

# Ministry

# International Journal for Pastors

December 1996

# EVEN SO



# LORD OF THE RINGS

## Ghosts on the way to the pulpit

I was about to dismiss the May issue as an example of painful hypocrisy when I came upon the letter "Ghosts on the Way to the Pulpit."

Ballis is right on target. I am on the verge of being an ex-minister largely because of miscommunication and an "organizational culture of secrecy, deception, and oppression." The handling of my particular situation has been very painful and disillusioning for me and my family. Political and institutional concerns have far outweighed pastoral concerns.

I freely admit bringing "ghosts" into the ministry. This kind of vulnerability has left me open to emotional devastation by a system that exploits the weak. It is dangerous to be open and needy in a system as closed as ours.

I believe we have "come of age" because our religious and institutional dysfunction and addictions can no longer cover up the obvious need for ministries of healing and recovery that are resisted at all levels.—*Name Withheld.*

## AIDS and Adventist youth

A research study has been presented on the AIDS risk among Adventist youth in the July issue of *Ministry* ("Aids and Adventist Youth"). As a pastoral counselor I find it laudable that the topic is addressed at all, and as a social scientist I am pleased to see some relevant, readable, and reliable research rather than opinions based on vague assumptions.

However, I do have problems with the apparent suggestion of the authors that one should consider reducing the number of non-Adventists in our schools. The implicit hope that this would reduce the risk among Adventist students is not borne out by the evidence. First of all, the authors admit the limitations of the self-selected sample. There are reasons to suspect that the extremes of the spectrum (i.e., the "goodies" and the "baddies") are overrepresented, artificially increasing the differences between Adventists and

non-Adventists. Similar studies in Germany could not find a difference at all. Second, sexual practices do not seem to have been taken into account. Even though we strongly prefer abstinence, "safe" sex (while by no means being safe) is certainly risk reducing. Third and most important, the study does not demonstrate that Adventist students are influenced in their risk behavior by their risk-taking friends. Rather the study very clearly shows that the example of parents is highly significant and the input of teachers is important. Thus we could draw the opposite conclusion and encourage non-SDA attendance as a means of help and mission without increasing risks. The main conclusion and task, then, would be to include the parents in the education process. Quite apart from the empirical argument, segregation and monastic solutions can hardly be the Christian's answer to the gospel call. The primary task of our educational system cannot be protection, but preparation for the real work as well as for the world to come.—*Andreas Bochmann, Ph.D., Neuenhagen, Germany.*

## Preserve the vessel, share the treasure

Thank you for the article by Eric Winter entitled "Preserve the Vessel, Share the Treasure" (June 1996). However, let me express my personal observation regarding the status of a local church pastor in this part of the world field.

It seems very apparent among the laity and the clergy that the pastor of the local congregation is psychologically perceived to be the lowest officer in the ministry in contrast to the exuberant evangelist and the departmental personnel.

We developed this concept early in our history because of our expectation of the imminent return of Jesus. We grew with the understanding that the end was near and that time was short. As a result of this belief, our primary mission focus was on evangelism and evangelism alone.

In fact, the pattern of pastoral ministry portrayed by Protestants back then wasn't even appealing to our early Adventist pioneers. They perceived it to be a waste of time, contrary to their understanding of the Parousia. Because of this, pastoral ministry within our church has not been given the emphasis it deserves until very recently.

Another factor that has contributed to the church's negligence of pastoral ministry is our lack in developing a clear, well-defined, biblical theology on the role of the pastor. Hence the prevailing mentality that seemingly places the pastor on the lowest rung in the leadership of the church.

What is needed is a careful and systematic analysis of the teaching of the New Testament in the following areas: (a) the nature and responsibilities of elders and bishops; (b) a correct biblical understanding of spiritual gifts, their variety, and implications; (c) understanding the theological implication of Jesus' charge to Peter and other biblical allusions to pastoral responsibilities. Such a study will portray the pastoral ministry to be a dignified, satisfying, God-ordained, sacred office.

Thank you once again for your article.—*Vince David, Bible teacher, Honiara, Solomon Islands.*

## Remembering our Father

*Ministry* magazine is such a wonderful paper for clergy. Every month when it arrives it is instructional and upbuilding. Our ministry has grown as a result of sharing its contents.

The June 1996 issue was packed with good reading, and I was particularly helped when I read "Remembering Our Father," by Sharon Cress. It was a job well done. The Lord used her to talk to pastors in a realistic manner in relation to what we meet as we execute the Master's business. He goes the whole way with us.—*Cranmer B. Nkiriyehe, executive director, Western Uganda Field.*

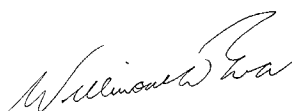
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A **potent vision** propelled the Seventh-day Adventist Church into existence. The vision received its fire, focus, and form from a promise that is often expressed in four words: Jesus is coming again, or better still, "I will come again" (John 14:3, KJV, etc.). The promise takes incarnate wings and soars when the heart of faith hears it spoken by the voice of the One who first uttered it in an hour of significant uncertainty and confusion to those first followers of His. What it means here and now to the pastor who believes it, proclaims it, and lives by it, and what it increasingly means to a world in the throes of even greater uncertainty and confusion, is incalculable. The intensity of the faith and passion that mounts in the *Adventist* soul when these words are spoken directly affects the lifeblood of all we understand ourselves and this movement to be.

The theme articles by Mario Veloso, Hans LaRondelle, and Norman Gulley are dedicated to enlarging the vision and vitalizing the convictions of Seventh-day Adventist ministers when it comes to this integral aspect of the faith. The support articles by Auldwin Humphrey and Jack Lange are also calculated to be genuinely encouraging, though in a different way.

In this December issue we look forward to a new *Ministry* year, and among other things, to a new 1997 12-part series overseen by Rex Edwards. Whereas our 1996 series spoke of the way a pastor might deal with the crises of his or her members, the 1997 series will speak candidly of the public, personal, and even private challenges of the pastor, and how pastors have grown in the face of these real-life difficulties.

**Good reading!**



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MARKETING: Mark Thomas

ADVERTISING SALES: Melynie Tooley

SUBSCRIBER SERVICES: Steve Hanson

*Ministry*, (ISSN 0026-5314), the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 1996, is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and printed by the Review and Herald® Publishing Association, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740, U.S.A. Subscriptions: US\$25.00 for 12 issues worldwide, air mail US\$39.85. Single copy US\$2.25. Member Associated Church Press. Periodicals postage paid at Hagerstown, MD. This publication is available in microfilm from University Microfilms International. Call toll-free 1-800-521-3044. Or mail inquiry to: University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. PRINTED IN U.S.A.

Editorial Office: 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Stamped, self-addressed envelope should accompany unsolicited manuscripts. Office telephone: 301-680-6510; Fax: 301-680-6502. E-mail via CompuServe: 102555.70 or 74532.2425.

**Postmaster:** Send address changes to *Ministry*, 55 West Oak Ridge Drive, Hagerstown, MD 21740.

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# Going beyond unity in diversity

Will Eva

**T**he other day as I was talking to a friend and colleague about a relatively minor aspect of Seventh-day Adventist culture/tradition he said, "If I were to find that this aspect of truth is not as I and others have always believed it to be, I would leave the Adventist Church."

His statement got me thinking. This was not the first time I had heard someone say this kind of thing. What he said came across as brave, honest, and high-principled; however, something in it bothered me. I wondered how worthy the Adventist faith would be if its ultimate credibility depended on the proper expression of a controverted aspect of its tradition.

If everything had to be deemed perfect before it could be accorded any significant credibility, there would be few things that we could trust with any degree of certainty. And I realized that this is the uncomfortable point to which many have come: rejecting, or at least placing in serious question valuable people, organizations, books, publications, and other sources of truth and sustenance because we have found a flaw or two in them. More serious than this and more to the point of my editorial, do we find ourselves adopting negative interpersonal attitudes and breaking from one another over issues that are not all that critical?

We are keenly aware of the other side of this coin: Truth is truth and should not be mixed with error, and it takes just a little leaven to permeate the whole lump (Gal. 5:7-10). And a given controverted point of truth or culture may be much more important than we consider it to be. There are also many aspects of truth

foundational enough to cause us to reject the whole if we find significant enough error existing within them. All this considered, however, let me follow my original line of thinking.

One example of this tendency to reject the whole because of a questionable part, or to detach from one another because of a point of perceived error, came to our church in Minneapolis in 1888 when interpretations of Galatians were the center of a divisive dispute among leading ministers. In the heat of the situation Ellen White tells of one minister who said, "If our views of Galatians are not correct, then we have not the third angel's message, and our position goes by the board; there is nothing to our faith." To this Ellen White replied, "Brethren, here is the very thing I have been telling you. This statement is not true. It is an extravagant, exaggerated statement. If it is made in the discussion of this question I shall feel it my duty to set this matter before all that are assembled, and whether they hear or forbear tell them the statement is incorrect. The question at issue is not a vital question and should not be treated as such. . . . There has been a spirit of Pharisaism coming in among us which I shall lift my voice against wherever it may be revealed."<sup>1</sup>

In this situation the points of debate had been assigned an importance so great that it was only natural for disagreement to end in estrangement and schism. In this setting it is not difficult to see Ellen White's point that the underlying mistake of the Pharisee is not merely his proverbial legalism, but the fact that he takes his own codified expressions of reality and turns them into ultimate tests of faith

and fellowship, feeling sincerely justified for rejecting or emotionally disfellowshipping anyone who sees things in any other light.

A few years after Minneapolis Mrs. White wrote something that has all the earmarks of profound wisdom and inspiration. With Minneapolis in mind and all that had happened since, she said, "We cannot then take a position that the unity of the church consists in viewing every text of Scripture in the very same light. The church may pass resolution upon resolution to put down all disagreement of opinions, but we cannot force the mind and will, and thus root out disagreement. . . . Nothing can perfect unity in the church but the spirit of Christlike forbearance."<sup>2</sup>

What is and what is not the baseline unifying ingredient among us? Feeling we must have everyone seeing things in the same light is not. The humble exercise of the divine principle of "Christlike forbearance" is.

A particular quality of forbearance is championed here. This is not just "openness," nor is it merely "unity in diversity." This is rather a spirit which refrains or abstains from unnecessary expressions of negativity when they seem most justified. Even more significantly, this is a "Christlike" principle. A particular issue or person is approached in a way consistent with the way Christ might respond or not respond.

We are constantly searching for points of logical, rational, or propositional connection between one another and this certainly has its place. But we search one another's words, minds, hearts, eyes, and expressions trying to find people who think as we do on this or that matter. In

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# Cut it down!

## My New Year's resolution

**Sharon Cress**

**T**he huge prickly pear cactus dominated the center of our driveway. Azaleas and other smaller flowering shrubs shared the space. However, the cactus was the center of attention. Neighbors clustered around and admired it. Passersby slowed to take a second look. Visitors marveled at its size and symmetry. My sisters and I respected it. Long, ferocious-looking spines as large as sewing needles covered the pancake-like pieces. In between these sharp thorns grew thousands of finer needles—all of them menacing.

This marvelous cactus, along with dozens of African violets decorating our kitchen windows, was a testimony to my mother's love of plants.

Then it happened. One day while my cousins were visiting we were involved in a frantic game of chase. We all rounded the cactus close together—and too close to the cactus. My sister Eulita lost her balance and tumbled into the barbs.

### Screams of pain

Her screams of pain brought my mother running. One arm and one leg were completely covered with dozens of the sewing-size needles, and countless small spines were sticking out all over. Leaving the rest of the gang outside, Mom grabbed Eulita, took her to the kitchen, and went searching for her tweezers. My other sister, Deanna, and I watched in fear and silence while Eulita moaned and cried as my mother began the tedious task of gently and methodically removing every one of those needles.

Deanna and I kept peeking around the kitchen door like baby chicks. We had a good look at Mom's face. Her lips

were pursed (an expression she still keeps in reserve for moments of deep contemplation or consecration), and the longer she worked, the deeper the furrows in her forehead became. Anger replaced anxiety and was finally overcome with what seemed to be resolve. I figured the furrows meant she had decided what Deanna's and my punishment would be, since it would be our fault because we had not been hurt!

Finally it was over. Cactus needles of all shapes and sizes covered a paper plate. Coating my sister's arm and leg with antiseptic, Mom abruptly and quietly got up. Deanna and I were waiting for a reprimand and decided that whatever happened to us was definitely better than Eulita's fate. Intent on inspecting Eulita's wounds, we didn't notice where Mom had gone. The next thing I remember was seeing her striding through the yard pushing a wheel-barrow. In it were an ax and a shovel. She went straight for the cactus and began cutting it down.

