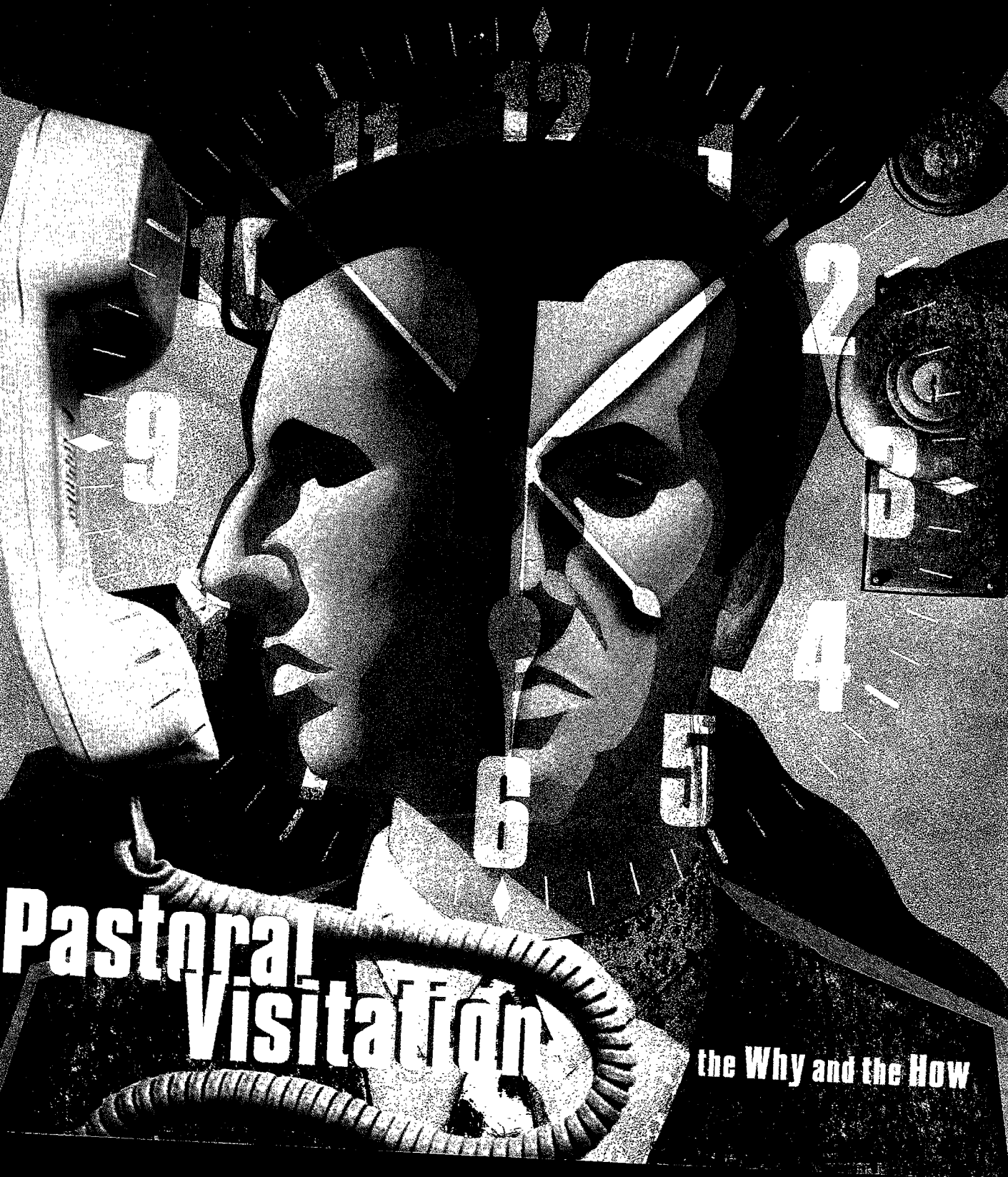


Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

August 1994



Pastoral Visitation

the Why and the How

Visions and revisions

Ron Graybill's article "Visions and Revisions, Part II" (April 1994) is helpful and timely. His account of how the *Testimonies* have been edited in the past is valuable for obvious reasons. It's good analysis and gives us historical documentation. But this should also encourage all of us who value Ellen White's counsel to ask that *more* editing of her work be done now. This is long overdue. Why? Here are a few reasons.

1. *Language continues to change.* Words gain new meanings, change emphasis, or become outdated as time passes. For example, Ellen White sometimes uses the word "intercourse" to indicate exchange of ideas or communion among people. While this remains a valid meaning for the term, it's not the most common today. "Inter-course" makes most people think of sex. This can be confusing. This can put off young readers or the newly converted. Should we expect people to learn Victorian English in order to understand Ellen White?

2. *Communication styles change.* The length of sentences used today shows how communication style changes. In a newspaper like *USA Today* many sentences are 20 words or less. Shorter sentences, with only 5 to 10 words, are mixed in with the longer ones. Many paragraphs are also very short—sometimes just two or three sentences.

Of course, the length of sentences in general books today are longer than what we find in newspapers. Still, the sentences in Ellen White's writings can seem long and complicated. And some of her paragraphs are very long.

The extent to which this is true varies. A good sleuth like Graybill could probably tell us how much editing has gone on in the easier-to-read material.

Example. In the opening of *The Desire of Ages* the sentences are

quite short. The number of words in these sentences are 9, 18, 32, 12, 18, 12. Readable. Clear.

But not always. Consider a famous paragraph that appears in *Steps to Christ*, pages 57, 58. It contains a reassuring, and often-quoted sentence. "The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts."

First of all, the paragraph has 10 sentences. And the number of words in these sentences are 34, 36, 28, 26, 14, 19, 43, 12, 16, and 22. I would never let a modern author do that for general readers! In fact, when we prepared to reprint this section of *Steps to Christ* in the *Adventist Review* a couple of years ago, we asked for permission to break up the original paragraph into four short ones.

We didn't change words. We just attempted to make the article *look* more inviting, more readable.

3. *Language today has become more precise and inclusive.* For those of us who still read the King James Bible, using the word "man" to mean both men and women may seem fine. But most people today who read the word "man" think of a male, not a female.

As our language changes we need to help Ellen White's writings mean what she meant them to mean. We should not allow her writings to sound sexist. She was an inclusive-thinking person.

None of this will be easy. None of this can be done hurriedly. But if we want to give Ellen White a chance to make sense to today's speakers of English, we need to begin. At once.—Kit Watts, assistant editor, *Adventist Review*, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Ellen G. White and tithe

Alberto Timm's article "Ellen G. White and Tithe" (February 1994) helped to shed more light on this sensitive topic. Two of his state-

ments/conclusions seem to miss what she was stating. The first relates to places of worship. He quotes White, "There are exceptional cases, where poverty is so deep that in order to secure the humblest place of worship, it may be necessary to appropriate the tithes." But then he states that "the issue is not the construction, renovation, improvement, or maintenance of a church in an established area, . . . but the danger of losing the 'place of worship' itself." Maybe I am not informed as to the use of the word "secure" in the late 1890s, but it seems to imply not losing a place of worship (though one might argue that aspect as well), but acquiring (securing) a place to worship, whether through rental or ownership.

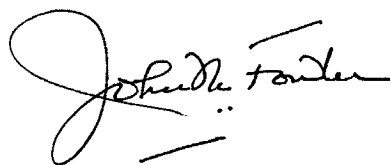
The second place he seems to miss Mrs. White's thrust is in regard to paying ministers' wives who are involved in "ministerial work." Timm says: "The question remaining is whether those statements of Ellen White about paying wages to ministers' wives refer only to particular instances mentioned here, or if they also provide a pattern to solve unjust cases today. One might find some kind of endorsement of a special use of tithe in solving situations of dire financial injustice regarding those who work 'in the line of ministry.' But the real problem is defining what is a real situation of injustice." Ellen White had no such problem in defining what was and wasn't a "situation of injustice." He quotes her own words. "The method of paying men laborers and not their wives is a plan not after the Lord's order. . . . The Lord does not favor this plan" (*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 323). Her point is clear: injustice is whenever a minister's spouse is involved in full-time ministry and not paid.—Mike Speegle, associate pastor, Marietta SDA Church, Marietta, Georgia.

(Continued on page 23)

One hundred fifty years may not be long in the history of the Christian church, but for Adventism, living in the urgency of the end time, it is pretty long. George Knight (p. 10) takes a look at the contours of the development of Adventist theology since 1844, and pleads for understanding. "All of us can learn from those holding theological positions contrary to our own," but for this we need to internalize the spirit of Christ.

"People are lonely. Have you noticed their faces?" asks Charles Betz (p. 21) as he tackles the need for saving one of Adventism's great institutions, the Sabbath school. How could this once vibrant part of the church be revitalized? How can it help achieve community? Is it possible for the Sabbath school to be a therapeutic experience to the lonely and the spiritually starving? You will not want to miss Betz's article.

Our talent search in expository preaching yielded some excellent articles. The senior pastor of Campus Hill Church at Loma Linda shares his insights on how he crafts his sermons. David VanDenburgh (p. 14) shows how to speak the Word so that each one in the congregation goes away filled with the love, the grace and the power of the Incarnate Word.



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Volume 67 Number 8



Four influential friends

Sharon Cress

Timothy had Paul. Ruth had Naomi. Samson had Delilah. Samuel had Eli. Esther had Mordecai. Ahab had Jezebel. Bathsheba had David. Peter had Andrew. What did all of these share in common? Each, for better or worse, met someone who influenced the path they would follow.

Who is influencing your life? To whom are you listening for sage counsel?

As a young and inexperienced pastoral wife, I needed a lot of positive influencing. Jim was raised in a pastoral family that instilled a focus for his life, but I had no idea what I was getting into. But heaven was helping me even before I realized it. Early in our ministry I learned the value of positive people the Lord provides to influence our lives. Four such pastoral wives deserve special tribute.

Vinna Mansell

When we met, Vinna and her husband, Leslie, were almost ready to retire. I arrived directly from seminary, and Vinna must have shuddered when she first saw me. My skirts were too short, my hair had that collegiate look, and I surely did not fit the church's image of an intern pastor's wife. A longtime pastoral wife had already told me to shape up and act properly. Since I perceived in her more criticism and ridicule than love and concern, I paid little heed.

Vinna, by contrast, was the most gracious pastoral wife I had known. She wore grace like others wear fine perfume. Never rude or harsh, she made a

person think he or she was the most important human being in the world. To paraphrase Scripture, Vinna was worth more to her husband's ministry than fine jewels; she complemented him by setting a standard of loving concern for church members.

Vinna gave no lectures, just nurture. She showed me tolerance and unconditional love, modeling what I could become if I were willing to change. Thank you, Vinna Mansell. You taught me that people are the church's most important asset and how to be a gracious pastoral wife.

Corea Cemer

When the call came to full-time evangelism, I was aghast! No way was I wanting to go itinerating around every backwoods burg in the state. I wanted to be home at night in my own bed. I had a life, you know. Because the Lord had other plans for me, He brought Corea into my life. She was almost 70 years old and deserved to retire and enjoy as much of the "good life" as this old world can offer. Corea had served with her evangelist husband throughout the Caribbean and eastern United States, bringing thousands of souls to the Lord. Jim and I were their last associates.

Corea told me stories of growing up in a migrant camp where she lived in a tent. The overseer paid her a penny for every 100 fruit flies she could kill. She never possessed any of the nice things other little girls enjoyed, but she did earn a few pennies each week with her extermination business and soon bought herself a pair of shoes.

Later in the ministry she trudged

through years of evangelistic campaigns without complaining. Her husband, Ken, was a great evangelist and I know that God used him mightily. But I also believe that the many who were won to the Lord through his preaching will be recorded as her ministry. Thank you, Corea Cemer, for teaching me self-sacrifice and patience.

Marge Gray

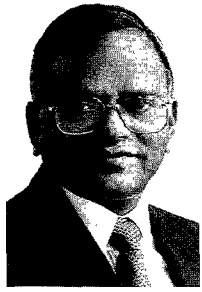
Exchanging warm, sunny Florida for cold, dreary Michigan was difficult for me; I experienced both cultural and climate shock. Through that move, however, I met Marge Gray, who showed me that Christ expects more of pastoral wives than just being gracious, self-sacrificing nurturers. He wants to make us soul winners.

Marge demonstrated that a pastoral wife could have a ministry of her own no matter what her profession. She gave Bible studies and shared the good news of Jesus with hundreds of people. Marge in fact authored Bible study lessons for adults and easily understood doctrinal lessons for children. I've prepared many youngsters for baptism with her lessons. Thank you, Marge Gray, for giving me a passion for souls.

Merlo Bock

Merlo was an administrator's wife when I met her. Quite an individualist, she modeled Christianity in her own unique way. I loved her from the moment we met. After rearing her children, Merlo returned to college to prepare for her dedicated, brilliant career in nursing. She never put on airs and

(Continued on page 6)



The Nazareth sermon

John M. Fowler

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up; and he went to the synagogue, as his custom was, on the sabbath day. And he stood up to read" (Luke 4:16).*

Luke 4:16 is a good Adventist text. Like most Adventist evangelists, I have used it to hammer home the point that it was the custom of Jesus to keep the Sabbath. With the help of *Webster's* or *Oxford's* when I finish defining the word "custom" most of my audience is ready to concede that Sabbathkeeping is indeed part of walking in the footprints of Jesus.

But recently in preparing an evangelistic sermon on the Sabbath, I read and reread Luke 4:16, and the verses that followed gripped me with the essential core of the Nazareth sermon. On that Sabbath day in His hometown Jesus seized the opportunity to proclaim the true meaning of His kingdom. What He proclaimed on that Sabbath is as important as the fact that He observed the Sabbath. In His Sabbath worship experience in Nazareth, Jesus gave us three great lessons in Christian fellowship: its time, its basis, and its scope.

