

# Ministry

International Journal for Clergy

February 1991

HOLY  
BIBLE

**CRISIS  
IN  
AUTHORITY**

## Thank you, Pastor Spangler

The Army has relocated my chaplain husband from Germany back to the States again, and our July (1990) *Ministry* has just recently caught up with us. I could not let Pastor Spangler's retirement pass without acknowledging how much he has meant to me. Because my husband serves the Lord as an Adventist chaplain in a very pluralistic ministry, we continually see the effects of the PREACH program on other chaplains. It is my feeling that PREACH has helped fill the gulf of suspicion and scorn separating some of our brothers and sisters of other faiths from us. It paves the way for those of us who continually meet and work closely with those of other faith groups.

Pastor Spangler's influence on *Ministry* has made it a publication worthy of the PREACH program. I love *Ministry* and look forward to each issue. It is a valuable resource, a challenge, and an encouragement to me.

The publication of *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . .* filled the longing of my heart to have a Christ-centered, appealing, easy-to-read book to share with my wondering friends and acquaintances. I have shared and will go on sharing many copies of this book.

Pastor Spangler has made enormous, loving contributions to the work of our church and, through his work, to me personally. For that I am deeply grateful. To Pastor Spangler and to the newly realigned *Ministry* staff: God-speed! —Carol Brock, Eatontown, New Jersey.

## Please take a stand

I think the church should take a strong stand against abortion. And I definitely believe our hospitals should not be allowed to perform abortions. The church's wishy-washy way of dealing with abortion is causing people—in and out of the church—to lose respect for the church. When this question has come up in my classes at school, all the kids have expressed their disgust at the church for not dealing with this issue.

The church needs to come out and say that we are a Bible-keeping church and will follow the guidelines God has given us—including the sixth commandment, which says "Thou shalt not kill." We have to remember that God loves us and gave us these guidelines to improve our lives and to make us happy. We can't just ignore a commandment we don't like. James 2:8-13 says that if we break one commandment, we have broken them all.

The church should not ease the conscience of those who want to sin. This will hurt them in the end. Galatians 6:8 says that "the one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life" (NIV). The church has the responsibility to show its members and others what the Bible says. —Sarah Endres, student, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

## Poor time to defend oil

Re "The Story on Fat in the Diet" (October 1990). Three out of four Americans suffer premature disease, disability, and death from factors related to the high fat content of their diets. Research published this past year shows conclusively that a 30 percent fat diet *advances* rather than regresses arterial plugging. With this in view, it seems a poor time to present a vigorous defense of vegetable oils!

A varied plant food diet that includes olives, avocados, and nuts in modest amounts furnishes about 20 to 24 percent of calories as natural fat. This is proving to be about the right balance to maximize health and prevent disease, leaving precious little room for added animal or processed vegetable fats. Strictly limiting the use of both is a healthy thing to do. (To reverse disease, further fat limitation is necessary.)

The article also uses references out of context. Biblical "commands" for the preparation of sacrificial offerings (Lev. 2), for instance, are not exactly commands to use oil today.

The article also states: "Furthermore, she [Mrs. White] used butter in cooking her vegetables after these strong statements against grease." The reference actually reads "We purchase butter for cooking purposes" (*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 488; dated 1895). The next page contains a letter written four years later in which Mrs. White says, "We eat no meat or butter, and use very little milk in cooking" (*ibid.*, p. 489). For her, dietary reform was progressive. We would do well to follow her example. —Aileen Ludington, M.D., Loma Linda, California.

## Correction

I would like to call your attention to an error in my article ("The Story on Fat in the Diet," October 1990). In the last paragraph of the second column on page 22 it is stated that linoleic acid is present in large quantities in olive oil. That is a mistake. It should read that linoleic acid is present in large quantities in corn oil. —John A. Scharffenberg, M.D., Pacific Health Education Center, Bakersfield, California.

## Recognize all personnel

In the December 1990 issue of *Ministry* was an excellent interview with Robert and Anita Folkenberg. In the portion in which Anita tells us briefly about her background, the following sentence was inserted in brackets: "Mrs. Folkenberg's father later served as General Conference treasurer." No mention has been made in either the *Adventist Review* or *Ministry* that Anita's mother was an administrative secretary in the General Conference office, with important responsibilities.

Administrative and other secretaries at the General Conference office have knowledge and experience that is needed to complement the performance of officers and department heads. Let us recognize such personnel when there is opportunity to do so. Let us not encourage a "caste system." —A. Gordon Zytoskee, Paradise, California.

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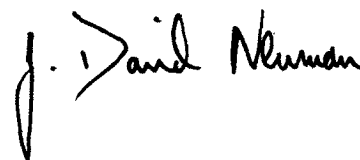
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## First Glance

Three of the articles in this issue deal with the subject of authority. In "Crisis in Authority" George Knight discusses what authority may properly be used to settle theological disputes. Does one appeal only to Scripture, or can one also appeal to church leaders, church councils, or the writings of Ellen G. White?

Then Christine Feldmann-Neubert from Germany poses the question "Crisis: Threat or Opportunity?" At a time when many are disenchanted with church leadership, how is confidence restored? She offers six keys that leaders need to consider.

Our series by Fred Veltman on Ellen White (October and December 1990) and the interview with Bob Olson (December 1990) are bringing in the letters. One of the issues both Veltman and Olson allude to concerned Ellen White's "denials" of having copied or borrowed material from others. Olson's article, "Ellen White's Denials," looks at all such statements and discusses their meaning and implications.



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# You must understand the question

**A** little more than a year ago we published an article by Tim Poirier that provided some valuable help in understanding the much-discussed topic of Ellen White's views on Christ's human nature. Poirier framed the question in these terms: "Did Christ take the sinless humanity of Adam before the Fall, or a nature identical to ours this side of the Fall?"<sup>1</sup>

In response one of our readers wrote, "It seems to me that Sister White answered the question very clearly, and I just wonder why her own answer was not used in the discussion." This reader enclosed a photostat of a couple pages from *Selected Messages*. He had underlined a sentence in which Ellen White said that Christ's human nature was "identical with our own."<sup>2</sup>

Yet on another occasion, this same Ellen White wrote, "Let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves; for it cannot be."<sup>3</sup>

A superficial glance at these two statements may suggest to us that they contradict each other. But the problem does not lie in the statements. Rather, it lies in our regarding them as direct answers to the question we have supplied: What was Christ's human nature like?

Herein lies an important principle: we will misunderstand Scripture, Ellen White's writings, or those of any other author if we haphazardly regard them as answers to our questions. Of course, the flip side of this principle is that to understand what an author, any author, is saying, we must first discover that author's concern—what he or she is writing

about, what questions he or she is answering. If our question parallels the author's, then we can accept the answer given as directly helpful to us. If it does not, we will have to search for the principle underlying the message given and extrapolate from that to our concern—or, as the case may be, we may simply have to admit that the author has nothing to say on the subject about which we are inquiring.

## Applying the principle

To illustrate: In the case of the first Ellen White quotation above, Mrs. White directly stated the question she was answering. The one to whom she was writing had asked, In light of the fact that Christ was one with God, could His human nature yield to temptation? Ellen White answered that, though Christ's divinity could not be tempted, He was as truly human as we are and so could be tempted as strongly as we, and could just as certainly have yielded to temptation.

The question centered on whether or not His human nature was subject to temptation, not on whether it was like ours in every respect. Only when we recognize that can we correctly understand Ellen White's answer.

The other Ellen White's statement we mentioned came in response to a different concern. In the first instance, Mrs. White was dealing with someone who so emphasized Christ's divinity that he had lost sight of the reality of His humanity. In the second case, the recipient of her counsel focused almost exclusively on

Christ's humanity. Here Ellen White warned of two dangers. First, this individual was close to suggesting that, like the other descendants of Adam, Christ had evil propensities. And second, he was losing sight of the fact that Christ was more than merely human. She counseled, "You need to guard strenuously every assertion, lest . . . you lose or dim the clear perceptions of His humanity as combined with divinity."<sup>4</sup>

So when she said that Christ was not "altogether human, such an one as ourselves," she was not meaning to imply that His humanity was of some other kind than ours. Rather, she was simply delineating between our propensities to sin and Christ's sinlessness, and between our utter humanity and His unique status as fully divine while fully human.<sup>5</sup>

Careful consideration of context—both literary and historical—is crucial to understanding anyone's communication. Finding the question the author is addressing is an essential part of understanding that context.—David C. James.

<sup>1</sup> Tim Poirier, "Sources Clarify Ellen White's Christology," *Ministry*, December 1989, pp. 7-9.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), book 3, p. 129.

<sup>3</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1129.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1128. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>5</sup> In a manuscript she had written earlier than either of these she had combined the concepts that appear in these two statements. She wrote that Christ's humanity was "perfectly identical with our own nature, *except without the taint of sin*" (manuscript 57, 1890; italics supplied). Poirier includes this statement in the box accompanying his article.

Interestingly, this statement parallels the one in *Selected Messages* even to the point of contrasting Christ's human nature and the nature of angels. It differs mainly in including the italicized distinction between His human nature and ours—that He was without sin.

# How sacred is human life?

**I**n the fourth meeting of the Christian View of Human Life Committee we have just done what we should have done at our first meeting—we have developed a set of biblical principles on which to base a Christian view of human life.

Concern about abortion provided the catalyst for the creation of this committee. Two and a half years ago, after vigorous debate in the officer group, it was decided to recommend that the General Conference Committee appoint a standing committee to make recommendations concerning this and other life-related issues (see *Ministry*, November 1988).

It was only natural, then, that abortion head the list of agenda items. But after grappling with this subject for three sessions and after making an attempt at a consensus statement (see *Ministry*, July 1990), some felt that we had neglected to provide a biblical foundation for that statement. In addition, the vast majority of the many letters that we received disagreed with the consensus statement.

So in our most recent session (October 1990) we spent most of our time developing 12 principles that express the biblical view of the meaning of life. We present these to you (below) as a preliminary statement and ask for your comment.

We will need to take a fresh look at our abortion guidelines in the light of these principles and see how the guidelines measure up. This church must be guided first by what the Scriptures say and only secondarily by human ethical theories.—J. David Newman.

## Principles for a Christian view of human life

### Introduction

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and

Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3, NIV). In Christ is the promise of eternal life; but since human life is mortal, humans are confronted with difficult issues regarding life and death. The following principles refer to the whole person (body, soul, and spirit), an indivisible whole (Gen. 2:7; 1 Thess. 5:23).

### Life: Our valuable gift from God

1. God is the source, giver, and sustainer of all life (Gen. 1:30; Job 33:4; Ps. 36:9; John 1:3, 4; Acts 17:25, 28).

2. Human life has unique value because human beings, though fallen, are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27; John 1:29; Rom. 3:23; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 2:2; 1 John 3:2).

3. God values human life not on the basis of human accomplishments or contributions but because we are God's creation and the objects of His redeeming love (Matt. 5:43-48; John 1:3; 10:10; Rom. 5:6, 8; Eph. 2:2-9; 1 Tim. 1:15; Titus 3:4, 5).

### Life: Our response to God's gift

4. Valuable as it is, human life is not the only or ultimate concern. Self-sacrifice in devotion to God and His principles may take precedence over life itself (1 Cor. 13; Rev. 12:11).

5. God calls for the protection of human life and holds those who destroy it accountable (Gen. 9:5, 6; Ex. 20:13; 23:7; Deut. 24:16; Prov. 6:16, 17; Jer.

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**We will need to take a fresh look at our abortion guidelines in the light of these principles.**

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7:3-34; Micah 6:7; Rev. 21:8).

6. God is especially concerned for the protection of the weak, the defenseless, and the oppressed (Ps. 82:3, 4; Prov. 24:11, 12; Micah 6:8; Luke 1:52-54; Acts 20:35; James 1:27).

7. Christian love (agape) is the costly dedication of our lives to enhancing the lives of others. Love also respects personal dignity and does not condone the oppression of one person to support the abusive behavior of another (Matt. 16:21; 22:39; John 13:34; 18:22, 23; Phil. 2:1-11; 1 John 3:16; 4:8-11).

8. The believing community is called to demonstrate Christian love in tangible, practical, and substantive ways. God calls us to restore gently the broken (Isa. 61:1-4; Matt. 1:23; 7:1, 2;



J. David Newman

John 8:2-11; Rom. 8:1, 14; 12:20; Gal. 6:1, 2; Phil. 2:1-11; 1 John 3:17, 18).

### Life: Our right and responsibility to decide

9. God gives humanity the freedom of choice—even if it leads to abuse and tragic consequences. His unwillingness to coerce human obedience necessitated the sacrifice of His Son. He requires us to use His gifts in accordance with His will and ultimately will judge their misuse (Gen. 3; Deut. 30:19, 20; Rom. 3:5, 6; 6:1, 2; Gal. 5:13; 1 Peter 2:24).

10. God calls each of us individually to moral decision making and to search the Scriptures for the biblical principles underlying such choices (Acts 17:11; Rom. 7:13-25; 1 Peter 2:9).

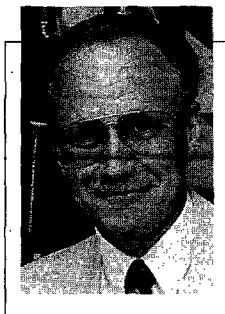
11. Decisions about human life—from its beginning to its end—are best made within the context of healthy family relationships and the support of the faith community (Ex. 20:12; Eph. 5, 6).

12. Human decisions should always be centered in seeking the will of God (Luke 22:42; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 6:6).

# Crisis in authority

George R. Knight

**It is human nature to appeal for support to whatever authority agrees with us. But when church leaders took this tack, Ellen White pointed them back to the only real Authority.**



George R. Knight is professor of church history, Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. This article is adapted from a chapter in his book *Angry Saints* published by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, Hagerstown, Maryland, in 1989.

**T**here is almost a craze for orthodoxy. A resolution was introduced into the college meeting that no new doctrine be taught there till it had been adopted by the General Conference. Mother and I killed it dead, after a hard fight."<sup>1</sup> Thus wrote W. C. White near the close of the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis. His comments reflect a division among the Adventist leadership on the proper use of authority in settling theological disputes.

The 1888 conference provides an excellent opportunity to study the use of authority in making theological decisions, since the issues were viewed by both Adventist factions as important and verifiable. The importance and visibility of the disputed points on Galatians and Daniel provide insight into the use of authority that can help Adventists address issues they face in the late twentieth century.

There are some subjects related to the 1888 meetings that are surrounded with question marks. That is not true concerning the manner in which each side tried to sustain the "truth" of its position. The surviving documents reveal that the various factions sought to win their point through the use of administrative authority, expert opinion, authoritative books, denominational tradition, creedal legislation, the writings of Ellen White, and the Bible. There is no issue more important to the Christian than authority. All that a person believes and does is based upon some view of authority. Adventist leaders were split over the problem in

1888, and they are still split over it today. Perhaps the lesson on religious authority is the most crucial thing Adventists can learn from the Minneapolis experience.

## Appeals to human authority

Seventh-day Adventist traditionalists appealed to at least four forms of human authority in their attempt to settle the theological issues troubling the denomination in 1888. Both Uriah Smith and George I. Butler made appeals to *expert opinion* and the authority of established Adventist authors. While the majority of the ministers may have agreed with them, their appeals were met by a chorus of objections from Adventism's reform element.