In a matter of moments it was felled, chopped, and loaded into the wheel-barrow. She was heading for the back corner of the yard. There she began digging a large hole into which she dumped the remains of the once-glorious cactus. Covering the hole and stamping it down, she headed back to the garage, put away the tools, and came inside. All she said was "That cactus won't hurt anybody anymore."

Somewhere in some old family photographs there is probably a picture of that plant. In my childish eagerness back then I was simply glad that I hadn't been punished, that the cactus was forever gone, and that the next day

Eulita was up and about so we could taunt each other for a few more years. Life went on.

In all that happened back then, my mother taught me a lesson that only now in adulthood I can really understand.

### Lessons I learned

I learned, from her willingness to sacrifice something that had brought her a sense of satisfaction and admiration, that love for people is so much more important than love for things. No matter how important something is to us, no matter how much pleasure it brings, even though it may be a "good" thing, if it brings pain to others, then maybe we should get rid of it. My mother wasn't going to let anything—no matter how special it was to her—harm someone she cared for. She had not been aware that the beautiful plant could be an instrument of such pain. But the minute she saw the damage, she didn't dally—she chopped it up and buried it. And she never spoke of it again.

During this season most of us are thinking about the positive resolutions we will make as pastoral families to do things differently in 1997. As I reflected on this childhood incident I thought about some things that are actually very pleasant and rewarding, but that can cause pain to other people who are close to us. In and of themselves these things may give immediate pleasure, enjoyment, and satisfaction. In the long run, however, they may need to be buried along with the old year.

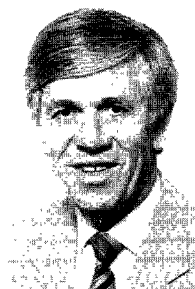
As pastors we sometimes tend to spend all of our time and energy serving and meeting the never-ending

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# There is no delay

**Mario Veloso**

## When the New Testament does not announce the hour of Christ's coming, how could there be a delay?



*Mario Veloso, Th.D., is an associate secretary of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

**T**he “delay” of Jesus’ second coming is a frequently discussed subject. In such discussions there is often a lot of heat but very little light. This article proposes to deal with that subject without confronting any particular person. For this reason there will be no reference to authors or to any extrabiblical writings, even though reference to ideas is unavoidable. We shall look at the biblical material to see whether or not there are grounds in Scripture for proposing that there is a delay in Christ’s coming. In doing this, we will look at three main sources—Jesus, Paul, and John.

### **Jesus—the day and hour no one knows**

Although the Synoptic Gospels speak much on the subject of Christ’s coming, we shall limit ourselves to Matthew 24 and 25.\* According to Matthew, late on Tuesday afternoon of the Passion Week, after spending the whole day in the Temple, Jesus and His disciples went to the Mount of Olives, where He talked to them about His second coming. He spoke about the destruction of the Temple and the signs of His coming, which has led some to interpret that He was indicating that both events would happen almost simultaneously. But a careful look at the passage shows that Jesus was more interested in explaining the end of the world at His second coming than He was the end of the Temple. The collapse of the Temple and of Jerusalem was, however, in the minds of His disciples and illustrative of the end of the world.

In relation to His coming, Jesus spoke about time, preparation, mission, and judgment. Jesus described *judgment*

in terms of separation—the sheep from the goats. The basis given for this separation is the issue of service. Those who serve are seen as the righteous. What they do for their fellow beings in need, without knowing it, they are pictured as doing to Christ, the coming King. The cursed ones, in turn, are pictured as not having served the King (see Matt. 25:31-46). The *mission* is described in the parable of the talents—investing one’s talents is God’s business and requires the complete dedication of every talent given by God. Those who improve on their talents are pictured by Jesus as good and faithful (see verses 24-39). *Preparation* for the Second Coming requires having the Holy Spirit (see verses 1-13).

In all of this, *time* is very important. It is significant in all of the signs and symbols, as well as in the straightforward statements of Jesus relating to the Second Coming. The timing of the signs is progressive. Some of the signs cover only the period up to the destruction of Jerusalem, as with the warning about “the abomination of desolation” (see Matt. 24:15). Other signs go farther into the eschatological time frame, with still others reaching through to the second coming of Christ itself. A significant time factor here refers to the preaching of the gospel in all the world, which is followed by Jesus’ time-related promise “And then the end will come” (verse 14). Likewise, the parable of the seasonally mature *fig tree* shows by the state of its foliage that “the summer is near” in the same way as the fulfilling of the signs of Christ’s coming show that the coming of Jesus is near when all the *signs* are in

evidence. Such things announce that His coming is near, "at the very doors" (verse 33). Among other things, the signs tell us that there exists an interim period between the destruction of Jerusalem and the second coming of Christ.

Christ's *straightforward statements* clearly inform us of the possibility of a "delay" or a length of time during which people look expectantly for the coming of Christ as being earlier than it ultimately turns out to be. At one point Jesus makes this statement: "But of that *day and hour no one knows*, no, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (verse 36). Another verse repeats the same concept: "Watch therefore, for *you do not know what hour your Lord is coming*" (verse 42). And a third one declares: "The Son of Man is coming at *an hour when you do not expect him*" (verse 44). So Jesus did not announce the hour of His coming.

How, then, could anyone speak about a delay in His coming? There could be a delay only if He had set an announced time for His return. This not being the case, there is no delay.

There is one more important piece of information. At the end of His reference to the time of His coming, Christ told the parable of the wise and the evil servants. The wise servant takes care of his master's household properly. The evil servant says, "My master is delaying his coming" (verse 48), and instead of caring for his fellow servants, he beats them. While he is thinking about the delay of his master, he loses track of the signs; he does not observe the condition of the fig tree, he does not preach the gospel, and thus he is "not aware" of the time of the master's coming (see verse 50). He is just that—an evil servant—somebody who drinks the drink of the drunkards, rather than the words of his master (see verse 49).

### **Paul—the apostasy comes first**

One of the presuppositions behind the idea of a delay is the concept of a "realized" eschatology. Some exponents of this idea teach that the apostles and the apostolic church believed the

Second Coming would occur in their time (see 2 Thess. 2:3). The truth is, the apostles never taught this concept. This is particularly clear in looking at the teachings of Paul, from whom we have the two letters to the Thessalonians as witnesses. In the first letter, written in A.D. 51, Paul encourages the Thessalonians to suffer persecution in hope and contentment. He reminds them of his faithfulness in teaching them about the day of the Lord. As a result they "know perfectly" that the Lord will come "as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). This knowledge has far-reaching ethical consequences, affecting their lifestyle while they wait in assurance of the final salvation, which He brings in when He comes (verses 4-11). A few months later Paul wrote another letter because false teaching had come in among them concerning the time of the Lord's return. Some false teachers were teaching a realized type of eschatology affirming that the Lord had already come.

This was not in harmony with Paul's teaching when he went to Thessalonica the first time (see Acts 17:1-9). Neither did it agree with his teaching in his first letter to them (see 1 Thess. 5:2). Paul taught a historical eschatology. This is the central teaching of the Second Epistle. The day of the Lord has not yet come (see 2 Thess. 2:1, 2) and will not come immediately because there are some events that must take place in history before the coming of the Lord. Any teaching contrary to Paul's doctrine is seen as a deception. "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed" (verse 3). "Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things?" he asks them (verse 5).

The whole history of the falling away or great apostasy in the Christian church and the work of the "man of sin," the "son of perdition," or "the lawless one," was still to be fully played out. A few years later, in his farewell address to the elders at Ephesus, Paul said that this apostasy would come because within

the church would rise those "speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples *after themselves*" (Acts 20:30). And when Paul forewarned Timothy about it, he told him that their teachings would not be according to the truth and that all this would come in the "latter times" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

So for Paul two points were very clear regarding the time of the Second Coming. First, it would be in the future, after many historical events had occurred. Second, it would come as a "thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:2). There was no fixed date established. Both concepts rule out the possibility of a delay. There is no delay in Christ's coming because from the very beginning Paul foretold historical events that would have to happen before the coming of the Lord. Again there is no delay in relation to any particular date or time, because such a date or time has never been established.

### **John—I am coming quickly**

The second coming of Jesus is the theme of the book of Revelation. In its introduction the book talks about the *manner* of His coming, and in its conclusion about the *time*. There are many references, and John uses many different time symbols. But in this article we are looking only at the question of time as it relates to the Second Coming, aiming for one particular objective—to discover whether a delay of Christ's return to the world can be detected.

Revelation was written by John sometime between A.D. 95 and 100. In its introduction there are two references to a specific time that relates to the things the book is about to unfold. John says that his book is about things that would "shortly [*en tachei*] take place" (Rev. 1:1), and they must be understood, for "the time is near [*eggus*]" (verse 3). John is referring here to when the events predicted in the book of Revelation would begin to be fulfilled. *En tachei* means quickly, hastily, immediately, with no delay, thus putting an emphasis on time in such a way as to express urgency. *Eggus* emphasizes proximity in time, not urgency. It means near at



hand. This is why a specific appointed time (*kairos*) could be near. The events predicted in Revelation will take place with no delay when their appointed time is near.

There is a clear sense of urgency in the introduction of Revelation, but it is related only to the "things" predicted in the book. What does come in short order (by the end of the first century, in fact) is the beginning of the historical events that are predicted to occur prior to the Second Coming. Obviously, however, the Second Coming itself is not contemplated as early as these signatory events. The coming of Christ is not referred to in terms of time in the introduction of this prophetic book. At this point John talks only about the manner of Christ's coming—"He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, and they also who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him" (verse 7). So John did not say that the Lord would come during the time when he was writing the book of Revelation, shortly before A.D. 100. He said that the signatory events he prophesied would begin to occur about that time. The urgency of the second coming appears in the conclusion of the book.

After all the events predicted in Revelation have been fulfilled, the urgency is transferred from the *things* "which must shortly take place" (Rev. 22:6) to the second coming of Christ itself. The expression "I am coming quickly [*tachu*]" is repeated three times (verses 7, 12, 20). It is only after all the events predicted in Revelation have come to pass that the coming of the Lord occurs "quickly." Before that time we cannot speak of a delay or believe that something is untrustworthy about the promise of His coming, because it has not yet occurred. Clearly, we live in a moment of history when many of these events are still to manifest themselves.

### Implications for the church and her members

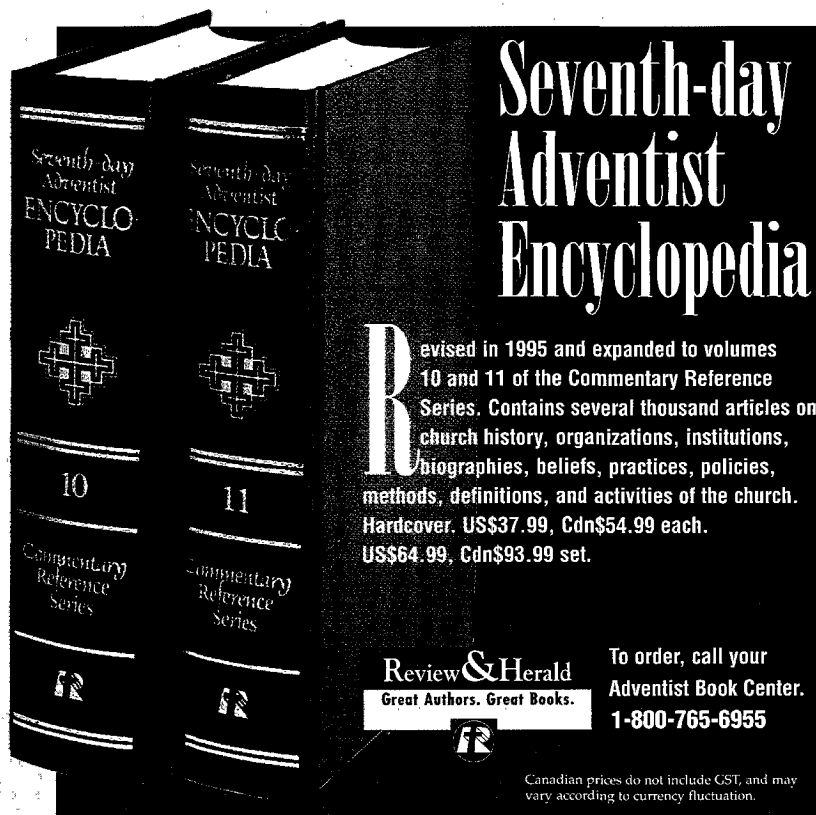
Our knowledge and attitude toward the time of the Lord's second coming has implications for lifestyle, theology, and mission. The concept that there is a

delay in Christ's coming ushers in a very tenuous understanding of revelation. It is not consistent with what Scripture actually says. It is, in fact, only an exposition of what some contemporary interpreters think is the state of things. Revelation, through Paul's personal teaching and writings to the Thessalonians, says that the Second Coming is still in the future. But thinking in terms of some kind of delay or apostolic misprediction, some contemporary teachers place the Second Coming in a time prior to the one Paul was indicating. What is the basis for these approaches to the biblical message? They are proposed on the basis of a deception introduced by attitudes, spoken words, and writings similar to those exposed by Paul in passages such as 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3. The behavior of these teachers affects their spiritual and practical lives, turning them into busybodies instead of communicators of the gospel (see 2 Thess. 3:11-14).

