

Ministry

International Journal for Clergy

August 1992



TO CELEBRATE OR NOT TO CELEBRATE

The Bible does not call us to choose between
celebrating and mourning,
but teaches us when and why we should do both.

Global Mission, my mission

In the article "Global Mission, My Mission" (April 1992), Newman finds only one out of our 27 fundamental beliefs dealing with salvation and the cross.

I believe that the 27 fundamentals are centered upon Jesus and the cross. While it is true that our emphasis on doctrines all these years may not have been Christ-centered, the fact is that each of the teachings is salvation-centered. If we cannot teach salvation and the cross from each of our fundamental beliefs, then we have no business teaching or preaching them.—Jon A. Gutierrez, Glendale, California.

■ I have my doubts that the cross will ever be preeminent within the Adventist Church. For so long too many other teachings have occupied the forefront and our members have been taught to believe in truth, but not the gospel. And it just doesn't seem esoteric enough; it's too simple and everybody else has it, too. However, the cross of Christ is the center of my ministry, my preaching; it's why I pastor and continue to evangelize (in the truest sense of the word) the congregations that I serve.—Jeff Taylor, Front Royal, Virginia.

■ I do not believe we have to choose between statistical growth and spirituality. I do not believe that just because Jehovah's Witnesses are also hardworking and fast-growing, our faithful pastors and evangelists could very well be motivated by a righteousness-by-works dominated religion.

Nor do I believe your statement that "what made the difference" between attendance results at a recently organized celebration-type church in the Washington, D.C., area, and attendance results generally experienced by our evangelists, was the celebration group's emphasis on "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."—Bob DuBose, Avon Park, Florida.

■ I fully agree with and appreciate the good things you said. We have far too long, too often, confused our members,

as well as prospective members, regarding what the real requirements for heaven are, as well as the requirements for church membership. Thanks for helping to give some significant clarification to that.

I could not agree with you more regarding the concern about emphasis on numbers and bringing people into church membership without ever really introducing them to Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and their only basis for entrance into the heavenly kingdom. The cross of Christ must be the center of everything that we believe and preach. If it isn't, our teachings become irrelevant and meaningless; in fact, even harmful if they take our focus away from Christ.

When emphasizing Christ, we must make it very clear that our salvation is based upon extrinsic, not intrinsic, righteousness. It is the perfect righteousness of Jesus received by His grace through faith that makes us acceptable to our heavenly Father. The intrinsic righteousness, that is Christ living within us by His Spirit, gives us strength from day to day to live more like Him, but it is not that which saves us. The concept of a higher power and me working together to procure and secure my salvation is pagan and has no place in Seventh-day Adventism.

I especially enjoyed your analogy of the picture in the frame. Jesus is the picture and must be the object of our focus, the subject of our preaching, and the basis of our salvation. During a recent visit to a Seventh-day Adventist church, I was shown a "wonderful" new addition that had been made to the church's decor. Twelve lovely pillars were placed flat against the wall, six on each side of the sanctuary. These were identified to me as the "pillars of our church." I quickly read each pillar. I read such things as Second Coming, state of the dead, Spirit of Prophecy, healthful living, millennium, Sabbath, investigative judgment, etc., but nowhere did I find Jesus. I remarked sadly to the pastor, "You have a wonderful display depicting the pillars of the Seventh-day Adventist message. It's too bad Jesus didn't make it."—

Herman Bauman, president, Arizona Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Scottsdale, Arizona.

■ God bless you for your article "Global Mission, My Mission." From my experience in Southern Asia Division, I can confirm that from 1960 to 1980 several ministers there were greatly concerned about liberal baptisms, and even more about liberal baptismal reports.

I personally avoided checking out for myself the places where many had been baptized and almost none left. Torn at heart, I felt it might do more harm than good. However, several of us spoke out where we thought it proper.

In my last years there, I continually reminded our division and union leaders, including departmental men, of the counsel in *Evangelism*, pages 279-333. My earnest prayer is that God will help our leaders today to discontinue this drive for numbers, humble themselves, and start a true reformation that will lead to a spiritual revival among our ministers and throughout our churches.—Jack Williams (former treasurer, Southern Asia Division), Hendersonville, North Carolina.

■ I appreciated your article. It's time our church recognizes that salvation in Christ is not just one of a number of doctrines. It is the very foundation of our faith.

We need to face the fact that some of our historical practices as a denomination have always made the gospel only one small part of a much larger package. Take, for example, our approach to baptism.

We have made people into Seventh-day Adventists before acknowledging the reality of their commitment to Christ through baptism. By insisting that people make a commitment (or at least an assent) to every one of our beliefs and behavioral standards before baptism, we have said in effect that our church constitutes the body of Christ. We have refused people entrance into His body, His kingdom, because they

(Continued on page 29)

"Dear God, if You exist, where are You now?" Such was the cry of a mutilated youth bleeding to death in the gutter of a ghetto. Teresa S. Caine tells his story and other compelling experiences from her work with inner-city ministries. In the wake of recent turmoil in large cities around the world, no article could be more relevant and practical than "Neglected ministry of the ghetto." While secular society helplessly wrings its hands, loving Christian ministry has the power to transform lives and neighborhoods.

"Pastor, you're about to get educated and educated fast!" That's what Mike, a recent convert, told Pastor John Glass as they raced down the road toward a chilling encounter with demons. John became convinced that the supposed divine deliverance he witnessed was really a satanic counterfeit—spiritism, in fact. He shares important counsel about dealing with demons in "Beware of deliverance ministries."

A practical article for evangelism is William MacCarty's "Guest ministry: the adventure of the front door."

Perhaps you haven't heard all you need to know about celebration worship until you read "To celebrate or not to celebrate: that is not the question," by Richard Fredericks. We trust you will find his observations insightful rather than inciteful.

Martin Weber

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Ministry is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association.

ASSOCIATION SECRETARY:
Floyd Bresee

EDITOR:
J. David Newman

ASSOCIATE EDITORS:
John M. Fowler, Martin Weber

EDITORIAL ASSISTANT:
Ella Rydzewski

EDITORIAL SECRETARY:
Dot Tone

SEMINAR DIRECTOR:
Rex D. Edwards

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS:
Carlos Aeschlimann, Galen Bosley
Ellen Bresee, James Zachary

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William H. Shea, Russell L. Staples
Sally Streib, Richard Tibbits

INTERNATIONAL EDITORS:
Walton Whaley, Ministerial Secretary
Africa-Indian Ocean Division of SDA
22 Boite Postale 1764
Abidjan 22, Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa

Baraka Muganda, Ministerial Secretary
Eastern Africa Division of SDA
P.O. Box H.G. 100
Highlands, Harare
Zimbabwe, Africa

Johannes Mager, Ministerial Secretary
Euro-Africa Division of SDA
P.O. Box 219, CH 3000
Berne 32, Switzerland

Mikhail P. Kulakov
Euro-Asia Division of SDA
ul. Severodvinskaya 9, Apt. 407
Moscow 129224, Russia

V. P. Bocala, Ministerial Secretary
Far Eastern Division of SDA
800 Thomson Road
Singapore 1129, Republic of Singapore

Jaime Castrejon, Ministerial Secretary
Inter-American Division of SDA

P.O. Box 140760
Miami, FL 33114-0760

William C. Scales, Jr., Ministerial Secretary
North American Division of SDA
12501 Old Columbia Pike
Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600

Amasias Justiniano, Ministerial Secretary
South American Division of SDA
Caixa Postal 12-2600
70279 Brasilia, DF, Brazil

John H. Gate, Ministerial Secretary
South Pacific Division of SDA
148 Fox Valley Road
Wahroonga, N.S.W. 2076, Australia

P. V. Jesudas, Ministerial Secretary
Southern Asia Division of SDA
SDA Complex
Post Box 2, HCF
Tamil Nadu, India

A. David C. Currie, Ministerial Secretary
Trans-European Division of SDA
119 St. Peter's Street
St. Albans, Herts, AL1 3EY, England

COVER DESIGN/LAYOUT
Scott Kirby/Ann Taylor

ADVERTISING SALES:
Ella Rydzewski

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES:
Larry Burtnett

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Lessons from afar

John M. Fowler

I was stranded at the airport, tired and hungry. My flight was indefinitely delayed. After an hour of waiting I went to the airport restaurant and ordered a simple meal. The waiter politely informed me that it would take 15 minutes to get the food ready. "That's fine," I assured him. Within two minutes he was back again, this time with a pamphlet in his hand. "Perhaps you may like to read this while you wait." The pamphlet was on who Jesus is, and was issued by the Seventh-day Adventist Publishing House in Manila.

The meal was good. The mango was delicious. It was time I checked in my luggage. The airline clerk profusely apologized for the delay. She checked my luggage, gave me my boarding pass, and just as I was leaving she handed me a magazine. "Something to read while you wait," she said with a smile. A *Signs of the Times*, 9 months old.

"Where are you coming from?" I was startled from my doze some 30,000 feet up in the air. The elderly gentleman had moved from his seat and had taken a vacant one next to mine. "India," I told him. He was full of questions about India and showed a great deal of enthusiasm. A few minutes later he gave me a card and suggested that I should enroll in a correspondence school. "You would find in Jesus your best friend, and you must get to know Him," he insisted. I told him I was only visiting the Philippines. "Never mind," the old man smiled again. "We have a branch school in India, and I will ask them to mail the lessons to you." He was persistent in enrolling me in the Voice of Prophecy Bible Course.

Within a matter of one hour three

Adventists were trying to make an Adventist out of me. That was my exposure to Filipino evangelism three years ago.

And now in 1992 I had another opportunity to see for myself at close quarters the passionate zeal and the enormous enthusiasm that Filipino Adventists have for their faith. The opportunity came in the form of a crusade in the city of Davin on the island of Negros. This is one of two cities on that island in which we did not have a Seventh-day Adventist presence. At the conclusion of the crusade, we baptized 311 persons and established a church in the city. I was the preacher during the crusade, but for the entire duration of the evangelistic campaign I found myself a disciple sitting at the feet of simple believers so totally immersed with the burden of sharing their faith. I found myself being taught instead of teaching, being an instrument of grace rather than an extension of a giant ecclesiastical machine.

What did I learn?

Strength of a church is not in its institutional structure and administrative edifice, but in the commitment of its members to the Lordship of Jesus. Sure, our church in the Philippines has an organizational structure similar to the worldwide model. But there is a deliberate thrust to make the structure a servant of the church, the administration an avenue of service. Consequently, evangelism and church nurture seem to dominate the concerns of church administration, clergy, and laity. Most churches are cared for by members: what else can they do when routinely a pastor is a pastor for multiple churches, at times extending to as many as 18, in a radius of 40 miles or so, and without the convenience of a car?

The pastor coordinates, supervises, trains, and equips the members for the

local church ministry and evangelism.

Pastor Mansueto Leonar was the coordinator for the Davin crusade. I got to know him quite well. He knows his Bible. He loves the Lord. And he is the pastor of 10 churches. Make that 11, now that the crusade is over. I asked him how he manages and what he does. Members run his churches. Trained elders, Bible workers, Sabbath school teachers, and youth workers attend to church care, nurture, and growth. Pastor Leonar trains personnel for the church, coordinates church nurture programs, promotes local evangelism, and takes turns preaching in his 10 churches.

Among the many pastors I met, including a woman who pastored 18 churches, no one could conceive of pastoring without at the same time evangelizing. The new frontier is ever the goal of the pastors, and they take the church along to that frontier.

Elders play a vital role in the ministry of the local church. An elder from another church was among the associates who formed our crusade team. He and his wife are experienced in visitation. They love their Lord. They love this message. They love people. With that combination they could lead people to decisions. A few days before the crusade was over, this elder told me his strategy for the new company of believers. He would take care of the church (no pastor or worker is possible), and with the help of the district leader, he would train an elder from the newly baptized group, and the infant church will then be on its own—with, of course, an occasional visit and more training from the district pastor. The elder of the new church with his colleagues will then become responsible not only to care for the Davin church, but also to seek after a new frontier.

The local church elder in the Philippines is unlike elders in some other parts of the world. His role is not limited to the worship program on Sabbath morning and to other routine duties. The Filipino elder takes the ordination to that office seriously and gets fully involved in the total ministry of the church. As in other parts of the world field where the church is experiencing an evangelistic explosion, the local church elder in the Philippines is often the de facto leader of the local congregation, working of course in close cooperation with the pastor. If the work of the elder was not available to church ministry and evangelism, the local missions in many cases would need 10 times their present worker force. I thank the Lord for elders. (And I'm glad the Ministerial Association is committed to training, encouraging, and equipping the local church elders around the world to become global partners in the gospel ministry.)

"Come and see" still remains a good evangelistic tool. How do we get strangers in an altogether strange town to

come and hear a stranger preach a strange gospel? Good public relations, advertising, a strong organization, and a good budget—all have a place. At Davin we had very little of these, but we had a powerful team of laypersons who loved the Lord so deeply that they could talk about Him wherever they were, with whomever they met, without fear and without embarrassment.

The three Filipino Adventists I mentioned at the beginning of this report are typical of our members who share their faith in the fish market as well as in the president's palace. In their relentless pursuit of seeking the lost, many members employ the only tool they can use—the tool of the Samaritan woman, who at the moment of her greatest discovery shouted to the city, "Come and see."

Thus I came away from the Philippines strengthened in my faith in the gospel commission of our Lord. That commission has to do with me—my love for my Lord, my commitment to a life of faith, my passionate participation in sharing my Lord with others. ■

An arresting reality

Martin Weber

Have you ever been arrested? I have. It happened last September, the week before I moved across the United States to work for *Ministry*. You might appreciate an explanation.

Late one afternoon I was driving my daughter Christi from the shopping mall to the home of a friend. After turning left to get on the freeway, I saw red and blue lights flashing in my mirror. My tax dollars were at work, calling me to account for turning from the wrong lane. I had to sit helplessly for six minutes while

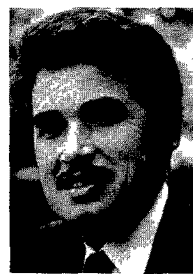
the officer radioed headquarters to make sure I wasn't a drug dealer. Meanwhile, cars drove by—full of people from church, it seemed. Finally the officer handed me a yellow paper to sign, and I timidly ventured on my way.

Not wanting penalty points on my driving record, I spent the next Sunday in traffic school. That's where I learned that I had been arrested when I got my ticket. You see, according to California law, when the officer pulled me over he was actually placing me under arrest. When I signed the ticket I was posting bond. When he let me drive away he was releasing me from custody.