A time for fellowship

By going to the synagogue on the Sabbath, Jesus underscored the need for a special time for fellowship. Some would suggest that the coming of Jesus has set us free from such obligations as the observance of the Sabbath. No way. Luke's use of the word "custom" was not to stress the routine nature of the occasion, but to affirm powerfully an indispensable part in the life of

Jesus—that He recognized that the Sabbath is God's community time, and He practiced it as such. His example acknowledges that the Sabbath is God's special time for a special fellowship with His people. Jesus' entry into history made no difference to this special time set apart at Creation, recognized as a memorial of God's liberating act in human history (see Deut. 5:6), and codified at Sinai. By His own example, Jesus sanctified the Sabbath observance and showed its intended meaning.

Part of this example was the purpose of the Sabbath: it's a time for adoration and worship, when the community of faith comes together to speak together the language of praise. In that speaking together, the community of faith assures the continuity of faith. Nothing ought to diminish that design. The evil nature of Nazareth, the hypocrisy of the community's leadership, the indifference of the people around, or even one's own unpreparedness to face the awesome presence of God is no excuse to refrain from coming to God's temple. God is there, and the Sabbath is His time in space, inviting sinners to seek His forgiving grace and urging saints to acknowledge the source of their being, strength, and hope.

The basis for fellowship

By the sermon He preached, Jesus revealed the basis for Christian fellowship. That fellowship is based on Christian good news. That good news is the *raison d'être* for the community of faith. From the prophet Isaiah, the

Lord drew out the fundamental ingredients of His good news. It's not something so otherworldly that it's irrelevant for here; it's not so intricate that one needs a rabbinical expertise to understand its nature; it's not so mundane that it has no eternal significance.

The gospel Jesus preached is relevant, simple, and eternally significant. It's a message of freedom from oppression; of sight to the blind; of good news to the poor—all within the context of the year of the Lord, and all made possible because the Spirit of the Lord had anointed Him, set Him apart, and directed Him for that specific task.

Persons before and persons after Jesus have spoken about freedom and justice, but the one singular difference with the proclamation at Nazareth is the assertion that freedom and justice, in their truest and fullest sense, are possible only within the context of the "year of the Lord." The year, of course, does not refer to a calendar, but to the era of salvation that Jesus has inaugurated. With Him has come the possibility of true liberation and justice—the liberation of the whole person in the process of establishing His kingdom of justice and peace. The passage that Jesus quotes is from Isaiah's prophetic hope that the Messiah would intervene in history and usher in the kingdom. And Jesus added, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

The word "today" is significant. The Jews expected the kingdom of God to come sometime in the future

in a dramatic, militaristic way, uprooting an alien regime in Judea and ushering in the Davidic throne. But Jesus gave no such hope. He was saying that the kingdom had already come in His Person, and that He would break the power of sin, crush the devil, and free the oppressed captives of his domain. The freedom that Jesus spoke is a freedom from sin as well as its resultant effect upon the community in which the individual lives. The gospel of Jesus is thus individually and corporately relevant.

Wherever there is a struggle with sin, wherever poverty and injustice dehumanize a person, wherever there is brick without straw, duty without dignity, existence without hope, religion without love, the gospel, with all its liberating power, needs to impact and create the new person.

By this we are not talking about a call to arms or a covenant with humanistic notions of freedom and dignity. We are referring to a personal identification with the Nazareth edict, with the Man of the cross. Find from Him the cost of sin. Seek from Him the forgiveness for sin. Identify with Him fully. Carry the cross He gives daily. Create with Him the community of faith, freedom, and justice. Proclaim to the world in word and deed that the kingdom of God is not a pie in the sky by and by, but a reality that confronts life where it matters most here on earth.

Once that happens, the other would follow: a commitment to carry out the Nazareth edict wherever we live. The point deserves to be repeated. Without the individual experience of identifying with Jesus, there can be no readiness to create the community of faith. Without letting the dynamic of the cross do its work of freeing the individual from the guilt and power of sin, there could be no adequate expression of communal love or justice. The kingdom must transform the person first before it can impact the persons who make up a community. And without the willingness to participate in that community and to live the Nazareth plea, the individual claims of knowing the Lord is at best meaningless.

The scope of fellowship

At Nazareth Jesus defined the fellowship of His kingdom as going beyond the known frontiers of His congregation to include the unknown, the rejected, and the apparently lost. He was introducing a new definition of community and corporate responsibility, and it is at that level the Nazareth community failed. As long as "gracious words . . . proceeded out of his mouth," "all spoke well of him" (Luke 14:22). Gracious words are soothing to the soul. A message of love and care is like the balm of Gilead, full of healing and restoration to the suffering individual. But the moment Jesus outlined the universal implications of His gospel, the Nazareth congregation was ready to slay its Prophet.

What went wrong? The admiring congregation at Nazareth turned into a vengeful mob because they were not ready to accept the frontier-free nature of the gospel of Jesus. Jesus was saying that His kingdom was for the Jews as well as the Gentiles. Both the chosen Elijah and the gentile widow of Zarephath can experience the goodness of His kingdom. Both Elisha the prophet and Naaman the Syrian leper do need to experience the cleansing stream (see Luke 4:25-27). But the people of Nazareth, who defined chosenness as exclusiveness and therefore thought that gentiles were fodder for the fires of hell, could not stomach a message as radical as that of Jesus. We can have Elijah and we can accept Elisha, they argued; but who is this carpenter's Son to tell us to take in the triple disaster of Zarephath (a Gentile, a woman, and a widow at that) or to understand the puzzle of Syria—a gentile leper? But the preacher at the Nazareth pulpit would have it no other way: such is the cost of His kingdom.

And immediately admiration gave way to anger, acceptance to rejection. And such failures at the corporate level to accept the implications of the Christian gospel are not limited to distant history. As long as Jesus leaves me alone, offers me my freedom from sin, provides me a cushion to lean on, and directs me and my family toward a home beyond the sunset, that's just

fine. I can praise the Lord for moving so mysteriously His wonders to perform in me. But the moment Jesus challenges me to live and love within the context of a community—accepting as potential partners of the kingdom those with a different perspective, a varying look, a flatter nose, or whatever—I find myself at a fork. Should I let the moral me subtly merge with the immoral mob, full of righteous wrath, rushing to throw the Lord headlong down the hill? Or should I let the Lord crucify my pride and prejudice and make me a part of His family, where everyone who takes up His cross really belongs? ■

* All Scripture passages are from the Revised Standard Version.

Four influential friends

From page 4

never pretended to be anything but the special person Jesus created her to be. She helped me understand that God makes each person special, and He values our unique individuality.

Merlo taught me that it was OK to be me. In fact, it's not just OK but important to be myself, rather than striving to be a mirror image of some other person. She helped me comprehend that Jesus doesn't make mistakes when He creates distinct personalities, and it is all for His glory. Seldom have I had a conversation with Merlo without hearing about how eager she is for Jesus to return. Thank you, Merlo Bock, for teaching me that we don't need to wear masks, and it's OK for me to be the person I am.

Not by mere chance

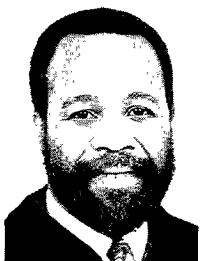
In His plan for our lives Jesus places in our company people who strengthen us spiritually. We each need a teachable spirit to profit from the wisdom of those who have experienced life more widely.

Who is influencing your life? ■

Pastoral visitation: in person or by . . . ?

R. Clifford Jones

Technology may help, but can never be a substitute for personal visitation.



R. Clifford Jones is the senior pastor of the Ephesus Church of Seventh-day Adventists, Manhattan, New York.

Is the pastoral visit a phenomenon of the past? Some pastors think so, and give many and varied reasons ranging from the sublime to the ludicrous. For some, technological advancements have rendered visitation obsolete. Such pastors argue that visiting may have been necessary when telephones were a luxury, but in this high-tech age of video messages, telephones, answering machines, etc., it makes little sense for a minister to make his or her way to a member's home when a 5- or 10-minute phone call will do. Then there is the matter of time. Many clergy contend that, given the increasing demands on their time, it only makes sense to minister by telephone. Add to this the fact that a majority of parishioners are employed outside the home, which cuts down the time available for visitation.

Another reason for not visiting homes is lack of or limited resources. An aggressive, wide-ranging visitation program can run up the expenses of the pastor, so they should explore ways of saving money, such as visiting with congregants in the pastor's study.

All of this may call into question the wisdom and relevance of the pastoral visit to a parishioner's home. And yet, can ministry afford not to have home visitation?

Biblical rationale

Notwithstanding the differences of opinion pastors may have, home visitation has a biblical rationale. In Scrip-

ture we find God visiting with people both before and after the Fall. In fact, after Adam and Eve fell it was God who took the initiative in seeking them (see Gen. 3:8, 9). The Bible provides unambiguous proof that our God is not aloof, but approachable, and that He visits with His people in their circumstances, surroundings, and situations (see Gen. 18:1-16).

But God was not content to visit periodically with His people, so He went several steps further and sent His Son to live with us: "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).^{*} In Jesus Christ the transcendent God became immanent and one with us. The purpose of the Incarnation was not so that God could condemn or censure the human family, but that He could save it unto Himself. "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him" (John 3:17).

Perhaps nothing more characterizes the life and ministry of Jesus than His identification and empathy with people, including and especially those whom society condemned as sinners. Jesus often visited people in their homes, where He listened to them, ate with them, and generally met their needs (Mark 1:29-34; 5:35-43; Luke 19:5). Writes Ellen White: "Our Saviour went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate."¹ Christ also showed how important visitation was by placing it among other acts of

kindness and benevolence that would separate the sheep from the goats in the final great assize (see Matt. 25:34-46).

If ministers are to follow the example of their Lord they will therefore be found often in the homes of their members. Ellen White is quite instructive in this regard, stating that "ministry means much more than sermonizing,"² and that pastors "should visit the people in their homes, talking and praying with them in earnestness and humility."³ But she doesn't end there, going on further to state that "no minister is sufficiently equipped for his work who does not know how to meet the people at their homes, and come into close relation to their needs."⁴

Benefits of pastoral visitation

One can hardly overemphasize or belabor the significance and relevance of pastoral visitation, especially in a parishioner's home. There is simply no place more appropriate than the home for pastors to interact with their members in a personal manner. And this holds true whether such interaction is for the purpose of leading a person to Christ, reclaiming a lost soul, or offering support and guidance. To be sure, quality pastoral care may be provided at other times and in other places, but seldom is it ever better provided than in the privacy of the home, where face-to-face, one-on-one conversation and interaction can take place.

To be effective, pastors cannot afford to remain apart from their members. We must come down from our ivory towers, our stations of apartness, and meet with our people where they are. Then our ministry will become more vibrant and successful. How? For starters, we experience firsthand the conditions under which our people are attempting to live out the kingdom values. Pastors who visit have a better idea of their members' concerns and cares. This information is vital, perhaps even foundational, for ministers, who, as shepherds, must constantly search for ways to meet

the felt needs of their flocks.

Another benefit of pastoral visitation is that it helps in building warm, caring relationships. In the home the pastor is bound to be seen as a warm human being who cares, and as a person who is able to relax, laugh, eat, and talk about a host of issues, including some not directly connected to Scripture. As a consequence, the relationship between the minister and member will grow.

A third benefit of pastoral visitation is that it leads to a heightened interest in the church. Members whose leaders visit with them are more apt to feel a part of the church. Accord-

Pastors, we must come down from our ivory towers, our stations of apartness, and meet with our people where they are.

ingly, they involve themselves and lend their full support to various ministries and programs of the church. Seldom, if ever, do these members have to be cajoled into being faithful stewards.

Retired North American Division president Charles Bradford loves to say that a homegoing pastor makes for a churchgoing people. This statement still holds true. Apostasies usually are low when pastors visit their members. Thus pastoral visitation also leads to a deepened spirituality on the part of the member. But it doesn't end there. I believe that the pastor's own spirituality also will be deepened as he or she enters into an experience with the member in the home.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church, faced with a disturbing and tragic missing-member problem,⁵ certainly stands to benefit if its clergy would do more visiting. Fortunately, church leadership recognizes this. At its 1990 Annual Council the General Conference appealed to every divi-

sion, union, conference/mission, and institution to have church membership visitation as part of their Global Mission strategy. This action was long in coming.

Guidelines for effective visitation

But how is pastoral visitation done so that the benefits mentioned above are realized? Certainly not all visits made by pastors lead to increased church attendance. I know of one church member who stopped attending church because her pastor dropped in one day, ostensibly because he "just happened" to be in the neighborhood, and then proceeded to bore her with details about her new neighbors. Pastors must know how to visit to reap the desired benefits.

Here are some general principles and guidelines for a successful visitation program.

1. *Plan the visit* with specific objectives and goals in mind. Why are you calling on this member or person? What do you wish to accomplish by this visit? Do you have as much information as possible about the family? Exercise tact and common sense during the visit so as to protect the individual or family from concluding that you are either prying into their affairs or snooping around.

2. *Schedule the visit.* Many pastors call on parishioners unannounced, believing that setting an appointment robs the visit of its spontaneity and them of their flexibility. This may be true, but the drawbacks of an unscheduled visit far outweigh any advantage. On the practical side, you may make your way to a member's home only to discover that the member is not there or not in a position to welcome you. Even visits to health institutions should be scheduled; you don't want to go to a hospital or nursing home only to find that the patient is in therapy, surgery, or perhaps discharged.

Another important reason for scheduling your visit is that it is not proper social ethics to visit people without informing them ahead of time. Unscheduled visits almost always create anxiety and stress in parishioners, many of whom may pass the time you

are there praying that you leave soon. The unscheduled visit may help the pastor meet a visitation goal, but it will hardly lead to a strengthening of the relationship between the pastor and parishioner.

People not only need to know that their pastor will be visiting with them, but also why he or she is coming. Few members appreciate preparing for a visit not knowing why you'll be there.

