

Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

April 1999

A black and white artistic illustration. In the foreground, a church with a prominent steeple is visible. A large, stylized, textured hand is superimposed over the church, with its fingers wrapped around the steeple. The background shows a dark, cloudy sky and some silhouettes of trees or hills. The overall mood is somber and contemplative.

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Ministry

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Forgiveness

I am sad that grace has suffered again at the hand of the law ("Forgiveness," W. Norman MacFarlane, October 1998). "But God demonstrates his love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). "When we were dead in our sins and the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made us alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins" (Col. 2:13). "Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Eph. 4:32). "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34) embraces the world. Grace is grace because it is not the exchange of forgiveness for remorse and repentance. Grace is free and sovereign and takes the initiative to restore a broken relationship. Yes, remorse, repentance, and confession are therapeutic and necessary for spiritual and psychological health but they are the *result* of forgiveness perceived and received. God's forgiveness, like His grace, like His sunshine, is poured out at great cost for the healing of the world. The sin of the world lies in its rejection of an unconditional gift. There are consequences to all our sins, even the "forgiven" ones for both sinner and saint. We cannot ignore or wish these away. However, the saint knows he is accepted (forgiven) not because he has become good enough but because God is good enough.—Ian Hartley, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada.

- This article was the most powerful and "truthful" description of forgiveness that I have ever read (And I have read many articles on "forgiveness"). The author faithfully described forgiveness from many angles

including: common sense, everyday views, Biblical authority and erudition, as well as traditional views and concepts of forgiveness. And whatever he held up as "true" he was able to provide Biblical and rational support for.

My past understandings of forgiveness from previous articles I have read, which seemed reasonable and, on the surface, acceptable, made forgiving a difficult Christian requirement for me. This article, however, puts forgiveness on an even plane, possible both easily to comprehend and to practice in my daily life, even though it is still a tough thing to do. This is a wonderful explanatory model ably supported by personal experience and Biblical erudition. Normally, I do not read through every article, but I was so captivated by this one that I read it from start to finish. Thank you once again, *Ministry!*—R. D. Prime, Sheffield, England, United Kingdom.

Embracing the role of pastoral theology

I just wanted to express my delight at Will Eva's editorial "Embracing the Role of Pastoral Theology." It was such a concise piece, getting right to the heart of the matter. I have often felt the very stress of trying to work with conflicting theological "fronts," as Eva calls them. His depiction of them was quite refreshing and establishes, in my opinion, a needed distinction of the areas.—Jerry Smith, pastor, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada.

Appreciation

I am a pastor who especially enjoyed the February 1999 issue. I always try to read it cover to cover, highlighting and then filing the articles for future reference. Keep the good

stuff coming.—Mark Cockerham, Tualatin Seventh-day Adventist Church, Tualatin, Oregon.

Sabbath in the crossfire

Samuele Bacchiocchi's "Sabbath in the crossfire" (December 1998) reminded me of beloved veteran evangelist Robert L. Boothby, who, in the late forties, dodged Sabbath crossfire. His ads for meetings stirred the local Ministerial Council to call him before them to justify holding meetings in their city. The first question was why he taught the seventh-day Sabbath. Turning to Genesis 2:1-3, he read that God Himself rested on, blessed, and sanctified the seventh day as the Sabbath (emphasis his). He then asked, "Brethren, when God sanctifies something, it is sanctified forever. Now, if any of you will show me a verse in the Bible telling me that God has unsanctified the Sabbath He sanctified, I will be happy to cancel the meetings." No one spoke up.

After a long pause, the chairman asked him to proceed further. Boothby responded, "Brethren, you invited me here and asked me a question. I have answered your question from the Bible. Now if you will please answer my question from the Bible, we may proceed." More silence. Urged again to proceed and with no reply forthcoming, Boothby, looking earnestly at them, said, "Well, brethren, I have much work to attend to, as you must have, and since you haven't replied to my question, I shall be on my way." Forthwith, he took up his Bible and passed unchallenged out the door. A Michigan farm boy, Boothby was an uncomplicated but powerful defender of the faith.—Norman L. Meager, Sonora, California. ■

Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.



What are the meanings that lie hidden in the troubles of the church? Where is God when in one way or another the

church is knocked to her knees by some confounding situation, as often enough she has been? In the discomfiture and chagrin that have battered our own church community in recent years and months, what is God trying to say and do in His church?

In such circumstances it is easy to become disillusioned with the Church, questioning her authenticity, even her character and charter. Or maybe in looking into the face of today's church we see a dulling of the luster we once admired in her, and perhaps we feel touches of helplessness or resignation. These kinds of feelings are almost inevitable if we evaluate the church's afflictions in merely rational or political terms. If the meanings that come forward spring from such valid, though limited vantage points, then we are virtually destined for the land of despondency and disillusionment.

How then may we view the meaning of the storm fronts that blow through the Church? A friend recently shared with me the following profound and wonderfully true expression of the way in which the disabling and damaging mingles in God's sovereign providence to generate among us the beneficial and beautiful:

"I now know that my encounter with Brother Cancer has been a time of grace. Initially, I could not fully acknowledge his presence. Later, I was not always a ready listener. But, both patient and persistent, he has helped me to see more clearly and to know my Lord more intimately. As I wonder about the future, one concern looms large. Should I walk now alone, [without the benefit of Mr. Cancer's companionship] will I live always with

Crisis time, grace time

W I L L E V A

the wisdom and intensity that accompanied me as I walked with Brother Cancer? . . . I hope that I have journeyed honestly and openly with my companion. . . . And most profoundly, I pray that I might now more fully live in Christ . . . and give praise to God."¹

The author of this immeasurably wise insight had battled high grade sarcoma with all its accompanying pain and anguish. Instead of viewing his cancer merely as a demonic, mystifying emissary of pain and death, he sees the sovereign God majestically exploiting the missiles of Satan so that they bring a redemptive meaning and discipline to his life. This is indeed a redemption he badly needed, and would not have been able to embrace had it come in any other form. It was indeed the naked distress and fear that, under the skillful touch of God, opened his soul to insight and healing. It is this that brought him to the kind of inner restoration he sought all along and needed most.

Isn't this a basic and underlying theme in the history of God's approach to those who are His? Isn't this fundamental to the way God has related to His people throughout their history, even if some of our contemporary views of the way God loves, seem to contradict it?

David's poetic review of Israel's history confirms this. ". . . Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains, for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High. So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled and there was no one to help. Then [directly because of their predicament] they

cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom and broke away their chains" (Psa. 107:4-14, NIV). And so goes the whole psalm and much of the Bible itself, and the more deeply one interacts with the text, the more parallel it appears to be with the contemporary experience of today's church.

In C. S. Lewis' great allegorical work, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* there is a telling conversation between Susan and Lucy and Mr. and Mrs. Beaver. The two girls are asking Mr. and Mrs. Beaver about the magnificent, mysterious King Aslan (Christ), to whom the Beavers promise to introduce the girls.

"Is—is he a man?" asked Lucy.

"Aslan a man!" said Mr. Beaver sternly. "Certainly not. I tell you he is the King of the wood. . . . Don't you know who is the King of Beasts? Aslan is a lion—the Lion, the great Lion."

"Ooh!" said Susan, "I'd thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe? . . ."

"Safe?" said Mr. Beaver. . . . "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."²

In the light of God assuming such a role in the life of his church, it seems to me that a rather different-from-usual meaning and response should be embraced when trying to explain what the dynamics are and how the players are to play as the church faces the arrows that come from the quivers of the Archenemy. It is clear that one of the most honest ways of viewing the struggles of the church, or more specifically, of locating God in the vicissitudes of church crises, is found in the message to Laodiceans. "Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock" (Revelation 3:19,20, NASB).

We are so used to evaluating our

continued on p. 27

WRESTLING WITH THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES

The last fifty years have probably been the most theologically challenging and productive period in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



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These years have been a time of growth and intellectual formation during which we have moved beyond the wording of doctrinal statements to explore their theological significance. This theological awakening has, of course, resulted in some serious theological and doctrinal debate among us.

There are two main forces involved in the current debate and tension. One may be found in sectors of our academic community, where some are calling the church to reformulate, modify, or abandon some of its distinctive views in order to make its message more relevant and intellectually attractive to its members and to the world at large. A second group consists of lay members and some church workers who express concern in the light of what they perceive to be the introduction of undesirable changes in church doctrine and standards.

The two groups operate at different levels of communication, and their influence affects different audiences. The first

group is sometimes called “progressive Adventists” (others call them “liberals”). With much of its influence in academic circles, this group tends to impact the formation of workers, particularly pastors and some administrators. The second group usually refers to itself as “historic Adventists” (others call them “conservatives”). This group is influential mainly among lay people and a limited number of pastors and church administrators.

Both groups seek to influence the church through books, magazines, and other means of communication. So far, neither group has been decisive or determinative in what the world church believes or teaches.

The interaction between these two groups has resulted in some theological tension within the church. Interestingly, there is fundamental agreement throughout the world church when it comes to the validity of the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. The differences and tensions surface when attempts are

ANGEL MANUEL RODRÍGUEZ

made to flesh out the fundamental beliefs. In what follows, we will examine some important areas where there is diversity of opinion.

Soteriology

Adventists believe there is salvation only through faith in Jesus Christ. It is impossible to find an Adventist who will disagree with that simple biblical fact. The split appears when individuals try to explain how we are saved. Some progressive Adventists argue for the moral influence theory of the atonement. They exclude expiatory substitution. Officially, the church has embraced both concepts as it has tried to remain faithful to the biblical text and its Protestant roots. It has made statements such as: "In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, God provided the only means of atonement for human sin, so that those who by faith accept this atonement may have eternal life, and the whole creation may better understand the infinite and holy love of the Creator. This perfect atonement vindicates the righteousness of God's law and the graciousness of His character; for it both condemns our sin and provides for our forgiveness. The death of Christ is substitutionary and expiatory, reconciling and transforming" (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe*, Fundamental Belief 9; 106).

It is difficult to say how seriously these differences should be taken, because only a small number of Adventists find themselves in disagreement with the officially expressed position of the church. Nevertheless, this significant variation could motivate the church to continue its exploration of the mystery of the atonement.

Among historic Adventists, the situation is more difficult to describe and assess. In some circles salvation is initially through faith in Christ, but meritorious works are not excluded. Once the individual accepts Christ and receives the Holy Spirit, he or she is enabled to perform, through the power of the Spirit, good works that in some way make a contribution to salvation. The church, on the other hand, has

stated: "These precepts [the Ten Commandments] are the basis of God's covenant with His people and the standard in God's judgment. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit they point out sin and awaken a sense of need for a Saviour. *Salvation is all of grace and not of works, but its fruitage is obedience to the Commandments.* This obedience develops Christian character and results in a sense of well-being. It is an evidence of our love for the Lord and our concern for our fellow men" (Fundamental Belief 18, 232, emphasis supplied).

Another view of salvation argues that the whole human race was legally saved, redeemed, reconciled, forgiven, and justified on the cross. This was possible because at that crucial moment in history every human being was in Christ. However, this is not the way the church has understood the biblical message of salvation. "In Christ's life of perfect obedience to God's will, His suffering, death, and resurrection, *God provided* the only means of atonement for human sin, so that *those who by faith accept* this atonement may have eternal life" (Fundamental Belief 9; 106, emphasis supplied).

