

MINISTRY

International Journal for Pastors

June 2004



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WHEN GOD IS LEADING US OUT ONTO A PLATFORM OF ETERNAL TRUTH, HOW COME WE HAVE TO STEP OFF THE ONE HE GAVE US DURING THE FIRST 100 YEARS?

I am writing regarding Roy Naden's article "The Nature of Christ: Four Measures of Mystery" (June 2003).

The author has Jesus speaking to Satan: "I stand here like the first Adam before you tempted him. I, too, have never sinned. And I have a sinless nature like the first Adam at his creation."

The author admits that Jesus "inherited our human nature," yet in the instance above claims that He had a "sinless nature."

Romans 8:31 states, "God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh."

Hebrews 2:16: "For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took him on the seed [nature] of Abraham." Christ was born a descendant of Abraham. What nature did Abraham and Isaac and Jacob have? A sinful nature, a fallen nature. Jesus took on the nature of man as it was *after* the Fall.

"He took upon His sinless nature our *sinful nature*, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted" (*Medical Ministry*, 181). "Clad in the vestments of humanity, the Son of God came down to the level of those he wished to save. In him was no guile or sinfulness; he was ever pure and undefiled; yet He took upon him our *sinful nature*" (*Review and Herald*, Dec. 15, 1896).

The only nature we have is a sinful nature. It was the only nature available to Jesus when He clad Himself in humanity. There is no need to argue

against a fallen, sinful nature for Jesus, for it is not the sinful nature that condemns us, but sin. We are all born with a sinful nature. But we are not sinners at birth . . .

When Christ returns, then "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . . the dead [in Christ] shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." In that moment it is our sinful nature that shall be changed and we shall then, indeed, be as Adam before he sinned. If a "sinful nature" condemned us before God, we would need to have it changed before death, or before the close of probation. Sin must be put away before our probation closes, but we must leave our sinful natures to Christ to change at His coming.

—Ed Johnson, retired pastor, Granbury, Texas.

Elder Naden's message explaining the nature of Christ was interesting. But was it written for Adventists? I was disappointed and bewildered over the confusion that exists because of this and other articles that have come during the last 50 years. When God is leading us out onto a platform of eternal truth, how come we have to step off the one He gave us during the first 100 years?

Why do we as a church support teachings which come from those who have not been blessed with the light from the throne of God? Our aim, since the books *Questions on Doctrine and Movement of Destiny* came out, seems to be to try to

satisfy the fears of those who want to follow the papacy's teachings. At the 1901 General Conference, Dr. Waggoner said, "Do you not see that the idea that the flesh of Jesus was not like ours (because we know ours is sinful) necessarily involves the idea of the immaculate conception of the virgin Mary?"

George Knight says, "Christ's nature created no controversy in the Adventism of the 1890s. It was a generally accepted theological nonissue" (Knight, *From 1888 to Apostasy*, 131). Why did it in the 1950s? We sought the fame of not being called a "sect" at the expense of compromising the truth . . .

If we try to save Christ by giving Him an unfallen nature while on earth, then what? Can sinless nature die? No. Christ took the nature of the people He came to save in order to be able to pay their debt. He took that sin-cursed nature to the cross and crucified it.

The story of the serpent of brass is one of the many good illustrations. "The uplifted serpent of brass . . . was a symbol of Christ. As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made in the likeness of 'sinful flesh' was to be their Redeemer" (Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages*, 175). We can hardly conceive of Christ being represented by a deadly serpent. But that is what sin is and shows how low He stooped to redeem us.

Paul says, "Great is the mystery of
continued on page 29

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.

Artful dodgers?

Last Sabbath in my home church we sang a striking hymn that I'd never noticed in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal*. Here's its opening verse:

*When the church of Jesus
Shuts its outer door,
Lest the roar of traffic
Drown the voice of prayer:
May our prayers, Lord make us
Ten times more aware
That the world we banish
Is our Christian care.*

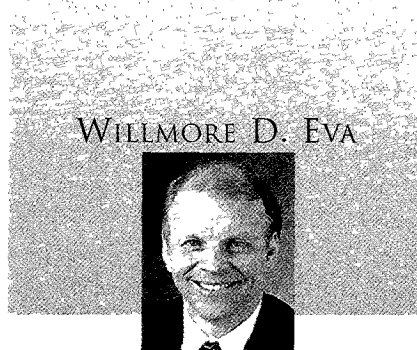
Among people in the Western cultures of our world and elsewhere, it is painful for us to acknowledge that Christianity has unnecessarily lost alarming proportions of its credibility. And we know that Adventist ministers are by no means untouched by this trend.

Citing an array of reasons, some of us may rather brashly banish any significant concern about this. But it cannot be escaped that easily.

If it were in fact *necessary* for us to lose credibility or the trust of many of those around us, in order to faithfully carry out our God-given calling, such a loss would be a worthy one. But I don't think that a lot of the loss of trust we are experiencing is necessary.

It is certainly important to the Church's ministry in this world that we faithfully and fearlessly "point out sin," when we are in fact called to do so. But when rebuking and correcting sinners becomes the predominant characteristic of our ministry, the trait we are especially known for, then we have left the ministry of Jesus Christ to take on the very "ministry" for which the arch-enemies of Jesus were notorious.

We know that Jesus of Nazareth had good reason for carrying on His ministry



as He did. He by all means helped people right in their homes, villages, streets, byways, and alleys simply because He loved them, but this kind of ministry was unquestionably a major reason for His ability to reach their hearts with His teaching and His preaching—to reach them with "the truth."

Jesus had the real thing: legitimate, convincing integrity and credibility. And so He was ultimately effective. He won people's innate trust by being a true fellow traveler with commoner and celebrity alike. He related to people where they were and as they were.

So scores of them loved Him—by no means all—just because they couldn't help it as they experienced the way He touched them and lifted them at the focal point of their most pressing pain, sorrow, or joy. And so they hung on his words and believed those words, not only because he was a great speaker and miracle worker but, again, simply because they trusted him on the basis of who He was to them and for them.

All this we know, of course, but I must admit that I have a difficult time internalizing it and actually incorporating it into the way I practice my ongoing ministry.

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church and for us ministers of the Church to find meaningful balance

here, is as crucial a challenge as it is lifelong.

Evangelism? Of course! But evangelism, or Christian ministry in general, without this element of authentic care is not the real thing. It's not going to be all that effective. It can't be. It's not the full treatment, and it will lead to the well-known feelings of frustration that so many of us are well acquainted with.

With honesty, insight, and cutting satire, Søren Kierkegaard once said: "We artful dodgers act as if we do not understand the New Testament, because we realize full well that [if we let on that we did] we should have to change our way of life drastically. That is why we invented 'religious education' and 'Christian doctrine.' Another concordance, another lexicon, a few more commentaries, three other translations, because it is all so difficult to understand. Yes, of course, dear God, all of us—capitalists, house-owners, beggars, the whole society—we would be lost if it were not for 'scholarly doctrine!'"

The more one thinks about the thrust of this kind of assessment of organized religion, and the verse of the hymn quoted above, the more one feels the need of a kind of Christian ministry that tugs at us with beautiful but challenging conviction; that calls us to fashion our ministry and that of our churches after the radical order of the down-to-earth, holy ministry of the New Testament communities of faith, and again, that of Jesus Himself. ■

- 1 Fred Pratt Green, *When the Christian Church of Jesus* (Carol Stream, Ill.: Hope Publishing Co., 1969). Used in the *Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal* as hymn 581, by permission of Oxford University Press.
- 2 Søren Kierkegaard, quoted by Peter G. van Breemen, *Called by Name* (Denville, NJ: Dimension Books, 1976), 88, and in Brennan Manning, *Abba's Child* (Colorado Springs, Co.: NavPress, 1994), 135.

eTreasures:

Seven way to enhance your ministry through the Internet

Tim Crosby

If you are a church leader not using the Internet, you are missing out on a new world of potential. Dozens of sites can make your ministry more productive. The Barna Research Group claims that by now nearly half of all Protestant churches in North America have a Web site that lists upcoming church activities and provides background information and current congregational news. The advantages of an online presence for members and especially non-members are obvious.

Music

Entire hymnals exist on the Web. They are far more versatile and “capable” than their paper ancestors. They can actually play the hymn on your computer. You can search not only by title, author, and composer but also by scriptural reference, meter, or even full-text search of the lyrics. Cyberhymnal.org has over 4,400 hymns. Lutheran-hymnal.com has six complete Lutheran hymnals.

Other sites will play a snatch of any contemporary Christian song and then, for a small fee, allow you to print the score. Church musicians should investigate classicalarchives.com, www.praisecharts.com, sheetmusicdirect.com, sunhawk.com, and worshiptogether.com. Recorded clips of 350 different choirs singing thousands of anthems are available at www.geocities.com/hearchoirs/.

The entire Adventist hymnal can be played

online in MIDI at www3.telus.net/sdahymnal; see also www.digitalhymnal.org, which is less complete but offers more options.

Active email

It is close to impossible to communicate too much, so an active email list is vital. Snail mail is still needed for the older members not on the Internet, but email is the future. No special software is required. With Microsoft's free email software, Outlook Express, you can manage categorized lists, emailing all the members, or just the youth, deacons, church board, etc.

Members will appreciate the timely communication of prayer requests, illnesses, last-minute changes, etc. The church communication secretary can email not only announcements but entire bulletins, sermon notes, even board agendas. Being kept in the loop keeps the members happy.

Bible study

Bible.gospelcom.net will display any particular Bible passage, or do a concordance search of 16 different Bible versions in 30 languages. You can list all passages that contain, say, the words “Jesus” and “priests.” Other Bible study aids and commentaries are available on this site, as well as at www.bible.org and www.ccel.org. You may already have Bible search software and a library. Now all of your online members do too!

An exhaustive concordance to the published writings of Ellen G. White is available online at egwdatabase.whiteestate.org, and a complete online index to Adventist periodicals at www.andrews.edu/library/car/sdapiindex.html.

Sermon preparation

For speakers, teachers, and writers, the Web offers resources of revolutionary proportions. Research has never been easier. Type “sermon Samaritan woman” (without quotes) into Google.com and Google will gladly serve up, in less than a second, more than 18,000 such sermons—free! The judicious pastor can glean anecdotes, ideas, and quotes from a wide range of sources without the wholesale borrowing that constitutes plagiarism.

These days Google stands above the pack as the leading search engine. With its blazing speed, it is so multitasking that many pastors make it their home page or download its toolbar. Google is a calculator: type in a formula



Tim Crosby, D.Min.,
is pastor of the
Willowbrook
Seventh-day
Adventist Church in
Hagerstown,
Maryland.

and it will provide the numerical solution; or type in "teaspoons in a gallon" and it will give the answer. It's a dictionary: type in a word and it will give you the definition. It's a national telephone directory: type in a name and a state (city optional) and get a telephone number. It will also translate paragraphs from one language to another.

One of Google's more amazing abilities enhances pastoral visitation: type any telephone number into Google, and it will offer a map of the address of that phone number! Or you can start with an address: type in "Reno, NV," or a specific street address, for a detailed map. For a list of Google's abilities, see www.google.com/help/features.html. No other Web site offers so much. And remember Google's constantly updated newspaper.

The Web contains more information than a large reference library, and Google is the gateway. Computer malfunction? Just type the error message into Google. Want the full lyrics to some obscure hymn? Just type a snatch of the lyrics between quote marks into Google. Want to buy a house? Want to know more about Melchizedek? It's all on the Web, though you may have to sort through some nonsense. Children's Sabbath School leaders can find hoards of material—quizzes, pictures to color, etc.—ready to print and use.

Newer search engines are rising to challenge Google. Alltheweb.com now indexes more sites: the same sermon search on "Samaritan woman" returns 64,000 results.

Books

Entire libraries are available on the Net, capable of full-text searching (whose content is not necessarily accessible to Google). These include Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Bartleby, Books-on-line, The Internet Public Library, Project Gutenberg, The Online Books Page, Electronic Text Center, Elibrary, and Questia (look these up by using Google). Still more online religious libraries are listed at

www.crosssearch.com/Reference/Online_Libraries/.

For those who still like to buy their own books, there is Amazon.com, the second most useful site on the Web. Amazon has the highest-ever customer-satisfaction rating of any company in history. Amazon sells everything but specializes in books. It will display all books in print on a particular subject and sell them at a generous discount, with no sales tax, and no shipping charge on orders over \$25! Local stores can't compete. For most books Amazon offers online reviews, sometimes hundreds per book. This book review feature is a great research tool. You can delve into the text of many books because pages of front- and end-matter are provided online. Amazon also presents you with a list of books similar to the one you are looking at.

