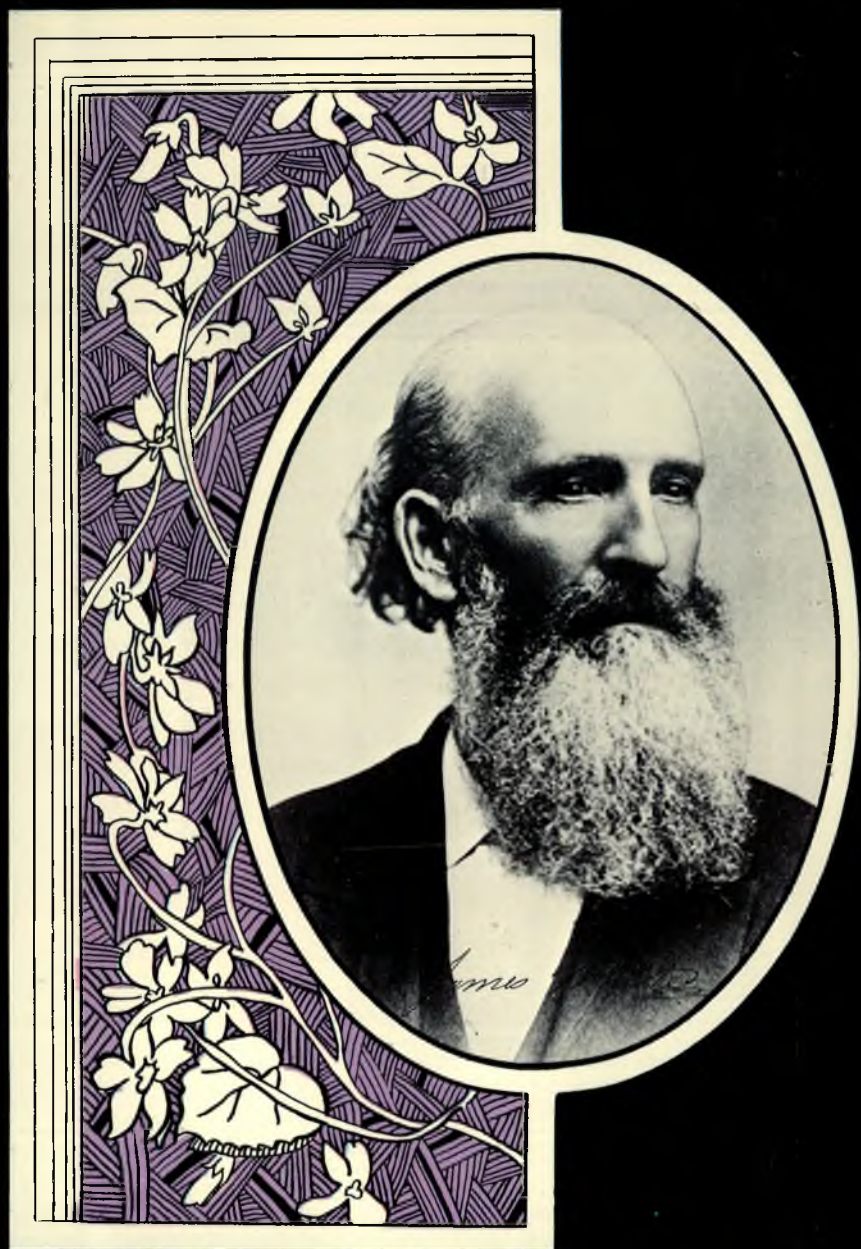


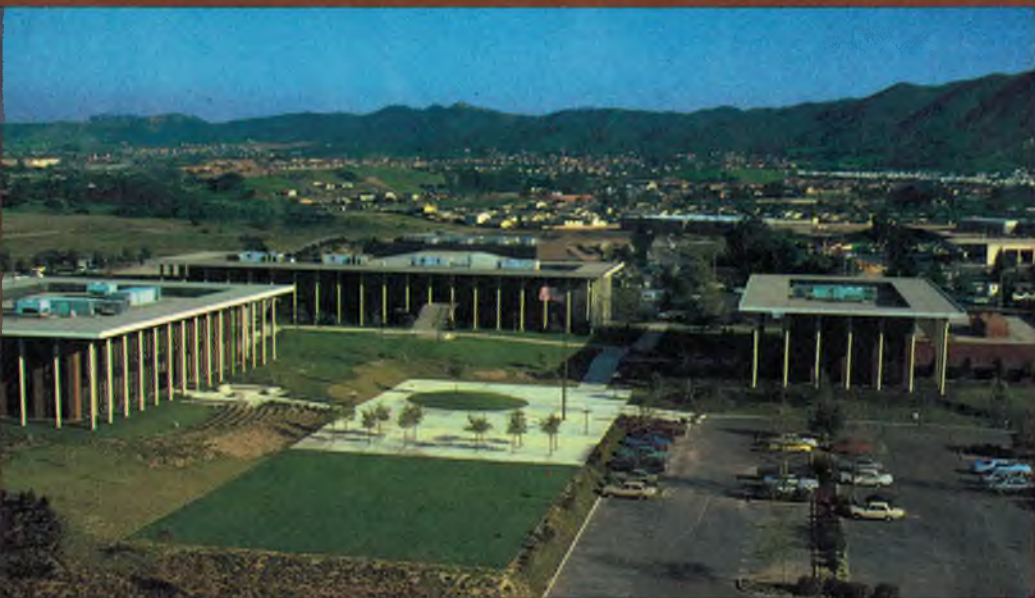
The Church



Collegiate Quarterly
January-March, 1981

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General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists AFRO-MIDEAST DIVISION

Dear Sabbath School Members:

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF EASTERN AFRICA


The East African Union with 150,000 members in Kenya and Uganda is the second largest union conference in the world. With a further 70,000 members in the neighboring countries of Tanzania and Ethiopia, there are almost 250,000 church members without a senior college for their youth.

Because of this urgent need for a senior educational institution, the General Conference has approved plans for the development of the University College of Eastern Africa on a 334-acre agricultural estate in the highlands of Kenya near Eldoret and has agreed that the Special Projects Offering for this quarter may be used exclusively for this project.

In anticipation of what we hope will be the largest Sabbath School offering ever received by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, the College Board moved forward in faith and commenced building. Dr. Percy Paul, the college president, and his corps of teachers and staff have worked valiantly under difficult conditions to launch this new Adventist educational institution. Students from several countries began classes in January, 1980. Your offerings will help to complete the modest buildings which are needed to provide the facilities to operate a college effectively and help establish an institution which will accelerate the preparation of national workers for important leadership positions for the church in Africa.

The members, faculty and students, present and future, thank you for your continuing interest, prayers and support.

Yours truly,



Charles D. Watson
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The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is written by faculty, students and friends of the Seventh-day Adventist colleges and universities throughout North America. This is an experimental publication, organized under the Union College board of trustees and published with the approval of the General Conference Sabbath School Department.

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Cover photo of James Springer White (1821-1881). Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Cover and inside design by Heidi Klooster of Lincoln, Nebraska. **Photographs** from the Review and Herald Publishing Association

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Facts About The Collegiate Quarterly

Published with the approval of the General Conference Sabbath School Department.

Discussion is centered around the same themes as the adult quarterly.

Special attention is directed toward the expressions and needs of the college and university person.

An intercollegiate project of the colleges and universities across North America.

Approximately 200 professors, college students, pastors, church administrators and laymen have contributed articles for the quarterly.

The international circulation of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY for the fourth quarter of 1980 topped 15,000.

How To Use The Collegiate Quarterly

The COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is not designed to be just a supplementary quarterly. It is *the* Sabbath School quarterly for the college and university person—though many in other environments and age-brackets are also attracted to its use. So use it just like you would any other daily study guide or Sabbath School quarterly.

The Logos articles of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY have been condensed and rewritten from the corresponding weeks of the adult Sabbath School lessons. As the articles with the greatest Bible base, they most clearly reveal the central theme for each week and around them the other articles center their discussion.

Along with each daily discussion, a reference is given of a biblical passage for further Bible study. We encourage you to read these passages—even though some may be lengthy—as this will greatly enhance your study.

Do not accept every concept and emphasis made in the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY just because it is in the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY. For it can be dangerous to accept anything as truth, without personal investigation, simply because it has an organizational stamp of approval.

One goal of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is “to aid in developing thinkers and not mere reflectors of other men’s thoughts.” To meet this goal, it is necessary to include within the pages of this quarterly challenging and stimulating material—which inherently may contain something which you disagree with. But that’s OK. Challenge the authors. Think. Prayerfully and critically question the material in each day’s lesson to determine the truth in the material for you.

Musings On Horseback

Introduction To The Lesson

It was nearing dusk at Fred Murray's farm when I saddled my horse and rode across the cattle-strewn Nebraska prairie. I can imagine that as I rode, the bluegrass played in the evening breeze and angry mockingbirds attacked an invading crow. But of the actual events of nature that happened that evening I am uncertain. For the sensations of God's physical creation swept past me as easily as the eventide wind as my mind contemplated something which has always been very important to me: *the church*.

I wondered, as I rode along, why the church has been passing through such difficult times. I wondered if the problems we were facing could simply be classified as the inventions of Satan, or if they were more likely the results of human judgment and ideas. I wondered what the responsibility of the church to its members is when attempting to decide matters vital to the organization and for doctrine and thought of the church. Is an "always positive" portrayal of events the answer? Or is "always honest" the answer—to use worldly terminology, laying *all* the cards *face up* on the table?

I considered some of the real issues that the church as a whole was facing; and then thought of churches I had attended that were attacking what might best be called "non-issues." I thought of the high standards that Jesus had called His disciples to, and then my mind turned to consider the regulations invented by churchmen which had supplanted the truth of God in the minds of His would-be followers.

And then for a while I pondered what it means for the Christian church to be *in the world*. Should the majority of Christians prefer secular employment? How involved should Christians be in political causes? In social action?

Likewise I considered what it means for the church to be *not of the world*. Does this involve acting as the conscience of society: condemning the discrimination, oppression and exploitation of peoples? Does being "not of the world" mean encouraging pacifism in times of war?

I thought about the need for unity in our church. I wondered about the balance of unity with individuality. And I also wondered about the unity of the universal Christian church, and how we Adventists fit into ecumenical plans.

And then my horse stopped, quivered, wheeled to the left and took off—there was a little black and white skunk right in our path, with its tail raised. And with that, my thoughts on the church vanished for the rest of my ride in order to assume a more mundane, but necessary work of surveilling the countryside.

But back to the church. It is a very human and very divine—incarnate—organization, called into existence by the Divine will, distinguished from the world, unified in Christ and organized for service. It is a community where the demands of the Spirit are confronted by the needs of the world, and mesh for the good of mankind. It is the only earthly community established by God; one upon which He bestows His supreme regard.

And thus, it demands our earnest dedication, and both our criticism and our approval, neither one to the exclusion of the other. For the church is both human and divine.

That the Lord will stimulate you, challenge you, and give you vision as you read this issue of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY is the prayer of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY authors and staff.



Eugene B. Shirley, Jr.
COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY Editor

Chosen To Communicate God



"Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

— Mark 5:19; NIV

by Carolann Rosario

They were all sitting in the impressive conference room wondering what the meeting would be about. They had been called together for a very important reason, or so they had been told. And all were very curious as to what that reason might be. No one was quite sure what could be so important.

But then the chairman of their board entered, and he brought with him a man whom they had never before seen. The stranger appeared harmless enough but something about his appearance did not set quite right in their minds. As their friend spoke the situation became more clear. "My brothers, you must be wondering why I called you all together today. I have found the answer to all of our problems. The solution is Jesus Christ." So far his words made sense, but the clincher was still to come. As he took the stranger by the arm and directed him to the center place of attention he said, "Meet Jesus!"

The above story is fiction to be sure. But wouldn't it be nice if it were true? Haven't you thought at times how much simpler things would be if Jesus would Himself appear—or send shining angels—to solve the world's problems and preach His message?

But alas, such is not His plan. He has instead chosen the church, "His people," to spread His message of reconciliation and redemption throughout the world in the midst of this great galactical controversy.