3. *Be relaxed.* A nervous and tense pastor can upset a parishioner. If your next appointment is causing some concern about time, then cancel or postpone it. Members feel demoralized when during a visit the pastor keeps constantly looking at the watch.

The rushed visit benefits neither the pastor nor the parishioner. Again, such visits may lead to quantity, but they always lack in quality. It is far better for you to make two or three quality visits in a day than 10 hurried ones. The latter tends to leave pastors stressed out and members frustrated, unfulfilled, unaffirmed, and disappointed.

Being relaxed means that you will strive to make the person you're visiting as comfortable as possible. Communicate in both demeanor and words that you are not there to judge, condemn, or embarrass. Speak with warmth. Be genuine in your words. Look for opportunities to affirm the individual.

4. *Create an atmosphere of confidence.* At times members want to share information and experience of a confidential nature. Create an atmosphere in which they can speak freely. Let them feel confident that what they share with you will not be used as public information, such as in a sermon illustration. To do so even without revealing names is to destroy trust and confidence that members have in you.

5. *Listen empathetically.* Most people think they must talk "religiously" in the presence of ministers. Let them know that that isn't so. Encourage them to talk about their feelings, concerns, questions, and issues of life. Be attentive. Empathize. Lis-

ten to unspoken messages. Keep the conversation flowing. Periods of silence may tend to be dysfunctional.

6. *Conclude with prayer.* No pastoral visit should ever end without prayer. Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the visit, people expect that at some point in a pastoral call the pastor will pray. Don't disappoint them. Place the hopes and concerns of the conversation before the Lord, asking Him to work things out for them.

Pastoral visitation is not a peripheral or incidental phenomenon. It is an essential part of the ministry in the steps of the Lord who visited us. ■

* All Scripture references in this article are from the New International Version.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), p. 188.

² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁴ ———, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 438.

⁵ Monte Sahlin, "Where Have All the Members Gone?" *Ministry*, February 1990, pp. 4-6.

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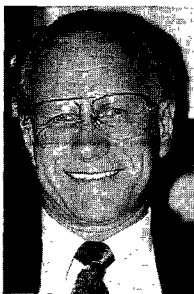
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Adventist theology 1844 to 1994

George R. Knight

Our search for identity and the threat of polarity



George R. Knight is professor of church history at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary in Berrien Springs, Michigan.

What is Adventism? What does it mean theologically to be an Adventist? The most intelligible framework for understanding the historical development of Seventh-day Adventist theology is to see it as a *search for identity* moving through four basic stages.

Stage 1: "What is Adventist in Adventism?" (1844-1886)

The search for identity was violently and abruptly thrust upon all Millerite Adventists on October 23, 1844. Up to that time they had known who they were, and they had had little doubt about their place in God's cosmic plan. But the October disappointment left the bewildered Adventists in a chaotic condition. Millerism in late 1844 and for most of 1845 needs to be seen as a seething and chaotic mass of confusion. It would take years for the theological confusion to clear up, and various Adventist groups would eventually come to different conclusions on the meaning of their experience.

Some eventually concluded that they had been right in the event predicted in Daniel 8:14 but wrong on the time. For this group the cleansing of the sanctuary still pointed to the second coming of Christ and the cleansing of the earth by fire. But October 22, 1844, was not the date. Christ's coming was yet future. This group evolved into the Advent Christian denomination and several related bodies.

Others held that both the event and the time had been correct. Christ had indeed returned on October 22, but the

coming had been spiritual rather than literal. Fanaticism easily arose in the ranks of these spiritualizers, as they were called.

Yet a third group of disappointed Millerites held that they had been correct on the time, but wrong on the event. That is, something had taken place on October 22, 1844, but it was not the second coming of Christ. Rather, after a thorough study of Scripture using Miller's concordance approach, they concluded that the sanctuary of Daniel 8:14 was God's heavenly temple rather than the earth. Thus, Christ had entered a new phase of ministry on October 22, 1844. This interpretation formed the initial insight that led to Seventh-day Adventism.

After the Great Disappointment, each of those Adventist groups had to redefine its identity. This period in the development of Seventh-day Adventism might best be thought of as a time when the denomination's founders sought to determine *what was distinctively Adventist in Adventism*.

By 1848 or 1849 our Sabbatarian forebears had concluded that Adventism's distinctives centered on their message of the heavenly sanctuary, the seventh-day Sabbath and the law of God, the premillennial and visible second advent of Christ, the conditional nature of human immortality, and the revival of the gift of prophecy as evidenced in the ministry of Ellen G. White. These theological items were packaged in the end-time framework of the three angels' messages of Revelation 14.

Those who became Seventh-day Adventists were overjoyed with their conclusions about what was Adventist

in Adventism. For the next 40 years they boldly preached their distinctive theology to the world around them. Feeling little need to emphasize such items as faith, grace, or other beliefs shared with the larger Christian world of the day, they emphasized their distinctive beliefs—especially the law of God and the seventh-day Sabbath.

Unfortunately, 40 years of emphasizing what is Adventist in Adventism led them into a disjunction with basic Christianity. That problem would come into bold relief between 1886 and 1888.

Stage 2: "What is Christian in Adventism?" (1886-1920)

The magnitude of the theological groundshift taking place among Adventists in the late 1880s and the 1890s is no secret to anyone with the slightest interest in the development of Adventist theology. Suddenly the denomination was faced with a new theological emphasis, a new vocabulary, and a new question as to religious identity.

It had all started simply enough. Two relatively young editors from California—A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner—had challenged the traditional Adventist interpretation of the 10 horns of Daniel 7 and the nature of the law in the book of Galatians. But G. I. Butler and Uriah Smith, the official leaders of the denomination, interpreted their challenge as an attack on the integrity of historic Adventism. As a result, they became aggressive with Jones and Waggoner and did everything in their power to keep the younger men from getting a hearing in the denomination.

The confrontation between the two sides came to a head at the Minneapolis session of the General Conference in the autumn of 1888. That meeting witnessed a meanness of spirit on the part of those defending historic Adventism that led Ellen White to declare that they were seeking to win the battle by using the spirit of the Pharisees. She deplored such tactics. To her the 1888 session was the "most incomprehensible tug-of-war we have ever had among our people." Again, she looked back at the session as "one of the saddest chapters in the history of the believers in present truth."

Both the spirit and the theology of the denomination's leading ministers, she

soon concluded, lacked a crucial element—Christ and Christlikeness. As a result, she recalled: "My burden during the meeting was to present Jesus and His love before my brethren, for I saw marked evidences that many had not the spirit of Christ." And on October 24 she told the delegates: "We want the truth as it is in Jesus. . . . I have seen that precious souls who would have embraced the truth have been turned away from it because of the manner in which the truth has been handled, because Jesus was not in it. And this is what I have been pleading with you for all the time—we want Jesus. . . . All the object I had was that the light should be gathered up, and the Saviour come in."

Coupled with Jones and Waggoner, Ellen White uplifted basic Christian themes at Minneapolis and in subsequent years. They especially uplifted Jesus and righteousness by faith in Him.

That new emphasis was reflected in Ellen White's writings by a new direction in her literary effort. The first book-length contribution to her new emphasis came in 1892 as *Steps to Christ*—a volume she refused to put out to denominational publishing houses because she did not trust those in charge to present her gospel message to the people in its unadulterated form. Rather, *Steps to Christ* was published by Fleming H. Revell, Moody's brother-in-law. Of course, she also hoped to reach a broader audience by publishing with Revell.

Steps to Christ would be followed by *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* in 1896 (also published by Revell), *The Desire of Ages* in 1898, *Christ's Object Lessons* in 1900, and the opening chapters of *The Ministry of Healing* in 1905.

The new emphasis was also reflected in the vocabularies of Waggoner, Jones, and W. W. Prescott as they preached Christ and His saving grace to the denomination's clergy and members. Whereas these younger men emphasized words like "Christ," "faith," "justification by faith," and terms related to Christ's righteousness, the denomination's older theologians put the emphasis on such words as "works," "obedience," "law," "commandments," "our righteousness," and "justification by works."

The 1888 meetings set the stage for a major theological shift in Adventism.

Between 1888 and 1900 the denomination would arrive at a better understanding of salvation in Christ, the Trinity, the personhood of the Holy Spirit, and a fuller understanding of the divine nature of Christ that would begin to displace Adventism's semi-Arianism. In addition, certain of its theologians initiated interpretations regarding the human nature of Christ being exactly like the nature of the fallen Adam that would set the stage for conflict in the 1990s, and the church would be treated to forceful attempts by Ellen White to make the Bible—rather than her own writings—the determinant of Adventist theology.

The new theological emphasis raised at Minneapolis had caused an earthquake in Adventism. In essence the earthquake had been brought about by a new question. The tectonic plate of the old question "What is Adventist in Adventism?" had run smack-dab into the tectonic plate of the new question "What is Christian in Adventism?"

Unfortunately, most of those who had spent their lives preaching the answer to the first question saw the second as a threat to the first rather than as an enrichment. Thus the 1890s saw war in the Adventist theological camp at the very time when necessary enrichment was what was being advocated. After all, Seventh-day Adventism at its best is both Christian and Adventist in its identity. That insight, however, was not obvious to the denomination's theological gladiators in the late 1890s and has yet to dawn upon many of their heirs in 1994.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of 1888 and the post-Minneapolis period is that the denomination's theologians had become polarized and no longer served as healthy checks and balances on each other's viewpoints.

The Adventist brethren on the different sides of the theological fence had failed to learn one of the great lessons of the 1888 General Conference session—that they needed each other if they were to maintain theological balance. The condition of things among Adventist theologians in 1892 led Ellen White to write in that year that Satan "has a hellish jubilee" "when he can divide brethren." She and others in the 1890s would repeatedly point out that many of the serious problems in Adventism could have

been avoided had the two sides learned to learn from each other. Having achieved that, they could have pulled together toward Adventism's theological and experiential center.

Unfortunately, between 1888 and 1900 Adventism kind of rocked along without bringing full unity to its theology. In other words, the marriage between what was Adventist in Adventism and what was Christian in Adventism was never successfully consummated. Theological polarity was a better descriptor of the Adventist theological world in the early 1890s than was that of unity or mutual respect. The identity crisis continued, even though it seems to have been masked by a pragmatic harmony and excitement in the area of the unprecedented spread of Adventist missions.

But even that outward harmony would be shattered soon after the turn of the century as the denomination faced multiple theological crises in the forms of the holy flesh movement, pantheism, and A. F. Ballenger's teachings on the sanctuary doctrine.

The polarity among Adventism's theologians during the 1890s left the denomination theologically off center and ill-prepared to meet the challenges of the new century. Thus the early years of the 1900s witnessed Adventism in the turmoil of a major identity crisis and schism. Many issues in that crisis would be moving toward resolution by 1920, only to be faced by new challenges that would contribute their own complicating heritage for Adventist theology in 1994. Out of the new challenges of the 1920s would come a new crisis in Adventist identity and a new question regarding the essential nature of Adventism.

Stage 3: "What is fundamentalist in Adventism?" (1920-1956)

The new question in Adventist identity in the 1920s would be "What is fundamentalist in Adventism?" The 1920s form a watershed in American religious history. For more than a half century forces within Protestantism had been building toward a major break between what were coming to be known as

liberalism and fundamentalism. The battle would come to a head in the early 1920s around at least eight issues, with the fundamentalist holding for verbal inspiration and an inerrant Bible, the historicity of the virgin birth, the necessity of the substitutionary atonement of Christ, the historicity of Christ's resurrection from the dead, His premillennial return, the authenticity of miracles, the uniqueness of the Christian revelation in the plan of salvation, and divine creation by fiat as opposed to theistic evolution. The liberals, of course, held to the opposite position on those eight points. In reality, the fundamentalists were reacting vigorously to the liberal formulations of those doctrines.

The Adventist brethren on the different sides of the theological fence had failed to learn one of the great lessons of the 1888 General Conference session—that they needed each other if they were to maintain theological balance.

Adventists had traditionally held seven of the eight theological positions set forth by the fundamentalists. But the denomination had never officially espoused verbal inspiration or an inerrant Bible, even though such theological leaders as S. N. Haskell, A. T. Jones, the early W. W. Prescott, and many others certainly did. The General Conference during its 1883 session had gone on record as accepting thought rather than verbal inspiration. And inerrancy had never been a formal issue. Yet in spite of the moderate official stand of Adventism on inspiration, a great deal of discussion took place as if the denomination did have a verbalist and inerrantist view. That viewpoint would be extended and become even more explicit and more

consistently expressed during the 1920s.

During that decade, Adventism was literally forced into the arms of fundamentalism in the face of the unprecedented polarization taking place in Protestantism. At this point it is crucial to recognize that there was no neutral theological ground in the 1920s. Either one was a liberal or a fundamentalist, and Adventism certainly had much more in common with the fundamentalists than with the liberals. In the frenzy of the times, Adventism was thrust toward fundamentalism in spite of its traditionally more moderate view on inspiration—a moderation definitely supported by the recently deceased Ellen White.

The magnitude of the groundshift in Adventism over inspiration during the 1920s is evidenced by the fact that the leaders who spoke out openly for a moderate view of inspiration at the 1919 Bible conference lost their positions in the 1920s. In fact, the inspiration issue became a major lever at the 1922 General Conference session to unseat the powerful A. G. Daniells, who had been the denomination's president since 1901.

On the other hand, B. L. House, who argued against the more moderate view of inspiration at the 1919 meetings, would be selected to write the denomination's college-level Bible doctrines textbook that appeared in 1926. House held not only for "verbal inspiration," but that "the selection of the very words of Scripture in the original languages was overruled by the Holy Spirit," as was the selection of historical data. A similar perspective was set forth by other denominational publications in the 1920s.

The more rigid view of the inspiration of both the Bible and the writings of Ellen White would shape Adventism for decades and would not face significant challenge within Adventism until the late 1970s and 1980s. Now, in the 1990s, it has become a major factor in Seventh-day Adventist theological dialogue.