Recently Amazon unveiled its most astonishing capability: full-text searches of over 130,000 books—33 million pages—called "Search Inside the Book." Amazon has always allowed keyword searches of book titles; now it searches the full text of the book.

A recent search using the word "Sabbath" generated over 9,000 volumes. You can read any page that contains your keyword, and browse a few pages backward and forward. But you cannot read the book from beginning to end, and you cannot download or copy text because Amazon supplies only pictures of pages, not electronic text, and their objective is for you to purchase their books.

Adventist books can be purchased from adventistbookcenter.com. All things Adventist can be accessed through www.Adventist.org or www.Plusline.org.

Evangelism

Most Adventist media programming, such as *It Is Written*, can be viewed over the Internet. 3ABN leads in technological prowess; it is broadcast live and in real-time over the Net in broadband (a dial-up connection

works, but the quality is poor).

Bible studies are available on the Net from most of the Adventist media sites. Here the *Voice of Prophecy* has jumped ahead by taking the next logical step in evangelism. One of their Web sites, www.prophecyspeaks.com, offers an entire series of evangelistic meetings by Lonnie Melashenko on demand in broadband video. Another broadband series featuring Kenneth Cox suffers from slightly lower resolution (www.wordsight.org/net2000). An earlier low-resolution series featuring Dwight Nelson (www.net98.org/schedule.html) is still useful for those without a broadband connection.

Another evangelistic tool is the Jesus film (now seen by one out of every three people living on earth) available on the Net in broadband in any one of 60 languages at www.jesus-film.org. These video presentations can be used effectively in pastor's classes or evangelistic outreach with the addition of the live human touch.

Web conferencing

The Web makes it possible to hold online theological chats, real-time meetings, and expert training—without the necessity of physical proximity. Up to 500 participants in an online conference room can hear the moderator over their speakers and can type in comments visible to all.

The moderator, whose face can be displayed onscreen in real time, can present documents and allow any participant to edit them, or can lead the group on an Internet tour. The charge starts at around 15 cents per minute per participant and is cheaper for quantity purchases—which certainly beats the high cost of travel. There are many competing sites; a search for "web conferencing" may unearth some free offers.

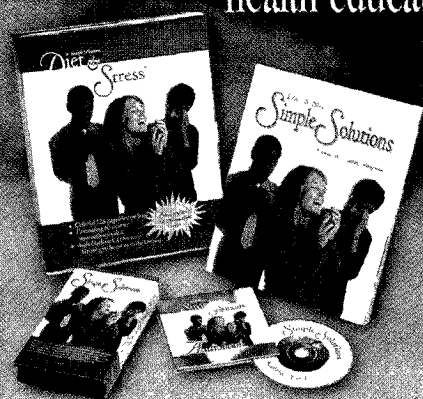
Caution!

The Web is powerful, but with great power comes great danger. A great time-saver, it can be an even greater time-waster. Surfing the Net

continued on page 27

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4 color poster at \$12 for twelve 11x17 four color posters.* An added feature is the free web page you receive with all orders which include imprinted invitations. This is a great way to invite friends, co-workers and family members to a life changing seminar on decreasing stress, changing diets, lifestyles and much more.

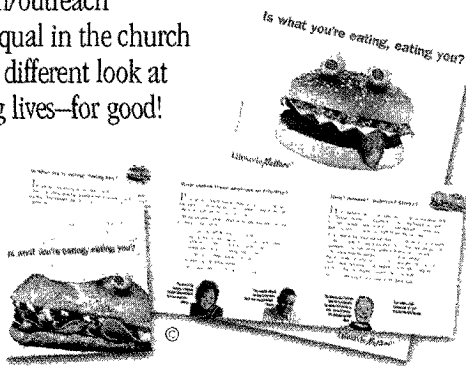
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The privilege of stewardship

Seventh-day Adventist Statement of Faith #20: *"We are God's stewards, entrusted by Him with time and opportunities, abilities, and possessions, and the blessings of earth and its resources. We are responsible to Him for their proper use. We acknowledge God's ownership by faithful service to Him and our fellow men, and by returning tithes and giving offerings for the proclamation of His gospel and the support and growth of His church. Stewardship is a privilege given to us by God for nurture in love and the victory over selfishness and covetousness. The steward rejoices in the blessings that come to others as a result of his faithfulness. (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15; 1 Chron. 29:14; Hag. 1:3-11; Mal. 3:8-12; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; Rom. 15:26, 27.)"*

Stewardship! The very word confronts us with the idea that we have something to do, and that it will cost us—money and effort. Questions come to mind when we think of stewardship. Why should I give? How much should I give? Do I really want to give? Why is it always about money? Why is money so important, or so much a problem? And, who really is owner? Yet as we look at the biblical concept of stewardship, we see something much greater. Stewardship is the lifestyle of one who accepts Christ's lordship, walking in partnership with God and acting as God's agent to manage His affairs on earth.

Where it began

It all began with God's creation of Adam and Eve in His own image. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

BEN MAXSON



Shaping Adam's form with His hands and breathing through his lips the breath of life, God created us by means of an act of incredible intimacy. This story provides humanity's initial and core identity—intimate friends with God who as stewards are entrusted with the task of managing God's world. Remember, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it" (Ps. 24:1, NIV).

Thus God shared with us His governance of the world. We became His agents with the task of handling His resources. God is the Owner and we are His managers. Everything in our hands—our time, our talents, our energy, our material resources—everything is His. And we hold it only in trust. This concept forms the foundation of biblical stewardship.

Stewardship in and through Christ

When sin entered the world, it shattered and distorted God's creation and separated humanity from God. It broke the union with God and marred the image of God. The governance God had shared with us was surrendered, and this earth became sin's domain. In the same way, stewardship without a relationship with God becomes simply an extension of our sinful lifestyles.

In Jesus Christ, God restored the divine-human relationship and re-

established His kingdom on earth. Thus the gospel provided reconciliation between God and humanity as Christ became the Second Adam, winning back humanity's lost role as stewards of the world under God. Today, stewardship begins with the recognition of God's sovereignty as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer, and Owner.

Through the Incarnation, Christ identified Himself fully with humanity. The shared intimacy of God with humanity is embodied in Jesus Christ—the God-Man. His life and death form the basis for a renewed relationship with God. Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the living presence of Jesus restores the reality of a shared intimacy with God.

Restoring God's image in humanity is part of the redemption process. While not complete before the Second Coming, the process begins here on earth. The Holy Spirit brings the promised presence of Christ into the life of the believer (John 14:16-20) and begins a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). Sinful humanity, saved by grace, again shares the image of God (2 Peter 1:4). Through Christ's power, the believer who accepts the gift is again in union with God.

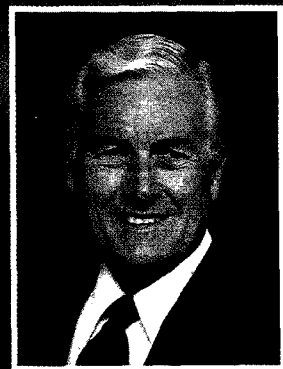
As the model steward, Jesus Christ demonstrated the lifestyle of the individual in union with God. Through His ministry in heaven, Christ enthrones humanity with Him (Eph. 2:6) and renews humanity's partnership with God. When we allow God to live on the throne of our lives, He lifts us to sit with Him on His throne. In this partnership, we as human agents function as regents under the authority of God. All the power of heaven is available to aid God's stewards in their daily lives.

While enthroned by God in heavenly places with Christ, we are totally dependent upon Him for every aspect of life. Yet God is also dependent upon us. He has chosen to depend upon His

AMAZING FACTS

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GOD AT RISK

God At Risk

"How much did an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient and loving Creator really risk by bringing Planet Earth into existence and populating it with free moral human beings, all of whom have the power of choice? *God at Risk* gives a surprisingly stimulating, reassuring answer by effectively dissecting and convincingly explaining the character of God, the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and the ultimate triumph of Divine love."

—Neal C. Wilson, D.D., D.H.S, President, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (retired)

"This volume is a fresh look at the cost of freedom for God and highlights the purpose of the gospel, rising above the limited gospels in vogue today."

—Jack J. Blanco, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Religion (retired), Southern Adventist University

"*God At Risk* is a timely, useful volume. In developing his theme, Douglass provides an insightful and remarkably comprehensive survey of the great controversy, reminding us that the struggle is about a major rebellion against God from within His own family in which the very government of God is at stake. Satan, the rebellion's leader, employs deceit and coercion, but God relies on truth, evidence and persuasion consistently respecting the freedom and individuality of His creation."

—Malcolm Maxwell, Ph.D., President, Pacific Union College (retired)

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believers as the ultimate demonstration of His power and character to the world. He trusts us with a complete partnership in union with Him. The awesome concept of God's dependence on us is crucial to our accepting full dependence on Him.

Partnership and interdependence

This renewed interdependence provides the model for relationships with other human beings. The corporate dimension of the church as the Body of Christ, with Him as its Head, reflects the ultimate level of partnership and/or stewardship. Each part of the Body, individually or corporately, grows and matures through interdependence. Interdependent with God, as members of His Body we are also interdependent with each other.

At first, as individuals or even as a corporate group, we are totally dependent on the rest of the Body. With growth and maturation, we gain strength until we are able to contribute to the Body as a whole. Stewardship is an important

ministry in fostering this growth in interdependence.

Through a discipleship walk, stewards acknowledge God's lordship and surrender every area of life to Him. Discipleship—moving the entire life toward God—takes place under the Holy Spirit's guidance as He recreates the believer in God's image. Faithful stewardship is the Christian lifestyle and the joyful result of a personal relationship of assurance in Jesus Christ. It indicates the believer's response to God's initiative in creation and redemption. It indicates an acceptance of the relationship established by God, and the willingness to integrate obedience into every area of life.

Thus, stewardship carries over into every area of the life of an individual or church. It provides the foundation and motivation for ministry and witness.

Living in partnership with God shapes the priorities and focus. And as believers grow in this partnership, the Holy Spirit guides them to provide the financial support for the church as the Body of Christ.

Time and money

The issues of time and money are critical in stewardship because they are the two most fluid and changeable dimensions of life. The management of these two areas quickly reflects and influences our spiritual lives. God created the Sabbath as the crowning act of Creation week. As a sign that they accepted Him as their Creator and Sovereign, He has asked humanity to rest and worship Him before doing anything else.

God established the system of tithes and offerings for the same purpose. Through the tithe we worship God and acknowledge Him as our Lord. We recognize that all we are and have belong to Him. God asks that both the first portion of our time and of our material possessions be given to Him as a sign that we accept our covenant relationship with Him. God then invites us to live the rest of our lives in partnership with Him.

Money plays an important role in our lives. How we deal with money reflects what is happening in our spiritual relationship with God. Jesus stated, "No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Matt. 6:24, NIV). Money, in fact, appears to be one of the most important subjects in Scripture. There are over 2,300 biblical references to money and material possessions, while there are only about 500 that refer to prayer, and fewer than 500 dealing directly with faith. A majority of Christ's parables deal with money and material possessions.

This is why our stewardship must include a strong financial dimension. We must come to the point where we recognize and accept God as Owner of all the material blessings He has placed in our hands. When we think of ourselves as owners, we deny God's essential identity as Master and Owner. It is really a question of lordship. Who will be in control?

Tithes and offerings

As growing disciples, we accept God's control of all material or financial

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areas. We seek to do His will as guided by the Holy Spirit. This essential stewardship principle is brought into focus by the system of tithes and offerings.

We are tempted to look at tithes and offerings as the church's method for funding itself. Yet when we look at the biblical record, we discover that tithes and offerings began long before there was a church or even a corporate dimension to God's people. The biblical accounts of the first sacrifices are found in Genesis 4 and clearly have to do with offerings that are brought to God as acts of worship.

The word *tithe* or *tenth* first appears in the story of Abraham and Melchizedek in Genesis 14. The concept next appears when Jacob promises to return to God a tenth of all the blessings he will receive (Gen. 28:22). During the entire time of the patriarchs, there was no church to support. Tithes and offerings were returned to God simply as acts of worship.

Later, when God established a corporate people whom He would call His own, He used the system of tithes and offerings as a means of support for the Levites and priests. (See Lev. 27:30-33 and Num. 18:21-28.) The people presented their tithes "as an offering to the Lord" (Num. 18:24). Thus the concept of worship was central to tithing.