The term "the great controversy" describes to Adventist thinking the universal warring forces of good and evil. The force of evil is seen as embodied in the person of Satan and active in the world through his

followers. Likewise, the force for good is seen as embodied in God and active in the world through His followers—the church. For, as Ellen White has said, "God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies and Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work."¹ Thus, God has chosen to spread His message using the instrument of His church. For if He works through a variety of people, He is able to reveal His character a truths in a variety of ways. "And the truth thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life."²

In this great universal conflict, Satan's efforts are to "misrepresent the character of God" and "to cause men to cherish a false conception of the Creator." These efforts "may be traced in the history of the patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, of martyrs and reformers" through the ages.³

And yet in spite of this misrepresentation and the oppression of the followers of God, a revelation of the Most High has always survived—as revealed in His special people. The Jews, the early Christians, the Protestant movement and many more have all been instruments in God's ministry to man.

Indeed, God has chosen to become incarnate in every human being and to reveal His character to the universe by the living testimonies of His people. And thus, God is at the controls, bringing his will into action through His church. For, "Lo I am with you always even unto the end of the world."⁴

¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 8.

² *Ibid*, p. 8.

³ *Ibid*, p. 12.

⁴ Matthew 28:20.

by editors

Notes

"How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations!" (Isaiah 14:12; NIV).

"When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked" (Genesis 3:6,7; NIV).

How sin could enter a perfect being is hard to understand. No reason can be given for sin—if it could be explained it would cease to be sin. But one thing is clear: God has given His created beings the freedom to sin. For God prizes freedom above the possibility of sin—even at the risk of His own Son's life.

"And the Lord God said, 'The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever' " (Genesis 3:22; NIV). When man was driven out of the Garden, it was evident that God was in control. But more importantly, God has had a plan whereby man's sin can be atoned for, and man, if he chooses to be loyal to His God, can be re-created and restored to an earth made new.

It is this message of hope that was preached to antediluvians and postdiluvians, to Abraham and his descendants. It was the message of reconciliation and redemption that was delivered by God to Moses (see Exodus 20:2). And this message of salvation God has given to the world by His prophets down through the ages—though their messages have generally been rejected.

Hence, a **"'virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' —which means, 'God with us' " (Matthew 1:23; NIV).** As God's purpose had not been accomplished through the work of the prophets, so it was necessary for Jesus to come and give His unique message of God's love.

But the world rejected Him also. So God turned to a cross-cultural, international organization to serve His missionary purposes—the church which He himself has built.

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature . . ." "teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19, 20). As God desires every person on earth to be saved, so it is necessary that the gospel be preached in every corner of the world. For this evangelistic purpose, the Lord has organized the church.

But the church is not only the object of our Lord's supreme regard, it is also the agent of reconciliation and the means of preparing a world for the second coming. Thus, the church can best be understood in the context of God's activity and man's response.

by Myrna E. Candelaria

In His work of redemption, God uses both the individual and the church organization to make Himself and His ways known in the world.

The story of Cornelius, the Roman centurion, is an example of how God works through the individual for one's salvation. A man of wealth and noble birth, the Bible describes Cornelius as a "devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway" (Acts 10:2). But although devout, Cornelius had yet to hear of the gospel as revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Thus, an angel was sent who said, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter . . . and he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do" (Acts 10:4-6).

Here, Ellen White makes a fascinating comment: "The angel was not commissioned to tell Cornelius the story of the cross. A man subject, even as the centurion himself, to human frailties and temptation, was to be the one to tell him of the crucified and risen Savior.

"As His representation among men, God does not choose angels who have never fallen, but human beings, men of like passions with those they seek to save. . . . To men and women has been committed the sacred trust of making known 'the unsearchable riches of Christ.' " Ephesians 3:8.

"In His wisdom the Lord brings those who are seeking for truth into touch with fellow beings who know the truth. It is the plan of heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness."¹

But just as God works through the individual for the development of His cause, so He also works effectively through the organized church. "God has a church and she has a divinely appointed ministry. . . . Jesus loved the church, and gave Himself for it, and He will replenish, refine, ennoble, and elevate it so that it shall stand fast amid the corrupting influences of this world. Men appointed of God have been chosen to watch with jealous care, with vigilant perseverance, that the church may not be overthrown by the evil devices of Satan, but that she shall stand in the world to promote the glory of God among men."²

"Jesus sees His church on the earth, whose greatest ambition is to cooperate with Him in the grand work of saving souls. He hears their prayers, presented in contrition and power, and Omnipotence cannot resist their plea for the salvation of any tired, tempted member of Christ's body."³

"Christ gives power to the voice of the Church. . . . No such thing is countenanced as one man's starting out upon his own individual responsibility and advocating what view he chooses, irrespective of the judgment of the church. God has bestowed the highest power under heaven upon the church. It is the voice of God in His united people in church capacity which is to be respected."⁴

"God speaks through His appointed agencies, and let no man, or confederacy of men, insult the Spirit of God by refusing to hear the message of God's word from the lip of His chosen messengers. By refusing to hear the message of God, men close themselves in a chamber of darkness. They shut their own souls away from vast blessings and rob Christ of the glory that should be given to Him, by showing disrespect to His appointed agencies."⁵

¹ Acts of Apostles, p. 134.

² Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 52.

³ Ibid, p. 19.

⁴ Testimony Treasures, pp. 395-396.

⁵ Testimony to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 34.

 Key passage:
 Acts 10

Notes

by Debbie Kinsman

Key passage:
Mark 5:18-20

Notes

Imagine: God has given the church the responsibility of showing the world what He—the omnipotent, omniscient One—is like!

It is natural for us to wonder why. Why would God give such an awesome task, on which so much depends, to a human organization?

Leslie Newbigin, in his book *The Household of God*, says the church “has its being, so to say, in the magnetic field between Christ and the world.”¹ Here he is describing the church in terms of mission service—bridging the gap between Christ and the world. This overt missionary function of the church is important, but the opportunities the church gives for fellowship and collective worship are equally important. Even in these activities the church is giving a missionary message of hope: each time a congregation meets to worship God, it is foreshadowing the time when the saved will meet together to worship Him in heaven. Newbigin continues: “Precisely because the church is here and now a real foretaste of heaven, she can be the witness and instrument of the kingdom of heaven. It is precisely because she is not merely instrumental that she can be instrumental.”²

Newbigin further explains why the church was chosen to spread the message of salvation, which is the revelation of God’s character. “A message whose essential meaning could be grasped by each individual apart from his relationship with his fellow men and with the rest of the created world could—one may suppose—be revealed at a great number of different places and times. Indeed the only just manner of communication would be—so to speak—a separate communication sent to each individual’s address. But a salvation whose very essence is that it is corporate and cosmic, the restoration of the broken harmony between all men and between man and God and man and nature, must be communicated in a different way. It must be communicated in and by the actual development of a community which embodies—if only in foretaste—the restored harmony of which it speaks. A gospel of reconciliation can only be communicated by a reconciled fellowship.”³

Truly the responsibility of the church is to be—for the cause of God—that “reconciled fellowship.”

“A gospel of reconciliation can only be communicated by a reconciled fellowship”

¹ From *THE HOUSEHOLD OF GOD*, by Bishop Leslie Newbigin. Published by Friendship Press, copyright © 1954. Used by permission. Pages 161, 163, 169.

² *Ibid*, p. 169.

³ *Ibid*, p. 161.

by Lori Lewis

Key passage:
Acts 4:13

Notes

Years ago God chose the Children of Israel to make His name known among the nations. The Israelites, however, did not fulfill this task which God had given them. As Christians, we believe that God has now chosen us to finish this ministry. So the most critical question for all Christians today is, How may we cooperate with God so that He can best use the church as a medium to spread His gospel? Below I have made three suggestions.

1. First of all, God can't control a church body unless the individual members have committed themselves to Him. This should be obvious. But what this means is being committed to God not only spiritually, but also committed to any task He may appoint.

As an example, when asked to hold a church office or participate in a program we sometimes tend to avoid the responsibility by arguing that another is more qualified and "could do a better job anyway," or that so-and-so has had "more experience." But Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians: "For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are" (1 Cor. 1:26-29).

2. Secondly, we must have a strong commitment to being a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. When giving Bible studies, it's easy to follow the planned step-by-step lessons. We memorize which Bible texts prove the seventh day is Sabbath, or that there will be a "time of trouble." But how do we answer some of the more personal questions asked by non-Adventists or non-Christians? Questions like: "I'm already happy. What does Christianity have that I need?" Or, "Aside from the usual doctrinal differences, why should I become a Seventh-day Adventist, rather than a Baptist or something else?" And the question most often asked: "Why are *you* a Seventh-day Adventist?"

When answering questions like these, we must communicate true sincerity. There must be no doubt that Seventh-day Adventism adds a special meaning to our lives. Our belief in what the church stands for must have such a strong basis, for only then can we convince others of our true and honest commitment to that belief.

There is a third step necessary to take in preparing ourselves to cooperate with God for the spread of the gospel: **3. We can prepare ourselves to be efficient leaders and effective followers that God can use for His ministry.** In order to accomplish this, it is important to thoroughly and honestly study the issues and controversies that arise in the church. It is important for all—whether followers or leaders—to become *mentally* involved in our church's affairs and to completely *understand* what is going on. This demands a candid portrayal of all the facts by the church, and a willingness among the people to become involved.

Too, to prepare for effective "leader- and follow- ship," we must practice —i.e., become involved in church activities, as mentioned in step number one. Every believer has been chosen by Christ to use his talents to their fullest potential. And every Christian needs to be so committed to Jesus Christ that he is willing to prepare himself for dedicated ministry—a ministry under God's control.

by Rick Trott

Key passage:
Romans 8:9

Notes

God in control? Indeed! Where's the evidence of such control in Iran, Thailand/Cambodian refugee camps, Afghanistan, or even in the United States?

And why would a God who is in control voluntarily give to a very human organization—the church—such an awesome responsibility: to share with a fallen world God's message of hope and grace? For where is God's control of the church seen? There are any number of theological and political controversies in which the church seems embroiled. There are cases—too numerous to mention—in which the church has failed (from *at least* a human point of view) to "glorify" God's name.

Leslie Newbigin's statements which Debbie collected for this week's Evidence article point in the right direction to some extent. Yet how is it that God can be in control when His own creation—and even those people whom He has chosen to work through—are free to sin, and *do* sin? And, if God does control, why is it that He seems to be more effective through His church in one part of the world, say in Bolivia, and not in all parts, like the United States?

How then can we, as members of Christ's body, convey to a very troubled, uncertain, unpredictable world (and especially to our neighbors, friends and relatives) that God *is* in control? That He *is today* working through His people for the salvation of the world? How does the church go about conveying such a message?

Sabbath School classes in every Adventist college could surely spend important time discussing these issues at great length. Yet I'm not at all certain that in such discussion we would ever get to the central issue. For it seems to me that the ultimate questions must eventually be these: Is God in control of my life—every part of my life? Do I daily seek God's controls, study His controlling guidelines, allow His controlling Spirit to operate freely through my choices and actions and words and thoughts? Do I know experientially God's control over my own, otherwise out-of-control existence?

I believe that when the church members as a whole can give positive answers to these questions, we might well be able to rejoice in seeing thousands of consecrated lay members giving daily evidence to our uncertain world that God *is* in control and that He *is* revealing Himself through His people, and that soon (and it just can't be soon enough) He will assert that total control which is in everyone's best interest.

**"Do I know
God's control
over my
existence?"**

REACT

1. The introductory article for this week's lesson states, "The Jews, the early Christians, the Protestant movements and many more have all been instruments in God's ministry to man."
What does it mean to be an instrument "in God's ministry"? Has it meant the same thing for God's people living in different periods of time and in different environments? Explain.
2. The Logos article for this week says, "As God desires every person on earth to be saved, so it is necessary that the gospel be preached in every corner of the world." Do you agree? Is it necessary for the gospel to be preached in "every corner of the world"? Why do some believe that this must be done by the end of time, but not necessarily throughout all of history?
3. The Logos article also mentions that the church is the "object of our Lord's supreme regard." Which church is meant here? The Adventist church? The Christian church in general? An invisible, non-organized body of all true believers?
4. To what degree should the organized church be an authority in doctrinal matters? In organizational matters? In disciplining members? Why?
5. Ellen White says in the Testimony article for this week, "No such thing is countenanced as one man's starting out upon his own individual responsibility and advocating what view he chooses, irrespective of the judgment of the church." If such counsel had been accepted by, for example, Martin Luther, would there have been a Reformation? When, if ever, is it proper for one to stand against the organization? Under what circumstances is it the individual, and not the organization, that is "chosen to communicate God"?