It was quite a shock to discover that I

was now a criminal. A common law-breaker. And I thought I was a worthy citizen. I used to think I was a pretty good husband, too. Then I took my wife (or she took me) to one of those Marriage Encounter weekends. I'm glad we went, but I have to admit it wasn't much fun at first. As several sensitive, caring husbands testified about the love notes and poems they write to their wives day and night, I felt like a selfish failure. With all that I had to learn and unlearn, it seemed I was a marital Moonie getting deprogrammed. So much for my accomplishments as a husband.

I also used to think I was a pretty good worker for Christ. I try to take advantage of the soul-winning opportunities God brings my way. Last year while flying to Los Angeles I witnessed to Darryl Strawberry, a baseball player who had been having serious personal problems. Not long afterwards he became a believer—and he told a reporter that it all got started one night on a plane when a minister talked to him about God. Darryl isn't an Adventist; he tithes his five million dollar salary to a charismatic group. But evidently I had some small role to play in his conversion. That makes me happy. I confess to my shame that it also makes me feel proud. What a pity—how seldom the Lord manages to really use me, and when He does I crave some glory for myself. Shame on me for my mingled motives. I'm not such a good Christian worker after all, any more than I am a good husband or a good citizen.



Elder John sins a dozen times a day in the car. So much for our right-eousness.

Now let's pull in the driveway and visit your home. How good a spouse are you? Are you compassionate and self-denying all the time? Or when you sit at your desk leafing through a news magazine, do you sometimes catch your eyes lingering over tempting pictures? At church, are you especially cheerful and attentive with attractive members of the opposite sex?

You who are married women reading

Without the merits of Christ imputed to our account we are damned, we are doomed, we are dead.

this, please don't feel self-righteous if your husband struggles with sexual temptation. Yes, it's true that cherishing lustful thoughts amounts to adultery, and that's inexcusable. God has plenty of power available to keep your husband's heart and mind in Christ Jesus. But remember your own struggles. Do you take a plunge into the pit of resentment when your husband disappoints you? Jesus said that indulging a bitter, hateful attitude amounts to murder, just as your husband's lust is adultery.

The fact is that all of us are sinners. The Bible says: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way" (Isa. 53:6).^{*} If we sinners try to relate to a holy God on the basis of our spiritual attainments, we are damned, we are doomed, we are dead.

Notice this startling warning from the law of God: "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'" (Gal. 3:10). The law of God demands absolute perfection. *All* things in the book of the law must be performed on a continuous basis, every waking moment seven days a week. And this requires more than merely resisting the temptation to do something wrong or think forbidden thoughts. The law curses not just sins of commission (the bad things we do) but also sins of omission (the good things we don't do enough of).

Here we have a stunning blow to our personal righteousness. Since the law requires not just the absence of sin but perfect performance of all duty, *we might never yield to sin yet still be under the curse of the law! Think of it!*

That was absolutely shocking news to me. *Then what hope do we have?* I wondered. I kept reading in Galatians 3 and discovered my salvation: "Christ has

redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (verse 13). Thank God, Jesus took our curse so we can receive His blessing. He wore our crown of condemnation so we can wear His eternal crown of glory.

This good news should melt our hearts and fill us with such intense love for the Saviour that we keep all of His commandments. Resting in Jesus isn't rusting in complacency. The grace of God gives us courage to confront our sins. "Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Gal. 5:24). How sad that many counterfeit Christians—yes, sometimes even pastors—become careless in Christ, claiming the cross while secretly clinging to sin. They too are damned, doomed, and dead: "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:7, 8).

So saving grace does not disgrace our Saviour. Despite wholehearted obedience, however, we still fall short of the glory of God. You don't think so? The fact is that "God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach."¹

Consider this solemn word from the Lord: "It is wrong to waste our time, wrong to waste our thoughts. . . . If every moment were valued and rightly employed, we should have time for everything that we need to do for ourselves or for the world."² My brother, my sister, how do you measure up to that high and holy standard? People who suffer from legalism need to understand the curse of the law, how it condemns as sin every trace of unrighteousness and incompleteness. How dare we presume to relate to God on the basis of our achievements! Those who live by the law will die by the law. If we insist upon ascending to heaven from Mount Sinai, we will lose our souls. Salvation comes only at Mount Calvary. Only on the basis of God's mercy can we ever have a relationship with Him. Yet it's so hard to admit our inadequacies.

A friend of mine had just delivered a camp meeting sermon when an elderly woman approached him, obviously upset. "Young man," she shouted, "I've served my Lord 40 years as a Bible worker—are you telling me that all my sacrifice counts for nothing in the judgment?"

"My dear sister," he replied, "only Christ's sacrifice on the cross counts for anything in the judgment. Your only hope and mine is 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.'"

Do you know the real problem legalists have? Ironically, they don't take the law seriously enough. They want to raise the standards of the church, but their own standard of holiness is far too low. In trying to relate to God by how well they are fulfilling the law they inevitably minimize its infinite requirements. The foundation of their faith is really just a veneer of thin ice, cracking beneath their feet. Their only hope is the merits of Christ, the solid rock.

Notice this: "Perfection through our own good works we can never attain. The soul who sees Jesus by faith repudiates his own righteousness. He sees himself as incomplete, his repentance insufficient, his strongest faith but feebleness, his most costly sacrifice as meager, and he sinks in humility at the foot of the cross. But a voice speaks to him from the oracles of God's Word. In amazement he hears the message, 'Ye are complete in him' (Col. 2:10). Now all is at rest in his soul. No longer must he strive to find some worthiness in himself, some meritorious deed by which to gain the favor of God."³

This compelling statement leaves us with some heart-searching questions. We may have repented of our sins, but have we also repudiated our righteousness? Do we see our repentance as incomplete, our strongest faith as feebleness, our most costly sacrifice as meager?

Maybe you baptized 25 souls last year, or even 125. That's great, but you had better not relate to God on the basis of any success in your ministry. Without the merits of Christ continuously imputed to our account we are damned, we are doomed, we are dead. But thanks be to God, if we have sincerely entrusted ourselves by faith to Him, then we are complete in Christ.

In ourselves we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. But in Jesus we are rich, increased with goods, and in need of nothing further to be worthy. ■

^{*} All Bible passages in this article are from the New King James Version.

¹ Ellen G. White, *In Heavenly Places* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1967), p. 141.

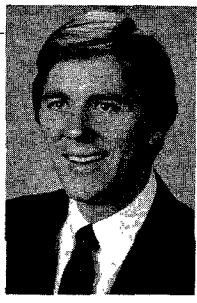
² ———, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1942), p. 208.

³ ———, *Reflecting Christ* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1985), p. 76.

To celebrate or not to celebrate!

Richard Fredericks

That is not the question.



At the time of writing, Richard Fredericks, Ph.D., was an associate professor of religion at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland. Currently he is the pastor of the Damascus, Maryland, Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Recent innovations in several Adventist congregations in the United States and elsewhere have raised the question of whether celebration in worship is a neo-Pentecostal threat. Some even consider it dangerous to use the word “celebration” in describing any component of the worship service. Is such concern justified?

This article is not an analysis of Adventist congregations who call themselves “celebration centers.” Rather, it is an attempt to keep us from throwing out a God-given baby because of what some believe is muddied bathwater.

Regardless of how one views the “celebration movement” in Adventism, the real or alleged misuse of a good thing should never cancel its legitimate use. Though greedy hucksters constantly misuse the Bible, we continue to study it. Even though society constantly abuses money and sex, God doesn’t call us to become celibate paupers. So with the biblical concept that worship is communal celebration of life in Christ—we should not reject it because some might abuse it.

Some critics of the “celebration movement” categorically assert that this is “no time to celebrate.” Instead, our lives and our worship should be marked by weeping and sighing. Celebration, they say, must wait until the coming of Christ. One article through a rather dubious exegesis of Isaiah 22 even concludes that celebration worship is the unpardonable sin in the last days!¹

Something beautiful could be lost if we take these voices seriously. We need celebration. The true gospel requires it. It is crucial to the corporate life and evangelistic outreach of the Adventist Church. It is central to Christ-centered worship. It is

vital to the health of Christians as individuals. Without it our souls shrivel.

If this is true, it should be clear biblically. And it is. Amid our struggle to be authentic Christians in a spiritually decaying world, the biblical call to celebrate God’s amazing grace becomes more urgent, not less. Especially as the coming of Christ draws near Christian worship should be characterized by joyful praise, confidence, and courage.² In other words, celebration.

The Bible never calls us to choose between celebrating and mourning. Rather, Scripture teaches us when and why we should do both.

The true focus of worship

Worship is a verb. It’s active devotion. Should Christian worship be characterized by celebration or by “sighing and crying for the abominations in the land”? The answer depends primarily on our focus of worship: Do we center upon God’s great salvation through the death of Christ, or upon our desire to attain perfection of character?

Is corporate and private worship the time to focus on ourselves and what we are doing for God, or rather on who God is and what He has done for us? The answer is determined largely by the basis upon which we rest our hope for salvation. If we trust in the perfect sufficiency of Christ’s life, death, and resurrection, then our worship will celebrate security in Christ. But if we base our hope upon a future perfection of the final generation, then worship becomes marred by mourning over our failure to attain that ideal.

Whatever gets our attention gets us. If the primary theme and focus of worship are ourselves—even our desire to be Spirit-filled, sinless selves—then we are left with pharisaical self-worship (see Luke 18:9-12; Matt. 7:22, 23). Likewise, if our wor-

ship focuses primarily on the ups and downs of the denomination, then we have corporate self-worship.

Given the theology of many who condemn every form of celebration worship, their opposition to it is justified. If the Adventist message requires preoccupation with our "sinless" selves, then worship becomes a time of grieving. Sorrowful humility results from any honest focus on ourselves in the light of the holiness of Christ. As Ellen White says: "The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. . . .

"None of the apostles or prophets ever claimed to be without sin. . . .

"At every advance step in Christian experience our repentance will deepen. . . . We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone. We shall make the apostle's confession our own. 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing' (Rom. 7:18). 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world' (Gal. 6:14)."³

The key question is whether worship is the time to focus on ourselves. Solomon wrote, "There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event [literally, "delight"] under heaven. A time to be born and a time to die. A time to plant and a time to uproot. A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to tear down, and a time to build up. A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance" (Eccl. 3:1-4).*

Clearly all these things, including both weeping and laughing, have a proper place in this life. So there is a time for deep repentance and a time for great confidence; a time for confronting our sins and a time for rejoicing in our Saviour. Too often, in misguided zeal we set up false dichotomies, artificial either/or elements, when in reality both are appropriate. The question is, when should we mourn, and when should we celebrate? The Bible is clear.

Kneeling at the cross

When we focus on Christ crucified, risen, and coming, we celebrate. Indeed, it would be shameful not to celebrate. Listen to Ellen White's rebuke of those who criticize the manifestation of enthusiasm in light of God's grace:

"His arm brought salvation. The price was paid to purchase the redemption of man, when, in the last soul struggle, the blessed words were uttered which seemed to resound through creation: 'It is finished.' . . . Here is a theme, poor formalist, which is of sufficient importance to excite you. . . . Upon this theme it is sin to be calm and unimpassioned. The scenes of Calvary call for the deepest emotion. Upon this subject you will be excused if you manifest enthusiasm."⁴

"Christ's death proves God's great love for man. It is our pledge of salvation. To remove the cross from the Christian would be like blotting the sun from the sky. . . . Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope. From it shines the light of the Saviour's love, and when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy, for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling in faith at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain."⁵

There can be no doubt about it—the center of true Christian worship is celebrating the victory of the cross by which:

1. God so loved the world that He gave His only Son as our atoning sacrifice (see John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 10).

2. The curse of sin in our lives was exchanged for the sufficiency of Christ's righteous life, thus allowing us to stand complete in Him before the Father: "For in Him all the fullness of deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete" (Col. 2:9, 10; see also Heb. 10:14).

3. Christ received the punishment we deserve, making an all-sufficient atonement for our sins that has saved us from the wrath of God (see Col. 1:19-22; Rom. 5:9, 10).

4. Jesus has promised to never leave us nor forsake us; to be with us always, even unto the end (Matt. 28:19, 20).

5. We have the testimony that whoever has the Son has eternal life, and there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (see 1 John 5:11-13; Rom. 8:1, 31-39).

6. After believing the gospel of our salvation, we are sealed in Christ with the Holy Spirit of promise (see Eph. 1:13, 14).

In light of all this that Christ has accomplished for us, exuberant praise and boldness are two primary characteristics of New Testament worship (see Rom. 14:17; Phil. 2:17, 18; 3:1; 4:4; 1 Thess.

5:16-18; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-23).

A time to weep

At 5:30 each morning I rise to walk and talk with the Lord. While walking I read a pocket New Testament through which God speaks to my soul. For several weeks recently I wrestled through Ephesians 4 and 5 and Colossians 3, which communicate exceedingly high calls to holiness in Christ. Morning by morning God humbled my soul, rebuking the shortcomings of my life and calling me to a higher commitment to holiness.

In self-examination we should be contrite before God (see Isa. 55:6-12 and 1 Peter 5:6). This is the time for humility, mourning, and confession of sin; the time for hungering and thirsting after the true righteousness of Christ, which surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, who spent their whole lives seeking an adequate inward righteousness (see Matt. 5:3-7, 20; 6:33; Phil. 3:7-10).

God calls us to deal with our souls honestly. "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit shall from the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal. 6:7, 8).

Both corporate and individual self-examination, if Spirit-led, produce the same result: humility in light of our unworthiness (see Luke 17:10). The church needs to realize that even our best achievements in the light of God's ideal are a constant call to repentance: At every advanced step our repentance will deepen.

Great are Thy works

Personal and corporate self-examination, necessary though they be, are not the central fact or focus of true Christian worship. David highlights both the orientation and the attitude of true worship: "I will extol Thee, my God, O King; and I will bless Thy name forever . . . Great is the Lord, and highly to be praised. . . . One generation shall praise Thy works to another, and shall declare Thy mighty acts. On the glorious splendor of Thy majesty, and on Thy wonderful works, I will meditate. And men shall speak of the power of Thy awesome acts; and I will tell of Thy greatness. They shall bubble over with [margin] the memory of Thine abundant goodness, and shall shout joyfully of Thy righteousness" (Ps. 145:1-7).

Worship as the celebration of God's

goodness alone is clear in the Psalms. But what about during the last days? Does the focus in worship shift from God's great saving act in the past (which gives the future hope), to put our confidence in the attainment of sinlessness by the final generation? Does the apocalyptic crucible produce a people who can finally sing: "Worthy is the Lamb—and me?"