A return to tithing was part of the great revivals in Israel (see 2 Chron. 31:4-13 and Neh. 10:37, 38; 12:44; 13:5, 12). As God's people responded to God's call to return to Him, their faithfulness was so great that new store-rooms had to be built to contain the tithe. Today, the church has designated the local conference as the "storehouse" where the tithe is to be stored and distributed.

The most direct passage relating to tithe belonging to God is found in Malachi 3:6-12. The entire book is an extended dialogue between God and His people, especially the leaders of His people. They are in apostasy, and God is calling them back. The climax comes with His call for them to return to Him. And a core element of that return is for them to stop robbing God of His tithes

and offerings and to bring them to His "storehouse." Because of their apostasy, God's people cannot enjoy His blessings, and He states that those blessings can only be restored in the context of their faithfulness.

In the New Testament, Jesus reaffirms the principle of tithing (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42) when He tells the Pharisees that they ought to tithe and practice justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Paul uses the Old Testament tithing practice as the basis for supporting gospel workers (1 Cor. 9:13-14).

In 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7, Paul outlines the guiding principle for determining how to give and how much we should give: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (NIV).

Thus the system of tithes and offerings is a critical part of our financial discipleship. The tithe is holy, claimed by God as His own. But this does not mean that the rest of it is ours. As we first return to Him the money He has placed in our hands, we remind ourselves that it all belongs to Him—that 100 percent of it is to be used for His

glory and honor. This principle then guides our complete use of His finances, even when we use what remains to care for our families and our needs.

It's a lifestyle

The truth is, however, that when we have returned our tithe and given our offerings, our stewardship has only begun. It is not a matter of "paying our dues" and then living the rest of our lives for ourselves. Stewardship reminds us that everything we are and have belongs to God. He invites us to enter into an intimate partnership with Him—to let Him be Lord of our lives. As someone has said, "If He is not Lord of all; can He be Lord of all?"

Thus stewardship becomes a lifestyle that involves submitting ourselves completely to God as an act of heartfelt worship (Rom. 12:1). All this is a privilege given to us by God to nurture a life integrated in Him. Stewardship becomes the practice of God's presence in all we do. From slaves to sin, God lifts us to be partners with the Divine—stewards managing His affairs on earth. ■

Ben Maxson, D.Min., is director of the stewardship department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Genuine medical missionary work is bound up inseparably with the keeping of God's commandments, of which the Sabbath is especially mentioned, since it is the great memorial of God's creative work. Its observance is bound up with the work of restoring the moral image of God in man. —Testimonies, vol. 6, pp. 265, 266

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"Political correctness" in Muslim evangelism?

Borge Schantz



Borge Schantz, Ph.D.,
professor emeritus
and retired from
Newbold College,
lives in Denmark.

During recess at a Scandinavian elementary school, immigrant Muslim boys attacked a little girl who wore a cross necklace. They tore it off and threw it on the ground while cursing and shouting obscenities. When approached by the girl's parents about the matter, school authorities—afraid of not being “politically correct”—did nothing.

In the same school district, some Muslim parents claimed that a teacher had not shown sufficient respect to Mohammed and the Koran, an accusation that made problems for the teacher.

In my home country, we are almost in a situation where newspapers, radio, and television can voice obscene, debasing, vulgar, and malicious sentiments about the church, Christianity, the Bible, even Jesus Christ—and no one lifts a finger. At the same time, minor negative comments, criticisms, and evaluations of Islam made public are immediately brought to the notice of the courts, which want to stamp out such “racism.”

What's wrong with this picture?

Compromise or confrontations

The spirit of today is compromise, not confrontation. This “political correctness” is also creeping into Adventist approaches to other non-Christian traditions. Adventists talk about “building bridges,” “cultivating under-

standing,” “commitment to reflect brotherhood,” and “being sensitive to the heart needs of Muslims” and other religious groups.

I get quite a few messages by which Adventists express their concern over a “dumbing down” of the Christian message in general, and the Advent message in particular. We are told that in our outreach programs we should emphasize “things we have in common” with other religions.

Respect for an individual Muslim, or someone of any belief, is an essential expression of biblical love. No one should deny that. But when the Christian witness meets erroneous doctrines or beliefs, be it Islamic, secular or whatever, our call is to enlighten and correct, no matter how “politically incorrect” our words might be deemed. To minimize this call is to be unfaithful to our gospel commission.

Commonalities or misinterpretations

Besides, personal experience has shown me the fallacies in this let's-talk-about-what-we-have-in-common approach. In my years working in Muslim areas, I have often stressed the few points where there seemed to be agreements between their beliefs and my faith. The reply has been: “If we have these things in common, why should I change my religion?” In fact, a good Muslim friend once said to me: “You ought to be a Muslim. You speak like one.”

Attempts have been made to equate the Allah of the Koran with the God in the Bible. Despite some superficial commonalities, the comparison is invalid. When Christians talk about God, we talk about a Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To the Muslim, that is blasphemy—and polytheism.

Allah's attributes and character are revealed in his 99 names. He is called holy, merciful, gracious, forgiving, and protecting. However, some names also indicate that Allah forces, diminishes, humiliates, and causes damage. Three very significant attributes that Christians ascribe to God are absent in Islam. Allah is never called Father, never called Love, never called Spirit.

That Arab Christians use the word *Allah* for God is irrelevant to the point under discussion. J. H. Bavinck, a Dutch missiologist puts it this way: “. . . In nearly all religions, God, or the gods, occupy a position (that) can . . . be called a moment or element of truth. That they believe in God is an element of truth, but

what they say and think of him is entirely different from what God has revealed of himself in his word. The words found in the sacred books of other religions which are nearly identical with the words of the Bible ought also not to lead us into error."¹

Another interesting but revealing case is when Adventists try to establish common ground by claiming that both Muslims and Adventists believe in the second coming of Christ. Muslims believe that Messiah will descend to the earth and will destroy antichrist and then establish the true religion of Islam.

This is interpreted to mean, among other things, that Christ will return to prepare the way for Mohammed, who will then inaugurate an eternal kingdom based on the Koran. In such a scenario, Christ is demoted to a kind of end-time John the Baptist, a view that cannot be squared with our understanding of the Second Coming in any way.

Space will not allow us to draw attention to other seeming commonalities such as heaven and hell, angels, the Scriptures, day of judgment. Yet, in reality, almost the only thing in common is the names for the various doctrines. The deeper theological meaning, the reason for the beliefs and the purpose of the specific doctrine, is often different, if not contradictory.

Honesty while witnessing to truth

Thus, is it really "depersonalization"—as some would claim it to be—to point out wrong doctrine, abuse, and even dangerous heresy in other religions, if this is done with Christian courtesy? After all, in the Bible we find examples where humor (Matt. 7:34 f), irony (Rom. 6:1, 2), even a species of ridicule (Isa. 44:13-20) are used. Jesus called the Pharisees "white-washed tombs" (Matt 23:27). Was Peter's speech on Pentecost "politically correct" (Acts 2:36, 37)?

Among the commands that Christ gave after His resurrection were com-

mands to preach, teach, train, disciple, observe, command, enlighten, cause to understand, repent, make known, instruct, demonstrate, discuss, and charge. These cannot be obeyed unless one is prepared to warn against heresies and point those of other faiths to a better way.

Church or mosque?

In an attempt to be sensitive, a well-meaning evangelical pastor once decided to build a church in a style similar to a mosque. He also programmed services to somewhat reflect the programs Muslims follow for their prayers. The new church looked like a mosque; it even pointed toward Mecca. For the services, shoes were left outside, men covered their heads, the genders were separated, and no hymns were used.

After some time the local police officer asked the pastor if he was Christian or Muslim. Surprised, the good evangelist confirmed his calling as a minister of the gospel. The officer then told him to act, behave, and talk like a Christian. He was advised not to deceive people. The policeman's advice was for the evangelist to be honest in his approach.

Some in among the charismatic movements who are working on the "halfway house" concepts—where Muslim converts are almost left in a semi-Christian state—are beginning to experience difficulties. They are accused of underground work among Muslims, a "crime" in some Islamic societies that comes with heavy punishment. An honest, tactful witness to the gospel will definitely be resisted; it will not, however, be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Today there are more than 12 million Seventh-day Adventists; more than 5 million of them originally came from Roman Catholic backgrounds. We have been successful in winning Catholics. Several missiologic reasons could be hypothesized for this success, but political correctness, emphasizing "things we have in common," is not foremost among them.

No doubt concerned evangelists and laypersons with a loving spirit have initiated their witness by stressing beliefs we have in common. And we have a few more commonalities with Catholics than we do with Muslims. Yet evangelistic success is not a result of stressing commonalities. Success among Catholics has come largely because, after mutual trust had been built up, we could point out fallacies in their doctrine and point them to something better. Those won were generally those who already were dissatisfied with their church and who found a better way through what we have had to offer.

Dissatisfied Muslims

Today a growing number of Muslims are perplexed—even embarrassed—by what is happening in the name of Islam: suicide bombing, honor-killings of young girls, and so on. This embarrassment is fueled by the fact that few Muslim leaders and theologians speak out against these acts.

These displeased Muslims are looking for solutions. Many contemporary Muslims, discouraged by what the extremists are doing, are winnable for Christ. However, they are not looking for a church that overemphasizes the few doctrines the two religions superficially agree upon. They are looking for a church with a message that will give their life meaning, a message that preaches love to one's neighbors, a message that gives them hope and the promise of a better future. In short, they are looking for the gospel.

These Muslims are the ones we seek to evangelize now. Our lectures, literature, radio and television programs, and other activities should be geared toward these. The message should be one of hope, but also of warning, of theological and doctrinal correction, and most importantly of a better way—no matter how "politically incorrect" that way might be. ■

1 J. H. Bavinick, *Introduction to the Sciences of Mission* (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Pub. Co., 1960), 228.

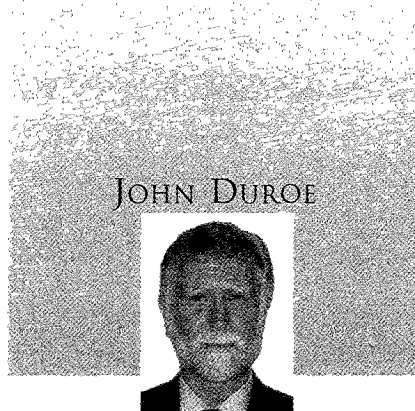
Evangelism is God's business



Benjamin Sulit is a church elder in the San Pablo City Seventh-day Adventist Church, North Philippines. In the past he and his family lived in Saudi Arabia. While there Benjamin was head of the X-Ray Department in a local hospital and his wife worked as a dentist. He was also the active elder of a group of Seventh-day Adventists. He produced a Bible Correspondence Course to be used locally, which was completed by over 80 people. He also organized small groups on the hospital compound where he lived.

Life was very comfortable for his family in Saudi Arabia, but Benjamin's mind seemed always to be thinking of ways to share his faith, not only in Saudi Arabia but also among his people back home in the Philippines.

The Sulit family decided on a permanent return to the Philippines. Benjamin's wife continued working as a dentist, while Benjamin tried a variety of business ventures, without much suc-



cess. After much prayer, answers began to come to him. He decided to concentrate directly upon ventures for God.

As Benjamin thought, planned, and worked, he came up with an acronym which described his ministry: ALIVE (Adventist Lay Members Involved in Vigorous Evangelism).

His first project was to develop a *Teacher's Guide* for the Sabbath School lesson study. His local conference liked it and asked him to produce and distribute it to all the Sabbath School

teachers in his local conference.

He appreciated the *Elder's Digest* being produced by the General Conference Ministerial Association and decided to produce a local version, complete with 13 weekly sermons. The local conference encouraged him to produce it for all their local elders.

When the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) office saw the first editions, they offered it to every church elder in the division, subsidizing the publication and translation of the first two editions. Now the SSD office takes an active role in its production. Over 5,000 copies are distributed every quarter in the Philippines alone.

Benjamin's third project was to produce a Bible study disc so that church members could visit their friends using a VCD player and plugging it into their friends' TV sets. This was so well received by the conference lay people that Benjamin was asked to produce a children's VCD and then a health VCD.

When Pablo City church members went out to distribute their Sow One Billion tracts, Benjamin wanted an instant response. He wanted to reply to the Bible Study Guide requests personally, so he included his cell phone number on the tracts and invited the reader to text in a request.

The Philippines has been labeled "the texting capital of the world." Everybody has a cell phone in their hand, not to talk to someone but to send a text message (it is so much cheaper!). The most natural thing for a Filipino to do is text. So before Benjamin returned home the first Sabbath afternoon after handing out the tracts, he had received his first text request.