Foundations Of The Church



"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

— Ephesians 2:19, 20

by Edward Henry

At one time in his life, my father was a Pentecostal minister and an elder in his church. Thus my experience with prayer and studying the Word of God began at a very early age. As a child, I loved to pray, and my father always asked me to pray aloud during our morning worships. And when I became old enough, my father made me read from the Bible. Whenever I could not pronounce certain words, he would pronounce them for me and he would also tell me their meanings, and this was how I learned to read.

At the age of seventeen I accepted the Lord as my personal Savior and was put into a baptismal class at my church. But before the time came for me to be baptized certain events in my life caused me to migrate to California from my home in Jamaica.

The awesome majesty of America intimidated me for several months. I was lonesome for my brethren and I wept many nights. But I began attending a church in Los Angeles which conducted Youth for Christ rallies on Saturday nights, and the songs they sang made me remember my brethren in Jamaica and for a while I felt at home.

But then I tried to join the church, and was told in a polite "Christian" way that it would be better for me to join a Negro congregation. "I am sure, young man, you will feel more at home among your own people. . . . We know you will understand." For sometime I was deeply crushed. But then I joined the Navy and tried to forget about my recent troubles. I ceased to pray and to read my Bible. And I became busy

with the affairs of the world.

During the period of time that I was separated from the church, however, I was confronted with a serious crisis in my life: my mother died. And, in a very real way, I died too, for I loved her deeply. There was a great emptiness in my life. But in a short while God sent to me an Adventist messenger with a copy of *The Great Controversy*. I devoured it and my life began to change. Then the messenger brought me *The Desire of Ages*, and in the introductory section I discovered that the hospital in which I was born, the White Memorial Hospital, was founded by Ellen G. White and her husband. Soon the pieces of a great puzzle began to fit together. I began to see clearly where I belonged. The elements of truth which had been planted in my heart as a youth had constructed a foundation not easily destroyed. On November 24, 1979, my wife and I were baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist Church—twenty-two years after I had been scheduled to do so.

But at last I was home . . . home with my true family. No longer was I a stranger in a hostile world. For the Lord built and is continuing to build on the foundation of my life which He had laid even before I was born.

"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:19, 20).

by editors

Notes

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (I Cor. 3:11).

Jesus is everything to the church: He is the founder and builder, the source of life and power. Because of who He is, He is the rock on which the church is built.

Many people will recognize that Jesus was a great teacher. They will place Him in the line of the great prophets. But they fail to recognize Him as the Son of God; they ignore His deity. **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets’ ” (Matthew 16:13, 14; NIV).** The people’s affirmations of the greatness of Christ were inadequate. For the church finds its foundation in the deity—**“more than a prophet”**—of Jesus of Nazareth.

“ ‘But what about you,’ ” questioned Jesus, **“ ‘who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’ ” (Matthew 16:15, 16; NIV).** This assertion that Jesus was the divine Son of God was a recognition of origin and authority that made no room for doubt. It is because Jesus is the Son of God that He can speak with authority and reach down to man. It is because He is the Son of man that He is able to draw men up to God.

“Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven’ ” (Matthew 16:17; NIV). Here Jesus is telling Peter and his fellow disciples that the source of their insights and understandings is God. Reason and scholarship have their place, but when all is said and done, we can know about God and His plans only through revelation. Furthermore, revelation may be seen as a personal conviction because of a personal encounter with God.

Jesus continued: **“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18; NIV).** Peter had acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ. It is this basic confession that is the rock which cannot be moved. It is important to also notice in this verse that Jesus says *He* will build *His* church. The church is therefore not a human association brought together by societal forces, but a group called and welded together by Christ Himself.

Jesus also indicates in this text that the church cannot be restricted or contained by the phenomenon of death. For in Christ the church never ceases to exist. Men may come and go, but the church goes on forever. The church is God’s provision for man’s salvation, and so long as the church is God’s it must last as long as God and redeemed men last.

Jesus closed this discussion with: **“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19; NIV).** This passage seems to suggest that there should be such a close connection between the church on earth and its Lord in heaven that there is unity in thought and operation. The “keys of the kingdom” may be seen as the words of Christ which “have power to open and to shut heaven. They declare the conditions upon which men are received or rejected. Thus the work of those who preach God’s word is a savor of life unto life or death unto death.”¹

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 413, 414.

selected by editors

Jesus and His disciples had now come into one of the towns about Caesarea Philippi. . . .

He was about to tell them of the suffering that awaited Him. But first He went away alone, and prayed that their hearts might be prepared to receive His words. Upon joining them, He did not at once communicate that which He desired to impart. Before doing this, He gave them an opportunity of confessing their faith in Him that they might be strengthened for the coming trial. He asked, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?"

Sadly the disciples were forced to acknowledge that Israel had failed to recognize their Messiah. . . .

Jesus now put a second question, relating to the disciples themselves: "But whom say ye that I am?" Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. . . ."

Jesus answered Peter, saying, "Blessed are thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven."

The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith. It is that which Christ Himself has declared to be eternal life. But the possession of this knowledge was no ground for self-glorification. Through no wisdom or goodness of his own had it been revealed to Peter. Never can humanity, of itself, attain to a knowledge of the divine. . . . "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him;" and the fact that Peter discerned the glory of Christ was an evidence that he had been "taught of God." Ah, indeed, "blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee."

Jesus continued: "I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The word Peter signifies a stone,—a rolling stone. Peter was not the rock upon which the church was founded. The gates of hell did prevail against him when he denied his Lord with cursing and swearing. The church was built upon One against whom the gates of hell could not prevail.

Centuries before the Saviour's advent, Moses had pointed to the Rock of Israel's salvation. The psalmist had sung of "the Rock of my strength." Isaiah had written, "Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation." Peter himself, writing by inspiration, applies this prophecy to Jesus. He says, "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious: unto whom coming, a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house."

"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." "Upon this rock," said Jesus, "I will build My church." In the presence of God, and all the heavenly intelligences, in the presence of the unseen army of hell, Christ founded His church upon the living Rock. That Rock is Himself,—His own body, for us broken and bruised. Against the church built upon this foundation, the gates of hell shall not prevail. . . .

The Rock of faith is the living presence of Christ in the church. Upon this the weakest may depend, and those who think themselves the strongest will prove to be the weakest, unless they make Christ their efficiency.

Taken from *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 411-414.

Key passage:
Matthew 16:13-20

Notes

"The truth which Peter had confessed is the foundation of the believer's faith"

"Upon this rock I will build My church"

by Thomas Bokenkotter

Whether or not we accept the view that Jesus himself founded the Church and conferred authority over it on his twelve apostles, history clearly shows that from the beginning the first believers formed a tightly knit community and were conscious of being members of a unique fellowship—still within Israel indeed but with a distinct sense of identity due to their belief in the risen Jesus. . . .

Profoundly conscious, as they were, that it was the resurrection of Jesus and not some human agency that created the Church, they saw their fellowship as a gift of the Spirit, a miraculous act of God. This sense of the supernatural origin of the Church is powerfully conveyed by Paul, who thought of the Church . . . as a building erected by the apostles on the foundation of Jesus Christ; and as the temple of God. . . .

The traditional Catholic view of the organization of the Church is that Jesus himself organized it by appointing the twelve apostles and giving them authority to assume control of the Church after his death. This is the picture presupposed and developed by Luke particularly; but many scholars, including some Catholic ones, view this conception as a retrojection of the later developed Church system into the primitive era. To mention only one objection to the traditional view: If the twelve apostles were put in charge by Jesus, why do they so completely disappear from the subsequent history of the Church?

Many historians, therefore, prefer the theory that the primitive Church only slowly organized itself and shaped its system of authority in response to a variety of situations that existed in different localities. And in their view it only gradually settled everywhere on the three-tiered structure—bishop, priest, and deacon—as the one most conducive to its mission.

Those who favor this developmental approach interpret Paul, the earliest witness, in this sense. They hold that for Paul the Spirit is the one who organizes the community; rule by the Spirit means that love is its characteristic quality. The various ministries needed to carry on and order the community are given directly by the Spirit. . . .

Paul's system of charismatic leadership worked all right as long as the Church lived in expectation of the immediate end of the world and the second coming of Jesus, and as long as the original apostles were still alive who were able to guarantee the veracity of the oral tradition about Jesus. But two things happened that necessitated a change: First, the expectation of the End faded as awareness grew that the Church was destined to continue in history, perhaps for a long time; second, death began to carry off the apostles.

So the Church was faced with the problem of how to stay in touch with its origins and preserve its unity and continuity with the original apostolic witness. . . .

To meet this crisis, a threefold solution was gradually devised: A specially commissioned ministry was established [composed of elders, deacons, etc.]; an authoritative list of apostolic writings was issued [based on the consensus of the Church that all the books listed were in some way associated with an apostle and were orthodox]; and a rule of faith or creed was drawn up [a compendium of the main teachings of the bishops]. . . .

In this threefold manner . . . the Church erected a durable structure of authority, a framework of steel that has enabled it to meet every conceivable crisis.

Key passage:
Matthew 16:18, 19

Notes

“It was the resurrection of Jesus and not some human agency that created the Church”

The church organization evolved in response to its environment

To meet the crises: a ministry, canon and creed

Excerpted from A CONCISE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH by Thomas Bokenkotter. Copyright © 1977 by Thomas Bokenkotter. Reprinted by permission of Doubleday & Co., Inc. Pages 39-45.

Thomas Bokenkotter is an author of religious history.

by editors

"The church has one foundation,
'Tis Jesus Christ her Lord. . ."

Key passage:
I Corinthians 3:1

Notes

How many times have you sung this hymn? Probably many, many times. It is one of those songs which is popular around constituency meeting time and when there are divisions within the church body.

And so it should be. For the Christian community needs to often be reminded of its *one* foundation, its *one* source of nourishment and support. But unfortunately, too many people echo the words to this song without interpreting and applying their meaning. Indeed, what *does* it mean for the church to have "one foundation" in "Jesus Christ her Lord"?

It means:

1. The church's foundation can never be shaken. When doctrinal controversies enter in among Adventist circles, it is always popular for someone to exclaim that the foundations of the church are being shaken. But how can this be if the foundation of the church is Jesus Christ? How may humans so influence the Divine? It is impossible.

The doctrines which men have deduced from Scripture can indeed be shaken. Some will remain solid and firm, and others will take a terrible fall. But the church's foundation will always stand unshaken.

Thus, the church can welcome the investigation and careful scrutiny given to its doctrines, and at the same time it can study the theories and philosophies of other denominations and of the world, as long as its foundation rests secure in Jesus Christ.

2. The church is free from the material things of this world. This means that of those seeking admission into Christian graduate schools, the financial contributions of near-relatives or friends is to be of absolutely no regard. It means that in our fund-raising appeals, coercion, pressure and intimidation are to be foreign means of motivation. It means that the church's foreign missions programs are to be developed on the basis of the needs of the people, and are not to be calculated with the promises of material gains (or threatenings of material loss) from any government in mind.

The church is a spiritual union of peoples without materialistic—or national or cultural—foundations. Thus, it is bound only to God.

3. The church is free from human pride and egos. It is easy, if one is involved with a program which he considers to be important to the church, to begin to think that the success of the Lord's work depends upon him. It is a great temptation for some committees to claim that their every decision came as a directive from heaven itself. For some, it is more agreeable to take difficult passages of Scripture and from the writings of Ellen White and claim that they don't really say what they say, than it is to admit an error in philosophy.

But such are vain attempts to protect the human pride and ego. And because the church has only one foundation—Jesus Christ alone—all such attempts are less than worthless. They stand condemned among the "things of this world."