No, Scripture never hints at such a shift of orientation in the final worshiping community. Listen carefully to those who are victorious over the beast and his image: "Great and marvelous are Thy works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations. Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Thy name? For Thou alone art holy; for all the nations will come and worship before Thee" (Rev. 15:3, 4).

Joy is our strength

Let us see what kind of worship God expected from His imperfect people in the days of Nehemiah (see Neh. 8:9, 10). The setting was shortly after the Jews returned to Jerusalem from their Babylonian exile. They had wandered from God and forgotten the Torah (translated Law), but now a remnant had returned to rebuild their city and their faith. Ezra led them into a study of the books of Moses, explaining so that "they understood the reading" (Neh. 8:8). The people felt so smitten by how far they had fallen from God's will that they began to weep. Notice the response of Ezra, Nehemiah, and all the Levites: "This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn or weep. . . . Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength" (verses 9, 10).

As reading on in Nehemiah makes

clear, the people of God had real shortcomings, real problems to grieve about. But since they had returned to Him, this was a time of worship, of hearing God's redemptive Word and focusing on Him, not on themselves. In that context the joy of the Lord was their strength, the very strength they would need to confront and conquer their own sins in the battle of life.

The Bible makes clear that in Christ we stand acquitted before God (see Rom. 5:1; 8:1). Because of this verdict (see Rom. 8:31-34) we now live in the joyous year of jubilee. Notice the confessions of praise that the prophet Isaiah declares this brings us: "To grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness. . . . Instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. . . . Everlasting joy will be theirs" (Isa. 61:3-7).

Isaiah switches to a first-person confessional to express the attitude of Christ's community in worship, a confession of rejoicing in what Christ has done for us: "I will rejoice greatly in the Lord, my soul will exult ["be joyful," NKJV] in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations" (verses 10, 11).

The real celebration begins

When Jesus Christ emerged from the tomb the real celebration began. Old Tes-

tament prophetic promise became historical reality, and this formed the substance of the celebration. The new covenant of a justified people in Christ was ratified and sealed by His death and resurrection (see Rom. 4:25). So as Christians we rejoice, for in Christ we already—at this moment—have been (1) "justified [accomplished fact]" "by His blood [method]" (Rom. 5:1, 9); (2) "brought near [to God] by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13); (3) "[given] peace with God" (Rom. 5:1); (4) qualified "to share in the inheritance," and delivered "from the domain of darkness," and transferred into "the kingdom of His beloved Son" (Col. 1:12, 13).

Grasp what these verses are saying. The verbs in every case denote what God has already accomplished for us in Christ. Christ was absolutely victorious over sin, death, and the devil. His victory is ours before the Father as we put our faith in Him. Therefore, as Christians we work from victory, not toward it.

In Luke 10:17-21 we find the disciples caught up in their own experience. Their focus is on themselves and what they are capable of in Christ's name. Jesus affirms His power in their lives, but then He warns them not to rejoice in their subjective experience—even when it is a victorious one. Rather, He says, "rejoice in this, . . . that your names are recorded in heaven." In other words, if we accept the gospel of salvation through the blood of Christ, our Lord commands us to rejoice that, by the grace of God, our names are recorded in the Lamb's book of life.

The disciples finally understood this focus of the gospel after the cross and Pentecost. Never in history was there a more victorious church than the early apostolic church, and yet the entire focus of their preaching, praying, witnessing, as-

"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS, AND AGAIN I SAY, REJOICE!!"



"LET ALL THOSE THAT SEEK THEE REJOICE AND BE GLAD IN THEE."



"THOU HAST TURNED FOR ME MY MOURNING INTO DANCING..."



"THESE THINGS HAVE I SPOKEN UNTO YOU... THAT YOUR JOY MIGHT BE FULL."



"THE CHURCH HAS NOTHING TO CELEBRATE!"



surance, and fellowship (as described in the book of Acts) was on Christ crucified and risen—not on their subjective experience. Therein lay the secret of their power.

The Father commands it

Jesus introduced three parables in Luke 15 in response to the Pharisees' accusation that He received sinners and ate with them. In each story Jesus pleads guilty to their charge, and the punch line is always a call to rejoice in God's acceptance of those unworthy and lost. "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10; see also verses 5, 7). If the angels celebrate every repenting sinner who is found by Christ, shouldn't we as repenting sinners also celebrate our salvation in Christ when we worship Him?

The third parable, the story of the prodigal, merits the most careful consideration. Here Jesus introduces the concept that our willingness to rejoice becomes the mark of an authentic relationship with the Father. We all know the story. The son in selfishness turns from the loving father and squanders his inheritance on the cheap and unsatisfying sins of "a far country." He ends up eating garbage with pigs. That is Christ's terse, realistic description of life apart from our heavenly Father.

Finally the lost son comes to his senses (the work of the Holy Spirit). He makes three essential choices. He determines to (1) return to his father, (2) confess his sin against the father, and (3) cast himself in utter unworthiness upon the father's mercy.

While the young man is yet a long way off, the father sees him and also does three things. He (1) showers compassion on him, (2) embraces him (the text implies kissing him again and again), and (3) covers the prodigal's wretchedness with his own magnificent robe, while also restoring to him the ring of sonship. This is the basis for our celebration as Christians.

Isn't that the good news? Indeed, it is such good news, it should cause us to celebrate—which is just what the father calls everyone to do: "Let's . . . celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." So they began to celebrate" (verses 23, 24, NIV).

Let's not miss the potency of the parable as seen in verses 25-32. In the older brother Jesus symbolizes the religion of the Pharisees, so consumed with the pursuit of salvation through personal character attainment that they had no time or desire for God's gift in Christ. The older

brother, coming in from working in the fields, discovers the party. He is angry—furious, in fact. How dare they celebrate! Think of the wasted, impure life of this false brother compared with his own superior zeal in obeying the father's commands. Look at the prodigal's lack of moral perfection. What is there to celebrate? (See verses 29, 30.)

But the father doesn't even respond to the older son's self-righteousness. Instead, he freely offers his proud son just what the younger brother accepted so freely—everything. Jesus ends the story by putting these words in the mouth of the father (God) for us to ponder: "But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found" (verse 32, NIV).

Celebration despite circumstances

So as we embrace the gospel, the celebration begins. But should it continue on when the hard times come, when the world, the flesh, and the devil rage and dark circumstances surround us? The key again is Christ crucified as the motivation and assurance of the Christian life. If Christ Jesus is Lord and we continue to walk in Him, then with Paul we can shout: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Rom. 8:31, NIV).

Acts 16 illustrates how Paul applied this principle of celebration in his own life. While evangelizing the Roman colony of Philippi, he delivered a servant girl from a demon, thus ending her lucrative fortune telling business. Her owners stirred up the mob. Paul and Silas found themselves bloodied, bruised, and cast into a dark, dirty dungeon.

Can you imagine more discouraging circumstances? But what did the apostles do? They sang! In the inky blackness of that midnight hour, chained and battered, they celebrated God's goodness to them in songs of praise. Paul and Silas certainly were not singing about themselves or their circumstances (see 2 Cor. 4:4-6), but about God, about who He is and what He had done for them in Jesus Christ.

Out of this witness of celebration in the midst of suffering came the salvation of a jailer and his family. These converts were convicted of the reality of Christianity by the apostles' joyful courage amid terrible circumstances.

Let us celebrate the feast

The New Testament centers in the cross of Christ as God's finished and per-

fect work for saving sinners. God forbids us to glory or boast in anything else, for on it (as Ellen White says) hangs our every hope (see Gal. 6:14).⁶ Because of this focus the New Testament is a book of celebration and security: "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the feast" (1 Cor. 5:7, 8)!

As Adventists we tend to center our theological identity around preparing for coming eschatological events. The Value-generation study shows clearly that our children know more about the time of trouble, the close of probation, the last deceptions, the seven last plagues, the Second Coming, and final judgment than about the gift of present assurance through the substitutionary death of Christ—which is the basis of true preparation for the future. There is no security in merely knowing about final events. Until we find personal assurance in the cross of Christ, the Second Coming is the cursed threat rather than the blessed hope. The theory that the true gospel is the character attainment of the final generation of Adventists continues to breed a paralyzing perfectionism in our ranks. No wonder many don't feel like celebrating; they are preoccupied with themselves, with getting ready rather than being ready, with trying to attain salvation rather than sharing and celebrating the joy of free salvation in Christ.

The solution is not simply more contemporary music. Neither is it more intense weeping and crying while we focus on our sins. The key is Christ and Him crucified. The gospel is the proclamation of God's great salvation in Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:18-21; 1 Peter 2:24). Without this gospel we have nothing to celebrate. When we know the gospel, we will comprise a community of continual celebration, despite all circumstances and trials, because of our security in Christ.

The term *gospel* means good news. How do people respond when they receive really good news? What would be our reaction if a son thought dead in a war called to say he was OK; if a daughter at college we thought went down in an airplane crash called from the airport saying she was safe; if we were reunited with our families after a long separation? What about when we finish college or win a promotion? We rejoice. And our rejoicing is spontaneous, heartfelt, and natural.

Consider this. How should we react when we learn that God has given us, right now, eternal life based on our faith in the

death of Christ alone (see 2 Tim. 1:9, 10)? It would be foolish to believe the gospel and not celebrate the unity and security of our lives in Christ.

In 2 Samuel 6 we find our final illustration of how dangerous it is to despise or deny the legitimacy of celebrating the goodness of God. David was dancing before the Lord with all his might because the ark of mercy was returning to God's people. Michal, the daughter of Saul and David's wife, saw her husband's exuberant celebration in worship and "despised him in her heart," condemning him as a shameless fool. But David knew that his expression of joy had a different setting: "I will celebrate before the Lord." Because Michal despised David's joyful celebration, she spent the rest of her life under the curse of barrenness.

May God help us grasp the fullness of His gospel, His radical goodness to us in Christ. This will move us to authentic and godly celebration of Him in our worship and witness. May we learn to celebrate before we too, like the proud daughter of Saul, find ourselves as individuals and congregations utterly barren and without any children.

You see, then, that whether to celebrate or not to celebrate is not the question. In our worship we simply must rejoice in "so great a salvation" (Heb. 2:3).

Our theology will always define our worship. If our hope is in ourselves and the righteousness of our own victorious experience, worship as celebration is either religiously impossible or it is arrogant self-deception. But when we turn from ourselves to adore the Lord Jesus Christ for what He has done and will complete for His people, then worship becomes a celebration. Even in the most difficult circumstances, celebration is necessary, obvious, and natural. ■

*Unless otherwise noted, scriptural passages in this article are from the *New American Standard Bible*.

¹ Marshall Grosboll, "No Time to Celebrate," *Our Firm Foundation* (December 1990), pp. 14-19.

² More songs of praise and rejoicing are in Revelation than in any other book of the Bible except the Psalms, Scripture's own celebration hymnal.

³ Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1941), pp. 160, 161.

⁴ —, *Testimonies* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 2, pp. 212, 213.

⁵ —, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), pp. 209, 210.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 209.

Beware of deliverance ministries

John Glass

A pastor's chilling experience with alleged demonic deliverance leads him to return to the more sure Word of God.



John Glass is pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist churches in Ogden and Logan, Utah. This story is based upon his experience in a previous parish.

It was a rainy April morning the week before Easter. My young nephew was visiting for a few days, and I had brought him with me to the office. Being a computer nut, he had just planted himself in front of my keyboard when the phone rang: "Pastor, can you come? We need you, and we need you now!" It was Mike, one of my newer members.

"I would, Mike, but I don't have a car here right now."

"I'll be right over!" he yelled.

While getting into Mike's car, I felt sick in my stomach when he said: "Pastor, you're about to get educated and educated fast!" Trying to figure out what he meant, my mind raced along with the car. I sensed it had something to do with the demonic.

My fears were confirmed after we arrived at the house. The atmosphere inside was hideous—I'd never witnessed anything like it. His wife, Debbie, was thrashing around on the living room sofa, evidently possessed by an evil spirit. The voice speaking through her was gravelly, bitter, and vindictive. The next three and a half hours were a blur, even though each moment seemed to drag endlessly along.

A couple I had never met sat in chairs in front of Debbie. Who were these people? They reported having already

"But the Word of God, not personal experiences, is to be the final authority in religious matters."

spent 10 hours trying to help her. I was shocked to hear them arguing with the demon, commanding it to admit various things. They told me a number of things they had learned about Debbie from the demon.

I asked to talk to the victim. Instantly Debbie was herself again, and I encouraged her to reach out by faith to Jesus for the help He promised her. At one point she related a vision she was seeing. Then suddenly another personality would assert itself through her.

Sometime later three others joined us: a lady from the west side of the state and another couple from a Southern state. They immediately sat down and began what I would characterize as taunting the demon. Finally someone suggested that we have a prayer season. Again we knelt. Mike prayed first, the others next, and I was last. As I prayed, I got Debbie to pray, repeating phrases after me. She confessed her sins and her need of a Saviour, asking Him to free her. As she was saying "I thank You that I *have* been delivered," suddenly she gave a cry, sat up, and proclaimed, "I'm free! I'm delivered!" At that moment I sensed an immediate change in the atmosphere of the room. There was, of course, much rejoicing at that point.

Was it deliverance?

As Mike drove me and my nephew back to the office, my head was spinning. I thought I had witnessed a deliverance, but I wasn't sure. I wanted to affirm Debbie's deliverance as genuine more than anything I had ever wanted before, but certain things troubled me. For one thing, the wife of the man from the South had been giving "thought

messages" to the church, as if she were a prophetess. I had listened to one of her tapes, and it didn't have the "ring" of truth about it. Another thing that bothered me was the introduction to a book they gave me: *You Can Be More Than a Match for Satan*. The author, well known for his "deliverance ministry," used hypnotic techniques in his dealing with demons. The people who gave me the book told me I was a wonderful man of God who was going to do a wonderful work of deliverance. Their flattery bothered me. Nevertheless, I found myself wondering whether my whole church needed a ministry of deliverance from demons. I had never thought of my members that way before.

As the days passed, it seemed as though the deliverance ministry that had come to town was about to permeate my entire congregation. I learned that Debbie had experienced a second "deliverance" session ("The demons come out one at a time, you know") and that a number of my young people were going to her home to be delivered from the demons of caffeine and rock music. Several parents were upset about the whole business, wanting me to tell them what was going on.

At first I didn't take a public stand. I compiled 80 pages of data on deliverance (the church office looked like a print shop). Whenever members asked what I thought, I handed them a set and suggested they go home and study for themselves. The night we studied about demonic deliverance at prayer meeting, the room was packed.