Benjamin's latest project is to develop a way of reaching professional people, who do not have the time to respond to traditional public evangelism. He aims

continued on page 27

AIAS BEGINS 2004 YEAR OF EVANGELISM WITH GOOD RESULTS

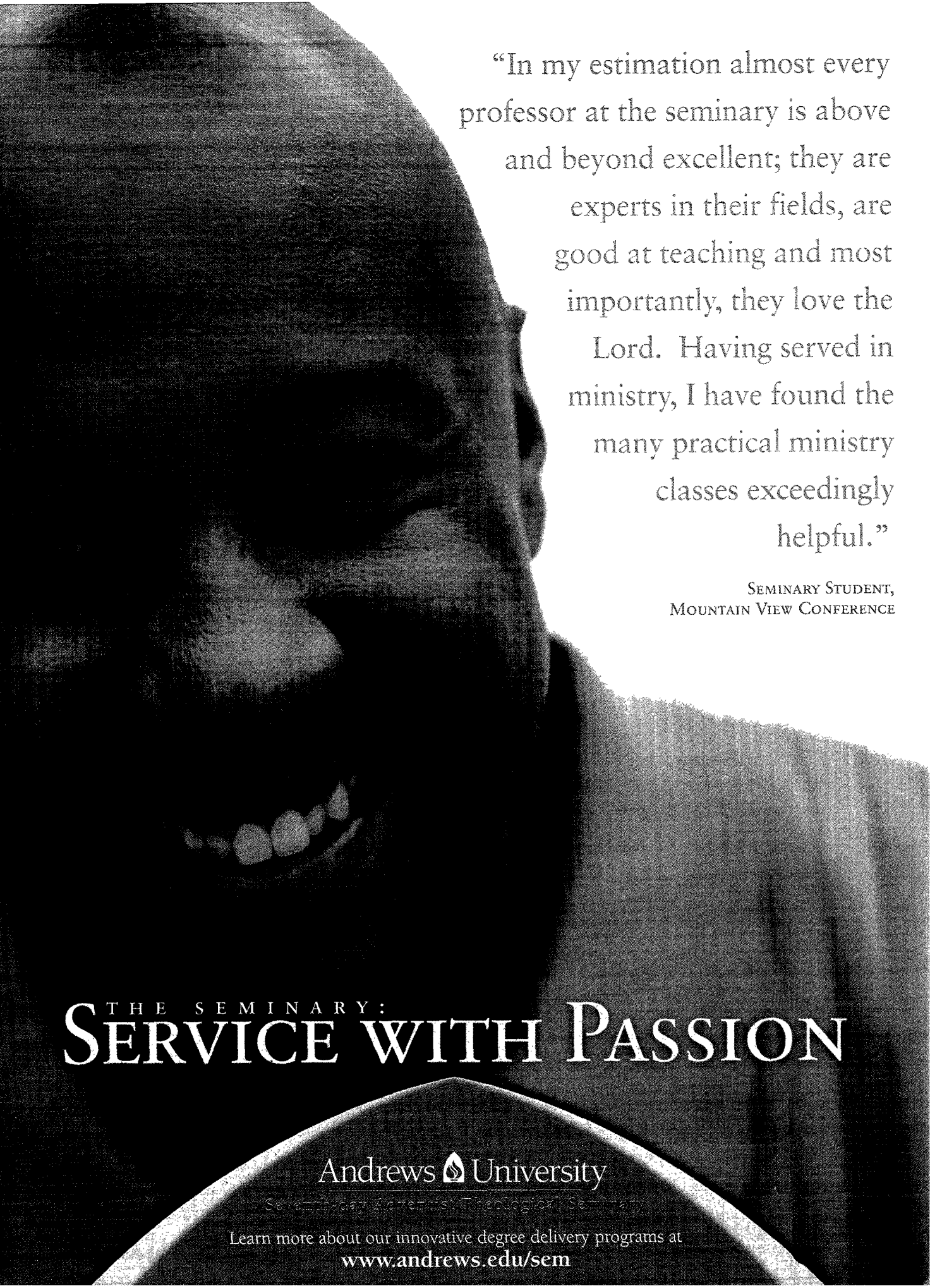
In the first week of this Year of World Evangelism, the church at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) sprang into action. AIAS is our SDA graduate university for the Asia-Pacific region, situated in the Philippines.

We started the week with a fellowship supper to honor and thank all the active lay ministry groups who had led out in personal ministries in 2003. The Jail Ministry group reported 142 baptisms. Three evangelistic teams had worked in surrounding towns—Maliksi, baptizing 79, Tagaytay 12, and Batas 12. Local campus ministries had baptized another ten. We celebrated over the 255 new converts.

Before the end of the week our Personal Ministries Committee had met to discuss new plans for 2004. We discussed ways to disciple the new believers and to plan for three more evangelistic thrusts. Each of AIAS's Sabbath School classes will send a supporting group of members, once a month, to help support our church's evangelistic ventures. We planned to help in community service projects, working together with other nongovernment organizations.

The second week was set aside as a Week of Prayer. We want to work together with God. The week ended with a period of fasting and prayer.

At AIAS in the Philippines, we want to be part of God's Year of Evangelism.



“In my estimation almost every professor at the seminary is above and beyond excellent; they are experts in their fields, are good at teaching and most importantly, they love the Lord. Having served in ministry, I have found the many practical ministry classes exceedingly helpful.”

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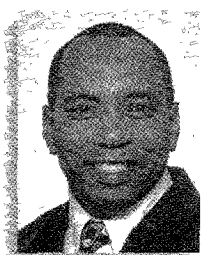
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Not just membership: Called to discipleship

Ruthven J. Roy



Ruthven J. Roy, D.Min., is a church consultant for strategic ministry, Hagerstown, Maryland.

For centuries, the growth of Christianity has been calculated in terms of church membership. Although Christ's call to discipleship has been stressed, it has not in fact significantly influenced the church as an organization. Discipleship has not become the basic orientation it was in the first century of the church, thus affecting the effectiveness of the mission of mainline denominations.

Meanwhile, church-growth gurus and researchers agree that accession rate of the church in modern times has and is diminishing in many countries, under the influence of a postmodern culture—noted for its institutional distrust and disloyalty, its religious pluralism, and its unabashed individualism.

Many churches have already closed their doors, others are downsizing and restructuring, and some are limping along, hoping for positive changes to take place. The few who have been creative and tough-minded enough to face the challenge of postmodernity are experiencing some measure of growth.

This crisis in church membership—for example, little or no growth, membership apathy, disloyalty, sporadic church attendance, and growing apostasy—has sent many church leaders and organizations back to the spiritual drawing board to rethink growth and conservation strategies.

In recent times, the word *discipleship* has begun to resurface from the dusty archives of

apostolic tradition, as a part of an ongoing conversation in many churches and denominations. However, the word is still being used very loosely, because many churches have become victims of rigid organizational structures that are prescribed by the church traditional values that are behind the church membership orientation—which, for many ecclesiastical institutions, has been reduced to the survival practice of counting heads and managing cash flow.

For many, *discipleship* is only a politically correct buzzword, swirling around in the community of faith, instead of being the resident lifestyle that defines that community.

It is, however, worth noting that although church membership is a viable biblical concept, it was never meant to stand on its own as the predominant shaping and defining influence in a believer's life and experience. Herein lies the error: Membership is not discipleship. One can be the member of a church and not be a disciple of Jesus Christ. The dilemma of Christian denominations today is that they possess few members, but even fewer disciples.

Church membership must always be defined and regulated by Christ's personal call to discipleship. Discipleship was always intended to be the immovable framework that shapes and defines the believer's life and practice, with membership being the automatic outcome.

Accepting the personal call of Christ makes one a member of His body, not just of an organizational structure. Christ's call to discipleship is not another evangelistic option for the church. Rather, it is the lifeblood and the lifestyle of the church.

We simply cannot grow the kingdom, or its people, without giving heed to and embracing discipleship. In most congregations, this may require a complete paradigm shift in current evangelistic and conservation thinking and practice. To accomplish this, it is important that we examine Christ's call to His first disciples.

Understanding the call

The call to discipleship is a command: "Follow me and I will make you fish for people" (Matt. 4:19, NRSV). This call did not occur in a vacuum. It was an integral part of Christ's kingdom strategy and forms the immovable platform for growing and sustaining that kingdom here on earth.

Discipleship can be understood only when it is viewed through the window of the kingdom of God. Any other vision will be woefully barren and myopic. The uncomfortable truth is that, in many believing communities, we have allowed the vision of the church and/or denomination to overshadow the view of the kingdom of God, and by extension, the concept of membership to eclipse Christ's call to discipleship.

Unlike John, Christ came not only to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God but also to take action to establish it. In chapter 4 of Matthew, we see Christ walking by the Sea of Galilee (4:18). This was not just a casual stroll but a kingdom search and a mission strategy. This walk by the sea was an intentional step in laying the foundation of the kingdom by calling His first disciples into service.

Interestingly, this act of Jesus was opposite to rabbinical tradition, which required the prospective disciple to seek out the teacher of his choice and ask for the opportunity to sit at his feet as his student. Jesus was a rabbi of a different order, and by this exemplary act, He was giving His very first lesson in a cardinal principle of the kingdom: "Whosoever will be chief among you let him be your servant" (Matt. 20:27).

Personal invitation: Follow Me

First and foremost, Christ's call is direct and personal. "[You] follow Me!" This call cannot be blocked or terminated. It cannot be abrogated by any ecclesiastical, executive, or denominational mandate. No born-again believer can escape its appeal. It is not transferable due to personal preference or excusable due to some "higher" perceived obligation.

At first glance, "Follow Me" may appear simplistic, rudimentary, and nonstrategic. On closer examination, however, these two words contain the potent seed for exponentially growing and sustaining the kingdom of God. "Follow Me" implies more than just come after me. It is a call to imitate

the Master in life and word. It demands being who Jesus was, and doing as Jesus did. A true disciple has only two obligations: become like his master; and pass on the master's teaching and way of life to others.

By this simple invitation, Christ was establishing the foundational principle for successful kingdom growth. It is called the principle of *self-duplication*, and it is powerful. Over and over again Christ repeated this "follow Me" principle. (For example, see Matt. 8:22; 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27; John 1:43; 21:19.)

By this process of disciple replication, Christ intended to extend Himself and His influence through an endless network of disciples who would produce more and more disciples for the kingdom of God.

Powerful transformation: I will make you

The call to discipleship is not only personal, it is powerful. It is supported and guaranteed by Christ's personal promise: "I will make you . . ." (Matt. 4:19).

Who or what a person is, before that person receives the call of Christ, is of no consequence to the Master. All

the human appendages and accomplishments, frailties and failures, melt away in the presence and power of "I will make you!"


What a pitiful group Christ chose to form the core of His kingdom campaign. Their backgrounds, characters, and personalities were so diverse and discordant that they were a perfect formula for failure. These men, perhaps all of them, would not pass the test or qualify for fellowship in any Christian communion today. But Christ chose them anyhow. Under His patient, empowering tutelage, these men, except for Judas, emerged to be the spiritual progenitors of the Christian church.

Bill Hull correctly states that "Jesus sees his followers for what they will be, not for what they are in 'the spiritual raw.' Everyone is a candidate for something, and there are no exceptions. Regardless of what we might see in a person, pro or con, there is much more than meets the eye, things that only God understands."¹

Productive occupation: Fish for people

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people. It is very important to understand that the driving force and emphasis of discipleship is not in the fishing; it is in the following.

Fishing for unsaved people is always the "unavoidable" result of following Jesus, because it is produced by the enabling power of the Master through the Holy Spirit. Christ promises: If you follow Me, I will make you fish! There is absolutely no room for failure here, since Christ holds Himself responsible for the fishing outcome.

This fact leads to one irrefutable conclusion: Since fishing is the unavoidable result of following Jesus, it becomes the acid test of one's true connection or relationship to Him. Simply put, if I am not fishing for people, I am not a true disciple or follower of Jesus! I may be following someone or something else—religious leader, system, organization, or denomination—but I am certainly not following Jesus the Nazarene!

Jesus said fruit-bearing (disciple-making, see John 15:16) is the test of true discipleship (John 15:8).

Fishing without following?

On the contrary, there may be those who are fishing without following Jesus, since the former is, by far, much easier to do than the latter. Such a back to front activity is quite beguiling and dangerous. One can spend one's entire life fishing—like the disciples who fished all night and caught nothing (Luke 5)—and come to the end to hear the Master's words: "Depart from me, I never knew you" (Matt. 7:23).