The church, in its official documents, knows nothing about a biblically based legal universal justification on the cross. It knows only justification by faith in Christ. Therefore, it sees in what Christ accomplished through His ministry as a whole and on the cross the provision of salvation that has to be accepted in order to be effective in the life of the individual.

Christology

The church has formally affirmed: "God the Eternal Son became incarnate in Jesus Christ. . . . Forever truly God, He became also truly man, Jesus the Christ. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He lived and experienced temptation as a human being, but perfectly exemplified the righteousness and love of God" (Fundamental Belief 4; 36). This is a confirmation of the biblical teaching without any attempt to define the specific nature of the mystery and with the

implicit recognition of the unfathomable nature of the Incarnation.

However, even though the church has never stated its position on the nature of the humanity of Christ, Adventists have always been interested in the topic. This should not be seen as a threatening enterprise as long as those exploring the mystery do not try to impose on the church their own peculiar views and understanding.

Historic Adventists have argued that Christ had a fallen nature. They have used that position to buttress other theological concerns. The tension between the church and those promoting this view is the result of their attempt to make their particular view part of the Fundamental Beliefs of the Church and their eagerness to criticize the church for not acknowledging their position to be the correct one.

Progressive Adventists have shown little interest on the subject of the human nature of Christ, but in general they appear to support the view that seems to prevail among Adventist theologians, and possibly *most* ministers and theologians. This view argues that Jesus was neither exactly like Adam nor exactly like us. He was unique.

This topic will continue to be debated among Adventists. What complicates the discussion is the level of dogmatism coming from some of those involved in the debate. As a result, in some places the unity of congregations has been seriously affected. Because of the disruptive nature of the discussion, appropriate leaders in the church have the responsibility to respond to this controversy.

Ecclesiology

Two fundamental issues dominate the discussion of ecclesiology: the nature of the church and its authority. Progressive Adventists appear to be interested in a decentralized system of authority. They seem to consider the General Conference in session to have some type of authority over the world church. In some instances, however, they are in open disagreement with the decisions made there and actively argue for different positions.

Their implicit, and at times explicit, call for decentralization seems to be resulting in more independence from the world church. The more extreme expressions of this call are found in the rise of congregationalism and the official separation of some local churches from the world body of congregations.

A closely related issue is the question of the use of tithe. Churches with congregational tendencies would like to keep some of their tithe to cover local needs and programs. Some conferences are already experimenting with new models and exploring new possibilities. What tends to be overlooked is that this is not just an administrative issue but an ecclesiological one with serious doctrinal, theological, and biblical implications. One would expect that those implications be explored before changes are introduced in the administrative side of the church.

Historic Adventists have rejected some aspects of traditional Adventist ecclesiology. When they argue that the church is not proclaiming some fundamental biblical truth (e.g., the true gospel), they are in fact saying that the Adventist Church is no longer the repository of present truth. Consequently, some have constructed parallel organizations, with legal identity, to preserve and promote the truth that they feel the church is not proclaiming and is not willing to accept from them. This seriously challenges the authority of the church as ultimately constituted through the world body of believers.

Some historic Adventists reject the teaching that the church is the exclusive repository of tithe and the only channel for its distribution. They base their position on the idea that the Adventist Church is the church of God but that its true expression is located in those who are faithful to God within it. One gets the distinct impression that they see themselves as the faithful ones, therefore having the right to receive tithe and use it for the promotion of their views.

Ecclesiology is one area in which progressive and historic Adventists seem to be raising the same concerns. Both tend to question the authority of the

church in some areas or in one way or another. Both are interested in more independence from the world church. Both question the claim of the church to be the only repository of, and channel for, the distribution of tithe. Thus ecclesiology will continue to be a lively subject of discussion for years to come, and if it is not handled carefully, it could threaten the unity of the church.

Eschatology

Since Adventism is an apocalyptic movement, eschatology is essential for its self-understanding and for the message it proclaims. But even in this area we find some fragmentation. Many progressive Adventists de-emphasize eschatology and stress social involvement or personal relevancy here and now. The "delay" in the expected appearance of Jesus seems to have weakened their expectation, and they want the church to fill the waiting period with ministry to the poor, the oppressed, and the environment. Among them some seem to have questioned and even rejected the Adventist end-time scenario and its interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and the doctrine of the sanctuary. To a significant extent, this is the result of the influence of theology in Adventism critical of the teaching of the church. At the same time, however, it is a reaction to speculative "time setting" that at times has been embarrassingly common among Adventists.

Historic Adventists support the traditional eschatology of the church, but some have pushed it beyond what the church is willing to state in its official documents. This applies particularly to their concept of the eschatological harvest, the existence of a last generation of perfect Christians who will reach a standard of commitment to Christ unreached by any other previous generation. The "delay" in Christ's coming is considered to be the result of the unwillingness of the church to live up to the message entrusted to it or, according to others, the fact that some aspect of the message has been rejected.

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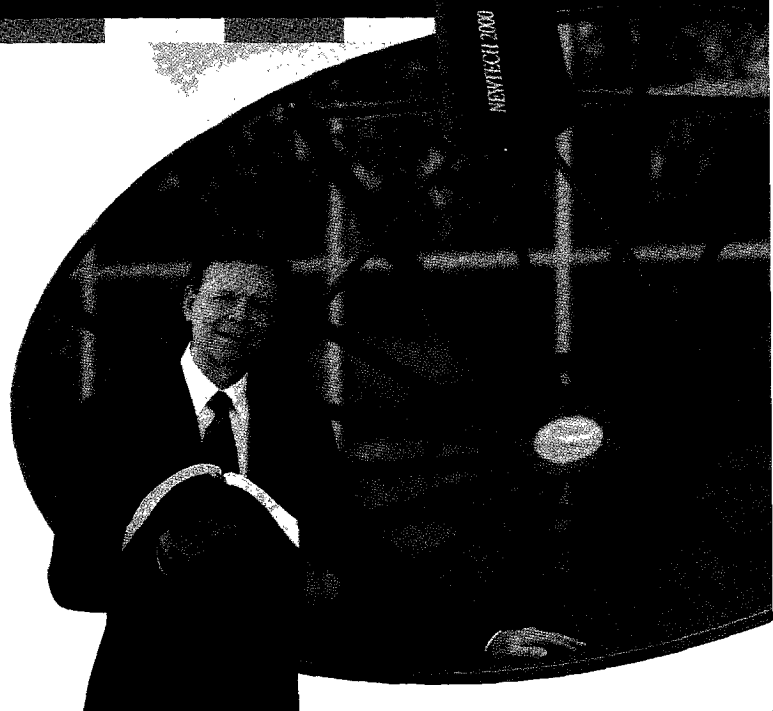
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point of debate. The rejection of historicism, if it ever happens, will radically alter Adventism by weakening or destroying its self-identity. Therefore, one could expect the church to oppose strongly any attempt to replace our system of prophetic interpretation.

Biblical interpretation

Biblical interpretation includes not only biblical hermeneutics but also the nature of the Bible, its revelation, and inspiration. Here again there are some fundamental agreements among Adventist theologians. All accept the unity of the Old and New Testaments and acknowledge that the Scriptures are the written Word of God, given through divine revelation and inspiration.

But it is the nature of revelation and inspiration that introduces differences of opinion and results in different hermeneutical approaches. The basic issue is the role and extent of the human element in the final product. No one denies that there is a human element in receiving and writing down the revelation entrusted to the prophet. But was the human element minimal or more significant? To what extent did God use cultural concepts and customs as He conveyed to His instrument the message He intended to communicate? Since cultural influence is usually recognized as playing a role in biblical writing, the question becomes How can we distinguish between what is culturally determined in the Bible and what is not? These and other similar questions are now under discussion among Adventists theologians and interested lay people.

Progressive Adventists tend to allow for the presence of a rather strong and significant human element in the process of inspiration that led to the inscripturation of God's revelation. Consequently, some of them will probably argue that in the communication of the message God used cultural practices and beliefs known by the prophet to facilitate comprehension but did not invest them with permanent relevance. From the point of view of hermeneutics, they will press the idea that the exegete must look for the message that is being commun-

icated rather than become entangled in discussing the relevance of ancient cultural practices reflected in the biblical documents. They will put the emphasis on inspiration as thought or person inspiration. What is of value, they say, is the thought that God was expressing through the language and images used by the prophet.

The implications of that approach are very risky. For instance, by using it, one could conclude that the historical accuracy of the Bible is not important since the "historical" information found there was being used to communicate a particular message or thought. Consequently, some of them have argued that the Creation story is not history but a cultural belief used by the Lord to convey the important message that He is the Creator.

It is at this point that progressive Adventists collide with the position of the church. The church has stated that the Bible is "the trustworthy record of God's acts in history" (Fundamental Belief 1; 4). And with respect to Creation it says, "God is Creator of all things, and has revealed in Scripture the authentic account of His creative activity. In six days the Lord made 'the heaven and the earth' and all living things upon the earth, and rested on the seventh day of that first week" (Fundamental Belief 6; 68).

Historic Adventists accept the stated position of the church on inspiration and revelation. They, together with many other Adventists, will not allow for a view of inspiration that is culturally determined. As the debate continues, there is the risk for some to move to the fundamentalist extreme, arguing for the doctrine of inerrancy, a position rejected by the church. The nature of the Bible and its proper interpretation is another area where certain significant changes could have a devastating effect on the message and mission of the church.

Church standards

Related to the question of the authority of the Bible is the subject of church standards. This is an area of serious disagreement in the church, loaded with emotional and judgmental atti-

tudes. Progressive Adventists aggressively challenge traditional standards, while historic Adventists attack the church for lowering them. Progressive Adventists argue that the church should be interested in defining broad, general biblical principles and leave the specific implementation of those principles to church members, without the mediation of the church. For example, the church must teach the importance of modesty and simplicity in personal adornment, but it must not assume the right to define which type of jewelry is modest and simple.

This is indeed an open challenge to the teachings of the church that will require time and willingness to listen to the witness of the Scriptures for its resolution. Two important issues are at stake: the authority of the Bible and the authority of the church. The potential for division is enormous.

Conclusion

Theological tensions are difficult to solve. In many cases time takes care of them. Some of them are simply rejected by the church. Others are modified and slowly incorporated into the teachings of the church, while still others are easily accepted by the body of believers. Meanwhile, the dialogue and evaluation of different opinions are important for the well-being of the church. Those involved in the debates must be willing at times to put aside personal convictions and preferences in order to preserve the unity, the message, and the mission of the church. ■

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STRANGERS IN OUR MIDST

A shy little man, dressed neatly in a tan sport jacket and jeans, walked into church unnoticed and slipped into a seat.



Roland R. Hegstad is the former editor of Liberty. He has retired and lives in Silver Spring, Maryland.

He liked the sermon, the first he had ever heard in an Adventist church. After the service, he waited in the line of worshipers who were shaking hands with the pastor. Wanting to express his appreciation for the sermon, he moved toward the pastor ready to extend his hand as those before him had, but the pastor had turned his back and moved away. He walked away ungreeted.

