems traceable to humanistic public education."

Nazarenes take a stand against movies. However, only 43 percent of the students at Point Loma are Nazarene, and the school does not dictate to non-Nazarene students on the subject. Fox speculates that a revision of the movie policy will possibly come soon and will include a rating system.

Nazarenes make their strongest stand against alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. Persons using them may not attend Point Loma. The school offers counseling to students caught using alcohol. If students refuse help, they are asked to consider leaving; after two or three infractions, the school demands that they leave. Drug users must leave the campus immediately, and the school attempts to work with them in their home situations. Fox does not believe drug use is widespread on the campus.

The practice of not wearing jewelry has gradually changed. When Fox was ordained in 1971, pastors did not wear wedding bands, but a short time later all of them did. Except for some members over 65, jewelry is no longer an issue. Fox does not believe the change has had any effect on the spirituality of the church. "There is definitely no correlation," he states emphatically. Actually, in recent years he has observed increasing spirituality and enthusiasm for religious subjects among students.

The Catholic reformers

Historically, rigidity and isolation characterize the Catholic orders, while the laity's behavior reflects current culture. Despite their worldly actions, human beings have a spiritual dimension. A recent survey of Catholic youth revealed that they desire an active prayer life, a more peaceful world, and understandable teachings from their church. The survey also revealed that only 44 percent believe that God answers prayers, 19 percent believe that sex belongs only in marriage, and 47 percent

believe that Christians have an obligation to the poor. Yet 53 percent believe in the Second Coming.¹⁶

With its moral influence waning and its effectiveness in fulfilling spiritual needs questionable, this cumbersome church is experiencing a number of renewal movements. The Little Brothers and Sisters of Charity is a lay group seeking to meet people's needs while remaining true to a moral, obedient, simple, and joyful lifestyle. Founded in the early 1980s, their sponsoring organization is the Little Portion Hermitage (LPH) in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. LPH takes the Bible and the life of Saint Francis of Assisi (who took a vow of poverty to preach and pray with the people) as their guides. John Michael Talbot, a religious musician and writer, founded Little Portion in the late 1970s. Started primarily as Catholic organizations, both groups are open to Christians of all denominations. People join because they share a vision that in nearly all ways runs counter to modern American materialism.

At retreats participants wear minimal makeup; modest, simple clothing; and little jewelry except religious symbols. No one smokes at these gatherings. Some from the Hermitage wear the traditional plain monk's garb. An observer might assume that this group has a list of specific rules to promote such simplicity. But we find their only rules in the "rule for life," on which Talbot and his wife, Viola, collaborated. It consists solely of Bible scriptures. Devoted to a common cause, members seek to live a simple and wholesome existence in the manner of their Saviour.

"Simplicity starts with cutting back a little," states Talbot. Though he writes extensively about simplicity, he does not lay down specific rules. He permits each individual to decide how to live, based on where he or she is in his or her spiritual journey. "Our wants are killing the needy," he declares, expressing his belief that a radical change of lifestyle and a biblical view of history is vital to Christianity.

The group at LPH hopes to bring more people—Catholics and non-Catholics—into a more intimate relationship with Christ. They encourage personal standards based on love for Christ and humanity. They promote ecological concerns and sponsor sacrificial programs to feed the hungry. The principles of chastity, prayer, worship, religious study, and

obedience to God are to pervade the life. These practices seem to result in behavioral changes, such as simplicity in diet and dress and increased apostolic service. At least in this first phase of their development, there is a strong sense of community.

Conclusion

In studying Mennonites and Nazarenes, we find a consensus on decidedly moral issues and practices relating to good health. Differences occur regarding appearance. Mennonite dress codes have their roots in an ethnic background that sought identity and survival in appearance. As with Adventists, Nazarene standards relate to the church's origin in the nineteenth century. Its theological understanding of complete sanctification also plays a significant role. The Nazarene Church is undergoing a gradual but balanced change, often regionally based, and the church regularly updates its *Manual* to include new issues. Both groups show generational differences in accepting change.

Studies reveal nonconformance among some Mennonites on some important values. This may reflect a dissatisfaction with the church's rigidity concerning less significant behavior. The church is struggling to guard the tradition of the fathers without becoming static.¹⁷ Members holding more liberal cultural views than their present church may join another Mennonite group without denying their basic faith. Many Amish become Mennonites for this reason.

Despite their ethnicity, Mennonites have a great sense of responsibility to others. A social consciousness, complemented by high moral and ethical standards, makes a unique and admirable faith.

Christ-centered reform movements within the Roman Catholic Church are a cause for rejoicing, but only time will tell how much influence they will have. Will a group such as LPH maintain its enthusiasm? Some of their concepts deviate from current Catholic interpretation. This causes observers to wonder how long LPH can remain true to its vision and still be acceptable to the Catholic Church. Or if a time of decision comes, will loyalty to a church organization finally cause a loss of vision?