One evening I stopped by to discuss my reservations and concerns with Debbie and Mike. "Pastor," they said, "don't question this experience! If you do, you're yielding to the demon of doubt!"

"But the Word of God, not personal experiences, is to be the final authority in religious matters."

"Here, you'd better take this and read it." Mike handed me the publication *Setting Captives Free*, from a group called the Intercessors. "Pastor!" Debbie exclaimed, "before this experience I could never read the Bible. Now I can't keep my nose out of the Book. Do you want me to go back to doing drugs and all the other horrible things I used to do?"

What could I say but "Of course not, Debbie?"

The crisis point

As I walked into my office the next morning I realized that the situation had reached a crisis point. There had been a blowup at Pathfinders. The leaders there had asked Mike and Debbie to cease their involvement with the club until the church elders could resolve the problem. I sat down at my desk and covered my face with my hands. All my senses and emotions were telling me to affirm Debbie's deliverance as genuine, yet I wasn't sure. More than ever before in my life, I had to have an answer from the Word.

After a brief, earnest prayer, I picked up the pamphlet that Mike had lent me and began reading it. Within two minutes the Holy Spirit showed me clearly from the Word that Debbie's deliverance was a counterfeit. I had my answer from God, but in order to affirm the truthfulness of the Word I had to deny all my senses and emotions, and it has been that way with this from that moment forward.

I wrote a brief letter to Mike and Debbie informing them of my conclusion regarding her experience, appealing for them to trust the Bible for true deliverance. They immediately severed themselves from Pathfinders and moved to a different home several miles south of the community. Later the elders concluded from their study that Debbie's experience was a form of spiritualism. Two of them visited Debbie and Mike with a written appeal listing the biblical reasons for their conclusions, requesting that they either accept their counsel or prove them wrong from the Bible. Debbie threw their letter on the floor with the comment, "I'm not going to read this kind of trash!" A few months later the church family had to disfellowship Mike and Debbie for apostasy into spiritualism.

Just what were the conclusions of the elders?

Biblical pointers

1. There is such a thing as demonic oppression, harassment, and actual possession. Both the Scriptures and the writings of Ellen White attest to this.

2. Jesus gave His church power over all evil, and there is no record of it ever being withdrawn. Our failure to conquer evil is not attributable to a divine power shortage, but rather to human negli-

gence, as is evidenced in Matthew 17:14-18. There are many instances recorded in which Satan and his hosts suffered total defeat from Christ's followers exercising faith in His name. This can and should be the experience of the church today.

3. We are cautioned to be careful when dealing with spiritual phenomena. First John 4:1 admonishes us not to "believe every spirit," but rather to "test the spirits to see whether they are from God." * Jesus encouraged a testing of fruit (Matt. 7:15-20) as a means of evaluating (this does not mean the judging of individuals). And what is the fruit of the so-called deliverance ministry? Every church under its influence has been adversely affected, some to the point of being split (see Rom. 16:17).

4. Christ's exorcisms were very brief (see Matt. 8:32; 17:18). The deliverance ministry counterfeit extends for hours. In Debbie's case it stretched 13 hours over two days.

5. Jesus never initiated conversation with any demon. Rather, the demons were the first to speak. The deliverance ministry, however, establishes dialogue with demons under the guise of asking the Holy Spirit to make them talk and identify themselves by name.

6. Jesus never let demons draw Him into extended dialogue. Matthew 8:16 says, "He drove out the spirits with a word." The most verbal interaction between Christ and the demons recorded in Scripture is that of His dealing with the demoniacs of Gadara. That brief conversation consisted of the question "What is your name?" (Mark 5:9), along with the command to "come out" (verse 8). Texts such as Mark 1:34 and Luke 4:41 indicate that Jesus normally would not even allow the demons to speak. In contrast, I have seen deliverance ministry people enter into lengthy arguments with demons, often taunting them. This is a species of spiritism, which is communication with the evil spirits.

7. When Jesus cast out demons, they all went at once. Mary's consecutive sevenfold deliverance was necessitated because she returned to her old ways seven different times. In contrast, the deliverance ministry often requires several deliverance sessions in which the demons leave "one at a time."

8. Information given by the demons, such as that about Debbie's background,

is generally accepted by deliverance advocates as being factual. However, John 8:44 terms Satan a liar and the father of lies. So how can we trust anything a demon says?

9. The publication *Setting Captives Free* presents Mark 16:15-18 as the blueprint for deliverance ministry. It promotes the gift of tongues as a sign of receiving the Holy Spirit. It also asserts that our Lord commissioned His church to do *three* things: (1) preach the gospel; (2) heal the sick; and (3) cast out devils.

In actual fact, first of all, the best biblical manuscripts do not even include this passage. Second, even supposing that the passage is authentic, the above interpretation would be hermeneutically unsound; there is only one command listed: "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation." Mark 16:17, 18 lists five signs (*semeion* means a "sign" or "miracle," not a "command") that will follow the believers: casting out devils, speaking in tongues, taking up serpents, drinking poison, and laying hands on the sick to heal them. A review of various religious groups reveals that these signs lend themselves very well to excesses. We all know about faith healers, poison drinkers, snake handlers, and counterfeit Pentecostalism. The casting out of demons is just another form of this fanaticism that now threatens the Adventist Church.

Ellen White states: "The work of declaring persons possessed of the devil, and then praying with them and pretending to cast out the evil spirits, is fanaticism which will bring into disrepute any church which sanctions such work. I was shown that we must give no encouragement to these demonstrations, but must guard the people with a decided testimony against that which would bring a stain upon the name of Seventh-day Adventists, and destroy the confidence of the people in the message of truth which they must bear to the world."¹

Without question, delusions about deliverance certainly qualifies as one of Satan's direct assaults against God's remnant church.

10. Ellen White states emphatically that "we are none of us to seek to cast out devils, lest we ourselves be cast out."² She also counsels: "In this period of the world's history we have altogether too great a work to begin a new kind of warfare in meeting the supernatural

Jesus never initiated conversation with any demon. Rather, the demons were the first to speak.

power of satanic agencies."³ In contrast to this, the deliverance ministry does seek to cast out devils. It is actually their primary focus, far from the emphasis the church should have of preaching the gospel.

11. All personal problems and sins are reduced to the level of demonic possession; the deliverance ministry makes no allowance for either physical or spiritual problems. An example of this is considering allergies to be specific demons, rather than bona fide physical problems of the body. There is no recognition for legitimate suffering in the Christian life (see Heb. 5:8).

12. Individuals who experience this kind of deliverance are taught never to question their experience, lest they yield to the "demon of doubt." This makes personal experience authoritative over the Bible.

In conclusion, bear in mind that in order to affirm the truthfulness of the Word, I found it necessary to deny my senses and emotions. At first this was extremely difficult. Now, however, I regard in a new light something Peter wrote. After describing his experience at the Transfiguration, he testified that the "word of prophecy" is "more sure" (2 Peter 1:19, KJV).

More sure than what? More sure than personal experience. Believe me, I know. ■

* Unless otherwise noted, texts in this article are from the New International Version.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), book 2, p. 46.

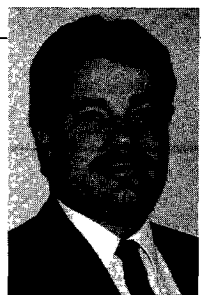
² Ellen G. White letter 96, 1900 (manuscript release 1058).

³ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to Ministers* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 249.

Planning for success

Steven Haley

Planned goals, developed with the members themselves, can foster a vibrant ministry.



Steve Haley is the pastor of the Stone Mountain Seventh-day Adventist Church, Atlanta, Georgia.

Church Objectives, New Year."

From the top of the page, those words were staring at me. Ten minutes passed. I had nothing written down. Ten minutes more, and still nothing. The annual dilemma of planning for the new year had just gripped me with a paralyzing force. What should my church do this year? What's realistic? Could this year be different from previous years? Should the church have objectives at all? Should mission have a definition? Should ministry have a plan?

When the seventy went out on their first tour of ministry, they didn't begin their work with a sheet of paper marked "objectives." But they did begin with a goal, a mission. They knew what was to be accomplished. They planned for success, and God gave them success: "Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, 'Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name' " (Luke 10:17, NKJV).

Today's ministry may not be quite like that of the seventy who blazed the gospel with "neither money bag, sack, nor sandals" (verse 4, NKJV). We may have our IBM desktops, four-color brochures, multifaceted ministries. But as Robert Coleman, president of Christian Outreach, points out, the ministry of Christ, despite the passage of time, retains a planned approach to reach a singular objective: "to save out of the world a people for Himself."¹ Our tools may have changed, but we're working on the same masterpiece begun 2,000 years ago.

What if my ministry style is not the disciplined type? Spontaneity may have its place, but successful ministry, whether it is in preaching, visiting, or teaching, demands planning. "Whether he [the pas-

tor] likes it or not, the program of the church will not just happen, nor can he ignore those duties and hope lay-people will take care of them."² Great achievements in the life of your church do not come by accident. Instead they are conceived as ideas, and they mature through planning.

A philosophy for planning

For five years I had practiced the philosophy of a planned ministry. So why was it suddenly so hard for me to come up with my church's goals? The task of setting goals and defining the direction of my church had at first seemed easy. Just take last year's achievement in Ingathering, baptisms, worship, and Sabbath school attendance, increase it by 10 percent, and there you have it! Instant objectives for the new year. No fuss. No wait. Having just arrived as the new pastor, I could really make my presence known. Rally the church to new heights of 10 percent increases. Next year would be a good year for my ministry. These goals were safe. Attainable. A few sermons, a special appeal here and there. That's all it would take. Still, a gnawing sense of doubt kept my pen frozen in hand.

The past year we did achieve some objectives, while other goals languished in congregational apathy. Some programs received a yawn; others an uninspired greeting, such as "good luck getting the goal, Pastor." I looked at the page title once again. "Church Objectives, New Year." Whose objectives would these really be? Mine? The conference's? I might feel good about them, but would the members feel the same? Could successful ministry relate to who sets the goals?

Pastors lead. The church follows. Right? Maybe.

Planning isn't a question of who's in charge of the church. Instead, it is a question of who is charging the church.

You see the problem, don't you? Goal-setting is an acceptable means to further God's work. Certainly the success of our ministry can be measured by new buildings and expanding church rolls. But we must begin by reminding ourselves that success, like ministry, belongs to God. Let's not confuse our ability to make things happen with what God wants to have happen. As one successful pastor points out: "There is an enormous number of people who years ago offered themselves for ministry and have never come close to achieving their goals. So we have to offer ourselves to God to do whatever He wants us to do."³

Setting objectives, then, is not a test of my pastoral ability. It could just be a solitary activity between me and a sheet of paper. That approach may keep me safe from risk. Yet it also shuts out the dynamic process that propels the church forward. Goal setting should be a spiritual exercise in which a church is plugged into God's will. You and I simply help make it happen. The plans are God's, not ours. It's amazing what happens when God's will replaces our instinct toward professional self-preservation. We discover that our goals look very small.

I've also found that in good management God defines one's mission through others. His presence is not limited to an individual. It is multiplied among His people. A seasoned administrator once told me "if you make up goals yourself, you'll have to reach them yourself."

It was just as well that my paper marked "objectives" remained blank. Objectives dropped on the laity from the "top down" are at best patronized and at worst ignored. Shouldn't we involve the church in planning the goals we expect it to achieve?

Participative planning

Corporate management recognized such logic long ago. "The most effective contemporary management process is participative management."⁴ But how does shared planning begin in a church?

I begin planning by evaluating the real needs of my church. That understanding entails more than a review of budgets and baptisms. The first Sabbath in my new pastorate, an elderly lady approached me in the lobby. "Pastor, please come by this week and visit. You're

new, and I want to tell you all about our church." During our visit she told me that this was not just any church. It was different. As different as the people who sit in its pews.

Recognizing the uniqueness of each church is perhaps a good place to begin the process of planning. The "one size fits all" philosophy never works with ministry. What one church can do may be quite different from what another one can do. What one church can do one year may not be the same the next year. The point is: don't impose your plans on your church, but rather let the church discover its ministry. As Coleman warns, this kind of surrender of control may be painful, and "some cherished plans of our own making may have to be redirected, or perhaps abandoned altogether."⁵ The object is to let the goals fit the church. Not the other way around.

Take time, and feel the pulse of your church. Do this before you surprise them with a list of "what we're going to do." Remember that your church has a story to tell. A story about itself. You won't see that story in goals and line charts. That story is in faces, in lives. It has taken me a year of visitation, committees, and old-fashioned listening to know my church. Its history of ups and downs. Its history of people and events. The spiritual depth of some. The emptiness of others. My church, with its warts and its beauty, has something unique to give. All these go into planning.

Individualize and involve

So you know your church. You're in touch with its unique role in God's plans. You're committed to harnessing its resources to meet its ministry. But skeptics will say this is where philosophy breaks on the rocks of reality. Does this really work? It will if you remember two words: "individualize" and "involve."

In November I begin a series of sermons on the church's awareness of mission. In December I take a special Sabbath service to define that mission in terms of the new year. That definition may include objectives for evangelism, church growth, retention of new members, social activities, community ministry, and the annual traditional programs of the church. The objectives are tailored to *our church*, to fit the context of our community, our people, our vision of ministry. Demographics studies, community surveys of felt needs, and even

Planning isn't a question of who's in charge of the church. Instead, it is a question of who is charging the church.

local government social service offices can provide input for individualizing mission objectives for our church.

On "mission day" we divide the congregation into groups of five or six. Each group meets with a leader previously selected for his or her facilitation skills. The groups discuss what a statement of mission is and how to define its goals. After a thorough discussion, each group writes down a mission statement. The groups determine specific objectives. The poster-sized results are taped to the walls in the sanctuary. The worship atmosphere is positive, expectant, and even exciting.

Next evening a "planning board" meets to consider the mechanics to accomplish the goals. They analyze the financial and human resources available. They bring back to the church the plan for the year, the resources, the methods, and the personnel to accomplish the plan. In the weeks that follow, we display in the church lobby these goals and objectives. We print them in the bulletins. The church owns these goals. It's not the pastor's program. It's *our* program. Our goals. Goals to impact our city. In the place of apathy, there is clear purpose. With shared objectives, with a plan in which we were all involved, our church is on the move.

That can happen to your church, too. Wherever you pastor, whomever you pastor, Jesus Christ calls you and your church to a successful ministry. Planned goals that are sensitive to need and shared by the church can provide such a ministry. ■

¹ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1963), p. 17.

² Robert C. Anderson, *The Effective Pastor* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), p. 277.