He wondered whether it was because he was not wearing a suit, as were many of the worshipers. Or could it be that he was not Caucasian? Race was not an issue in his Baptist church, where he was a deacon. Later, he was to learn why, when his experience was one of a half dozen featured by the religion editor of a large metropolitan newspaper.

I was the reason the stranger was there. He was one of about three dozen people I hired to visit Adventist churches in the North American Division a few years ago. The *Adventist Review* has, in recent months, been sending strangers into churches across the North American Division and reporting their impressions. This is what I wanted to do.

My investigations started when I was invited to speak at the 100th anniversary of a Midwestern Adventist church, the 80th anniversary of one in the West, and the dedication of a church in the South—all within a period of a few weeks. Early on, I decided not to

merely congratulate the first two on having survived. Had they, in fact, thrived? Did the Lord's genuine love of people come through in the way they related to each other? Were their worship services vital, their sense of mission intact? Was there some way I could determine their spiritual vitality before speaking to them?

Perhaps the best jury to give a verdict, I thought, would be visitors. Would they report being accepted? Would they be thrilled by a vital worship experience? What would a teenager with hair to his shoulder blades and a ring dangling from one ear have to say? What about a young woman in slacks and baubles? Or an aged bum radiating the odors of Joe Camel and Budweiser? Would conservatively dressed 35-year-olds be given a more enthusiastic reception than they? I decided to find out.

I called a friend who lived near the church in the West and explained that I wanted a few non-Adventists to attend Sabbath services in the weeks before my arrival. They should not have attended an Adventist church before, and I would expect them to fill out a questionnaire following their visit. I had put together a small budget and would, if necessary, pay them to attend. Neither the pastor nor the members were to know of the project. For the church in the South I depended on an Adventist pastor in a

ROLAND R. HEGSTAD

neighboring district to find people to visit. In the Midwest, I called the religion editor of a major metropolitan newspaper, explained my project, and asked whether he would cooperate, with the understanding that he could print the results but not identify the church. Bingo!

I titled the questionnaire "Observations on a Church Visit." Among the questions (somewhat condensed): Express your thoughts as you entered the church. What one thing did you especially enjoy? (I know this question wasn't objective, but I wanted something positive to report to each congregation when I spoke there! Nor did I produce a questionnaire from which to extrapolate grand generalizations for all Adventist churches in North America). Did anything leave a negative impression? How would you describe the greeting you received? Were you invited to a fellowship dinner or home for lunch? Did the visit make you want to return? How would you characterize the attitude of the church members as a whole?

In addition, I offered a section with questions requiring answers to be filled in on a scale from one to five in which the visitor could characterize the atmosphere (friendly?) of the church and the interest shown in him or her as a person. Of the worship service itself: Was it meaningful, reverent, a celebration of God's presence? I included a quarter page on which the visitor could share suggestions about how the church might relate more effectively to visitors.

So who were my visitors? The manager of a metropolitan radio station; a proofreader for a Philadelphia newspaper who was visiting the site of one of the churches; several conservatively dressed professional couples; a newspaper reporter; a Methodist minister; and, yes, the teenager with an earring, the 28-year-old newspaper reporter with the bangles, and a further selection of visitors not normally encountered in an Adventist pew.

Now, put yourself in the pew of one of these test churches. Imagine it is yours and that, duly introduced, I have stepped to the pulpit. Without the usual

opening pleasantries and with a more sober mein than usual, I begin: "I am not here to congratulate you on having survived for 80 (or 100) years (or, in the case of one church, "for having paid off the mortgage"). During the past few Sabbaths, strangers have walked down the aisles of your church and found a place next to some of you. I hired them to come and to report their impressions of your acceptance, friendliness, or lack of it; and other aspects of your worship service. Not even your pastor was aware

"Express your thoughts as you entered the church. What one thing did you especially enjoy? Did anything leave a negative impression? How would you describe the greeting you received? Did the visit make you want to return? How would you characterize the attitude of the church members as a whole?"

of their mission. Before I finish my sermon, I shall report their findings."

Now, imagine a congregation that goes dead silent. Grandparents glare at whispering grandchildren, and mothers practically throttle cooing babies. Teenagers quietly put aside their *Insights*, and the pastor looks as if he has given up exhaling. That's the way it was in each church. Never have I had such rapt attention!

Even now, I don't think you pastor-readers are waiting for an extended report on my sermon theme. (In essence, I pointed out that the first angel's

message *is a people* who give God glory by permitting Him to reveal His genuine goodness through them.) Thirty minutes into the sermon I began to give the awaited report, which, of course, varied from church to church. Here is a selection of comments I shared:

"Atmosphere conducive to worship."

"Soft seats" (You take what you can get!).

"I appreciated the warmth between the pastor and the congregation and the introduction of guests"—the 28-year-old newspaper reporter.

"Got a lot out of the Sabbath School class, the sermon was great, and everyone made me feel very welcome."

"I especially enjoyed the open atmosphere, the lack of pressure, and the youth service." Did the church make this person feel that she would want to attend again next week? Her answer: "Absolutely!"

"A sense of Big Family friendliness."

"The church does a really great job with visitors, much better than any other church I've ever visited."

"The members appear to have the love taught by Jesus."

The last four quotations were from visitors to the top-rated church. The last quote was from a lady in her late 50s who liked the Southern church so well that she returned and a few weeks later was baptized! (Which has led me at times to propose to ministerial groups, with some tongue in cheek, that they quit spending large sums of money on brochures featuring menacing beasts. "Just use the money to *hire* people to come," I've told them.)

The top-rated church was Avon Park, Florida, which is the one that had paid off the mortgage. And in subsequent visits under subsequent pastors, I've found the atmosphere still contagiously upbeat and friendly. In each of the three churches, a guest had something gracious to say. And, if you're wondering, I shared the observations with each pastor. (The pastor of Avon Park did get one "warning" on the questionnaire: "The outgoing spirit of this church can melt icebergs. But keep the

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1999 Workshop Schedule

Children's Ministries

March 13 - "Teaching Children to Love Each Other As a Response to Grace" - Especially for Children's Ministries leaders, children's Sabbath school teachers, pastors; Community - This program will clearly identify community building as a response to the grace of a loving God who wants children and youth to see faith actively lived through sharing with and being accountable to others in their neighborhoods, at church, and with people around the world.

Adventist Community Services

Community Impact Series

January 9 - Introducing the New ADRA Annual Appeal Campaign;

March 13 - Heartbeat Training; **May 8** - Disaster Response

Training; **October 9** - Helping People Find Jobs

Evangelism

January 9 - "Staying Power - Creating Churches Where Members Feel Valued" - Especially for elders, evangelism coordinators, Sabbath school leaders; Assimilation - What's it like for new members to join your congregation? How can churches make new members feel at home and integrate them into meaningful church life?

October 9 - "Discovering 21st Century Ways to Reach Our Communities" - Especially for Personal Ministries leaders, pastors; Outreach - As we prepare for the new millennium, we must find innovative ways to share the love of Christ with our communities. How can we share the Adventist message and mission with seekers and interest them in joining our church family?

Family Ministries

April 10 - "Identifying Ministry Opportunities With Today's Adventist Families" - Especially for Family Ministries leaders, pastors, elementary teachers; Diversity - This program will address the diversity of our church family today and discuss practical ways congregations can minister to our diverse needs.

September 11 - "Parenting That Models Ministries of Compassion" - Especially for Adventist parents; Service - This program will show parents in the church how they can help classroom teachers, Adventist Community Services leaders, Youth Service Corp. youth pastors, Maranatha, ADRA, and others agencies in their local communities that want to engage their children and youth in compassion projects.

Health Ministries

November 13 - "Lifestyle Initiatives For the New Millennium" - Especially for Health Ministries and Adventist Community Services leaders; Health - Join us to take a look at four health outreach programs effectively working in North America and choose one for your church to use.

Sabbath School

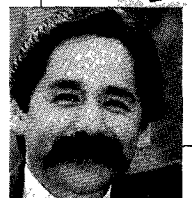
February 13 - "What Gets Twentysomethings Involved in Sabbath School?" - Especially for adult Sabbath school leaders, pastors, young adult leaders; Challenge - How can Adult Sabbath school classes actively attract and engage young adults into an intergenerational study setting that meets their needs without alienating other members?

Youth Ministries

May 8 - "There's More to Youth than Sabbath School" - Especially for Youth leaders, Bible teachers, youth pastors; Activation - This program will profile effective programs that are providing innovative compassion ministries, mission experiences, leadership development, and unique nurturing ministries for today's youth.

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pastor away from folks outside the church, or you'll have to start a new building program!" (This respondent also was baptized.)

But now some of the painful observations:

"The atmosphere was cold—people going through the motions."

"I was not made to feel part of the group. No one asked who I was." But even at the lowest rated church, one sister (bless her heart!) invited one of my paid guests home for lunch!

One guest's feelings as he entered the church: "I was apprehensive and curious" (likely the attitude of many who enter the unknown for the first time). "I had a hard time with the noise of children. Partly my fault for sitting in the back" (But partly ours, for forgetting what mothers' rooms are for.) However, the visiting Methodist minister, while observing that the "crying and fussing" of infants was "disruptive," expressed pleasure with the family atmosphere. Here are others of his comments, shared with the Western church:

"No welcome by an usher or greeter. Found a seat unaided. No one spoke to me, smiled, or nodded. Visiting friends of members were introduced. I was not even spotted as a new face. As I left, an usher at the door said 'Hello.' Members were "coldly indifferent."

His observations on the service: "I did not go to be critical but to worship. It was the first Seventh-day Adventist worship I have ever attended. A beautiful sanctuary but devoid of Christian symbols. The dedication of infants was impressive. The kneeling of worshipers during the opening prayer was great. A splendid number of children came forward for their story.

"Not a singing congregation. The hymns seemed irrelevant (incidental). I missed a flow in worship. I also missed an affirmation of faith and a benediction. The "dialog" sermon was well-done and made the Scriptures relevant to today's problems."

From a mid-30s well-dressed professional: "Guest speaker from the conference office was dull. I nodded off twice. I didn't learn much about the

church's philosophy. Pastor introduced himself, but no one else did. Congregation lacked enthusiasm. Strong sense of family. I have no doubt that religion plays a large part in the lives of these people.

"I put my address and phone number on an offering envelope and enclosed \$40 but have received no follow-up call."

No, I won't forget to tell you why the pastor of the Midwest church turned his back on the visiting Baptist deacon. But first a few further observations. I'm troubled by the Methodist minister's summary of a congregation as "coldly indifferent." Perhaps "awkward" or "shy" would be more fitting. Anyway, that's my generous appraisal of a Pennsylvania congregation my wife and I visited recently, while on a weekend vacation. We entered the church (maybe 80 members, no one at the door) just as the Sabbath School teachers (three in the sanctuary) picked up their quarterlies. We sat down in a class on the left of the aisle. Not only did the teacher not ask our names, he refused eye-contact during the lesson. We moved toward the front for the church service, preached by a lay member (the pastor was at the other church in his district). No one approached us; no one asked our names. At the end of the service I trailed the speaker down the aisle and, with a smile, introduced myself to my brothers and sisters of the Adventist family. Nods were perfunctory; handshakes were hurried. With the last hand shaken, my wife and I stood alone. We walked to our car, drove to a park, and ate our peanut-butter sandwiches.