If we as Seventh-day Adventists added to our high moral standards the greater social concern of the Mennonites and

"Our wants are killing the needy," he declares, expressing his belief that a radical change of lifestyle is vital to Christianity.

the openness to cultural change of the Nazarenes, and presented these principles in the Christ-centered manner of the LPH reformers, we might have less problems with standards.

The focus of simplicity must be Christ. All three groups share a belief in His soon coming. No doubt because of its "newness," LPH puts more urgency into this teaching, for, as Talbot states, "troublesome times are coming upon the earth," and "Jesus is the answer." This was the final answer that went beyond denominations for my grandfather, and it is the answer for each one of us. ■

¹ *Mennonite Confession of Faith* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1963), Articles 9, 14, 16, 17, and 18.

² Thomas Finger, "Why We Have Been Skeptical," *Gospel Herald*, May 19, 1987, p. 339.

³ J. Howard Kauffman and Leland Harder, *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1975), p. 34.

⁴ Elaine Sommers Rich, *Mennonite Women* (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1983), p. 228.

⁵ Kauffman and Harder, p. 35.

⁶ Finger, p. 339.

⁷ Roger Dudley, "Adventist Values: Flying High?" *Ministry*, April 1985, p. 4.

⁸ Kauffman and Harder, pp. 128, 129.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 141, 180, 181.

¹⁰ Keith Helmuth, "Some Theological Implications of Acid Rain," *Gospel Herald*, May 12, 1987, p. 325.

¹¹ Kauffman and Harder, pp. 340, 341.

¹² "Church News," *Gospel Herald*, May 12, 1987, p. 328.

¹³ *1985 Manual, Church of the Nazarene* (Kansas City, Mo.: Nazarene Publishing House, 1985), pp. 34, 35.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-48.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 279-283.

¹⁶ James Breig, "The Young and the Restless: What Catholic Teens Think About Their Church," *U.S. Catholic*, December 1988, pp. 10-12.

¹⁷ Kauffman and Harder, p. 33.



Righteousness by faith and standards

The story is told about a saint walking down the road and meeting an angel carrying a torch in one hand and a bucket of water in the other. The saint asked, "What are the torch and water for?" Replied the angel, "The torch is to burn down the mansions of heaven and the water is to put out the flames of hell. Then we shall see who really loves God."

Why do people profess to love God? Why do we serve Him? How much does the concept of reward and punishment figure into our relationship with God?

These questions relate very directly to lifestyle. What are my standards? What motivates me to keep a standard? Why have standards?

More discussion and debate are generated on the topic of standards than on any other single subject. The committee overseeing preparation of our doctrinal book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* spent more time discussing chapter 21, "Christian Behavior," than any other chapter. Why? Because standards focus on the tangible—the visible—the touchable—the doables! What one believes about the work of the Holy Spirit or the nature of Christ doesn't "hang out." But what you wear, drink, eat, and where you go and the things you participate in are obvious.

Requirements and guidelines

David Newman touches on the difference between teachings and fundamental beliefs in his article titled "Standards Define Relationships" in this issue. The concluding part of the chapter on Christian behavior in the book *Seventh-day*

Adventists Believe . . . expresses the same concept under the heading "Requirements and Guidelines." This carefully worded section reads "Because of the impact a person's lifestyle makes upon his spiritual experience and his witness, as a church organization we have set certain lifestyle standards as minimal requirements for becoming members. These standards include the abstention from tobacco, alcoholic beverages, mind-altering chemicals, and unclean flesh foods, and the evidence of a growing Christian experience in matters of dress and the use of leisure time. These minimal standards do not comprehend all of God's ideal for the believer. They simply signify essential first steps in developing a growing, radiant Christian experience. Such standards also provide the foundation essential to unity within the community of believers.

"The development of Christian behavior—'God-likeness'—is progressive, involving a lifelong union with Christ. Holy living is nothing less than a daily yielding of the will to Christ's control and a daily conformity to His teachings as He reveals them to us in our Bible study and prayer. Because we mature at different rates, it is important that we refrain from judging weaker brothers or sisters (Rom. 14:1; 15:1).

"Christians in union with the Saviour have but one ideal: that they shall do their best to honor the heavenly Father, who has provided such a rich plan for their salvation. 'Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God' (1 Cor. 10:31)" (p. 289).

Note a few points in this passage. First, the church is a group of individuals "called out" from the secular world to be

a witness and blessing to the world. Thus, the church has "set certain lifestyle standards as minimal requirements for becoming members." These requirements are nonnegotiable unless the church agrees to change them at a General Conference session.

Second, "these minimal standards do not comprehend all of God's ideal for the believer." If we accept the fact that "God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 311), we will seek to continually elevate standards in our lives.