Meanwhile, another contribution to the 1990s dialogue would be developed by M. L. Andreasen in the 1930s as a full-blown "final generation theology"—a theology that emphasized that the sec-

ond advent of Jesus was dependent upon a behaviorally perfect Adventist Church. Final generation theology was still in seed form in the 1890s, but it would move to center stage between the late 1950s and 1990s.

That brings us to the mid-1950s and the latest groundshift in Adventist theology.

Stage 4: "Adventism in theological tension" (1956-1994)

A new crisis and theological alignment erupted with the 1956 publication of Donald Grey Barnhouse's *Eternity* magazine article entitled "Are Seventh-day Adventists Christians?" In that article, with the apparent approval of L. E. Froom and R. A. Anderson (foremost Adventist leaders), Barnhouse publicly relegated M. L. Andreasen (Adventism's leading theologian in the 1930s and 1940s) and his theology to the "lunatic fringe" of Adventism and inferred that Andreasen and his type were similar to the "wild-eyed irresponsibles" that plague "every field of fundamental Christianity." Meanwhile, the denomination, under the influence of Froom, Anderson, and W. E. Read, published *Questions on Doctrine*, a book that fanned the flames of the developing controversy.

Andreasen retaliated with his *Letters to the Churches*, in which he charged the denomination with rejecting both the writings of Ellen White and historic Adventism. Andreasen's reward was the removal of his ministerial credentials and the withdrawal of his books from denominational bookstores.

Then in 1960 Zondervan Publishing House released Walter Martin's *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism*. In the book's foreword Barnhouse indicated that a major split in Adventist ranks had arisen over *Questions on Doctrine* and evangelical recognition. He went on to write that "only . . . those Seventh-day Adventists who follow the Lord in the same way as their leaders who have interpreted for us the doctrinal position of their church are to be considered true members of the body of Christ."

At that point the stage had been set by both Adventist insiders and outsiders for a split in Adventism's theological ranks.

I would suggest that since the mid-1950s Adventism can best be defined as being in theological tension. All the old

questions are still being asked in 1994, but now they are being asked at the same time by differing factions and individuals. Some, for example, are inquiring: "What is distinctively Adventist in Adventism?" They tend to focus on Andreasen's perfectionistic theology coupled with insights offered by Robert Wieland and Donald Short, who in the early 1950s shocked the denominational leaders by suggesting that their forerunners had led Adventism astray by rejecting the message of Jones and Waggoner at Minneapolis in 1888 and subsequent years.

As of 1994 the "Adventist Adventist" faction of Adventism emphasizes the sinful post-Fall nature of Christ, the necessity of what amounts to some sort of sinless behavioral perfectionism, final generation theology, and what it increasingly refers to as "historic Adventism." In theological method it practices a very heavy reliance upon the writings of Ellen White and often sees Jones and Waggoner as having the final word on righteousness by faith. The Adventist Adventists tend to be weak in their use of the Bible.

Present-day Adventism also has a major theological faction asking: "What is Christian in Adventism?" At its best this group uplifts the centrality of Christ and the cross in salvation, views the basis of assurance as being "in Christ," with the saved Christian being both justified and in the process of being sanctified; and seeks to place the Bible at the center of its theological methodology. While it firmly upholds the distinctively Adventist doctrines, this faction emphasizes those doctrines within the context of basic Christianity.

Also alive and well in Adventism's 1994 theological world are those who are asking: "What is fundamentalist in Adventism?" This faction may hold views in common with either those emphasizing that which is Adventist in Adventism or those stressing that which is Christian in Adventism, but their special burden is the fundamentalist concerns of the 1920s.

Those divisions in the present-day Adventist theological world would be serious enough, but they have been aggravated by the multiple shocks to the certitude of Adventist identity resulting from the Numbers, Rea, Ford, and Dav-

enport crises of the late 1970s and early 1980s, plus the fact that the aging Adventist movement has arrived at its 150th birthday, and by the same unfortunate polarizing effects that did so much to weaken the denomination in the 1890s. *One cause of the polarity problem is that in a desire to escape from one sort of perceived error, people are liable to back into the polar opposite.*

In Adventism in 1994, theological activity is shaping up along two fronts, with all the old questions providing the dividing lines. Thus, in the confrontation between those emphasizing that which is Adventist in Adventism and those emphasizing that which is Christian in Adventism there is the ever-present danger that the opposing forces will become ever more one-sided in their interpretations.

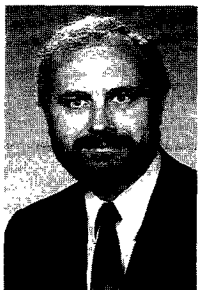
The crisis issue for the Adventist Adventists is that they will lose contact with basic Christianity as they focus on nonbiblical sources for theological authority and force a true biblical concept of perfection into a sort of itemized sinless perfectionism. At the other extreme is the ever-present danger that in seeking to avoid the Adventist Adventist error some will be tempted to deny their Adventism through one-sided emphases and thus become "Christian Christians." *I suggest that there is adequate defensible middle ground for those who might be designated as "Christian Adventists" if and only if they keep their eyes on the Bible and avoid the distorting dynamic built into the very process of doing theology, when doing theology becomes primarily an exercise in doing theology against one's opponent.* The distorting factor comes into action when individuals consciously or unconsciously place a primary emphasis on putting mere distance between themselves and what they consider to be error and when they conclude that they can learn nothing of value from those who differ from them.

The Adventist Adventist versus Christian Adventist polarizing effect was present in the 1890s, but in 1994 Adventism is also being challenged by a second polarizing dynamic. While some individuals fear liberalism and appear to be reaching for the fundamentalism of the 1920s (apparently confusing it with
(Continued on page 25)

Compelled by the love of Christ

David VanDenburgh

**A winning article
in our talent
search explains the
process of biblical
preaching.**



David VanDenburgh is senior pastor of the Campus Hill Seventh-day Adventist Church in Loma Linda, California, and an adjunct professor for the faculty of religion at Loma Linda University.

Let me begin with an overview of my own preparation process for an expository sermon. It starts with selecting the preaching passage; my preference is having it as part of an ongoing series on a Bible book. That relieves the agony of not knowing what the next week's sermon will be about. Nevertheless, it's difficult sometimes deciding how much of the upcoming passage to focus upon. A chapter? Just one verse?

Next in my sermon development comes a consideration of the audience. Who are they? What are their needs, their questions, their struggles, joys, and sorrows? From here I move back to the text and ponder what it meant and means. Then I test tentative sermon outlines and reflect upon how the text might be presented to the audience. Next I think about my aim and theme, checking to be sure I will be talking about what the text is actually talking about. I might develop a dozen or more possible ways of presenting the text, sketching them side by side.

Now it's time to decide the best way of preaching the sermon—the best outline. I look for narrative, stories, and illustrations that permit me to preach the sermon in story form as much as possible. At this point I have a fairly extensive working outline. I use an outlining program on my computer to facilitate moving topics around. I do a lot of this. Would part 3 work better as part 2? Would this point be better made there than here? Gradually the sermon takes form.

After that I ask my most important question: So what? Sometimes everything gets scrapped right here if the

sermon isn't worth preaching. More often "So what?" leads to revision of the working outline. Sometimes a minor point is expanded to be much of the final sermon, and what was a major point compresses into one sentence. *The goal is to say something important to the audience while being absolutely true to the text.*

The final task in sermon preparation is producing the preaching outline from the working outline—unless, of course, one would preach without notes.

Now, having looked at the process of preparation in overview, let's see the process in detail.

Choosing the preaching portion

To begin with, I write the sermon text at the top of a sheet of paper. For this sermon it's verses 14 and 15 of 2 Corinthians 5. I was struck with the idea that Paul was compelled (KJV—"constraineth"; RSV—"controls") by the love of Christ. His life certainly gave evidence that something beyond self-interest compelled him. The same would be true of every genuine Christian. Second, I was struck with Paul's statement of cause for why the love of Christ compelled him. Is there a sermon here? Is this text saying something significant for me and my parishioners? A few moments of thought convinced me that real possibilities existed. This is highly preachable stuff!

I eventually settled on a preaching portion consisting of 2 Corinthians 5:13-21. This represents a division of the text into a section that holds together logically and that provides the immediate context necessary to understand the central portion of the text on which the

sermon will focus: verses 14 and 15. I decided it would be difficult to exposit verses 14 and 15 without continual reference to the verses before and after. Since the passage selected hangs together theologically, it might as well be read to the congregation and handled as the preaching portion.

Audience

Good biblical preaching makes the text speak meaningfully to the needs of the audience. This involves putting the text into context: first, the context of the world in which the audience lives, then also the more commonly recognized aspects of biblical context.

To preach well, one must expound Scripture, but one must also continually ask that question "So what?" It's not enough to say to an audience, "This is what the text means"; the preacher must also say, "This is why this is important to us." Thus, when beginning sermon preparation it's helpful to ask, "What do I know about the audience who will hear this sermon? What are their needs? What questions are they asking of God? What problems are they struggling with?" Then, while examining the text, the preacher also draws from it answers to the questions that the audience might ask of it. That in turn settles the question "So what?"

Text

Context. My sermon preparation moves from considering the audience to considering the text. The first thing to know is its context, from which most of the exegesis falls into place. After answering the context questions, I look at grammar and construction, and examine the important words in the text through word study. Only then do I attempt a tentative outline for preaching the text.

To be a good expository preacher, one must be bathed in the words and theology and background of the Scriptures. He/she must be conversant with the larger context into which the Bible book itself fits. There is no substitute for simply reading the Bible book again and over again. When I know by memory what every chapter in a Bible book

contains, then I understand the interconnections among parts and the various arguments, particularly for the Epistles.

To me, nothing is more important to expository preaching than seeing the text set within its many contexts. A television commercial I just saw illustrates the point. The screen shows a single dot. What is it? It's impossible to tell. Gradually the camera pulls back, showing another dot, then another and another. The first two or three are the same color, but newly revealed dots are different colors. Still it is impossible to tell what they are. The camera continues to pull back. A radical color change, a margin, a border of some kind, a curve

Good biblical preaching makes the text speak meaningfully to the needs of the audience.

appears. The individual dots blend together into shapes; still the shapes are unrecognizable. Back and back goes the camera. Suddenly recognition dawns! The dots make up a dark round circle; the circle is the pupil of an eye; the eye belongs to a face; the face is the face of a child.

It's impossible to overemphasize the importance of understanding the context in which the text occurs. To do this we start with the largest context and move progressively to narrower contexts until we come to the text itself. For our passage in 2 Corinthians, we must consider the larger world of the New Testament. Consider the following: Paul (as Saul) was a Pharisee. Soon after Jesus' death and resurrection, we find him doing his best to stamp out the infant Christian church. He was obviously convinced that Christianity was a heresy and Jesus a fraud. After encountering the living Christ on the Damascus road, he becomes convinced that Jesus is in fact the long-awaited Messiah and devotes all his energy in proclaiming Him to Jew and Gentile. What

changed?

Obviously, after the Damascus road experience he knows Jesus is not dead but alive, but why should that realization thrust Paul in the direction it does? Certainly God gives him a commission as apostle to the Gentiles, but what would be his message as apostle—simply that Jesus is alive? What does that mean? Could it be that the Damascus road experience was less significant than the following three days of blindness—three days during which Paul wrestled with the most upsetting question of his life, the question of how Jesus could be both cursed of God and blessed of God? Paul would certainly have known the Scripture that declares anyone hanged on a "tree" cursed of God (Deut. 21:23, cf. Gal. 3:13). He would certainly have believed that Jesus could not have been the Messiah since He was obviously cursed of God. Meeting Jesus on the Damascus road then would have thrown Paul's certainties about such things into a tailspin. Jesus is clearly exalted, yet He was just as clearly cursed of God. How could these two seemingly irreconcilable facts be reconciled?

Perhaps the answer came to Paul during the three days of blindness prior to his baptism, maybe afterward; but clearly at some point Paul saw that Jesus was cursed of God vicariously, not for his own sin, but for the sin of others. From that point onward the central thrust of Paul's message would be the substitutionary atonement of Jesus. The well-known and often-cited forensic and justificational emphasis in Paul's theology might well have stemmed from his struggle to find an answer to the dilemma that meeting Jesus on the Damascus road posed to him on that day.

Our verses in 2 Corinthians 5 come from Paul's pen, out of his head, shaped by his sense of who Jesus is, what Jesus did, and what that meant. To understand these verses, we need to get into Paul's head, enter into his experience, wrestle with his questions, and rejoice in his discoveries. This is what I mean by understanding the larger, New Testament-wide context in which the verses appear. If we can do this, we have begun to understand the first of the

many contexts in which this text must be placed.

The more immediate context is Paul's relationship with the Corinthian church and his Corinthian correspondence. The apostle explains that his attitude and actions toward the Corinthians are compelled by the love of Christ—the persecutions and afflictions are accepted as a part of what it means to share in Christ.

Perhaps you can see why discovering the contexts in which the text lives is more than an important part of understanding the text; it may also be the best way to preach the sermon. Reading the text and describing its context may be all that the audience needs to understand what God is saying in the text, not only to the original audience, but to them. The description of the original setting and the author's line of argument may be all that is necessary to establish the points of contact that enable the audience to say: "My life context is similar to that context, and I hear God speaking to me in this text."

Exegesis

No sharp line exists between understanding context and doing other kinds of exegesis. I separate them in my mind largely because I can do the former with my Bible alone, but to do the latter I need tools. Here is where I open my Greek Bible and do my own translation. I look up words in Arndt and Gingrich's *Lexicon*.¹ I parse verbs and decline nouns. I look up important words in *Kittle's*² or *Brown's*.³ I load my computer Bible and search for words, using a cross-reference index to look for other texts that deal with the same or similar subjects.⁴ I look at grammar and syntax, and try to understand what they might contribute.