The evil servant in Christ's parable, the one who believed in the delay of his master's coming, has confused his mission and the whole purpose of his actions. As he waited for his master to come back, instead of remaining faithful and wise while he served his lord, he began to behave as if he were the master, forcing his own will on everyone and governing his actions by his personal sensual pleasure (see Matt. 24:48-51).

In contrast, those who understand the nature of the timing of Christ's coming know that His coming occurs quickly at the end of the predicted period of waiting and probation (see Rev. 22:11, 12). For "the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (verse 17). ■

\* All Scripture passages quoted in this article are from The New King James Version.



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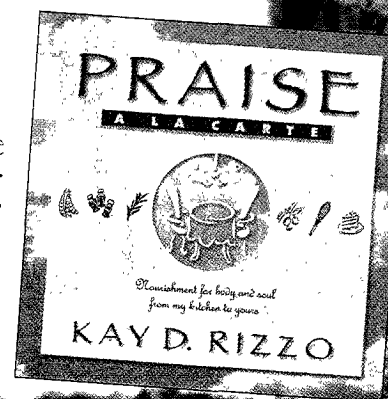
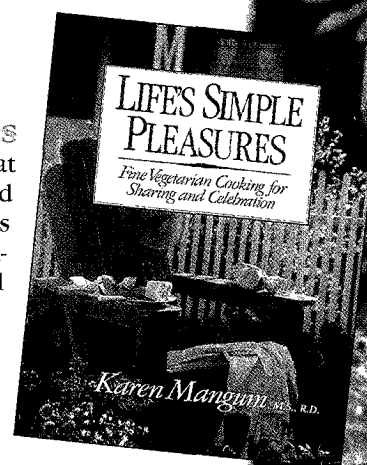
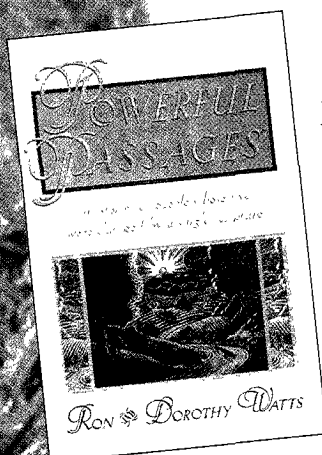
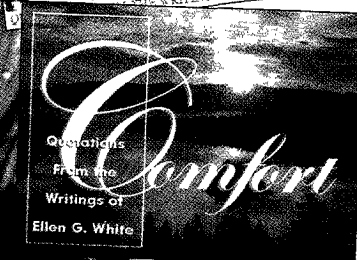
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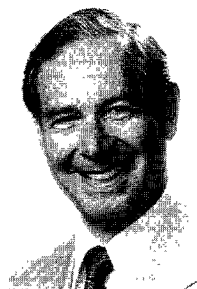
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# The end-time message in historical perspective

Hans K. LaRondelle

## An approach to Revelation 12-14



Hans K. LaRondelle, Th.D., is an emeritus professor of systematic theology at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

There is joy in discovering the architectural design of John's Apocalypse. This hidden design cannot be discerned by the usual approach of dissecting the book into separate parts or chapters. The book of Revelation is an indivisible, organic unit, an ingeniously balanced composition. The beauty of its parts and counterparts becomes visible only in light of its total structure.

### The literary analysis

Early visions in Revelation are regularly developed more fully in later ones. A prime example is the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11, which is widely recognized as a preview of the subsequent visions in Revelation 12-20. One cannot understand the prophecy of the seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-19) adequately except in the light of the expanding visions that follow (Rev. 12-20). No chapter in the Apocalypse must therefore be isolated from its context as an independent revelation.

Also, the central unit of Revelation 12-14 must be understood in the light of subsequent chapters, which clarify the earlier symbolic portrayals. For example, the term *Babylon* occurs for the first time in Revelation 14:8 without any explanation or clarifying reference. However, the subsequent chapters (Rev. 16-19) further elaborate the meaning of *Babylon*. Other examples of this kind of approach are visions of the red dragon with seven heads and ten horns in Revelation 12 and of the sea beast with seven heads and ten horns in Revelation 13. An informed interpretation of these symbols requires the input of the vision of the

scarlet beast with seven heads and ten horns in Revelation 17.

In short, the proper approach to understanding Revelation 12-14 requires a *contextual* interpretation. This larger view leads to the conclusion that Revelation 12-20 constitutes a developing unit characterized by a progressive revelation of the same controversy between good and evil.

In a similar fashion, the judgment of God on the persecutors of His people is gradually developed in the portrayals of the *wrath* of God in Revelation 14-19. While the third angel's message warns against the coming outpouring of God's wrath in "full strength" (Rev. 14:10, NIV; *akraton*: unmixed [see RSV]), the subsequent chapters disclose that this ultimate outpouring of God's wrath will consist in the seven last plagues, "because with them God's wrath is completed" (Rev. 15:1; also 16:1-21).

This contextual and structural approach of Revelation 12-14 is crucial for the discovery of the biblical meaning of *Armageddon* as the culmination of the last plagues. This contextual method will prove to be the corrector of popular yet erroneous interpretations.

### The theological perspective

Beyond this literary analysis, an understanding of the message of Revelation 12-14 also requires a *theological* perspective. This inquiry searches for the connections of every apocalyptic term and name with the Old Testament and its covenant promises and curses. More than any New Testament writer, John borrows Hebrew words and concepts to describe the theological significance of Christ's church. The

Hebraic style of John's Apocalypse is now universally acknowledged. R. H. Charles established that John did not use the Septuagint, but the Hebrew text of the Old Testament for the hundreds of allusions to Moses and the Prophets.<sup>1</sup>

The fact that John also uses Old Testament passages in Revelation 12-14 is absolutely essential for the proper interpretation of this key section. The apocalyptic phrase "Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great" (Rev. 14:8, NIV) is borrowed from a fusion of two prophetic passages which predicted the fall of the Neo-Babylonian empire (Isa. 21 and Jer. 51).

Such literary correspondences prove to be indicators of a *typological connection* between Israel's history and later church history. The implications of a biblical typology are often overlooked, yet prove to be of crucial importance. Such a theological relationship foreshadows, in essence, the high calling but also the failure of the Christian church.

The principles that ought to guide the Christian interpreter are determined by the gospel of Christ.<sup>2</sup>

A further theological characteristic of the Apocalypse is its repeated phenomenon of *contrasts*. John clarifies the characteristics of truth by contrasting them with falsehood. He places the faithful remnant of God's people over against their Babylonian opponents. Babylon is placed in stark contrast with the New Jerusalem, the Lamb in opposition to the beast, and the glorious woman in heaven (Rev. 12) is contrasted with the prostitute sitting on many waters (Rev. 17). In this contrasting imagery many have discerned an ironic parody or mimicry of the work of Christ. This style serves the purpose of creating a *theological antithesis*, a helpful method for differentiating or contrasting truth and error more sharply.

### **Progressive revelation in Revelation 12-14**

Revelation 12-14 is justly considered by many as the keystone or central vision of the Apocalypse. Leon Morris discerns "seven significant signs" in Revelation 12-14, which he calls

"another series of visions" in the Apocalypse.<sup>3</sup> Others discern different subdivisions or scenes, while they maintain the unity of chapters 12-14. This idea of a central unit comprised in these three chapters gains strength if one considers the infrastructure and gradual progression of the Apocalypse as it moves toward the end-time in its overall narrative.

Revelation 12 covers the whole covenant history of the Christian church. Thus the purpose of Revelation 12 goes beyond warning the Christian believers against persecution by encouraging them to persevere until the end. This chapter presents as its central vision the heavenly acclamation of victory over Satan, combined with the celebration of the inauguration of Christ as the rightful king of heaven and earth (verses 7-12). The excursus in the narrative quite naturally looks beyond earthly history to the *origin* of all hatred and cruelty against the woman of God. It reveals the depth dimension of all persecution of God's children by pointing out the real enemy of the church and of Christ.

A heavenly warfare is seen to be inciting the earthly wars against God's people (verses 7-9). However, the reason for doxologies and jubilation is the victory of Christ over Satan *now* (verse 10). As in Daniel 7-12, so Revelation 12 offers a panoramic view of church history seen from God's perspective. It shows how God began His work of redemption through Jesus the Messiah, and how Satan tried to destroy the Messianic redemption for humanity. Revelation 12 thus sets the stage for the rest of the book, which progressively enlarges the conflict between Satan and the followers of Christ on earth (Rev. 13-19) until the everlasting peace of Paradise is restored (Rev. 20-22).

Revelation 13 portrays the temporal triumphs of the ancient dragon through the activities of his two earthly allies or agents: the ten-horned beast from the sea and the two-horned beast from the earth.

This raises the urgent question *How is Revelation 13 related to Revelation 12?* The answer is of crucial importance

for how we understand the final events in the book of Revelation. One recent author asserts: "The events of chapter 13 follow chapter 12 in chronological order."<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, he projects the visions of Revelation 13 in the future. This innovative concept requires a close examination.

The assertion that Revelation 13 follows chronologically after Revelation 12 is based on the assumption that "the story which began in chapter 12 is continued without interruption in chapter 13."<sup>5</sup> But this assumption is not justified. In both Daniel and Revelation the order of the visions is *not* intended to present a chronological sequence. The literary structure of both apocalyptic books reveals a persistent pattern of paralleling panoramas of covenant history. The visions of Daniel 2, 7, 8, and 11 are to be understood as progressive parallel visions, each elucidating important aspects of the whole picture. This is confirmed by comparing the explanations of the interpreting angel of each vision.

The parallel style of Daniel's visions is equally apparent in John's Apocalypse. The series of the seals (Rev. 6) ends with the final judgment of God. The following series of the trumpets (Rev. 8; 9; 11) resumes a description of the church age with a progressive emphasis on the end-time.

The visions of Revelation 12, where Christ receives all authority by virtue of His self-sacrifice (verses 10, 11), cannot follow *chronologically* after the vision of the seventh trumpet in Revelation 11:15-18, where He has already begun to reign. Rather Revelation 12 presents a review of the entire church age, starting with the first advent of Christ.

The three visions within Revelation 14 apparently do not teach a chronological order of fulfillment. The threefold message of Revelation 14:6-12 obviously must be proclaimed prior to the vision of the Lamb with His victorious 144,000 followers (verses 1-5). This vision of the 144,000 overcomers has therefore been called an interlude, a scene of end-time "assurance."<sup>6</sup> Again, describing things in a chronological sequence is

clearly not the intent of the writer.

The visions of judgment in Revelation 15 and 16 only enlarge the vision of the world harvest in Revelation 14:14-20, where the righteous are redeemed and the wicked are destroyed. Likewise, Revelation 17, which further explains the punishment of Babylon, does not follow chronologically after Revelation 16, where Babylon has already been destroyed.

These examples should alert us against assuming that Revelation 13 follows Revelation 12 “without interruption.” First of all, there are two indicators of an *interruption* between Revelation 12 and 13. Revelation 12 concludes with John’s statement: “And he stood on the sand of the sea” (RSV—in NASB in Rev. 13:1). The NIV translates: “And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea” (verse 1). The statement of John about this new location on the seaside (cf. Rev. 12:4) explains why the dragon could spew water “like a river” at the woman to sweep her away (Rev. 12:15).

The next vision (Rev. 13:1-10) discloses by what dramatic means the dragon will persecute the saints and blaspheme God’s name. The closing statement of Revelation 12 also looks forward to Revelation 13. Revelation 13 begins with a *new* vision: “And I saw,” which reveals some important connecting links with the panoramic view given in Revelation 12. The first link is the *time phrase* for the period of persecution, *42 months* (Rev. 13:5; cf. 12:6, 14). The same time symbol was used in Revelation 11 to signify the predetermined period of “trampling on the holy city” (Rev. 11:2; cf. verse 3). There is no legitimate reason to assume that the equivalent time symbols are different time periods. A *new* vision does not automatically suggest a chronological sequence succeeding a previous vision. The immediate context indicates whether a new vision amplifies a previous vision or continues the historical narrative.

Once again the equivalent time symbols in Revelation 11-13 indicate that all these chapters are parallel

visions that progressively illuminate each other. We therefore must reject the assumption that the vision of Revelation 13 continues the narrative of Revelation 12 without interruption.