Third, "standards . . . provide the foundation essential to unity within the community of believers." A spiritual fellowship with believers in the same communion is quite impossible unless there exists a common thread of belief and lifestyle. I find no difficulty in enjoying fellowship with those with whom I may not see eye to eye on the nature of Christ, but for me it is difficult to enjoy a deep, intimate Christian fellowship with a meat-eating, coffee-drinking, wine-sipping, jewelry-laden, rock-and-roll-music-loving, gambling, etc., etc., member. Our spirits just don't match. We have very little in common. As a community of believers, we should have similar lifestyle standards if unity is to prevail. This illustrates the basic reason for the existence of the church. The church is a called-out group of people who are joined to Christ and to each other by virtue of common agreement on doctrines, beliefs, and standards. We live and interact together as a unified people having the mind of Christ.

Fourth, "Christian behavior—'God-likeness'—is progressive, involving a lifelong union with Christ." Since Chris-

tians mature at different rates, it is imperative that we refrain from judging others. As Paul says: "Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way" (Rom. 14:13, NKJV). This is a most critical point. It requires God's grace to not have negative feelings toward those whose lifestyle does not measure up to our standards! I remember the horribly wrong attitude that I held in my early years of ministry toward any woman in the church who wore a wedding ring. My American-Adventist culture led to judgmentalism. Neither my wife nor I wear a wedding ring and never intend to, but God forbid that I should judge anyone who wears one. I constantly pray for the Holy Spirit to create in me a love for my fellow church members even if they do not measure up to what I consider minimal standards. An attitude of condemnation never touches other lives redemptively. During my 40-plus years of ministry, I have seen great harm done by those who are preoccupied with externals, who have treated others harshly for some supposed failure to live up to a particular standard. I have heard Adventist preachers rant and rave, to put it mildly, on so-called standards. Many a sheep left the meeting hall bloodied and battered from such histrionics.

Raising the standards

Let it not be said that the editors of *Ministry* are attempting to lower standards! Never! We want to raise them! But standards are not truly elevated through whipping the sheep into shape.

Taking the Bible as our guide, Seventh-day Adventists have established a detailed set of standards. Ellen White's counsel is quite explicit on numerous lifestyle standards. But this fact can make Adventism dangerous! How? It can produce two types of tares in the wheat field.

One group, which usually includes those who have been members for a rather long time, has failed to grow in grace. They have slipped into a behavior pattern that denies the converting power of the Holy Spirit. Their understanding of the gospel ignores the necessity of any response or accountability to the Lord. This faulty understanding of God's unconditional love leads them to believe in unconditional salvation. The motto of this group in the "cheap grace" camp is "Do what you want; God understands!"

The second group includes those who meticulously and rigorously conform to church requirements and guidelines related to lifestyle, believing that sanctification is the *root*, not the *fruit*, of their salvation! This all too often leads to a supercritical, legalistic attitude. These become the judges of those members who, for one reason or another, fail to exhibit a "correct" lifestyle.

Righteousness by faith

Righteousness by faith, properly studied, accepted, believed, and practiced, is the answer to the standards problem in the church. God's love is unconditional. But do not confuse this with unconditional salvation. There is a vast difference. God's unconditional love tells me Christ died for the ungodly, and that means me and everyone else (Rom. 5:6)! Unconditional love tells me that while we were still sinners Christ died for us (verse 8)! Unconditional love tells me that while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the cross (verse 10). Let's face it, the Lord never taught or said, "Since you quit smoking, I love you" or "When you take off your jewelry, I will love you" or "Provided you stop dancing, I will accept you!" God loves us, accepts us, and died for us while we were without strength, ungodly, sinners, and enemies!

This concept is difficult for performance-oriented sinful beings to accept. Unconditional love is so incomprehensible to us. I myself struggle to accept the idea that God's love for me is unaffected even if I falter or deviate in any way from reaching some standard.

Someone exclaims, "Your type of theology will destroy standards!" But this is not the case. The converting power of understanding the unconditional love of God markedly changes the attitude and motives of a person. In Galatians 4, Paul's illustration of being a son versus a slave helps us to understand unconditional love. Since God sent His Son to redeem us, "we are no longer slaves but sons, and as sons we are heirs of God through Christ" (see verse 7).

My heavenly Father loves me on the basis of who I am, not what I do. If my relationship to Him is based on my performance and not on my position as His son/daughter, I will ever be in a state of anxiety. There is no peace for the Christian who seeks the assurance of salvation through performance, for the simple reason that we will never know how much

Standards are not truly elevated by whipping the sheep into shape.

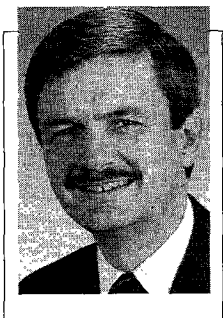
performance is enough to gain God's acceptance. The perfectionistic Christian is of all people most miserable. This condition constitutes slavery, not a son or daughter relationship.