For "The church has *one* foundation, 'Tis Jesus Christ her Lord. . ."

by Kent Giacomozzi

Nothing is weaker than water,
But when it attacks something hard
or resistant, then nothing withstands it,
and nothing will alter its way.

Everyone knows this, that weakness prevails
Over strength and that gentleness conquers
the adamant hindrance of men, but that
Nobody demonstrates how it is so.

Because of this the Wise Man says
That only one who bears the nation's shame
Is fit to be its hallowed Lord;
That only one who takes upon himself
the evils of the world may be its king.

this is Paradox.
—Lao Tzu
"T'ien hsia jou je"

Within the hearts of the Jewish people has always been a longing for the coming of the Messiah. The religious leaders of Jesus' day focused on the prophecies that talked of the Messiah's advent in power, and they looked for Him to save them from the Roman oppression. Wanted has been a powerful leader to relieve their sufferings and make of them a powerful and prestigious nation. Thus, when the members of the Jewish community looked at Jesus and did not see a man of power, they rejected Him because He did not fulfill their expectations.

The Christian church accepted Jesus as the Christ, but it too has historically stressed the inherent "power" of the Messiah. We Christians often try to overlook any idea of a weak or suffering Christ. We talk about Christ our "rock" and how He could have called ten thousand angels, but not of the weak and suffering Savior.

In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: "in the passion Jesus is a rejected Messiah. His rejection robs the passion of its halo of glory. It must be passion without honor. Suffering and rejection sum up the whole cross of Christ. . . . The very notion of a suffering Messiah was a scandal to the church, even in its earliest days. That is not the kind of Lord it wants, and as the Church of Christ it does not like to have the Law of suffering imposed upon it by its Lord."²

What Bonhoeffer is saying is that it is not through His power and omnipotence that God saves the world, but through the weakness of Christ. Jesus does not offer man what he expects or wants. Religious man thinks that by turning his back on the world and devoting time to the sacred he will be rewarded by happiness and the absence of suffering. "But the Biblical God calls man to plunge into the godless world and share the suffering of Christ."³

Thus, the strength of the church's foundation is not so much in the omnipotence of God, but in the weak and suffering Christ. The suffering and weakness of Christ is shared by the church. And because of its weakness, the church is like water, able to penetrate and change the world around it.

None of the leaders of Christ's day expected that this one weak man could change the world, but He did. In His weakness and suffering was power and strength.

This is paradox.

Key passage:
Matthew 26:36 —
27:50

Notes

"It is not through His power and omnipotence that God saves the world, but through the weakness of Christ"

¹ From THE WAY OF LIFE: LAO TZU trans. by R. B. Blakney. Published by New American Library. Page 131.

² Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., from A LAYMAN'S GUIDE TO PROTESTANT THEOLOGY, Revised Edition, by William E. Hordern. Copyright © 1955 by Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc. Copyright © 1968, William A. Hordern. Page 218.

³ Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., from THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP, 2nd ed. by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. © SCM Press 1959. Page 96.

REACT

1. We often hear of "foundation truths." The How To article for this week has shown us that the only actual foundation of the church is Jesus Christ. But built upon that *one* foundation are fundamental beliefs—often called "foundations"—of the Christian church in general and of the Adventist church specifically.

Below, briefly list those beliefs which you consider to be fundamental to the Christian church.

Now list those beliefs which you consider to be fundamental to the Adventist church specifically.

If you consider the Sermon on the Mount to be Christ's statement of His fundamental beliefs—"foundation truths," if you please—then compare your above two lists with the Sermon on the Mount. Are they similar? Should they be similar?

2. Jesus likens the Christian's foundation to a rock, and the "worldlings' " foundation to sand—many little rocks. Does this illustration suggest any relationship between the philosophies of the world and revelation from God?

3. What does it involve for one to make Jesus Christ the foundation of his life?

Called By God



"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood,
a holy nation, a people belonging to God."

— 1 Peter 2:9; NIV

by Herman Bauman

Most of the readers of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY are much too young to remember the posters that appeared so widely during World War I that showed Uncle Sam pointing his finger. The poster was made in such a way that wherever you went, to the right, to the left, or directly in the front, Uncle Sam's big finger was pointing straight at you. And, of course, underneath it said: "I need you." I have often thought of that poster and its message when considering the way God is calling our special people from the world to be His own and to serve Him. The God of the universe is pointing His finger directly at you and at me saying, "I need you. I need you to serve Me in a special way. I need you to be a witness for Me."

In the Lord's Prayer, Jesus taught His followers to pray, "thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). Indeed, this is a beautiful prayer and a beautiful evidence of trust, but it is also the most dangerous prayer in the Bible. For when we ask God to do His will in our lives, it could mean making some very great sacrifices in order to be able to serve Him as He desires.

For instance, when Moses prayed "Thy will be done," God asked him to give up the glories and riches of Egypt and to suffer for forty years with a rebellious people in the desert and to die without ever reaching his goal. When Daniel prayed "Thy will be done," God allowed him to be cast into a den of lions. When Saul of Tarsus prayed "Thy will be done," God made him the great apostle Paul, but subject to a beheading in Rome. Indeed, today God calls a people who collectively and individually are willing to pray, "Lord, Thy will be done," and allow Him to lead in whatever way would please Him and bring glory to His name.

But perhaps we are like the young man who, when he was converted,

prayed that the Lord would make Him a witness for His cause. He prayed earnestly, "Oh, Lord, send me to do your will. Send me to witness for you. Lord, send me anywhere in the world." But as he began to think about it, he thought of Africa, with its wild beasts and its fierce warriors, and he added, "but Lord, don't send me to Africa." As he grew older he became a deacon and a leader in the church, but he continued to pray that prayer, "Lord, send me to work for you. Send me anywhere, but not to Africa." Finally he reached middle age, and was still praying that prayer, when the Holy Spirit came upon him in a powerful way and he realized that it was wrong for him to limit the Lord. In complete dedication he said, "Lord, send me anywhere to serve You . . . yes, even to Africa." The Lord seemed to answer that deacon's prayer with, "My son, I didn't want you to go to Africa, but I just wanted you to be willing to go."

Friend, in calling out His people, God calls us to be willing to go anywhere and do anything to represent Him, and to serve Him and to bring souls to Him. In Acts 9:15, God, referring to the apostle Paul shortly after his conversion, said, he is "a chosen vessel unto me." But just as surely as God chose Paul to do a special work for Him, so He has chosen each of us and given us a task to perform for Him.

Perhaps some may be frightened by the tremendous responsibility that comes with being "called," and feel inadequate for the tasks ahead. But all can take courage, for we are assured in *Christ's Object Lessons*, "As the will of man co-operates with the will of God it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings."¹

¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 333.

by editors

Notes

“Called by God.” It’s kind of a nondescript phrase, isn’t it? Difficult to interpret. Does it suggest some type of high-voltage, metaphysical experience with the Divine? Does it mean that we are called to live lives of solitude and reflection in Spartan quarters? Surely, it means something else—something different from these ideas. But what?

To be called by God means:

1. To leave the world. “By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (Hebrews 11:8; NIV). As God calls Christians today to leave the “things of this world,” so He called Abraham millenniums ago to leave his homeland to preserve the true faith and to be a witness for God of that faith.

2. To be God’s people. “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Exodus 19:5, 6; NIV). God wants a special people with whom he can enjoy a special relationship. This people, however, must accept His authority. When they realize that God is all-knowing and all-powerful, it will be seen as foolish to go against His wishes. And when they know that God is love, they will know no reason to question His demands.

3. To come from darkness into light. “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (I Peter 2:9; NIV). To be in darkness is to be in a state of ignorance and unresolved speculation and doubt. By contrast, God has called a people to come out of ignorance, to leave behind all frustration and despair. His people operate in a philosophical system with which they can understand themselves, this world and their Creator.

4. To be disciples. “The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, ‘Follow me’” (John 1:43). In contrast with the rich young ruler (Mark 10:17-22), those who were truly seeking the kingdom of God followed Jesus. Those who followed had many things to learn and they certainly made mistakes, but they placed themselves in the right environment and listened to Jesus’ teachings, and there was no question where their loyalty lay.

5. To serve. “He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to cure every kind of disease and sickness” (Matthew 10:1; NIV). The disciples were given the power to do the kind of work that Jesus had been doing: healing the sick, casting out devils, announcing the coming kingdom of heaven. They were ambassadors for Christ—regardless of the price (see Matthew 10:34-36).

6. To strive to walk worthy. “. . . live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory” (I Thess. 2:12; NIV). Because of the fact that God has graciously called us to share in His kingdom and glory, it should be our natural response to live lives in accord with that high calling. Consider what Paul means by living lives worthy of God’s call in I Thessalonians 2:2-11.

by Tim Poirier

Perhaps no better illustration can be found in Scripture of being "called by God" than the example of Abraham. Concerning this Ellen White comments: "'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.' Hebrews 11:8. . . . Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. . . ."

"It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God had spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be."¹

But Ellen White adds that it was not to make Abraham and his heirs the sole recipients of His favor that God called him out. Rather, "It was for the purpose of bringing the best gifts of Heaven to all the peoples of earth that God called Abraham out from his idolatrous kindred and bade him dwell in the land of Canaan."²

"The object of God in choosing a people before all the world was not only that He might adopt them as His sons and daughters, but that through them the world might receive the grace that bringeth salvation. When the Lord chose Abraham, it was not simply to be the special friend of God, but to be a medium of the peculiar privileges the Lord desired to bestow upon the nations."³ "He designed that the principles revealed through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man."⁴

Likewise Christ's comparison of His people to salt, indicates that the call to separation is not a call to isolation. "When God compares His children to salt, He would teach them that His purpose in making them the subjects of His grace is that they may become agents in saving others."⁵

"Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate, infuse it, that it may be preserved. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved as masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power."⁶

"'Ye are the light of the world.' The Jews thought to confine the benefits of salvation to their own nation; but Christ showed them that salvation is like the sunshine. It belongs to the whole world. The religion of the Bible is not to be confined between the covers of a book, nor within the walls of a church. It is not to be brought out occasionally for our own benefit, and then to be carefully laid aside again. It is to sanctify the daily life, to manifest itself in every business transaction and in all our social relations."⁷

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

² *Prophets and Kings*, p. 15.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 231, 232.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 232.

⁷ *Desire of Ages*, pp. 306, 307.

Key passage:
Acts 13:47

Notes

"The happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be"

"The call to separation is not a call to isolation"

by Joseph F. Nicosia

Key passage:
John 3:16

Notes

As I consider the mission that we as Seventh-day Adventists have to the world, I am reminded of the most brilliant text in all of Scripture: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16). Of the various ways one might emphasize the words of this text, I have chosen to consider the special significance of the phrase, "God so loved the world."

And of this point there can certainly be no doubt. God most definitely loved and still does love this world. This is why His method of evangelism (sending His own Son) was so successful. The ministry of Christ was one which recognized itself as a part of the world (His Father's creation). The whole concept of the incarnation of Christ was built around the idea of God reaching man at a level man was familiar with. Paul had this idea in mind when he counseled the church at Philippi: "In your minds you must be the same as Christ Jesus: His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and become as men are" (Phil. 2:6, 7; paraphrased).

As "called out" members of God's church, we must be careful when we consider ourselves in relation to those who are not saved. There is indeed a great danger among some of setting themselves so far apart from the world that they fail in emptying themselves and assuming "the condition of a slave."

Let us remember that the Spirit of God calls man, not out of the world, but into the world—immersing him in it. As Watchman Nee has said, "Far from seeking to avoid the world we need to see how privileged we are to have been placed there by God. 'As thou didst send me into the world, even so send I them into the world.' What a statement! The Church is Jesus' successor, a divine settlement planted here right in the midst of Satan's territory. . . . God has deliberately placed us in the *kosmos* to show it up for what it is. . . ."