### Wars against the saints

A second indicator that Revelation 12 is further expanded in Revelation 13 is the corresponding *wars against the saints* in both chapters. Revelation 12 forecasts *two* consecutive wars against the church of Christ: the first one in verses 6, 14-16, and the second one in verse 17. The first warfare against the church is characterized by the time symbol of 1260 days and three and a half times (verses 6, 14), which establishes a definite link with Daniel 7:25. This Danielic connection requires the backdrop of the long-range vision of Daniel 7. It discloses that the three and a half times or 1260 days of Revelation 12 must be reckoned as the period of supremacy of the little horn of Daniel 7, and not of pagan Rome. These 1260 days refer therefore to the dark Middle Ages, when many thousands of people were persecuted and martyred for the alleged crime of “heresy.”

Revelation 13 begins with the vision of a sea beast with 10 horns that connects this vision unmistakably with the portrayal of Daniel 7! The sea beast incorporates all four beasts in Daniel 7 (verses 1, 2), indicating thereby the progress of time through to John’s visions. The sea beast exercises its authority against the saints for “42 months” (verses 5-7). These two

features (warring against the saints and the time period) correspond exactly with those in Daniel 7 and Revelation 12. Therefore they must be identified with each other.

In Revelation 12, the *final* warfare against the saints is called the dragon’s war against “the rest of her offspring—those who obey God’s commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus” (verse 17, NIV). The meaning of this brief statement of warfare is expanded further in the last vision of Revelation 13. This vision (Rev. 13:11-18) shows how a two-horned beast came out of the earth as the second ally of the dragon. This land beast will exercise its authority to enforce the worship of the revived beast in all the world (verses 12-14). This vision thus enlarges the *final* war against the faithful remnant people of God (Rev. 12:17). It predicts the worldwide enforcement of a special *mark*, “which is the name of the beast or the number of his name” (Rev. 13:17, NIV). This final warfare against the remnant church in Revelation 13:11-17 is the amplification of Revelation 12:17. This persecution of Christ’s followers is presently still an unfulfilled prophecy. But its universal extent and climactic place in human history positions this religious war at the center of God’s end-time message in Revelation 14.

### God’s final appeal

The threefold message of Revelation 14:6-12 represents God’s final appeal or ultimatum to a world united in rebellion against its Creator. Therefore, this

Diagram 1

Revelation 13:15-17	Revelation 14:9-11
“He was given power to give breath to the image of the first beast, so that it could speak and cause all who refused to worship the image to be killed. He also forced everyone small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a <i>mark</i> on his right hand or on his forehead, so that no one could buy or sell unless he had the <i>mark</i> , which is the name of the beast or the number of his name.”	“A third angel followed them and said in a loud voice: ‘If anyone worships the beast and his image and receives his <i>mark</i> on the forehead or on the hand, he, too, will drink of the wine of God’s fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night for those who worship the beast and his image, or for anyone who receives the <i>mark</i> of his name.’”

message constitutes the central burden of the entire Apocalypse and conveys a specific alert signal to the end-time generation. At the same time, Revelation 14 contains the most dreadful curse ever pronounced on mortal beings—the wrath of God *without* divine mercy (verses 9-11) and the comforting assurance of the presence of Christ for the overcomers (verses 1-5). It is important to observe that the message of Revelation 14:9-12 corresponds precisely with the persecution initiated by the land beast in Revelation 13:15-17. A comparison of both passages shows the historical parallel. (See Diagram 1.)

These parallel passages show that the threefold message of Revelation 14:6-12 does *not* follow Revelation 13 chronologically, but instead refers to further aspects of the same time period. God responds immediately to meet the final challenge of Satan. In fact, He even forewarns the church of the final test of faith. The vision of the harvest of the earth in Revelation 14:14-20 naturally follows chronologically after the time of the threefold warning message of verses 6-12.

The vision of the 144,000 *victorious* saints who stand on Mount Zion with the Lamb fits at the conclusion of the final conflict. It is placed before the three angels' messages, however, in the Hebrew style of stressing the glorious outcome of God's people already in advance, by way of an interlude.

Reviewing the seven visions of Revelation 12-14, we conclude that these three chapters are interwoven indivisibly. As a unit they show a progressive expansion and increasing emphasis on the end-time. The literary composition of Revelation 12-14 shows two parallel structures (see Diagram 2).

The literary and thematic correspondence between Revelation 12-14 show intentional linkages that repeat and expand previous visions. Revelation 13 does not cover the full panorama of chapter 12, but begins to enlarge the section of religious persecution of the 1260 days in Revelation 12:6, 14, and then moves to the final conflict of verse

17 by enlarging on it with a description of the mark of the beast (Rev. 13:13-18).

Revelation 14 presents God's coded response or counterpart to this end-time conflict of Revelation 12 and 13 by urging the saints to overcome the beast and its mark (cf. Rev. 13:15-17 and 14:9-11). The summation of Revelation 14:12 shows a striking correspondence with verse 17. Both end-time passages identify the faithful saints as those who keep the commandments of God and who persevere in the testimony or faith of Jesus (Rev. 12:17; 14:12). These linkages indicate that chapters 12-14 are not intended as uninterrupted sequences, but as parallel compositions, each of which zooms in more closely on the final events of the church age.

Only when this infrastructure of Revelation 12-14 is settled can we proceed with confidence to relate these apocalyptic portrayals to the wider contexts of the Apocalypse (especially

to Rev. 15-19) and to the larger contexts of the New and Old Testaments. This method may protect us against some of the misrepresentations that abound today. At the same time it opens up for us a deeper and clearer understanding of apocalyptic prophecy, critical to our experience as Christians today and in the future. ■

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

<sup>1</sup> R. H. Charles, *Studies in the Apocalypse* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1915), p. 88.

<sup>2</sup> See H. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1983) and *Chariots of Salvation* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1987).

<sup>3</sup> Leon Morris, *The Revelation of St. John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. Eerdmans, 1973), p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> L. Wilson, *The Revelation of Jesus* (Bruston, N.Y.: Teach Services, 1990, 1992), p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

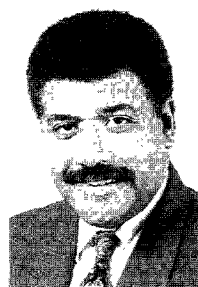
<sup>6</sup> C. M. Maxwell, *God Cares*, (Boise, Id.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1985), vol. 2, p. 349.

Diagram 2

The Progressive Parallelism of Revelation 12-14		
<b>Revelation 12</b> The dragon wages war against the woman and her child—the Messiah (verses 1-5).		
The woman flees into the wilderness for 1260 days (verse 6).	<b>Revelation 13</b> The dragon uses the sea beast with 10 horns crowned to wage war against the saints for 42 months (verses 1-10).	
In heaven: Celebration of Christ's enthronement (verses 7-12)		
The woman is in the wilderness for 3½ times (verses 13-16).		<b>Revelation 14</b> The preview of the victorious saints on Mount Zion (verses 1-5).
The dragon wages war against the remnant of the woman's offspring, who "obey God's commandments and hold to the testimony of Jesus" (verse 17).	Finally a land beast with two lamblike horns enforces the mark of the beast on a global scale (verses 13-18).	The end-time warning produces overcomers over the mark of the beast. They "keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (verses 6-12, RSV).
		The double world harvest at the Second Advent (verses 14-20).

# Is this the church? Or should we look for another?

## Auldwin Humphrey



*Auldwin Humphrey is the adult ministries director of the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.*

A man condemned to die, John the Baptist found himself locked away in Herod's prison. Faced with the ominous prospect of being beheaded, he found his faith in the Messiahship of Christ challenged. "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3) was the question he sent his disciples to present to Jesus.

Jesus responded, "Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (verses 4, 5). This list of observable indicators were characteristics of the work of the One who should come.

If modern-day John the Baptists were to ask the probing question of our church in North America "Are you the true church—or should we look for another?" what would we point to? Would we be able to say that we possess the early church fervor? Could we show an effective use of spiritual gifts? Would we be able to point to 1 John 3:14 and say "We know . . . because we love the brethren"? What could we point to as our badge of validation?

### Our badge of validation

The challenge of being the "true church" has motivated us to share our unique perspectives over the years. But today we face a bigger challenge. Are we truly Christ's church? Can we offer fruits that bear witness to God-empowered ministries? Can we, like Christ, offer tangible indicators that dispel the doubts? How long will being

caught in a Laodicean time warp be our excuse for not resembling the body of Christ?

At first blush we go for our unique points of doctrine—the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the Spirit of Prophecy, and health reform. We would also cite the fact that we are a worldwide church. These offer very good credentials. However, they are quite different from the kind of credentials that Christ shared with John the Baptist, a deathrow inmate grasping for his last straw of hope: "The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them."

None of the credentials cited by Christ were doctrinal. They all related to helping "restore in man the image of his Maker."<sup>1</sup> (This coincides with data that shows that people do not generally leave the Seventh-day Adventist Church over doctrinal concerns, but over relationships and felt needs.) Christ's credentials centered around relieving suffering and healing.

### A taxonomy of kingdom growth

It is not my desire to minimize the value of our doctrines. They are the foundation of our value system. It is to place doctrine in its proper relationship to the overall taxonomy of kingdom growth. If we would genuinely love people, manifesting kindness, compassion, and tenderheartedness, there would be 100 baptisms where now there is one. Isn't it interesting that Christ validated His Messiahship by pointing John the Baptist to His miracles of healing and the restoration of people's

lives? Isn't it interesting that He didn't validate His Messiahship by a body of beliefs? He pointed to the fruits of a God-empowered ministry—"words made flesh."

If inhabitants from another galaxy were to visit our planet today and study the Scriptures from stem to stern, would they find the Seventh-day Adventist Church to be an embodiment of Christ's ministry? Would they find the fruits of ministries dynamically connected to Jesus Christ? Would they identify our church as the true church? Would we be recognizable outside of our doctrinal garb?

Ironically, the church has become like Jacob when he sought to deceive his father, Isaac, into giving him the birthright. Isaac smelled the tasty food. He felt Jacob's goat-hair-covered hands. The dialogue went like this:

Isaac: "Who is it?"

Jacob: "I am Esau, your firstborn."

Isaac: "Come near so I can touch you, my son, to know whether you are really my son Esau or not."

Isaac touched him and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau."

If we were to approach Christ seeking His confirmation as disciples, would we have to cover ourselves with the church's doctrines to keep Him from seeing who we really are? Would He say, "The doctrines are Mine, but the life belongs to Caesar"?

Many are asking the question that John the Baptist asked: "Is this the one, or should we look for another?" I am convinced that we need not look further. However, the disguise of doctrine must be peeled back and a rebuilding of what's real must take place. Models of ministry that focus on the Holy Spirit as the source of gifts that empower each member-minister must be put in place. Christ's methods alone can bring true

success. "The Saviour mingled with men. . . . He . . . ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"<sup>2</sup> We must truly become what we claim to be—Christ's true church. ■

Adapted from *Ministry Makers*, a publication of NAD Adult Ministries, spring 1996.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1898), pp. 37, 38.

<sup>2</sup> ———, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 143.