In this text, for example, there is an obvious grammatical question to be asked about verse 14: Is "Christ's love" (*agape tou Christou*) an objective or subjective genitive? If it is objective, then the text means: "The love I have for Christ compels me"; if subjective, the text means: "The love that Christ has for me compels me." There is, of course, the inevitable disagreement

among commentators about how or even whether the question can be answered grammatically, and probably it does not matter much—the love of Jesus for us creates the love we have for Him (we love because He first loved us [1 John 4:10]), and both or either are compelling. In Paul's writings the genitive after *agape* is always subjective (e.g., Rom. 5:5; 8:39; 2 Thess. 3:5; see also Rom. 15:30; Eph. 2:4; Col. 1:13). It enriches sermon preparation, and possibly the sermon itself, to think it through and consider both possibilities.

Another exegetical question is the meaning of the two phrases "one died for all," and "therefore all died" (2 Cor. 5:14). The aorist of the first phrase suggests the once-and-for-all death of Jesus at Calvary. It happened in time

"The love that Jesus has for me and the love that I have for Jesus is the compelling force in my life. Everything I do flows from this."

and space as a historical event, over and over and done with. The aorist of the second phrase suggests something similar but considerably harder to comprehend—at some point in time and space all of us died. Reference to Romans 6 reminds us of similar Pauline statements: "We died to sin" (verse 2); "Our old self was crucified with him" (verse 6). When and how did we die to sin? When and how was our old self crucified? Paul's argument makes clear that the "how" was "in Christ" (verses 3, 4, 5, 6, 8) and the "when" was at the time of his death. *God dealt with us in Christ*. He put us in Him, and in Him we died, were buried, and were resurrected. In Him we now sit at the right hand of God (Eph. 2:6). Paul became "convinced" of all this, and that conviction brought him under the compelling love of Christ.

There is a parallel between our text in 2 Corinthians and chapter 6 of Ro-

mans. Being "convinced" in 2 Corinthians 5:14 is parallel to "know that our old self was crucified with him" combined with "count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" of Romans 6:6, 11. Being "compelled by the love of Christ" is parallel to "offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life" in Romans 6:13. In both cases an understanding of the meaning of the cross drives the Christian into consecrated ministry to Christ. Romans 6 is the general application to all Christians of Paul's personal experience with the gospel and its implications for him.

At this point in sermon preparation, I turn to the commentaries. Since each has a slightly different perspective, I find it helpful to read as many as I can get my hands on. I prefer to read what the commentators have to say without taking notes; this prevents borrowing too much of their language or specific ideas. I want instead to gain my own understanding of the text. This method enlists the help of commentators without having them write my sermon.

When I have done as much as I want with exegesis (usually I have to call a halt because of limitations of time), I write a paraphrase of the text. This brings together all I know about the text from my research and from my reading of what others have written. This is my paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15:

"The love that Jesus has for me and the love that I have for Jesus is the compelling force in my life. Everything I do and everything I am flows from this. And this love flows from my conviction that Jesus died for all of us when He died on the cross, and that, when He died, we all died in Him. And the reason He died is so we might live our lives for Him rather than for ourselves."

At this point the fun is over and the hard work about to begin.

Tentative outline of the sermon

For me, the hardest work in sermon preparation is coming up with an outline. Studying the text is fun. My mind sees a multitude of interesting ideas

that could be explored in a sermon. I can see lessons to each, warnings to amplify, and examples to emulate. But which of these is central? Which should be left for another sermon? How should the sermon be arranged?

The difficult task here is to move from understanding the text to presenting it. I find it helpful to cover a page with "thumbnail outlines," sketching in very brief form a dozen different outlines for presenting the sermon. Here are a few of the possibilities:

1. A new creation: what we all want to be
2. Compelled by the love of Christ: what it means to live as a new creation
3. Convinced that one died for all: how we become new creatures

1. Paul as an example of a man compelled by the love of Christ
2. How he got that way—he was convinced that One died for all
3. So he lived no longer for himself, but for Him who died and was raised again

1. Compelled by Christ's love means two things:
2. His love for us (subjective genitive)
3. Our love for Christ (objective genitive)

1. Christ died for us
2. In Him we died
3. We live no longer for ourselves, but for Him

This sketching of tentative outlines might resemble doodling. Now that I use an outliner program on my computer, I take advantage of its ability to rearrange elements, bin-sort, prioritize, and quickly create and automatically number new outlines.⁵ The process is almost like playing with what I know about the text to see how many different ways it can be put together.

Gradually a sense of how to handle the text emerges, along with the order of presenting the main ideas and what is important from what is not. I find myself settling on a way to organize what I want to say about the text, a way that appears more and more often in my

doodling. This way must be natural so that it will be easy for me to remember and not appear forced to the audience.

Theme, aim, and "So what?"

This is the time I ask questions about theme and aim. The theme? We, like Paul, will be controlled by the love of Christ when we too see that Christ's death and life are ours. The aim? To proclaim the gospel in a way that will create faith and new life.

At this time I also ask the "So what?" question: "I've spent all this time finding out about this text; I've got a bunch of possible sermons that could be preached from the text. But so what? Is it worth preaching? Is there any good reason to take the time of hundreds of people to listen to this sermon? Is it important? So what?"

My pastoral theology says that people need to hear the gospel story again and again and in every new way I can think of. Even though they may have heard the gospel before, they have never been the people that they are right now. Perhaps someone in the audience has a readiness to hear now what he or she has never heard before and will never hear again. The gospel is always new because the people who are listening are different than they have ever been. Their world is different. Their needs are different. They come with different ears and minds.

If I can make the story of Jesus live, especially the story of the cross, if I can make it real, if I can connect it with basic human emotion and need—then somebody out there will say, "I've heard the story before, but somehow this time I know it was for me that He came, for me that He died." They have internalized and operationalized something that before was abstract theological proposition. Jesus came alive for them as Saviour and Lord.

When I ask the "So what?" question of this text, this sermon, I answer it with a clear conviction that this is important, that this is basic, that this is life and death. What could be more important than showing people where they can find life?

Adding narrative and illustrations

At this point I go back through the

sermon and ask if there are illustrations to add that make the points easier to grasp and remember. I also look for stories that reinforce these points and add to them a pathos and humanness that make the ideas live.

First, I think about recent stories that might illustrate my points, then whether there are any Bible stories that do the same. Without good stories, I will resort to my collection of illustrations, but seldom are they of any use.

The past few years have seen a shift in my sermon style from didactic/cerebral to narrative/affective. In sermon preparation I ask myself, "Is there some way this sermon could be preached in narrative style? Could I take what I have learned from the text and share it in story form?"

In this particular case the story of Paul's own encounter with the risen Christ and his personal history with the Corinthian church suggest that this text might be preached by narrating the story of Paul's journey toward Damascus. He was secure in his knowledge that Christianity was false, because Jesus could not be the Christ since He had been cursed of God. Then he encounters the living Christ. How can this be? How can a Man cursed of God be now exalted? I can describe his torment of mind and soul during those three days of blindness in Damascus as he strives to put the puzzle together in some way that makes sense with all he knows about God and Scripture. I can let the audience share in his excitement as he sees in a flash of insight that Jesus was cursed of God, but not for Himself—rather "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor. 5:21).

Through this narrative I can transform a theological argument into a drama with great human appeal and pathos. I can make Paul human. I can make his discovery of the gospel dramatic and alive. I can take the doctrine of justification by faith and make it live through the experience of this great man of God. I can draw lines that connect Paul's experience with the experiences of my listeners. I can hold Paul up as an example of a person who was so sure he was right that he was terribly

wrong. I can even suggest to those in my audience who might be rigid in their thinking that they might emulate Paul in rethinking their own faith.

Given a choice between a narrative presentation of concepts derived from a text of Scripture and a didactic presentation of those same concepts, *I would always choose the narrative*. Not without reason did God present the Scripture story largely in narrative form. The form of Scripture ought to dictate the form of our preaching, just as the content of Scripture dictates the content.

Final outline

With the choice of a narrative style for the presentation of the sermon comes a decision to outline the sermon differently than would be the case if the sermon was presented in a more didactic way. (See box for final outline.)

The two large narratives make up the main line of the sermon. There are two departures from narrative: one to allow theological reflection on what it means to be compelled by the love of Christ, and the other to allow theological reflection on what it means to be convinced that One has died for all, therefore, all have died. The narrative sections should provide plenty of color, movement, and interest. The theological sections give us an opportunity to draw a line from Paul's experience to the text and from there to our own lives. The theological concepts are saved from abstraction and dryness by the storyline of the two narrative sections. This strikes me as a much better way to handle doctrinal or theological material than the usual method of textual exposition or topical instruction.

Preaching notes

This is a highly individualized matter. Some preachers will want a manuscript to read; others will preach the sermon without notes of any kind. There will be many in between who will want more or less of an outline to jog their memories and lead them through the preaching. Whatever works for the preacher is the best thing to use. I can say from my own experience that what works best is *the least of an outline I can get away with*. The better I prepare, the more time and energy I spend in

Sermon Outline

1. Narrative: Paul's dealings with the Corinthian church
 - a. Founding the church
 - b. Leaving Corinth to travel
 - c. Hearing disturbing stories from Corinth: immorality, factions, lawsuits, disorder, questioning the resurrection
 - d. Writing 1 Corinthians
 - e. They respond with accusations and hostility
 - (1) Paul is not a real apostle
 - (2) Paul doesn't have their best interest at heart
 - (3) Paul is crazy
 - f. 2 Corinthians 5:13
2. "For Christ's love compels us"
 - a. Paul was obviously compelled by something besides self-interest
 - (1) His persecutions and sufferings (2 Cor. 4:8, 9)
 - (2) His desire to please Christ (2 Cor. 5:9)
 - (3) His love and concern for these Corinthian Christians (2 Cor. 6:3-13)
 - b. The "love of Christ" was the compelling power of his life
 - (1) Christ's love for him
 - (2) His love for Christ
 - c. Why was Paul so compelled by the love of Christ? What is the secret? What happened to Paul to make him this way? Could it happen to us? Do you want to be "compelled by the love of Christ"?
3. Narrative: Paul discovers the gospel
 - a. Paul, convinced that Jesus could not be Messiah because he knew the Bible, says, "Cursed is everyone hanged on a tree."
 - b. On the Damascus road he meets Jesus
 - c. Dilemma: Jesus is blessed of God; Jesus is cursed of God. How can this be?
 - d. Three days of blindness, wondering, pondering
 - e. Insight: Jesus is cursed of God for us (2 Cor. 5:21)
 - f. This becomes Paul's passion, Paul's message, Paul's gospel
4. "Because we are convinced that one has died for all, therefore all died"
 - a. God dealt with us in Christ
 - b. When Jesus went to the cross, we went to the cross
 - c. When Jesus was crucified, we were crucified
 - d. When Jesus died, we died
 - e. When Jesus was buried in the tomb, we were buried
 - f. When Jesus was resurrected, we were resurrected
 - g. When Jesus ascended to heaven, we ascended to heaven
 - h. Look at Romans 6 and Ephesians 2:6
 - i. We have a new life in Christ (2 Cor. 5:16-19)
 - (1) No longer what we were
 - (2) New creations in Christ
 - (3) Reconciled to God by the death of His Son
 - (4) That's why "we regard no one from a worldly point of view" (2 Cor. 5:16)—not God, not others, not ourselves
 - (5) We are "made new" people with a new life, a new identity, and a new mission—all because Jesus "died for all, therefore all have died, and we live no longer for ourselves, but for Him, who for our sake died and was raised." We are "compelled by the love of Christ," and compelled by the love of Christ, we live for Him.

preparation, the less I can get away with in the way of preaching notes—and the more freedom and serendipity I experience in my preaching. ■

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

¹ W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

² Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969).

³ Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1978).

⁴ I like the cross-references in my NIV. I recognize that cross-referenced texts are linked only because someone thought they should be and aren't necessarily related.

⁵ I use a program called MaxThink, available from Neil Larson, 2425 B Channing, No. 592, Berkeley, CA 94704.

Severed roots and moving blues

Crystal Earnhardt

Coping with the pain of moving



Crystal Earnhardt, a pastor's wife, writes from Misenheimer, North Carolina.

The average pastor's wife moves every three to four years. How do you cope when you're the guest of honor at nearly every farewell party and waving goodbye depresses you?

When I indulge in childhood memories, family traditions come to mind. Leisurely Sunday dinners around a table with aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins. Christmas Eve services in the Methodist church, after which we received huge bags of candy and fruit. Summer picnics, family reunions and visits to our grandparents' farm.

I was blessed by a large, caring family who became an integral part of my daily existence. Becoming an Adventist pastor's wife changed all that, as my husband and I joined the literal Advent movement. Two years in this district, four years in another—and if we were extremely fortunate, five years in one district. Suddenly I found myself miles away from my parents, with no family rituals to speak of. Sabbath dinners frequently transpired in the homes of complete strangers or at church potlucks. My husband had several congregations to pastor, so my children didn't even have the pleasure of forming attachments to one Sabbath school class.

Sometimes I felt a void in my heart. For months or even a year I might hardly feel it. But then it would suddenly come and nearly overwhelm me. I was suffering from severed roots.

It's not that I had a problem making friends or living the role of a pastor's wife. Many church members became as close as natural relatives. In fact, that's where some of the problem came in. I made such good friends and then became rooted in their lives, never wanting to leave them. I wanted life to take on a familiar pattern. I wanted one house with trees that would grow with my children. I wanted at least one best friend who would one day reminisce with me about all the things we did together.

I gazed in envy at my neighbors, whose husbands worked a nine-to-five job. As we drove off to evening visitation or prayer meetings, I would look out the car window and see them barbecuing in their yards or sitting on their porches. We never had time for that!

Others feel the same way

At first I believed the problem to be uniquely mine because of my non-Adventist upbringing. Somehow I thought that most Adventist workers didn't mind being born with a suitcase in hand. But I had to be sure, so I phoned several pastors' wives. One young mother burst into tears.