Nee continues: "'Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel' (Mark 16:15). This is the Christian's privilege. It is also his duty. Those who try to opt out of the world only demonstrate that they are still in some degree in bondage to its way of thinking. We who are 'not of it' have no reason at all to try to leave it, for *it is where we should be.*"¹

Our mission, then, as Christians "called of God" is to love the world—as Jesus did. This means to become immersed in the world for the good of the world, and not to draw artificial lines of separation between "sinners" and "saints." To love the world means to meet people where they are—in their own environments—and make it as easy as possible for them to accept Christianity, while still maintaining the principles for which Christianity stands. And indeed, we must remember that true evangelism is never for the purpose of self-edification but always and only for sharing with another that which is good.

Yes, "God loved the world so much . . ."

The world
is where
Christians
should be

¹ From: LOVE NOT THE WORLD. By Watchman Nee. Published by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., © 1968 by Angus I. Kinnear. Used by permission. Pages 71, 72.

by Ken Downing

Key passage:
Psalm 32:8

Notes

When my father would call me as a child to accomplish some important task—like taking out the garbage—I never wondered what he was calling me to do or what my response should be. His strong voice would search me out wherever I might be playing and my response would be immediate gravitation toward the house. You see, I was trained Pavlovian style—but instead of a bell, I was conditioned to a belt.

At times we still think that God's call to a certain task will come as clearly and directly as did my father's—and with the same consequences. After all, look at Jonah and Balaam and Pontius Pilate, to name a few. All were clearly spoken to by God and all suffered dire consequences for refusing to obey. Yet we are troubled when we cannot figure out what major to take in college or what job to take after graduation. Does God still call us to a specific job or career? I believe He does. So consider three ways that God may be trying to call you:

1. Through His Word. The Bible is very clear about God's call to certain things. For example, *everyone* is called to love (I John 4:7), peace (Col. 3:15), patience (Eph. 4:2), fellowship (I Cor. 1:9) and a host of other traits that constitute a godly life. And, as God speaks through His Word and we conform our lives to His—from our understanding of the Bible—we will become increasingly sensitive to God's leading in our career and job choices. This includes doing what obviously needs to be done. David, for example, was "called" by his father to take lunch to his soldier brothers, but no clear voice told him to go fight Goliath. His understanding of God's will for Israel made clear to him what God wanted him to do.

2. Through your work. As with Moses going to herd sheep in Midian, we may not have a clear indication of where God wants us to be or what He wants us to do. But we can know that He wants us to do our best wherever we are. Christ stated very clearly that faithfulness in little things is rewarded with larger responsibility (Luke 16:10). The tireless patience which Moses developed herding dumb sheep enabled God to be able to use his other leadership skills developed in the courts of Pharaoh to lead Israel to the promised land.

3. Through your mind. It troubles me to see college students feeling that God will lead them like He would an unthinking robot, and bypass the mental powers He has given them. Even in the Bible God did not always specify exactly what careers or jobs He wanted His followers to take. Paul and Barnabas were "called" by a committee to go solve a problem in Jerusalem. Paul later spent time in Corinth making tents and preaching without a "clear" call from God. In fact, most of Paul's ministry appears to have been spent going where he felt his talents and energies would be best used for God's cause and only occasionally, as in the vision to go to Macedonia, did God providentially redirect him (Acts 16:6-10). As a teacher once said, if we move ahead in faith, God can just as ably close doors as He can open them.

God is in the business of communicating His will to men. The Bible, the incarnation and the spirit of prophecy all testify abundantly to that fact. Learning to listen for His communication and to follow His will provide the challenges and overwhelming privileges of every Christian.

by James Valentine

Key passage:
1 Peter 2:9

Notes

The church of God can be characterized by the word "called." It is **called out** to be the people of God; it is **called for** a special relationship with Him; it is **called together** as a community of believers; and it is **called to** a future inheritance. Consider each of these callings below.

Called Out. The church (*ekklesia*) is by definition the "called out" people of God. It belongs to God, has come from God, and owes every good gift that it enjoys to the mercy of God. Without the love of God, the initiative of God, the salvation of God, the revelation of God and the call of God, there would be no "chosen people." So let us as a church never look to our own size or strength to find our identity, but simply to His sovereign grace.

Called For. God's people were called for a relationship with Him. This was the basis of the covenants established with Abraham, Moses, and the Children of Israel.

Likewise, Christ called His disciples "my friends." And Paul writes that "God . . . has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ. . . ." (1 Cor. 1:9:NIV). It is significant that when Jesus called the twelve disciples, He called them to Himself and appointed them "to be with Him;" and it was only from this primary fellowship with Him that they were sent out to preach and heal (Mark 3:13-15). Indeed, the heart of all church activity is this personal and corporate relationship with God.

Called Together. The church of God is called together as a community of believers. Community, however, is not to be confused with activity. Many churches that abound with activities have little or no sense of community. For community is dependent upon relationships. Whatever else we may do, the development of right relationships within a church is of paramount importance. We must learn to love one another just as we are. Our lives must be shared together, with all our faults and failings. Otherwise, the gospel of a loving and forgiving God will be empty words.

Called To. When God called Abraham, it was to a future inheritance. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go to that place where he was to receive his inheritance (Hebrews 11:8). So too was Israel called to journey towards a specific goal, the land of promise. And it is no different with the church. We have been called out of spiritual Egypt for our journey towards a future inheritance.

Often throughout the history of the church the pattern has been the same: God breathes into His church fresh life by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit; man likes what he sees, organizes it, regiments it; and the patterns therefore continue for decades, if not for centuries, after the Spirit has quietly made His departure. God's plan for continuous renewal becomes the church's Society for Historic Preservation. The aliens and exiles have settled down in a world that is not to be their home. And buried beneath an avalanche of committee reports, plethora of programs and ecclesiastical paraphernalia, they are virtually unable to listen to, or respond to, the gentle but urgent promptings of the Holy Spirit.

But this is not what it should be. The church must learn to be on the move, always relevant for today's world. If it cannot speak in the language and culture of this present generation, whom it has been called to serve, then it is tragically out of touch, not only with the world today, but also with the God of today. For the church of God has been called to look towards the future—and a future inheritance.

REACT

1. Is accepting a call from God a matter of dedication and consecration on the part of the believer, or is it but a matter of salvation? Is it a sovereign act of God, or is it, at least in part, man-originated?

2. Complete the following:
To be called by God means to never . . .

To be called by God means to always . . .

To get called by God I must . . .

To be called out of the world means . . .

To walk worthy of His calling I must . . .

3. Herman Bauman, in the Introduction for this week's lesson, likens the call of God to Uncle Sam's "I need you." but does God really *need* us? to what extent is the Sovereign God dependent upon humanity?

4. Tim Poirier, in the Testimony article for this week, says, "The call to separation is not a call to isolation." How can this be? Explain.

5. In the Evidence article for this week, Watchman Nee says, "Those who try to opt out of the world only demonstrate that they are still in some degree in bondage to its ways of thinking." Do you agree with him here? Explain.

Distinguishing Marks



"All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another."

— John 13:35; NIV

by Peter Beck

If your religion is not making a difference in your life, it is worthless. Week after week, thousands of people go to church leaving behind the struggles and anxieties of life. They sit in total surrender for two and one-half hours. But when church is over and they race to their cars to fight for a position in the ensuing traffic jam, the doors of the church become a barrier dividing the religious from the secular. When most leave the church, the confusion of life once again controls their existence.

But somewhere on this globe live individuals who are different. They refuse to become caught in the swamp of humanity. The ethic that governs them is not dictated by popular trends, but is a reflection of the fact that Jesus Christ died so that they could begin to live.

Our study this week deals with the basic characteristics of these people—God's church. Hopefully the concepts you discover in daily study will challenge your life—and the awareness of this challenge will strengthen your dependence upon Christ.

"Now to him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24, 25).

by editors

Notes

"And at that time there was great persecution against the church that was in Jerusalem; and they were scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1).

Some things, when their parts are scattered, cease to exist. But not the church. For the church is wherever church members are. The church is basically people: people who come and go, people who may congregate in large numbers or in two's and three's, people who act in certain definite ways. But always, people who are distinguished by certain characteristic marks.

"Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 5:42; NIV). Here we see that the members of God's church are characterized by believing in Jesus the Christ. Indeed, this belief is central to all their teachings. Their lives and thinking are bound up with what Jesus has done and is doing for them.

In Ephesians 4:15, we see a second characteristic of God's people: **"Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ" (NIV).** God's people are distinguished as those who are loyal to truth, albeit always in the spirit of love.

For church members there is only one basic truth, and that is the truth as they see it in Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth and the life. It is a truth which makes them free, a truth to which they will be loyal even unto death.

And yet, for the Christian, truth is not merely something to be intellectualized; it is a way of life. James says it plainly: **"Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says" (James 1:22; NIV).** The true church insists that a person is not a member of the church unless he lives up to the principles taught in the Bible. Indeed, Christians practice what they preach!

Still, the standard of Christian living is not legalistically perceived. It is a way of life because it involves the way of love. **"A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples if you love one another" (John 13:34, 35; NIV).** Here Jesus is talking about a love that corresponds to the love of God, a love that extends itself to enemies and to the unlovely. Christian love: the most distinguishing and most demanding of all the Christian characteristics.

Thus, the Christian never thinks of himself as having "arrived." He is always seeking renewal and reformation, always seeking to accomplish God's plans and purposes. His constant heaven-sent plea is, **"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you? Show us your unfailing love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation" (Psalm 85:6, 7; NIV).** But at the end of his days he hopes to repeat after Christ, **"I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4; NIV).**

by editors

Key passage:
I Corinthians 13

Notes

What are the characteristics of God's true church as described in the writings of Ellen G. White? Consider her statements below:

"Jesus . . . is indeed the author and foundation of all religion of God's chosen people. . . ."

"The mission of the church of Christ is to save perishing sinners. It is to make known the love of God to men, and to win them to Christ by the efficacy of that love. . . . The followers of Christ should not live selfish lives; but, imbued with the Spirit of Christ, they should work in harmony with him."²

"God calls upon the church to set in order the things that remain. Workers together with God, you are empowered by the Lord to take others with you into the kingdom. You are to be God's living agents, channels of light to the world, and round about you are angels of heaven with their commission from Christ to sustain, strengthen and uphold you in working for the salvation of souls."³

"The church is firmly and decidedly to hold her principles before the whole heavenly universe and the kingdoms of the world; steadfast fidelity in maintaining the honor and sacredness of the law of God will attract the notice and administration of even the world, and many will, by the good works which they shall behold, be led to glorify our Father in heaven. The loyal and true bear the credentials of heaven, not of earthly potentates."⁴

"Look not to other men to see how they conduct themselves under the conviction of the truth, or to ask them for aid. Look not to men in high position of responsibility for strength, for they are the very men who are in danger of considering a position of responsibility as evidence of God's special power. Our churches are weak because the members are educated to look to and depend upon human resources. . . ."⁵

"In order for the church to be healthy, it must be composed of healthy Christians. But in our churches and institutions there are many sickly Christians. . . . He who cooperates with the Great Physician will keep nerves, sinews, and muscles in the best condition of health. In order to do its work properly, the human machinery needs careful attention."⁶

"God wants men . . . who can be depended upon; who will ever be found on the right side in times of danger; who will faithfully war against the enemy. . . . In order to prosper, every church must have men upon whom it can rely in times of peril,—men who are as true as steel,—unselfish men, who have the interest of God's cause lying nearer their hearts than anything which concerns their own opinions or their worldly interests."⁷

"'Let there be no strife between me and thee,' said Abraham, 'for we are brethren;' not only by natural relationship, but as worshipers of the true God. The children of God, the world over, are one family, and the same spirit of love and conciliation should govern them."⁸

"Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard."⁹

¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 432.

² *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 381.

³ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 436, 437.

⁴ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 17.

⁵ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 380.

⁶ *Counsels on Health*, p. 592.

⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 637.

⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 132, 133.

⁹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 49.

by Terrell D. Gottschall

The first extensive description of the basic characteristics of the early Christian church came from the pens of the patristic apologists, early church leaders who sought both to defend the church against imperial Roman persecution and publicize its doctrines and beliefs to a pagan Rome. The apologists were particularly concerned with the uniqueness and cohesiveness of the church in order to distinguish it from discredited Judaism and the pagan Greco-Roman cults.