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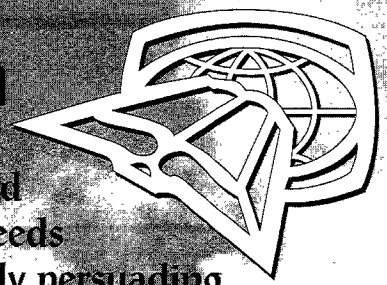
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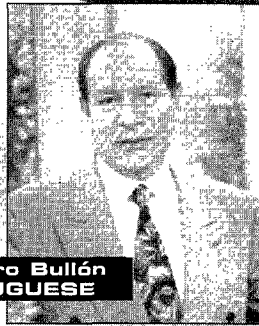


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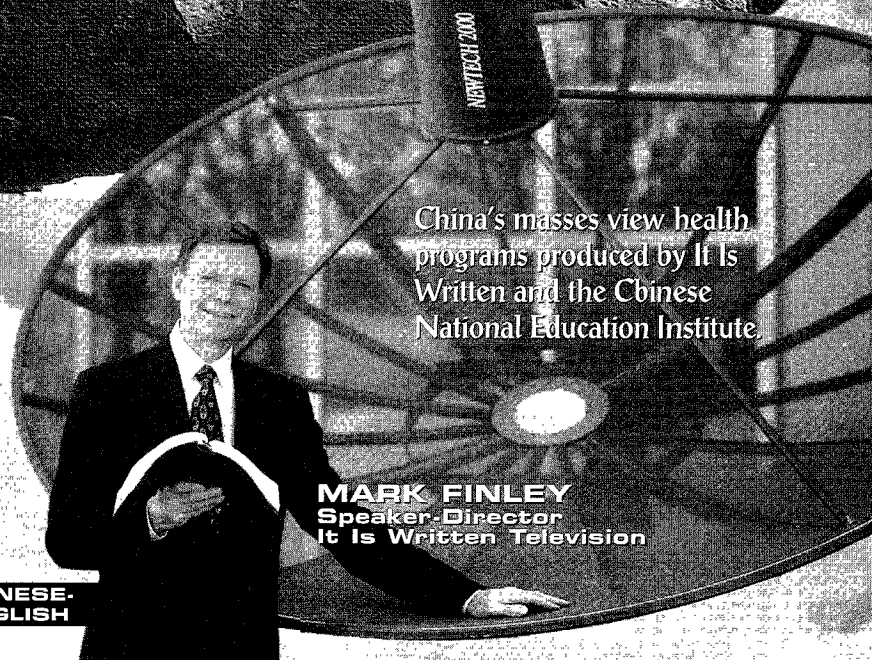


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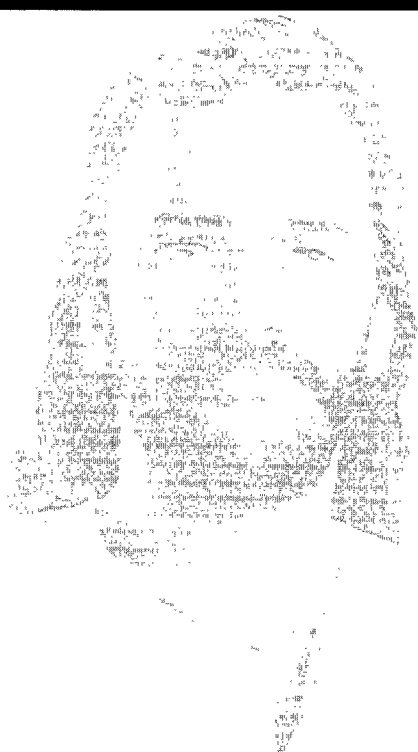
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# A song in the night

Norman R. Gulley

## Triumphing in the throes of end-time turmoil



*Norman Gulley, Ph.D., is a professor of systematic theology at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.*

As time runs out and the planet rushes toward its ultimate rendezvous with destiny, we wonder if we will make it to the third millennium. One thing is certain: there is a sense that something momentous is about to happen. Never before have people around the world reported so many angel encounters or described such a variety of encounters with apparitions of Mary. Never before have psychics been so widely accepted, or spiritualism had such a worldwide impact, or phenomena such as the New Age movement been so influential. Christians in America have an unprecedented opportunity to dominate American politics through such auspices as the Christian Coalition. Something must be going on behind the scenes (see Rev. 16:12-16).

The earth flies through its history toward a final terminus like a plane on a transoceanic flight. It has been a long time since takeoff, and the trip is becoming tiring and more turbulent. Looking ahead, a dark sky threatens, dense with apprehension. Surly clouds dominate the horizon. As the planet flies through them, they swirl and shift, socking in a shuddering world. There used to be ways of flying above or around such storms, but these ways can no longer be found so easily. It is the earth's destiny to fly right into this ultimate bad weather front.

The stupendous crisis of all time is unfolding. It will never again be business as usual. The early time of trouble, the great time of trouble, and Jacob's time of trouble dominate the prophetic horizon of a shaken planet.

### The good news

There's deserved concern about these things. We don't like the idea of a Sunday law with its ultimate enforcement with a death decree (see Rev. 13:15). Nor are we comfortable with the thought that all the world will follow a dominating and oppressive world power, actually worshiping this authority called the beast (see verses 3, 4), while nations, with America in the forefront, force the issue (see verse 12). It is troubling to know that freedoms as basic as buying and selling will be severely curtailed unless homage is paid to this dominator (see verse 17). And no one likes the prospect of being the object of universal hatred.

In a recent survey of college students, 56 percent were afraid of last-day events. In fact, 41 percent said they would rather die than live through the last days. One student said, "I would rather go to heaven through resurrection!" Yet paradoxically, 88 percent claimed they knew Christ as a personal friend. But so many are overwhelmed with the cares of everyday life or with the prospect of coming circumstances that they cannot see the Christ who is coming.

It is past time for Adventists to know deep down that final events have more to do with *who* is coming than with *what* is coming. These disturbing events have to do with *Christ* rather than just *crisis*. He makes all the difference. He comes as a light stronger than the sun. His glory dissolves the black clouds. With Him no night on a hurting planet is dark or empty. His light beams from the future into the center of our trouble, and we who look

for the Advent should know that. Though darkness shrouds the globe, it is powerless to stop the entrance of this quality of light. With Him the blackness is never terminal and cannot last long. With Him we have a future, not the night. He is light, and He is our future. His track record is this way, and so it will be to the end of time. Adventists need to know this deeply and certainly.

### **It is worth singing about**

If I have a bad day, it's not worth thinking about, let alone singing about. Yet the end-time saints will sing the song of their experience following the most horrendous period of trouble ever known (Dan. 12:1). Scripture says, "They sang a new song before the throne. . . . No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth" (Rev. 14:3). These are the ones who live through it all. It is "the song of their experience."<sup>1</sup>

When do they sing it? The context says they stand on Mount Zion with Christ (see Rev. 14:1). Mount Zion is "the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God" (Heb. 12:22). This city is in heaven now and will come to the new earth after the millennium (see Rev. 21:1-3). The context also says the 144,000 will follow Christ wherever He goes (see Rev. 14:4). "This seems to point to some special privilege the 144,000 will have."<sup>2</sup> This privilege, I believe, has everything to do with the reason they live through the ultimate postprobationary crisis. In this respect they are like Christ, who lived through His time of trouble without the assurance of His Father's comforting presence. Jesus had no mediator in heaven. So it will be for the 144,000. They will demonstrate in a comparative way what He demonstrated in an absolute way—that a human being dependent upon God can live a victorious life under the most challenging of circumstances. In this way the 144,000 join Christ in answering the great controversy issue. They will follow Christ wherever He goes (Rev. 14:4) and live forever to tell the story to the unnumbered worlds flung throughout the universe.

This is the point. These people sing about their greatest trouble long after it happens *simply because they know that all they have gone through has been worth going through, especially in the light of the Lamb they have been following!* That puts final events in a totally different light. Suddenly one is confronted with the fact that even in the midst of unprecedented trouble there is far more than darkness and ominous horror.

### **The words of the song**

So it is the 144,000 who sing the song, and the song they sing is called the "song of Moses the servant of God and the song of the Lamb" (Rev. 15:3). Here are the words: "Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed" (see verses 3, 4).

Notice the focus of the song. There is not one word about the trouble they went through, nor is there anything about their victorious living. From beginning to end the song is about the marvelous deeds of God! It is the work of Christ that counts in every step of our salvation, and so when all is said and done, it is still the work of Christ that will count.

But why is this song called the Song of Moses? Because it calls our minds back to God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt at the Red Sea as a type of the final deliverance. When the great army of Pharaoh came after the unarmed Israelites, "they were terrified and cried out to the Lord" (Ex. 14:10). From a natural point of view there was no hope for them. Terrible fear gripped them. But "Moses answered the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. The Egyptians you see today you will never see again. The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still'" (verses 13, 14). In other

words God says, Rest in Me, trust Me, I am able to take you through.

### **Resting in Jesus**

This is how it will be for the final "Israel." When everything seems hopeless, we will look to Christ, rest in Him, and trust Him to take us through to the other side. This resting and trusting in Jesus has everything to do with the Sabbath test that comes when a threatening civil power is descending on us. Sunday legislation will not only involve the question of which day is holy; in a far deeper sense it has to do with the Sabbath experience. It is this Sabbath-like experience of resting in Christ and following Him even when doing so seems to place all the odds against us that is the very essence of the experience of the 144,000 and is the heart of their song.

At the Red Sea it was not the Israelites who rolled the waters back. Christ did. Moses didn't keep the waters back. Christ did. Their scantily armed men didn't destroy the Egyptian army. Christ did. "The mighty hand of Christ rolled back the waters of the Red Sea, so that they stood up like a wall. Thus He made a dry passage through the sea, and Israel passed over dryshod."<sup>3</sup>

Look at the Song of Moses. "I will sing to the Lord, for he is highly exalted. The horse and its rider he has hurled into the sea. The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation" (Ex. 15:1, 2). "In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling" (verse 13). And so the song goes on for 18 verses. There's not one word about the time of trouble they passed through. The entire song is about God and the awesome power He manifested on behalf of His people. The Song of Moses and the Song of the Lamb is about Christ, not about times of trouble. It is about Christ, not the crisis. It is now that we must learn to look at every struggle of our lives and at the ultimate crisis in the same way—seeing past the crisis to the Christ!



Just as Christ was with His people at the Red Sea, so He will be with the 144,000 in the great time of trouble. He is the God who stands with His people in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:25). He is the Christ who stands in the midst of His churches (Rev. 1:12, 20). He promised, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you" (Heb. 13:5), for "I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Christ makes the same decisive difference to final events as He did at the Red Sea rescue. Without Him there is no good news. But because of Him there is always the very best news indeed! Going through last-day events has much more to do with what He is going to do for us than with what we are going to do for Him.

When the final moments come, Christ will provide latter rain power to comfort and sustain us (see Joel 2:28). He will send the plagues against a world confederated against His people (see Rev. 16). He will destroy the enemy and deliver His people (see Rev. 18). No wonder the 144,000 have something to sing about forever! The focus of this song is always to be our focus. Thus it will not be God's children who will feel fear in the final throes of history, but it will be those who enact a death decree who in the end will experience ultimate fear (see Rev. 6:12-17).

## Two Second Advent scenes

But the game isn't over until it's over. In the first quarter of the end-time game there's a Sunday law. In the second quarter there's a death decree, and then the plagues will be pounding the planet. The fourth quarter is the climax—Armageddon and the Second Advent. We know that as the game ends, Christ will manifest His power by obliterating the opposition. And the saints will be homeward bound and forever safe. Thus we need to look at coming events from the end of the game forward. It makes all the difference.

There is a dramatic comparison in Revelation 14 and 19 that is important. In chapter 14 we see Christ riding on a white cloud with a crown on His head.

He comes to deliver His people. The crown is a *stephanos*, a laurel wreath of victory, worn by the winner of an Olympic-type game. It is the same *stephanos* that the redeemed wear (see Rev. 4:4). Chapter 14 pictures Jesus as one of us. He has been through the worst time of trouble, far greater than ours, in Gethsemane and at Golgotha. In Revelation 14 He comes as the compassionate Deliverer, the Son of man, the Redeemer wearing the crown of the redeemed.

In Revelation 19 He comes on a white horse to make war, to judge, and to throw the enemy into the fiery lake. He comes with multiple crowns, each one a diadem worn exclusively by royalty. He comes as King of kings and conquering God. At the sight of such a Christ the saints rejoice, for "God has judged her [Babylon] for the way she treated you" (Rev. 18:20). Now in Babylon there is no song to sing. It is destitute of music (see verses 21, 22) and filled with fear.

What does God say to His children in these two pictures of the Second Advent? He says, "I understand; I know what you will go through. I'll go through it with you." "The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints."<sup>4</sup> He also says, "I am the King of kings. Do not be afraid when all the civil powers of the world are in union with all the apostate religious powers to oppose you. They are a wisp of smoke to Me, the eternal King. Do not be afraid of what they might do against you. I will have the last word. I am coming to destroy them. When languishing in prisons, My angels will come to you, 'bringing light and peace from heaven.'"<sup>5</sup> "You will only observe with your eyes and see the punishment of the wicked. If you make the Most High your dwelling—even the Lord, who is my refuge—then no harm will befall you, no disaster will come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways" (Ps. 91:8-11).

Sudden deliverance (see Rev. 18:8,

10, 17) brings joy to the saints. "Their faces, so lately pale, anxious, and haggard, are now aglow with wonder, faith, and love. Their voices rise in triumphant song: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof' (Ps. 46:1-3)."<sup>6</sup>

When their enemies have no song, the saints will sing their new song. That song is about triumph and not tragedy, about faith and not fear, about Christ and not the crisis. This is our destiny—to sing that song. What is coming will be tough but thrilling.<sup>7</sup> It will find us in the final exodus, facing the final Red Sea, and crossing over with Christ our only help. ■

\* Bible texts in this article are from the New International Version.

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1950), p. 649.

<sup>2</sup> *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1957), vol. 7, p. 826.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 1, p. 1101.

<sup>4</sup> White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 633.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 627.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 639.

<sup>7</sup> This article is about the 144,000. There are others who become martyrs (Rev. 20:4). For them see 1 Corinthians 10:13.

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# The process of crisis intervention

Martin W. Feldbush

Crisis intervention is  
an art of restoring  
human beings to their  
God-given dignity and  
potential.