"We live so far away from my parents," she lamented. "And my mother couldn't be with me when the baby was born. She was 2 months old before they could come and see us. My boy doesn't even know his own cousins! That hurts."

A career-minded mother felt the inconvenience in another way. "I find a job I like. My kids are happy with the church school. Then boom—the conference rearranges the districts."

A third wife only commented, "It bothers me when I hear preachers' kids declaring that they will never marry a pastor."

History of God's people

It helped me when I realized that I wasn't alone and the problem isn't isolated with the clergy. On average, most Americans move every four years.

We can all take comfort in knowing we are playing an important role in earth's drama before the universe. Most of those who preceded us were nomads, travelers, or wanderers. Mrs. Noah's home became a floating ark. Abraham and Sarah lived as itinerants in a tent. Zipporah followed her husband around in the burning desert with an ungrateful bunch of rebels. David spent time hiding in a cave. And the Creator of the universe confessed that He didn't have a place to lay His head on. All these could truly sing with conviction: "This world is not my home, I'm just a-passing thru."

Solutions

In case you've been suffering from severed roots or moving blues, here

are some ideas that have helped me and countless others.

1. *Think positively.* In my bouts of depression I do the glad game that Pollyanna made famous. Psychologists call it positive thinking. I count my blessings, listing all the positives. I can travel and see more of the world than my parents dreamed of visiting. Experiencing many cultures has broadened my horizons. I've been a part of many people's lives, help-

"It bothers me when I hear preachers' kids declaring that they will never marry a pastor."

ing make an eternal difference for them.

2. *Accept your role.* Paul wrote: "I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances" (Phil. 4:11, NIV). And "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6, NIV). There is healing in acceptance of our situation. We can roll up our sleeves and say, "OK, this is the path that God in His wisdom has given me. I must thank Him and do the best I can."

Remember that helping others is a proven method of working out one's own problems. Somebody in every district needs you. So find those hurting persons and make them your mission. When you get ready to move on, you'll feel a sense of achievement.

3. *Establish family traditions.* In her book *Journal of a Happy Woman*, June Strong wrote that she and her family join hands and

repeat the fourth commandment together each Friday evening as the sun sinks in the west. Afterward they enjoy a favorite soup and homemade bread. She knows this little tradition will never be forgotten.

Family night is an indispensable tradition. It may be the most important ritual that your children will remember. Select one evening each week to spend quality time together.

4. *Adopt grandparents, aunts, and uncles.* Maybe Grandma isn't a part of your children's everyday lives. They can't be with her long enough to love her as you do, but you can fill in gaps with a local elderly person who needs someone to love and care for them. Invite them over on a regular basis, especially for holidays.

Don't forget your own needs for a friend or a sister. Being the pastor's wife might make it difficult to form close friendships with church members, but God can give wisdom in choosing a friend.

5. *Focus on the larger picture.* You belong to a large family, one much bigger and better than the one you were born into. Your Father owns the whole world, and one day you'll be able to settle down and enjoy your inheritance. The next time you see a family picture, try to visualize the worldwide family of God with you right there too.

6. *Be rooted in God's Word.* The Bible can sustain you through any trial. Paul the apostle learned this in his own experience. From a lonely prison cell he wrote: "I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ" (Eph. 3:16-18, NIV). ■

A strategy to beat the moving blues

Turn your traveling blues into fond memories. Make a scrapbook of each district you've served in or place you've traveled to. Include pictures of the house, special places of interest, and of course, your local church family.

Achieving community in Sabbath school

Charles H. Betz

Class units provide a built-in opportunity.



Charles H. Betz, a retired Adventist pastor, lives in Portland, Oregon.

People are lonely. Have you noticed their faces? Though masked by poise or bravado, they are sad and forlorn. The problem, say social scientists, often is the inward pain of isolation. A recent survey reports that 4 out of 10 Americans acknowledge frequent or occasional feelings of intense loneliness.

In his book *A Nation of Strangers*, Vance Packard analyzes the uprooting and fragmentation of American lives, observing: "Personal isolation is becoming a major social factor of our time. A great many people are disturbed by the feeling that they are rootless or increasingly anonymous, that they are living in a continually changing environment where there is little sense of community."¹

Many factors bring on loneliness, among them the mobility of society. Some 49 million American citizens will pull up roots and move this year. But, as one observer said, "they lose more than family and friends, they lose themselves." One recently moved executive said, "To avoid the pain of saying goodbye we no longer say hello." M. Scott Peck describes the condition: "Trapped in our tradition of rugged individualism, we [Americans] are an extraordinarily lonely people. So lonely, in fact, that many cannot even acknowledge their loneliness to themselves, much less to others."²

Created for fellowship

God has recognized from Eden onward humanity's need for companionship. Declaring that "it is not good

for the man to be alone" (Gen. 2:18, NIV), He graciously provided marriage, children, extended families, and the church to meet our need for community. Note the experience of the New Testament church: "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. . . . All the believers were together and had everything in common. . . . Every day they continued to meet together . . . They . . . ate together with glad and sincere hearts" (Acts 2:42-46, NIV).

God calls us first into fellowship with His Son (see 1 Cor. 1:9), and this leads to the horizontal dimension of Christian fellowship. The unique New Testament word *koinonia* means sharing together Christ and His benefits. We are called fellow workers, fellow citizens, fellow soldiers, and elect together. We are invited to partake with, suffer with, and rejoice with one another. These are known as "syn" compounds, a Greek prefix meaning "with, along with, or together." These compounds in the New Testament indicate the newness and uniqueness of our life together in Christ, which is far deeper than any camaraderie known to the world.

A built-in solution

Why, then, are there so many lonely, isolated church members—including Seventh-day Adventists? Larry Richards describes the condition often seen in Bible classes: "How tragic the sterility of classes where strangers sit together each week in

well-dressed rows, masking the hurts and clutching close the private joys while a 'teacher' whom few know intimately mouths the words of truth."³

Seventh-day Adventists usually do quite well at the door in making people feel welcome. Unfortunately, that's often the end of our "community." We nod and smile, give casual greetings, and even pass the time of day. Then what? Many visitors and fellow church members return home to four walls and a lonely existence.

My thesis is that we have a built-in answer: Sabbath school classes. Unfortunately, we are not taking advantage of the opportunity. We gather around the Word of God and are blessed, but where is genuine community? Our problem is too formal a context for learning, too much attention given to lesson content, and too little listening and sharing. So many teachers dominate the class by lecturing 80 percent of the time. "But," you ask, "how can we enjoy fellowship when we have only 20 or 30 minutes together?"

Well, church policy stipulates 70 minutes for Sabbath school. In our congregation the superintendents streamline the program (large group time) to about 20 minutes—time enough for the scripture reading, prayer, and the mission feature. This leaves 50 minutes for the classes (small group time). In our class we have about 15 minutes of sharing, caring, and intercessory prayer. This provides 35 minutes for discussing the lesson (anything less, in my opinion, is inadequate).

Community takes time to build

I have discovered that a closely knit Sabbath school class can truly embody community—a genuine therapeutic experience. But there is no such thing as instant community. It takes many months to really get acquainted and develop a sharing atmosphere—warm, open, and caring. The teacher must have a vision of what he or she wants to do and follow some carefully designed steps:

1. Teaching must be person-cen-

tered, open, and nonthreatening, with emphasis on relational Bible study. In preparing to teach I look for scriptures that can help individual members: "What is there in this lesson that will encourage John, who is out of work?" I have tried to develop a "shockproof" attitude toward negative comments and "far-out" ideas. One learner said, "The whole idea of blood atonement turns me off." There were no shocked expressions, only mutual support followed by sharing some appropriate scriptures. A non-Adventist husband said recently, "Why is it so hard to surrender?" Although he used a slang word in expressing his frustration, again

A closely knit Sabbath school class can truly embody community—a genuine therapeutic experience.

there were supportive thoughts and helpful scriptures. Another remarked, "I wonder if I'll ever make it?" Still another said, "Pray for my son; he has run away." After one year we are learning to "share our mutual woes."

2. Use the discussion method of teaching.⁴ I talk less than half of the time and usually refer questions back to the class. This facilitates exciting interaction. I keep the discussion moving forward, make it Christ-centered, and focus attention on the Bible.

3. Many find listening difficult, especially teachers and preachers since their training encourages them to talk. I try to listen with my eyes and my heart and develop a "tolerance for silence." This creates an atmosphere of openness and encourages discussion.

4. Getting acquainted with class members by personal visitation has helped immensely. When you get to know people's needs and show unconditional love, they respond in like manner.

Gratifying results

The spirit of sharing has enriched our class experience. M. Scott Peck says: "We cannot be truly ourselves until we are able to share freely the things we most have in common: our weakness, our incompleteness, our imperfection, our inadequacy, our sins, our lack of wholeness and self-sufficiency."⁵ Our class has an outreach project of visiting missing Sabbath school members. We have had the joy of seeing some of these return to Sabbath school.

The results of this sharing approach have been gratifying. In one year attendance has nearly doubled, and every week we have nonmembers attending—husbands and friends of our members. One lady, away for some time, upon returning said, "I'm so glad to be back in our class. I feel like I'm at home." Another testified, "I feel safe in this class. I can be myself and express my frustrations, my doubts, my joys, and my sorrows."

Ellen White counsels regarding classes: "They should be family schools, where every student will receive special help from his teachers as the members of the family should receive help in the home. Tenderness, sympathy, unity, and love are to be cherished."⁶ "You must win their affection, if you would impress religious truth upon their heart."⁷

A unique feature of our class is the season of intercessory prayer. This is when we get closest to one another, joining hearts in earnest prayer expressing needs, sorrows, wants, and thanksgiving.

I recognize that from a pastor's point of view, there are many factors and methods available to a congregation in achieving *koinonia*. But small groups experiencing genuine Christian community can enhance any method. I wish I had discovered the potential and power in a Sabbath school class before I retired!

Your greatest challenge in achieving community is changing traditional thinking and establishing new methods of teaching. It takes time to re-educate Sabbath school teachers and leaders. But remember Ellen White's

classical formula for change: "Educate, educate, educate."⁸ In addition to her *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* two books that have helped me are *The Different Drum* by M. Scott Peck, and *Life Together* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer.⁹

With vision, hard work, and much prayer your Sabbath school classes can become centers of rewarding and productive excitement. Your church can become a spiritual home and a place of genuine community. ■

¹ Vance Packard, *A Nation of Strangers* (New York: David McKay Co., Inc., 1972), p. ix.

² M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1987), p. 58.

³ Larry Richards, "Church Teaching: Content Without Context," *Christianity Today*, Apr. 15, 1977.

⁴ See Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Sabbath School Work* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1938), p. 166.

⁵ Peck.

⁶ White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 6, p. 152.

⁷ ———, *Fundamentals of Christian Education* (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assn., 1923), p. 68.

⁸ These words appear in a number of her books. For example, see *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1963), pp. 78, 79, 262.

⁹ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco: Harper and Row Pubs., 1976).

Letters

From page 2

■ I should like to call attention to Alberto Timm's summary regarding the use of tithe in reference to four main statements by Ellen White. He states that while the first allows tithe use to avoid losing the "humblest place of worship" in a missionary context, it does not endorse the use of tithe for "construction, renovation, improvement, or maintenance of a church in an established area (which, in the same context [Ellen White] strongly disapproves)."

Apparently Timm is unaware of White's statement in *Testimonies*, volume 4, page 464: "Institutions that are God's instruments to carry

forward His work on the earth must be sustained. Churches must be erected, schools established, and publishing houses furnished with facilities for doing a great work in the publication of the truth to be sent to all parts of the world. *These institutions are ordained of God and should be sustained by tithes and liberal offerings.* As the work enlarges, *means* will be needed to carry it forward in all its branches" (italics supplied).—Raymond Ermshar, Colton, California.

Valuegenesis

Thank you for Helmut Ott's article on the Valuegenesis report (February 1994). How saddened I was to read that 80 percent of our youth believe that behavior in some way saves them. I am the mother of two wonderful academy-age boys who seem to sense legalism and fight for the truth of salvation by faith. I thought that our youth were hearing and getting it right, and I was looking forward to a church led by them.

Having struggled with salvation Adventist-style since converting from the evangelical Baptist persuasion 20 years ago, I believe that few of those 80 percent will remain Adventist. Behavior-oriented salvation can only lead an honest young person to conclude, "I'll never be good enough. What is the use!" How many times I have come to this hopeless conclusion. As an adult I have discovered that life is too short not to have the assurance of God's unconditional love and full hope that because I have accepted Christ's atoning sacrifice for me I am fit for heaven. When I hold onto this most basic, sacred, and precious of doctrines—the Gospel—there is so much joy in my life that Christian behavior is a natural result. When I lose sight of this hope and revert to my old behavior-oriented thinking, I assume I'll never be good enough, and the pleasures of this world seem to hold some promise of relief for my hopelessness. Twenty years is too long to struggle with assurance.

I pray that my boys will always know the joy of assurance and never waste a day in legalism.

Our church has little hope for the future as long as 80 percent of our youth believe in behavior as a means of salvation.—Brenda Johnson, Livingston, New York.

Preachers' kids

I was happily shocked to find a news note about the Rocky Mountain Conference workers' kids' retreat (December 1993).

As a former preacher's kid (PK), I know how much that would have meant to my brother and me. Most of the time we got lost in the shuffle of moving and our parents giving their lives to the Lord's work. It can be bitter stuff to swallow when you find on your birthday or at a special school program that your father couldn't be with you because he had to visit someone at the hospital or be with parishioners that need him. Your mother needs to be on top of it all the time. Otherwise it will be documented, or perhaps someone in the congregation will hurt her feelings by saying an offhand remark about her children or her dress or whatever is bugging them.

If these PKs can have the kind of attention and time with other kids that are having these same frustrations, what a lift of guilt and help of self-esteem. I would say half my friends who are PKs do not go to church or even practice Christianity.

God bless the Rocky Mountain Conference for caring!—Paulette Straine, Newbury Park, California.