This shouldn't happen. Yes, we can train greeters and handshakers and name taggers. But you can't train love. Only when the loving Lord enters our heart (and always, only by invitation) can we really show a loving interest in someone other than self.

In fact, if I remember correctly, that was the way I concluded my sermon at the three churches that invited me to speak at a significant occasion in their history.

Did the comments of my "stranger" friends who walked their aisles

make any difference in their mission? Yes. One example: The lowest-rated church recognized themselves in the column by the religious editor of their city paper. The board met to discuss the report. Only a week before, they had turned down a request by a nearby Baptist church to rent the Adventist gymnasium one night a week. That action was rescinded. The request was granted. I don't know whether that Baptist church was the one whose deacon had been one of my "strangers." I hope so.

And why did the pastor turn his back on him? Not because of his race. The pastor was mortified when I called, read him the deacon's report, and asked for an explanation. "You see," he said, "the week before, a stranger introduced himself to me after the service as an Adventist who had suffered an unexpected financial setback and needed emergency help. I gave him \$80,* only to discover, a couple days later, that he was a confidence man who had worked his scam on a number of churches that week. When I saw this stranger standing there, hand outstretched, I thought 'Here's another one!' and so I turned away."

You should know that the pastor had an excellent service record and, I believe, truly loved his Lord. He confessed his misjudgment and, with the aid of the church board, set the congregation onto a more sensitive and loving course in the Midwestern city.

I hope the *Adventist Review's* experiment is as productive of change. In fact, since the *Adventist Review* publicized its intentions, I've noticed that my home church's greeters are scanning visitors with new intensity, and firm and many are the handshakes extended. Of course, change has its perils. A few weeks ago, back in my home church for a Sabbath, I stepped up to a "stranger," shook her hand, and asked whether I might not enroll her in our guest book.

"Oh, Elder Hegstad," she replied. "You know me. I've been a member here for 20 years!"

Maybe she touched on a deeper problem still. . . . ■

* The sum could have been a few dollars one way or the other. Memory lacks currency.—R.H.

THE STOP-START JOURNEY ON THE ROAD TO A CHURCH MANUAL

Because “we have gotten along well . . . without a manual,” declared the General Conference president, the church did not need one.



*Gil Valentine, Ph.D.,
is vice president,
Avondale College,
Australia.*

Other denominations might have developed a church manual as they reached “a certain magnitude” and saw “the need for uniformity” but, George Butler insisted, this was not for Adventists. Once a denomination started down that road there was no logical stopping place. “Hence,” he said, “we stop without a church manual before we get started.”¹

It was 1883, and Butler was explaining in the *Adventist Review* why the recent General Conference Session had rejected having a church manual. A committee of ten church leaders had been appointed by the session to join with the General Conference Executive Committee in order to look at a proposal. The manuscript had appeared in segments in the *Adventist Review*.² The committee, which had been addressed by Mrs. White in person, unanimously recommended that the session reject the church manual.³

Session delegates accepted the recommendation but asked Butler to

explain why to the wider church membership. Butler was so certain of his ground that he said: “It is probable that it [the question of having a church manual] will never be brought forward again.”⁴

He was wrong.

The manual itself

The authors of the manuscript were stunned. As respected senior pastors,⁵ they had written the document specifically at the request of the General Conference and had carefully addressed concerns the committee had raised. Specifically, the manual was not to be prescriptive or to “be regarded as invariable under all circumstances.” Rather, it was to be a document that was to be “simply” taken as “suggestions,” offered for “the assistance of those who feel they have need of aid and are not unwilling to accept the counsel of others.” Yes, it contained a “statement of the fundamental principles,” but was “never to be regarded as a cast-iron creed to be en-

G I L V A L E N T I N E

forced in all of its minor details upon the members of the Seventh-day Adventist church.”⁶

The church desperately needed a manual, according to Elder W. H. Littlejohn, pastor of the Battle Creek congregation. “The condition of things” in the church had “changed materially” in recent times.⁷ The denomination had expanded greatly, and new churches were constantly being organized. Furthermore, younger preachers had received no training and little or no experience in church management.

Others agreed. Dudley M. Canright said that the previous year church membership had risen to fifteen thousand worshipping in almost seven hundred churches. One hundred and fifty fully ordained pastors and a similar number of licensed ministers serviced these congregations.⁸ None had benefited from adequate training.⁹

Against this background, the “propriety of having a church manual” had been agitated at several General Conference sessions. Finally, in 1882 the preparation of a document was authorized.¹⁰ Littlejohn, Corliss, and St. John worked on a manuscript that Canright had previously put together. They then published the material in the *Adventist Review* so that the church could appraise it and delegates could “vote intelligently” at the session scheduled for the following year.

Policy book or manual?

When discussion of a “manual” had first arisen at the General Conference Session in 1878, what had been requested was really a policy book with “Constitutions and By-Laws” and guidance on parliamentary procedure. What the 1882 session asked for, however, was specifically a manual that would provide “Instruction to Church Officers” at the local church level. Thus the proposed manual addressed both. It specifically dealt with issues of local church order and governance but also policy. After dealing with the name of the church and the principles of organization, it dealt with matters such as how to organize a local church, appoint officers, admit new

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members, and discipline existing members. It outlined the duties of church officers and explained how to conduct quarterly church business meetings, ordinances, weddings and funerals, as well as how to care for tithe, the matter of ministerial credentials, and the holding of church property. Substantial parts of the material provided biblical justification for particular Adventist practices and beliefs. The manual was basically descriptive, as indicated by the frequent use of such phrases as "it is customary among Adventists," "at the present time," and "experience has shown." The manual also included Uriah Smith's summary Statement on Fundamentals.¹¹

A survey of the *Adventist Review* of 1882–1883 indicates that the young denomination was working hard at developing a consensus on matters of church polity, teaching, and practice. Considerable diversity of practice and sometimes confusion existed among the churches. Issues disputed included the nomination process for church office, the election of local church leadership, the transfer of church membership, and the form of the Communion service. Discussion of these issues resulted in a definitive resolution by either a local conference or the General Conference.

Why not a manual?

Some of the questions implicit in the history of the designing of a church manual among Seventh-day Adventists are the following: If there was an ongoing process of codification of practice through regular decisions at annual General Conference Sessions, if normative approaches to church life were being established, if there was a demonstrated need for a manual of instructions—what was the problem with collating these in "manual" form? If the reasons for rejecting a manual were good then, might they not still be good today?

In their unanimous report the manual review committee said their concern was that the move would be a step toward "the formation of a creed, or a discipline, other than the Bible," something the denomination had

"always been opposed to."¹² Six specific dangers were identified for rejecting the manual.

1. The danger of moving away from the Bible as the "word of counsel" and the church's only creed and discipline. Session delegates felt it would be inevitable that the manual would eventually take the role of shaping the church instead of the Bible. The church had already successfully surmounted the

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"difficulties" associated with adopting a formal, structured organization without the aid of a manual. Would not the adoption of one make further growth and development more difficult rather than less difficult?

2. The danger of formalism. Church members and ministers would tend to rely on the manual instead of on their individual God-given powers of judgment and the direction of the Holy Spirit.

3. The danger of trying to define, too closely, things upon which the Bible

is silent. If God had wanted the church to have a manual containing such instruction about church life, the Spirit would have left one "with the stamp of inspiration upon it."

4. The danger of insisting on uniformity. Circumstances vary. Individual problems should be dealt with on merit. "Union" already prevailed throughout the body. "Uniformity" was not necessary.

5. The danger that the document would become a test of orthodoxy. Although, of course, not intended "to have authority or settle disputed points" nevertheless, because the document would be approved by the General Conference and be issued under its "auspices," it would inevitably carry "much weight of authority." It would become *prescriptive* of what must be done, not just *descriptive* of what generally had been done. Those who did not follow would be considered "out of harmony with established principles."

6. The danger of the slippery slope: Where does one stop? Churches in the past, feeling the need for uniformity, had prepared documents to "guide the inexperienced." These had grown in number and authority until they had become "authoritative." It was best not to start down that road and give "even the appearance of such a thing."

What signals might have prompted the anxieties Butler, Mrs. White, and their colleagues felt? Was there any evidence in the document, or in the church of these kinds of difficulties? Perhaps.

Although the preface to the proposed manual acknowledged that its purpose was to provide "a few simple rules" and not a set of directions to be regarded as "invariable under all circumstances," a clenched fist did lie hidden beneath the velvet glove. The expectations for an "orthodox" compliance were stated strongly in places. For example, the importance of including footwashing in the Communion service is stressed.¹³ The manual expressed the hope that ministers who fail to comply with this "will be dealt with in a summary manner." Was it this approach to

ensuring compliance with orthodoxy that raised concerns?

Elsewhere the manual set out practices that today seem quite narrow even though we know that they reflected practices and perspectives of the time. For example, the procedure for accepting new members into fellowship required a unanimous "rising vote" on the part of the members attending the quarterly meeting. If only one church member objected, the motion to accept the new member was lost. Furthermore, members could not withdraw from fellowship voluntarily. They could be removed from the church roll only by transfer to another Adventist church, by death, or expulsion.¹⁴ With the benefit of hindsight it seems clear that formal codification of church practice and belief into an "authoritative" manual at this stage would have been premature, inhibiting the development of the church into a fellowship of believers broad enough to take on a worldwide mission.

Another example of the document's rather authoritarian approach deals with organization. The manual reflects a somewhat harsh attitude toward the brethren who had been on the losing side in the earlier organizational debate. While in 1883 church leadership was confident in the "perfect harmony" on the matter of formally structured church organization, perhaps the wounds from the strident debates 25 years before had still not healed. The manual had the potential for reopening old wounds. Those who had opposed organization were uncharitably described as being *only* "elements of weakness in the body," who had brought *only* "confusion and distraction."¹⁵ Perhaps the "perfect harmony" trumpeted in 1883 was not quite that perfect. Codifying things into a church manual so soon after these debates might have prompted a renewal of the debate.

The manual also suggested there was still a lack of consensus on some issues. These parts of the manual presented a reasoned debate setting out arguments justifying why, for example, the church had adopted a name and organization. The intended audience seems

to be other Adventists who had not joined with the Sabbath keepers rather than pastors and church members within the body. Did this type of content suggest to the review committee that the document might tend to become a kind of creedal statement rather than simple "hints" for effective church governance?

Clearly, the detailed instructions about the conducting of weddings and funerals troubled some on the committee who saw them as a possible drift toward formalism. J. H. Waggoner, editor of the *Signs of the Times*[®], thought so. He expressed to W. C. White that "nothing of the kind that was published in the *Adventist Review*" was what had actually been requested, certainly not formalistic "minute directions how to conduct weddings!"¹⁶

More reasons for rejection

The reasons outlined above were the ones that President Butler was prepared to discuss publicly. But there were also "other reasons," he said, why the church manual was rejected.¹⁷ A study of the 1883 period and of the specific content of the manual suggests what some of these might have been.