Recently my wife and I took sailing lessons. The most memorable point of our lessons was an incident in the classroom, in which our instructor put everything in perspective. He gave us a simple conceptual framework into which we could fit everything we were learning. He said there are three basic things one needs to know to sail: (1) how to read the wind, (2) how to set the sails, and (3) how to steer the boat. Learn those, our instructor assured us, and you'll be a sailor!

Pastors who want to respond to crises also need a conceptual framework from which to work. This article will deal with a theory of caring relationship, types of crises, constituents of pastoral care, a model for helping, and an evaluation process.

## A caring relationship

A caring relationship is built on helping others grow and actualize themselves instead of using them to satisfy your own needs.<sup>1</sup> It is based on genuine love. It is not an isolated feeling or momentary relationship, but a process of development toward wholeness. Milton Mayeroff suggests that caring consists of the following ingredients: knowledge and competence, the ability to evaluate ourselves critically in the helping process, the gift of patience in "staying with" the person in need, trusting counselees' ability to grow so that we do not overdo for them, honesty, the humility to know our limitations, a sense of hopefulness about the potential for growth, and the courage to invest ourselves in caring for others.<sup>2</sup>

David Switzer argues that caring is pastoral when the minister's caring is seen as an expression of the whole life and purpose of the Christian community.<sup>3</sup> He outlines three ways in which such an expression becomes possible:

*Empathy.* Empathy is the ability to understand and share in the emotions and feelings of another person. The goal is to understand the other person from his or her point of view, assuring him or her that he or she is heard and appreciated.

*Respect.* Respect involves communicating to others that they are of value. This is crucial since people in crisis often have low self-esteem. Unconditional acceptance of the other person enhances self-esteem.

*Self-disclosure/vulnerability.* When we communicate that we too are human and have the same feelings and needs, we convey to people in crisis that vulnerability is not unique to them.

To these factors one may add the *quality of being nonjudgmental*. Help in crisis

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aims at understanding the individual and not judging. The main point is that before we do anything to help the person in crisis, we need to create an environment in which caring and healing can take place.

## Types of crises

Two types of crises are predominantly discussed in literature today. First are *developmental crises*, experienced at the transitional or turning points of life that produce stress. They are fraught with a need to adapt, to find new meanings, and are often (but not always) predictable events we know will happen someday. Included are marriage and birth of children, adolescence, career changes, aging, bereavement, etc. Second are *situational crises*. These are reactions to specific, external, and often unanticipated events in our lives. Included are traumatic events such as accidents and natural disasters, failure and breakup of relationships, loss of a job, unexpected death of a loved one, and so on. Of course, there can be some overlap between these types of crises. A situational crisis differs from a developmental crisis in the *source of stress* and in the *element of time*.<sup>4</sup>

Most researchers see a crisis as a result of a sequential process:

1. A precipitating event occurs, often external in nature.
2. The individual examines the situation to determine if it threatens some basic need. The degree of threat will depend on whether the person has experienced the threat before, its impact then, the available coping resources, and so on. At this phase the person *interprets the event and assigns it meaning*—threatening, mildly threatening, nonthreatening, etc. Thus what the person believes about the event is as important as the event itself.

3. Having deemed the event a threat, the person employs coping methods and resources to deal with the matter. The adequacy of these will determine the extent to which the event will be internally experienced as a crisis.

4. Last, if the coping mechanisms fail, the individual enters the crisis phase, reacting internally to the hazard.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, a crisis has more to do with a person's *internal response* than with the external situation.

Since we are dealing with *situational* crisis intervention, it is essential to know whether or not a person is experiencing that kind of crisis. Determining this will decide the degree of help we might feel we are able to give to the person. Switzer gives a three-question diagnostic procedure: 1. Has there been a recent (within the past few days or weeks) onset of troublesome feelings and/or behavior? 2. Have these symptoms grown progressively worse, leading the person to the pastor for help? 3. Can the onset be linked with some

external event or change in the life situation or in the person's perception of the circumstances?<sup>6</sup>

## Constituents of pastoral care

Since there are varying types of crises, pastoral intervention must vary accordingly. We will look especially at the pastor's response to situational crises, utilizing a model recommended by most specialists. This involves four steps.

1. *Pastoral presence*. When a person in crisis comes to the pastor for assistance, the pastor should make available those attending skills that show his or her interest in the individual. These skills are primarily nonverbal. They communicate in the first few moments of the interaction that the pastor is there for one purpose—to be with that person and provide compassionate care.

2. *Identifying needs and resources*.

The pastor uses general leads and appropriate questions to let the person tell his or her story. Being a listener is the heart of pastoral care, because in that act the person externalizes his or her understanding of the circumstances, perceptions about them, and knowledge of available coping resources. By listening, the pastor gathers information and impressions that will form the basis of the next step.

3. *Pastoral diagnosis*. Although this article does not deal with pastoral assessment theory and methods, it is important for pastors to understand common models of diagnosis that can be used in counseling and shared with practitioners of other disciplines. Basically this involves understanding and

utilizing biblically based pastoral concepts of caring and compassion to hurting people.

4. *Pastoral interventions*. Only after valid pastoral assessment should the pastor utilize the spiritual therapies at his or her disposal. To do otherwise would be like a surgeon performing an operation without examining the patient or doing any diagnostic studies. The pastor has a "kit bag" similar to the physician, except that it does not contain instruments. It contains spiritual therapies that become operative through the ministry of the Holy Spirit and the healing balm of loving interpersonal care. Among those therapies are the use of Scriptures, prayer, the caring Christian community, pastoral counseling, the ceremonies and rites of the church, etc. The pastor's therapies thus become the natural outgrowth of a relationship based on mutual trust.

The pastor has a  
"kit bag" that is  
used through the  
Holy Spirit and  
loving inter-  
personal care.

## The helping model

Tom, a recent graduate of a state university, came to his pastor one day and shared feelings of low self-esteem and described physical stress symptoms. He sometimes

wondered if it was worth keeping on in the face of life's problems. The pastor wisely realized that Tom needed more than a prayer and a verse of Scripture and encouraged him to talk about his situation. He especially wanted Tom to share specifically what was happening in his life and how long he had felt this way. The pastor's attitude of personal acceptance encouraged Tom to share his story, and out tumbled an account of bad financial decisions and escalating debt. His credit cards were over the limit, and three weeks earlier his car had been repossessed. The worst of his symptoms had begun at about that time. The pastor read the signs of situational crisis and moved toward helping Tom in his problems.

The pastor's basic goals were:

1. To provide symptom relief, and lower distress and maladaptive coping.
2. To help Tom return to normal functioning.
3. To provide reassurance when appropriate.

How does a pastor help people like Tom? Switzer's helping model provides some assistance to the pastor. The model has three phases.

*Phase 1: Contact.* Contact involves a caring and therapeutic relationship. During contact, trust is built through communication of accurate empathy along with good attending and listening skills. During this time the pastor will get to know whether the crisis is situational or not. If it is not, the pastor may have to switch gears and refer the person to another professional.

The pastor encourages the person to tell the story, asking the individual to identify the problem that precipitated the crisis. If the counselee's narration does not reveal when and how the distress began, the pastor must intentionally search for these precipitating factors through gentle questioning.

By telling the story, the counselee builds trust and aids in the assessment of the situational crisis. The pastor can also begin building hope by suggesting the need for contracting an agreement that the two work together on the problem.

*Phase 2: Focus.* Focus helps review in detail the precipitating event and the person's reaction to it so that together you can clarify (a) what has happened and (b) why it is perceived as a threat and the reason for the kind of response it is eliciting in the counselee. The counselee must connect the event and its assigned meaning to see that the difficulty might not only be the event itself but also his or her beliefs about it. If the counselee is not able to make this connection, the pastor might state the core of the problem as he or she sees it.

Sometimes it is helpful to ask the counselee to describe the situation both before and after the crisis-producing event. Especially look for changes in behavior, emotions, physical symptoms, relationships, and mental functioning. As a result of active listening and other discovery techniques, the pastor and parishioner will come to a better understanding of *what has happened, what the problem is, and why it is perceived as a threat.*

*Phase 3: Coping.* Coping is doing something about the problem. This involves making some decisions based on

information that has already been gleaned and implementing solutions that are agreed upon. The first task is to inventory problem-solving resources that the counselee can call upon, such as church, personal faith, social support systems, community agencies, and so on. Essentially this is drawing out the inner strengths and external resources that can be used in dealing with the crisis. One way of getting at this is to listen for and/or ask about similar crises that may have happened in the past and how the person coped with them. The counselee often realizes he or she has been through this before and had resources to cope then. Identify and discuss these resources.

The second task is to assist in the decision-making process. Encourage the person in crisis to identify decisions and actions that if taken would alter the situation. Initially this is brainstorming. Since we want the counselee to assume responsibility for himself or herself, we do not offer options until the person has exhausted his or her ideas. The pastor then assists in the evaluation of options. Will it work? Is this feasible? Why? Why not? What will the probable results be?

The pastor then gently yet firmly encourages the counselee to make a decision about a course of action, encouraging him or her to act upon it. The pastor does not make these decisions for the person. He or she suggests alternatives only when it is apparent that the course of action chosen might result in harm.

Part of the decision-making process is affirming the resources suggested by the counselee, especially relationships with both God and people. This is important because people in crisis often suffer from damaged relationships.

Action decisions lead to new learning. This is reviewing what has transpired and asking what the counselee has learned from the process. This helps the person add these learnings to their arsenal of resources to be utilized again in times of crisis.

Follow-up is essential, whether in the form of continued counseling sessions or informal yet regular contacts. The pastor, having encouraged the counselee to implement the plan of action, now helps to evaluate progress and make midcourse corrections if needed.<sup>7</sup>

## Evaluating the helping process

How do we evaluate the helping model and its effect on the person in crisis? Switzer poses five evaluative questions:

1. Has the level of anxiety been reduced?
2. Can the person describe the plan of action in his or her own words?
3. Is the person hopeful regarding the future?
4. Does the person exhibit appreciation for the help given?
5. Is there realistic expectation that the unmet needs precipitating the crisis can be met?<sup>8</sup>

This model is not meant for every occasion, yet it helps many people to proceed in an orderly manner while retaining emphasis on the quality of interpersonal relationships. Both are needed by people whose crises leave them feeling alone and unable to sort out cognitively what is happening. The model

may seem too structured to some yet refreshingly focused to others. Try it, practice it, evaluate it, and refine it. ■

<sup>1</sup> Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 9-20.

<sup>3</sup> David K. Switzer, *Pastoral Care Emergencies* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> ——— *The Minister as Crisis Counselor* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974, 1989), pp. 33, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Howard W. Stone, *Crisis Counseling* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), pp. 12-14.

<sup>6</sup> Switzer, *The Minister as Crisis Counselor*, p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 65-89.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 85.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION EXERCISE

### The process of crisis intervention

1. **What are the facilitative conditions** of counseling and their role in developing a context for healing and growth?
2. **Identify and distinguish** between two major types of crises discussed in this article.
3. **Discuss how to identify** situational crises as may be evidenced in parishioners or counselees who come to you for help.
4. **Summarize the sequential process** that leads to the experience of situational crises.
5. **Review and summarize** the basic phases in the helping model discussed in this article.
6. **How would you evaluate** the effectiveness of this helping process after using it to help someone?

### Suggested reading

Clinebell, Howard. *Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counseling*. Rev. Ed. New York: Abingdon Press, 1984, 1992. Provides a theological foundation for pastoral counseling and discusses various types of pastoral counseling.

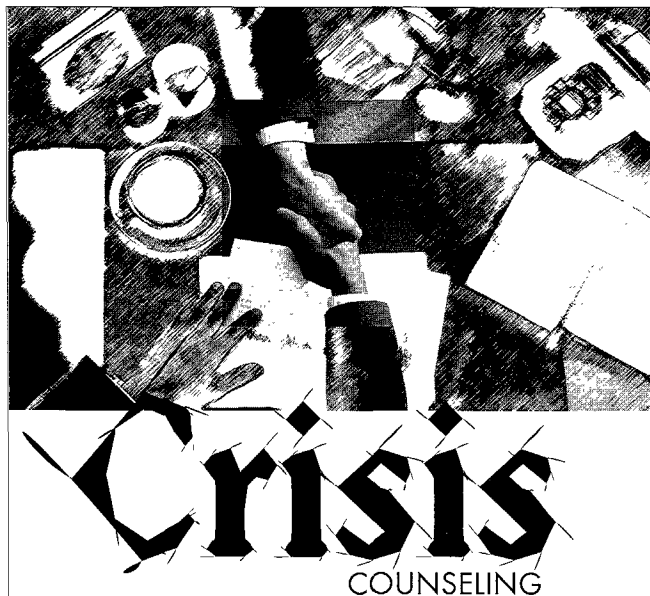
Kennedy, Eugene. *Crisis Counseling*. New York: Continuum Pub. Co., 1990. Written for the nonprofessional counselor, it deals with the theory of crisis, types of interventions, and their application in a variety of situations including depression, rape, suicide, bereavement, child sexual abuse, and others.