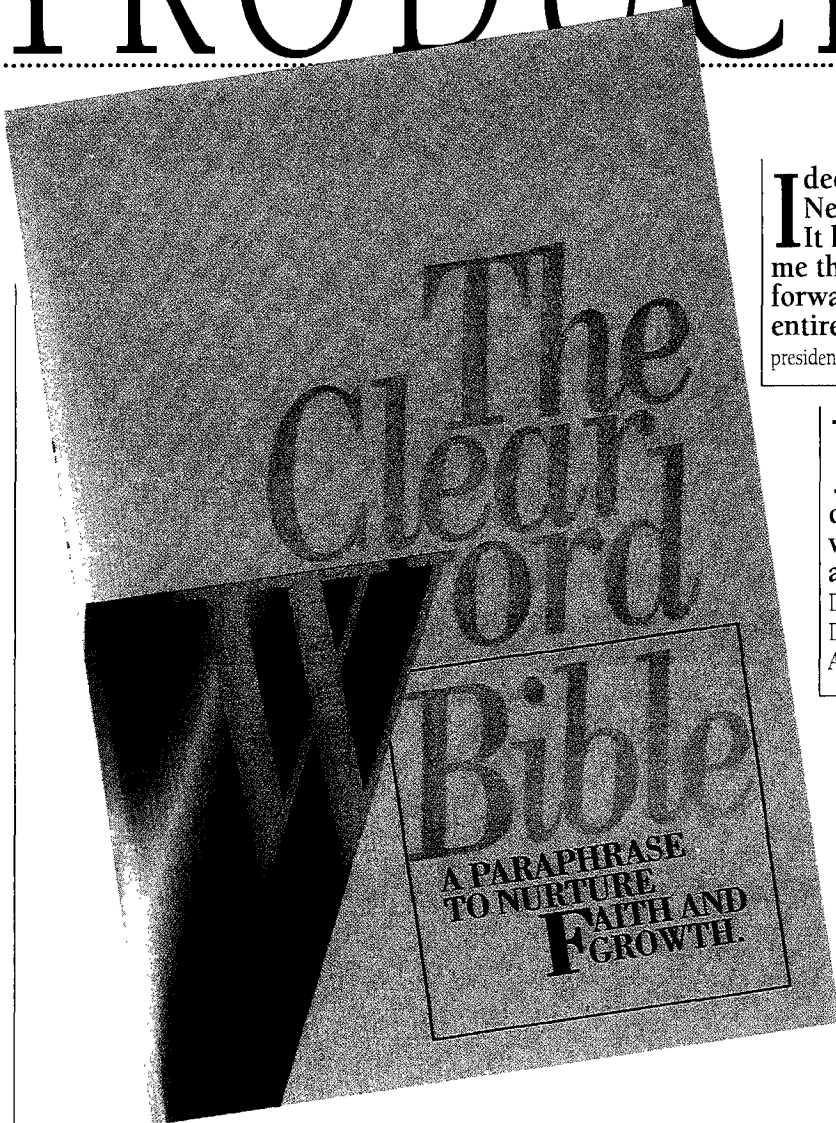
Ministry cover

Your December 1993 issue cover appears to open up new vistas in *Ministry*. It makes the contents vibrant because the balanced graphics reveal the purpose of your journal. Even though I prefer less typographical variation in the Bible text, the total picture is still impressive and adds dignity to the publication.—Johann Thorvaldsson, Holbaek, Denmark.

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It began as a private devotional experience for a Christian professor. Then family and friends prevailed on Jack Blanco, head of the Religion Department at Southern College, to publish his New Testament paraphrase. It energized the devotional lives of people from coast to coast.

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I deeply appreciate Dr. Blanco's New Testament paraphrase. It has been such a blessing to me that I have been looking forward to his completion of the entire Bible."—Robert S. Folkenberg, president, General Conference of SDA

Passages that through familiarity have almost become clichés leap from the page with new life, luster, clarity, and relevance."—Richard M. Davidson, chairman, Old Testament Department, Theological Seminary, Andrews University

I never thought I would see the day when I would have to take a Bible away from my sons to get them to go to bed."—Wayne Hicks, youth leader, Upper Columbia Conference of SDA

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Adventist Theology 1844 to 1994

From page 13

the mind-set of pristine Christianity in the process), other Adventist thought leaders (in their desire to escape what they consider to be the theological errors and extremes of fundamentalism) are in danger of backing into an advocacy of the liberal Christianity of the 1920s. At the basis of this polarization are hermeneutical/epistemological issues of the first rank—especially that of the primacy between revelation and reason. But it should be recognized by all parties, that a modernist view (as was espoused by the liberals in the 1920s) that has adopted the enlightenment emphasis on the supremacy of human reason above Scripture is no more healthy than the fundamentalist error that confuses 1920s rigidities with the mind-set of Christ and

the apostles.

Valuable lessons

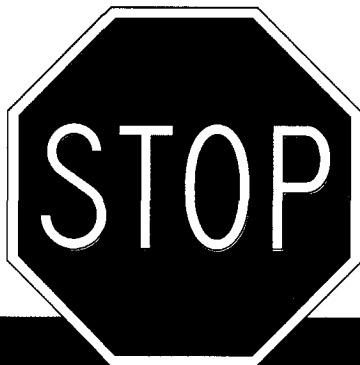
In closing, I would suggest that Seventh-day Adventist theologians in their search for identity face the same basic dynamic in 1994 that they faced in the 1890s—the dynamic of polarization. Of course, in 1994 the dynamic is more complex since the conflict is being fought by more actors and, more important, on two distinct but overlapping fronts at the same time. But the dangers are the same.

Any religious group is in trouble if and when its theology is being formulated primarily in opposition to a real or perceived polar position. That very dynamic sets the stage for more rapid strides toward both further polarization and additional theological distortion. One must be aware of those dynamics as he or she seeks to do biblical theology in the spirit of Christian Adventism at its best.

We learn not only from the dangers faced by Adventist theologians in the 1890s, but also from the possible solu-

tions that lay at their fingertips. The main lesson for us is one that our forebears failed to grasp—that *the advocates of Adventism's polar positions need each other*. It is difficult and probably impossible for any individual or group to be totally wrong or totally correct. All of us have captured important aspects of truth as well as portions of error. And all of us can learn from those holding theological positions contrary to our own. But in order so to learn, it is mandatory that we internalize the spirit of Christ—a spirit that not only thinks the best of others, but one that maintains an openness to truth from all sources.

One key to theological health is to keep our eyes focused on the seeming intent of Scripture and the essentials of both Christianity and Adventism. A second key to theological health is to learn from each other and to back away from ideologically defensive positions as Adventist theology seeks to continue guiding the church in its extended and ongoing search for identity. ■



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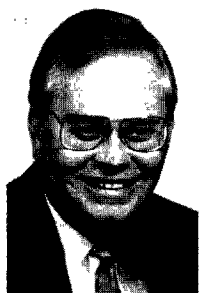
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You will catch more fish with the net

James A. Cress

When Jesus likened evangelism to fishing, He probably wasn't thinking of a line on a pole dropped into a quiet stream with a bit of attractive bait. Jesus envisioned winning great numbers—the gospel going to the whole world.

Soulwinning, like fishing, is one of those activities where quantity is determined by the tools you choose. You might catch a fish or two with a rod and lure, but huge numbers come only to those who use a net. You may win a few souls through personal one-to-one witness, but large numbers are usually won only as the result of mass evangelism when the message is preached to the largest number of people possible.

Evangelistic audiences once were limited to the size of auditorium or stadium or the technological capacity of equipment to amplify the voice of the preacher. Today, different tools make the task of preaching to massive numbers quite simple. For example, in South America, Alejandro Bullon regularly preaches to 50-60,000 souls in large arenas.

Opportunity for mass outreach

Evangelist Billy Graham recently conducted a satellite evangelistic campaign from Europe with more than two million attendees participating in 1,400 cities throughout 59 countries. Next February, Mark Finley of *It Is Written* and the North American Division are teaming together to launch our own evangelistic satellite thrust: NET '95. For the North American

continent, this great venture raises the vision of God's people to something bigger than has ever yet been achieved. By placing such a priority on evangelism, the human and financial resources of the church are refocused on the church's mission—to evangelize the world. Pastors and members will be united across five time zones toward a common purpose.

Success comes at the local level

While NET '95 provides a tremendous central focus, the success of the whole venture comes down to what happens at the local level. The late American politician, Tip O'Neil, noted that "everything in politics is local." Applying that to evangelism: everything in successful soulwinning ultimately is local.

The technology will be in place. One of our most talented and capable evangelists will be preaching. A quality team, led by C. D. Brooks of the *Breath of Life* telecast, will join Mark Finley in Chattanooga, Tennessee. The finest musicians will be secured. The most able of technicians, camera operators, and directors will produce a quality product.

But remember, unless something happens in the local church, little will result. Everything in soulwinning is ultimately local! This is why great evangelists such as Billy Graham, Mark Finley, C. D. Brooks, Bill Scales, and Alejandro Bullon insist on involving local lay members in preparation for their crusades. This also is

why as much effort and energy must be invested in preparing for such an opportunity as goes into the actual crusade itself, and why follow-through must be an integral part of the whole process rather than an afterthought.

How to successfully participate

What can pastors and elders do to ensure local success from such opportunities? Try the following:

Promote this opportunity as your congregation's local response to Christ's great commission.

Pray for abundant response from those who will participate in your area.

Work to ensure that every member and nonmember possible will attend the crusade events.

Prepare your audience to participate in the evangelistic crusade by pre-events designed to bring people to your church.

Motivate lay members to accept personal responsibility for inviting their neighbors and working associates, as well as their own families, to attend.

Secure the best possible equipment and make the setting as attractive as possible for your guests.

Visit each person who attends and invite them personally to accept Jesus as their Saviour.

Baptize those who accept Jesus and learn His message of truth.

Disciple new converts into healthy, witnessing members of the church community who themselves reach out to others. ■

Church and Denominational Growth: What Does (and Does Not) Cause Growth or Decline

David A. Roozen and C. Kirk Hadaway, eds., Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1993, 400 pages, US\$21.95. Reviewed by Lawrence G. Downing, pastor, Anaheim, California.

I assumed pastors were responsible for church growth. Research shows otherwise. Churches grow when the members decide they want them to grow. However, pastors *can* block growth.

This discovery, one of many that will challenge your ideas about church growth, is in David Roozen and Kirk Hadaway's important book for pastors, church administrators, and lay people. Most of us who pastor Anglo, English-speaking churches recognize the declining health of mainline denominations in North America. This book identifies the symptoms and suggests some remedies.

Sixteen respected scholars present data in charts and graphs to illustrate their textual material. Then each author evaluates the findings.

Church attendance began declining in the fifties and sixties. These scholars expect no turnaround for either conservative or mainline churches. (Their research contradicts the assumption that conservative churches grow and liberal ones decline. Strictness is more a matter of sectarian survival, not church growth.) The traditional and liberal polarization will continue to increase. How the shifting balance of power settles will be critical to a denomination's future. This finding has specific application to Seventh-day Adventists.

Some other important insights include:

Churches primarily concerned with their own needs stagnate. Growing churches usually are younger and newer.

Denominational loyalty no longer exists as it once did. People do not believe like their parents and grandparents, and lack their commitment

level.

You may have heard about church placement: "Better many small lights than one big one." Research does not support this theory. To use politically correct language, small churches are developmentally challenged and cannot compete in the marketplace. This conclusion affirms the "hunch" of veteran author and observer of church life Lyle Schallar.

Hiring a church consultant for church growth problems usually doesn't work. After a short burst, life goes on as before.

Chapter 3 studies evangelism in three North American denominations: American Baptist, United Church of Christ, and United Methodist. Evangelism is the only factor that increases

Administrators need to know that their decisions influence denominational growth.

church growth. (By evangelism the authors do not mean public meetings, but people inviting people to join them at church.) Their statistics show that public revivals or other meetings have no lasting effect.

Since the seventies a new challenge confronts pastors. Decisions of denominational leadership can negatively impact congregations. Many people today leave church because they do not agree with how leaders handle certain issues. Because of increased awareness of what leadership does, pastors have to answer questions beyond their control. According to the authors, administrators need to know that the institutional factor heavily influences denominational growth. What denominational leaders do affects the local church, and how leaders model their faith can't be ignored!

Because of Adventist attempts to reclaim former members, one section caught my attention. Why do people come back to church? Research reveals several reasons. Inner need (40 percent) and desire to rediscover their religious faith (27 percent) are at the top. What seems not to work is a church program designed to bring back former members. A scholar states, "None of the six most frequently cited reasons involve the proactive outreach of the church." It didn't even make it in the top 20!

The editors devote three chapters to the church in Canada, which is in even more difficulty than in the United States. In Canada baby boomers come to church only on their own terms. Yet hope exists for the church in both countries. People remain spiritual beings, and many look for churches that minister to their needs. To meet those needs rapid response to change is essential. A warm, friendly, comfortable, adaptable congregation can thrive. Keeping the status quo brings decline. If we use our energy to preserve what we have, we may survive, but we will not grow.

The editors have not provided a cook book for church growth, and not all the information applies to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But don't think we are different. The data and conclusions challenge the church to consider allocating our resources in new ways. One author questions parochial education. Research in the Roman Catholic Church indicates that parochial schooling has slight, if any, influence on church growth. The Seventh-day Adventist Valuegenesis report offers a strong base for this conclusion.

Do we have the courage to question our "sacred cows"? Are we willing to direct more people and money toward the support and development of local congregations? Do our ancillary institutions benefit or hinder the local church? This book helps us look at some hard questions.

The Bible: Our Great Treasure House

Ellen G. White, *Leaves of Autumn Books*, P.O. Box 440, Payson, Arizona 85547 (602-474-3654), 1993, 72 pages, \$4.95, paper. Reviewed by Wayne Willey, pastor, Bentonville, Arkansas.