Canright, one of the leading advocates of the manual, whose earlier material constituted a significant part of it, had retired from preaching to take up farming. He had become discouraged, disillusioned with the church, and disenchanted with Mrs. White; his sentiments were partially shared by *Review* Editor Uriah Smith. These negative attitudes concerning Mrs. White and some doctrines were known. Perhaps the association of the manual with Canright made it difficult to adopt, given Canright's uncertain status.¹⁸

The Marion party of former Adventists in Iowa was newly active in 1883. They were critical of the church and Mrs. White over changes in the reprinting of some of her early testimonies. The denomination was sensitive to these charges. Perhaps changing from an anti-creedal stance to the adoption of a manual might have exposed the church to even more criticism than it could then handle.

Perhaps there was just too much on the agenda for the church at that time. The period of 1882–1883 had been difficult, witnessing the closing of Battle Creek College as well as intense criticism of Mrs. White, her son W. C. White, and other editorial helpers over changes made in reissuing the *Testimonies*. *Adventist Review* editor Uriah Smith's loyalty was also temporarily under question. Was he perhaps more inclined to side with the opposition on some issues?

Conclusion

Despite the fact that the codification of church practice and belief continued through actions of the local and the General Conferences, and despite the strong need of the church and the ministry for formalized guidelines, the 1883 General Conference Session saw more in the dangers associated with developing a church manual than they saw in the benefits of having one. Fifty years later circumstances and attitudes had changed to the extent that the desirability of adopting a church manual outweighed the fears that it would become a creed. George Butler's prediction that the idea of a church manual had been dispatched forever proved false. By 1932 the General Conference Committee had adopted a fully developed model.

In 1883 the church turned away from a manual because it feared such a document would become prescriptive and a test of orthodoxy rather than descriptively outlining a "few simple rules" based on effective existing practice. In the decades since the adoption of a church manual in the 1930s, the manual has been widely accepted and has been enormously helpful in bringing strength and cohesion to the church. But as the church on the threshold of the twenty-first century wrestles with issues such as marriage and divorce, the ordination of women, tithing, and the relationship of churches to conferences, a new consensus seems difficult, despite the presence of the *Church Manual*. Does the existence of a church manual today make progress more or less difficult? Should

the concerns expressed in 1883 keep us aware of the role of the manual as primarily a "descriptive" document rather than a "prescriptive" one? And does such a perspective suggest that new initiatives and developments in the church seem best taken at a more local conference or church level (in counsel with leadership) where implications can be studied, dangers averted, and corrections made within a manageable arena? Amendments to the manual would then be adopted to ensure that it reflects successful existing practice rather than trying to amend it to determine future practice.

The next article in this two-part series, scheduled to appear in the June issue, will explore the background of the shift in the denominational attitude toward a manual and trace the story behind its development. ■

The second part of this article will appear in the June 1999 issue of *Ministry*.

¹ *Review and Herald*, (November 20, 1883), 745.

² *Review and Herald*, (November 27, 1883).

³ According to W. C. White, his mother had met with the committee during its deliberations and had "spoken well." WCW to May White, Nov. 1883. Although there is no extant report of what she said to the committee, the general thrust of her other reported talks to ministerial meetings at the conference suggest her general emphasis at the time. She was concerned that individual ministers needed to seek wisdom from God, to rely on the Word of God as an adequate guide and not so much on the counsel of others. "In it (the Bible) there are promises, directions, counsel and reproof, which are to be used as the case may require." We have "reached out altogether too much for human beings for help," she asserted. "Jesus is the fountain head of wisdom, and our supply must be received from him." "Word to Ministers," Nov. 1883 (Manuscript 2, 1883). See also (W-15a-1883); "Letter to Brethren," Nov. 1883 (B-5-1883); Manuscript 11, 1883).

⁴ *Review and Herald*, (Nov. 20, 1883), 746.

⁵ W. H. Littlejohn, J. O. Corliss, and H. A. St. John.

⁶ *Review and Herald*, (June 5, 1883), 361.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Review and Herald*, (June 5, 1883), 368, 745; DMC, "Our Ministers" *Review and Herald*, (Nov. 21, 1881), 328.

⁹ *Review and Herald*, (Oct. 17, 1878).

¹⁰ *Review and Herald*, (Dec. 26, 1882), 787.

¹¹ *Review and Herald*, (June 5–Sept. 25, 1883).

¹² In his more detailed explanation to the denomination as to why there would be "No Church Manual," Butler complimented the "worthy" writers on their work and noted that the document contained "much excellent matter" and had given "many valuable directions." The problem was not content per se. There were "broader" issues that related to the desirability of adopting any manual whatsoever (*Review and Herald*, Nov. 20, 1883), 733.

¹³ See *Review and Herald*, (Dec. 26, 1882), 787. See also JOC to EGW, Apr. 13, 1882 (Washington, D.C.: Ellen G. White Resource Center).

¹⁴ *Review and Herald*, (Aug. 7, 1883), 505.

¹⁵ *Review and Herald*, (June 5, 1883), 362.

¹⁶ JHW to WCW, Dec. 8, 1883.

¹⁷ GIB "No Church Manual," (Nov. 27, 1883), 746.

¹⁸ DMC to Brother Long, (Dec. 9, 1883); DMC to US (1883); GIB to WCW (May 16, 1882); Canright did not finally withdraw from the church until 1887.

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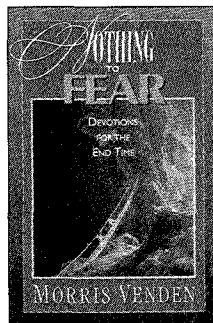
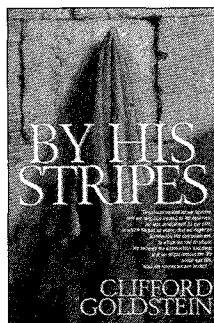
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THE MINISTRY OF EQUIPPING

Pastor Raimundo dos Santos Correia of the North Brazil Union baptized more than one thousand people in one year.



Joel Sarli, D.Min., is an associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association.

When the news reached me, I was a bit skeptical. Perhaps there was some exaggeration. I left for the Maranhao district to find out for myself. What I found astounded me. Here was just an ordinary pastor—but a pastor with an extraordinary vision.

When he assumed the pastorship of a twenty-church district, Pastor Raimundo felt overwhelmed by the burden. He prayed. He immersed himself in his Bible. He consulted various sources of inspired wisdom and council. Finally he turned to his members. He wanted a group of men and women willing to be lay ministers. When He had his group, he trained them in the basic skills of church leadership and evangelism. He entrusted them with the care of the congregations. Soon these lay leaders began training others, who learned to perform most of the ministerial responsibilities in the local congregations. Pastor Raimundo became their supervisor.

From this simple plan of lay training and empowerment, Pastor Raimundo's churches are experiencing explosive growth year after year. Laypeople conduct evangelistic campaigns, baptismal classes, and stewardship programs. Then Pastor Raimundo baptizes the thoroughly prepared candidates. This program has brought

prosperity both in membership growth and in the spirituality of the churches. His members are full of enthusiasm.

Every believer trained for ministry

Pastor Raimundo's program is successful because the principles on which it is based are guided by God. "God expects His church to discipline and fit its members for the work of enlightening the world. . . . There should be no delay in this well-planned effort to educate the church members."¹ "In every church the members should be so trained that they will devote time to the winning of souls to Christ. . . . Let those who have charge of the flock of Christ awake to their duty, and set many souls to work."²

Naturally, lay members who receive this training must then find outlets for service. "What can we expect but deterioration in religious life when the people listen to sermon after sermon and do not put the instruction into practice? The ability God has given, if not exercised, degenerates."³

Ministry is the ultimate objective of the church's life. Every believer in becoming a part of the Christian community must submit to the service of God. "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service."⁴ Ministry, then,

J O E L S A R L I

is crucial to the very nature of the Christian church, and it is by conversion that every member becomes a part of the ministry of the church. "He who becomes a child of God should henceforth look upon himself as a link in the chain let down to save the world."⁵

Every believer a minister

In Scripture we find that some ministries or gifts are designed to equip other members of the body for their own ministry (see Eph. 4:11, 12). No ministry is placed above another, and there is an interdependency of ministries. So, the apostle Paul could climax his great vision for a serving church with the following words: "Every part [doing] its share . . . causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love" (verse 16, NKJV).

Now comes the question: Who really does ministry and for whom? Paul's letter to the Ephesians makes it clear that Christ has given to the church a system of ministerial reciprocity—each part serving and equipping every other part for the greater and overall service of the church (verses 1-16).

In one edition of the Revised Standard Version (1946) a "fatal comma" was inserted between the first and second classes of people mentioned in verse 12: "to equip the saints (,) for the work of ministry for building up the body of Christ." This comma would lead us to think that the previously mentioned gift of "pastors and teachers" had the distinct responsibility for ministry. But erasing that comma, making it read "to equip the saints for the work of ministry"—an entirely permissible translation change—would return the emphasis to the gifts rather than offices of ministry, thus including all in the act of equipping the church.

John Stott says that this emphasis brings into focus the immediate and ultimate purposes of the gifts. The immediate purpose is "to equip the saints for the work of ministry" (RSV, 1971), and the ultimate purpose is "for building up the body of Christ."⁶ Stott goes on to show that this places ministry within the scope of not just a few "bossy" clerics

but in the hands of "all God's people without exception." He further criticizes the traditional model of the church as a pyramid, with the pastor perched precariously on its pinnacle, like a little pope in his or her own church, while the laity are arrayed beneath in serried ranks of inferiority—a totally unbiblical image. Not much better is the bus image, with the pastor as driver and the laity as passive passengers being taken to a pastorally appointed destination.

In a healthy church there is not a part or section of the body that ministers alone while all other segments are ministered to. All are ministers with special gifts for ministry, and all ministries are essential for corporate service, growth, and unity in the church of Christ.

The biblical image is that of a body with no hierarchical system but one of pluriformity with each part properly working for other parts and receiving its sustenance from all the others. Let us take this another step and look at Paul's image of unruly children (Ephesians 4). He paints a graphic picture of a family of children in a chaotic condition. His imagery then shifts to boats on a stormy sea devastated by the waves and wind. No child or parent, no boat or fleet captain, is able to do anything to right the situation when there is no center with power and control.

The center Paul points to in Ephesians is Christ. He pictures Jesus as the head of a body. If everyone who is

part of the body of Christ grows up into Him, allowing Him to be whom He is, then unruly members are bound together, and all formerly tossed ships find their anchor. All of this illustrates graphically that there is only one "head" or center of authority. And from that head every part receives its sustenance and power to substantiate all other parts.

The traditional method of equipping for ministry did not take this route. It supposed that clergy are the representatives of Christ, teaching and ruling the obedient masses. This wandered completely outside of the biblical method of ministering, where every part of the body ministers to all other parts, while pastors equip all others to serve and receive service.

Consequently, according to Ephesians 4, the whole body grows as each member serves with his or her God-given gifts. The exalted Christ pours these gifts on His church, not as adornments but as edifying means for service. Each member receives and gives his or her gifts for equipping all others.