Conversely, if performance-oriented Christians ever become satisfied with their performance, then pride takes over and with pride comes the inevitable attitude of condemnation toward all those who do not perform according to their standards.

Those who operate on righteousness-by-faith principles act on the basis of a son or daughter relationship. Performance is a response to the Father's unconditional love. And above all, righteousness-by-faith-oriented Christians always see themselves as faulty and imperfect. They see more defects in their life and character as they draw closer to Jesus. Does this bring discouragement? Never. It results in a constant attitude of gratitude and a more intense desire to reach a higher standard through His enabling power.

I repeat, the deeper the understanding of righteousness by faith based on God's unconditional love, the greater the desire to obey all of God's commandments. Whatever the standard, we are happy to do our very best. The desire to know more of God's will increases! Like the prodigal son, when we return home, we want to leave the pigpen behind us. When we fail, we are pained because we have brought pain to the heart of our Lord. But we know that He still loves us unconditionally and will not cast us out.

Obedience that responds to unconditional love no longer needs either the fire or the mansion for motivation. —J. Robert Spangler.



Blame it on the system!

We must find a way to stop this cannibalization—this feeding frenzy in which members of Congress are seeking to destroy one another.

That was the essence of the message that I picked up from the news clips of the resignation of the man third in line to the presidency of the United States. Rather than admitting to having done something wrong, the speaker of the House pointed his finger squarely in the face of the Ethics Committee and the people who had the audacity to go out and try to “get the goods” on a prominent Democrat after members of that party saw to it that an apparently unfit Republican was not confirmed as secretary of defense. Emotion choking his voice, the speaker derided the system that had ridden him to the point of resignation.

A few weeks later I heard another resignation news clip. This time it was the head coach of a prominent collegiate basketball team. His team had come under severe discipline for having violated the rules of the National Collegiate Athletic Association, and this had led to his resignation.

Taking his cue from the speaker, the coach said nothing of personal guilt for having tried to get away with the equivalent of bribing top players to come to his school. Rather, he decried the foolishness of the system that prevented him from being able to buy even a pair of shoes for a needy player, and called for changes in the system.

If people in the limelight today are to be believed, there is almost no actual wrongdoing going on in our world. Rather, the “systems” on which the world runs all need modification to

make them less restrictive.

Is it possible that this same attitude of “Who me, do something wrong? Of course not! It’s the rules, not me, that need changing!” has infiltrated the church?

This question seems particularly relevant to the discussion of standards. I can’t think of any standard or rule in the Seventh-day Adventist Church today that I haven’t heard some “good and regular” church member argue against, either verbally or by lifestyle.

Some of my most severe trials as a pastor came about at times when I mustered up enough courage to call into question the behavior of people who wanted to be church officers without living up to the standards of the church. I was made to feel that I had intruded into the members’ private lives in a way that I had no right to.

Does the church have the right to call into question its members’ (including its ministers’) behavior? Or did the church lose that right when automobiles made it possible for members to commute to

church over long enough distances to allow them to live outside other members’ scrutiny six days a week?

I will always remember the entries I found in an old church secretary’s record book. The minutes of a church business meeting revealed that the church was deeply concerned over the report that someone had heard Brother Jones using coarse words in a cross way in speaking to his wife! The deacons were to inquire and bring back a report for possible disciplinary measures.

Perhaps the system was too restrictive in the days when every family fight had to be aired before the church corporeal. But today’s system in which church members are allowed to flagrantly disregard standards, claiming that they need not heed the rules because the rules need changing, is no improvement.

In a democratic society, as well as in the church, we have the right to modify manmade rules to create a system that is just and calls members to righteousness. I hope that this issue of *Ministry* will be one constructive step toward helping our church to scrutinize the rules we ask our members to live by, and to bring them into harmony with the will of God for the last decade of the twentieth century. If some of our rules are irrelevant or illogical, or if we have failed to keep pace with the times and our rules do not even address some issues that have become important in recent years, this encourages members to disregard the church’s authority in all areas, not just the ones that need changing.

If changes need to be made, let’s make them. But in the meantime let us not play games with ourselves by allowing each individual to decide which of the church’s standards to live by and which to ignore. The church has standards because we believe that there are certain behaviors that are important to nurturing the spiritual growth of members, and because we know that we are strangers in an alien land where the devil prowls about seeking whom he may devour.

While it seems to be the vogue to call the system into question for being too restrictive, I for one would like to call the system into question for not being strict enough in applying constructive, corrective discipline to erring members. Will not the Master of the flock hold us responsible for the sheep we have allowed to stray unwarned into the lion’s domain?—Kenneth R. Wade.

Someone had heard Brother Jones using coarse words in a cross way in speaking to his wife!



Do we need an abortion standard?