E. J. Waggoner was as lucid on the topic as anyone. In refuting Butler's use of expert opinion to settle the Galatians issue, Waggoner met the older man at his most vulnerable spot. "I care nothing," argued Waggoner, "for what a man says. I want to know what God says. We do not teach for doctrine the word of men, but the word of God. I am verily convinced that you would not quote Greenfield if you could find Scripture argument instead." If Adventists were to begin relying on authoritative opinion, he asserted, "we might as well turn papists at once; for to pin one's faith to the opinions of man is of the very essence of the Papacy. It matters not whether we adhere to the opinions of one man, or to the opinions of 40; whether we have one pope or 40."<sup>2</sup> After demonstrating that Butler's use of such authorities as Philip Schaff would lead to strange conclusions if used for the Adventist view of the Sabbath, Waggoner hoped out loud "that at

this late day we shall not have introduced among us the custom of quoting the opinion of doctors of divinity to support any theory." Seventh-day Adventists "should be Protestants indeed, testing everything by the Bible alone."<sup>3</sup> A. T. Jones backed up Waggoner's position, telling Uriah Smith that it would never solve the problem of the identity of the 10 horns to claim "that Bishop Chandler said so."<sup>4</sup>

Adventists were tempted to use not only the standard Christian authors as authorities but their own well-established authors, such as Smith, as well. W. C. White pointed out that some Adventist ministers gave "equal importance to the quotations of Scripture, and to Elder Smith's comments."<sup>5</sup> That was largely because of Ellen White's commendation of his *Daniel and the Revelation*. When the book was being revised for translation in 1887, W. C. White recalled, "they brought forward what had been written by her endorsing the work of Elder Smith, and [the] teaching that he had the help of heavenly angels in his work; and these things were enlarged upon, until the president of the publishing association practically took the position that *Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation* was inspired, and ought not to be changed in any way. This, of course, made a candid and fair study of the questions under consideration almost impossible."<sup>6</sup> W. C. White hoped in February 1889 that the "infallibility doctrine" regarding Smith would soon dissipate.<sup>7</sup>

Closely related to the authority of expert opinion was that of *authoritative position*. The iron-willed Butler was particularly susceptible to appeal to position. His concept of leaders having "clearer views" and more important positions than followers set him up for abuse of authority. Ellen White chided him in October 1888 for favoring those who agreed with him, while looking with suspicion on those who "do not feel obliged to receive their impressions and ideas from human beings, act[ing] only as they act, talk[ing] only as they talk, think[ing] only as they think, and, in fact, mak[ing] themselves little less than machines."<sup>8</sup> Soon after the 1888 meetings, she would write that Butler "thinks his position gives him such power that his voice is infallible."<sup>9</sup>

Butler's approach in encouraging Adventists "to look to one man to think for them, to be conscience for them," had created too many weaklings who were

"unable to stand at their post of duty" faithfully.<sup>10</sup> Ellen White said that she "never was more alarmed" than at the 1888 General Conference session, where ministers felt that they could not even study the Galatians question in the Bible "because one man is not here."<sup>11</sup> Because people had placed Butler where God should be, they had ruined both their own Christian experience and his.

Denigrating both administrative and expert human authority in doctrinal issues, Ellen White pointed out in December 1888 that "we should not consider that . . . Elder Butler [and] Elder Smith are the guardians of the doctrines for Seventh-day Adventists, and that no one may dare to express an idea that differs from theirs. My cry has been: Investigate the Scriptures for yourselves. . . . No man is to be authority for us."<sup>12</sup>

A third invalid use of authority at Minneapolis was seen in those who wanted to rely on *Adventist tradition* to settle a point. Both Smith and Butler repeatedly argued that since the Adventist positions on Galatians and Daniel had stood as truth for 40 years, they should not be changed. Smith even went so far as to claim that if the tradition was wrong, he would be forced to renounce Adventism.<sup>13</sup>

E. J. Waggoner and A. T. Jones, of course, rejected the appeal to tradition. J. H. Waggoner backed up his son. "I have long believed," he penned, "it to be a serious error, which was growing up among us, that an individual, or even a publishing house, should send forth their views and hold the denomination bound to that view because it chanced to be published by them. . . . Expositions of [the] Scriptures cannot rest on" the authority of tradition. "They can be settled only by calm investigation, and just reasoning, and then all must have an equal right to express their opinions."<sup>14</sup>

Ellen White, as usual, was in the reformers' corner. "As a people," she warned, "we are certainly in great danger, if we are not constantly guarded, of considering our ideas, because long cherished, to be Bible doctrines and on every point infallible, and measuring everyone by the rule of our interpretation of Bible truth. This is our danger, and this would be the greatest evil that could ever come to us as a people."<sup>15</sup>

A final appeal to human authority by the Smith-Butler group was seen in their drive for a voted *creedlike statement* that would set the pre-1888 theology in con-

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**"We are certainly in great danger . . . of considering our ideas, because long cherished, to be Bible doctrines . . . and measuring everyone by the rule of our interpretation of Bible truth."**

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crete. Butler hoped that at the 1886 General Conference session his nine-man Theological Committee would lay the groundwork for establishing by vote the truth on the law in Galatians and the 10 kingdoms of Daniel 7. His hopes faded, however, when the committee split five to four. Being an astute politician, he did not take the matter onto the floor of the session itself, since there would be "a big public fight over it."<sup>16</sup> Settling for a compromise, he obtained the approval of a resolution that "doctrinal views not held by a fair majority of our people" were not to be made a part of the instruction in Adventist schools or published in denominational papers until they had been "examined and approved by the leading brethren of experience."<sup>17</sup> Since Butler and Smith were obviously "the leading brethren of experience," this resolution gave them virtual veto power, but they did not have the formally voted action they desired.

The drive for a "creedal" statement would continue up through 1888. In May 1887 Leon Smith (who nearly always followed his father Uriah's lead) wrote an editorial on "The Value of a 'Creed'" for the *Review*. To Leon, a creed as a summary of beliefs was one of the most plainly taught truths in the Bible. "Let us," he concluded, "take the 'creed' which the Inspired Word gives us, become thoroughly grounded in its teachings, and hold on to it regardless of the adverse declamation of those who aspire to be teachers of a new gospel."<sup>18</sup> Leon's

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## Creeds tend to set marginal issues of current interest firmly next to the central teachings of the Bible as landmarks of the faith.

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last sentence was obviously aimed at Waggoner and Jones. His creed, like that of his father and Butler, would undoubtedly have contained statements on the law in Galatians and the 10 horns of Daniel 7, since in their minds these were central Bible teachings. One problem with creeds is that they have tended to set marginal issues of current interest firmly next to the central teachings of the Bible as landmarks of the faith. Such new landmarks, once established in a creed, become almost impossible to overturn in the future, since any change is interpreted as destroying the faith of the fathers. That kind of perpetuity, of course, is exactly what the traditionalists hoped to achieve at Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis meetings saw attempts at creedal-like resolutions on both the 10 horns and the law in Galatians. On October 17, for example, G. B. Starr called for a vote on the 10 kingdoms. "I'd like," he said, "to put an everlasting settler on this question so it would not come up for argument again." The audience responded with "cries of 'amen,' 'amen.'" <sup>19</sup> Such attempts, however, were successfully resisted by Waggoner and the Whites. Mrs. White wrote on the last day of the meetings that she and "Willie . . . had to watch at every point lest there should be moves made, resolutions passed, that would prove detrimental to the future work." <sup>20</sup> W. C. White had earlier told the delegates that he would feel compelled "to preach what he believed, whatever way the conference decided the question," concerning the 10 horns if it were put to a vote. <sup>21</sup> Both Mrs. White and Waggoner pled for further Bible

study before a decision of any kind was made. "The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions," she penned in 1892, "but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. These resolutions may conceal the discord, but they cannot quench it and establish perfect agreement." She suggested that "Christlike forbearance" of some variation of belief was necessary. On the other hand, "the great truths of the Word of God are so clearly stated that none need make a mistake in understanding them." But she stood firmly against those who magnified "mere molehills . . . into mountains and . . . made barriers between brethren." <sup>22</sup>

Unfortunately, the foundation of the problem with the traditionalists of 1888 (and much of the rest of church history) was that they were confused between molehills and mountains, believing that their molehills were truly the most important mountains in the realm of spiritual geography. But because they had no clear-cut Bible position for such "mountains," they were forced to look to creedal legislation or some other form of human authority to support their views.

### Appeals to Ellen White's authority

All agreed, however, that a "testimony" from Ellen White on the disputed points would be better than human authority and would settle the issue. After all, were not her testimonies from God? Butler was particularly excited with the possibility of getting an answer direct from God via Ellen White's pen. Between June 1886 and October 1888 he wrote a series of letters trying to encourage or even pressure Ellen White to provide the authoritative interpretation he needed to settle the Galatians issue. Had he been more successful, he could have written a work entitled *How to Push a Prophet*.

Butler, using good psychology, began in a mild manner to elicit a response from Mrs. White. On June 20, 1886, he wrote to her, complaining of Jones and Waggoner's teaching at Healdsburg College and their writing in the *Signs* that set forth the law in Galatians as the moral law—a point, he emphasized, that was out of harmony with traditional Adventist teachings. Butler then slid into his appeal by gently nudging her toward the proper answer: "I heard it intimated years ago that you had light concerning the added law, to the effect that it related to

the remedial system rather than the moral law. I think this question ought in some way to be set at rest. It would be a most bitter pill to many of our leading brethren to be compelled to see the idea taught generally, that the law which was added . . . was the moral law itself." <sup>23</sup>

On August 23 the General Conference president came a little more out in the open on the topic. After noting that the subject was creating controversy, Butler became quite specific about the confrontation between Stephen Pierce and J. H. Waggoner in the 1850s when the Adventist leadership had adopted the ceremonial law interpretation. Butler then suggested that he might develop a tract on the topic, since "the true view has never been yet fully brought out in print." Finally, he hinted that he knew very little of her opinion, thereby providing Mrs. White with an opportunity to rubber-stamp the "true" view that he had just finished outlining to her. That Butler expected a reply is evident from his next few sentences: "Of course it would be quite a shock to me, after studying the question so long and having it seem so clear to me, if it should be shown to you the position I hold was wrong. But I feel sure I would accept it and at least keep quiet if I could not clearly understand it. This is the only proper position to take, while we acknowledge the gifts of the Spirit." <sup>24</sup> President Butler could afford to be humble because he had no doubt that Ellen White would validate his position. She, however, once again neglected to respond to his gentle invitations to settle the issue. Her reply was silence on the topic.

By December 16, 1886, Butler was growing impatient with the silent prophetess. His plan to have the issue settled by a creedal resolution at the General Conference session had failed, and he was beginning to feel desperate regarding Ellen White's lack of cooperation with his tender pleas. "We have been waiting for years to hear from you on the subject [of Galatians]," he blurted out, "knowing that its agitation would end only in debate." Twelve days later he flatly told her that "nothing short of a testimony from heaven" would change his mind on issues intimately related to the problem in Galatians. <sup>25</sup>

March 1887 found Butler in somewhat better spirits. He had received Ellen White's February rebuke of Waggoner and Jones for making their controversial views public. Butler took some of her



remarks to be an indication that she was on his side in the Galatians controversy. He was certain now that Ellen White would say the correct things. He therefore reminded her that he had written to her several times on the subject, "but got no reply." While claiming that he was not urging her to make a statement, he ominously hinted that he felt "certain that after all the stir over this question it will make constant trouble till your opinion is known. You see if it [doesn't]." "If our people knew that you had light that the moral law was not the added law, the question would be settled in short order. That is precisely what our people are waiting with much anxiety to know." <sup>26</sup>

Feeling certain that Mrs. White would now come out in public for his position, he was both hurt and shocked when she wrote to him in April that her letter rebuking the younger men did not mean that she believed his position was correct.<sup>27</sup> After that "betrayal," Butler did not waste any more ink asking for her opinion on the topic.

By October 1, 1888, the General Conference president was beyond pleading for Ellen White's support. He attacked and condemned her for her silence despite his repeated requests on the Galatians issue. He even blamed her for his broken health. Beyond that he openly threatened her. If she did not come up with the proper interpretation, Butler wrote, not only would it "open a wide door for other innovations to come in and break down our old positions of faith," but it "will tend to break the confidence of our people in the testimonies themselves. And this whole matter, I believe, will do more to break down confidence in your work than anything which has occurred since this cause has had an existence . . . If our people come to think that the other side is supported, it will break the faith of many of our leading workers in the testimonies. There is no other possible result."<sup>28</sup> There is no doubt that Butler was including himself among those whose faith would be broken.

The sequence of Butler's letters is interesting, given the way many Adventists view the counsels of Ellen White. Many have silently or verbally wished that she were here in our day so that they could ask her the "real" meaning of a scriptural passage. In the Butler sequence we find her answer to such an approach—silence, frustrating silence. She refused to play into the hands of the tradi-

tionalists who practically demanded that she settle the Galatians issue by providing an authoritative answer, either by appealing to a testimony she had written to J. H. Waggoner in the 1850s but subsequently lost or by making an authoritative statement. In other words, they wanted her to function as a theological policewoman or an exegetical referee. But she refused to do so. As a result, she lost her credibility with many.

Not only did Ellen White refuse to settle the biblical issue by appealing to the Testimonies, but she went so far as to infer to the delegates at the Minneapolis meetings on October 24, 1888, that it was providential that she had lost the testimony to J. H. Waggoner in which she had purportedly settled the issue once and for all in the 1850s. "God has a purpose in this. He wants us to go to the Bible and get the Scripture evidence."<sup>29</sup> In other words, she was more interested in what the Bible had to say on the subject than in what she had written. The Testimonies were not to take the place of the Bible. She would emphasize that point again in early 1889 in the publication of *Testimony* 33, which has an entire section on that topic. She made it explicit that her writings were to bring people "back to the Word" and to aid them in understanding the biblical principles,<sup>30</sup> but she never held them up as a divine commentary on Scripture.

In the face of Ellen White's refusal to "produce" a testimony on Galatians, the Minneapolis traditionalists must have felt a wave of thankfulness that they had her published writings on the topic, especially since she had seemingly identified the law in Galatians in her *Sketches From the Life of Paul* (1883). On October 24, J. H. Morrison utilized *Sketches* in his attempt to demonstrate the validity of the ceremonial law interpretation. He read to the delegates: "He [Paul] describes the visit which he made to Jerusalem to secure a settlement of the very questions which are now agitating the churches of Galatia, as to whether the Gentiles should submit to circumcision and keep the ceremonial law." Morrison next read from the discussion of the nature of the Galatians' problem: "Having gained this point, they [the Judaizing teachers] induced them [the Christians at Galatia] to return to the observance of the ceremonial law as essential to salvation. Faith in Christ, and obedience to the law of Ten Commandments, were regarded as of minor importance." This last quotation

## They wanted her to function as an exegetical referee. But she refused to do so.

seemed to accomplish two points at once—it apparently validated the ceremonial law interpretation, while explicitly discounting Waggoner's position in one fatal blow. Morrison then read where Ellen White spoke of the yoke of bondage that is mentioned in both Acts 15:10 and Galatians 5:1: "This yoke was not the law of Ten Commandments, as those who oppose the binding claim of the law assert; but Peter referred to the law of ceremonies, which was made null and void by the crucifixion of Christ."<sup>31</sup> Having submitted this evidence, Morrison and the traditionalists must have believed they had clinched the argument. After all, they had a quotation from Ellen White, and they believed her commentary was the final authority on Bible truth.