³ Richard Nelson Bolles, "The Pastor's Parachute," *Leadership* 11, No. 3 (Summer 1990): 19.

⁴ Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1987), p. 22.

⁵ Coleman, p. 115.

Neglected ministry of the ghetto

Teresa S. Caine

Our inner cities may be the world's last mission field.



A pastor's wife and free-lance writer, Teresa S. Caine is editor of Shepherdess News for the Gulf States Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. She has led and organized several inner-city ministry groups.

The dark, trash-cluttered streets are damp from the mist of the night. A stray dog roams about, scrounging for scraps to fill his empty belly. He stops suddenly and sniffs the air, catching the scent of human blood. He howls mournfully. The sound of it echoes eerily throughout the ghetto.

In a back alley lies a mutilated youth in a puddle of his own blood. His clothes are in tatters from his attacker's knife. Shreds of cloth stick to the hair around his gaping wounds. Scattered about are a few remaining stolen bills intended for a drug deal. Helpless and barely conscious, he moans, "Dear God, if You exist, where are You now?" Tears mingle with sweat, stinging the cuts on his face.

In a dingy tenement high above the street, a woman hides her two toddlers in a closet just before her drunken husband staggers through the door. She greets him cheerily, hoping to ward off further trouble. He responds with curses, condemning her as "no good," and at the same time demanding supper. She offers a small plate with what little she could scrape together. He frowns at the food and shouts, "Can't you do any better than that!"

"It's all we have left," she cries. "The kids ate only a potato, and I haven't eaten at all. I need a little more money to—" Before she can finish her statement, his arm sweeps the plate to the floor, shattering it into pieces.

"All you want from me is money!" he yells insanely. "You're no better than a slut on the street!" Seeing the red glaze

in his eyes, the woman tries to run. He grabs her by the hair. "You want food? Then you eat this garbage!" He mashes her face into the broken pieces of porcelain, causing the jagged edges to tear her tender skin. She screams and begs him to stop hurting her, but like someone possessed he continues to grind her face unmercifully.

In the closet the two toddlers huddle together. Their muffled cries harmonize with the dog's mournful howl outside.

Misfortunates in a rut

These stories are real. In the heart of every inner city lies the ghetto, a dismal society whose members cry out for help but usually find little. They are stuck in a rut because of social unacceptance, low self-esteem, and a lack of skills, compounded by problems ranging from addiction to the severest cases of codependency, abuse, and neglect. These misfortunates manage only to exist from day to day. Don't expect them to think or work their way out of their environment; they have long since lost their ability to think or work for themselves.

Their only hope

Their only hope is the transforming power of God. But how can they find Him? Yes, the marvels of nature testify of an omnipotent God and His everlasting love, but the ghetto has no majestic mountains, living forests, or lovely birds. Nevertheless, just as a velvety rose counteracts the evil thorns, just one blossoming Christian can reveal the grace of God in a slum.

When we experience God's love in our own lives, we are equipped to help

others know that He is a "compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin" (Ex. 34:6, 7, NIV).

Unfortunately, few good Christians ever venture into a rugged ghetto to share the gospel. It is one of the most neglected ministries on earth today.

Neglected by the church

Most of our churches are situated in nice suburban areas, ministering to the suburban classes. Away from the inner city, most of us tend to be out of touch with people of the ghetto, unable to meet their needs.

Sometimes ghetto dwellers manage to find their way into suburban churches, only to be ostracized back out again. A pastor and his wife took into their home three inner-city kids who were taking a stand for Christianity. Two were boys who had been repeatedly threatened by gangs, and the third was a teenage girl who had been sexually abused by her stepfather after he had drugged her mother to sleep. The boys were first to be baptized. The girl, sitting in the audience, found herself moved by their public witness. She asked for permission to stand up before the church and testify about her gratitude that God had come into her life and rescued her from the ghetto. Her request was declined. A couple church leaders decided that her testimony would be inappropriate. Besides, they said, fellow members didn't appreciate their pastor taking street people into his home.

The girl ran out of the church in tears and never returned. She may have had rough edges to her character that some members found offensive, like nature's prickly thorns, but a rosebud had begun to blossom. Had she found acceptance in the church, she might have become a powerful witness to others of her background. Instead, the church's lack of social acceptance crushed the tender buds of first faith.

How to help the helpless

1. Accept them where they are. This is difficult for many members whose primary interest is maintaining high standards. We must consider, however, people's backgrounds. Many struggle with the inherent afflictions of a dysfunctional society. To overcome and change,

they require time and nurturing in a safe environment. The outcasts especially need compassion, unconditional love, and mercy *before* they can change. Christ's two great commandments, to love God and love your neighbor as yourself, clearly commission us to honor His open-door policy regarding church fellowship. Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:35-40, NIV).

2. Acquaint yourself with spiritually oriented recovery opportunities in your area (Parents Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, Al-Anon, Adult Children of Alcoholics, etc.). In these programs your baptismal candidates can find specialized help. A church should not attempt to solve all personal problems—most churches are not equipped to do so. The knowledge of God's love and Bible truth is wonderful and essential, but it may not be enough to carry alcoholics through the detoxification process. Along with the loving support of the church, they need the practical help of an AA-type program to fully recover and rebuild their lives. In addition, many community social services offer family counseling on a sliding scale for low income families. Churches should not only familiarize themselves with resources available but also supplement them with prayer and transportation.

3. To minister effectively, church members must be helpers without becoming enablers of dependency. Ghetto victims become dependent on others for what they should do for themselves, having lost the ability to manage their own lives. They are experts at imploring pity and handouts from those willing to give. While these victims do need compassion and items of necessity, they also need rehabilitation. Everything about them needs to be converted and recreated every day. We must teach them to persevere in overcoming their many temptations, like Mary Magdalene, who became repossessed six times after her conversion before she finally conquered in Christ.

Self-sufficiency is the goal. Unfortunately, too many pastors are frustrated and even burned out because they made themselves enablers instead of helpers.

4. Traditional evangelism seldom works in the ghetto. We must devise creative ways of reaching people on the streets with the gospel. Here are four ideas that have proved effective.

a. *Van ministries.* Find a name for your group ministry, post it on a van, and make weekly trips into the ghetto. Do blood pressure checks and other health screenings. Church members will find opportunities for personal witnessing, leaving literature relevant to felt needs. (All literature should bear the church's phone number and address.) Volunteers can also drum up Bible study interests for follow-up. Later, the van can transport interests to and from the church for weekly worship and other meetings.

b. *Clown ministries.* The youth are especially good at taking this wonderful ministry to the streets. They dress in clown attire and perform skits or mimes containing relevant Christian themes. Afterward they mingle with spectators, passing out literature for both adults and children. Sometimes balloons with messages can advertise upcoming meetings.

c. *Street preaching.* Pick a corner, set up a microphone (and platform if possible), and preach the love of Jesus! Other members' personal testimonies will add power to the preaching. Just make sure they give testimonies people can relate to. If your church has musical talent, here is an opportunity to use it. Bible workers in the crowd can pass out literature and find study interests. For the best turnout, advertise ahead of time with a clown ministry. Since the poor rarely read newspapers, the best advertising is through flyers distributed door-to-door a week in advance, or through commercials aired over a popular radio station.

d. *Branch Sabbath schools.* Bringing street people into a suburban church spawns problems that most members are not prepared to face. However, branch Sabbath schools can bridge the gap between the slums and suburbia. Housing projects generally allow churches to rent an apartment for Christian ministry. These extremely inexpensive apartments enable the church to meet ghetto dwellers on their own turf. Everything from prayer meetings to cooking schools, Bible stud-

(Continued on page 31)

Guest ministry: the adventure of the front door

William MacCarty

Every time a visitor enters our church, a siren should turn on in our minds, alerting us that God is at work.



William MacCarty is an associate pastor of Pioneer Memorial Church, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

If you will watch the front door of your church and faithfully follow up every visitor, your church will grow." This sage counsel, drilled into us by one conference president at every workers' meeting, has proved to be the best advice I ever received in my ministry.

One Sabbath morning in a small church in Provo, Utah, I looked up from my sermon notes and noticed that a visitor had slipped in quietly. A few minutes later I again looked up and found that the unobtrusive visitor was gone.

Following the service, I consulted with our hostess. She had secured the needed information from our five-minute guest: his name, address, and that he was a student at Brigham Young University.

That very afternoon an Adventist BYU student and I visited our guest. The young man, on his way to an appointment with one of his professors, had noticed the cars in our parking lot, and out of curiosity stepped in for a few minutes. Within two years of that visit we baptized him, his wife, and seven of his friends.

Of course, not every visitor is a potential baptism. But one of the most significant factors in the growth of churches I have pastored in the past 18 years has been the commitment of members to watch the front door and minister to our guests.

The undergirding assumption of guest ministry is this: *there are no chance visits to our worship services.* Every time a

visitor enters our church, a siren should turn on in our minds, alerting us that God is at work. God may be writing a new chapter in the life story of our guest, and He may be inviting us to contribute. When we discover that story and participate in it in appropriate ways, we experience the adventure of guest ministry.

Guest ministry seeks to make visitors feel as welcome and at home as possible when they visit our churches. But it reaches beyond the worship service. Comprehensive guest ministry consists of the following six basic components.

Basic components

1. *Guest ministry begins in the parking lot*, with several spaces close to the front door reserved for visitor parking. I have found that occasional reminders in the church newsletter or the announcement period at church will usually result in members voluntarily leaving some close parking spaces available for visitors. Visitors often come for the worship service well after our own members have arrived. When visitors drive into a crowded parking lot and locate available spaces near the front door, it sends an important signal that our church cares about their convenience.

2. *Guest ministry welcomes warmly.* One or two members with the gift of making people feel welcome should be stationed at each door a visitor might enter. (I join the official greeters at the front door myself until my pastor's community Bible class begins.) The greeters welcome all worshipers, provide bulletins, and direct visitors to the guest recep-

tion desk. The hostess there invites the visitor to fill out a guest registration card (name, address, phone number, church affiliation). She provides information regarding the location of restrooms, the pastor's community Bible class, and children's Sabbath school divisions. She gives out any printed material available about our church and its program. Finally she invites the visitor to the fellowship meal.

But the greeting of visitors should not be left exclusively to the official greeters. We encourage all our members to seek out visitors sometime during the morning, welcoming and thanking them for their visit.

3. Guest ministry structures worship to be user-friendly. It forces us to ask the following kinds of questions: Does the bulletin make clear to our visitors what is happening at each transition point in our worship service? Do we announce from the front when to stand or sit, and clarify anything else about our service that may not be clear from the bulletin? Is any part of our worship service potentially embarrassing for visitors, such as asking them to stand while their names are read from the front?

Ideally a church member sitting near visitors would greet them and make them feel welcome and comfortable in the church. As the service progresses, the member could explain anything that is unclear.

4. Guest ministry offers a fellowship meal for visitors. Not every visitor will take advantage of the offer, but the gesture itself demonstrates a caring commitment. In large churches volunteers can sign up in teams to provide the meal each Sabbath on a rotation schedule. Some smaller churches can do the same once or twice a month, with private homes open on the alternate Sabbaths. Such meals provide a relaxed atmosphere for getting to know visitors on a more personal basis. Churches I have pastored have gained many members through the warmth and friendship fostered at the Sabbath fellowship meals.

5. Guest ministry aims toward a personal visit. All first-time visitors should be visited in their homes within a week of their appearance at the church. This home visit is an essential component of comprehensive guest ministry. It seizes the opportunity to make new friends and perhaps lifelong members of our church. Two-member teams are ideal for making

these visits, but one can do the job where teams are not available.

The primary purpose of the initial visit is to hear the personal stories of our guests. The warm-up conversation discovers how long our guests have lived in the area, where they grew up, and where they may have recently moved from. We also seek to learn something about their families and occupations. Then I like to lead into their story with the following transitional statement: "I'm sure there's a story behind your visit to our church, and I'm one who likes to hear stories." Then I wait quietly for their reply.

As we listen to their story, we are ushered into the special, sacred world they live in. Every life experience contains its own special treasure. Appropriate and sensitive questions asked about things they share with us show our interest in their world. But we take care not to pry into their private lives or encourage explicit confessions that could cause them an embarrassment later. It is very important to remain nonjudgmental about anything they share. If they sense that we accept them just as they are, they will often respond by sharing more of their story with us. This is the way to form lasting friendship bonds for our church.

After hearing their story, we may have an opportunity to share our own testimonies of how our hearts were drawn to Jesus and His church. I especially try to share some specific ways that our local church has enriched and blessed my life. I want them to know that my involvement in our church has made a significant difference in my life, and that I am enthused about our church. Nothing sells like satisfied customers, and nothing makes a church more attractive than members whose lives are noticeably blessed by it.

6. Guest ministry plans for appropriate follow-up ministry. If visitors are new to the community, you may offer to help them locate local shopping and recreation areas. If they are nonmembers or new members, they may be candidates for Bible studies. Perhaps there may be a felt need that your church could help meet. Some visitors may require no follow-up at all other than an invitation for them to visit again in the near future. In the case of others, it may mean just keeping in touch.

Training

Training guest ministry teams need

It is very important to remain non-judgmental about anything they share.

not be a lengthy or complicated process. Two- to four-day workshops are available to train members at a highly sophisticated level to do home visitation. Such in-depth workshops have their place for specialized visitation of inactive members, but they are not essential for guest ministry visiting teams to be effective. Sometimes these long workshops can even result in overkill for the skill level needed for visiting our guests, and can lead some very well-qualified members to an erroneous conclusion that visiting church guests would be too complicated for them.

I conduct two training sessions for our guest ministry teams, one for our greeters and guest reception desk hostesses, and another for the home visitation teams. Each session lasts from 60 to 90 minutes and consists simply of a presentation of the principles of guest ministry, as outlined in this article and adapted to the local situation, plus some role-playing. The latter demonstrates the practical application of the principles and allows the greeters and visiting teams to experience the feelings of our guests.

Guest ministry to Adventist visitors

Some churches follow up non-Adventist visitors but neglect those visitors who identify themselves as Adventists. Such a practice inhibits growth.

This tendency to place a higher priority on non-Adventist visitors was advocated in a church growth seminar I attended some time ago. To illustrate the superiority of kingdom growth from new baptisms over growth that results from member transfers from one church to another, the speaker took a quarter from one of his pockets, transferred it to his other pocket, then asked rhetorically how much richer he had become. He then asserted that transfer growth is likewise illusory, for it fails to enlarge the king-

dom of God. For him, nonmember accessions were more important to the kingdom of God than transfer accessions. But this line of reasoning makes one fatal assumption: namely, that every time a quarter leaves one pocket, it automatically ends up in a neighboring pocket. The reality is, quarters do get dropped and lost forever on the way from one pocket to the other. Unfortunately, this also happens all too often with church members in the transferring process. Growth from transfers should never be taken for granted or discounted. Transfer growth is good growth.