The anonymous author of *The Epistle to Diognetus*, writing about A.D. 124, argued that the early Christians were in the world, yet not of the world: "The difference between Christians and the rest of mankind is not a matter of nationality, or language, or customs. Christians do not live apart in separate cities of their own, speak any special dialect, nor practice any eccentric way of life. . . . [The] relation of Christians to the world is that of a soul to the body. As the soul is diffused through every part of the body, so are Christians through all the cities of the world. The soul, too, inhabits the body, while at the same time forming no part of it; and the Christians inhabit the world, but they are not part of the world."¹

Placing Christians within the world refuted the Roman charge of misanthropy, that is, that Christians showed their hatred and distrust of all mankind by separating themselves from society. To the cosmopolitan Roman mind, this was the most heinous crime and one which the Romans leveled at Christians in A.D. 64, the time of Rome's catastrophic fire, when Nero blamed the Christians for the arson that he himself had instigated. The author of the *Epistle* stated that the primary difference between Christians and pagans was that God had chosen the Christians for a special mission and "it is their moral duty not to shrink from it."²

Tertullian, another important apologist, was a second-century Christian lawyer who influenced Christian perceptions of baptism, the Trinity and the nature of Christ and used his legal talents to organize Christian doctrines into a coherent creed. His *Apology*, written in A.D. 197, claimed that Christianity's strength lay in the nature and morality of its adherents: "We are the same when assembled as when separate; we are collectively the same as we are individually, doing no one any injury, causing no one any harm. When men who are upright and good assemble, when the pious and virtuous gather together, the meeting should be called not a secret society but a senate."³ The repressive Roman state had an abiding fear of secret societies which allegedly threatened the political stability of the state. And because Christians often met at dawn for their services, the Romans feared that they were actually conspiring against the Roman state.

Tertullian finally spoke for Christians everywhere when he noted that the belief in Christ—present, past and future—was the ultimate key to Christianity's uniqueness: "We therefore form one body because of our religious convictions, and because of the divine origin of our way of life, and the body of [our] common hope."⁴

Key passage:
John 13:34, 35

Notes

"Christians inhabit the world, but they are not part of the world"

"Christianity's strength lay in the nature and morality of its adherents"

Belief in Christ is the key to Christianity's uniqueness

¹ "The Epistle to Diognetus" 5-6, in *Ancient Christian Writers*, ed. and trans. by James A. Kleist (Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1948), pp. 135-147.

² *Ibid.*

³ Tertullian, "Apology," 97, in *The Apologetical Works of Tertullian*, trans. by Emily Daly (New York: The Fathers of The Church, 1950), pp. 198-202.

⁴ *Ibid.*

by editors

Key passage:
Micah 6:8

Notes

Have you ever wondered how to identify God's true church? Probably not, if you've been raised an Adventist. For then your parents and teachers and pastors have sought to make it pretty clear to you that God's true church is the one that "keeps the commandments of God and has the testimony of Jesus."

But alongside these distinguishing marks, what basic characteristics should one see in that group of people which is described as being "God's"? What should one look for in order to find the people God most closely identifies with?

1. Look for a body of believers. A group of people, totally dependent upon Jesus, supporting and encouraging one another. A unit.

Look for a group of people whose joy is your joy, whose sadness comes when you are sad. A group that supports you during times of economic difficulty. A group that is concerned about your married life, and offers both you and your spouse the emotional support you need. A group that cares if you really have found spiritual fulfillment and satisfaction, and is studying with you and praying with you and for you. A group that wants you to have a good time in life, and plans and attends social functions that Christians should be enjoying. A group that is concerned about *you*, as a person—not about how you can benefit them.

2. Look for a people having a deep concern for those outside the church. I have overheard hitchhikers report that the worst place in the world to hitchhike is through some Christian communities.

But God's true church is characterized by "Good-Samaritan-love," love which offers assistance to anyone who is in need. Inconvenient? Yes. A sacrifice? Certainly. Costly? Without a doubt; it may even cost some their lives (it cost Jesus His). But such is not important to the members of God's true church. The only consideration made is, Does someone need our help?

3. Look for a people which offers true worship to the living God. Singing "Rock of Ages," putting one dollar (even one thousand dollars!) into the offering plate, listening to the sermon and keeping your eyes closed during prayer—these things do not necessarily constitute true worship.

God's true church, however, participates in that basically spiritual—metaphysical—experience called worship, which elevates a person from the materialism of the here and now to the spiritual level, giving him a time of participation in eternity, a time for adoration and reverence of the Deity. To the member of God's true church, worship is a deeply personal experience.

But this true worship is not just confined to Sabbath morning. Worship is an everyday event of saying "Yes" to the world; i.e., "Yes" to creation by accepting it as it is, and using our talents to improve on the bad and appreciate the good. It is seeing the detrimental effects of sin, but seeing here opportunities to re-create and restore. True worship as an everyday event is a celebration and affirmation of life. And such worship God's true church enjoys.

selected by editors

Luther's basic definition of the church is derived from the biblical teaching about the "people of God" and the confession of the Apostle's Creed, "I believe in the communion of saints." Thus Luther emphasized the noninstitutional character of the church—he disliked the word "church" (*Kirche*) and preferred terms such as "community" (*Gemeinde*), "congregation" (*Gemeine*), and "assembly" (*Sammlung*)—as seen in the interaction of the persons who are living members of the body of Christ. The communion of saints is both a hidden (*absconditus*) community (in the sense of Paul's statement in I Cor. 2:7-15) and a visible (*sichtbar*) fellowship. It must be hidden because faith is "the conviction of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1); it is never completely realized on earth in either its universal or its congregational extension, since God has reserved the complete realization of faith to the Last Day. The true nature of the church, therefore, is not fully revealed, just as God was not fully disclosed even on the cross of Jesus, and has remained a hidden God (*deus absconditus*). On the other hand, the church can be recognized through concrete signs such as the preaching of the word, the distribution of the sacraments, the confession of faith, and even the ban. Luther maintained this dialectic between the hidden church and visible fellowship with a fundamental consistency throughout his writings, even though he directed his attention more and more to the church in this world. Thus he could say, on the one hand—using a daring image—that "God does not want the world to know when he sleeps with his bride;" and on the other hand, that "the assembly of the church is visible for the sake of the confession of faith" (Rom. 10:10).

When Luther elaborated his basic definition of the church as the communion of saints, he stressed the fellowship into which Christians are called by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, the church consists of people who are incorporated into Christ and each other like the ingredients of a cake: none is for himself, but instead each is blended with the others in the fellowship of love. Luther himself depended on the "consolation of the brethren" (*consolatio fratrum*) whenever he suffered inner turmoil and temptation—especially in the year 1527, when he was plagued by illness, the loss of friends, and various other forms of *Anfechtung*. Communion meant true communication to Luther, through word and sacrament, in the giving of oneself to Christ and to one's neighbor. Just as Christ emptied himself for the world on the cross (Phil. 2:5-11), so the Christian is to empty himself to his neighbor in love. And yet Luther did not present an idealistic or perfectionistic picture of the church. He had a sense for the historicity of the people of God, for the trials and tribulations of the men of God, be they Old Testament prophets, New Testament apostles, or medieval clerics. The communion of saints is at the same time the communion of sinners who have to bear each other's burdens. Luther's theology of the cross here extends into his ecclesiology: just as Christ renewed mankind through his death, so, too, the Christian must become a "Christ" to the fallen world. Thus Luther emphasized the Christian's responsibility not to run away from the church when it is in trouble, but to stay and work for its renewal.

Key passage:
Matthew 25:31-46

Notes

"Luther emphasized the noninstitutional nature of the church"

"The communion of saints is at the same time the communion of sinners who have to bear each other's burdens"

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by Lyndon K. McDowell

Notes

Editor's Note: Whenever one challenges the distinguishing characteristics of a church, the cry of "heresy" is often raised. But what is a "heretic"? How valuable are those who challenge the church's doctrines to the organization? How should those who make these challenges—and their ideas—be treated? Lyndon McDowell addresses these issues below.

Dionysius, a patron saint of France, once received an interesting letter from a friend. It recounted the story of Carpus, a godly priest who was supposed to be favored with visions. One day Carpus became incensed because an infidel had perverted a Christian. In righteous indignation he prayed that thunderbolts from heaven would destroy them both. At midnight, as was his custom, he awakened to sing a hymn, but suddenly it seemed that the earth opened and he saw a horrible chasm out of which were coming a multitude of snakes which entwined themselves around the limbs of the two miserable saints and began dragging them over the precipice into the abyss.

The sight gave Carpus great joy until he looked up and saw Jesus descend from His throne, give His hand to each of the doomed men, and deliver them from the serpents. Carpus was much surprised at this act but even more so when the Lord said to him, "Strike me, if thou wilt, Carpus, and unburden thy wrath upon my own person. What I demand is not that they be punished, but that they be saved."

The mistaken zeal displayed by Carpus is, unfortunately, a common Christian failing. Too often "heretics" have been condemned, ostracized, banished or burned. Yet, however much we regret and condemn this attitude, the question as to what to do with dissenters and heretics remains a vexing problem.

Heresy is not only difficult to handle, it is also difficult to define. In Classical Greek the word *hairesis* referred to the philosophical school which an individual chose to follow. As used in the New Testament, the word meant a party or a group to which a person belonged, with the added implication of self-will or sectarian spirit.

Even Christians were "heretics." When Paul addressed Felix he said, "but this I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I."¹ But the same Paul admonished Titus that "a man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject." The reason being that he subverts and sins, or, as the New International Version reads, he is "warped and sinful."² So Paul, called a heretic by the Jews, told Titus to avoid heretics as defined by Christians. Obviously when there are opposing views, a person is a heretic or not depending upon one's point of view.

The Christian church was established on certain fundamental beliefs. These beliefs held Christians together. They were followers of "the way." It was Paul's acceptance of "the way" that drew him into the Christian church. As a Christian he preached the basic principles of Christianity tirelessly, yet Paul was never petty. He allowed for differences of opinion on peripheral matters. This is shown clearly in Romans 14 and I Corinthians 8 and 9. Nevertheless there were certain fundamental beliefs that, according to Paul, stood immovable, especially in light of the controversies of his day. To depart from these was to remove oneself from the accepted norm of what was called "Christianity." Today, the church still has a responsibility to guard its members against divisive, heretical teachings—especially in the light of controversies which might send the church off on a tangent.³

"What I demand is not that they be punished, but that they be saved"

"A person is a heretic or not depending upon one's point of view"

Interestingly enough, fundamental beliefs have not usually caused heated arguments and divisive factions within the church. Such usually come from argument over less important matters. As Henry VIII declared in a speech from the throne in 1545, "some be too stiff in their old mumpsimus, others be too busy and curious in the sumpsimus."⁴ When fundamental questions have been at stake the issues have usually been clear-cut and a separation has taken place.

The first question to settle then, is, What doctrines or beliefs are fundamental to the church. When this question is settled, a heretic could be defined as an individual who no longer believes in one or more of the fundamental doctrines of the church, and *who insists on advocating his views.*

The problem of defining beliefs is not an easy one. We cannot be too narrow as E. G. White herself warned:

"One of the landmarks under this message was the temple of God, seen by His truth-loving people in heaven, and the ark containing the law of God. The light of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment flashed its strong rays on the pathway of transgressors of God's law. The non-immortality of the wicked is an old landmark. I can call to mind nothing more that can come under the head of old landmarks. All this cry about changing the old landmarks is all imaginary."⁵

This was in 1889 and obviously had reference to the debate over righteousness by faith and should be read in the light of that setting. But it is interesting to see how limited was the list of "pillars" or "landmarks." More than this, Ellen White declared that "we have only the glimmerings of the rays of light that is yet to come to us."⁶ In other words, we must go on to new truths and a new understanding of old truths. Jesus said "every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."⁷

We should remember that truth does not conflict with truth. New truth is continuous with what has gone before. It enlarges, defines, and redefines, but never rejects or contradicts the truth of the past. But we must be sure, of course, that what we have believed to be truth is indeed truth. Mere repetition does not transform error into truth. We must, as individuals as well as a church, be prepared to recognize that we have been in error when such is the case.