S

hould the Adventist Church vote an official stand on abortion? This question headed the agenda as the Christian View of Human Life

Committee met in Washington, D.C., April 17-19, 1989. Some committee members felt the current guidelines were sufficient, while others disagreed. One hospital administrator argued that the church needs to take a position, saying that the present situation leaves the hospitals to bear the brunt of people's criticism.

Sanctity of life

We listened to five papers but lacked a paper on the biblical understanding of the sanctity of life. Without a solid grounding in Scripture almost any ethical theory will do. Do we decide each case according to the situation? Does the principle of love mean that there are no absolute behavioral standards? Are the Ten Commandments absolute or can we allow exceptions? Does an ethic based on Scripture differ from an ethic developed apart from it?

Before this meeting concluded, we commissioned several more papers—one of them to be prepared by Dr. Miroslav Kis, ethicist at our theological seminary, elucidating what the Scriptures say about the sacredness of life.

I believe Christian ethics differ from secular ethics. Secular ethics spring from the thinking of man; Christian ethics originate in the mind of God as revealed in the Scriptures. In order to understand life we must study the only document that records the origins of that life.

One Adventist scholar has advocated what many would consider an extreme position. In his book *God, the Situation Ethicist*, Dr. Carsten Johnsen argues for an absolutist position regarding abortion. He believes that since God is the only giver of life, only He has the right to take it. Johnsen says that when we decide who will live and who will die, we are playing God. How do we know, he continues, that God is not planning to bring some good out of the situation?

Our concept of man underlies our view of this problem. Johnsen quotes Reinhold Niebuhr: "All modern views of human nature are adaptations, transformations, and varying compounds of primarily two distinctive views of man: (a) the view of classical antiquity, that is, of the Greco-Roman world, and (b) the biblical view" (from *The Nature and Destiny of Man* [1955], p. 5).

How do the two views differ? The classical view saw man as unique because of his rational faculties. The Bible, however, portrays man's uniqueness as lying in the fact that he has been created in God's image. From the moment that image begins to form to the time life ceases, each individual exists in the image of God. Reasoning faculties comprise only part of this image.

Just because someone is old, retarded, infirm, or crippled does not make that individual less than a person. If rationality constitutes the basis of personhood, then 6-month-old babies have no more rights than do unborn babies.

Other people raise questions based on the life of Christ. When did Jesus start to become man—i.e., when did He begin to take on the image of God? At conception? Two weeks after conception?

When His brain became active? At quickening? At birth?

Deciding about abortion is particularly difficult because there are always at least three lives involved. While the father's role in producing a new life takes but a few moments, the mother's takes months. If that mother is not going to love the child, if she cannot care for it, if she will abuse it and even kill it, why should it be brought into existence?

Since our planet is already overcrowded, aborting a child that faces such a situation seems to make sense in many ways. That is why we must first decide on the sacredness of human life. If we can reach agreement on that issue, we will have begun to cut the Gordian knot that binds this subject.

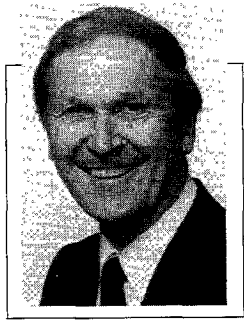
Counsel needed

The Christian View of Human Life Committee will meet next at Loma Linda, California, October 31-November 3. We are interested in your ideas and suggestions.

- Should the church take a stand on the sanctity of life?
- Should the church vote a stand on abortion?
- If so, how strong should that stand be? Should it be just a teaching of the church, or should it be a matter of discipline if not followed?
- Should we allow no abortions under any circumstances?
- Should we allow it if the physical life of the mother is at risk?
- Should we allow it for rape, incest, in cases of pregnancy below a certain age, because of deformity, or because the fetus is the wrong sex?
- Do we approve of abortion as a form of population control?
- If we allow abortions in some circumstances, who would decide? The mother only? Mother and father? Physician? Others?

Please send your responses to J. David Newman, *Ministry*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, before October 31.

Whatever our eventual decision, may we learn to practice the love of God that Peter pictured when he wrote, "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8, NIV). —J. David Newman.



Ministerial internship: purposes and problems, concluded

Floyd Bresee

One of the main problems the Seventh-day Adventist Church's present ministerial intern program faces is *lack of supervision*. Conferences often feel pressured by finances to place their beginning interns virtually by themselves or with ministers who want assistants, but who spend little time with them. We believe this to be a false economy and a misappropriation of the subsidy given the conference for the intern's training.

Untrained supervisors constitute another problem. Even when conferences/missions conscientiously supervise their interns, they almost always assign the interns to ministers untrained for the task of being their mentors.