Here are some drawbacks and pitfalls of fishing without following:

(1) The tendency to focus on the fish. This often leads to an inflated self-image (the "I'm-better-than-you-are" attitude) on the part of the fisher, since the vision of Christ and His call is usually tertiary or altogether absent.

(2) Having a preoccupation with trying to "clean" the fish before they're caught. This may be done by erecting man-made barriers between

Christ and sinners who are trying to come to Him.

(3) Trying to separate good fish from bad fish in the boat (church).

(4) Focusing on particular group(s) of fish to the neglect of others.

(5) Replacing Christ with the self. In the process this ends up causing one to hold oneself responsible for the fishing outcome. In this scenario, success is measured by one's ability (or lack thereof) to land a large number of catches. This may be done on a personal, corporate, or denominational level.

(6) Placing the emphasis on catching fish (the numbers game) but not on caring for the catch.

When we follow Christ, we learn to fish as He did.

We will work for all types of people—regardless of their orientation, lifestyle, culture, or race—using different mediums, methods, and locations (baits, tackles, and fishing vehicles) to reach people where they are.

Fish do not make adjustments to the size and shape of our boat or to our attitudes and preferences as fishers. It is in *our* interest (and that of the Kingdom) to make the strategic mental and tactical adjustments in order to land a catch. This is important since all fish are not the same size or shape, neither do they share the same habitat or feeding patterns.

Christ met people on their own turf and gave to all of them—irrespective of their life and practice—unhindered, unrestricted access to Himself. His true followers will do the same. We must cooperate with Christ in catching the fish, but in the end He reserves the sole right to the fish-cleaning process.

Conclusion

The call of Christ is a call to discipleship and not a call to membership. It is a call to serve, not to sit. This call cannot and must not be replaced or superseded by the call of a church, a denomination, or any other organization. The call enunciated by such

continued on page 27

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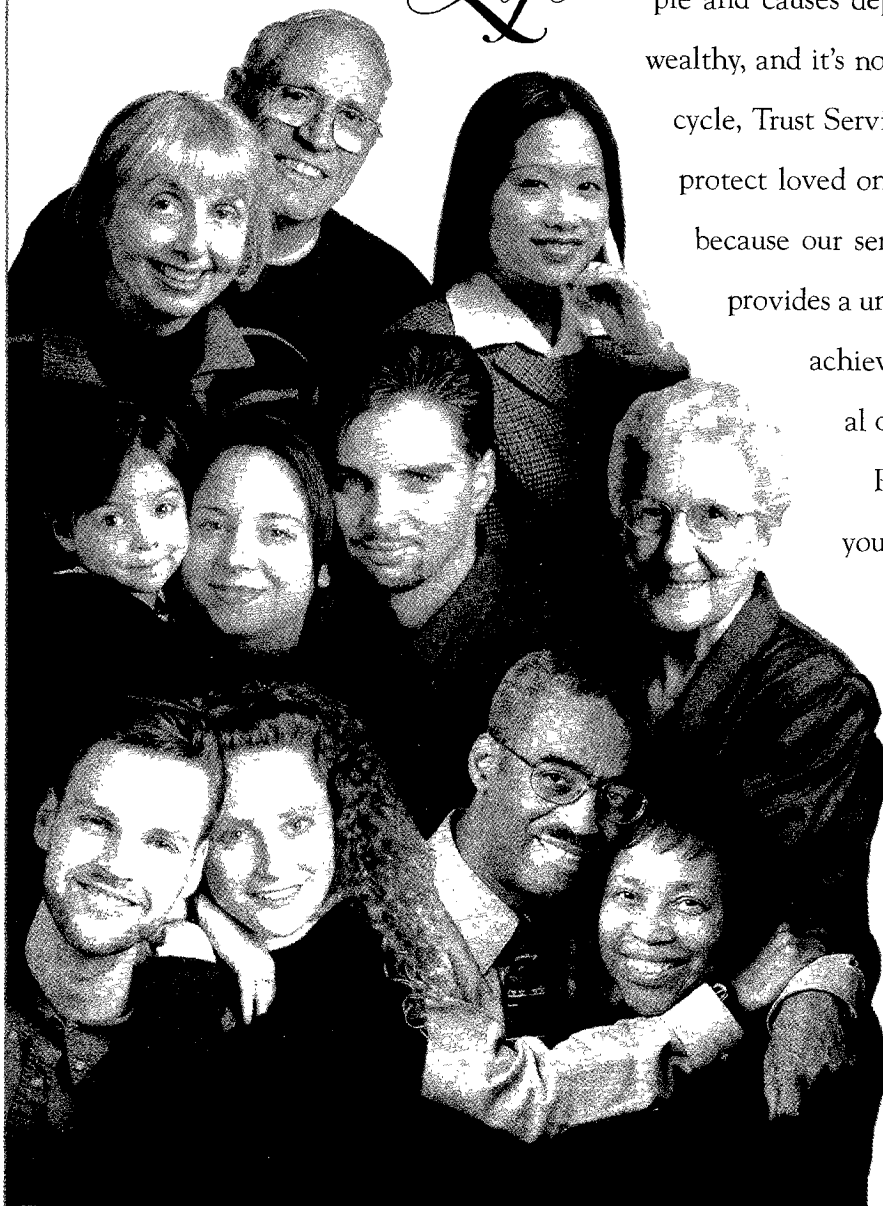
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The Fundamental Beliefs and “Growing in Christ”: Proposal for a new Fundamental Belief

The 2004 Spring Meeting of the General Conference Executive Committee took the following action on April 14, 2004.

VOTED, To submit to the world Church for discussion and suggestions the document entitled “The Fundamental Beliefs and ‘Growing in Christ’: Proposal for a New Fundamental Belief” with the understanding that it will be brought back to the 2004 Annual Council for final discussion before it is presented to the 2005 General Conference Session.

In harmony with this action, we reproduce the proposed new fundamental belief and accompanying rationale. Members who wish to comment or make suggestions should send them (by email) to Stella Thomas (ThomasS@gc.adventist.org) or by regular mail to Biblical Research Institute office, c/o General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, Maryland 20904-6600.—Editors

The Fundamental Beliefs and “Growing in Christ”: Proposal for a new Fundamental Belief

I. Introduction

The purpose of this document is to bring before you an invitation to initiate a formal dialogue that will hopefully reveal whether or not the Spirit is leading the church in the direction suggested here. In Adventist praxis the formulation of a fundamental belief is not something that happens in a particular office under the leadership of a group of individuals, but rather something that is the result of a consensus created by the Holy Spirit in the community of believers. We should see ourselves as facilitators, as channels

through which the Spirit can work in the expression of that consensus.

Consequently, what we are initiating cannot be pushed on the church but must be a clear expression of where the church itself stands today. What we bring before you carries a disclaimer: We do not own it, neither do you. It should belong to the church; it should be, as already indicated, an expression of the thinking of the Spirit through the church. We bring this document to you to listen to your counsel as we seek to determine whether the perceived need of a new fundamental belief is real or not. After the discussion you may conclude that there is no need for a new fundamental belief or that it seems pleasing to all of us and to the Spirit to seek His guidance through the *consensus of believers*. At the present time some of us feel that this is pleasing to the Spirit, but this perception needs the external witness of the Spirit through the church.

This document contains four main parts. The first is a summary of the process that brought us here today; the second is a discussion of the nature of the Fundamental Beliefs; the third is an analysis of our existing Fundamental Beliefs in order to see whether a new article is needed; and, finally there is a sample of what the new fundamental belief could look like. If it is concluded that a new statement is needed, then the sample will help in the formulation of the final draft.

II. Summary of the Process

Seventh-day Adventists have always had a well-defined biblical theology describing God’s greatness and power. Bible study and prayer have always been fundamental Seventh-day Adventist values that facilitate having a relationship with Jesus. These beliefs are not new.

Adventism originated from a

Western culture with deep roots anchored in the Reformation. Bible study and prayer as a way of understanding God’s greatness and accessing His power were so fundamental that much has been assumed through a verbal understanding.

Since the beginning of the church, mission has been seen as a primary responsibility. This message quickly spread across America. By the late 1800s the church’s concept of mission extended to all the world. Over the past 120 years the Three Angels’ Messages has spread to almost every country in the world and certainly to most major people groups. The pioneers met the challenge of establishing a beginning and an infrastructure from which a much larger work could be carried forward.

Today, national workers largely carry forward the mission of the church. This resource cannot be overestimated. In most places the church has been able to operate within the culture of the people and appeal to a much wider population. This movement is spreading to the 10/40 window.

Over the past 10 years a wide gospel appeal has been made by national workers in many of the 10/40 window countries. The big view of finishing the work and the conversion of Animists, Buddhists, Communists, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews has challenged traditional methods of evangelism. National workers having an innate sense for effective methodology have struck the core values of not only the religion but the culture. Here we confront two main areas of great concern for us among non-Christian religions, namely transcendental meditation and the power of demons.

Transcendental meditation is a search for contact with spiritual powers in order to enrich the individual. In

place of that spiritualistic practice we offer them contact with God through prayer, Bible study, service, and meditation on the Word of God and His providential leadings. These subjects, as will be demonstrated later on, are hardly addressed in the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. This deficiency has been pointed out by church members from different parts of the world.

All major world religions have borrowed from and have been affected by Animism. More than 70 percent of the world's population lives in fear of evil powers and regards evil powers as the answer of choice when considering the metaphysical and epistemological question. Often, the first question asked front-line workers is, "How does your religion deal with the evil spirits in my life?"

While Seventh-day Adventists have a strong biblical theology on good and evil spirits, the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs does not compile the biblical evidence but rather relies heavily on an Adventist cultural understanding. Cultural understandings, when at some distance from the process used to establish a biblical truth or practice, can take on dimensions that extend well beyond the Adventist garden of theology.

Occasionally when Global Mission Pioneers are asked by interested people how the new religion they proclaim would affect the evil spirits that controlled their lives, the answer has not been what would have been expected. We hear expressions like, "We must be cautious not to offend the evil spirits," or "We must not anger the evil spirits." The Global Mission Issues Committee has discussed the issues surrounding good and evil powers. The Adventist external look says we have 70 percent of the world's population testifying of visible and physical evil spirit evidence in the context of our mission for a lost world. The Adventist internal look says that God will gather a huge harvest from all nations, victoriously leading His people through the great end-time deceptions that will include a seemingly miraculous display of evil powers. Spiritualism will take control of the world in a way never seen before. We must do all we can now to prepare

the world for that final deception.

While prayer, Bible study, service, meditation, and God's great power over evil are not new truths, a large growing church amid people traditionally controlled by evil powers is a growing reality for which we have long prayed. What brings us to this agenda? Mission—that every person might come to know Jesus and claim His victory over sin and evil.

III. The Fundamental Beliefs

The Fundamental Beliefs play a vital role in the life and mission of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church. We are a rapidly growing movement with a presence in more than 200 countries, and the Fundamental Beliefs describe what Seventh-day Adventists believe. Thus, they establish our doctrinal identity and help to keep us united.

As currently stated, the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs dates from the 1980 General Conference Session held in Dallas, Texas. However, the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted on that

occasion was not intended to necessarily be the last word on the matter. The Fundamental Beliefs are a *living* document, not a creed.

A. The Fundamental Beliefs: A Living Document

The preamble to the 1980 Fundamental Beliefs states:

"Seventh-day Adventists accept the Bible as their only creed and hold certain fundamental beliefs to be the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. These beliefs, as set forth here, constitute the church's understanding and expression of the teaching of Scripture. Revision of these statements may be expected at a General Conference session when the church is led by the Holy Spirit to a fuller understanding of Bible truth or finds better language in which to express the teachings of God's Holy Word."