That position, however, was not the one that Ellen White took at Minneapolis. That very morning (before Morrison's presentation) in addressing the Galatians issue, she had said: "I cannot take my position on either side until I have studied the question."<sup>32</sup> It was in that context that she noted that it was providential that she could not find her testimony to J. H. Waggoner on the topic. It would have been misused to keep people from the study of God's Word. Ellen White had light for the General Conference delegates on the subject of Galatians, but that light, as she repeatedly asserted, was that they needed to study the Bible and not rely on any other form of authority as they sought the meaning of Scripture. She would stamp that message home in her last recorded sermon at Minneapolis—"A Call to a Deeper Study of the Word."<sup>33</sup> She was apparently not impressed with Morrison's use of *Sketches* to prove his point. We have no indication that she considered the matter settled by that method, nor did she quote her own writings at Minneap-

olis to decide any of the theological, historical, or biblical issues. Her writings had their purposes, but apparently they were not intended to provide an infallible commentary on the Bible.

Mrs. White would take the same position 20 years later in the controversy over the meaning of the "daily" in Daniel 8. In that struggle the traditionalists (this time led by S. N. Haskell) held that the new interpretation would "undermine present truth" because the old view had been based upon a statement in Ellen White's *Early Writings*. Thus the new interpretation of the daily was "contrary to old established points of [the] faith."<sup>34</sup> Haskell was explicit concerning his view of the relation of Mrs. White's writings to the Bible: "We ought to understand such expressions by the aid of the Spirit of Prophecy. . . . For this purpose the Spirit of Prophecy comes to us. . . . All points are to be solved" in that manner.<sup>35</sup> Mrs. White made short shrift of Haskell's arguments. "I have had no instruction on the point under discussion," she wrote. She saw no need for the controversy because "this is not a subject of vital importance." "Let all contention cease."<sup>36</sup> As at Minneapolis, she was not supportive of people, no matter how sincere they might be, using her writings to create new landmarks or to create rigid interpretations of Scripture.<sup>37</sup>

### The authority of the Bible

Waggoner, Jones, and the Whites stood in harmony on the use of authority in settling theological issues. All three held that the Bible is the only determiner of Christian belief. As a result, they were united against the attempts of the old guard to utilize other forms of authority to settle biblical issues.

Ellen White was particularly insistent on the need for Bible study in settling theological disputes. In April 1887, for example, she wrote to Butler and Smith that "we want Bible evidence for every point we advance. We do not want to tide over points, as Elder Canright has done, with assertions."<sup>38</sup> In July 1888 she set forth her position with the greatest clarity when she published in the *Review* that "the Bible is the only rule of faith and doctrine."<sup>39</sup>

But her most important statement concerning the theological authority struggle that was agitating the denominational leaders as they drifted toward Minneapolis was penned on August 5, 1888. On that day she wrote a letter to

the "brethren who shall assemble in General Conference." That circular letter has received scant attention in the past, but it should be seen as one of the most important documents relating to the Minneapolis General Conference session. The letter specifically highlighted the developing crisis related to the spirit of Minneapolis and the solution to that problem through assimilating the spirit of Jesus. More important, however, it was a forceful call for every individual to study the Bible and to avoid merely maintaining the old ways. "We are not to set our stakes," she wrote in alluding to the Smith-Butler position, "and then interpret everything to reach this set point. Here is where some of our great Reformers [of the past] have failed, and this is the reason that men who today might be mighty champions for God and the truth are warring against the truth." She urged Adventists not to make the same mistake, and called for open study at Minneapolis of the controverted issues.<sup>40</sup> Butler could not escape the implications of that public letter. His hand had been forced, and by the end of the month he announced in the *Review* that the topics upon which "some difference of opinion may exist" would be studied at the forthcoming General Conference session.<sup>41</sup>

"Search the Scriptures carefully to see what is truth," Mrs. White penned in her August 5, 1888, letter. "The truth can lose nothing by close investigation. Let the Word of God speak for itself; let it be its own interpreter, and the truth will shine like precious gems amid the rubbish." She chided the Adventist ministry for too easily accepting the opinions of others. "There is a most wonderful laziness that is indulged in by a large class of our ministers who are willing others should search the Scriptures for them; and they take the truth from their lips as a positive fact, but they do not know it to be Bible truth, through their own individual research, and by the deep convictions of the Spirit of God upon their hearts and minds. . . .

"Our people," she continued, "individually must understand Bible truth more thoroughly, for they certainly will be called before councils; they will be criticized by keen and critical minds. It is one thing to give assent to the truth, and another thing, through close examination as Bible students, to know what is truth. . . . Many, many will be lost because they have not studied their Bibles

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**"Search the Scriptures carefully to see what is truth. The truth can lose nothing by close investigation. Let the Word of God be its own interpreter."**

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upon their knees, with earnest prayer to God that the entrance of the Word of God might give light to their understanding. . . .

"The Word of God is the great detector of error; to it we believe everything must be brought. The Bible must be our standard for every doctrine and practice. . . . We are to receive no one's opinion without comparing it with the Scriptures. Here is divine authority which is supreme in matters of faith. It is the Word of the living God that is to decide all controversies. It is when men mingle their own human smartness with God's words of truth in giving sharp thrusts to those who are in controversy with them, that they show that they have not a sacred reverence for God's Inspired Word. They mix the human with the divine, the common with the sacred, and they belittle God's Word."<sup>42</sup>

With that forceful epistle, Ellen White gave a mighty forward thrust to a theme she would uplift at Minneapolis and throughout the 1890s. On the eve of the 1888 meetings she mentioned that Butler and Smith were "very loath to have anything said upon the law in Galatians, but," she noted, "I cannot see how it can be avoided. We must take the Bible as our standard and we must diligently search its pages for light and evidences of truth."<sup>43</sup> During the meetings her messages were honeycombed with that theme. Three of her comments at Minneapolis on the topic are particularly insightful. First, she claimed that "if we have the truth it will stand" careful investigation.<sup>44</sup> Second, she indicated that she could not take a position on the controverted issues until she had studied

the questions from the Bible. She did not seek to enforce an interpretation from her published works. Nor did she intend to sit passively and wait for a vision. Her method was the same as that which she recommended for others—active Bible study. Third, she continued to uphold the supremacy of the Bible. “The Scriptures must be your study,” she told the delegates in her last message, “then you will know that you have the truth. . . . You should not believe any doctrine simply because another says it is truth. You should not believe it because Elder Smith, or Elder Kilgore, or Elder Van Horn, or Elder Haskell says it is truth, but because God’s voice has declared it in His living Oracles.”<sup>45</sup> She could have as easily added her own name to that list, given the position she had taken during the meetings.

Mrs. White was adamant, during the conference and in its aftermath, that both sides of the argument in the Galatians controversy needed to be submitted to the searching scrutiny of exacting Bible study. On December 9, 1888, she asked a crucial question: “If every idea we have entertained in doctrines is truth, will not the truth bear to be investigated? Will it totter and fall if criticized? If so,” she answered, “let it fall, the sooner the better. The spirit that would close the door to investigation of points of truth in a Christlike manner is not the Spirit from above.”<sup>46</sup> Two days later she wrote to Butler that “the Bible, the Bible alone, laid up in the heart and blessed by the Spirit of God, can make man right and keep him right.”<sup>47</sup>

Ellen White leaves us with no doubt as to the supremacy of the Bible in faith and practice. At Minneapolis she was truly a “lesser light” pointing to (rather than dominating) the “greater light” of the Bible.

### Applying the lessons on authority

The cycle of crisis in authority tends to repeat itself over time. If Smith and Butler had been looked to as the authorities in 1888, Jones, Waggoner, and Prescott took over their role for a large number of Adventists in the 1890s. That tradition has been carried over into the twentieth century. Even as recently as 1987, Jones and Waggoner have been linked together in an influential book as part of “the inspired trio.”<sup>48</sup> Such an identification tends to confound the men with their message. Beyond that, and more important, such an identification perpet-

uates one of the foundational problems of Minneapolis—the failure of Adventists to use the Bible as the only standard of doctrine and practice. Mrs. White stood firmly behind Jones and Waggoner because of their call for openness in Bible study and their Bible-based emphasis on Christ’s righteousness. Her call was for Adventists to become involved in earnest Bible study in the same way that the young reformers of 1888 were involved. To fixate on their words and to read the Bible through their eyes is merely to repeat the mistake of the post-Reformation era as the second and third generations of Protestants read their Bibles in the light of the sixteenth-century Reformers. The great call of 1888 was for Adventists to move away from such false paths and to become active in intense, Spirit-guided study of the Scriptures. The challenge is to expand and enrich the theological beachhead of Jones and Waggoner, not to canonize it. ■

<sup>1</sup> W. C. White to Mary White, Nov. 3, 1888.

<sup>2</sup> E. J. Waggoner, *The Gospel in the Book of Galatians*, pp. 56, 59.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 67, 60.

<sup>4</sup> A. T. Jones to Uriah Smith, Dec. 3, 1886. Cf. W. C. White to George I. Butler, Aug. 16, 1888.

<sup>5</sup> W. C. White to C. Eldridge, May 14, 1887.

<sup>6</sup> W. C. White to Stephen N. Haskell, Dec. 9, 1909.

<sup>7</sup> W. C. White to J. H. Waggoner, Feb. 27, 1889. See also Arthur L. White, “Thoughts on Daniel and the Revelation,” *Ministry*, January 1945, pp. 11-13, 46.

<sup>8</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler, Oct. 14, 1888.

<sup>9</sup> Ellen G. White to Mary White, Nov. 4, 1888.

<sup>10</sup> Ellen G. White to S. N. Haskell, Dec. 11, 1891.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 9, Oct. 24, 1888.

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White to William M. Healey, Dec. 9, 1888. Cf. Ellen G. White manuscript 37, c. 1890.

<sup>13</sup> W. C. White handwritten notes on the 1888 General Conference, book 1 (“E”), Oct. 15, 1888, p. 27; Uriah Smith to A. T. Robinson, Sept. 21, 1892.

<sup>14</sup> J. H. Waggoner to the General Conference, Oct. 10, 1887.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 37, c. 1890.

<sup>16</sup> George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Dec. 16, 1886.

<sup>17</sup> Uriah Smith, *Review and Herald*, Dec. 14, 1886, p. 779.

<sup>18</sup> L. A. Smith, *Review and Herald*, May 10, 1887, pp. 298, 299.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in the *Minneapolis Journal*, Oct. 18, 1888, p. 2; and in the *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 18, 1888, p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Ellen G. White to Mary White, Nov. 4, 1888.

<sup>21</sup> W. C. White to Mary White, Nov. 3, 1888.

<sup>22</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 24, 1892. Ellen G. White practiced what she preached on the point of variation in beliefs. In the controversy over the covenants in 1890, for example, she did not hold that the ministers had to agree with her position that had been published in *Patriarchs and Prophets*—a position she had been “shown” was correct.

<sup>23</sup> George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, June 20, 1886.

<sup>24</sup> George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Aug. 23, 1886.

<sup>25</sup> George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Dec. 16 and 28, 1886.

<sup>26</sup> George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Mar. 31, 1887.

<sup>27</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and Uriah Smith, Apr. 5, 1887.

<sup>28</sup> George I. Butler to Ellen G. White, Oct. 1, 1888.

<sup>29</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 9, Oct. 24, 1888.

<sup>30</sup> See Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 663-668.

<sup>31</sup> ———, *Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 193, 188, 68. For data bearing on the date of the readings from *Sketches*, see W. C. White handwritten notes on the 1888 General Conference, book 1 (“E”), pp. 63, 67; Wahlen, *Selected Aspects of Ellen J. Waggoner’s Eschatology*, p. 74; Ellen G. White manuscript 24, c. November or December 1888.

<sup>32</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 9, Oct. 24, 1888.

<sup>33</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 15, November 1888.

<sup>34</sup> S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White, June 30, 1907; Feb. 25, 1909; Dec. 6, 1909; S. N. Haskell to Ellen G. White and W. C. White, Nov. 18, 1907; S. N. Haskell to W. C. White, Dec. 6, 1909; S. N. Haskell to C. C. Crisler, Mar. 30 and Apr. 15, 1908; S. N. Haskell to W. W. Prescott, Nov. 15, 1907; W. W. Prescott to S. N. Haskell, Dec. 1, 1907; Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pp. 74, 75.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 11, July 31, 1910; Ellen G. White to “brethren in the ministry,” Aug. 3, 1910. For an excellent discussion of the struggle over the “daily,” see Gilbert M. Valentine, “William Warren Prescott: Seventh-day Adventist Educator,” 2 vols. (Ph.D. dissertation, Andrews University, 1982), pp. 389-426.

Some have suggested that the thesis I have argued regarding Ellen G. White’s relation to the Bible in the resolution of theological differences breaks down in her treatment in 1905 of A. F. Ballenger’s problem over the sanctuary teaching. On that occasion she came across much more authoritatively than she did during the Galatians and “daily” conflicts. Thus the Ballenger incident is an excellent test case for my thesis. As a preliminary hypothesis, it seems to me that there is a fundamental difference between Ballenger’s case and the other two. From Ellen G. White’s perspective, the point at issue in the Ballenger controversy had already been thoroughly studied from the Bible by Adventist scholars, whereas the law in Galatians and the “daily” still needed more attention when disagreement arose over them. As a result, she related to Ballenger’s situation differently than she did in the other cases. Such a hypothesis has yet to be tested, but that testing should prove to be an interesting and meaningful task for some scholar in the future. It should be noted that Ellen G. White’s seemingly different treatment of Ballenger’s situation should not be attributed to some historical development in her theological assertiveness, since the Ballenger incident is chronologically spanned by the Galatians and “daily” controversies.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and Uriah Smith, Apr. 5, 1887.

<sup>39</sup> Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, July 17, 1888, p. 449.

<sup>40</sup> Ellen G. White to “brethren who shall assemble in General Conference,” Aug. 5, 1888.

<sup>41</sup> George I. Butler, *Review and Herald*, Aug. 28, 1888, p. 560.

<sup>42</sup> Ellen G. White to “brethren who shall assemble in General Conference,” Aug. 5, 1888.

<sup>43</sup> Ellen G. White to Mary White, Oct. 9, 1888.

<sup>44</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 9, Oct. 24, 1888.

<sup>45</sup> Ellen G. White manuscript 15, November 1888.

<sup>46</sup> Ellen G. White to William M. Healey, Dec. 9, 1888.

<sup>47</sup> Ellen G. White to George I. Butler and wife, Dec. 11, 1888.

<sup>48</sup> Robert J. Wieland and Donald K. Short, 1888 *Re-examined*, rev. ed., p. 75.