Adventists active in their former churches may become inactive after just a few visits to a church in a new community. This is especially true when the move to a new community removes them from the church where they were baptized in, and where they had all their friends. If the new church is significantly different from the one they were used to (and often that is so), it may not even seem like an Adventist church to them. Such persons are high-risk candidates for becoming a lost quarter in the transferring process, unless they are carefully and sensitively nurtured.

On the other hand, a geographical move may result in a narrow window of new spiritual openness. A move from one community to another is often associated with other major changes in a person's life—changes in family status, occupation, friendships, church attendance patterns, and even church affiliation.

Another good reason to extend guest ministry to former Adventists is almost a sentimental sense of loss they feel in their separation from former friends and family in the old church base. This nostalgic sense of separation from "family" ties drives many to visit an Adventist church in a new community. If that single visit is followed up by a trained, caring visiting team from the church, many former members could possibly be reclaimed. I have seen that happen again and again.

If a guest identifies himself or herself as a member of a nearby Adventist church, should that person be exempted from guest ministry outreach? I used to think so. But I have discovered that some visitors who so identify themselves haven't been attending their home church for some time, and may be making one last try at finding a compatible congregation before dropping out altogether.

Guest ministry considers every local

visitor important, Adventist and non-Adventist alike. One of our visiting teams in Salt Lake City called on the home of a guest who identified himself as an Adventist. As they listened to his story they found that he had lived in that very community from birth but had fallen away from the church and God years ago. A traumatic personal crisis drove him to make things right with God. He intro-

duced our visiting team to his wife, a member of the Church of Christ. Before long both started taking Bible studies. They were eventually baptized, and soon afterwards they led out in the spawning of a new Adventist church in their community, a church that is still thriving.

Guest ministry principles are simple. Guest ministry training is simple. Guest ministry really works! ■

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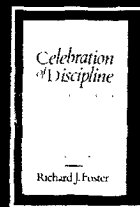
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Growth explosion of the Hispanic church

Miguel Valdivia

Over the past decade the Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America has registered an average annual growth rate of 10 percent. Some reasons, some lessons.



Miguel Valdivia is associate editor at Pacific Press Publishing Association in charge of the North American Spanish edition of the Adventist Review.

The storms are raging over the proposed celebration of the quincentennial of Christopher Columbus' discovery of the Americas in October 1492. What started as the prospect of memorializing five centuries of change and progress has turned into a bitter battle that includes the angry voices of indigenists and other groups that propose the labeling of Columbus' voyage as the ultimate symbol of oppression and murderous colonialism. But no matter which side triumphs in setting the tone of the quincentennial celebration, one has to recognize the tremendous impact of Spanish culture on the history of the continent.

In North America Hispanics number about 25 million and, taken as a group, represent the fifth-largest Spanish-speaking country in the world. In the midst of these people, the Seventh-day Adventist Church is experiencing an outstanding success.

In the North American Division, as in other parts of the world, the Spanish-speaking membership is growing faster than any other ethno-linguistic segment. And this is the case in most parts of the world. During the past ten years the average annual growth rate has been around ten percent—from 25,191 members in 1979 to 64,502 in 1990, and from 215 congregations in 1979 to 441 as of the third quarter 1991. At this rate the Hispanic churches will have about 150,000 members by the year 2000. In the Pacific Union Conference alone, the more than

30,000 Hispanics comprise 17 percent of the total membership.¹

In August 1990 the Hispanic leaders of the North American Division voted an evangelistic plan that would see 100,000 Spanish-speaking members in North America by the end of 1995. This means baptizing 40,000 new converts in the next four years. Also in the works is a national evangelistic campaign throughout 1992, marking the 500th anniversary of the Columbus discovery. Judging by the ebullience and enthusiasm of the Hispanic leadership, these goals will be reached!

This phenomenal growth has created serious challenges for the Spanish-speaking work. Eradio Alonso, associate ministerial secretary for the division, lists six areas of concern: (1) the need of buildings for new congregations; (2) providing Adventist education for thousands who cannot afford our education; (3) finding steady financial resources for the increasing opportunities in evangelism; (4) furnishing a greater variety of Spanish literature; (5) developing stronger ties among different Hispanic nationalities; and (6) better representation at the governing structures of the church.²

Why the growth?

Until recently the Hispanic work grew slowly. What are the reasons for this tremendous spurt in the past decade? Besides the obvious leading of the Holy Spirit, the time just seems to be right. Economic and political upheavals in Latin America have spurred immigration to the north. Spanish language radio and publications have been sowing the seed for

decades. The Catholic Church has changed its posture toward Bible study, allowing its members to discuss Bible doctrine more openly. American leaders and members have supported and nurtured Latin congregations. To these, let me add three major factors.

No more melting pot

In recent years a sociological change that has increased the visibility of all Hispanics in the United States has also influenced evangelism among them. I refer to the abandonment of the melting pot mentality. Let me explain.

The melting pot social theory suggests that any ethnic group will eventually lose its own unique identity and will integrate totally as part of mainstream American culture. As some have said, the melting pot has turned out more like a stew pot in which all ingredients keep their flavors while influencing the flavor of the whole dish. In recent times it has become acceptable to retain the elements of one's ethnic culture while learning the ways of North America.

Hispanics now have their own national television chain, attracting the attention of most major advertisers. There are new magazines for North American Hispanics in both English and Spanish, and strong job-recruiting campaigns by well-known companies. The new Hispanic identity is so strong that it has inspired an English-only movement that attempts to uphold English as the official language of the United States.

How do all these affect Hispanic evangelism? Effective outreach among ethnic groups requires a good measure of respect for the distinctive traits that make up the group's identity. In general, imposing external cultural values or habits has not proven very successful anywhere. Spanish churches have always been a sanctuary not only for religious beliefs but also for those cultural attributes that make up the Hispanic way of life. Now that Hispanics know that they are not required to "melt," they have come in record numbers to churches that perpetuate their Hispanic identity.³

Spanish Seventh-day Adventist

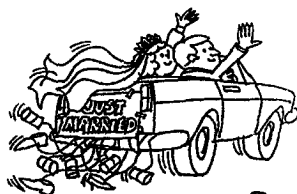
churches, for instance, exhibit a distinctive Latin American influence in their church services: spirited singing, active response with "amens" to a good message, and a warm welcome to visitors.

Evangelism first

Another factor that propels the growth of Hispanic congregations is the emphasis on evangelism. Some Spanish leaders point to a historic meeting held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in the summer of 1980 in which Hispanic coordinators forcefully decided they would make evangelism their top priority, just as they did in their countries of origin in the Inter-American and South American divisions. The encouraging number of baptisms after that year speaks for the seriousness of their commitment.

Evangelistic methods

The evangelistic methods employed by North American Hispanics are many including Revelation seminars, group Bible studies, baptismal classes, Easter week evangelism, multimedia presenta-



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tions, and small group outreach.

Some ministers are developing new strategies. In Chicago Pastor Efrain Perez, now sales director for foreign language literature at Pacific Press, translated into English every sermon delivered in Spanish by his guest speaker, Pastor Pedro Clausell, from New York, in order to reach a group of English-speaking young Hispanics. Both audiences responded, and more than 40 were baptized. In Tacoma, Washington, Joaquin Cazares, a minister and a physician, is reaching the Latin community through a radio program that offers health tips and fields health questions from his audience.

Lay involvement

Lay involvement is the key to soul-winning. In the Greater New York Conference 105 lay preachers equipped with Bibles, books, and pamphlets worked in 16 churches. Less than four months later 286 were baptized. Three months after that, the ministers again started a monthlong training program and organized more than 100 lay teams. The new phase started with a lay festival at the Brooklyn College auditorium; in the same meeting an altar call was made, and more than 100 non-Adventists responded. That conference laid plans to baptize 800 by the end of 1990. The achievement: 710.

Hispanics attempt to utilize every opportunity for soul-winning. They distribute record amounts of outreach literature (64,000 members support 100,000 subscriptions of *El Centinela*, the Spanish missionary journal), and their church calendar is planned around evangelistic events.

Spanish members usually set their own soul-winning goals. Pastor and members come up with a plan and a goal for growth. Many times they will not reach that exact number of baptisms, but they know their work and their direction. This is no place to discuss the merits or the theological significance of setting goals, but I believe it works as a general principle of church growth.

What can we learn?

1. *Target specific groups, respecting the social, cultural, and personal traits they exhibit.* Adopt evangelism methods to specific situations, and let this be the unique product of each congregation.

2. *Make soul-winning the top priority.* A myriad of details and concerns surround each minister and church member

FROM SMALL BEGINNINGS . . . WHAT GOD HATH WROUGHT

In 1898 two colporteurs in Tucson, Arizona, Walter Black and C. M. Williams, approached Marcial Serna, a Methodist preacher, with their books, but with no success. Then Black asked Serna if he would teach them Spanish, since many of their prospective clients spoke this language. The preacher offered to help and suggested that they use the Bible as their textbook.

When they came to the texts that dealt with the Sabbath, the preacher proposed a public debate as the means of settling the argument, a debate he intended to win easily. The colporteurs were the first to speak, and they listed numerous arguments from the Old and New Testaments in favor of Sabbath observance. While they spoke, Serna kept taking notes, until he became so interested that he stopped and gave them full attention. When it came time for him to speak, he got up and said: "I have noticed that my opponents have exposed the truth based solely on Scripture. It is clear to me that according to the Word of God, the seventh day is the Sabbath, and I promise to keep it from now on."

Soon after this, Black and Williams held evangelistic meetings at Serna's Methodist church. As a result 28 were baptized at the nearby Gila River—including Marcial Serna. In December 1899 R. N. Kilgore and C. M. Williams organized the first Spanish Seventh-day Adventist church in North America in Sanchez, Arizona.

In 1900 Abel Sanchez, one of the new Adventist members, moved to Angwin, California, while his son attended Pacific Union College. On one of his trips he stopped at Elmhaven to visit Ellen G. White. She asked him to which church he belonged and when he answered, she added: "I have been shown that the Spanish work will grow much until it reaches all the Spanish countries in the world. Thousands will be converted." *

Ellen White's words have proven true. The growth of the two Spanish-speaking world divisions has been phenomenal and the work among Hispanics is thriving in such unexpected places as Australia and Norway.

* See articles on the beginnings of the Spanish work in Sanchez, Arizona, in *Revista Adventista*, February-April 1977, by Agustin Sanchez, son of a member of the first Hispanic Seventh-day Adventist church in North America.

in North America—politically, socially, and economically. In the midst of all of these we need to hear the words of the Great Commission: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:19).

Rearranging our priorities, as painful as it may be, will give us a tremendous sense of freedom and purpose.⁴

3. *Involve the laity.* Ministers alone will not finish the work. When it comes to soul-winning, the laity is as responsible as the clergy. They need to be involved in training and in setting their own baptismal goals. There is nothing—business or

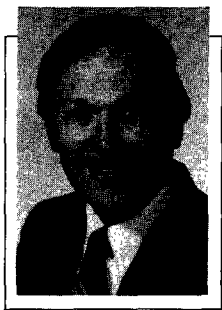
pleasure—that should get us more excited than bringing souls to Jesus. ■

¹ Statistics available through the Office of Human Relations of the North American Division.

² *Revista Adventista*, North American edition, April-June 1990, p. 5.

³ According to some Catholic leaders, the Catholic Church is losing Spanish members in several parts of the country because, among other reasons, it does not let Hispanics worship in ways that preserve their cultural roots. Vicki Larson, "The Flight of the Faithful," *Hispanic*, November 1990, pp. 18-24.

⁴ For more on North American Hispanics, see also *Christianity Today*, Oct. 28, 1991, cover story, pp. 16-21.



And Mizpah . . .

Floyd Bresee

N

ew experiences are both fun and frightening. I learned it was both fun and frightening to fall in love and marry. It was fun and fright-

ening to hold each of our four babies for the first time. It was solemnly fun and frightening to feel the hands of ministerial ordination on my head and shoulders. And now that 65 has come and Ellen and I have decided to retire as of August 31, we're hoping it's going to be fun, but right now it's just a wee bit frightening.

I've sat down here to prepare my last Pastor's Pastor. The writing has proved to be a relentless monthly assignment these past seven years. But I'll miss it.

It's time I shared a chapter from my personal life. Seven years ago I sat in a waiting room outside the surgery where my wife was having a tumor removed. We had been warned it was almost certainly cancerous, but hoped the malignancy had not gone further. When the doctor finally walked out, his face was long, for his news was bad. The cancer had spread. He had followed it as far as he dared, uncovering 27 lymph nodes—all cancerous.

A section of the hospital had been shut off for remodeling and was temporarily vacant. I ducked behind the barrier to be alone. I paced the empty floor as the tears stung my eyes. Why? Why her? All she ever wanted was to be a blessing to her husband, her family, and her precious Shepherdess ladies!

I can't say God ever gave me a good answer. But He has already given us seven more years together. Ellen prayed that she might live long enough to support me through the remaining years of my work. That wish God has granted. For 43 years now, she's followed me around

wherever our work has led, moving some 20 times during the first 15 years of our marriage. Now I'm going to follow her around for a while.

Surgery, radiation treatments, and chemotherapy seemed to stop the cancer for a time, but a year ago it returned, and she's back on chemotherapy. Courageously, she has continued her work. Her spirits are good, but we'd like some free time together while it's still available.

For the present, we intend to retire at our little place in the Rocky Mountains, near Denver, Colorado, and Porter Hospital. Two of our children live in the area. We hope our contribution is not completely ended. My health is good, and I'm buying a new computer before heading for the hills. I'll still help the Ministerial Association and our ministers in whatever tasks I may be assigned.

With rejoicing

I leave ministerial with both rejoicing and regret. Regret that my contribution was not greater, rejoicing over these things our wonderful staff has accomplished together:

Old programs are continuing. Ministry magazine and the PREACH program to serve non-SDA clergy are both thriving despite budget cuts.

New programs are succeeding. Continuing education for ministers has become a reality in every division. Our ministerial supply center placed approximately \$300,000 worth of soul-winning tools in pastors' hands during 1991. We have begun a program to coordinate the training of local elders. Approximately 70 percent of our conferences/missions around the world now have Shepherdess chapters to support and train ministers' spouses.