In the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as in the early Christian church, men and women were drawn together by certain fundamental beliefs. The acceptance of these beliefs made people Seventh-day Adventists. Therefore, to depart from these fundamental beliefs is to depart from the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is to become heretical.

"We are not to receive the words of these who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith. . . . And while the Scriptures are God's word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves one pillar from the foundation that God has sustained these fifty years, is a great mistake."⁸

This warning, given in 1905, had reference to Ballenger's teachings.⁹ But we must be careful to recognize and accept creative, progressive thinking and new ways of stating old truths while at the same time be able to keep inviolate the truths that distinguish us as a people and which give reason for our being.

This is not easy to do, and there appears to be only one way to do it. There must be a body of men of both experience and learning who provide an ultimate appeal to orthodoxy. In the Adventist church this has been the General Conference. Acts 15 has been the New Testament model. When differences of teaching and practice became a matter of controversy the question was taken to the elected representatives of

**Heretic:
One who no longer believes in one or more of the fundamental doctrines of the church, and who insists on advocating his views**

"We must go on to new truths and a new understanding of old truths"

"Mere repetition does not transform error into truth"

the church. E. G. White gives a very emphatic statement on this matter, although it should be borne in mind that she recognized that that body of men was not infallible.

"I have been shown that no man's judgment should be surrendered to the judgment of any one man. But when the judgment of the General Conference, which is the highest authority that God has upon the earth, is exercised, private judgment must not be maintained, but be surrendered."¹⁰

In spite of the dangers that are inherent in this counsel, it is nevertheless fundamental. The most pathetic period in the history of the Israelite people was not their captivity in the sixth century B.C., but the time of the Judges when "every man did that which was right in his own eyes." The results were absolutely tragic. We dare not allow the Adventist church to descend into a similar condition today.

Perhaps an outstanding example of how members of the church should relate themselves to the counsel of appropriate committees is exemplified by R. J. Wieland and D. K. Short. In 1950 these two men presented a paper to the General Conference concerning the message of righteousness by faith as presented in 1888. Their argument was that the church should make a public confession for its failure to accept the 1888 message. The General Conference Committee considered their paper but rejected the validity of their conclusions. Wieland and Short thereupon agreed not to propagate their views even though, to the best of my knowledge, they continued to hold to their ideas. These two men remained in good and regular standing within the church and continued to give valued service.

While popular heresies engender a great deal of division and disaffection, however, they usually have one healthy by-product. They cause men to study and make the church take a stand.

In the early years of the Christian church Marcion's agitation led the church to define the New Testament canon. Arius' heresy led the church to define the nature of Christ. Brinsmead's ideas led the church to study the history of 1888 and the message of righteousness by faith.

Interestingly enough, Ballenger's defection seemed to pass without too much reaction. The probable reason was that Ellen G. White gave a decided testimony against his views. The prophet had spoken and there was no need to study the question any further.

Right here is both the weakness and the strength of the church. In practice, if not in theory, the writings of E. G. White have been elevated to an almost verbally inspired touchstone of interpretation which has resulted in an essentially biblically illiterate membership.¹¹ Undoubtedly one of the benefits of current discussions on controversies will be to put the E. G. White writings in the place they were originally intended to be.

Historically all churches have been reluctant to reexamine traditionally held beliefs. This has also been true in the Adventist church, particularly when questions have been raised about Ellen White. To question the role of the spirit of prophecy has been almost tantamount to apostasy. Now the questions have been forced upon us and they have to be faced. The problem we have to solve is how to promote free and open discussion without shattering the unity of the church and the faith of the laity.

Some, with an eagerness for debate, would suggest that every theological question should be aired publicly. But someone has to distinguish the wheat from the chaff. Furthermore, the church is not a debating society, it is a people with a mission.

We have to remember that the church is composed of more than theology students and campus caustics, or professors and restless men

"When the judgment of the General Conference is exercised, private judgment must be surrendered"

"The prophet had spoken and there was no need to study the question any further. . . . Right here is both the weakness and strength of the church"

"Some would suggest that every theological question should be aired publicly. . . ."

with shiny new degrees, valuable and necessary as these are. The church is also composed of men and women who have left the security of their ancestral faith to give heart and hand to promote the mission of the church. It is composed of men and women of simple faith who are not concerned over theological niceties, and who feel no need to be. It is composed of men and women of every nation, kindred, tongue and people who have known the other side of life where there is no faith and no hope and to whom the third angel's message has given new horizons and a vibrant faith and who find the restless questionings of second and third generation Adventists both puzzling and disappointing. The church has a real pastoral responsibility as well as an academic one.

"The church has a real pastoral responsibility as well as an academic one"

Doctrinal purity will not come by debate and agitation. It will come in God's way and in God's time. If we are too conservative heresies will be raised up to cause us to move. If we are, on the other hand, too hasty, divisions will rend the church. Thus, we need to be among those who bind up. For the evidence of Scripture is that God is more concerned with Christian behavior than with doctrinal orthodoxy. He is more concerned for a spirit-filled people who love God supremely and their neighbor as themselves than He is for precise definitions.

The Scylla of the Adventist church is the rock of die-hard, entrenched conservatism that disappoints and disillusiones dedicated but progressive thinkers seeking for clear definitions and a more relevant message. On the other hand, to sail too close to the swirling currents of restless criticism is to court disaster.

The task of the church in the 80's is to engage both theologians and administrators in meaningful discussion, and with God-given authority avoid the rocks of Scylla and pilot the church safely past the cave of Charybdis.¹²

¹ Act 24:14.

² Titus 3:10.

³ Acts 20:28-31.

⁴ For some forty years there was a misprint in the Priest's mass: "quod in ore mumpsimis" instead of "Quod in ore sumpsimus." Priests had got so used to the wrong wording that when the correction was made some declared that they would "Not change my mumpsimus for your new sumpsimus." The word *mumpsimus* came to mean an erroneous doctrinal view obstinately adhered to.

⁵ *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 30.

⁶ Quoted in *Ministry Magazine*, July 1953, p. 37.

⁷ Matthew 13:52.

⁸ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 161.

⁹ Albion Fox Ballenger (1861-1921): a one-time Adventist minister who was disfellowshipped from the church because of his views regarding the work of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary.

¹⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 492.

¹¹ This was illustrated by a Sabbath School lesson quarterly in 1977 when the Bible was required to be used only nineteen times in three months of study. In personal correspondence with the editor over the methodology it was explained that some people object to the use of Bible verses taken out of context. The fact that there were innumerable paragraphs, sentences and half sentences taken from the spirit of prophecy did not seem to be an issue.

¹² Scylla was a rock off the coast of Sicily and Charybdis was a whirlpool and cave off the coast of Italy. Sailors had to steer their ships between the two.

REACT

1. Consider, and then discuss with your class, what it means for God's true church to be loyal to the *truth* as opposed to being loyal to *traditional doctrine and thought*.
2. List what you consider to be the three most important distinguishing characteristics of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Be prepared to explain to your class why you feel these are the most important.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

List what you consider to be the three least important distinguishing characteristics of the Adventist church and be prepared to explain why you feel this way.

1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
3. Peter Beck, in the Introduction for the week's lesson, says that the ethic which distinguishes God's people from the world "is not dictated by popular trends, but is a reflection of the fact that Jesus Christ died so that they could begin to live." What does he mean by this statement?
 4. Tertullian stated in his *Apology* (see this week's Evidence article), "Christianity's strength lay in the nature and morality of its adherents." Do you believe this is true today? Do you feel that most Christians today may be distinguished from non-believers by their high levels of morality? Explain.
 5. What does the word *church* mean to you? Do you define it as basically a visible organization, or as being basically invisible—made up of all who are truly God's people, regardless of organizational ties?
 6. Relative to Ballenger's teachings, Ellen White stated: "We are not to receive the words of these who come with a message that contradicts the special points of our faith. . . . And while the Scriptures are God's word, and are to be respected, the application of them, if such application moves one from the foundation that God has sustained these fifty years, is a great mistake" (see Lyndon McDowell's supplementary article for this week).
How do you interpret this statement? Is Ellen White making an appeal to tradition? Explain.
 7. Lyndon McDowell, in the supplementary article for this week, suggests that the church should not be overly concerned with the public discussion of controversial theological questions, as it is "composed of men and women of simple faith who are not concerned over theological niceties, and who feel no need to be."
Do you agree with Elder McDowell on this point? Do you feel that if a more public and objective approach were taken relative to theological controversies, more of the laity would become concerned over these matters? If so, would this be beneficial?
-

Metaphors Of The Church



"The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe
the good news!"

— Mark 1:15; NIV

by editors

I wonder how inspiration worked when God revealed His plan for the church to the prophets and apostles?

Did God inspire Peter, for instance, to describe the church as being composed of "living stones . . . being built into a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5; NIV)? Or did God give Peter a main idea regarding the nature of the church and then let Peter illustrate it in his own way?

Because of the fact that there are so many different metaphors in the Bible used to describe the church, I have a feeling that God—through the Holy Spirit—inspired the prophets with general ideas about His church and then allowed the individuals themselves to illustrate them as they saw fit. As "living stones" or whatever.

Thus, we have Jesus describing the concept of the church in terms of a vine/branch relationship. "I am the vine; you are the branches." Here is seen the **only** source of nourishment and strength for the Christian church—Christ. He is the only Vine which is to be connected to the living branch.

As mentioned earlier, Peter—the "rock"—saw the church as "living stones . . . being built into a spiritual house." From the quarries of both the Jewish and Gentile worlds were to come precious stones, built upon that foundation which no man

can "lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

Paul, the philosopher, discussed the oneness of the church. As Plato had years earlier examined the unity and cooperation with which the human body works, so Paul used the analogy of the body to illustrate the church as one unit, pulling together.

The Gospel of John, quoting the words of Jesus, describes the community of believers as a flock of sheep with a shepherd. Likewise David, certainly history's best-known shepherd, also described the people of God in this descriptive way.

But perhaps the most adequate of all the metaphors used to describe God's church is the "kingdom of heaven." Central to the message of Jesus was a belief in this kingdom. It is an invisible, cross-cultural, multi-national kingdom to which every child of God belongs. "Impossible" in its dreams. But those who believe in it compose the church of God.

This week's lesson is a discussion of each of these various metaphors of the church. Viewing a different metaphor from a different perspective each day, we hope you will better understand God's relationship and your relationship to the Christian church.

by editors

After surveying the situation ahead, it looks as though the church is in for some rough times.

Divisions in the church over the nature of Christ, righteousness by faith, the inspiration and interpretation of the writings of Ellen G. White, the understanding of Daniel's prophecies, especially Daniel 8:14, etc., etc. — these make for stormy weather.

In the world, the crises in the Middle East, the West's confrontation with the U.S.S.R., enough nuclear weaponry to destroy the world fourteen times over . . . —these things too show storm clouds of tornadic capabilities on the immediate horizon.

As God's people enter into these times the church may have feelings of insecurity and think itself to be threatened. In order to lessen the force of its opposition, and hence bring about a type of worldly security, there is a danger that the church might compromise its stand on the important issues.

But to such a people as compose our church, in the face of tremendous opposition and persecution to come, Jesus said, **"I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener . . . Remain in me, and I will remain in you . . . I am the vine; you are the branches"** (John 15:1, 4, 5; NIV). How many vines does it take to nourish a branch? How many trunks does a limb grow from? Indeed, how many sources of strength and support does the Christian church have? **"I am the vine."** **"I am your only strength and support."** No matter what division there is in the church, no matter what wars are brewing, the church of the living God is *secure*—totally—in Jesus Christ.

The church is not to find its identity and security in doctrine. It cannot find freedom from threat in its organization. The church cannot trust in its number of hospitals, educational centers or converts per day. There is one source of strength and security for the Christian church. There is one Vine. And that is Jesus Christ; the suffering, poverty-stricken, crucified One.

But, says Jesus, **"Abide in me, and I in you."** Only as long as the proper conditions are met can the church expect to find nourishment from the Vine. Only so far as the church partakes of the nature of Christ will the church find its security in Christ.