# Crisis: threat or opportunity?

**Christine  
Feldmann-Neubert**

**Six keys to retaining  
the interest, efforts,  
and membership of  
the laity of the  
church.**



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**I**n the highly industrialized countries—the traditionally Christian countries—the mainline churches, especially the Protestant churches, are bleeding to death. Hundreds of thousands of people are leaving them every year. To believe that the Adventist Church is immune to this development is an illusion.

But my aim in this article is not to point out how and why a crisis has developed in the European and North American segments of the Adventist Church. It is not even to define the nature and range of the crisis that may exist in the church. Instead, I am interested in considering how we deal with crisis situations in the church at any level.

Look at the term *crisis* itself. What feelings arise when one hears this term? Visions of hopeless conflict, unending quarrels, steady decline? The medical field offers some insight here. In a disease, *crisis* indicates a point at which the patient can just as well take a turn for the better as for the worse. With careful treatment, the crisis can be made the turning point to recovery.

How do we handle crisis in the church? Our answers to the following six questions will do much to determine whether or not we deal with it successfully.

**1. Do we regard crisis as a threat to the status quo, or as an opportunity to grow?**

It should be quite obvious that whether or not we succeed in managing a

crisis depends on whether we regard it as a threat to Adventist faith itself or as an opportunity to realize our faith in a new and reformatory way. If we regard a crisis in the church as threatening faith, we will tend to fear and respond aggressively toward all those in the church who differ with us.

Fortunately, since its beginning Adventism has been characterized by reformation. This characteristic offers help for today's crisis. But the claim to be a reform movement must rest on a more substantial foundation than a mere recollection of our pioneers' courageous actions as to the religious doctrines of their time. Nor does simply instructing other churches about what they should change in their doctrines or practices verify that claim. We can truly be a reform movement only as we continuously hold ourselves open to the possibility that new light may shine on us.

The present crisis offers the opportunity of recalling our very roots and of pondering our traditions, old habits, and dogmas. So, for example, the way we *traditionally* understand the Sabbath is not sacred in itself but should be open to continuous reformation.

**2. Do we require perfection of church leaders, or do we allow them the freedom to experiment, even though it means that at times they will make mistakes?**

No matter what we think about Gorbachev's policy, one thing is clear to his antagonists as well as to his supporters: he has shown the courage of his convictions. I think this courage shows up primarily in taking positions, in being will-

ing to risk making mistakes. Taking positions compels the respect of one's antagonists, while the inconstancy and vagueness of mind that result from the fear of making mistakes bother even one's own supporters.

Why are our churches not much more courageous? Are we, as redeemed and free people, really forced to have, or even justified in having, this fear of making mistakes? Who has stolen from us the freedom to err? Who has taken from us the freedom to admit openly the mistakes we make? I think it is time for us as Christians and especially as church leaders to drop the mask of infallibility—which is, by the way, a mask more appropriate to the Catholic Church than to ours!

### **3. Do we treat church members as children, or do we relate to them as responsible, mature adults?**

My work on various committees in the church has led me to believe that too frequently church members are regarded as children, under age, immature. I have often seen new, unconventional ideas that might have been useful to the church rejected, and the rejection justified with a line such as: "Yes, we would surely like to try this new idea, but some brethren would be certain to misunderstand it." Then, instead of acquainting church members with the idea and risking discussion, we avoid the matter.

Interestingly enough, I hear church members saying things that correspond to the leaders' attitudes: "We would like to try, but the church administrators..." So, over and over again, the old ways gain the victory.

Strange phenomenon! Or could this mysterious misunderstanding be the result of the working of the great distorter Satan?

Like other churches, we tend to regard the new and the unusual as alarming in themselves, and any risks, of whatever kind, to be unbearable. But if we avoid risks, we cannot progress or learn. Constructively working our way through conflict stimulates growth. To avoid hindering the church's effectiveness, we must communicate clearly with each other and we must try new approaches.

Some quote Paul's discussion of the weak and the strong (1 Cor. 8; 9) in support of the approach of not taking any risks. But Paul didn't forbid the strong to discuss matters with the weak and thus perhaps convince them. Otherwise, he would not have asked a few verses later

why his liberty should depend on another man's conscience (1 Cor. 10:29).

Of course, there is and always will be a natural tension between considering the feelings of the weak and the indispensable further development of the church. However, this tension should not excuse us from taking risks. Life in itself brings risks and opportunities, and only by accepting them will we grow. The alternative is everlasting stagnation in the church.

Jesus' message held the potential of giving offense. Like Him, we must deal with that possibility, not by avoiding risks, but by always relating to the weak in a positive and warm way while also offering them a better foundation on which to base their faith.

Perhaps church administrators should simply trust that their members are more responsible and self-reliant than the leaders may be tempted to believe, that the members' faith is strong enough to handle new ideas. If it is not, instead of leaving those members in their feeble condition, the church should aim to strengthen their faith. The believers will be (and should be) "strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man" (Eph. 3:16). Church members can develop this strength by handling differences in a mature way.

### **4. Do we construct straw men, or do we face the real problems?**

One of the mechanisms some in the church use to manage the changes we face is what I call "magical defense by rationalist means." Much like the magical practices of the so-called primitive tribes, these people project the evil they foresee into some area where it can be attacked. Those in churches with roots in the Puritan heritage—like our church—tend to suspect first of all the subconscious, the emotional, the instinctive side of life, because it seems to be uncontrollable. But the suggestion that we must either control nature or be defeated by the uncontrollable is a mere intellectual construction that can be traced through the Enlightenment and the early Christian church back to the Greek philosophers.

Dividing the human entity into good and evil parts misses the fact that the conscious and rational aspect of human life is no less susceptible to evil than is the emotional aspect. So we are lulled into a false security. At the same time, overestimating the susceptibility of the

## **Why are our churches not much more courageous? Who has stolen from us the freedom to err?**

emotional sector cheats us out of the full use and enjoyment of our being.

Attempts to deal with crisis by using projection will likely fail. The better way requires a certain degree of self-confidence: we must face and deal with reality in all its complexity and diversity. We must not allow wishful thinking to displace reality.

### **5. Do we expect lay members to follow blindly, or do we allow them to have a critical but active loyalty?**

The church cannot any longer pamper itself by expecting of its members blind, unconditional loyalty. The widespread secularization of society has had its part in making this expectation unrealistic. Yet even if secularization has caused a more critical attitude toward religion and the church, it does not necessarily follow that this process does not also have constructive and fructifying aspects.

At any rate, reality shows that in the same measure as the church claims blind loyalty from its members, their numbers lessen. Fundamentalists tend to view those who leave as the apostatized, who weren't following the Lord earnestly anyway; they suggest that those who leave the church are leaving God Himself, and that those who stay with the church are the faithful remnant. Those with this attitude show neither regret nor self-criticism when another member leaves the church. Can we afford to be so self-complacent?

I believe that secular processes—and that crisis itself—can offer opportunities instead of simply posing threats. But whether or not we see them as opportunities depends on how we define ourselves and our role in society. Is it our role to categorize people as sheep or goats—that is, to exercise judicial powers? Or should we leave this task to the Lord? Meeting crisis by allowing criticism of

## When we regard our religious point of view as beyond discussion, we proclaim ourselves the criterion for all others.

ourselves and by examining ourselves may offer the opportunity of developing a greater measure of humility and humanity. When, on the other hand, we regard our religious point of view as beyond discussion, we proclaim ourselves the criterion for all others.

Churches often attempt to impel unconditional loyalty by intensifying standards. With the well-meant intention of strengthening Adventist identity, the use of these heightened standards starts a process of separation, and, as a result, it becomes more and more clear who are "inside" and who are "outside." This strategy is dubious in itself and not biblical, but it becomes even more problematic when standards of secondary importance, such as personal preferences in clothing, music, and politics, are used as the instruments of separation. These standards vary in different cultural and historical contexts. When we attempt to demonstrate that they are derived from the Bible, we add the risk of blinding ourselves to our own cultural biases.

Another interesting question arises: Why is it that standards in the field of personal preferences so often become the instrument for separation? I think these standards are chosen because compliance to them can easily be observed. But this strategy will not bring about the true goal—real loyalty. The "remnant" group may meet these standards while claiming that what's in their hearts is no one's business. Yet Adventist identity and loyalty manifest themselves neither in the acceptance of observable outward standards nor in welding members together against an outer enemy, but rather in the feeling of fellowship that comes as a result of the administration's confidence in the church members.

Church members have told me that

the objections and doubts raised merely because of the innovative, nontraditional way in which they want to do something dampens their desire to work for the church. I think we must cease to regard tradition as an end in itself; critical loyalty is needed, built by confidence and innovative openness.

### 6. Do we regard pluralism as evil, or do we admit that there are different ways of walking in the same direction?

It is my conviction that the Adventist faith can be lived in different ways. Adventists need not all have the same opinion about everything! And yet, despite the simplicity of this statement, again and again the term *pluralism* is marked as negative, as a threat.

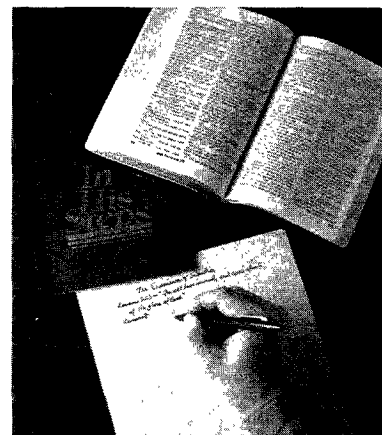
Those who regard pluralism as a threat do so because opinions that differ from their own make them uncertain about their own opinions. The intensity of our reaction has much to do with our acceptance of ourselves: the less sure we feel about ourselves, the more threatening pluralism will seem to us. But Paul warns us not to judge others' ways of serving God; they are responsible to God, not to us (Rom. 14:4)!

Accepting pluralism as legitimate doesn't mean that we must become totally uncertain about our own opinions. It simply means that we have to realize that all our perceptions of reality, both individual and collective (even those of the church), are, in the last analysis, limited. As Paul said, "Now I know in part" (1 Cor. 13:12).

To summarize, I believe that we can make the crisis the church faces an opportunity for growth if we meet it with courage:

- Courage to change traditions.
- Courage to make mistakes and admit them, and to allow others to make mistakes.
- Courage to trust in church members and their ability to grow.
- Courage to see problems in a realistic way without wishful thinking or projections.
- Courage to bear criticism rather than to condemn it.
- Courage to allow a variety of opinions.

I know this calls for a lot of courage, but I believe we have a good and abundant Source for that! ■



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# Ellen White's denials

Robert W. Olson

**The former secretary of the White Estate discusses every known instance in which Ellen, James, or W. C. White denied using sources.**



Robert W. Olson, Th.D., was the secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate at the time of his retirement last year.

**O**ne of the questions put to Fred Veltman in connection with his Life of Christ research project was "How do you harmonize Ellen White's use of sources with her statements to the contrary?" Veltman's response, published in the December 1990 *Ministry*, was "As of now I do not have—nor, to my knowledge, does anyone else have—a satisfactory answer to this important question."

In this article we will examine every currently known denial of the use of sources made by Ellen White herself, or by her husband or her son as they described her work. There are 10 such denials, or nonadmissions, that need to be considered. In my opinion, most of these present no problem when seen in context. I do agree with Dr. Veltman, however, that in a few cases we cannot give answers that will satisfy everyone.

## Denials 1 and 2

Ellen White's first health writings, published in 1864 and 1865, bore similarities to the works of earlier authors. For example, in 1857 John C. Gunn declared that tobacco was "a poison of a most deceitful and malignant kind, that sends its exciting and paralyzing influence into every nerve of the body."<sup>1</sup>

Compare those lines with what Ellen White wrote seven years later: "Tobacco is a poison of the most deceitful and malignant kind, having an exciting, then a paralyzing influence upon the nerves of the body."<sup>2</sup>

Several years later still Ellen White

was asked how much she knew of other health writings before she produced her own. She responded with an article in the October 8, 1867, *Review and Herald*, and a separate manuscript that gave additional details.<sup>3</sup> In these documents Ellen White stated: "I did not read any works upon health until I had written *Spiritual Gifts*, volumes 3 and 4, *Appeal to Mothers*, and had sketched out most of my six articles in the six numbers of *How to Live*."<sup>4</sup> "My views were written independent of books or of the opinions of others."<sup>5</sup>

How do we explain the parallels between Ellen White's health writings and those of earlier authors in light of her declaration that she was not familiar with other health works at the time she composed hers? Possible answers include the following:

1. Her expressions resembled the words and phrases of other health reformers purely through coincidence.
2. Before Ellen White wrote out her views, conversations she had with various persons who were familiar with the subject of health reform acquainted her with the expressions and even the ideas of other health reformers.
3. Ellen White did not do any reading in health reform literature until her earliest health writings were completed. Her husband, however, did extensive reading on the subject, and, in his role as her editor, helped clothe her ideas with the correct medical phraseology.
4. Ellen White had indeed read the health works of others in 1864 but had forgotten this fact by the time she made her 1867 statement.
5. Ellen White read the works of oth-



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## **"I have to choose the words and expressions myself. The words are mine, not God's."**

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ers after she had written her own. She then edited her works, incorporating occasional words or phrases from other health writers.

6. Ellen White had read the health works of others, but consciously denied that she had done so.

In my opinion, answer 2 may well be the right one. In the same article in which she denied having read other health works before writing out her own views, she asserted that she had discussed health topics extensively with anyone who would listen. She stated that, following her 1863 vision, "the matter was upon my mind continually. I talked it to all with whom I had opportunity to converse."<sup>6</sup> As Ellen White discussed health topics with those who were knowledgeable on them, she would naturally have become acquainted with the vocabulary and expressions used by the health reformers of her day.

There are those who will argue for option 5. Others will suggest that number 6 is the right one—that Ellen White was less than candid in her denials. However, knowing Ellen White as I do, after having been closely associated with her through her writings for many years, I would find it very difficult to believe that she would knowingly misrepresent any facts or situations. Ellen White was a totally truthful person. But even if it should be proved that she deliberately misstated this matter, I would still believe that she was God's special messenger. Twice Abraham was less than truthful, yet he remained God's spokesperson to that generation (Gen. 20:7). David feigned madness for fear of Achish (1 Sam. 21:13) and was guilty of duplicity in engineering the death of Uriah the Hittite (2 Sam. 11), yet the Christian world recognizes his psalms as heaven-inspired.

### **Denial 3**

In one of her health reform articles Ellen White had written that the reform

dress should "clear the filth of the streets an inch or two" and "should reach somewhat below the top of the boot" to "about nine inches from the floor."<sup>7</sup> When one of her readers thought he saw a contradiction in these expressions and asked her about it, Ellen White explained how inspiration worked in her case. She said that in a vision she saw three companies of women, each company distinguished from the others by the varying hemlines of the dresses they wore. Then she went on: "And here I would state that although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation. As I wrote upon the subject of dress, the view of those three companies revived in my mind as plain as when I was viewing them in vision; but I was left to describe the length of the proper dress in my own language as best I could."<sup>8</sup>

When she said, "The words . . . are my own," Ellen White was not denying that, in writing out her views, she might at times borrow the language of others; she was simply saying that she herself chose the words that she felt best conveyed the ideas or views she was endeavoring to impart. She was saying, in effect, "The exact wording of my testimonies is not given to me by God. Sometimes I am given pictures without any words at all. When describing what I have seen, I have to choose the words and expressions myself. The words are mine, not God's."