In summary, we see both from the Bible and the example of Pastor Raimundo in Brazil that ministry involves enabling one another to be effective and complementary members of the body of Christ, the church. In a healthy church there is not a part or section of the body that ministers alone while all other segments are ministered to. All are ministers with special gifts for ministry, and all ministries are essential for corporate service, growth, and unity in the church of Christ. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1947), 58.

² *Ibid.*, 61.

³ ———, *Testimonies* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948), 6:425.

⁴ ———, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1911), 9.

⁵ ———, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Id.: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1942), 105.

⁶ John R. W. Stott, *God's New Society* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 166-168.

When I was in my first district, a doctor helping me with Breathe Free Seminars asked, "What can we do to follow up our efforts?"

"We could invite the people to come to your house weekly in small groups to discuss 'Real Christianity,'" I suggested.

Ten people showed up at his door with Bibles in hand. We held small-group meetings in his home that resulted in several baptisms. I'll never forget the day the doctor's wife stood up after Communion and said, "What has happened in our home this past year needs to happen in every home in this church." The small groups continued in that area until the doctor relocated.

One day before both of us left, we were discussing together how we could reach out to more people. We thought of a program for his patients and named it "Dine With Doc." We invited up to forty of his patients to a vegetarian meal, and then we both spoke on the health of the heart. He spoke on how unforgiveness affects the heart, and I spoke on how a heart is made new. We followed the program with "Dine With Doc's Kids." His children put on a program for the same people with another meal that we served them.

This year, in our new location, one of our doctors had been thinking of how to reach some of the nurses she works with daily. Then she heard about an evangelistic Christmas party. She invited thirty nurses to her home to share Christmas traditions. On the invitation she mentioned that there would be a special guest to talk about the real meaning of Christmas. The special guest was yours truly. I arrived, not knowing what to expect but prepared to present the gospel. Thirteen nurses were there when I arrived. With smiles and kindness, they shared their Christmas traditions. One by one they spoke, and amaz-

A doctor and a minister

DAVID LIVERMORE

ingly, some of them opened up and even talked about their divorces. I could hardly believe how many had been divorced. With sadness, they spoke of how traditions were a thing of the past for them. Their lives had changed so drastically.

After much sharing, the doctor said that she had invited me to share with them too. I began by telling them about gift giving at Christmas—how you need a giver, a gift, and a recipient of the gift. As an illustration, I gave one of the nurses a gift that my doctor friend had handmade. Then I talked about John 3:16 and how God, out of love, sent us the world's greatest gift. As I watched the nurses, I knew they were with me. I talked about how I had had a hole in my heart until I applied this gift of Jesus Christ right in the center of it. I described Christ as the missing piece to the puzzle of life. We were clearly connecting. I invited them to pray with me the "sinner's prayer" and unwrap this gift and apply it in their own lives. When I had finished praying, I had cards and pens ready, and I asked them to write down how they felt about being there that night. If they were asking Jesus to enter their hearts for the first time, I asked them to specifically mention that. I told them that the doctor was interested in having a January Bible study in her home, and if they wanted to be a part of it, they should leave their name and phone number. We finished with some more Christmas cookies—baked by the doctor—and then they left.

The doctor and I couldn't wait to look at the cards. Everyone had been comfortable and felt that the evening had been a great way to begin the holiday season. Two requested Bible studies; one asked if this could be a new Christmas tradition. One, we discovered, was a new-age witch. She talked about the positive power she had felt all evening in the room. She had come up to me as she was getting ready to leave and told me that she felt more at peace in her heart than she had felt for a long time.

People were blessed. But most of all because of her love for Christ and longing to reach others, my doctor friend had done something she only dreamed could ever have been possible. She had truly reached out to the group of people that only she could touch. The touch that was felt that night was more than just the doctor's touch. It was the touch of God, a personal touch.

There are, no doubt, myriad other ways of teaming up with the physicians in our churches. It's worth searching out these ways and bringing them to reality in our communities.

There is something special that happens when we work together in this way. ■



David Livermore is senior pastor of the Kelso-Longview Seventh-day Adventist Church in Longview, Washington.

SCRIPTURE FACES CURRENT ISSUES



Gerard Damsteegt, Th.D., is associate professor of church history at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Editorial Note: Following the 1995 General Conference Session in Utrecht, the author of this article contacted Ministry requesting that he present a clarifying review of the positions he took in his formal presentation at the session on the issue of women's ordination. We declined his request, citing our post-Utrecht, self-imposed moratorium on articles dealing principally with the question of women's ordination. After substantial negotiations and wider counsel, it was agreed that Dr. Damsteegt would submit a revised draft with the issue of biblical interpretation as its partial theme, and connecting women's ordination to the hermeneutical principles he advocates. Here is the article. While we agree with some of what Dr. Damsteegt espouses, we feel that the articles which appeared in last month's issue of Ministry are more representative of our Church's position on biblical hermeneutics.

Adventists, people of the Book? Perhaps "peoples" of the Book would be more appropriate, because different approaches to the Bible have been introduced in Adventism that significantly affect belief and lifestyle. The Bible still reads the same; the conflict comes in how it is interpreted and applied.

"Hermeneutics"—the method of interpreting the Scriptures—was once an abstract subject confined to the

seminary. No longer so. It has moved from the classroom and the scholar so as to affect the lifestyle of the member and the decisions of the church. Time was when Adventists learned in the evangelistic tent that if the Lord said it, we should have courage to believe it and act on it. End of argument. People gave up jobs and risked family division because of what Scripture said.

Of course, we have always had to interpret Scripture, but over the years our hermeneutic has become more complex. After the 1995 General Conference at Utrecht, hermeneutics became a particularly hot issue in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Why? Because the way one reads Scripture was seen to result in opposite outcomes—results which produced heat under the collar and the rolling up of sleeves!

Some articles in our periodicals are suggesting that it is time for Adventists to adopt a "mature" approach to the Bible. They say that instead of a "literalistic" view of Scripture, Adventists need a "principled approach."

If there is an approach that will help us improve our interpretations of the Bible, we should welcome it. However, every new insight we accept should pass the test "To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20).*

Adventist approach to Scripture

The early Adventist approach to Scripture, the one that has guided us for more than one hundred and fifty years, was most clearly expressed by William Miller, who came to conclusions similar to those of the sixteenth-century reformers. Miller attributed the discovery of his principles simply to "studying the Bible."¹

Of Miller's fourteen rules, those most often cited by Adventists are: (a) "every word must have its proper bearing on the subject presented in the Bible"; (b) look at "all Scripture"; (c) "to understand doctrine" "bring all the Scriptures together on the subject you wish to know, then let every word have its proper influence"; and (d) "Scripture must be its own expositor, since it is a rule of itself."²

In the history of the Seventh-day Adventist church, Ellen White highly recommended Miller's rules of interpretation, calling them "simple but intelligent and important rules for Bible study and interpretation." She added

that "those who are engaged in proclaiming the third angel's message are searching the Scriptures upon the same plan" that Miller adopted.³ Consistent with this thinking Adventists have stressed the importance of upholding the Bible as the "standard of every doctrine and practice," urging that it must be the decisive factor in settling "all controversies,"⁴ and recommending a clear focus on the plain reading of scripture, for "the Word of God is infallible; accept it as it reads."⁵

Following these guidelines, Adventists have historically sought to establish our teachings in harmony with *all* the biblical evidence on a particular subject. The result has been an array of beliefs based on the Bible, and the Bible only, which gave Adventists the reputation of being truly a people of the Book.

This way of viewing and coming to the Bible is now being questioned within the Church. The questioning is notable as it relates to questions such as adornment and the role of men and

women in the church. Does this illustrate that our well-established methods of biblical interpretation are faulty? Should we replace them with a more "mature" approach to scripture which considers the *tendency* or *direction* of the Bible versus what the Bible actually says?

The case of jewelry

"Old-time" Adventists removed their earrings, necklaces, and rings on the basis of New Testament injunctions to a life of simplicity (1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4). "Not wearing gold" meant just that. Adventist pioneer, S. N. Haskell would not even wear a gold watch so as to not confuse the weaker believers⁶ (1 Corinthians 8:7-13).

Newer studies have added an auxiliary argument to the basic ones. The new suggestion is that living in the antitypical day of atonement implies that we should not wear jewelry. Israelites were required to "afflict" themselves on the Day of Atonement; similarly, it is suggested, spiritual Israel

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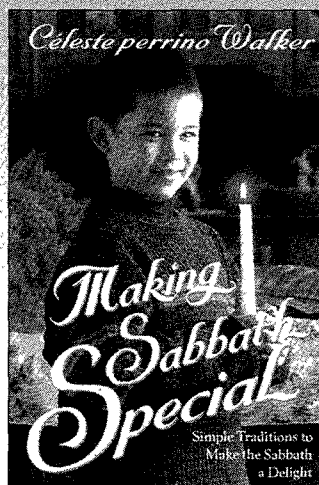
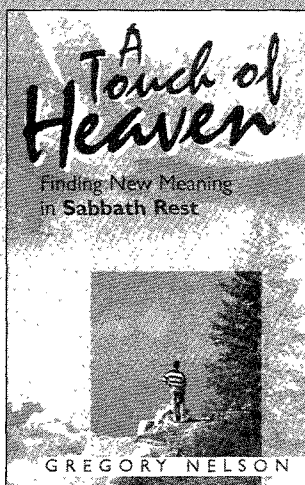
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is called upon to do the same during the antitypical Day of Atonement. One way of afflicting ourselves could be through a lifestyle of humility characterized by plainness of dress and the putting aside of jewelry.⁷

Not everyone is comfortable with this view. Objectors say that such an antijewelry position has not seriously considered the implications of the type. Because the children of Israel, on the Day of Atonement, were required to abstain from sex and from all work—while nothing is said about the wearing of jewelry—it could be argued that in the antitype, spiritual Israel ought to abstain from sex and work. Because Adventists do not abstain from sex and work on the antitypical Day of Atonement, it does not make sense to employ Day of Atonement reasoning against the use of jewelry.⁸

This is a type-antitype misunderstanding. We need to determine which part of the type is still relevant for the Christian and which is not. Adventists have always emphasized the rule of interpretation that we first consider the whole teaching of Scripture on a particular subject before coming to a conclusion. The question is: What does the Bible say about behavior on the ancient Day of Atonement that is relevant for today?

It is widely recognized that the Day of Atonement was a type of the final judgment. On it believers were required to “afflict” themselves (Lev. 16:31; 23:27, 32), that is, to humble themselves. This is clear from Psalm 35:13, where the same Hebrew verb is translated “humble.” There was no place for pride—hence, for the display of jewelry.

When God called His people to judgment after the golden-calf episode, He explicitly commanded them “to ‘take off your ornaments, that I may know what to do to you’” (Exod. 33:5). The literal rendering of the text describing the Israelites’ response was that they “stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb onward” (Exod. 33:6, NASB). The removal of jewelry symbolizes a change of heart. Nowhere in the Old Testament did God grant Israel

permission to put their jewelry back on.⁹

In a later period of apostasy, they again wore jewelry, but Isaiah 3 portrays God’s judgment against their doing so. It was the “proud” who were wearing jewelry, and God in judgment announced that he would strip off their ornaments.