This view of the *living* character of the Fundamental Beliefs really stems from the conviction of the pioneers that we are a people of "present truth" (2 Peter 1:12) who seek always to be



Micah 6:8

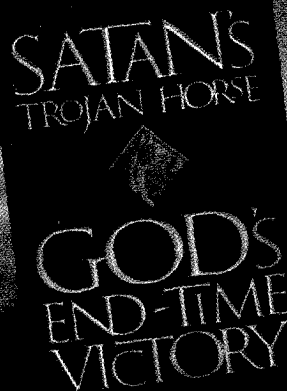
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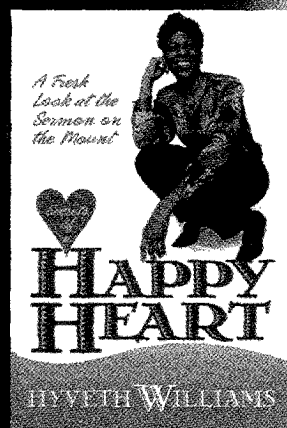
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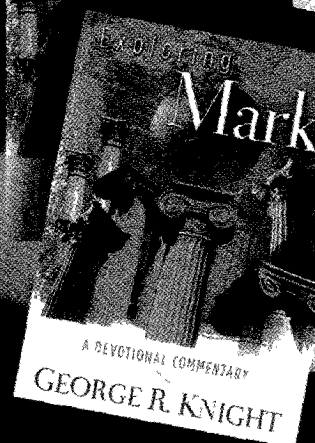
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open to the leading of the Holy Spirit into deeper understanding of truth. Ellen White encouraged us to guard against the tendency to fossilize our beliefs into a creed. Among her many counsels calling upon us to be receptive to new insights, while maintaining the foundations, we find the following:

"Whenever the people of God are growing in grace, they will be constantly obtaining a clearer understanding of His word. They will discern new light and beauty in its sacred truths. This has been true in the history of the church in all ages, and thus it will continue to the end. But as real spiritual life declines, it has ever been the tendency to cease to advance in the knowledge of the truth. Men rest satisfied with the light already received from God's word, and discourage any further investigation of Scriptures. They become conservative, and seek to avoid discussion" (*Gospel Workers*, pp. 297, 298).

"New light will ever be revealed on the word of God to him who is in living connection with the Sun of Righteousness. Let no one come to the conclusion that there is no more truth to be revealed. The diligent, prayerful seeker for truth will find precious rays of light yet to shine forth from the word of God. Many gems are yet scattered that are to be gathered together to become the property of the remnant people of God" (*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 34).

The history of development of doctrine in the Seventh-day Adventist Church shows growth in understanding and formulation.

1. The earliest list of doctrines appeared in the masthead of the *Sabbath Review and Advent Herald* in five successive issues, August 15–December 19, 1854. The "leading doctrines" were just five: The Bible alone, the law of God, the Second Coming, the new earth, and immortality alone through Christ.

2. In 1872 Uriah Smith wrote "A Declaration of the Fundamental Principles Taught and Practiced by the Seventh-day Adventists." The list had 25 doctrines.

3. In 1889 the *Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook* for the first time published a

list of "Fundamental Principles of Seventh-day Adventists." This list, based on Uriah Smith's list from 1872, contained 28 articles.

4. In 1894 the 1,521-member Battle Creek Church issued its own statement of faith. It had 31 elements.

5. The statement of faith that first appeared in the 1889 Yearbook was also included in the yearbooks for 1905, and from 1907 to 1914. According to Leroy Edwin Froom, the statement was not included in the yearbooks 1890–1904, 1906, and 1915–1930 because of conflicting views over the Trinity and the Atonement (*Movement of Destiny*, pp. 412, 413).

6. In 1931 F. M. Wilcox prepared a statement of faith on behalf of a committee of four authorized by action of the General Conference Committee. This statement, titled "Fundamental Beliefs of Seventh-day Adventists," had 22 articles. Although it was never formally adopted, it appeared in the 1931 Yearbook and in all subsequent year books. In 1932 it was printed in tract form. This was the statement that remained in place (with slight changes) up until the new formulation in Dallas in 1980.

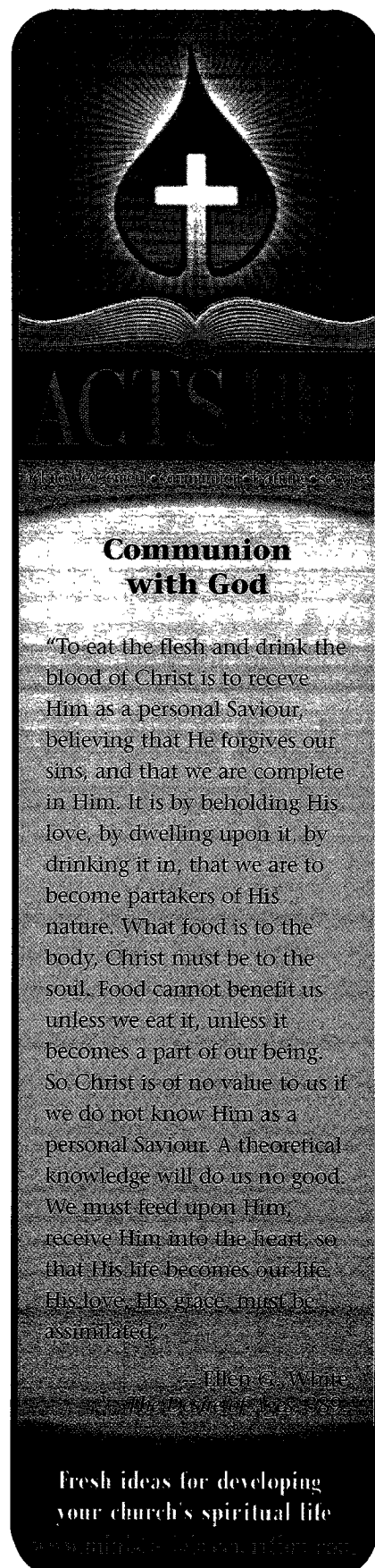
7. The 1941 Annual Council approved a uniform "Baptismal Vow" and "Baptismal Covenant" based on the 1931 statement.

8. The General Conference session of 1946 voted that no revision of the Fundamental Beliefs shall be made at any time except by approval of a General Conference session.

9. In 1980 the General Conference session made major revisions of the Fundamental Beliefs. Completely new articles were added on: Creation; The Great Controversy; The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ; The Church; Unity in the Body of Christ; The Lord's Supper; The Gift of Prophecy; and Marriage and the Family. Some existing articles were rephrased.

B. Observations Concerning the Fundamental Beliefs

Seventh-day Adventists throughout our history have formulated our doctrines without giving emphasis to a par-



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"To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him. It is by beholding His love, by dwelling upon it, by drinking it in, that we are to become partakers of His nature. What food is to the body, Christ must be to the soul. Food cannot benefit us unless we eat it, unless it becomes a part of our being. So Christ is of no value to us if we do not know Him as a personal Saviour. A theoretical knowledge will do us no good. We must feed upon Him, receive Him into the heart, so that His life becomes our life. His love, His grace, must be assimilated."

Ellen G. White
Christ's Desire for Us, p. 162

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ticular number. The number has varied greatly: from 5 to 31. We have simply designated our doctrines as "Fundamental Beliefs," never as the "22 Fundamental Beliefs" or "25 Fundamental Beliefs," and so on. This is still the case: the *Yearbook* simply lists our doctrines as "Fundamental Beliefs." Only in more recent years has the tendency arisen to attach a number, as in the book *Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . : A Biblical Exposition of 27 Fundamental Doctrines* (General Conference Ministerial Association, 1988).

In considering the new articles added in 1980, not one represented a new departure in doctrine. Each simply articulated beliefs already held and practiced by Seventh-day Adventists. It was felt that the time had come to incorporate these beliefs into the statement of Fundamental Beliefs.

The needs of mission have played a role in formulating our Fundamental Beliefs. We see this clearly as a factor

driving the statement of Fundamental Beliefs that emerged in 1931. The General Conference Committee minutes of December 29, 1930, record the following action:

"STATEMENT OF OUR FAITH FOR YEAR BOOK.

A request was presented from the African Division that a statement of what Seventh-day Adventists believe should be printed in the *Year Book*, since they feel that such a statement would help government officials and others to a better understanding of our work.

VOTED: That the chair appoint a committee of which he shall be a member, to prepare such a statement for publication in the Year Book."

C. Conclusion

Perhaps the time has come again when the needs of our global mission should cause us to revisit the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs. This is not to

alter what we already have in place since 1980, and which continues to serve us well, but to add an article that will enable us better to fulfill the mission. Billions of people live their lives in daily awareness, fear, and apprehension of spiritual powers. Large numbers view the religious life in quietistic terms, with transcendental meditation playing a key role. The Fundamental Beliefs in their present formulation do not seem to address these ideas.

Although the demands of Global Mission point to a possible addition to our Fundamental Beliefs, it seems likely that the entire church might benefit from the addition. Many people today, even in "developed" societies, feel threatened by evil that seems all pervasive and all powerful. For many, life is essentially meaningless.

At various times since 1980 some members have expressed surprise that the Fundamental Beliefs contain no reference to prayer, devotional life, and service. It may be possible to formulate a new article on Christian growth that meets the needs which have arisen from Global Mission and also to address the above lack. Significantly, the 1941 summary of Fundamental Beliefs did have a statement that highlighted the study of the Word, prayer, and the development of Christian character.

Any new article will not introduce new theology. As in the formulation of the Fundamental Beliefs voted in 1980, the new material will be merely an articulation of what we already believe as Seventh-day Adventists. Any addition to the Fundamental Beliefs will require widespread input, with dissemination well in advance of the 2005 General Conference Session. The whole church must "own" the Fundamental Beliefs.

Given the obvious need driven by mission, the question now becomes: Do the Fundamental Beliefs as currently formulated already address this need, so that we do not need a new article?

Back of that question is a more important one: Is the Holy Spirit leading His people today to revisit the Fundamental Beliefs formulated in Dallas, 1980?

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IV. Content of the Proposed New Fundamental Belief and the Statement of Fundamental Beliefs

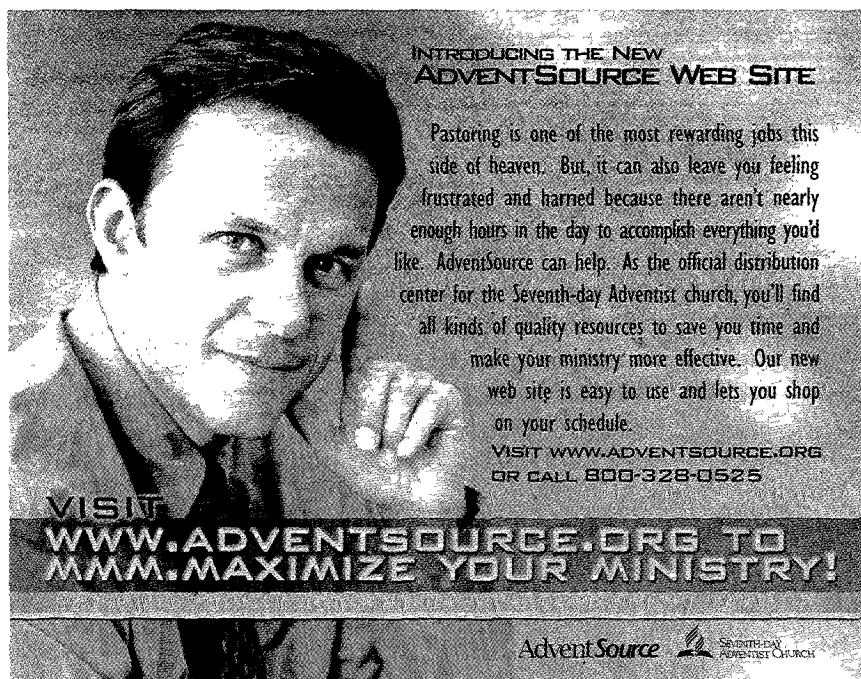
The proposed new fundamental belief has two main purposes. First, it explicitly addresses Christian growth in order to exclude eastern transcendental meditation as a spiritual exercise that is incompatible with the gospel of salvation through Christ. Second, it proclaims freedom through Christ from demonic powers to demonstrate that seeking help and guidance from them in our spiritual growth is not only unnecessary but totally incompatible with the work of Jesus on our behalf.

The present Statement of Fundamental Beliefs does not explicitly address those doctrinal concerns. Some of the basic theological elements presupposed in the proposed new statement are briefly touched in some of the doctrinal statements, thus providing a link between this one and the rest of the body of beliefs. We will briefly look at the fundamental beliefs in which this link is found.

A. Statements Addressing Demonic Power

We read in Statement number 8 ("The Great Controversy"): "To assist His people in this controversy, Christ sends the Holy Spirit and the loyal angels to guide, protect, and sustain them in the way of salvation." The new proposed statement will reaffirm the content of this sentence but will go beyond it by developing its thought in the context of a call to Christian growth in freedom from the controlling power of demons.