### **Denial 4**

On March 28, 1882, Ellen White sent a very pointed letter to the church at Battle Creek, Michigan.<sup>9</sup> Some of the members there, resenting her strictures, accused her of basing her reproofs on unfounded gossip. Ellen White responded with another letter in which she asserted that what she had written three months earlier was not just human opinion. She declared: "You might say that this communication was only a letter. Yes, it was a letter, but prompted by the Spirit of God, to bring before your minds things that had been shown me. In these letters which I write, in the testimonies I bear, I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision—the pre-

cious rays of light shining from the throne."<sup>10</sup>

Ellen White was not, in this statement, ruling out the idea that some of her testimonies might contain passages gleaned from her reading. Rather, she was affirming her deep conviction that her messages of reproof bore the signet of Heaven. Just a little farther on in the letter she said, "I was told to gather up the light that had been given me and let its rays shine forth to God's people."<sup>11</sup>

This light was found, not only in her own letters and manuscripts, but in the writings of others as well. As a matter of fact, nearly one third of the material in this very letter was drawn from the works of Friederick Krummacher, Daniel March, and John Harris. W. C. White explained later: "She was told that in the reading of religious books and journals, she would find precious gems of truth expressed in acceptable language, and that she would be given help from heaven to recognize these and to separate them from the rubbish of error with which she would sometimes find them associated."<sup>12</sup>

### **Denial 5**

On February 18, 1887, Ellen White wrote a letter to A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner about the theological discussions regarding the law in Galatians in which church leaders were then engaged. In that letter she made this comment: "I have not been in the habit of reading any doctrinal articles in the paper, that my mind should not have any understanding of anyone's ideas and views, and that not a mold of any man's theories should have any connection with that which I write."<sup>13</sup>

I do not take this as a general statement intended to describe all of her reading and writing habits. Two months later she wrote G. I. Butler, one of the other parties in the dispute, that she had just read a doctrinal statement of his and was "pained" by it.<sup>14</sup>

### **Denial 6**

One of Ellen White's denials came in a June 25, 1897, letter that she wrote to Fannie Bolton, who worked for her periodically during a 10-year time span that ended that year. Ellen White wrote: "Your words regarding me and my writings are false, and I must say that you know them to be false. . . ."

"McCullagh stated in a large congregation that it was reported by one who



knew that I picked up things written in books, and sent them out as something the Lord had shown me."<sup>15</sup>

This denial should be read in the light of a letter Ellen White sent Fannie six weeks earlier, in which she spoke of hearing from others McCullagh's report of Fannie's claim "that I have very little to do in getting out the books purported to come from my pen, that I had picked out all I had written from other books, and that those who prepared my articles, yourself in particular, made that matter that was published."<sup>16</sup>

Here Ellen White denied that her writings were made up entirely of excerpts from other authors. Anyone who is well acquainted with her published and unpublished writings would have to agree with her. We know of perhaps a half dozen cases where Ellen White used a passage from a human author to help her describe what she had heard or seen in vision, but this is far different from what Fannie Bolton accused her of doing.

#### Denial 7

Two years before Ellen White dealt with the accusations noted under Denial 4 above, James White, her husband, had also met them. Concerning her personal testimonies, he offered this challenge to her detractors: "Where is the person of superior natural and acquired abilities who could listen to the description of one, two, or three thousand cases, all differing, and then write them out without getting them confused, laying the whole work liable to a thousand contradictions?"

Elder White then added, "If Mrs. W. has gathered the facts from a human mind in a single case, she has in thousands of cases, and God has not shown her these things which she has written in

these personal testimonies."<sup>17</sup>

James White was emphasizing the point that his wife's testimonies were not based on gossip but on what the Lord had revealed to her. Yet, it must be acknowledged that in writing out her personal testimonies, Ellen White did at times include "gems" gleaned from her reading.

Regarding his wife's books, James White declared: "In her published works there are many things set forth which cannot be found in other books, and yet they are so clear and beautiful that the unprejudiced mind grasps them at once as truth. . . .

"If commentators and theological writers generally had seen these gems of thought which strike the mind so forcibly, and had they been brought out in print, all the ministers in the land could have read them. These men gather thoughts from books, and as Mrs. W. has written and spoken a hundred things, as truthful as they are beautiful and harmonious, which cannot be found in the writings of others, they are new to the most intelligent readers and hearers."<sup>18</sup>

James White's language should be noted carefully. He did not say that *everything* that came from his wife's pen was original. He asserted that "many things"—even "a hundred things"—she had written could not be found in other books. This claim is no doubt true.

#### Denial 8

On January 8, 1928, W. C. White wrote the following to L. E. Froom: "In many of her manuscripts as they come from her hand quotation marks are used. In other cases they were not used; and her habit of using parts of sentences found in the writings of others and filling in a part of her own composition was not based upon any definite plan, nor was it questioned by her copyists and copy writers

**"Your words regarding me and my writings are false, and I must say that you know them to be false."**

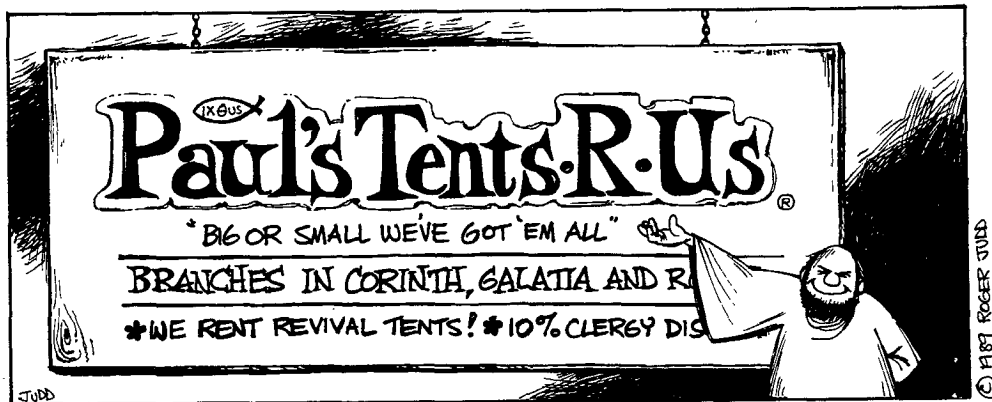
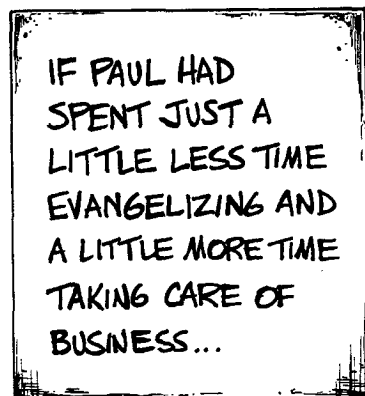
until about 1885 and onward.

"When critics pointed out this feature of her work as a reason for questioning the gift which had enabled her to write, she paid little attention to it. Later on, when complaint was made that this was an injustice to other publishers and writers, she made a decided change—a change which you are familiar with."<sup>19</sup>

W. C. White may here be referring to the 1911 edition of *The Great Controversy*. Quotation marks and credit lines had been used only to a limited extent in the 1888 edition of the book. When the printing plates wore out and type was being reset in 1910, W. C. White wrote the General Conference president: "When I presented to Mother questions as to what we should do regarding the quotations from historians and the references to these historians, she was prompt and clear in her opinion that we ought to give proper credit wherever we can."<sup>20</sup>

In evaluating W. C. White's comment that his mother, in earlier years, had "paid little attention" to this criticism, we should remember that she was not schooled in the technicalities of publication, and normally left these matters in the hands of others.

## BEYOND BELIEF



## Denial 9

In June 1907, A. G. Daniells defended Ellen White's literary practices before a group of her critics in Battle Creek. He then wrote W. C. White, outlined the arguments he had used, and added: "I presume in thinking the matter over you have additional thoughts, and I would be very glad to have you give them to me. In fact, I think that you and Sister White should make a clean, clear-cut statement with reference to this question of plagiarism. Give the exact reasons why there was a failure to give proper credit to the authors quoted. I presume we all must admit that it would have been better to have given quotation marks or some other kind of credit than to have put the matter out as it was."<sup>21</sup>

Several months later, in a "Memorandum of Plans Agreed Upon in Dealing With the 'Blue Book,'" church leaders made essentially the same request. They decided that "W. C. White shall prepare quite a full and frank statement of the plans followed in preparing manuscripts for publication in book form, including (if Sister White gives her consent) a statement of the instruction which Sister White received in early days as to her use of the productions of other writers."<sup>22</sup>

This statement was never produced. Ellen White was at this time in her eightieth year and was concentrating on the preparation of books she felt were still needed by our people: *Testimonies for the Church*, Volume 9; *The Acts of the Apostles*; *Counsels to Teachers*; *Gospel Workers*; *Life Sketches*; and *Prophets and Kings*.

## Denial 10

Following the 1919 Bible Conference, at which Ellen White's use of historical sources was thoroughly aired, E. E. Andross decided to bring the subject more fully to the attention of our church members generally. In preparing for his 1920 camp meeting appointments, he wrote W. C. White, asking for more information. In response White wrote, in part: "In the early days of her work, Mother was promised wisdom, in the selection from the writings of others, that would enable her to select the gems of truth from the rubbish of error. We have all seen this fulfilled, and yet when she told me of this, she admonished me not to tell it to others. Why thus restricted I never knew, but now am inclined to believe that she saw how this might lead some of her brethren to claim too much for her

writings as a standard with which to correct historians."<sup>23</sup>

W. C. White's explanation of his mother's nonadmission is helpful, but Fred Veltman's suggestion is, in my opinion, even better. Dr. Veltman notes Ellen White's deep concern that her writings should not be edited by Fannie Bolton and Marian Davis to the point where they would be considered ordinary human productions. Veltman then states: "It seems clear to me that Ellen White was worried over the danger of emptying the messages of their power through her dependence upon the writing abilities of others. . . ."

"In my judgment it is basically this same burden of Ellen White's over the reception of her writings as messages from the Lord that led her not to fully disclose her dependency on literary sources."<sup>24</sup>

## Epilogue

When reflecting on the denials and nonadmissions cited above, we should at the same time remind ourselves of these facts:

1. Ellen White borrowed materials from books that she herself urged Adventists to buy and read.

2. In her introduction to *The Great Controversy*, Ellen White acknowledged her use of historical and theological materials written by others.

3. The book *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, published in 1890, contained a tribute to Ellen White that John Harvey Kellogg wrote. In this tribute he recognized that she had used the health writings of others. Kellogg testified: "It must be admitted to be something extraordinary, that a person making no claims to scientific knowledge or erudition should have been able to organize, from the confused and error-tainted mass of ideas advanced by a few writers and thinkers on health subjects, a body of hygienic principles so harmonious, so consistent, and so genuine that the discussions, the researches, the discoveries, and the experience of a quarter of a century have not resulted in the overthrow of a single principle, but have only served to establish the doctrines taught."<sup>25</sup>

4. Ellen White's literary borrowing was openly discussed at the General Conference session held at South Lancaster, Massachusetts, in 1899. Summing up, A. T. Jones explained: "There are statements that are true which God has led man to write. The Spirit of proph-

ecy picks out of surroundings that are not all true these gems of perfect truth, and sets them in the setting that is all true, so that they can shine in their own true luster."<sup>26</sup>

It is apparent that Ellen White's literary practices were well known by our church members during her lifetime. Yet it is equally clear that she did not encourage discussion of the subject. Why?

In my opinion, she did not want her readers to be distracted from her *message* because of concentrating on her *method*. Undue attention to *how* she wrote might raise unnecessary doubts in some minds as to the authority of *what* she wrote.

If this is the correct explanation, there just might be a lesson here for us today. It certainly is proper for us to understand as much as we can about the work of a prophet. But let us not allow questions about methodology and inspiration to pull our focus away from the inspired communications God has sent us. ■

<sup>1</sup> Gunn's *New Domestic Physician* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wiltach, Keys, and Co., 1857), pp. 363, 364.

<sup>2</sup> *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4a, p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Both of these explanations are currently published in *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 276, 277, 280-282.

<sup>4</sup> *Review and Herald*, Oct. 8, 1867.

<sup>5</sup> Manuscript 7, 1867.

<sup>6</sup> *Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 281.

<sup>7</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 458, 462, 521.

<sup>8</sup> *Review and Herald*, Oct. 8, 1867; reprinted in *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 277-279.

<sup>9</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 45-62.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White Estate, *Brief Statements Regarding the Writings of Ellen G. White* (St. Helena, Calif.: White Estate, 1933; reprint ed., Washington, D.C.: White Estate, 1981), p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Ellen G. White Estate, *Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, D.C.: White Estate, 1987), vol. 1, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Ellen G. White Estate, *The Fannie Bolton Story: A Collection of Source Documents* (Washington, D.C.: White Estate, 1990), p. 77.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74. (Italics supplied.)

<sup>17</sup> *Life Sketches of James and Ellen White* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Seventh-day Adventist Pub. Assn., 1880), p. 328.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 328, 329.

<sup>19</sup> *Selected Messages*, book 3, pp. 460, 461.

<sup>20</sup> W. C. White to A. G. Daniells, June 20, 1910 (see White Estate Document File 83b).

<sup>21</sup> A. G. Daniells to W. C. White, June 24, 1907 (see White Estate Document File 389).

<sup>22</sup> White Estate Document File 213.

<sup>23</sup> W. C. White to E. E. Andross, June 18, 1920.

<sup>24</sup> Fred Veltman, *Full Report of the Life of Christ Research Project* (Washington, D.C.: 1988 [photo-stat]), introduction, pp. 172, 173.

<sup>25</sup> Ellen G. White and James White, *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene* (Battle Creek, Mich.: Good Health Pub. Co., 1890), p. iv.

<sup>26</sup> *General Conference Bulletin*, 1899, p. 112.



# Call to the clergy

Henry M. Wright

**T**

hou shalt not have any other priority than God's priorities in thy career.

Thou shalt not make unto thee the image of false motives and ego-tripping.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it well planned and Spirit-filled. Six days do the saints labor and do all their work, but the seventh day is the day for Spirit-filled, prepared, and prayed-over messages and sermons. On the Sabbath, the preacher should not come up short; thou nor the conference president nor the departmental secretary nor anybody else who occupies thy pulpit, for during six days the saints have been tossed about, but on the seventh day they must be fed.

Honor thy father and thy mother and anybody else who has helped thee along the way, for thy days shall not be long in this world when thou dost not remember those who helped thee along the way.

Thou shalt not kill thy fellow workers with thy mouth, thy gossip. Thou shalt not kill thy members with indifference and too much "other business" when they have needs.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal thy coworkers' sermons word by word.

Thou shalt not steal precious time from thy wife and family.

Thou shalt not steal precious time from thy ministry or the field that God has given thee.

Thou shalt not bear false witness to the conference concerning thy baptisms and goals raised.

Thou shalt not covet anything or anybody.