In response to this need, a 1946 Annual Council action to strengthen ministerial internship led to an article in the March 1947 *Ministry* that declared, "We need real field trainers, men who, by experience, education, and spiritual leadership, are equipped to mold future workers." In October of 1968, *Ministry* insisted, "It is time for this church to assign interns to only a select group of overseers."

In 1983 I took a survey for the General Conference Ministerial Association, asking interns and intern supervisors about the need for a program to train supervisors. We anticipated that interns would support such a plan—and they did. They made such comments as: "We were poorly trained by a pastor who was poorly trained, ad infinitum." "The attitudes, role concepts, and relationships during internship significantly affect the entire professional life, often determin-

ing whether the intern will even continue in the ministry."

Amazingly, supervisors seemed to feel as strongly as interns the need for supervisory training. Supervisor responses included: "I feel very inadequate in training interns. I did not receive proper training as an intern and do not know how to train others. I need to be trained."

"When I was first assigned an intern, no one ever explained to me my duties and responsibilities. I could have done a much better job with my first intern if such a program had been available to train me in supervising an intern."

"I feel that, generally, our interns have been placed with pastors of certain churches because of their position rather than their real interest in the training of interns."

"A ministerial internship ought to be at least on a par with a medical internship."

"It would be for the intern's best interest if the training program was the same throughout the country."

New program for internship

For decades we have complained about the problem of properly training interns. Now we have made a start at solving it.

The Ministerial Training Advisory Committee has appointed a committee (which included several pastors) that has worked with the General Conference Ministerial Association in preparing the first draft of a manual for Seventh-day Adventist ministerial interns and intern supervisors. We hope that the day will come when an intern supervisor is considered qualified to supervise only after

taking special training such as this course provides.

The manual includes a core of 50 ministerial functions the intern is to experience before ordination. Separate worksheets outline each function. Typically, the supervisor and intern talk over the ministerial function as outlined. The supervisor then performs the function while the intern observes. Later, the intern performs the function while the supervisor observes. Finally, supervisor and intern evaluate the performance, the intern taking notes useful to his or her ministry.

The manual also includes a covenant that the intern, supervisor, and conference negotiate together. This covenant outlines the responsibilities of each party. While the manual mandates that the conference ensure that the intern experience all 50 functions before ordination, conference representatives designate which parts of the intern core the supervising minister is to teach and how much emphasis should be placed on each. So the conference stipulates its own priorities in the training of its interns. (The conference may supply instruction that it does not assign to the supervisor through other sources, such as the video instruction being prepared by the General Conference Ministerial Association.)

Several parts of the world field are now piloting the new manual and program. It will be available for general use in the first part of 1990.

I plead with every administrator and intern supervisor to give it a try. It's time the church made internship the training program it was meant to be. ■

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How to Minister and Stay HEALTHY

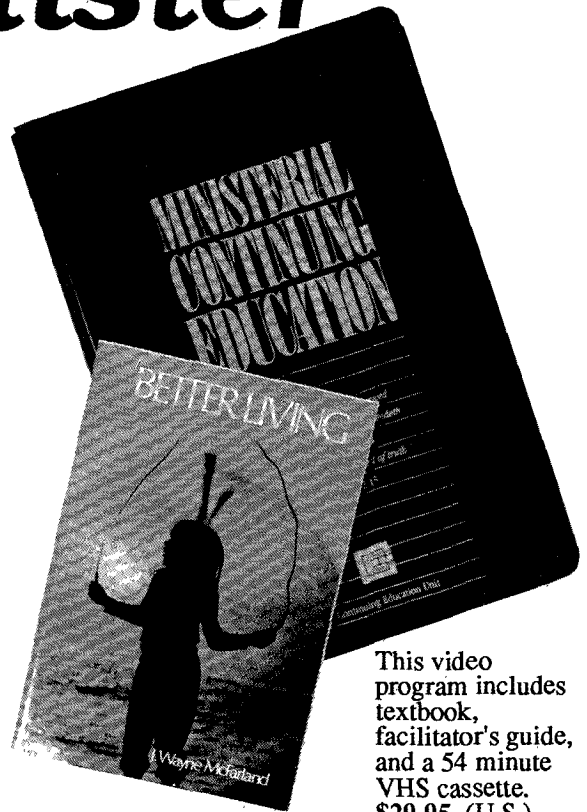
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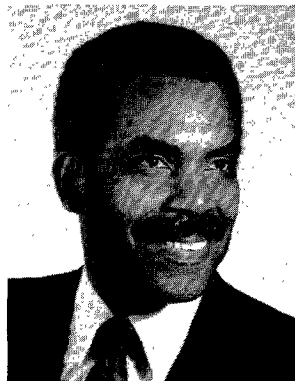
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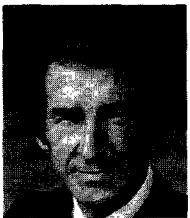
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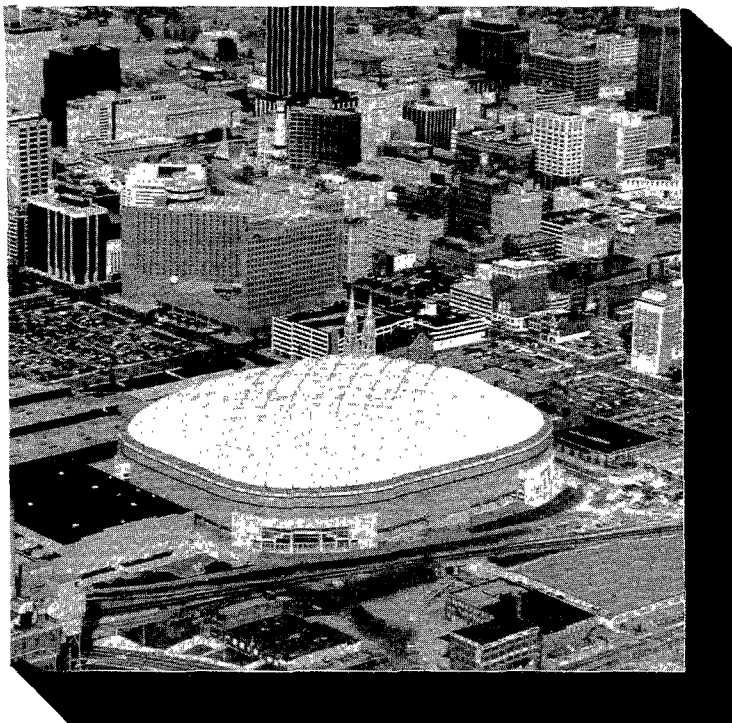