Mayeroff, Milton. *On Caring*. New York: Harper and Row, 1971. A secular discussion on the meaning of caring and its dynamics in interpersonal relationships.

Stone, Howard W. *Crisis Counseling*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976, 1987. A classic covering the dynamics of crisis counseling and providing a design for intervention and the place of such care in the church.

Switzer, David K. *The Minister as Crisis Counselor*. Rev. Ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974, 1989. A seminary textbook on crisis theory and methods of intervention and application in several contexts—including family crises, grief, marriage and divorce, and suicide.

———. *Pastoral Care Emergencies*. New York: Paulist Press, 1989. Deals with the ingredients of caring in various crisis situations, including sickness, death and dying, bereavement, suicide, family systems needs, homosexuality, mental illness, and substance abuse.



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The first of the four areas is **Youth Ministry**. It is a quarter-long program that will begin on January 6, 1997, and continue to March 19. Throughout this period these courses will be offered: "Contemporary Youth Culture," "Counseling Youth/Young Adults," "Visionary Leadership in Youth Ministry," and

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*Benjamin D. Schoun, D.Min., is the associate dean of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan; Dick Tibbits, D.Min., is administrative director of pastoral education and whole person health at Florida Hospital.*

management personnel and will incorporate special features, such as the Florida Hospital Conference on Mission and a study of their mission-based customer relations and service program, SHARE. The ongoing management operation and culture of the hospital will be a laboratory for real-life observation. The course can be taken either on the master's or doctoral level and requires pre- and postsession assignments.

The third area is **Worship and Church Renewal**. Many pastors and church leaders gravitate to some of the country's fast-growing and innovative churches in order to learn ways of reaching unchurched people. Worship renewal has become one of the important components of the broader goal of church renewal. We believe that several of the Adventist churches near Florida Hospital have demonstrated leadership in this area that is both attractive and appropriate to Adventist theology and values. The Forest Lake and Florida

Hospital SDA churches, with their excellent pastoral teams, innovative services, involvement of members, and outreach programs, stand out as good models from which others can gain ideas and principles to apply in other settings. This master's or doctoral class will be conducted as an intensive from March 21 to 29, 1997, with pre- and postsession assignments.

The fourth area, **Clinical Pastoral Education**, is especially appropriate to the Florida Hospital environment. It allows participants to improve their pastoral care and counseling skills for parish ministry or for some type of chaplaincy ministry. CPE has its own certifying organization and grants recognition in units. However, up to 12 quarter credits can be earned from the SDA Theological Seminary for a unit of CPE. Units can be completed in a full-time 11-week program or an extended program over several months. Call for dates. The time is spent in ministry to

patients, supervisory conferences, reading and seminars, preparing verbatims and case studies, in participating in learning groups, and conducting worship services. It is a real privilege to take such training in an Adventist Christian setting, where people's religious values are upheld.

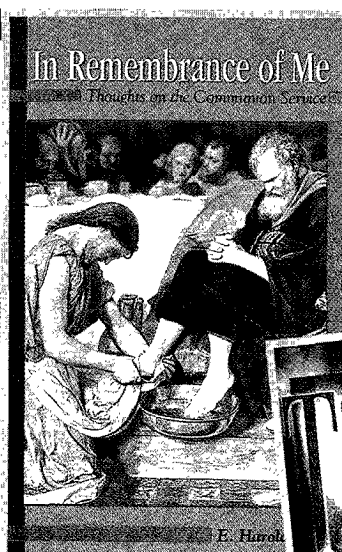
These educational experiences offer variety and enrichment to the seminary on-campus programs. It gives our students more options for meaningful learning. We also believe that the interaction between ministers and health-care workers can only enhance an understanding of each other and contribute to the development of a common vision, purpose, and ministry. For further information and costs for any of these programs, please contact Dr. Dick Tibbits at Florida Hospital (407-895-7757), or Dr. Douglas Kilcher at Andrews University Seminary (616-471-3245 or CompuServe 74532,37 or 74617,2163). ■

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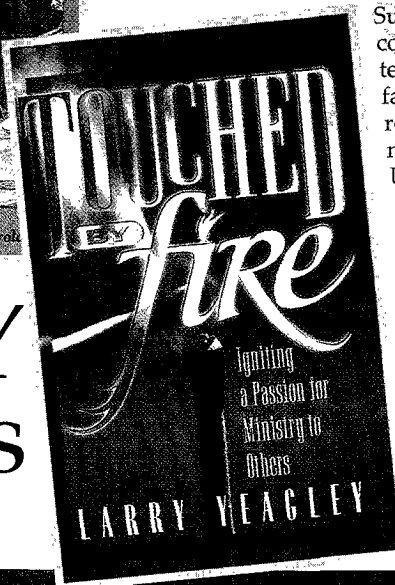


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# Burnout's subtle approach

## Jack Lange

### A pastor shares his traumatic experience with burnout



*Jack Lange is a pastor in New South Wales, Australia.*

I was 24, recently converted, and full of faith. One day I met Richard, a godly middle-aged Adventist. When he told me he was recovering from a nervous breakdown, I couldn't believe it. I said, "A Christian shouldn't have a breakdown, Richard." His glance reflected hurt and indignation. He quickly asked, "Why not?" Wanting to help him, I replied, "Our faith in God lifts us above stress." Richard didn't pursue the conversation. I didn't realize it at the time, but he must have felt sorry for my youthful ignorance. There was no way I could have known that years later, as an experienced minister, I too would suffer a major stress-related breakdown.

A few years after I met Richard, a conference president told my theology class that he expected us to "work hard and harder still to finish the work." As a young minister I followed that advice to the point that I felt guilty if I stayed home because someone canceled a Bible study appointment.

#### Early symptoms

Most of the time ministry brought me much joy. My theological training, however, had not prepared me for the pain caused by the artillery and missiles some of the saints fired at me. As I worked in small churches I found it difficult to deal with conflicts, and was drained emotionally. In my mid-40s I started to become strangely tired. Instead of me "finishing the work," the work was finishing me! I found it difficult to relax. I couldn't enjoy my meals. I couldn't appreciate the beauty of a flower or the colors of a butterfly. The sound of my kids playing happily jarred my nerves. My mind was caught

up with church problems. I wasn't enjoying the ministry as I had. Despite planning ahead, there were times I couldn't remember what to do next. Sometimes I resented living in the parsonage next to the church. "Won't the members ever leave me in peace?" I would say to myself.

A change was taking place in me so slowly that I was hardly aware of it. I didn't recognize then that I was experiencing the early-warning symptoms of a breakdown. I thought of going to a doctor but put it off, hoping that the next holiday season would recharge my batteries. It didn't. I continued to have highs and lows, but the lows gradually sank a little deeper. At times an uncharacteristic depression would pass over me temporarily. Although I realized that I might be suffering from stress, I never comprehended where the seriousness of the condition could lead.

With most illnesses, physical pain jars one to action. With psychological-emotional exhaustion, the warning symptoms are more subtle and harder to detect.<sup>1</sup>

Recently I spoke to a number of people who were recovering from burnout. While most of them on hindsight can now recognize the early-warning symptoms, they could not recognize them at the time of their occurrence. Personally I was only vaguely aware of the indicators, and it took a crisis to awaken me. By then it was too late to prevent an irreversible slide into severe breakdown. This is why it is so important for clergy to be able to identify the early symptoms.

Needless to say, when one is experiencing warning symptoms of burnout

it is unwise to accept a new appointment with added responsibilities, yet this is exactly what I did. It was an unwise decision, and it produced the extra wave that sank my ship.

### The crisis

One night about two years ago I had an extended visit with a couple who were pulled toward legalistic fanaticism. After that emotionally draining visit I drove off into the country for a Bible study. I slammed on the brakes too late. At 60 miles per hour the car plunged over the embankment, flew 50 feet through the air, and crashed in swampy ground. The car was badly damaged, but I wasn't seriously hurt. In stunned amazement I prayed: "Thank You, Lord, for protecting me. I didn't even see the corner coming; there must be something wrong with me." My advanced state of crisis required that accident to convince me fully that I was ill. From then on my health deteriorated rapidly. I was diagnosed as suffering from stress-related breakdown/depression. To my surprise, blood tests revealed the presence of a virus that caused chronic fatigue.<sup>2</sup>

Doctors told me that prolonged stress had affected my immune system, allowing the fatigue-causing virus to assert itself, thus further lowering my ability to handle stress.

### Emotional-psychological burnout

Severe "burnout" (sometimes called a nervous breakdown) causes suffering of greater intensity than most physical pain. With physical illness one's mind can still think well enough to cope with suffering. However, when the mind that controls the coping mechanism breaks down, the result is devastating. Without any exaggeration, my struggle was equal in intensity to the trauma of awakening from a nightmare to discover that it is real. Fitful sleep was invaded with panic attacks involving adrenaline rushes, heart spasms, and phobic thoughts (phobias and emotional liability are common with this condition).<sup>3</sup> I could understand why many suicides are motivated, not by some new and isolated tragedy, but by a desperate

desire to escape the torturous symptoms of clinical depression.<sup>4</sup>

I had no option except to accept medical advice and take extended sick leave. Two years later I am still not well enough to cope with the emotional demands of ministry. It took time for accumulated stress to cause the breakdown. It takes time to get better. To have my life turned upside down was not easy, even though the Lord has closely blessed my every new step. For someone who has been an active minister for many years, it's very difficult to have to do something else, for my heart is still in the ministry. This type of frustration is inevitable in a deeply burned-out minister and causes much emotional pain.

The family suffers too, as it now has to live with a sick person whose depleted emotional reserves cannot cope well with the demands of growing children (particularly teenagers). Full-blown chronic fatigue, which is a classic symptom of burnout, has to be experienced to be properly understood. Most drivers know what it's like to feel so tired while driving that it seems impossible to stay awake any longer. But when one experiences similar mental fatigue by 10:00 a.m. despite having had a good night's sleep, then

one knows the frustration of chronic fatigue syndrome.<sup>5</sup>

### Clinical depression

Clinical depression, often caused by burnout, is more common than many ministers realize. Dr. Fran Singer writes: "It has been estimated that one in 20 men and one in 10 women will become clinically depressed at some time in their lives."<sup>6</sup> Christians are not exempt, but for fear of embarrassment they try to conceal their illness. To admit depression is seen as lack of faith, especially in a climate that measures faith by joyful emotional experiences.

A clinically depressed person is not someone who is merely going through a very sad experience. "Feelings of sadness, frustration, and unhappiness are natural reactions to real-life problems, a painful loss . . . a conflict. Psychiatrists refer to such reactions as 'adjustment disorders.' If the symptoms gradually clear up as the problem subsides, you've probably just had an ordinary adjustment disorder. If not, you may be suffering clinical depression."<sup>7</sup>

It was only after I experienced burnout that I could fully appreciate what the psalmist meant when he described his inner turmoil: "My eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and

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my body with grief. My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak" (Ps. 31:9, 10, NIV).

Even the strength of David's mind was reduced to severe depression that lasted for years. Evidently, strong spiritual leaders are not exempt from severe depression! It is significant that the psalmist mingles expressions of suffering with expressions of great faith: "But I trust in you, O Lord. . . . My times are in your hands" (verses 14, 15, NIV). Apparently David's sufferings were caused, not by any lack of faith, but by the prolonged conflict situations he encountered.

So it's usually not appropriate simply to tell depressed Christians to "have more faith" or to "lay your burdens at the foot of the cross." They may already be plagued with the misconception that their condition is a result of lack of faith when in reality it may have a medical basis. It is far better to reassure them sympathetically that God is with them and that the suffering will pass.

### Some practical pointers

While it is not within my ability to give medical advice, I will briefly mention some practical pointers that have helped me personally.

Early in my illness the Lord led me to a wonderfully comforting book, *Self-Help for Your Nerves*.<sup>8</sup> It persuaded me that the traumatic symptoms I experienced were unpleasant but not harmful in the long term. It showed me I should not be unduly frightened by the involuntary bodily reactions and moods of my breakdown/depression, and indicated that these always pass and will diminish in time.<sup>9</sup>

I also benefited from physical exercise and a simple diet free from highly refined food and rich desserts. The doctor prescribed an antidepressant drug, and it helped me. It was not a mood-elevating drug, but it helped by raising the level of neurotransmitters in the brain.<sup>10</sup>

I have found spa bathing calming to my nerves. Hobbies create needed therapeutic pleasure without harmful stress, and they distract the mind from morbid preoccupations.

In my case, I wish that the church had made available some trained counselors who could visit incapacitated pastors on a regular basis. In the New South Wales Police Force a special counselor visits weekly with stressed-out police officers and provides valuable encouragement and direction. This kind of ministry in a church setting would be invaluable to pastors.