Soul-winning is prospering. All of us

together have helped the church baptize more than 2 million new members during the five years of Harvest 90. We're well on our way toward 3 million during the first five years of Global Mission.

With regret

I leave with the regret that my career did not continue to see the work finished and our Lord come. I regret that we in the Adventist ministry have not received a greater outpouring of the Holy Spirit in latter rain power.

Every now and then somebody comes with a calculator or computer and presents apparently irrefutable, mathematical proof that the work won't ever be finished. People are being born too fast. The work is going too slow. These skeptics may know their math, but they don't know their Bibles. The Bible says God's work will be finished: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts" (Zech. 4:6). Only the latter rain outpouring of God's Holy Spirit will lead to finishing His work.

When the giant Hoover Dam was completed, engineers predicted it would take 40 years to fill up huge Lake Mead behind it. But the lake was full and overflowing in just five years. Which engineer goofed? What went wrong? Nothing, really. It's just that the five years immediately after completion of the dam were years of heavy rainfall. They had failed to count on the extra rainfall.

When your work goes slowly, when you long for the key to successful ministry, please don't fail to count on the extra rainfall. May you live, not only to do Christ's work, but to receive the power of His Spirit to finish it.

"And Mizpah; for he said, The Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another" (Gen. 31:49).

Fulfilling your ministry—III

W

hat are the specific duties of a local church elder?

1. *Visitation.*

Nurture develops on a horizontal level in the church when

members offer encouragement and spiritual counsel to one another. In such a caring community, even the pastor is nurtured through the membership of the church. An elder can be a vital element in this kind of caring church. The elder can also visit members in their homes, encourage others to do so, and assist in instructing prospective members.

2. *Commitment to outreach.* It is especially important for the local elder to be committed to soul-winning. The congregation needs to know that its leaders have a clear vision of the mission of the church. It has been said that church growth is "caught" rather than taught. When an elder enthusiastically models a commitment of his or her time in outreach ministry, others catch the same spirit and commit themselves to the mission of the church. An elder should schedule time for ministering to the unsaved.

3. *Worship leadership.* The leadership of a local church elder can make a tremendous difference in weekly worship services. Quality leadership and participation can transform a dull, lifeless worship service into meaningful celebration and praise. Skills in worship leadership should be developed, such as the reading of Scripture, offering public prayers, planning the order of service, and in smaller churches at least, delivering the sermon.

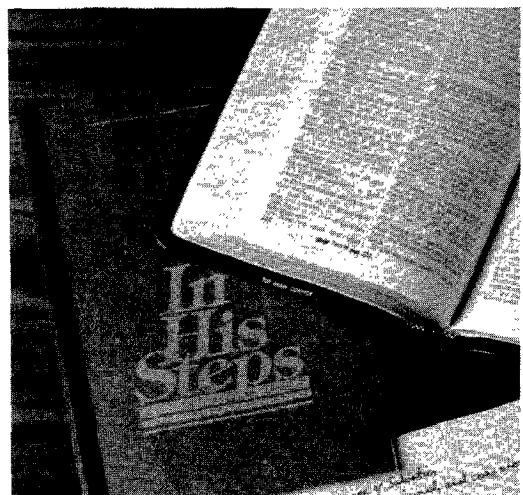
4. *Spiritual example.* The spiritual life of an elder should constantly lead members of the church to seek a deeper spiritual experience for themselves. The apostle Paul described the Christian life of an elder in these words: "blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous" (1 Tim. 3:2, 3, NKJV).

5. *Church administration.* An elder should contribute to the organization and progress of the church. While doing this, he or she should not try to dominate or control but rather enable others to participate in decision-making. An elder often serves in an advisory capacity to various departments, committees, and projects. In doing this, the elder provides unity among the various programs of the church, communicates progress to the church board, and encourages a unified mission.

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Adapted from *The Ministry of the Elder*, a pamphlet available from the North American Division Church Ministries Department.

Dismantling Racism—The Continuing Challenge to White America

Joseph Barndt, *Augsburg Publishers, Minneapolis, 1991, 179 pages, \$14.95 (Canada \$17.95), paper. Reviewed by Ella M. Rydzewski, editorial assistant, Ministry.*

Joseph Barndt, a White pastor in the Bronx of New York City, is codirector of "Crossroads," a ministry working to dismantle racism and to build a multicultural society. He addresses his book to Whites in North America, though its principles can apply anywhere one culture dominates the political scene. The author explains how racism functions in homes, schools, churches, and other institutions.

Barndt speaks candidly about the plague of racism. Some will not like what he says, but a significant number of Americans hold Barndt's view of racism. Most Whites, he suggests, do not choose to be racist but find themselves unwittingly part of a system that profits from racism. Barndt defines racism as "prejudice plus power." Thus, he concludes, only White persons can be racist because they hold political power. "Although strong prejudices may exist between other people groups, in the absence of power, they cannot be racist," Barndt asserts. Therefore, he contends, White-dominated institutions provide better services and facilities for themselves while subjecting others to more severe restrictions in housing and services.

According to the author, the dominance of the European culture in America prevents the evolution of the ideal multicultural society. He does not visualize a multicultural society as a "melting pot" of unrecognizable peoples. He sees instead a "salad bowl" in which peoples retain their identity; or, as in a "stew," intermingling to create a new flavor but keeping the integrity of each people group.

Barndt wants to inform White people to help dismantle racism so that a truly multicultural America can emerge. White Americans, he says, often get defensive when reminded of how earlier European peoples subjugated African-Americans and American Indians. Whites living today do not feel responsible for what happened in the past. But, Barndt writes, history does influence today's racial climate.

According to Barndt, Whites in power have been trying to change people of color instead of themselves. Poor people of color also want to change. But many Whites assume the victims cause their own prob-

lems instead of outside forces working through victimizing institutions. Barndt shows how ghettos stay ghettos because of these forces.

Barndt points out that using sociological phrases can separate people—"minority youth problems," "cultural deprivation," and "familial deterioration." He contends that maintaining stable nuclear families among African-Americans has been hampered beginning with the early separation of slave families and continuing until today with welfare stipulations that encourage families to break apart. Yet the extended family still plays an important role in African-American culture. White nuclear families, who have little regard for the extended family, have deteriorated faster in recent years than that of the African-American, according to Barndt's research.

Barndt does not fail to focus on the issue of the church and racism. In his final chapter, the author looks at Christian history and the parallel churches that have existed—the triumphal, made up of the rich and powerful (since Constantine), and the servant church (mainly religious orders—interestingly he neglects those outside the dominant religious system of the past). He suggests that hope for Christian equality came with the Reformation, but soon the same type of parallel churches developed among the reformers and traveled to the "new world" along with Catholicism. It is the triumphal church recent U.S. historians refer to as conquering and oppressing Native Americans. Today's religious climate contains the same type of parallelism. Barndt contrasts true Chris-

In a world torn by ethnic hatreds, the only witnessing that will gain attention is a church living out equality and forgiveness—building it into their structure and doctrine.

tian faith with a current pop religious culture: The former teaches that all people are broken, oppressed, and need freedom; the latter sees salvation as a mere spiritual abstraction and prosperity a sign of God's blessing.

Though the author mainly deals with institutions, he touches upon the value of individual responsibility, noting it takes only one person's negative attitude and behavior to give an entire institution or church a good or bad image.

Almost every page gives an eye-opening revelation that most White people have never considered. Yet the author's words do not demand a guilty verdict—they only ask for repentance.

The author does not emphasize as much as he could how similar racism is to other forms of discrimination such as gender, nationality, and religion. For example, substitute "male" for White in the following sentence found in the book: "If the leadership of a community or institution is predominately White and does not represent proportionately its membership, it is more than a problem of personnel or policy, it is a structural issue."

Although we desire cultural diversity we need to allow people freedom to follow their personal interests. As many African-Americans can testify, it is often difficult to step out of roles set by other Blacks. A Black preacher I heard not long ago criticized Blacks who excelled in classical music. He considered classical music to be too European. Whites (or others) choosing to socialize with or marry into another cultural group often experience rejection. Barndt ignores those who belong to two cultural backgrounds in which peer pressure, family, and society force them to deny one or the other.

Do Barndt and others stigmatize Blacks by identifying them as victims? Most psychologists agree that if a person accepts the victim role, healing becomes difficult, if not impossible. If such is the case for individuals, it certainly holds true for groups of people. Society should be careful about labeling entire groups of people as victims.

The book has a message for Adventists. We must put aside lesser issues and work on vital ones. Equality is one of those vital issues. "If the New Testament church had not resolved its difficulties," writes Barndt, "but had instead created two churches, one for Jews and one for Gentiles, the church

would never have gotten beyond scandalous parochial expression to discover its truly universal nature."

In a world torn by ethnic hatreds, the only witnessing that will gain attention is a church living out equality and forgiveness—building it into their structure and doctrine (John 13:35). This has never happened in earth's history. No group can call itself God's remnant people without this kind of love—in North America or anywhere else.

State of the Arts From Bezael to Mapplethorpe

Gene Edward Veith, Jr., Crossway Books, Wheaton, Illinois, 1991, 252 pages, \$11.95, paper. Reviewed by Merle J. Whitney, pastor, Seventh-day Adventist church, Lakeside, California.

How can the Christian tell the difference between good and bad art? Art can be tasteless, shallow, and idolatrous. It can also be exquisite, profound, and inspiring. How does one determine aesthetical value? What place do the arts have in the church? Veith deals with these major themes in this well-written, well-organized book. His goal is to "help Christians develop an informed and sophisticated taste, one that is open yet critical, discerning yet appreciative of what is truly excellent."

An introductory chapter discusses the current state of the arts, noting contemporary Christianity's neglect of the arts. This abdication is tragic, for the biblical worldview provides a stronger, more vital basis for the arts than that of materialism, existentialism, and humanism. The author devotes Part I of the book to understanding the arts. This section not only gives information but guides the reader through a museum containing works of consecutive periods of history. The book impressed me with the church's need to work through art in a dry cultural landscape dying for the water of life. Our highly visual age makes this need acute.

Part II gives the biblical foundations for using the arts in the church. Veith begins with Bezael and the wilderness tabernacle, and shows how art can easily become idolatrous. I found several points in this section of special value: the appropriate uses of abstract, representational, and symbolic art; the need of aesthetics and religion in art; and the implications of creation to our use and understanding of the arts.

Part III of the book deals with Christianity and the arts. Veith introduces several




contemporary Christian artists. He summarizes how art has been used in differing Christian traditions. Pastors will find the suggestions for the use of art in worship helpful. Veith carefully keeps his focus on the primacy of the Word when relating the Word and the arts. The concluding chapter talks about the place of art in the Christian's life.

A good table of contents, indices, ref-

erence notes, and resources add to the book's value. I recommend *State of the Arts* not only to enhance understanding of the arts but also to inspire pastors to use them to enrich both corporate and personal worship.

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of Jesus: First-Century Judaism in Crisis, John Riches, 151 pages; **Jesus and the Future**, David Tiede, 103 pages. Each book is \$24.95 hardcover or \$7.95 paper. Cambridge Press, 1990. Reviewed by Lawrence G. Downing, pastor, Seventh-day Adventist church, Anaheim, California.

After reading this series, I felt like a man who just finished digging a ditch with pick and shovel and saw a friend pass by with a backhoe. Only a few weeks earlier I had prepared and preached a sermon series in which the religious, political, and social climate of Jesus' time was a central part. My research took me through numerous books and journals. Now, I found in *Understanding Jesus Today* much of the information I had used. The authors have distilled an immense amount of current scholarship into easily accessible form. Each book ends with a suggested reading list and discussion questions.

Kee gives an excellent overview of extrabiblical sources. He briefly explains and examines the "Q" material. His book presents Jesus' major themes in the four Gospels and Paul's writings.

Riches introduces the reader to the shifting political, social, and religious forces found in Palestine during Jesus' time. He explores how religious beliefs changed the culture and social forces influenced Jesus' followers. We learn how John the Baptist initiated the concept that membership in the community comes through repentance rather than fulfilling ritual law. Riches makes a case for a hermeneutic that considers the text within its social and political context.

Tiede's purpose is "to assist people to read the New Testament and understand Jesus in the light of current scholarship." He seeks to integrate his faith and information gleaned from early records. He believes we should allow the biblical writers to speak for themselves. The chapter headings will delight the serious exegete—"The Kingdom Restored"; "Jesus and the Kingdom"; "The Vindication of Jesus"; and "Jesus and the End: How Long, O Lord?"

Understanding that some may be uncomfortable with his interpretations, Tiede handles the material gently.

He Walked Among Us: Evidence for the Historical Jesus

Josh McDowell and Bill Wilson, *Here's Life Publishers*, San Bernardino, California, 1988, 336 pages, \$10.99 (Canada

\$13.95), paper. Reviewed by James Ayers, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Waltham, Massachusetts.

McDowell, minister to college students for Campus Crusade for Christ, works with Wilson to offer an essay on the reality of the earthly life of Jesus Christ.

In recent years a number of critical and scholarly works have questioned the accuracy of New Testament accounts of Jesus' life. A number of popular works have taken this material and glibly offered it to the public. The book seeks to answer, especially for college students, this negative material.

The authors draw quotes from many sources—ancient and modern, conservative and critical. This gives the reader exposure to the arguments against the historicity of a given narrative, followed by discussion of the flaws in the critical analysis.

While the presentation is balanced, I felt distressed at their mocking, condescending tone. True, much of the material in contemporary imaginings about Jesus' secret life is written in a disparaging style; yet is this a helpful characteristic to emulate?

In some places I feel students would understand the argument better with additional background. The book provides an excellent demonstration of the differences between the Semitic style of Luke's infancy narrative and the same verses written in normal Greek style. Yet will this

mean much to those who don't understand how the two languages work?

Even with its flaws the book will prove helpful to those facing critical attacks on their faith, and to pastors who want a convenient summary of contemporary arguments for and against the accuracy of the New Testament portrayal of the historical Jesus.

Recently Noted

Les Cahiers Liturgiques, No. 2, Joëlle Gouel, editor, Geneva, Switzerland, 1991, 137 pages, US\$10 (£6).

This is the second issue of *Les Cahiers Liturgiques*, and a third should soon follow. Written in both French and English, these volumes are directed at pastors, musicians, and anyone involved in worship and liturgy. They seek to uplift and enrich the Adventist worship experience. An enthusiastic team of experts have donated their time to this project believing that worship, especially in its eschatological dimension, requires our careful study. Gouel states that "both ministries of the word and music exist biblically only as complementary to each other and should be dealt with through adequate structures provided for this purpose." No. 1 is subtitled *Luke, Cantor of the Wonders of God* (the larger portion of this issue is in French), and No. 2, *An Introduction to Theopoetic*. Both are available by writing Secrétariat, *Les Cahiers Liturgiques*, Case postale 2539, Geneve 2, Switzerland.