In Statement number 9 ("The Life, Death and Resurrection of Christ") we find a sentence that comes very close to one of the main thoughts of the proposed new statement: "The resurrection of Christ proclaims God's triumph over the forces of evil, and for those who accept the atonement assures their final victory over sin and death." However, it does not clearly state the present freedom Christians enjoy from the enslaving power of demons and neither does it set




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B. Statements Addressing Character Development

The Statement on "The Holy Spirit" (number 5) establishes that, "He [the Holy Spirit] draws and convicts human beings; and those who respond He renews and transforms into the image of God." The sentence describes a fundamental biblical truth, but it does not develop the thought. In any case, it is not the purpose of that specific fundamental belief to deal with the phenomenon of Christian growth but to describe in a general way the work of the Holy Spirit not only in our sanctification but also in several other areas.

Concerning the "Experience of Salvation" (number 10) we read, "Through the Spirit we are born again and sanctified; the Spirit renews our minds, writes God's law of love in our hearts, and we are given the power to live a holy life. Abiding in Him we become partakers of the divine nature." The sentence deals very briefly with Christian renewal and spiritual growth but it does not address the indispensable elements in that growth. That is

not the primary purpose of that fundamental belief.

We read in the Statement on "Christian Behavior," (number 21), "For the Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord we involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, health, and joy in our lives." This sentence, like the previous ones, is quite general and does not include the importance of prayer, the study of the Word, meditation, and involvement in mission as God's instruments for character development. Neither this fundamental belief nor any of the others can be edited to include the concerns of the proposed new one without distracting from their primary purpose and making them excessively large and cumbersome. Our Fundamental Beliefs are usually short, dealing with a particular issue in a very concise form, summarizing a significant biblical teaching in a clear way. We should preserve that format.

C. Conclusion

We may need a new statement that will bring together the main ideas expressed in the statements we quoted and that at the same time will put the emphasis on a daily walk with the Lord

characterized by freedom from evil powers and on a devotional life characterized by prayer, Bible study, meditation on God's Word and His providence in our lives, and participation in the gospel commission. This new statement will sharpen the Adventist understanding of the nature of a constant growth in Christ. This is indispensable at a time when some church members are more interested in theological discussion than in the spiritual impact of those doctrines in their daily lives.

V. Possible Content of the Proposed New Fundamental Belief

(to follow #10, "The Experience of Salvation")

Growing in Christ

By His cross Jesus triumphed over the forces of evil. He who subjugated the demonic spirits during His earthly ministry has broken their power and made certain their ultimate doom. Jesus' victory gives us victory over the evil forces that still seek to control us, as we walk with Him in peace, joy, and assurance of His love. Instead of evil forces, the Holy Spirit now dwells within us and empowers us. Committed to Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are set free from the burden of past deeds and our former life with its darkness, fear of evil powers, ignorance, and meaninglessness. In this new freedom in Jesus, we are called to grow into the likeness of His character, as we commune with Him daily in prayer, feeding on His Word, meditating on it and on His providence, singing His praises, gathering together for worship, and participating in the mission of the church. As we give

ourselves in loving service to those around us and in witnessing to His salvation, His constant presence with us sanctifies every moment and every task. (Ps 1:1-2; 23:4; Col. 1:13-14; 2:6, 14-15; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:18; 2 Cor. 3:17, 18; Phil. 3:7-14; 1 Thess. 5:16-18; Matt. 20:25-28; John 20:21; Gal. 5:22-25; 1 John 4:4; Eph. 5:19, 20; Heb. 10:25).

VI. Comments on the Statement

1. The proposed statement combines two inseparable facts of the Christian experience, namely, freedom from demonic powers through the death of Jesus, followed by empowerment through the Holy Spirit to grow in Christ. The reality of the first leads into the other.

2. The first two sentences establish the fact that throughout His ministry Christ was constantly confronting and subjugating evil spirits, but that it was at the cross that He defeated them once and for all. The second sentence recognizes the reality of the existence of evil powers by referring to them as "evil spirits." That designation includes any of its particular expressions though occultism, spiritism, animism, and the spiritualism of the New Age.

3. The third sentence addresses our victory over those forces by grounding it in the previous victory of Jesus. The sentence implies that such victory is not limited to our personal struggles with sin but that it also includes the casting out of demons through the power of Jesus. Besides, the sentence expresses the thought that Christians can be victorious over evil powers in spite of the fact that the spirits constantly attempt

to control or influence them. The implication is that we live in a world in which demons are still active.

4. The fourth sentence states that when the enslaving power of evil spirits is broken, the Holy Spirit comes and fills that spiritual vacuum enabling us to overcome them whenever they attempt to regain control over us. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit excludes the need for the role of the internal voice of spiritual guides in human experience, as taught, for instance, in the New Age movement.

5. Sentence number 5 prepares the way for the second main element in the statement. Once we enter into a covenant with Jesus, we are free from the "burden of past deeds." These include freedom from *karma*; from our sense of guilt, meaninglessness, and emptiness of life, and from the painful stigma of the past. This freedom brings true knowledge of salvation and dispels darkness and the ignorance that often led to superstitious beliefs.

6. Freedom *from* leads to freedom *to*. The sixth sentence attempts to define the indispensable elements in Christian growth. Instead of submission to demons and transcendental meditation, the Bible offers prayer, Bible study, and a meditation whose content is the Scripture and God's providential leadings in our lives. Besides, praising the Lord through singing, worship, and involvement in the mission of the church are considered indispensable in Christian growth. Participation in the mission of the church is not optional for those who are growing in Christ.

7. The Christian life is dynamic and does not require a constant withdrawal from the world and our daily activities. This is emphasized in the last sentence. Our loving service to others takes place in the workplace, the school, the street, the shopping centers, etc., as we take our Christian experience with us everywhere we go. Our awareness of the fact that God is always with us contributes and makes possible the sanctification of all we do according to His will. We should be constantly growing in Christ. ■

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Discipleship

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entities is only authenticated by heaven as it is given as an extension of the call of the Master.

The body can only call because the Head directs it to call. While discipleship and church membership are not mutually exclusive, they both connote two distinct experiences. Church membership connotes a sense of community and belonging, but discipleship communicates a sense of mission and purpose. Having examined the mission of Christ in the world: to establish the kingdom of God by calling people into service for the same; and having understood the nature of Christ's call: that it is personal, powerful, and productive; it is important that we make the appropriate response to that call. It is a call to follow Christ (no one else) and be His disciple. Very closely linked to the person of the disciple is the process of discipleship. This is what makes the disciple what he/she is supposed to be. *Discipleship is the lifelong commit-*

ment to, and process of, making a disciple like the Chief Disciple—Jesus Christ—in precept and practice.

This involves both being like the Master in public ministry and in private disciplines—in solitude, quietness, prayer, fasting, benevolence, and meditation.² Into this experience every believer has been called and through the same extends that call to others.

Ellen White reminds us that "He who called the fishermen of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God."³ ■

- 1 Bill Hull, *Jesus Christ Disciple Maker* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1994), 20.
- 2 Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of The Disciplines* (New York: HarperCollins Publishing, 1991).
- 3 Ellen White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1940), 297.

eTreasures

continued from page 6

devours hours—and dollars. Technology is expensive, and Barna has found that born-again Christians spend twice as much money on consumer electronics each year as they donate to their church. Finally, plenty of toxic waste is lurking on the Web, so a good filter program is essential. A wise pastor may ask his wife to create a password and keep it secret even from him!

Welcome to the new world of the Web. Offer it up to Jesus then use it to glorify His name through the advancement of your ministry and that of your congregation. ■

Evangelism

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to target specific professional groups by appealing to their professional interests and inviting them to request, through a text message, a VCD disc on a certain subject. After they have viewed the disc, they have the opportunity to text in a request for further disc studies and to share the used disc with a friend.

In this Year of World Evangelism, the Southern Asia-Pacific Division (SSD) is very grateful to have church members like Benjamin who put God's business at the center of their lives. ■

John Duroe, D.Min., is the ministerial association and global mission coordinator for the Southern Asia-Pacific Division, Silang, Cavite, Philippines.

James H. Zachary, Jr.
1929 – 2004



With deep appreciation for his life of committed service and assured hope in the joyous resurrection at Jesus' soon return, we announce the death of Jim Zachary, Associate

Ministerial Association Secretary (Retired).

Known to pastors and evangelists around the world, Jim was faithful to his calling and tireless in his efforts to expand the mission of the church.

James Hudson Zachary, Jr., born January 28, 1929, in Erickson, Manitoba, died April 22, 2004, in Redlands, California. On August 28, 1949, he married Norma Jeane Rowe, his partner in life and ministry for 54 years.

Jim completed a B.A. and two master's degrees at the former Emmanuel Missionary College. He taught Bible at Broadview, Lynwood, and Monterey Bay Academies, was ordained to the gospel ministry at Hinsdale, Illinois, in 1957, and in 1970 went to the Philippines where he taught Bible for six years at Mountain View College.

Next he joined the faculty of the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary of the Far East for three years before being elected as Ministerial Association Secretary of the Far Eastern Division. Upon returning to the United States after nine years, Jim worked for two years in evangelism with The Quiet Hour before being elected associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association in 1990. Then, post-retirement, Jim continued to serve the world church as a special consultant for evangelism and authored dozens of mission reports.

Jim rejoined The Quiet Hour as director of international evangelism, a position he held until his death, and acted as North American coordinator for Adventist/Jewish and Adventist/Muslim Relations.

Jim is survived by his wife, Jeane; by his mother, Viva Zachary, who celebrated her 100th birthday on April 21; two children, Vicki King and James Hudson, III, and four sisters, Dorene Yuen, Myrtle Tomczek, Deloris Foote, and Arnetta Innocent.

Even as Jim now rests from his multitude of faithful labors through so many years, we pastoral colleagues can follow his example of prioritizing the preparation of people ready to meet the Lord!

Power in the blood

For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Try the apostle Paul's motto. Preach Jesus. Jesus only. Preach Jesus crucified. Preach Jesus as the antidote for sin. Preach Jesus as our Creator, our Example, our Substitute, our Assurance, our Mediator, and our soon-coming King.

You need not preach anything else. If you think you have exhausted the topic of Jesus, begin again and retell the old, old story. Repetition refreshes your own heart even as it strangely warms the heart of your listeners.

What is so essential about preaching Jesus crucified? It is the gospel itself—Jesus taking my place. I deserve to die; Jesus took my place. "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed.'"

Beautiful, simple, clear, concise, abundant, bountiful, full to the uttermost with forgiveness and restoration. Years ago I jotted some notes and adapted a presentation by Maxie Dunham into a powerful message on the importance of Jesus' shed blood. Passover declares, in anticipation of the redeemer, "The blood shall be a token" (Exod. 12:13). A token of what? What does Jesus' blood mean to you and me?

Safety and Security. The experience of Passover ultimately meant protection. God did not merely bypass the homes protected by the blood. He stood guard, protecting each blood-sprinkled door and the people safely ensconced under that blood. Think of it. Protected by the blood. Protected even in the hour of judgment. Protected from sin's penalty. Protected from death's onslaught. How?

JAMES A. CRESS



Protected by the blood . . . if we choose to stay! Dunham said, "Some talk casually, even glibly, about 'eternal security' as though the burden were upon the Lord to keep us safe once we accept Him as Savior! Don't presume on God's grace. God has done His part! Christ has paid the awful price for our salvation, paid the price in His own blood! We are protected only as long as we continually claim the power of the blood!"

Submission. Although the blood was shed when the Lamb was sacrificed, it had to be applied at home. Picture the awesome scene. The Lord in the form of an Angel of Judgment moving over the land with piercing eyes, looking hither and yon and claiming the firstborn in awesome judgment, yet passing over those houses sealed with the blood. Passing over those identified by the blood as having heard God's call and chosen faithfulness.

Here's the reality. The hour of judgment was going to bring death to every house. Blood would be shed. For the unrepentant, the death of the firstborn child. For the repentant, the death of the only begotten Son of God. The result depends on whose blood was shed. It was a messy job to apply the blood. The process was unpleasant. But it brought a most pleasant reality. The sprinkled blood spoke of faith, of obedience, of testimony, of submission.

Substitution. The lamb was slain for

the whole house. Israel was saved by a lamb—the best and most perfect that could be found. Entering through their blood-sprinkled doors, they feasted on the lamb which had been slain for them. Of course, substitution is not all there is to the subject of atonement. It is an inexhaustible topic, but a simple truth. We will study it for all eternity, but we can accept and experience it at this moment. Paraphrasing Spurgeon, "I pray that we do not subscribe to some lax theology which teaches that the Lord Jesus did something or other which in some way or other, is in some degree or other connected with the salvation of men!" Don't make it too complex. Don't make it too difficult. Do make it plain. I deserve to die. Jesus took my place. Substitution. Specific. Individual. For me. Jesus took *my* place!