The New Testament says that in a certain sense the last days had arrived even in apostolic times (Heb. 1:2). It is notable that the New Testament gives no encouragement to the wearing of jewelry. On the contrary, Paul and Peter condemn it and urge believers instead to be modest in dress, professing the “incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit” and “good works” (1 Tim. 2:9, 10; 1 Pet. 3:3, 4).

Scripture teaches that the antitypical Day of Atonement was to take place toward the end of the Christian era. Daniel 8 shows that it was to begin in 1844, when Christ would inaugurate the final judgment.

Adventists are exhorted to contemplate the pre-Advent judgment “often.” Christ’s judgment since 1844, Ellen White states, is investigating the use of “our time, our pen, our voice, our money, our influence.” The destiny of God’s people is being determined by the heavenly records, which reveal every aspect of our behavior, including our use of money “sacrificed for display and self-indulgence.” “All who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart.”¹⁰

The well-established Adventist practice of viewing all teachings in the light of the whole Bible reveals that it is indeed proper to appeal to the antitypical Day of Atonement as one argument against the wearing of jewelry.

The male and female roles in church leadership

In the past, Adventists have opposed the appointing of women to the office of elder and pastor because it is contrary to the biblical teachings on

church leadership. The representatives of the world church, convened at Utrecht in the 1995 General Conference Session, voted not to grant the North American Division’s request to allow each division to set its own policies with regard to the ordination of women.

Before the vote, one designated speaker set forth the hermeneutic that Adventists have maintained since their beginning. Summarized, it was as follows:

Ellen White contends that “*the Scriptures are plain upon the relations and rights of men and women.*”¹¹ The Bible teaches the equality of men and women and also the existence of unique differences between them that are responsible for the unique roles the Lord has intended for them.

From the moment of creation, men and women have equality of being, both having been created in “the image of God” (Gen. 1:27). Similarly, they have shared equality in worth. God “shows no partiality” (Acts 10:34), for all are “one in Christ Jesus.” “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female” (Gal. 3:28).

While preserving their equality, the Bible reveals that God created men and women to be complementary in nature but with different roles. Fulfillment of these distinctive roles is indispensable for both healthy families and healthy churches.

The universal thrust of 1 Timothy’s direct injunctions was intended to reveal instructions for the successful operation of the church throughout the Christian era. Says the apostle, “I am writing these instructions to you so that . . . you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:14, 15, RSV).

What were these special instructions for God’s church? For one thing, Paul taught that a woman should not usurp “authority over a man” (1 Tim. 2:12). As God’s inspired apostle, he gave two reasons. First: “Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:13).

Paul reveals here that there were dif-

ferences in roles even before sin entered and long before variant cultures developed. He points out that the order in which the first man and woman were created teaches an important leadership principle. God's act of creating the man first was not an incidental event but one that illustrated the divine plan that the man is called to fulfill the leadership role.

Paul's second reason for denying full authority to women is derived from the origin of sin: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:14). This reason, like the first one, was based on a biblical event that had no relationship to culture.

Contrary to those who say that Paul was merely a man of his culture, with his own biases and prejudices, Ellen White has said that the inspired Scripture is not affected "by human prejudice or human pride."¹²

Biblical qualifications

In this context, Scripture states expressly that an elder or minister must be the "husband of one wife" (1 Tim. 3:2). The word *husband* in Greek is *aner*, a term that always refers to the male gender when used, as here, alongside the Greek word for woman.

But being a man is not alone sufficient qualification! The passage requires an elder not only to be male but also to be blameless, hospitable, temperate, and a good father, among several other qualifications. If it is true that no woman can be an elder, it is also true that very few men can be.

Why does the Bible call for an elder to be "husband of one wife"? The prosperity of a church depends on the stability of its families. An elder with a stable family provides a model in the church for all fathers. This is why an elder must be "one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence" (1 Tim. 3:4).

Scripture adds, "For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?" (1 Tim. 3:5). It shows that God wants experienced spiritual leaders to lead His church.

Are there not capable women who are good administrators? Yes, indeed; but the Bible does not call simply for able administrators to lead God's church. It calls for men who have been successful husbands and priests in their own families.

Was Ellen White a false prophet?

1 Timothy 2:12 says, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man but to be in silence." Would a literal application of this instruction imply that "Ellen White must be a false prophet of the most serious type," as someone has asserted?¹³ After all, Ellen White taught authoritatively throughout her career.

If a literal application of 1 Timothy 2:12 would make Mrs. White a false prophet, many of our Adventist pioneers were guilty of making her a false prophet—for they did indeed apply this instruction literally. In fact, in the early days of our church, non-Adventist critics repeatedly tried to prove that Mrs. White was a false prophet. Their criticism forced our pioneers to publish articles on what Scripture really teaches on the role of women in the church.

For one thing, our pioneers warned people not to come to conclusions that are based only on one or two texts in Timothy. As William Miller taught, Scripture must be compared with Scripture until an explanation emerges that harmonizes *all* passages on a subject.¹⁴

Using this hermeneutic, early Adventists concluded that Paul in fact wanted women to participate actively in church life. Women could exercise their gifts, pray, prophesy, edify, exhort, and comfort (1 Cor. 11:5 and 14:3). Our pioneers pointed out that Paul greatly appreciated women who were actively involved in ministry, naming Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Rom. 16:1-3, 6, 12; Acts 18:26).¹⁵ Thus our pioneers encouraged women to pray, sing, and testify in religious meetings—so long as they did not usurp authority over men (1 Tim. 2:12).¹⁶

Because our pioneers took note of

prominent Bible women who had the gift of prophecy—Miriam, Deborah, Hulda, and Anna¹⁷—they looked with approval on Ellen White also, whose prophetic authority, like that of the Bible prophetesses, embraced messages to men and women. However, while Adventist women were encouraged to participate fully in worship, no one intimated that the prophetic gift gave Old Testament women the prerogative to be priests or that it made Ellen White an elder. Although as prophetess Mrs. White bore distinct messages to our leaders directly from the Lord, she was personally submissive to church leadership "as to the Lord."

Despite our church's openness to women participating fully in worship, early Adventists were careful to distinguish specific roles for men and women. An editorial, "Woman's Place in the Gospel," commenting on 1 Timothy 2:12, said "that a woman is not allowed to teach nor usurp authority over the man." "The divine arrangement, even from the beginning, is this, that the man is the head of the woman" (Eph. 5:23). The editorial went on to say, "Man is entitled to certain privileges which are not given to woman; and he is subjected to some duties and burdens from which the woman is exempt. A woman may pray, prophesy, exhort, and comfort the church, but she cannot occupy the position of a pastor or a ruling elder. This would be looked upon as usurping authority over the man, which is here [1 Tim. 2:12] prohibited."¹⁸

In the early Adventist articles dealing with 1 Timothy 2:12 it is clear that the "teaching" that was forbidden to women was not every type of teaching. Paul actually exhorted women to be "teachers of good things" (Titus 2:3).¹⁹ What was prohibited to women was the teaching authority associated with the office of an elder, as the context of 1 Timothy 3 makes clear.

Early Adventists found the Bible's balance in the midst of their milieu. They discovered that Paul did not forbid women to participate in gospel work or in worship, but they did not follow the trend emerging among some nineteenth-

century Christians of establishing women as elders/ministers of congregations. Thus the pioneer teaching and practice confirmed Ellen White's assertion that "the Scriptures are plain upon the relationship and rights of men and women."

Conclusion

Not wearing jewelry during the antitypical Day of Atonement and not permitting women to be ordained as elders/ministers are practices built on sound biblical principles. To denounce these principles as "literalistic" is to fail to understand the nature of the Day of Atonement and the kind of biblical leadership that Christ instituted at Creation and upheld in the New Testament as a model for His church in the last days. Surely the "people of the Book" can do no better than follow the Book. ■

* All Scripture passages in this article are from the New King James Version, except as otherwise stated.

¹ "Miller's Rules of Bible Interpretation," in P. G. Damsteegt, *Foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Message and Mission*, 299.

² Ibid.

³ Ellen G. White, Notes of Travel, *Review and Herald*, Nov. 25, 1884.

⁴ ———, *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 1:44, 45.

⁵ ———, "The Tasmanian Camp-Meeting," *Review and Herald*, Feb. 11, 1896, 81.

⁶ Letter, S. N. Haskell to H. M. Kelly, Oct. 28, 1913.

⁷ Richard M. Davidson, "The Good News of Yom Kippur," in *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society*, Autumn 1991, 17, 18.

⁸ George R. Knight, "Proving More Than Intended," *Ministry*, March 1996, 26.

⁹ Samuele Bacchiocchi, *Christian Dress and Adornment*, 34, 35; Angel M. Rodriguez, "Jewelry in the Old Testament: A Description of Its Functions," in *To Understand the Scriptures: Essays in Honor of William H. Shea*, David Merling, ed. (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Institute of Archeology, Siegfried H. Horn Archeological Museum, Andrews University, 1997), 115.

¹⁰ Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1911), 487, 488, 490.

¹¹ ———, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948) 1:421.

¹² ———, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1913), 596.

¹³ Knight, 27.

¹⁴ See J. White, "Women in the Church," *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1879; D. Hewitt, "Let Your Women Keep Silence in the Churches," *Review and Herald*, Oct. 15, 1857.

¹⁵ See J. White, *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1879; U. Smith, "Let Your Women Keep Silence in the Churches," *Review and Herald*, June 26, 1866.

¹⁶ See U. Smith, *Review and Herald*, June 26, 1866. The article was reprinted in *Signs of the Times*, Aug. 26, 1875.

¹⁷ Ibid.; J. White, *Review and Herald*, May 29, 1879.

¹⁸ *Signs of the Times*, Dec. 19, 1878, 380. J. White, J. N. Andrews, and U. Smith are listed as editors and J. H. Waggoner as resident editor. See also N. J. Bowers, "May Women Publicly Labor in the Cause of Christ?" *Review and Herald*, June 14, 1881.

¹⁹ See W. M. Healey, "Women as Teachers," *Signs of the Times*, Feb. 10, 1881.

Crisis time, grace time

continued from p. 4

troubles in almost exclusively organizational, structural, political or pragmatic terms, that our most common reaction in all our crises is to ask such limiting questions as "Who is to blame?" "What structures, policies or organizational measures must we modify to prevent this from happening again?" or "Isn't it terrible that the Devil seems to have such a foothold in the Church?" Of course, these are important questions, but they tend to be asked in such a way and with such an assigned significance that they tend to eclipse the spiritual realities hidden in the storms that pound the church.

So it has been enriching to be part of the process of electing a new General Conference President. Personally, I have seldom if ever felt in myself or in this Church of ours the

extent of prayer, the magnitude of corporate soul searching or the level of eagerness to know the will of God that was palpably present last month as we met to search out a leader for our worldwide congregation. I am convinced all that has happened has been divinely intended and even calculated, as events shaped themselves into the crisis of the last few months. In God's sovereignty the storm brought us figuratively and literally to our knees. A good place to be, especially if we had not been there much of late.