In 1906 Ellen White wrote a lengthy manuscript on the role of the Bible in the Christian life under the title "Our Great Treasure House." The American edition of *Signs of the Times* magazine eventually published the manuscript in 20 installments over an eight-month period. Those articles, previously available only in the four-volume reprint of Ellen White's *Signs of the Times* articles, now have been collected, set in large type, and published in book form.

This article series provides clear insight into Ellen White's views on the Bible as she approached the end of her life. I believe this book has the potential for becoming as important in helping us understand her views of

the Bible as *Steps to Christ* has been in comprehending her views of the gospel.

Every pastor and church member will benefit by reading the material in this volume. *Leaves of Autumn* specializes in short-run reprints of out-of-print materials. Therefore, only 400 copies of this book are currently available. I encourage you to order one without delay.

Raising Them Chaste

Richard and Renee Durfield, *Bethany House*, Minneapolis, (1-800-328-6109) 1991, 175 pages, US\$7.99, paper. Reviewed by Tony R. Moore, pastor, *Shadyside Seventh-day Adventist Church*, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

As a pastor and father of two teenagers, I found *Raising Them Chaste* to be just the book I needed. When I first heard the Durfields on *Focus on the Family*, I was moved by their concept of a "key talk." In a day of rampant immorality children still look to their parents for guidance. The

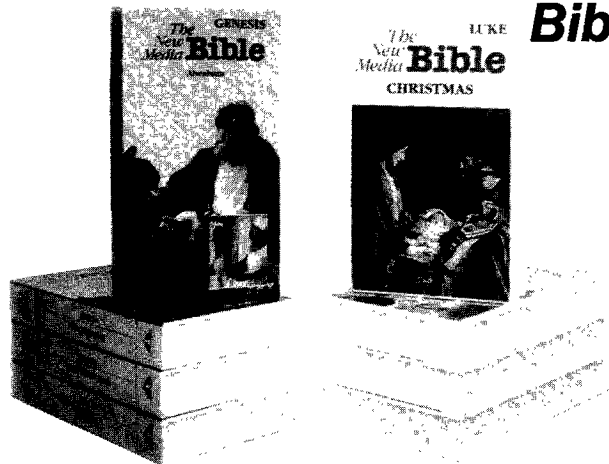
Durfields tell how parents can use a beautiful symbolic gesture to make a difference.

The authors suggest planning a special evening when a father can take his son or a mother her daughter to a nice restaurant. During their time together the parent encourages the teen to ask questions about marriage and sex. The parent leads the young person to see the value of preserving his or her body as a gift to God and keeping it as a pure gift for a future spouse. The two confirm the decision by a covenant the young person makes with the Lord. Then the mother or father gives the teenager a ring with a key as a symbol of the covenant and their desire to stay pure for the one of God's choosing.

During the ensuing years the key and ring are a constant reminder of that decision. On the wedding night this key can be given to the new spouse.

The book gives practical examples of youth who have benefited from the key talk. The Durfields also discuss

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other hurdles parents may face and the problems of single adults (including the divorced). The authors deal with tough questions like "How far is too far?" and talk about setting dating goals and guidelines. I recommend this book for anyone who has children approaching the teen years. The writing brought tears to my eyes and hope to my heart.

Power to Witness

James W. Zackrison, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1993, US\$7.95, paper. Reviewed by Brian Jones, pastor, Frametown, West Virginia.

Power to Witness gives clear guidance on how to share the gospel in the context of God's last warning before Christ's return.

James Zackrison tells how we can have church growth, not for denominational aggrandizement, but for winning souls. His definition of church growth governs the book: "For a church to grow means that it will grow in three areas: the number of converts it wins, growth of the spirituality of its members, and the multiplication of its ministries that it carries out."

The author sees discipling as the key to this threefold program. He defines a disciple as "a person who has been born again, joined the church, identified his or her spiritual gifts, and is committed to fulfilling that role *without continual* external motivation."

He emphasizes the Holy Spirit's role in making Christ real to us and empowering us to loosen Satan's hold on people as we magnify our Saviour. The author deals with the interrelationship between the fruits and the gifts of the Spirit in the work of the church.

He analyzes Christ's methods of winning souls and shows how we can apply them today. He discusses how to live a winsome faith yet without compromise in a secular world.

Drawing on Revelation 2 and 3, Zackrison gives a succinct sketch of the church's changing philosophy of evangelism in the past 1,900 years. He sees God's people of today return-

ing to the early church model of evangelism, which included more than instruction, converting, and baptizing. A missing element is being restored: that of teaching new converts how to win souls. Wherever it appears, this element produces church growth.

Zackrison writes with urgent conviction. He uses more than 25 diagrams to clarify texts. This book would make an excellent guide for small group study on witnessing.

Recently Noted

How to Survive in a Dead Church and Other Congregational Hazards to Your Spiritual Health, Doug Batchelor with Karen Lifshay, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1994, 127 pages, US\$8.95, paper.

Doug Batchelor, a pastor, and Karen Lifshay, a writer and pastor's wife, tell members how to cope with spiritual hazards found in the church. The authors discuss difficulties rang-

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ing from boring churches to mean ministries and all the problems in between. They give this advice within an ingenious framework of humor guaranteed to give you a few chuckles. "You know you are in a dead church when the members could be mistaken for mannequins if they didn't snore; the members look like they've been baptized in lemon juice; the only witnessing program is Ingathering; the youngest member is on Social Security."

Faith Amid Apostasy, *Frank Holbrook, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1994, 128 pages, US\$7.95, paper.*

Jeremiah faced some of the most troublous times of any of the prophets yet kept a strong faith. Frank Holbrook writes on the themes of the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations to give encouragement in today's trying times.

Angels, We Never Walk Alone,

Walton J. Brown, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Hagerstown, Maryland, 1987, US\$7.95, 173 pages, paper.

Books about angels have become popular recently in the secular as well as the religious press. Walton Brown gives the history of angels in the Bible and in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, especially as revealed and experienced in the work of Ellen White. We find renewed encouragement in understanding the ministry of angels in our own lives.

My Feet Need Washing Too, *Timothy N. Sharpe, Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Hagerstown, Maryland, 1990, US\$2.99, 96 pages, paper.*

A pastor writes with sensitivity and humor about the ordinary people in his congregation and community who teach him about forgiveness and love.

The Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement (German Reform), *Helmut H. Kramer, Biblical Research Institute, General Conference of Seventh-*

day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland, 1990, 95 pages, US\$3.95, Cdn\$5.55, paper.

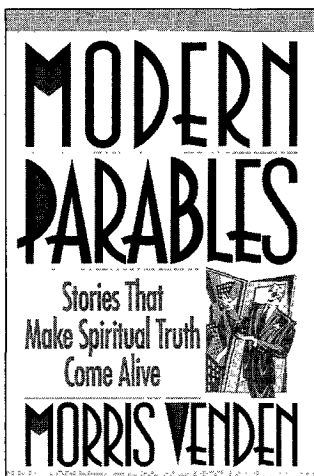
An informative book on an early Adventist offshoot group that remains active. Written by a former president of the group in North America, the material gives insight into this little-understood movement and their antagonism toward the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Kramer gives suggestions on how to witness to Reformers.

Nowhere to Turn, *Rhonda Graham, Pacific Press Publishing Assn., Boise, Idaho, 1993, 160 pages, US\$9.95, paper.*

What does a pastor's wife do when her husband of 17 years packs up and leaves? Turn to the church? Not in this story. Rhonda Graham records the pain and sorrow of a broken pastoral family from the viewpoint of Ellen, the disillusioned and forsaken wife. Every pastor who has ever contemplated a divorce should read this volume.

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1994 School of Evangelism

As of presstime, openings are still available to register for the 1994 school of evangelism conducted by the Adventist Evangelistic Association in Newbury Park, California. The faculty for the November 29-December 8 session includes Mark and Teenie Finley, Don and Margie Gray, Lyle and Peggy Albrecht, Dan and Gloria Bentzinger, Richard and Mary Halversen, and Leo and Tammy Schreven. Enrollment is limited. 805-373-7612.—C. Lloyd Wyman, coordinator.

Rediscovering Christian standards

Shall We Dance? is a new look at Seventh-day Adventist standards from a Christian perspective in the 1990s. Steve Case, from his rich background in youth work and research, digs beneath the do's and don'ts to discover the biblical principles relating to music, jewelry, alcohol, sexuality, movies, Sabbath-keeping, knowing God's will, competitive sports, and dancing. Available in book form for US\$12.95 and as a cassette tape series for US\$25. To ship in the U.S. add \$2 for the book and \$3 for the tapes. Make check payable to Piece of the Pie Ministries, 3732 California Ave., Carmichael, CA 95608.

Demographic gold

Rather than taking months to know the needs of your community, you can get valuable and

immediate demographic information from the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University. ICM offers a detailed demographic analysis of any given community in the United States, identifying the various people clusters and their lifestyles, plus a report of how well Seventh-day Adventists are doing in reaching these types of people. Such information is extremely helpful in determining what kinds of evangelism and preevangelism might be most effective. For costs and information contact the Institute of Church Ministry, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, MI 49104. Or phone (616) 471-3575

Books and videos

Hart Research Center is a research, development, and publishing organization with the specific objective of providing materials that enable and enhance outreach activities by pastors and individual church members. Available videos include: *Digging Up the Past*, a new approach to video evangelism featuring David Down; *Making Friends for God*, a video seminar featuring Mark Finley; *Fulfilling the Gospel Commission*, a video seminar with Mark

Finley. Books offered include: *Prayer*, by C. E. Bradford; *The Jesus Generation and Countdown to the Showdown*, by Dwight K. Nelson; *Studying Together*, by Mark Finley; and *Teens on the Witness Stand* by Cindy Tutsch.

For prices and more information, contact Hart Research Center, P.O. Box 2377, Fallbrook, CA 92088.

Baptizing children

Baptizing children between 8 and 9 years old can be a sensitive issue. It's often difficult for parents, pastor, and congregation to gauge the candidate's understanding of commitment to Christ. When a young child requests baptism, I arrange a visit with the family. I express my joy about the decision and show them a series of Bible studies that child

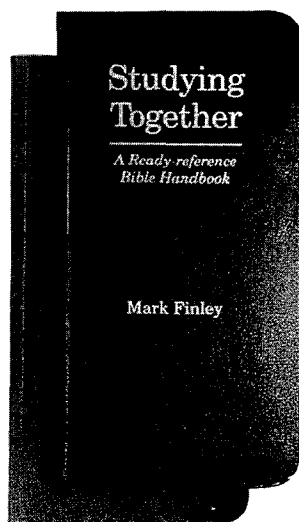
and parents should do together. I use Marjorie Gray's "Good News for Today Kid's Lessons," which has 24 lessons especially suited for this age group.

When three lessons are completed, I visit the family and ask questions that test the child's understanding (not memorization skills). When the series is complete, a date for baptism can be set.

This approach assures parents that their child is ready for baptism, since they have done the lessons together and also are present during my visit. It also assures me as pastor, since persevering through 24 lessons indicates a readiness for baptism. Peer pressure is largely negated. The young candidate has a basic understanding of what it means to be a Christian Seventh-day Adventist. Just before the baptism I briefly explain the process to the congregation.—Bill Peterson, Sylacauga, Alabama.

\$25 for your ideas

Please send us a suggestion about how pastors can make their ministry more effective or less stressful. If we publish it, we will send you \$25. If your idea promotes a product or service you are selling, we'll be glad to consider it for publication but won't pay you \$25! Send ideas to *Ministry*, Shop Talk Editor, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. U.S. citizens, please include Social Security number.



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Spiritual Ministries Conference

What Spiritually Healthy Churches Look Like

October 5-8, 1994

Sponsored by the North American Division and the Northern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Host Church

The Roseville Seventh-day Adventist Church has had a growth rate of 200% over the last 10 years. Come hear how

Roseville and other growing SDA churches have learned to be spiritually healthy and to have a passion for lost people.

Purpose

To discover what makes churches spiritually healthy and ready for growth. We will examine the "whole" church body and all its parts.

Registration Information

Fees include: Notebook, attendance at each session, choice of workshops and Sabbath meals. Confirmation packet: Packet will include details on scheduling, hotels and restaurants.

Location

Roseville is just northeast of downtown Sacramento, California, on Interstate 80.

Topics

- Assimilation Evangelism
- Family Life Lay Ministry
- Leadership Membership Care
- Prayer Small Groups
- Stewardship Vision
- Worship

Schedule

The conference begins Wednesday, October 5, with registration at 6:00 p.m. and the first plenary session at 7:00 p.m. It will close on Sabbath, October 8, at 6:30 p.m.

Registration Form • Spiritual Ministries Conference

Copy this form for additional registrants

Name _____

Address _____

City, State & Zip _____

Daytime Phone with Area Code _____

- \$50 First registered individual
- \$45 Each additional person from same church
- \$35 Per person for groups of six (6) or more
- Early bird registration—Save \$5 each if reservation is received before September 5, 1994
- Check is enclosed and made payable to Roseville SDA Church

Mail to Roseville Seventh-day Adventist Church, 914 Grby Way, Roseville, California 98661

To register by phone or for more information, call 800/601-5928

Who should come to this conference?
This conference is for pastors and lay leaders who have a desire to develop a spiritually healthy church with visible signs of growth. We will give you the opportunity to study growing churches, discover essential church growth principles and learn practical ministry ideas that you can take back to your church. It is also our prayer that you will experience a personal spiritual refreshing.

Featured Presenters
Spiritual Formation
Elder Ben Maxson
Upper Columbia Conference



Understanding the Gospel
Dr. Bill Liversidge
Creative Growth Ministries

Power of Prayer
Juanita Kretschmar
New York City Van Ministry



Spiritual Cooperation of
Conferences and Churches
Elder Merlin Kretschmar
Greater New York Conference

Leaders' Family Life
Dr. Kay Kuzma
Family Matters Ministry



and many others...