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Letters

From page 2

could increase our income by increasing our sales.

But only two of us colporteurs could see that this was the proper thing to do. One worker who had been an encyclopedia salesman let out a roar, "We want that money!" The rest followed him, and they carried the day.

That day our book work went into commercialism. The colporteurs stopped going from house to house. They developed a system of lead cards and raced past whole sections of cities, chasing these big interests. —H. B. Colburn, East Lebanon, Maine.

■ As a layman I've struggled with many of the issues you've dealt with in this article. Several times in the past few years I've been the only layperson on a conference or union committee. One such committee is the Lake Union Home Health Education Services committee. Recently at my request they appointed another layperson.

Your mention of this area is of special interest to me. Last year I served on a task force to study ways to improve the Lake Union HHES. It was not an easy task to undertake, because of the fears generated by those who are employees of the organization—and the controversy they created basically neutralized the task force report. —Chuck Randall, Lawton, Michigan.

■ The church structure and hospital system leadership determine the real mission and outreach of our church. If the leaders have a spiritual vision, then the supporting infrastructure follows step. But can we dismiss someone because of lack of spiritual vision? If the answer is yes, let's take a look at the General Conference statistics for 1988. Nineteen conferences in the North American Division reported a negative growth for the entire year. And 13 more conferences reported less than 1 percent growth. That means nearly 60 percent of our conferences produced less than 1 percent growth! Quite evidently their spiritual vision is stunted. Shall we dismiss their presidents and hire more spiritual men? If 13 years of ministry have shown me anything, less scapegoating and more creative problem-

solving are the only ways to meet the adversities that we face. —Richard Caraboolad, director of pastoral care, Anacapa Adventist Hospital, Port Hueneme, California.

Regarding "Church Structure—Servant or Master?" we should have noted that Ministry editors prepared the two tables and the sidebars "Office and Field Comparisons" and "Ellen G. White on Change" that accompanied the article. —Editors.

Exclusively the three angels' messages?

I write in response to the letter that expressed a desire for Ministry to turn primarily to the promotion of the three angels' messages (June 1989). I am glad that Ministry has not made its main goal to tell pastors (and others) what to preach. Rather, it is filled with articles on how to preach, on General Conference actions that affect churches and church workers, on handling the pressures of pastoral ministry and giving thanks for the joys it brings, articles that express concern for ministers' spouses, and so much more. It is most refreshing that Ministry is able to appeal to clergy of many denominations, just as the call to pastoral ministry has appealed to them.

I thank God that He has given His Spirit and Word to tell us what to preach. I also thank Him for directing Ministry to help me better understand and perform many aspects of my ministerial vocation, including the heralding of the three angels' messages. —Tim Breingan, associate pastor, Camarillo, California.

The Bible alone?

Re the letter calling us back to the Bible and the Bible alone (June 1989): We recognize that Ellen White made this call on several occasions, but we need to understand the context in which she spoke these words. Mrs. White was speaking against the replacement of Scripture with tradition and philosophy, the pleasing sentiments of higher criticism, evolution, spiritualism, theosophy, and pantheism.