*Henry M. Wright is secretary of the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Columbia, Maryland.*

# Ministering the Word

John W. Fowler

**Neither as a group nor individually do ministers have the respect once accorded them. In part this is their own fault—and the solution lies to hand.**



*John W. Fowler is the secretary of the Kentucky-Tennessee Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

**T**oday pastors are suffering from a disgrace, a discredit. Neither the church nor society takes pastors seriously enough either to honor them or to make them suffer for their ideas. The result is a decline in the influence of the ministry and the church and a growing moral and spiritual decadence everywhere apparent.

In the past it was not so. Pastors, being the successors of the apostles,<sup>1</sup> were expected to define the moral and spiritual issues of the day, to make understandable the distinctions between the many and varied sides of those issues, to say what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. Their role meant that they were often misunderstood and at times even hated. But generally they had the respect of those around them.

The church bears some responsibility for the disgrace pastors are suffering, because it has taken away the preeminence of the ministry of the Word. While the church gives lip service to the exalted role of pastoral ministry, in practice it has allowed this ministry to be viewed as of little importance. It encourages its best pastors to leave the pastorate for administrative posts within the church structure. And it signals its low regard for the pastoral ministry by giving other forms of ministry more than their share of the financial resources of the church for salaries, budgets, offices, office equipment, and secretarial help. As a person "climbs" the denominational ladder from the local church to conference, union, division, and then General Con-

ference positions, all of the benefits increase.<sup>2</sup>

But pastors must also bear some responsibility for the disgrace they suffer. They have abdicated their historic role as the spiritual and moral leaders of society. Very few pastors call the church to account or seek to correct and perfect it according to the standard of Scripture. Instead, they have succumbed to the institutional church's efforts to buy their allegiance. They have accepted its lowered standards and have come to enjoy its materialistic lifestyle.

The much-needed influence of the pastoral ministry can be reestablished, and the moral and spiritual values that are so important to the church and society restored. But such a restoration can take place only when pastors rediscover the preeminence of the ministry of the Word of God.

## **Finding the center**

Throughout the New Testament the ministry of the Word is always front and center. From Peter's first sermon, delivered on Pentecost, to the last message by John, we find Jesus as the dynamic, creative power of this ministry. His preexistence and divinity, His incarnation and earthly ministry, His death and resurrection, His priestly ministry and giving of the Holy Spirit, His ascension and second advent, formed the content of the disciples' communication.

But while the disciples' preaching centered on Christ, they recognized as the source of both their knowledge and authority the Scriptures—the Word of God. Peter rooted the miraculous happenings of that special Pentecost directly

in the Old Testament Scriptures (Acts 2:16). And in his Acts 3 message, Peter again used the Scriptures as the source and authority for his ministry.

When soon thereafter the apostles' ministry was being hindered because they were increasingly caught up in "waiting on tables," they asked the church to appoint seven men to care for that task. They wanted to be free to "give [themselves] continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4). In fact, so closely did they associate their ministry with the Scripture that Luke calls the great evangelistic success they experienced an increase of the Word of God (verse 7).

Acts says that when the great persecution that led to the stoning of Stephen drove the disciples out of Jerusalem, they went everywhere "preaching the word" (Acts 8:4). And as soon as the church in Antioch ordained Barnabas and Saul, later known as Paul, these two missionaries sailed to Cyprus and "preached the word" (Acts 13:5).

Paul always centered his ministry on the Word of God. In his Second Epistle to Timothy he contrasted the Word of God with fables, admonishing Timothy not to get caught up in vain babbling but rather to preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-4). In that same Epistle, Paul also points out that the Scriptures are the only infallible and authoritative source of knowledge about God and His will for man (2 Tim. 3:16).

Here Paul indicates why the apostles accorded the ministry of the Word of God such great importance. It is because God uses this ministry to accomplish His will and His work in the individual, in the church, and in the world.

In Isaiah 55:11 God says, "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereunto I sent it." God works through His Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures. Ephesians 6:17 states that the "sword of the Spirit . . . is the word of God." When used by the Spirit of God, the Word of God releases the "creative energy that called the worlds into existence."<sup>3</sup> Paul says the Word of God, the gospel, is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

Hodge confirms the Spirit's use of the Scriptures. He says that while the Word of God has intrinsic life and power, the spiritual darkness of the human mind

makes necessary the Holy Spirit's assistance in understanding and receiving the Word of God.<sup>4</sup> He then adds that "it is, therefore, the united testimony of Scripture and of history that the Bible, the Word of God, is the great means of promoting the sanctification and salvation of men, that is, of securing their temporal and eternal well-being."<sup>5</sup>

It is the ministry of the Word that creates faith (Rom. 10:8). It brings repentance that leads to forgiveness (Acts 2:37, 38). It implants in man the nature of Christ (Matt. 13:23).

The ministry of the Word establishes the church on earth (Acts 2:47). It perfects the church (2 Tim. 3:16), and it creates the spiritual kingdom of heaven within the church (Acts 4:31-33). It is through the ministry of the Word that the church is "conformed to Christ and ordered by the gospel."<sup>6</sup>

So pastors and the church have at their disposal the supernatural means God uses to renew, perfect, and restore His people individually and corporately. We must not perceive this work as something apart from evangelism. If evangelism aims to make disciples (Matt. 28:19, 20), then the restoration of people is its preeminent work.

### **Balancing conflicting demands**

If the ministry of the Word is effectively to conform the church to Christ and order it according to the gospel, its quality and character must be distinctly scriptural and Christian. As does Scripture, it must define the moral and spiritual issues of the day. It must distinguish clearly between what is good and what is bad, what is right and what is wrong.

Herein lies a difficult problem. The church employs pastors to preach and teach the doctrinal and theological truths it holds. It also expects them to uphold the moral and ethical values it espouses. We have clear counsel regarding independent thought and action on doctrinal and theological matters.<sup>7</sup>

However, since God Himself has called the pastors and appointed them as guardians of the church and custodians of the mysteries of His kingdom, their primary responsibility is to provide the faithful service that He requires.<sup>8</sup> Burning with the desire that Timothy, the pastor of the Ephesian church, preach what he found in Scripture and thus fulfill his primary role of conforming the church to Christ, Paul admonished, "Preach the word: be instant in season,

## **Many pastors have abdicated the historic role of the pastoral ministry as guardians of the church.**

out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering" (2 Tim. 4:2). Ellen White also indicates that the minister's task is to preach the Word of God—not only what Christ Himself taught in person, but also what He spoke through all the prophets and teachers of the Old Testament.<sup>9</sup>

Obviously, it takes careful handling to balance what is the church's right and what is due God. But if we respect and counsel closely with those who oversee our work for the church, it is unlikely that they will object to our assuming the historic role of the ministry of the Word. And it is only as we faithfully preach and teach the Word that God can guide and direct His church. Only as we give place to His Word and work can the church be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29).

### **Restoring the essential ministry**

How can pastors fulfill this ministry? How can they carry on and ultimately complete the work that Christ began?

First, pastors must begin to take seriously their duty of studying the Word of God to discover what God says about the moral and spiritual issues of our day. Very few pastors today can effectively minister the Word of God because very few pastors today study that Word deeply. If this is not obvious from the sermonical entrées served in the regular worship services, it is painfully obvious by the way church members respond to theological controversy and the teaching of false doctrines within the church. Unsound theological views circulating within the church too easily sway our members. They would exhibit more stability in the face of these theological whirlwinds if their pastors, those who serve as the church's guardians, were faithfully dealing with and clarifying these doctrinal issues week after week.

But many pastors have become simply employees. They see the ministry of the Word as only one of the necessary func-

tions of pastoral ministry within the institutional setting. Consequently, they do only enough study to meet the minimum requirements of that particular function. They have abdicated the historic role of the pastoral ministry as guardians of the church, as its spiritual and moral leaders. As a result the pastoral ministry is weak in the knowledge and proclamation of the Word of God, and thus often void of the creative, life-changing power of heaven. This attitude toward the ministry of the Word has allowed the spiritual and the moral decay we see in our church.

The only solution is a renewed study of the Word of God. Pastors should make the study of that Word their first order of business. They should become acquainted with every line of prophetic history and every lesson Christ taught.<sup>10</sup> When study undergirds their ministry, their sermons will reveal and communicate their grasp of spiritual things. Then out of their midst will flow "rivers of living water" to quench this world's thirst (John 7:38).<sup>11</sup>

Second, simply knowing what the Scriptures teach is not enough. We must conform our own lives to the moral and spiritual truths we find in them. The soldiers who were sent to arrest Jesus came back without Him, saying, "Never man spake like this man." Ellen White says the reason for the wisdom and power of Christ's words was that "never man lived as He lived."<sup>12</sup>

The point is that we can truly know something only as we experience it in our own lives. Jesus could move people to faith because He Himself fully trusted God. He could speak with power and authority about living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God because that was His constant experience. He knew for Himself the peace and joy of perfect oneness with the Father. Tempted as we are, in secret prayer He found the strength to do the will of the Father. It was because of the sacrifice He Himself was making that His appeal to give up the pursuit of material wealth, to sacrifice, to take up the cross, brought an unprecedented response from people in all stations of life.

Like Christ, our influence on our hearers stands in direct proportion to the genuineness of our own spiritual and moral lives. E. M. Bounds makes this point strikingly clear. He writes: "The preacher is the golden pipe through which the divine oil flows. The pipe must

not only be golden, but open and flawless, that the oil may have a full, unhindered . . . flow. . . . The man, the whole man, lies behind the sermon. Preaching is not the performance of an hour. It is the outflow of a life. It takes 20 years to make a sermon, because it takes 20 years to make the man."<sup>13</sup>

If our task is to conform the church to Christ and order it according to the gospel, then our work must begin with ourselves. The greatest hindrance to the effectiveness of the pastor is willful and unconfessed sin in his or her life. It flaws and discolors the earthen vessel through which the divine treasure flows. More than anything else, the ministry needs pastors great in holiness, great in faith, great in fidelity, great in unswerving commitment to the truth and values of the Christian faith. Only such pastors can, as E. M. Bounds says, "take hold of the church [and] the world for God."<sup>14</sup>

Third, we can only reestablish the historic role of the pastoral ministry as the guardians and spiritual and moral leaders of the church when we take the proclamation of the Word seriously.

In this skeptical age preaching the complex and yet simple message of God's Word does not always bring popularity. Consequently, as Elder H.M.S. Richards pointed out, "for fear they will be looked upon as philosophical, theological, sociological squares," many pastors present to their congregations instead "the latest shibboleth, the latest theological complexity, the profundity of vacuity."

Edwin C. Dargan's history of preaching—which he views as encompassing both proclamation and teaching—reveals the wide and far-reaching influence of the ministry of the Word. Dargan says that preaching has affected all areas of human life: the life and progress of nations, the rise and fall of governments, the arts and sciences, human culture, philosophy, and education, and, most important of all, the customs and morals of mankind.<sup>15</sup> He writes that "preaching is an essential part and a distinguishing feature of Christianity" and that "the spread of Christianity, both geographically and numerically, has been largely the work of preaching."<sup>16</sup>

Dargan holds that when spiritual life and moral standards within the church and society at large decline, a ministry weak in preaching is at least in part responsible. And he credits the great revival movements in history, the spiritual and moral advances within the church

and society, to the preaching of the Word.<sup>17</sup>

It is only through the ministry of the Word that God can realize His will and accomplish His work in people, in the church, and in the world. It is, as well, only as pastors make this ministry their primary work that the church can ever be conformed to Christ and ordered according to the gospel. ■

<sup>1</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 40.

<sup>2</sup> Today, however, we do see some shift in emphasis, thanks to the work of the General Conference Ministerial Association. A statement that the 1986 Annual Council approved says that the tithe is to be used primarily for the "support of pastors, evangelists, ministers. The tithe shall be utilized to support salaried personnel directly engaged in pastoral and evangelistic soul-winning endeavors" (*GC Working Policy*, T 20 15, point 1). Point 2 of the same policy discusses tithe for world missions—presumably for those directly involved in soul-winning work, even though that is not stated. The third point in that section of the policy states that tithe can be used for "soul-winning support personnel." Included in this are "departmental directors and their staffs that are engaged in evangelistic and nurturing activities."

While there is some ambiguity in this statement, it is a move in the right direction.

<sup>3</sup> Ellen G. White, *Education*, p. 126.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1981 [reprint]), vol. 3, pp. 472, 473.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 470.

<sup>6</sup> Raoul Dederen, "A Theology of Ordination," *Ministry*, February 1978, p. 24M.

<sup>7</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 489, 490.

<sup>8</sup> ———, *Gospel Workers*, p. 15.

<sup>9</sup> ———, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 826.

<sup>10</sup> ———, *Gospel Workers*, p. 98.

<sup>11</sup> Ellen White tells us there is "no need for weakness in the ministry. The message of truth we bear is all-powerful. But many ministers do not put their minds to the task of studying the deep things of God."

In the same place she writes that ministers must overcome their indolent habits of thought and that the study of Scriptures is the best way to accomplish this. She says that deep and disciplined Bible study will thoroughly awaken the intellect. With such study the mind will gain strength, breadth, and acuteness; it will be trained to think habitually. The student will gain intellectual culture, the memory will be strengthened, strength and vigor will come to the understanding, light will be shed upon the great problems of life, and the heart will be filled with high and holy purposes. She says that under such a regimen the minister will gain a nobility of character and a stability of purpose rarely seen. He will gain clarity of thought. His sermons will contain a direct, definite message that will help his hearers choose the right way and he will become qualified to do a larger work (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 98-100, 249).

<sup>12</sup> Ellen G. White, *the Ministry of Healing*, p. 469.

<sup>13</sup> E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1969), pp. 12, 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup> Edwin Charles Dargan, *A History of Preaching* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954), vol. 1, pp. 8-12.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 13.

# Trust services: colleague or competitor?

G. Tom Carter

**Many conferences now stipulate that trust services direct a specified percentage of the will or trust to the local church.**



G. Tom Carter is director of Trust Services for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. An attorney and ordained minister, he pastored for 11 years before entering trust services work 22 years ago.

**I**n the past five years, through trust services, by means of wills, trusts, annuities, and special gifts people have left the church more than \$177 million. These gifts have gone to local churches as well as to conferences and church institutions and programs.

Perhaps you have thought of trust services as working to direct your members' moneys to the conference rather than to your church. You may even have heard of a trust services representative urging an individual not to leave anything to the local church. While such a situation may have existed in the past, I believe you will find that things have changed. Those of us who work for trust services want to be your allies and colleagues. We want not only to serve the church at large, but also to help you achieve the objectives you have set for your congregation. We aim to provide channels through which individuals can support the work of the whole church by their gifts, trusts, annuities, and bequests.

## **Benefits to the local church**

While the methods used by different conferences vary, to my knowledge all conference trust services programs now encourage church members to consider the needs of the local church. In addition to recognizing gifts to local churches, a growing number of conferences mandate that a specified portion of unrestricted maturities<sup>1</sup> be distributed to the donor's church. For example, three large conferences in the Pacific Union distribute from 10 to 20 percent of such maturities

to the church of which the deceased was a member; the Florida and Georgia-Cumberland conferences distribute 20 percent; the Carolina Conference provides for the distribution of up to 25 percent, upon the meeting of certain stipulations; the Ohio Conference distributes 15 percent; and the Pennsylvania Conference 10 percent.