Soul cleansing. The lamb was without blemish; the bread without leaven. There was the absence of sin in the sacrifice which will lead us to the absence of sin in those covered by the blood. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Whatever your past, it is forgiven, forgotten. You cannot have been too bad that the blood of Jesus cannot cover your past. As our great Mediator, Jesus pleads His own blood on our behalf. His cleansing leads to full regeneration.

Service. The purpose of cleansing service. "How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:14). Jesus accepts me "just as I am," but He doesn't leave me there. He foreordained at our creation and our re-creation that we would serve Him as our living God. Having been cleansed, we must be about the works of His kingdom. ■

1 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1898), 25.

Letters *continued from page 3*

godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). When did Jesus come to reveal this mystery? Four thousand years after the Fall, not before the Fall! It would be no mystery if He had taken Adam's pre-Fall nature. But it was a mystery to many Jews at least, because He could not possibly be the Messiah they expected. . . .

I pray we may soon come into the unity Christ prayed for on this most important truth. That unity is coming; why not let it appear now?

—Ben Wheeler, retired pastor, via email.

Roy Naden's article, in which he deals with the human nature of Christ, is timely, but does not treat the subject objectively. Whether or not Jesus really identifies with me in my fallen state affects my perception and acceptance of His redemptive work as my High Priest, as well as my response to the entire *plan of salvation*. The playing field must be level! Curiously, Naden fails to refer to such Bible texts as Romans 8:3; Hebrews 2:17, 18; 4:15; 1 Peter 2:24; and 1 John 4:3, considered relevant by church founders as well as by theologians such as Barth and Cullman.

Nor, in describing how Jesus bore my sins, does he make use of pertinent references from the writings of my great-grandmother, Ellen White, who wrote and spoke extensively on the subject, without inserting the word "vicariously," a term she never used, and a concept she steadfastly rejected.

Could confusion on the subject of Christ's human nature have to do with the fact that one seldom hears expository or practical sermons on such subjects as the Incarnation, Crucifixion, sanctification, the Ten Commandments, or Christ's heavenly ministry as High Priest?

For a straightforward study of this seminal issue, I recommend J. R. Zurcher's *Touched With Our Feelings: Historical Survey of Adventist Thought on the Human Nature of Christ* (Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1999).

—Oliver Jacques, Fallbrook, California.

Roy Naden responds: I appreciated reading letters to *Ministry* regarding my article in *Ministry's* continuing series. For the past half century the theme of Jesus' nature has generated much prayer and discussion, and sincere scholars still have honest differences. So I have no criticism of my fellow retired ministers where their views differ from mine.

One letter rightly notes that the Bible was clear to our pioneers as they studied it. But ongoing study in the following decades changed some of their most fundamental convictions, including the infinitely better understanding that Jesus is eternal, not created, and that righteousness is ours by faith, not obedience! In Letter 37, 1887, 43 years after our ecclesiastical birth, Ellen White wrote: "The Bible is yet but dimly understood. A lifelong, prayerful study of its sacred revealings will leave still much unexplained" (*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, 82). The mystery of the incarnation is surely one such theme. Thus Ellen White's caution: "Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set him before the people as a man with propensities of sin" (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:1128).

We all bring an acquired set of presuppositions to our study, and these guide our interpretation of Scripture and Ellen White's comments. Here are two of my basic presuppositions in this connection: First, Jesus is my Savior, therefore he must be sinless. A "sinful" person could not save fellow sinners. This understanding is based, for example, on Hebrews 7:26-28, where Jesus is declared to be holy, blameless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and in no need to offer a sacrifice for His own sins, because He was sinless from birth. Luke refers to Him as "the Holy One" (1:35). Second, in this life, it is impossible to live without sin, for sin is not only an act, sin is rooted in and emanates from our sinful natures with which we will live until the eschaton. This concept is based, for example, on 1 John 1:8, where the apostle warns against any claim of personal sinlessness for such a claim would

be based on self-deception—the most dangerous form of deception.

Over the years I have read compilations of Ellen White's comments on the nature of Jesus. One kind of compilation selects quotes that say Jesus took our sinful nature, as for example, the one quoted above, "He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature . . ." (*Medical Ministry*, 181). Another compilation selects quotations that say Jesus did not take our sinful nature, such as: "We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ" (*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, 5:1131). There is a way to explain these apparently contradictory statements. It is by noting that "nature" (used explicitly or implied) in differing contexts is used with two different meanings: moral and physical. This conceptualization removes the apparent contradictions of the numerous statements about the nature of our Lord.

Finally, it should be added that well-known nineteenth century theologians, Ellen White's contemporaries, explained the nature of Christ by saying that Jesus was affected but not "infected" by sin thus, He took the infirmities of sin without its propensities. ■

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BOOK REVIEWS

***If God Spare My Life*, by Brian Moynahan** (London: Little Brown, 2002), 422 pages. ISBN 0316 860921.

Brian Moynahan has produced a gripping account of the determination of William Tyndale to translate the Scriptures into English and of the equally determined efforts of Sir Thomas More to stop him and if possible burn him at the stake.

Tyndale's determination grew out of the ignorance of the clergy of his age and their preference for and reliance upon tradition and ecclesiastical law rather than God's word in the language of the people. His famous declaration gives the book its title. "If God spare my life ere many years I will cause a boy that drives the plough to know more of scripture than the priests." His outspoken declaration was seen as heretical and offensive to the pope with the result he was forced to flee to the continent. It was there under unbelievable difficulties he produced the New Testament in English and also parts of the Old.

The story involves theology, politics, economics, and issues of faith that are with us today. In an age where Bibles are freely available, the titanic clashes of the early sixteenth-century over biblical translation may appear irrelevant—they are not. Nor are issues unimportant. The Lord's Supper. Our understanding of the church. Christian ministry. Christian living. Then and now these are live issues.

It was not only translating the Scriptures into English that caused problems for Tyndale, it was his translation of specific words that was particularly offensive to Thomas More.

Tyndale translated the Greek word

ekklesia as congregation. This undermined the Catholic exposition of Matthew 16:13ff and its theory of church order and government. The word *presbuteros* he rendered as senior or elder, making *bishops* redundant and unscriptural. Charity, the favored translation of *agape*, was rendered as love. This was seen as a direct attack upon the "sacrament of penance" indulgences and good works. *Metanoia* became repent, in place of "do penance." To put these terms and the Scriptures into the hands of the common people in their own language was blasphemy.

Sir Thomas More's hatred of Tyndale was obsessive. Moynahan refers to it as "demonic." More's own writings and his "pleasure" in the burnings of heretics bears this out. Both More and Tyndale died martyrs' deaths—one for his allegiance to the pope and the Catholic faith, the other for his commitment to the Scriptures and the Christ they set forth. More was beheaded after a trial. Tyndale was strangled and burned at the stake. His final words were "Lord, open the king of England's eyes." In 1536, with Henry VIII's approval, a Bible was provided in every parish church throughout England.

The King James version most favored by Protestants is mostly Tyndale's. Eighty-four percent of the New Testament is his. Of those parts of the Old Testament translated by Tyndale, 75 percent is in the King James translation.

It is a tragedy that today the Bible is no longer the world's bestseller. More tragic is its neglect by Christians. The reading of Moynahan's book could rekindle in the reader's heart a deeper understanding and appreciation of the inestimable privilege of having God's word in his own language and of the Christ it sets forth. This gift comes out of

the crucible of suffering and martyrdom. One thing is certain, no revival or renewal of Christian faith and witness takes place independently of the Scriptures. It is impossible to truly know and serve Christ Jesus as Lord and Saviour out of an empty head.

—Patrick J. Boyle, England.

***It's About People* by Jim Hohnberger** (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 2003).

Jim Hohnberger's third book *It's About People* is a sharp and piercing sword, paradoxically slicing to the left, to the right, and right down the middle of the church in an effort to point the way to unity. Its message is relevant to our time: Quit focusing on the issues that divide us; instead focus on the Lord who only can unite us.

More than just an injunction, Hohnberger states this as the very gospel. "This is the saving gospel of Jesus. It goes beyond who is right and who is wrong, beyond doctrine and denominational affiliation, beyond reforms and lifestyle changes; it goes beyond last-day events and prophetic understandings. It deals with the very heart of the matter—love without an 'if'" (124).

Such unconditional love calls for "a commitment to love in spite of the faults, differences, and imbalances that come between us. It is a commitment to allow the Holy Spirit room to work in one another's hearts and in one another's lives without trying to play junior holy spirit" (124).

One of my few reservations about the book is that most examples used by the author grow out of experiences the author and his family have had with the attitudes of quite conservative persons and groups. These graphic and vivid examples are so one-sided that the book seems to leave out other groups

who need the message just as much. Will this lead to a lessening of the impact of the universal nature of the truth the book is trying to convey?

Another reservation is that at times corporate actions of the church based on already established policies are interpreted as though they reflect the individual hearts of the members voting the actions. This need not be the case, and the book should have dealt with other important principles at stake so far as building church unity is concerned.

These reservations aside, I recommend this book to anyone who is up for a quick but sincere look into a very clear mirror that will remind them that "The Truth" is all about people.

—Kathleen Beagles, associate director,
Sabbath School and Personal Ministries,
General Conference, Silver Spring, Maryland.

Hard To Believe: The High Cost and Infinite Value of Following Jesus,

by John F. MacArthur (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2003), \$22.99

John MacArthur, 30-year pastor of Grace Community Church in suburban Los Angeles, is a popular radio preacher whose *Grace to You* program has a wide and well-deserved audience. MacArthur, whom I have met and interviewed, is a kind, gentle man in conversation, and an excellent expositor.

He is also, in my opinion, an able defender of the Christian faith. More than once he's been a part of a spiritual smorgasbord on CNN's *Larry King Live*, pitting his convictions against the New Age beliefs of a Deepak Chopra or the over-broad ecumenism of a hyper-liberal Christian cleric. MacArthur is determined to know only Christ and Him crucified. He'd like everyone else to

know that Christ, too.

Such a passion—and the opposing pressures of today's open market in religion—prompt this book, which began as a series of sermons at MacArthur's church. Faith in Christ, he maintains, is the only way to heaven; "cheap grace," "wide mercy," "easy believism" are all anathema, let alone religions which do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as God the Son.

If MacArthur concentrated on these points, he'd not only have had a rich vein of material to mine, he'd have offered a much better book. Syncretism seeks to mask itself in a wide variety of forms and formats. Most prominent are those who join in "interfaith" prayer services that invoke deities foreign to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Then there's the cafeteria approach, such as the "Jew in the Lotus," as Jewish Buddhists, or "Jew-Bus," are called, or "Christians" who mix a little Feng Shui in, just for fun. A patchwork quilt might be an attractive wall hanging, but it's not the white robe worn around the throne of God.

Sadly, though, MacArthur doesn't stop there. As someone who upholds the Calvinist tradition, MacArthur believes that it is only through that version of Christianity that the gospel can be effectively preached—or that people can be saved. It's not enough for a hand to be raised or someone to shuffle to the front of the auditorium and kneel at the "mourner's bench." Nope, you've got to be among the "elect of God" in order to really be saved. The rest of us are just fooling ourselves, John 3:16 notwithstanding.

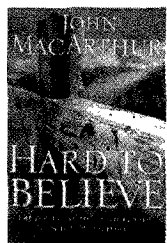
In two pages (pages 82, 83), MacArthur shreds the work and wisdom of Charles Grandison Finney, the nineteenth-century revivalist whose methods influenced Billy Sunday, Billy Graham and perhaps you, the reader of

this magazine. Finney's greatest sin, it seems, was in coming from the Wesleyan-Arminian tradition. From that, all sorts of evil has followed, including, apparently, Robert H. Schuller's "self-esteem theology," which MacArthur's peer voiced in a book 22 years ago, but not so much in recent times.

As a result, what could be an excellent resource and general apologetic becomes bogged down in sectarian squabbling. Perhaps it's my own 22-plus years in Arminian-based churches, but I don't see Calvinism as the only alternative. And having seen Schuller in action fairly recently, I wonder why MacArthur—who should know that Schuller's Reformed Church in America denomination is itself Calvinist—hasn't interacted with Schuller's more recent messages.

I believe there is far more to fear from radical, Christ-denying religions such as aggressive Hinduism and Islam (the latter denying the deity of Jesus) than there ever can be from Robert Schuller or Charles G. Finney. Yet, in taking Finney and his heirs to task, when he could discuss more important issues, "Hard to Believe" becomes useful only to one segment of Christianity, when it could have better served the church as a whole. ■

—Mark A. Kellner, assistant director for news and information, General Conference
Communication Department, Silver Spring,
Maryland.



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