### Preventive measures

If you suspect you may be on the burnout track, find a doctor who understands the complex nature of ministry. He or she may advise you to slow down, or may surprise you by recommending a long period off work. This may seem to be overly cautious, but is preferable to having to experience other potential effects of depression. It may take courage to inform your administrators that you feel stressed out, that they should give you freedom to lighten your load. Let your congregation know of your limitations and your need to slow down. If you don't, they will keep sending work your way. Some ministers try to give the impression that they are unbreakable, but church members respect ministers who reveal their humanity.

Learn to say no more often. Don't worry if this occasionally offends some well-meaning church members who think that you should operate up to their expectations. No minister can entirely escape criticism.

Sometimes even a healthy minister may have to try to adopt a five-day week as a survival measure. We vary enormously in our workload abilities. "Each individual must find his or her level of stress tolerance, because below it you'll feel bored and frustrated, and above it you'll suffer exhaustion."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See M.W.P. Carney, "The Diagnosis of Depressive Symptoms and the Prediction of ECT Response," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 3 (1965): 659-674.

<sup>2</sup> See A. S. David, "Postviral Fatigue Syndrome: Time for a New Approach," *British Medical Journal* 296 (1988): 696-699.

<sup>3</sup> See Ian Hickie, "The Psychiatric Status of Patients With the Chronic Fatigue Syndrome," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 28 (1990): 536.

<sup>4</sup> See P. O. Behan, "The Postviral Fatigue Syndrome—Analysis of the Findings in 50 Cases," *Journal of Infection* 10 (1985): 211-222.

<sup>5</sup> See William Vayda, *Chronic Fatigue: The Silent Epidemic* (Sydney, Australia: Simon and Schuster, 1991), p. 174.

<sup>6</sup> Fran Singer, "Let's Talk," *New Idea*, Sept. 5, 1992, p. 86.

<sup>7</sup> *Diagnosis and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 3rd rev. ed. (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1987).

<sup>8</sup> Claire Weeks, *Self-Help for Your Nerves* (Sydney, Australia: Angus and Robertson, 1989), p. 28.

<sup>9</sup> See also Vayda, pp. 51, 65.

<sup>10</sup> See Philip Elmer-Dewitt, "Depression: The Growing Role of Drug Therapies," *Time*, July 6, 1992, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup> Vayda, p. 51.

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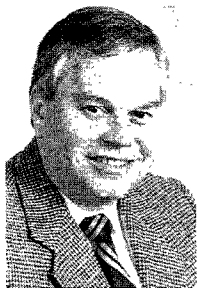
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## I wish I had said that!

James A. Cress

I collect Noah's Arks and interesting quotations. My collection of arks, on display in the Ministerial Association Office, has become a favorite stop on the General Conference tour. I hope some of my favorite quotations will brighten your day and challenge your thinking!

*"If there is miscommunication, blame yourself, not your audience. You are the message!"—Richard Ailes.*

*"Let me tell you the secret that has led me to my goal. My secret lies solely in my tenacity."—Louis Pasteur.*

*"We do not want suffering; we want success. We identify not with those who are low and hurt, but with those who are high and healthy. We don't like lepers or losers very well; we prefer climbers and comers. For Christians the temptation to be conformed to this world is desperately sweet and strong. Yet, says the apostle Paul, we are children of God if we suffer with Christ . . . God does not give His hardest assignments to His weakest children."—Cornelius Plantinga, Jr.*

*"Only a fool tests the depth of the water with both feet."—African proverb.*

*"Learn to say no. It will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin."—Charles Spurgeon.*

*"What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me."—John Stott, quoting humanist Margharita Laski.*

*"Keep in mind that the true measure of an individual is how he treats a person who can do him absolutely no good."—Ann Landers.*

*"When the character of a man is not clear to you, look at his friends."—Japanese proverb.*

*"I have not heard recently of committee business adjourned because those*

*present were still awaiting the arrival of the Spirit of God. I have known projects abandoned for the lack of funds, but not for the lack of the gifts of the Spirit. Provided the human resources are adequate, we take the spiritual for granted."—John V. Taylor.*

*"An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile, hoping it will eat him last."—Winston Churchill.*

*"The message of Jesus Christ is to bring hope to the least, the last, the left out, and the lonely."—Charles E. Bradford.*

*"There is a rule in sailing where the more maneuverable ship should give way to the less maneuverable craft. I think this is sometimes a good rule to follow in human relationships as well."—Joyce Brothers.*

*"Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words."—Francis of Assisi.*

*"No dog can go as fast as the money you bet on him!"—Bud Flanagan.*

*"The knowledge of where people are wrong is a hindrance to prayer, not an assistance. 'I want to tell you of the difficulties so that you may pray more intelligently.' The more you know, the less intelligently you pray, because you forget to believe that God can alter the difficulties."—Oswald Chambers.*

*"No one beneath you can offend you. No one your equal would."—Jan L. Wells.*

*"I will permit no man to narrow and degrade my soul by making me hate him."—Booker T. Washington.*

*"God has given the power of choice to each person, and it is theirs to use. We cannot change our hearts. We cannot by ourselves give our love to God, but we can choose to serve Him. We can give Him the powers of our minds. He will help us*

*choose the right way. Then our whole being will be guided by the Spirit of Christ. We will love God, and our thoughts will be like His."—Ellen G. White.*

*"The grass may look greener on the other side, but it's just as hard to cut."—Little Richard.*

*"Christmas reminds us that we are not alone. We are not unrelated atoms, jouncing and ricocheting amid aliens, but are part of something which holds and sustains us. As we struggle with shopping lists and invitations compounded by December's bad weather, it is good to be reminded that there are people in our lives who are worth this aggravation, and people to whom we are worth the same. Christmas shows us the ties that bind us together, threads of love and caring, woven in the simplest and strongest ways within the family."—Donald E. Westlake.*

*"Don't approach a goat from the front, a horse from the back, or a fool from any side."—Yiddish proverb.*

*"General DuPuy taught me something invaluable about holding on to one's core of individuality. . . . 'Never be so consumed by your career that nothing is left that belongs only to you and your family. Don't allow your profession to become the whole of your existence.' I remember thinking at the time of something the staff had observed. None of us had ever seen the inside of General DuPuy's home. Now I understood why."—Colin L. Powell.*

*"Why did Jesus Christ not remain alive and eliminate, generation by generation, all the evils which harass humanity? Simply because He was the Great Physician, and in the finest tradition of medical science, He was unwilling to remain preoccupied with the symptoms when He could destroy the disease. Jesus Christ was unwilling to settle for anything less than elimination of the cause of all evil in history."—Richard C. Halverson. ■*

## Letters

Continued from page 2

### "Outsiders" in a hearing church

Thank you for publishing my article "Outsiders in a Hearing Church" (March 1996). I wrote the article to raise the awareness of the need for an expanded deaf ministry within the Adventist Church and not to pat people on the back. While I recognize that the editorial deletions were because of space limitations, I take issue with the added statement "Our church has come a long way in meeting those challenges."

I wish that during my years as a nearly deaf person in the Seventh-day Adventist Church I had found that to be true—but it is not. The facts are that there are four ordained deaf ministers in the North American Division. One is retired, and the other three are part-time employees. As the deaf members of our church are widely scattered, I am sure you can appreciate the dilemma this creates.

To present this situation as one in which significant progress is being

made does all concerned a disservice. I invite you to come to the deaf camp meeting at Milo and check the situation for yourself.—Joyce Rigsby, Hanford, California.

## Going beyond unity in diversity

Continued from page 4

other words, we search for unity on the basis of cognitive similarity. And our relationships remain strained as we encounter (and we constantly do) any who see things in a different light. In all of this, the only real basis for oneness and Christian solidarity is this fabulous spirit of "Christlike forbearance."

O God, fill us full of Your Spirit! ■

<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1980), book 3, p. 174, 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ellen G. White Manuscript Releases*, vol. 11, p. 266.

## Cut it down!

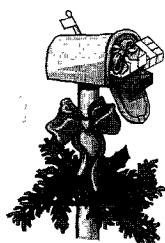
Continued from page 5

needs of our congregations. We forget that our families may feel hurt and neglected. They see us ever ministering to others and never ministering to them. If we are over-extended and overstressed by our work to the extent our families feel neglected or hurt, we need to repent and *cut down* the time spent away from them.

Some of us may have spent more money than we can afford because we have credit cards. All during the year, and especially at the Christmas season, this "easily accessible" money temporarily provides immediate gratification for a personal want, but it may mean doing without something that is truly important for the whole family. If we were selfish with our resources, maybe we need to take the cards and *cut up* the temptation.

Communicating is a valuable pastoral skill. Words are one of our main means of spreading the gospel. However, this same instrument, the tongue, that utters messages from on high can become harsh and abrasive with our families when we are tired, angry, hungry, or stressed. But these are just excuses. Words wound and broken promises hurt deeply. Like the cactus needles, they penetrate painfully and are not easily removed. We must *cut out* these hurtful words from our vocabulary.

As we begin the new year, let's take inventory of the things in our lives that may be damaging to another person. May the Lord give each one of us the wisdom to identify them and the courage to bury them before someone is really hurt. ■



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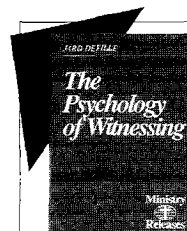
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## Ministry back issues

Australian reader would like to have back copies of *Ministry* from 1980 onward. If you have and can spare, please contact: Wegweiser Research, Brooklana, Via ULONG, NSW 2450, Australia—Keith Moxon, Brooklana, NSW, Australia

## A letter from north Philippines

Mrs. Noemi M. Abarquez makes the following request: "We are trying to build a library that our pastors and workers can use. May we request your readers to send whatever books they can spare? We are willing to pay postage. Please contact us directly at North Philippine Union Mission of SDA, Corner of San Juan-Donada Streets, Pasay City, Metro Manila, P.O. Box 401, Manila, Philippines.

## The Organ Resource Centre

Established in 1987, the Organ Resource Centre (ORC) operates as a project of the Edmonton Centre of the Royal Canadian College of Organists. When faced with the purchase of a new organ, churches are often at a loss as to how to begin their search. The ORC seeks to educate churches in the organ selection process by supplying them with a source of objective information. This centre has compiled over 100 articles and publications from various sources including books and periodicals from around the world, and has established a resource list from which to choose applicable materials. The Organ Resource Centre does not provide advice,

and carries no bias toward certain types of organ or builders. A comprehensive list of materials available from the Organ Resource Centre can be obtained free by writing or phoning: The Organ Resource Centre, Southgate Post Office Box 76112, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6H 5Y7. Phone: 403-429-1655.

## Christmas ideas

For many years I have followed the practice of placing a live, undecorated Christmas tree in the sanctuary of my churches. We have been encouraged to do this in *The Adventist Home*, page 482.

On Sabbath morning the deacons hand out bells made of red or green paper in which people can place their monetary gifts to Jesus. In the flurry of holiday gift giving, many forget to remember Jesus in their gifts. The members then bring their gifts and place them on the tree. Another option is to use red yarn which the deacons take row by row allowing the members to paper-clip their gifts on the yarn. The yarn is then placed on the tree like a garland. The presentation of our gifts to Jesus is made a very special part of the worship service.

I use the bells primarily to assist in the raising of the Ingathering goal in my churches. The bells could also be used for other projects.—Vialo Weis, Shattuck, Oklahoma

## Brookside Communion

One Sabbath evening, an hour before sundown, about 25 genetic subfamilies of

our church family gathered at a brookside in the shadow of the Appalachians. Our Family Life committee had planned a special outdoor communion service. Although the New Testament is clear about the original Lord's Supper being upstairs, indoors, we celebrated as a close parallel to the Old Testament leper cleansing service of Leviticus 14. With a tumbling cascade as our background I told them the story of a healed leper's (sinner) examination by the priest, the two birds, one (Christ) sacrificed over a running stream (Jesus, the Living Water), the blood sprinkling over the other bird (contagious person wanting to regain his place in the camp), then its release to free roaming flight again (sinner set free because of Christ's life gift). While these symbols

were in mind, the group divided by families to ask each other's forgiveness, pray, and wash each other's feet in the creek. Then, after reading some verses from Zechariah 12 and 13 predicting the Saviour as "a fountain" opened "to cleanse them from sin and impurity" (13:1), we each approached a table and took portions of bread and juice for ourselves. Memories of other treasured Communion services were shared from the grassy circle. Then the pinkened dusk closed our Sabbath with a circle, hands clasped and singing a song of unity. As the last prayer faded, the pond frogs began. Afterward, watermelon was the centerpiece of multiple conversations, some lasting more than an hour. It was a beautifully meaningful time.—David E. Smith, Greeneville, Tennessee.

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