The Atlantic Union is typical of many areas where, although no specific percentage is mandated, 10 to 30 percent of the restricted maturities benefit local churches. The Ontario Conference sets aside 20 percent of all unrestricted maturities for new church construction or for the renovation of existing churches.

The Southeastern California Conference reports that in a recent three-year period, donations to local churches through Trust Services totaled \$585,000. In addition, the majority of unrestricted gifts have gone either for church buildings or education.

Trust services has also benefited the local church through the union revolving funds. For example, Stewart Crook, director of trust services in the Southern Union, reports that a church in Kentucky saved \$155,000 in interest by getting a loan from their union revolving fund and paying off the bank mortgage. According to Ralph Ringer, the pastor of that church at the time, doing so cut the church's payments about \$700 a month. They were able to pay the loan off in six years instead of eight. Probably the majority of moneys in the union revolving funds come from trusts that trust services has developed.

Congregations outside of North America are also benefitting from trust

services's efforts. In Europe during a recent two-year period, the equivalent of millions of dollars matured to local churches. Alan W. White, now associate Trust Services director at the General Conference, says: "In Melbourne, Australia, some Adventist churches were under pressure from city councils to provide off-the-street parking for those who attend their services. Other churches needed extra land for such things as community outreach centers. In one year, three churches received bequests of approximately \$40,000 each. These congregations joyfully purchased land adjoining their churches, and thus their problems were solved."

Trust services cannot take credit for the donation of these moneys to the church; it is the work of the Holy Spirit on human hearts that has brought this about. But surely the Lord has used trust services as a tool to enable individuals to respond effectively to the needs of His cause.

### Far from our potential

Despite these thrilling results, we admit we are far from reaching our potential. Our best estimate suggests that less than 10 percent of the membership in North America make any provision directing funds to the Lord's work upon their death. Think of what it would mean if we were able to increase that figure to 20 percent, 35 percent, or even 50 percent!

While we are busy arguing over how the limited funds of the church are to be divided, we seem to be ignoring the vast resources that could be tapped if we united in unselfish dedication. Like angels having just one wing, we can fly only when we embrace each other. Pastors and trust services personnel must cooperate in educating our members.

Certainly tithes and offerings constitute an important aspect of stewardship, but are they all that God requires? John Tulio, trust services director for the Pacific Union, answers that question with

another question: Imagine a bank teller who throughout the day very faithfully posts and accounts for all moneys received. Suppose then that at the end of day, instead of carefully depositing all funds in the proper place for safekeeping and disposal, the teller leaves everything on the counter. Would such a bank teller be a good steward?

Likewise, it *does* make a difference whether or not stewards of the Lord's goods arrange to dispose of what is left in a way that will take care of loved ones, bless others, and advance the cause of Christ. Harold L. Lee, who specializes in stewardship for the North American Division Church Ministries Department, states: "An often overlooked dimension of stewardship is estate planning: stewardship after death. . . . God's purpose in the life of the Christian steward should be reflected in all areas of financial management—earning, spending, saving, giving, and estate planning."

Jesus commissioned His disciples to

## Pastors comment on trust services

"A representative from the conference trust services came to my church some years ago. He made a low-key presentation, and a lady who had recently joined the church asked for a visit. Having no close family, she made an estate plan to leave a small percentage to a close friend; the remainder was to be divided between the conference and our local church. At her death her estate provided funds to replace our roof, which had been leaking for years. The work of our trust services representative brought a real blessing to us."—*John Newbern, Miami Springs, Florida.*

"When I was pastoring in Knoxville, two estates matured for which trust services was executor. The local church and the conference shared equally in both estates. We had a fine relationship with the conference association in settling both of them. It was satisfying to see how the local church and trust services were able to work together to the benefit of both."—*Bruce Aalborg, Gentry, Arkansas.*

"Recently trust services was a real benefit to our church in the settlement of an estate. Through a trust, a lady had left both money and a house to the church. The trust services representative explained each step of the settlement of the estate, making our church board very comfortable with what was done. It is good to have a department that provides such a valuable service."—*Rick Esterline, Tampa, Florida.*

"We received about \$235,000 through the trust services of the Southern California Conference. A man who was a friend of one of our members asked for help in putting his financial affairs in order. I got him in touch with the conference trust officer. During the process he joined the church, and at his death the amount he left through a revocable trust helped build a new school building. Trust services was cooperative, professional, and prompt, and manifested the highest standard of Christian ethics."—*Donald Stutler, Spartanburg, South Carolina (formerly of West Covina Hills SDA Church, California).*

"Our church benefited from two es-

tates serviced by trust services. They kept us informed as the estates were closed out and seemed to be on top of everything. There was no vying over which organization would receive what; they administered the estates evenhandedly."—*Robert Beck, Winter Haven, Florida.*

"I have seen how important it is for trust services representatives to put service before money. For four or five years I saw one representative serve people in my congregation unselfishly. My local church and the conference reaped millions of dollars as a result.

"There were five or six estates that matured to benefit the Lord's work while I pastored the Santa Monica church. In one case the trust services representative, one of my members, and I teamed up to help a dear sister. Before her death she expressed how happy she was that the church cared for her. She provided for her entire estate to go to the church and the work that she loved."—*Burton Boundey, Glendale, California.*



## We want members to know that they can leave to their local church whatever portion of their estate they wish.

"be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8, NKJV). In this article I've focused on what is being done at the local church, or "Jerusalem," level. But let us acknowledge that there are also "Judea," "Samaria," and "end of the earth" concerns as well.

Completing the mission for which Jesus made us responsible requires the funding of sectors of the church beyond the congregation. The conference, which provides witness to places where there is no local church and which operates a conference-wide educational program, deserves attention. Colleges and other union institutions merit consideration. And how could we complete our assignment without world mission, relief, and media programs?

To prevent a narrow, self-centered focus, trust services personnel try to present the needs of all segments of the church as impartially as possible. But even while doing this, we leave the individual members free to make their own decisions. We can present various options for remembering the church in estate plans, but only the individuals can, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, decide how they wish to distribute what they leave to the church.

### Continuing communication necessary

Recently I asked both pastors and trust services directors how we could increase our cooperation. Continuing communication is an essential part of the formula. The five statements that follow reveal our perspective at trust services—our intentions and needs.

1. *We want to emphasize the service aspect rather than just money. But we must also take into consideration the limits that our small staffs impose and the fact that we must be cost-effective.*

One pastor indicated that during a five-year period a trust services representative focused primarily on offering his services to the members of the pastor's church rather than simply going where the money was. It paid off in a big way, bringing millions of dollars to the church. But it must be remembered that the limited number of trust services personnel forces them to be selective in the type and degree of service they can provide. In the example mentioned, the key to success lay in the pastor, church members, and trust officer all working together.

2. *We want to keep the pastor informed,*

*while also maintaining complete confidentiality for the members.*

As I talked with the pastors, they often said that they wanted to be kept informed. Pastors in Florida appreciate the fact that that conference's trust services director meets with them for lunch on a periodic basis and shares with them all information that he can ethically reveal. Some conferences in the North Pacific Union have also set up a forum for communication.

Of course, it would be unethical to share the individual church member's situation unless he or she gave full consent. There is no principle more sacred to trust services than that the donors must be able to count on complete confidentiality.

3. *We want the members to know the needs of the local church and that they can*

## Gifts to local churches through trust services

The 93 gifts listed below all came to churches in the Florida Conference between 1981 and 1989 through trust services. The amount of the gifts has been rounded off to the nearest hundred dollars. The number following the dollar amount is the approximate membership of the church that received the gift.

\$ 13,000—100	\$ 28,000—350	\$ 1,600—150
34,000—200	6,800—100	46,800—125
21,600—100	10,000—150	15,000—600
18,000—500	60,000—500	2,800—110
19,000—200	11,000—50	17,900—110
14,000—100	18,000—100	22,600—125
19,000—500	40,000—100	3,100—625
9,500—100	8,000—100	45,700—125
7,500—100	14,000—60	5,500—525
6,600—100	18,000—250	15,300—450
20,000—200	10,000—35	8,000—75
30,000—500	11,000—500	8,200—90
8,000—500	24,000—250	15,800—90
10,000—35	32,000—500	5,100—430
10,000—500	20,000—600	20,000—580
12,000—100	11,000—50	110,600—160
10,000—300	43,000—60	10,000—430
86,000—500	11,000—75	13,000—80
14,000—100	110,000—150	10,100—460
26,000—300	13,000—30	800—35
10,000—250	17,000—500	14,900—575
20,000—100	18,000—250	1,000—280
25,000—100	92,000—100	9,600—60
8,000—50	10,000—100	15,000—300
6,000—100	68,000—125	43,000—junior academy
25,000—350	10,000—60	42,900—local school
11,000—200	20,000—500	5,900—13 churches

Floyd H. Powell, director of trust services for the Florida Conference, reports that maturities in that conference from 1981 to 1989 totaled \$8,302,134.89. Of that amount, approximately 22 percent, or \$1,835,481.82, was distributed to local churches.

leave to it whatever portion of their estate they wish.

This probably isn't much of a problem. Adventists are not generally known for being easily led by others. Those who have been in the church for many years know exactly where they want their money to go. We want to avoid the appearance of promoting a certain area or project. The primary goal of the trust services representative is to determine what the person wants to do and to give the general information needed to accomplish those desires. Additionally, the representative will give any appropriate assistance to the professional advisors the donor may have chosen.

4. *When a member desires either a revocable or an irrevocable trust, we will want to determine the extent to which the church would likely benefit.*

When it comes to trusts, the conference association can serve only where the church is a substantial beneficiary. In such situations, the conference association will serve as trustee, whether it is the

local church or the conference that is the beneficiary. The association is set up as the legal body to serve both the local churches and the conference at large.

The unrestricted gift should not be discounted. It allows the conference the latitude to determine how the gift may best serve at the time when it matures. Because circumstances change, it is not wise to stipulate a particular project in a will or trust. Many feel it is better to leave that decision to an appropriate committee. The Ontario Conference has set guidelines for the use of unrestricted gifts. Their policy states that 20 percent of such gifts will be used for the construction and renovation of church buildings, 20 percent for the youth camp, and 20 percent for education, and that the executive committee is to determine for what needs the remaining 40 percent will be used.

5. *We believe that the world church, the conference, and the local church must be seen as parts of one body—that what benefits one part benefits all.*

Trust services is one area where the rubber meets the road as to our sincerity in implementing this biblical principle. On the one hand, pastors ask that trust services personnel show their interest in building up the local church. On the other, trust services personnel sometimes feel that the local church and pastor are not aware of the benefits local churches gain from trust services. Both groups must realize that what benefits one part benefits the whole. We must work together, taking care that no part is neglected.

"If Christians were to act in concert, moving forward as one, under the direction of one Power, for the accomplishment of one purpose, they would move the world."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> When persons who have made trusts or wills die and their estates are distributed, those trusts or wills are said to have matured.

<sup>2</sup> Ellen G. White, *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 221.

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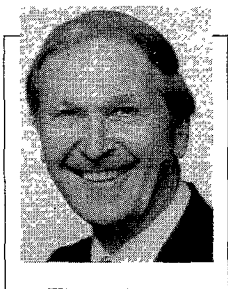
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# Ministerial ministries to ministers

Floyd Bresee

**O**ur home sits on a wooded lot that borders a beautiful bubbling creek. The mixture of flowing water, ferns, and moss creates a delightful little Eden that's all our own. And so we built a gazebo overlooking the creek, a perfect place to relax and reflect.

There's just one problem. We hardly ever find time for relaxing and reflecting. Our lovely gazebo just doesn't get used, and nothing is much good unless it's put to use.

The General Conference Ministerial Association fosters a lot of what we think are good programs. They're designed to minister to you, the minister. As we begin the new quinquennium we must ask ourselves if we're providing what you will actually use. Nothing is much good unless it's put to use.

Please let me share with you a few highlights of what the Ministerial Association has attempted to do for the ministry these past five years and what it hopes to do the next five. Is the Ministerial Association really ministering to our ministers?

**Global Mission.** We have just recently concluded Harvest 90, baptizing nearly 2.5 million people in five years. This church growth emphasis must continue under the new Global Mission program. We are encouraging divisions to allow each congregation to set its own baptismal goal and to form plans for the discipling of new members.

**Elders.** There are nearly 31,000 Adventist churches in the world and about 16,000 ministers employed to do evange-

listic and pastoral work. So laypeople, usually local church elders, preach about half of the sermons preached in Adventist churches each Sabbath. Yet the denomination has done next to nothing to train its elders, and both they and their congregations are suffering because of it.

Since elders work so closely with pastors, often serving as virtual lay pastors in many congregations, the Ministerial Association is planning to help fill this need. We hope to prepare both a manual that will detail the work of elders and a book that will give them basic help in preparing sermons. And we will publish in *Ministry* material designed especially for the local church elder.

**Ministerial supplies.** Once a year we hope to insert in *Ministry* a little resource catalog. In it we will list our self-study and video continuing education courses, and manuals such as the one for interns and their supervisors and the one containing evaluation instruments. In it we'll also include slides, filmstrips, baptismal certificates, computer software designed for Adventist churches, and other soul-winning tools used especially by ministers.

**Ministerial families.** Surveys indicate that finances place more stress on pastoral families than does any other factor. We hope to find ways to help. And we hope to encourage the preparation of materials that will educate congregations to

better understand, appreciate, and support their pastoral families.

**Special projects.** The *Manual for Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Interns and Intern Supervisors* is completed. We are now working toward and praying for the time when interns will always be placed in a true learning situation and introduced to the ministry by trained pastor supervisors.

We plan to revise and update the 1977 *Manual for Ministers* within the next year. We also are considering compiling a Spirit of Prophecy book giving counsel specifically to pastors.

Deep cuts are being made in some departments here at headquarters in an attempt to make our work more efficient and economical. When the field was surveyed prior to the downsizing, those surveyed quite strongly supported the Ministerial Association; consequently, our cuts have not been as deep as those made in some departments. But we lost two salaries and one travel budget.

With fewer personnel we must do less, so we want to be sure that we eliminate only what is least important, at the same time retaining what counts. What I've listed in this article, of course, only partially covers our programs of the past quinquennium and our plans for the next. Are there ways we, through your local, union, and division ministerial secretaries, can be of greater help to you? What are we doing that you feel is not necessary? What are we not doing that is necessary? More than anything, the Ministerial Association wants the Lord to lead us to minister more effectively to our ministers. ■

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**Nothing is much good unless it's put to use.**

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## Dictionary of Pastoral Care and Counseling

Rodney Hunter, editor, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1990, 1376 pages, \$59.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Andreas Bochmann, hospital chaplain and youth pastor, Berlin, Germany.

It may be presumptuous to declare a book a standard work in its field shortly after its publication. However, there can be little doubt of this dictionary's value. Its more than 1,200 articles, written by both scholars and practitioners, give insight into current trends in counseling and pastoral care.

Two facts impressed me. The first is the wide spectrum of contributors; they range from Clinebell to Collins and include some drawn from outside the boundaries of Protestantism and the United States. This gives the volume the needed balance in a field dealing with varied human needs.