Women In Ministry: Celebrating 25 Years

A video featuring the work of women pastors in conference and congregational ministry. Endorsed by the North American Division, this tape presents actual footage of the women clergy of Southeastern California Conference in all components of ministry in response to God's call to them.

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Letters

From page 2

were not fully ready to become a part of ours. Many have turned away from us because they have seen the fallacy of such an approach. Others have joined the church giving less than wholehearted support to all its beliefs and practices. Many of these have gone out the back door and are worse off than they were before.

Certainly we need to hold uncompromisingly to doctrines and standards that are biblically sound. Church membership should be based on a commitment to these beliefs and standards. They are a covenant that holds us together as a distinctive people with a distinctive message for the world. But shouldn't we at least consider the possibility that we have erred in confounding this elaborate covenant we make with one another with the simple but beautiful covenant made between Christ and the individual at baptism, signifying his or her born-again experience and new life in Christ?

Of one thing I am sure. If we are truly committed as a people to making the gospel our primary focus (if the gospel really is the picture and our doctrinal distinctives are the frame), then it will require more than a change in the words of a written statement of faith. It will require radical change in some long accepted attitudes and practices.

I love our church. I believe in its message and commission from God, and I work hard to share this message with others. I pray that I (and we) may not let our Lord down in proclaiming the everlasting gospel and completing our global mission.—Bill Carsley, Norway, Maine.

■ I appreciate your openness, foresightedness, and vision for a church to give to a hurting world the love of our Lord.

I am proud of my Adventist heritage. When people ask what we believe, how prone we are to list the many fundamentals. As an Adventist chaplain, when I minister to newcomers in our institution I am received often with suspicion and fear, and

thought of as a legalist. However, this suspicion disappears and a sense of joy takes over when they see my real mission: sharing God's love.—Harry W. Gabriel, Portland, Oregon.

■ You have certainly upset the devil. He knows that if we can understand the unconditional good news of the gospel and what it means to be justified by faith, his power over us will be broken. We need more than a form of godliness. Much of what we do, even in our zealotry, falls into the same category as what the Jews did (Matt. 23:15). We in our lukewarm and comfortable condition don't welcome the idea that our righteousness and our good works are like filthy rags.—Clifford Force, Hillsboro, Oregon.

■ If I had the gift of writing, I would have written "Global Mission, My Mission." Excellent!—James W. Blackburn, Talent, Oregon.

■ Your stories on how some evangelists/pastors prepare people for baptism (or should I say don't prepare them) say more about the integrity of the evangelist/pastor than it does about whether they have uplifted Christ while teaching doctrines.

Doctrines themselves will not save a person; only Christ can do that. My sense of the place of God's body (the church) is caring, nurturing, and in-depth spiritual fellowship—not whether doctrines are needed or are overemphasized.

The skeletal framework (doctrines) can be no more separated from a living body than can the blood (the gospel). The blood nourishes even the bones and muscles that move the whole body. Your article seems to pit one against the other. Since when is the message of God dividable? Can "imputed" stand by itself pitted against "imparted"? Where is the biblical support for pitting entering heaven against entering His church? Pitting principle against application isn't in Jesus' teachings. Both are necessary parts of His very balanced message.

We are expected to present Christ-centered messages and still keep the distinctives. No one ever said it would be easy!—J. Fred Hughes, Richardson, Texas.

■ For the past three years I have associated closely with ministers of other churches and have discovered that they too have the same difficulty as we do in conveying the message of salvation. No matter what position a church adopts on salvation, it is still the most difficult tenet to communicate effectively. Seventh-day Adventists are not alone in facing this challenge.

There is an ever-increasing concern among evangelicals that they have misrepresented the facts in presenting salvation. New birth is not all that sinners need. They also need to grow to become like Jesus, which takes the same miracle power as the new birth, offered by the same Lord. It is fatal to turn down either of His essential offers.

Obviously and assuredly we need to talk about salvation. Nothing else is of such import. What we need to do is to set aside, as Ellen White suggested, a thoughtful hour each day to spend at Jesus' feet. Can't we begin to stress that?—W. R. May, Fort Worth, Texas.

After-hours schooling: an alternate strategy?

While not wanting to appear to be a knee-jerk Adventist educational leader, I do have concerns about Robert Surridge's article "After-hours schooling: an alternate strategy for Adventist education" (February 1992).

I am very sympathetic to the need for Adventist pastors to provide after-hours schooling for students who do not attend Adventist schools. In North America this figure may approach 50 percent. These public school and college students do not get enough religious education to deal with secular challenges faced in their schooling. Few Adventist families have worship; and relying on Sabbath School and church service is simply not enough.

My greatest worry comes from the long contact between non-Adventist teachers and our students in a public setting. This concern grows out of evidences heard during Project Affirmation from Dr. Merton Strommen, founder of Search Institute and one of the leading authorities on the transmission of values between generations.

Strommen recalled a study his organization conducted. "In this study, three teachers, each an expert in a different method, trained young adults

who in turn trained high school youth. One of the teachers was a committed Christian, a second was an agnostic, and the third was a nominal church member. All three of the teachers were highly skilled, being admired by the young adults and the high school students alike.

"Three times youth took assessment instruments giving us excellent measures on 45 dimensions—three of which were religious dimensions.

"When we analyzed the results of our third assessment and compared it with the first, we were shocked. The high school youth trained under young adults who in turn were under the tutelage of the committed Christian showed a significant increase in religious interest and participation. Those under the nominal church member showed no change in scores on the religious measure. . . . But those high school students who were trained under the adults who in turn were under the tutelage of the agnostic showed a decline in religious interest and participation that could not be credited to chance. The values of these youth had shifted toward those of their leader, even though values and religious beliefs were never discussed."

In light of such evidence, are we not taking a big risk in assuming that an after-hours school program will be enough to prevent the transmission of values antithetical to an Adventist belief system?—Richard C. Osborn, Columbia, Maryland.

■ Surridge makes at least five false assumptions about Adventist education. The first is that you "need a membership of 200 plus (preferably with an adjacent Adventist institution)" to sustain a viable elementary school. Most of our elementary schools in North America are small one- or two-teacher schools, supported by churches with less than 200 members, and these are not located adjacent to an Adventist institution.

The second false assumption is that church school education is "prohibitively costly." The fact that there are many one- and two-teacher schools in North America should be evidence that a small church can provide a church school education. My 56-member church has a viable church school with 11 students!

A third assumption is that the church school cannot offer an education that "will be on a par with state education." Many studies have shown that children from small church schools perform as well as or better than students in public schools.

A fourth false assumption is that the only difference between a church school and a state school is the Bible class that provides "Adventist essentials." Apparently Surridge has never heard of the integration of faith and learning that makes every class in an Adventist school distinctly different from classes in public school.

A fifth false assumption is that you need "a regular supply of at least 20 children" to have a viable church school. What about the counsel in *Testimonies*, volume 6, page 199: "Schools should be established if there are no more than six children to attend"?

If these false assumptions are allowed to go unchallenged, we could see the end of organized Adventist church schools.—Paul E. Plummer, professor of education, Pacific Union College, Angwin, California.

■ **Robert Surridge responds:** I am writing from an European perspective. Things are different here from North America. In fact, things in Adventism are often different from North America both here in Europe and elsewhere around the world. It is to *Ministry's* credit that by publishing non-American writers we are coming to realize that the North American perspective is not the only legitimate one in the world church.

After-hours schooling within the local church setting (and following the successful Muslim model) offers to broaden the franchise of Adventist education to many for whom it is not available now. This, it seems to me, is the most obvious point that I am making. It surprises me therefore that Dr. Plummer sees my article as an attack on Adventist education.

Of course, the statistics of how many pupils are needed to make a school viable, or what membership base is needed, will vary from place to place. Whatever these numbers are, it is obvious that one will need far less for an after-hours school than for a full-time school. Surely the object of

Adventist education is to educate our children in whatever way is viable. By limiting this to the concept of full-time schools we may be allowing a mind-set of "institutionalism" to get in the way of our God-given objectives.

For those Adventist communities who have neither the means nor the personnel nor even government permission to establish full-time schools, an after-hours school may provide a way of giving their children an Adventist education. It may also mean that some of our faithful members will not have to feel guilty because they cannot afford to send their children to a full-time school. Furthermore, these children may receive a boost to their spiritual life and thereby remain faithful to the church and go on to support one of our colleges. There is also no reason that a truly successful after-hours school may not, in time, develop into a full-time school.

Towards Righteousness by Faith: 1888 in Retrospect

I would like to reply to George Knight's review of the book *Towards Righteousness by Faith: 1888 in Retrospect* in *Ministry*, February 1992. George Knight may have misunderstood both my personal beliefs and my examination of A. T. Jones. I agree with him that "while we can separate those categories [justification and sanctification] for purposes of theological definition, the New Testament [and the Old] does not teach experiential separation. A person is either in Christ or not. The justified person is also being sanctified." I also agree with Knight's statement that experientially "being righteous by faith includes both justification and sanctification." Part of the problem is that both words are linked together linguistically in Scripture, whereas endless argumentation has gone on over scholarly distinctions and definitions.

Far from me to "view [Scripture's and] Wesleyanism's emphasis on obedience and sanctification in a pejorative sense." I vehemently deny Knight's charge. I took no issue with A. T. Jones for his preaching of the call to obedience, victory over sin, character growth, etc. I certainly appreciate Adventist theology's roots in Wesleyanism and am thankful for it,

but A. T. Jones was not 100 percent John Wesley in his soteriology, and things were happening to Wesleyan theology through the nineteenth century that vitally affected our pioneers and A. T. Jones. Many of these developments were positive, but there was a weakening of the New Testament teaching that our acceptance and justification before God is on the basis of Jesus' perfect life and death, reckoned or imputed to us when we receive it by faith, and the replacing of it with one based on acceptance and justification, through God seeing Jesus' righteousness living out in our lives (i.e., impartation). A. T. Jones clearly came to subscribe to the latter.

I also deny viewing "the Reformation as a static event that took place in the sixteenth century rather than as a progressive historical process." I would just plead that as we must accept this reformation growth in the Christian church, so we should allow the same in our own history, and not try to impose a static 100 percent fullness of soteriological truth upon Waggoner and Jones. They were marvelous and brave reformers among our early pioneers, but they cannot be elevated to sainthood and inerrancy, for they had imbibed, out of the Wesleyan and holiness climate, not only truth but also some excesses.

The book, edited by the late Arthur Ferch, was primarily to help the church learn from the people and events of 1888 so that it will be better fortified for the future. Its purpose was not just to romanticize either the men or their message from that time, but to critique both the positives and negatives in that era.—Kerry Hortop, pastor, Gulfhaven Seventh-day Adventist Church, Houston, Texas.

■ I would have welcomed Knight's assessment of my research methodology. The research involved the reading and analysis of everything Waggoner published from 1884 to 1890. To my knowledge, David McMahon and I are the only historians who have used this method to achieve more objectivity.

In his book *Angry Saints*, Knight takes the traditional view of the 1888 Minneapolis Conference. We have the legacy of a few personal assessments made by attendees at that conference. These appear to be the infallible

benchmarks for Knight's interpretation. He never admits that either the assessments or the Wesleyan heritage underpinning them could possibly be fallible. My understanding of the official position of the Adventist Church is that only "the Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation."

For the purposes of my thesis I felt it would be fair to Waggoner to immerse myself in his thinking. Among the primary documents are 50 or more *Signs of the Times* articles that Waggoner wrote on the law and gospel issue.

I was taught in church history classes that Waggoner opened refreshing vistas of gospel truth at Minneapolis. However, I received a rude shock when I read his articles. I found them to be a cauldron of law-oriented soteriology with an occasional flash of the gospel. It was a soul-numbing experience: Waggoner's model in 1888 was yet another variation on salvation by faith *and* works. My conclusions had to be true to those primary documents despite the vilification from peers who wished to preserve yet another myth in Adventism.—Milton Hook, Wahoonga, N.S.W., Australia.

Neglected ministry of the ghetto

From page 17

ies, youth meetings, and anonymous 12-step recovery programs can be conducted from this one branch Sabbath school. The better these programs, the faster word spreads on the streets and the more people come to Christ and begin attending church.

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Evangelistic resource center

The new Adventist Evangelistic Association in California is establishing a resource center. Coordinator Lloyd Wyman wants to know your innovative evangelistic methods. How do you advertise? Prepare the church? Prepare the field? Present your sermons? Handle names of interests? Involve laypeople?

What equipment do you use? Where can your materials be seen or purchased? Which evangelists have used them, and with what results?

The Resource Center will share your successful ideas with pastors and lay leaders around the North American Division. Contact the Adventist Evangelistic Association, P.O. Box 2566, Newbury Park, CA 91320. Phone: (805) 373-7612.

Devotional church directory

Our church directory is prepared to serve also as a devotional guide. Each page lists the names, addresses, and tele-

phone numbers for members and friends of the church. For each one we randomly select a Bible verse from among the many scriptural promises. People are invited to use this verse as God's promise for them throughout the year.

Additionally, we urge people to pray for those listed on one of the directory pages each day. We have arranged our directory to have thirty-one pages, and include denominational officials and agencies on the last two pages. This means that someone is praying for those in our direc-

tory at least once a month. This has been helpful to many in our church.

It is my hope that this suggestion will benefit many churches and people.—Gordon B. Miller, United Covenant Church of Wilton, Wilton, Connecticut.

Bulletin preparation made easier

How many times have you sat down to gather bulletin information and found yourself spending precious time looking through papers and making numerous calls to get

the correct information?

For some time I have been doing the bulletin for my husband who pastors three churches. Each week it was a time-consuming struggle to gather all the needed information. In desperation I designed the following one-page worksheet for the churches. It's easier to place announcements in order this way.

Since I have been using this worksheet, the stress of doing bulletins has been eliminated. I hope you will have the same results.—Sandra Fletsch, Hampden, Maine.

Church Bulletin Worksheet

	Church Name	Church Name	Church Name
Speaker:			
Opening Hymn:			
Scripture:			
Special Music:			
Sermon:			
Closing Hymn:			
Speaker Next Week:			
Sabbath			
Sunday			
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			
Thursday			
Friday			
Sabbath			
Coming Events:			
Sunset today: _____	Sunset next week: _____		
Offering today: _____	Offering next week: _____		
Date: _____			

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