But let us now continue to embrace God's call to us to "live always with the wisdom and intensity that accompanied" us as we walk within our crises. If we do not there may be in God's sovereign discretion another and perhaps yet another storm, even more severe than those that have so far blown through the Church, exploited by God to bring us about so that the ship of the church will sail as He means it to on the course He has chosen. ■

¹ Robert Stewart, quoted by Martin Marty in *Context*, February 15, 1998, Volume 30, Number 4.

² C. S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (New York: Collier Books, 1950) 75, 76.

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What are your responsibilities for the future stability of those marriages at which you officiate?

The greatest impact a pastor can make on the establishment of a new family is prior to the wedding ceremony during pre-marital counseling.*

I've found the following eight issues to be especially significant for prospective marriage partners. Each should be seriously contemplated prior to marriage because each issue must, of necessity, be dealt with in marriage.

In fact, I believe this process is so important, that I will not officiate a wedding without investing quality hours discussing these issues. Personally, I schedule eight one-hour sessions so that each topic can be fully explored. It is more important for me to lead the couple to discuss these issues openly together, than it is for me to lecture them on the topic's importance.

These eight issues, with the exception of the first, are not ranked in any order of importance. Unresolved, each is a major factor in the destruction of homes. Since my objective is to establish marriages that can last forever—and remain happy for that length of time—I focus on each issue as a potential area of conflict and seek creative ways to resolve the challenges which will arise.

Should a couple refuse to participate in such a preparation for marriage process, then I refuse to conduct their wedding. Likewise, if it becomes clear that the partners have little chance of harmony, I will also decline to officiate even if we have shared the preparation process. Because of distance or other issues, I have conducted marriages where the preparation process was led by a trusted colleague, but I really prefer to lead this process myself.

Preparation for marriage

JAMES A. CRESS

Spiritual life: Do the prospective marriage partners have a unity of faith? More importantly, do they have a basic uniformity of practice? For example, if one partner is devout and engaged in their religious experience and the other is casual and distant from spiritual activities, conflicts will inevitably arise. Issues such as membership, church attendance, family worship, personal devotions, and service ministries should be explored.

Extended family: Other family members who impact the new home include in-laws (or as one prospective bride described her groom's parents, "outlaws"), children, and, increasingly, step-children and ex-spouses. I encourage marriage partners to develop a life together prior to rushing into parenthood. In addition to basic agreement regarding when and how many children to bear, prospective partners should consider wider influences on their home from colleagues, bosses, and confidants. For example, are there career expectations for one partner which will negatively impact parenting time or skills. Has the couple followed the Biblical counsel and "left" their father and mother? What support or lack of support will they receive from their in-laws? Who is allowed into the family circle as a trusted confidant? How will conflicts in these areas be resolved?

Financial realities: What impact on a marriage will occur from conflicting views of money? Is there unity of practice on stewardship? Does one partner see money as a control mechanism? "I have lots of money; that means I have control." Others

may think money gives them power, freedom, and independence. "If I make enough money I won't need anyone else. If this marriage doesn't work, I'll still be fine." When couples discover how each other thinks about money, they can begin to work through their differences. Credit and debt are often twin problems for newly-married couples. Even "honeymoon debt," student loans, or car payments which are brought into the marriage can add pressure which sparks conflict.

Sexuality: When God created humans as sexual beings, He designed marriage for physical intimacy. Sin has scarred God's plan. Some of those whom you counsel will have prior sexual experiences which will impact their future relationship. I always emphasize generosity and responsibility as dual priorities. Each partner should be sexually generous and each should seek responsibility for their mate's enjoyment. Of all areas, sexuality demands vital and on-going communication between partners. Areas of discussion might include birth control, sexual relations just for pleasure, trust, taboos, and if necessary, dealing with past relationships.

Time: Partners should understand the other's view of work and leisure time. Does that viewpoint include a healthy balance? Is one partner's personal identity too closely aligned with their profession? Are there different expectations about shared work loads at home? If both are employed, is it fair to expect only one spouse to accomplish routine chores of cooking, cleaning, repair, and maintenance? Every couple must make decisions about scheduling vacations (when and where, with or without extended family), maintaining a healthy lifestyle through exercise and nutrition, and avoiding burnout from overwork or overcommitment to even good and worthy things.

Communication: Why is it that couples who never have enough time

together prior to marriage, later think they have "nothing to talk about?" Real communication thrives in an atmosphere of intimacy and shared objectives. It is important to continue the courtship. Remember, those things that attract partners to each other will keep them attracted in the future.

Integrity of communication is essential. A partner should never need doubt the honesty of their spouse. Leveling regarding conflict, confrontation rather than avoidance, and trust rather than jealousy are all communication issues.

Adjustments: The necessity of appropriate adjustments is illustrated by the classic story of the bride who visited the church and pictured herself walking down the *aisle*, then gazed at the *altar*, and finally selected the *hymn* for her wedding. As she finished the process, she suddenly realized her life mission—*aisle, altar, hymn*. "I'll alter him!" If either partner believes their mission is to change the other, they are inviting major crisis. I once declined to marry a couple because the prospective bride could not relinquish her ideas of what her intended "would become" under her tutelage. She wanted the man she was certain she could create. Beyond major challenges during the first year of marriage, ongoing adjustments are necessary as children, health issues, empty-nests, dependent relatives, etc., impact the home.

Personhood: While basic personalities do not change, the converting power of the Holy Spirit should transform believers into growing more like Jesus. Respect for spouses as individuals created in God's image is essential and precludes any tolerance of abuse and violence, codependency and enabling sinful behavior, and unreasonable expectations for change. The very first gift which God gave to man was the marriage relationship. As pastors, we need to help promulgate that blessing to those whom we marry. ■

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Ministry Reports

Westpoint of Evangelism features cutting-edge methods

"Daring Evangelism for a Dying World," the 1998 Westpoint of Evangelism week, brought together more than 200 evangelists, pastors, and lay persons to share what works and to learn cutting-edge techniques.

The group represented not only the West Coast conferences, but also several other areas of the United States and Canada. In addition, three conference presidents came from Norway, and a church worker from Brazil attended.



Media ministry leaders presented the evening sessions during Westpoint. From left are Doug Batchelor of *Amazing Facts*, Bill Tucker of *The Quiet Hour*, Mark Finley of *It Is Written*, and Lonnie Melashenko of the *Voice of Prophecy*.

Westpoint is held annually in mid-December and is sponsored by the Pacific Union Conference and the *Voice of Prophecy* in association with *It Is Written*, *Amazing Facts*, *The Quiet Hour*, and the North Pacific Union. The event combines the Pacific Union Evangelism Council and the *Voice of Prophecy*'s Westpoint weekend, begun by H. M. S. Richards Jr. in the 1970s.

"Evangelists give and give all year," said Lloyd Wyman, chairman for the Westpoint council, "with only a week or two off between their crusades. They need to have a meeting where they can be

fed themselves and where they can share with each other and especially with younger evangelists and pastors. Through the exchange of ideas and experiences, many learn better methods."

How to reach today's television-oriented audience using computer-generated images was featured on three afternoons at the 1998 Westpoint. Dave Gemmell, pastor of the Mountain

View church in Las Vegas, presented three sessions with the assistance of specialists Palmer Halversen, David Jones, and Steve Wohlberg.

How to reach "Gen-Xers" received significant attention during a discussion chaired by Ron Whitehead, associate director of the Center for Youth Evangelism, and panel members Shasta Burr, Cindy Tutsch, and Tony Anobile. Art Bushnell from

the Central California Conference moderated another panel which discussed "How Clergy Families Flourish in Evangelism."



Participants chose from a variety of seminars, such as this one on how to launch an Internet Bible School at a local church.

Kurt Johnson, director of the *Voice of Prophecy* Bible School, and Alvin Glassford, who directs the ministry of the Joy River cyberspace Adventist church, demonstrated a new interactive Internet Bible School that will be available to local congregations this spring.

Evangelists Eradio Alonso, Jac Colon, Kenneth Cox, John Fowler, Mark Fox, Brian McMahon, Leo Schreven, and Jim Zachary presented seminars.

Young adults in their 20s were well represented at the Westpoint meetings. Several had attended Louis Torres's training school in the Dakota Conference to become Bible workers. Some now work with Brent Brusett's campaigns in Northern California, and a young couple from Romania will soon move to the East Coast to work in evangelism.

Up to 30 lay people attended various sessions. Some have worked primarily in North American crusades, while others have been involved in overseas evangelism. Among them are Joy Johansen and Rhoda Lau, who went to the Philippines last year; and Ralph Arnold Sr. and his wife, Pat.

The enthusiastic response to Morris Venden's devotional hour each morning encouraged Pastor Wyman to schedule him for another series at the 1999 Westpoint of Evangelism week, set for



At the annual Westpoint of Evangelism, December 1998, Marie Spangler, Lillian Guild, and Elder Dan Guild were honored for their lifelong commitment to evangelism and their personal soul winning ministry. Pictured are Lloyd Wyman, Ministerial Secretary for the Pacific Union, Marie Spangler, Lillian Guild, Dan Guild, Lonnie Melashenko, Speaker/Director of the *Voice of Prophecy*, and James A. Cress, General Conference Ministerial Association Secretary.

Dec. 12-16, at the Radisson Hotel in Simi Valley, California. For further information about the evangelism council, contact Lloyd Wyman's office at the Pacific Union Conference.
—Lloyd Wyman, Chair, Westpoint Council, Pacific Union Conference.

South-East European Union hosts youth retreat

Ministerial Association Secretary Jozsef Farago of the South-East European Union, (which includes Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia, and the territory of Montenegro) conducted a Christmas seminar and retreat for the teenage children of pastors in the union. The retreat was held at the Adventist Centre halfway between Belgrade and the Adriatic Sea at Zlatibor, a lovely mountain area, famous in Europe for its fresh air, snow, and scenery.



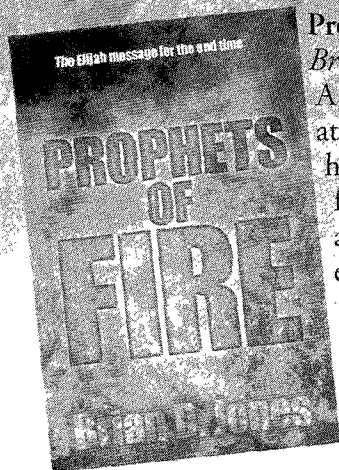
Pictured are the young people who attended the South-Eastern European Union youth retreat. Pastor Farago is the third from the left standing in the rear of the group.

Each morning and evening, Bible studies were conducted with the young people. After the evening worship they shared music, asked questions, and discussed their lives as pastors' children. During the day they went

walking and skiing. Many young people expressed their appreciation for the retreat and said they hoped this would become an annual event.—Peter Roennfeldt, Ministerial Association Secretary, Trans-European Division. ■

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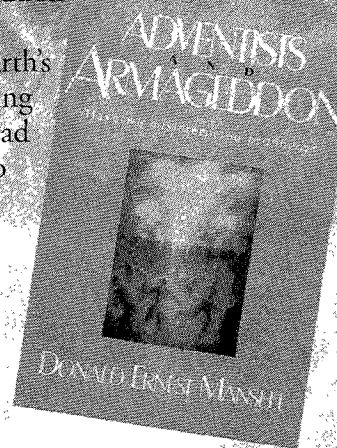
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