The second impressive fact is that this dictionary discusses a wide range of topics without becoming superficial or stating the obvious. I found a solid coverage of psychology and social sciences, theology, and practical issues. Articles range in length from short explanations of terms to several columns of in-depth discussion. A considerable number of articles deal with historical issues and personalities, putting current developments in perspective.

The Adventist reader will be delighted to find an article on Ellen White written objectively rather than pejoratively. However, under "Seventh-day Adventist" one finds only a cross-reference to "Sectarian Pastoral Care." That section does not mention Adventists. I did not find this flattering, considering that the dictionary contains a thorough three-column article on Mormon pastoral care. Rather than a flaw in this otherwise outstanding work, I would see this void as calling attention to a legitimate concern regarding the state of Adventist pastoral care and counseling.

Written with fairness and balance, seriousness and depth, this massive volume is still easy to read and handle. Designed as a standard work, Abingdon Press offers it at a reasonable price.

## Gentle Persuasion

Joseph C. Aldrich, Multnomah Press, Portland, Oregon, 1988, 247 pages, \$8.95, paper. Reviewed by James H. Zachary, newly elected associate secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Pastors and church officials have brought forth a plethora of plans and programs to push Christians into witnessing. But *Gentle Persuasion* brings us a refreshingly simple approach—as simple as living.

Lifestyle evangelism is the theme of this valuable book. If one can bake a cherry pie or drive a carpenter's nail, he or she can penetrate his or her community for Christ. Aldrich presents practical, realistic principles that not only bring results but also fill the Christian's heart with assurance and joy in witnessing.

The author makes no attempt to fit all Christians into one witnessing mold. Evangelism means loving people in ways "appropriate to your giftedness" until they ask you why. Evangelism means developing and nurturing relationships that will lead friends to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Aldrich puts words together so well that the reader's mind fills with images that make the principles hard to forget. This book will be prized by individuals and churches who desire to present Christ in an attractive way to their relatives, neighbors, and communities. The principles spelled out in *Gentle Persuasion* work!

## Living Proof: Sharing the Gospel Naturally

Jim Petersen, NavPress, Colorado Springs, 1989, 251 pages, \$9.95, paper. Reviewed by Thomas A. Davis, retired editor living in Armstrong, British Columbia.

Petersen has written a perceptive book about sharpening the edge of our evangelism. That edge no longer penetrates the cortex of our society. A Billy Graham associate expresses the opinion that we have reached most of the unreached who will respond to the gospel. Those being reached are either strays from the church or have church contacts. A worldwide survey shows that 87 percent of people

responding to the gospel already have a Protestant heritage.

Most people live in a world that does not include God. Disillusioned with society, they have a feeling of futility and a "sense of ending" that should make them reachable. But they do not believe in absolutes. They show little interest in what the Bible or the church has to offer. Traditional methods of evangelism do not work with these people.

These facts lay out the setting for Petersen's approach to winning people to Christ. Simply expressed, he presents the same solution as Paul used in evangelizing his pagan world: "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2, NKJV). Jesus must be on the cutting edge of our work for souls.

There are two ways of evangelizing—by proclamation and by affirmation. Proclamation means witnessing; affirmation means being a witness. Proclamation refers to the process of presenting content. Affirmation means modeling and explaining the Christian message. Petersen implies that we tend to proclaim the gospel but do not affirm it. He says that Christ reaches people primarily through lives, and only secondarily through teachings.

This is elementary stuff to Adventists, right? We know it! But our results do not show much more success than other Christians experience. It seems we also have difficulty putting the gospel into practice. I believe this author has something from which we also can learn.

Petersen devotes more than half the book to affirmation methods involving the individual, the church body, and verbal witness. The methods he suggests are neither sensational nor particularly new—Jesus, Paul, and Peter used them. But Petersen offers valuable insights on how to apply them in today's world.

I recommend this book for those who care about personal evangelism in a secular society.

## Herald of the Midnight Cry

Paul A. Gordon, Pacific Press Publishing Association, Boise, Idaho, 1990, 127 pages, \$7.95, paper. Reviewed by Hugh I.

Dunton, librarian, Newbold College, Bracknell, England.

Seventh-day Adventists see themselves as a movement arriving at a preordained time, and so have recorded their origins from its early days. We need to understand our roots without allowing nostalgia to enmesh us in our past.

At a time when there are several scholarly studies of Millerism, Gordon has written a popular account of Miller's life and ministry to "serve as a strong reminder to those of today who might have forgotten what it means to be an Adventist."

Since this is a short account of William Miller's life, one inevitably compares this book with *The Urgent Voice*, by Robert Gale (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1975). Only a limited amount of source material exists, and the two works inevitably overlap. Written for believers, both books adopt a noncritical viewpoint on Miller and the Advent movement. But Gordon uses a wider range of sources.

Gordon includes a chapter on fanaticism. While admitting excesses on the part of a few, he demonstrates how level-headed the majority of Millerites remained.

The author of this book does not refer to any modern research on Millerism, making the book one for easy reading rather than study. Some will question why he includes the Edson report of the cornfield vision, printed in 1921, since it leaves the reader feeling that Adventist historical writing has moved little in the past 50 years. He does include endnotes, but the addition of an annotated bibliography would have been useful for the reader who wants further information.

I recommend *Herald of the Midnight Cry* to the reader who wants a brief introduction to the subject. One will need to look further for an in-depth, objective analysis. However, pastors should be aware of this book and obtain it for their church libraries.

*The review of Antichrist in the Middle Ages that appeared in the October 1990 Biblio File contained a couple of errors that crept in during the editing process. To correct those errors we are printing—essentially untouched!—a second review Pastor Brothers has written of that book.—Editors.*

### **Antichrist in the Middle Ages: A Study of Medieval Apocalypticism, Art, and Literature**

Richard Kenneth Emmerson, University of

Washington Press, Seattle, 1981, 366 pages, \$21.50, hardcover. Reviewed by Greg Brothers, assistant editor of Signs of the Times.

In interpreting prophecy, or so it says in volume 7 of *The SDA Bible Commentary*, one has but three options: historicism, futurism, and preterism. The Reformers (and Adventists) espoused the first; Catholics responded with the latter two. The choice—at least for conservative Protestants—is clear.

But this argument leaves one question unasked: How did Christians interpret prophecy before the Protestant Reformers came along with historicism?

That's the question Emmerson answers in his book *Antichrist in the Middle Ages*. Based on the author's doctoral studies at Stanford, *Antichrist* traces the "life and times" of the title character, as described in medieval Bible commentaries, sermons, plays, poems, and art.

At the center of medieval apocalypticism, as Emmerson demonstrates, was the antichrist. History was thought to be a "great controversy" between God and Satan, with the battles of the past and present foreshadowing the final conflict between this demonic figure and the forces of righteousness.

This meant that, no less than the Christ whom he parodied, antichrist had had his "types" down through the ages. Medieval Christians believed that while many antichrists (pagan invaders, evil kings, even wicked popes) had already come and gone, the antichrist would appear just before Christ's second advent.

The antichrist, however, was given a new identity during the Reformation. No longer an individual to come, it was thought by Protestants to represent an institution already in existence: the papacy. This view, of course, was hotly denied by Catholic exegetes, many of whom defended the "conservative consensus" of the Middle Ages.

Whether the medieval view of the antichrist should be normative is, of course, outside the scope of this book. As Emmerson himself notes, different times and different places have feared different antichrists.

It does appear, however, that *The SDA Bible Commentary's* attempt to trace the history of prophetic interpretation is, at best, simplistic. Certainly more than three alternatives exist in the interpretation of prophecy. And certainly preterism and futurism are more

than "just" Catholic responses to Protestant historicism; all three are heirs (however legitimate) of the medieval view.

Emmerson's book, in other words, must be taken into account in any future defense of historicism as a means of prophetic interpretation. For that reason alone the serious Bible student should buy this book.

### **Recently noted**

*Everything You Always Wanted to Know About the Catholic Church but Were Afraid to Ask,\* \*For Fear of Excommunication*, Paul L. Williams and George A. Kelley, Doubleday Publishers, New York, 1989, 302 pages, \$17.95, hardcover.

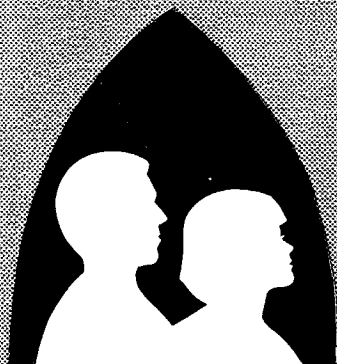
Two Catholic scholars take a candid view of their church and come up with some answers that will astonish Catholics and non-Catholics alike. More than 365 questions and answers give fascinating and controversial facts about Roman Catholic Church history and theology. Answers to questions concerning worldly power, an insane pope, finances, and even the canonization of Buddha as a saint make for interesting reading.

*The Best of Ted Engstrom*, Robert C. Larson, compiler, Here's Life Publishers, San Bernardino, California, 1988, 340 pages, \$16.95, hardcover.

Most of our readers will know Ted Engstrom as a popular Christian management consultant, author, and conductor of Managing Your Time seminars. He is also president emeritus of World Vision International. In this book Larson brings together some of the writings of Engstrom that best exemplify his philosophy for excellence. Those educated in modern management techniques may find the material too familiar and replete with truisms. But as Dale Carnegie showed us, old-fashioned common sense never goes out of style. The pastor in the field may be more easily challenged and motivated by Engstrom's biblically based wisdom than by sophisticated new manipulative styles of management.

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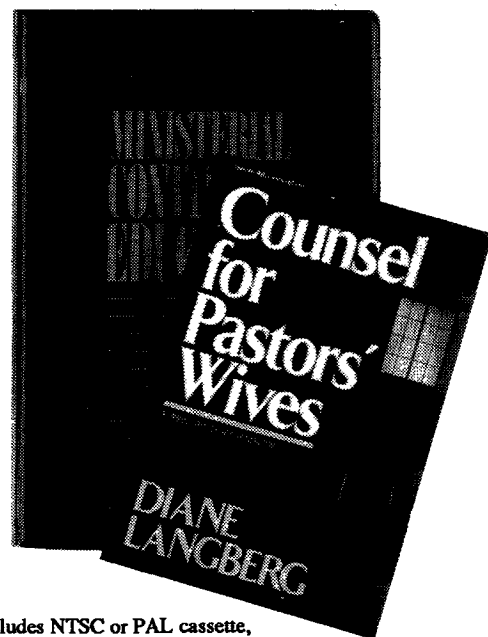
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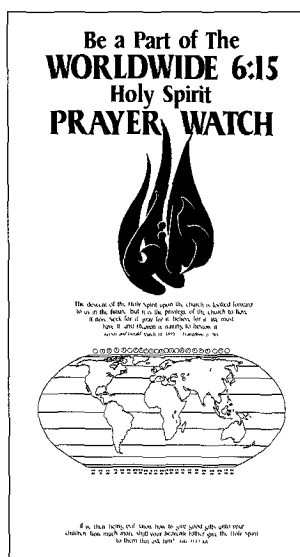


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Out of the World Ministers' Council held in conjunction with the General Conference session at Indianapolis came the moving concept of a global prayer watch: Nearly 2,500 delegates from 121 countries



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Meanwhile, to help you keep the goal before you visually, Washington Con-

ference, in cooperation with Color Press, has come up with an attractive two-color 11" x 17" poster with a flaming logo that catches your eye and reminds you of your privilege and obligation to belong to a worldwide family that prays for and awaits the outpouring of the Spirit. Price, inclusive of postage in U.S.: For 25 copies—\$19.50; 50 copies—\$28.50; 100 copies—\$45. International orders, please inquire. Write to: Color Press, College Place, WA 99324.

## A decision motivator

So you have come to the end of your Bible study series. You are not quite sure how to lead your students across the valley of decision. Sure they love the Lord, believe the truth, and yet there is some hesitation to take a stand. "It Is Written" has produced just the motivating tool you were looking for: a two-volume video presentation that leads the viewer to respond. In volume 1 of *In Step with Jesus*, George Vandeman surveys the 27 fundamental beliefs, and shows how each one of them leads to a complete relationship with Christ. Eleven times during the video students will have opportunity to respond to various doctrines by indicating acceptance or asking for

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## Real Truth Tract Series

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from: Central Departmental Services, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

## Evangelism: do it well, do it now

Here at last is a comprehensive, field-tested, practical resource manual that no evangelist or pastor or elder should do without: *Evangelism and Church Growth*. Written by W. C. Scales, Jr., ministerial association secretary of the North American Division, the book is a result of a passion for evangelism and church growth. In 340 pages, it covers everything from preparing for evangelism to concluding the campaign successfully to strategizing for sustained and Spirit-filled nurture and growth in the local church. It provides information valuable to pastors, laymen, church officers, ministerial students, health educators, and anyone interested in the Lord's commission and His coming. Cost: \$19.95 (inclusive of postage for USA; international orders require 20 percent add-on for handling and shipping). Write to: Central Departmental Services, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

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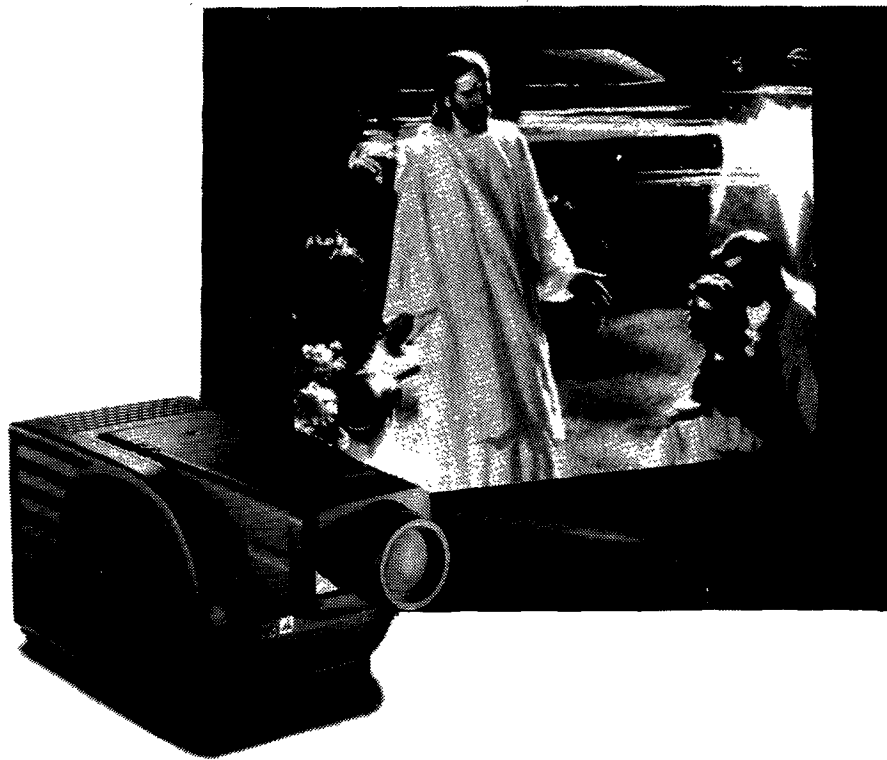
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