The gift of prophecy is an authentic spiritual gift that confirms a proper interpretation of Scripture. Further, God has revealed much of the future to this church through Mrs. White's writings, as well as insights into how we should

respond to everyday experiences, including such practical issues as involvement in competitive sport. To reject her writings is not only to reject a gift of God, but to reject the Bible itself, which gives credence to the gift of prophecy. —Phillip Downing, Chinchilla, Queensland, Australia.

Regarding women's ordination

The article by William Fagal in your December 1988 issue did not quote all the necessary references regarding the work of women in the gospel ministry. One very important reference says, "Women can be the instruments of righteousness, rendering holy service. It was Mary that first preached a risen Jesus. . . . If there were twenty women where now there is one, who would make this holy mission their cherished work, we should see many more converted to the truth. *The refining, softening influence of Christian women is needed in the great work of preaching the truth*" (Evangelism, pp. 471, 472; italics supplied).

"There are women who should labor in the gospel ministry" (*ibid.*, p. 472).

"Teach this my sister. . . . *Address the crowd whenever you can*" (*ibid.*, p. 473; italics supplied). "*There is a wide field of service for women as well as for men*" (*ibid.*, p. 474; italics supplied). —U. J. Underwood, M.D., Yanbian University, Yanji City, Jilin Province, People's Republic of China.

■ As an elder/pastor I have read many articles proving the right of women to minister. However, this is not the issue in my view, and such articles obscure the real issue. Ordaining women in the biblical meaning of the term means placing them at the head of the church as an elder or pastor. That's the point of the issue, not the "role of women's ministry in the church."

The group that opposes the ordination of women are not against the ministry of women. As has been made clear by both sides, there is ample room in the church for ministry by women in many ways. This was so in Old Testament times, in New Testament times, and in Seventh-day Adventist history as well. We *must* isolate the question of ordination from the ministry of women. —J. T. Knopper, publishing director, South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Wahrenoga, New South Wales, Australia.

CPE stipend available

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For application forms or further information, please contact Chaplain Henry Uy, Kettering Medical Center, 3535 Southern Boulevard, Kettering, OH 45429; telephone (513) 296-7240.

Making baptisms special

I ask baptismal candidates to spend a thoughtful evening writing out a brief testimony as to what their baptism means to them. I suggest that they might mention people who have helped bring them to this point and that they might recount something special in their conversion experience.

I read the candidate's testimony just before the candidate enters the baptism. The testimonies are always very personal and add a touching moment to the service. When there are a number of candidates, the reading of their testimonies provides a smooth and natural transition from one bap-

tism to another.

At the conclusion of outdoor baptismal services I like to have the candidates follow Jesus' example by kneeling in prayer on shore as they exit the pond, river, or rock quarry. There we ask that as the Holy Spirit anointed Jesus for His ministry, so He be sent to equip these disciples for theirs.

—Hans Varmer, associate pastor, Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Silver Spring, Maryland.



Help parents lead their children

I believe that rather than taking from parents the privilege of preparing their children for baptism, the pastor should help parents to carry out this responsibility themselves. So I've made such a program a regular part of my ministry.

Every other year, generally in the winter months, I have the families in my church who are interested in this program meet together once a week for six weeks. During our weekly sessions a couple from the church meets with the youth while I instruct the parents. The couple either introduces to the youth the concepts for the following week or reviews with them what they learned during the previous week. Mean-

while, I explain to the parents how to present the subject matter for the coming week. During the week, then, the parents make the actual presentation to their children.

We provide notebooks and study guides for both the parents and the youth, and in addition provide the parents with stories, quotations, materials on self-analysis, and tips on teaching techniques. The lessons we use are some I prepared on the subjects I think parents should cover. They cover such topics as conversion, Christianity vs. peer pressure, how to build a personal relationship with Jesus, how to conquer temptations, sharing Jesus with others, and what joining the church means.

I apply absolutely no pressure toward baptism. Right up front I tell the youth and their parents that they will decide about baptism on their own, and that when they have decided they can tell me. I do make sure they know what conversion is and how they can tell whether or not they are converted.

This approach allows a great deal of personalization. It is a joy because through it parents learn how to assist their children spiritually; they learn how to become support persons rather than authority figures while their children move from childhood to adolescence. —Stan Caylor, Healdsburg Seventh-day Adventist Church, Healdsburg, California.

"How to Get a Job"

Henry C. Martin, presi-

dent of Adventist-Laymen's Services and Industries and former owner of an automobile dealership in Grants Pass, Oregon, has written a booklet titled "How to Get a Job." Pastors can use this booklet, which bases its advice on Christian principles, to help their members secure jobs. Martin believes that "not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327).

To obtain this bilingual booklet (written in both English and Spanish), send US\$2 per copy or US\$10 for six copies to "How to Get a Job," P.O. Box 1881, Grants Pass, OR 97526. (Price includes postage.)

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