Christ was weak, He was suffering, He was poor. Some of His closest friends came from the "dregs" of humanity. He was more concerned about the soul of a single individual than He was about the success of any institution. Much of His work centered around relieving the physical sufferings of His fellow human beings. When He spoke of the spiritual, it was meat in due season, and none forgot His words. He didn't need Madison Avenue.

"Abide in me, and I in you." To the extent that the church partakes of the nature of Christ, to that extent will the church find security in Christ.

To the church Christ offers nourishment, support and strength for the storms ahead. But these blessings are conditional; conditional upon receiving the character of the Vine. For the branch which Christ supports is but an extension of Himself.

Key passage:
John 15:1-17

Notes

"How many sources of strength and support does the Christian church have?"

The church is not to find its identity and security in doctrine, organization, or "success"

"Only so far as the church partakes of the nature of Christ will the church find its security in Christ"

selected by editors

Key passage:
1 Peter 2:4, 5

Notes

Upon the foundation that Christ Himself has laid, the apostles built the church of God

Writing of the building of this temple, Peter says, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." 1 Peter 2:4, 5. . . .

The apostles built upon a sure foundation, even the Rock of Ages. To this foundation they brought the stones that they quarried from the world. Not without hindrance did the builders labor. Their work was made exceedingly difficult by the opposition of the enemies of Christ. They had to contend against the bigotry, prejudice, and hatred of those who were building upon a false foundation. Many who wrought as builders of the church could be likened to the builders of the wall in Nehemiah's day, of whom it is written: ". . . everyone with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other hand held a weapon." Nehemiah 4:17.

Kings and governors, priests and rulers, sought to destroy the temple of God. But in the face of imprisonment, torture, and death, faithful men carried the work forward; and the structure grew, beautiful and symmetrical. . . .

One after another the foremost of the builders fell by the hand of the enemy. . . . Yet the church grew. New workers took the place of those who fell, and stone after stone was added to the building. Thus slowly ascended the temple of the church of God.

Centuries of fierce persecution followed the establishment of the Christian church, but there were never wanting men who counted the work of building God's temple dearer than life itself. . . .

The enemy of righteousness left nothing undone in his effort to stop the work committed to the Lord's builders. But God "left not Himself without witness." Acts 14:17. Workers were raised up who ably defended the faith once delivered to the saints. . . . The workmen were slain, but the work advanced. The Waldenses, John Wycliffe, Huss and Jerome, Martin Luther and Zwingli, Cranmer, Latimer, and Knox, the Hugenots, John and Charles Wesley, and a host of others brought to the foundation material that will endure throughout eternity. And in later years those who have so nobly endeavored to promote the circulation of God's word, and those who by their service in heathen lands have prepared the way for the proclamation of the last great message—these also have helped to rear the structure.

Through the ages that have passed since the days of the apostles, the building of God's temple has never ceased. We may look back through the centuries and see the living stones of which it is composed gleaming like jets of light through the darkness of error and superstition. . . .

Paul and the other apostles, and all the righteous who have lived since then, have acted their part in the building of the temple. But the structure is not yet complete. We who are living in this age have a work to do, a part to act. We are to bring to the foundation material that will stand the test of fire—gold, silver, and precious stones, "polished after the similitude of a palace." Psalm 144:12.

(Taken from *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 595-599.)

"They had to contend against the bigotry, prejudice, and hatred of those who were building upon a false foundation"

"The workmen were slain, but the work advanced"

"The structure is not yet complete . . . we have a work to do"

by William Barclay

Key passage:
I Cor. 12:12-31

Notes

"A body consists of many parts but there is in it an essential unity"

Here [I Cor. 12:12-31] is one of the most famous pictures of the unity of the Church ever written. Men have always been fascinated by the way in which the different parts of the body cooperate. Long ago Plato had drawn a famous picture in which he had said that the head was the citadel; the neck, the isthmus between the head and the body; the heart, the fountain of the body; the pores, the lanes of the body; the veins, the canals of the body. So Paul drew his picture of the Church as a body. A body consists of many parts but there is in it an essential unity. Plato had pointed out that we do not say, "My finger has a pain," we say, "I have a pain." There is an *I*, a personality, which gives unity to the many and varying parts of the body. What the *I* is to the body, Christ is to the Church. It is in him that all the diverse parts find their unity.

Paul goes on to look at this in another way. "You," he says, "are the body of Christ." There is a tremendous thought here. Christ is no longer in this world in the body; therefore if he wants a task done within the world he has to find a man to do it. If he wants a child taught, he has to find a teacher to teach him; if he wants a sick person cured, he has to find a physician or surgeon to do his work; if he wants his story told, he has to find a man to tell it. Literally, we have to be the body of Christ, hands to do his work, feet to run upon his errands, a voice to speak for him. . . . Here is the supreme glory of the Christian man—he is part of the body of Christ upon earth.

So Paul draws a picture of the unity which should exist inside the Church if it is to fulfill its proper function. A body is healthy and efficient only when each part is functioning perfectly. The parts of the body are not jealous of each other and do not covet each other's functions. From Paul's picture, we see certain things which ought to exist in the Church, the body of Christ.

(i) We ought to realize that we *need each other*. There can be no such thing as isolation in the Church. Far too often people in the Church become so engrossed in the bit of the work that they are doing and so convinced of its supreme importance that they neglect or even criticize others who have chosen to do other work. If the Church is to be a healthy body, we need the work that everyone can do.

"We need the work that everyone can do"

(ii) We ought to *respect each other*. In the body there is no question of relative importances. If any limb or any organ ceases to function, the whole body is thrown out of gear. It is so with the Church. "All service ranks the same with God." Whenever we begin to think about our own importance in the Christian Church, the possibility of really Christian work is gone.

(iii) We ought to *sympathize with each other*. If any one part of the body is affected, all the others suffer in sympathy because they cannot help it. The Church is a whole. The person who cannot see beyond his or her own organization, the person who cannot see beyond his or her congregation, worse still, the person who cannot see beyond his or her own family circle, has not even begun to grasp the real unity of the Church.

"The Church is a whole"

From THE LETTERS TO THE CORINTHIANS (Revised Edition), translated and interpreted by William Barclay. Copyright © 1975 William Barclay. Published in the U.S.A. by the Westminster Press. Used by permission. Pages 113-115.

by editors

Key passage:
Hebrews 11:13

Notes

"After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said, 'The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:14, 15; NIV).

Central to the message of Jesus was a belief in the kingdom of God. It is that invisible, cross-cultural, multi-national kingdom to which every child of God belongs. Its radical nature is such that its members consider themselves to be "aliens and strangers on earth" (Hebrews 11:13; NIV), "but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:19; NIV).

Indeed, every child of God has been given a new citizenship—in the kingdom of heaven. Each believer has been born again—into the household of God. And as members of the kingdom of heaven and of the household of God, they are required to act in certain ways. They are asked to:

1. Believe in the impossible. Albert Schweitzer has said, "The belief in the Kingdom of God is the most difficult demand Christian faith makes of us. We are asked to believe in what seems impossible, namely in the victory of the spirit of God over the spirit of the world."¹

This is indeed the impossible. And yet, our hope is not in ourselves. We could never hope to overcome the spirit of this world using human force and covert activity which seems so necessary in facing world powers. Likewise, we could never hope to overcome the spirit of this world within ourselves by dedication and consecration. For the miracle needed is salvation, a sovereign act of God. And we are asked to believe.

To believe in the impossible.

2. Live by the Sermon on the Mount. Easy enough? Hardly! Consider just two of the demands:

"Blessed are the peacemakers." Here it is evident that "when a Christian meets with injustice, he no longer clings to his rights and defends them at all costs. He is absolutely free from possession and bound to Christ alone."² The peacemaker knows no national or political ties. Thus, in times of stress and war, the "enemy" is the one whom he is called to love.

"Ye are the salt of the earth." Here the Christian is called to act as a preservative, to prevent decay, to place a check on the evil in society. It means speaking out against injustice and oppression. It means social action. The social gospel? Yes, certainly. But along with the gospel of the spirit.

3. Love. Many a good person seeks social justice, and is even a pacifist in times of war, and yet is without love. But those who are members of the kingdom of heaven have as their hallmark the charity spoken of in I Corinthians 13: "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (vs. 4-8; NIV).

¹ "Religion And Ethics" by Albert Schweitzer from *A Treasury of Albert Schweitzer*. Ed. Thomas Kiernan. Copyright © 1965, Philosophical Library, Inc.

² Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., from *THE COST OF DISCIPLINESHIP*, 2nd ed. by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. © SCM Press 1959. Page 157.

by Phillip Keller

Key passage:
Psalm 23

Notes

"Nothing will ever make me leave this outfit — it's great!"

This psalm [Psalm 23] opened with the proud, joyous statement, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

Now it closes with the equally positive, buoyant affirmation, "And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

Here is a sheep so utterly satisfied with its lot in life, so fully contented with the care it receives, so much "at home" with the shepherd that there is not a shred of desire for a change.

Stated in simple, direct, rather rough ranch language it would be put like this, "Nothing will ever make me leave this outfit—it's great!"

Conversely on the shepherd's side there has developed a great affection and devotion to his flock. He would never think of parting with such a sheep. Healthy, contented, productive sheep are his delight and profit. So strong, now, are the bonds between them that it is in very truth—forever.

The word "house" used here in the poem has a wider meaning than most people could attach to it. Normally we speak of the house of the Lord as the sanctuary or church or meeting place of God's people. In one sense David may have had this in mind. And, of course, it is pleasant to think that one would always delight to be found in the Lord's house.

But it must be kept in mind always, that the Psalmist, writing from the standpoint of a sheep, is reflecting on and recounting the full round of the year's activities for the flock.

He has taken us from the green pastures and still waters of the home ranch, up through the mountain passes onto the high tablelands of the summer range. Fall has come with its storms and rain and sleet that drives the sheep down the foothills and back to the home ranch for the long, quiet winter. In a sense this is coming home. During all seasons of the year, with their hazards, dangers and disturbances, it is the rancher's alertness, care and energetic management that has brought the sheep through satisfactorily.

It is with a sublime feeling of both composure and contentment that this statement, "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever," is made.

Actually what is referred to by "house" is the family or household or flock of the Good Shepherd. The sheep is so deeply satisfied with the flock to which it belongs, with the ownership of this particular shepherd, that it has no wish to change whatever.

It is as if it had finally come home again and was now standing at the fence, bragging to its less fortunate neighbors on the other side. It boasts about the wonderful year it has had and its complete confidence in its owner.

Taken from Phillip Keller, *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), pp. 136-138.

REACT

1. Paul's concept of the body in describing the church is an interesting one. It illustrates a closeness and fellowship that says, "If any in the body are suffering, the others are suffering. If any need help, the others will do what they can to help."

There was an elderly lady who had been a faithful, tithing Adventist for many years who was denied admittance into an Adventist hospital because she was too poor to pay what was required. She was then admitted into a nearby community hospital.

Does this situation fit with Paul's description of the "body?" Explain.

Should any measures be taken to see that such incidents as the above do not occur in the church? If so, what can be done?

2. Continuing on with Paul's "body" concept, does this suggest that the first work of the church is to care for its own members, or should it care equally for those outside "the fold"? Explain.

3. Ellen White, in this week's Testimony article, discusses the apostle Peter's idea of Christ being the foundation and chief cornerstone of His church. Consider what this should mean to your life.

4. The kingdom of heaven which Christ talked about took on quite a radical nature—as seen in the Sermon on the Mount, chiefly. Yet, Adventists are generally quite conservative in their approach to social action and politics. Is this as Christ would have it to be? Explain.

5. How fitting is Christ's description of church members as being sheep?

What does this metaphor suggest about the organized work of the church? What is the best way to get sheep to cooperate with a plan?

Holiness

Ellen Gould (Harmon) White (1827-1915). Cofounder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, writer, lecturer, and counselor to the church, possessing the prophetic gift.



“And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight!”

— Colossians 1:21, 22

"Will The Real Christian Please Stand Up?"

□ February 1
Sunday

INTRODUCTION

By Bruce Closser

Most of what we know as humans comes to us through our eyes. Like Thomas, we don't want to believe something unless we have seen it for ourselves.

Prone as we are to the visual, it's not surprising that we tend to evaluate a Christian's lifestyle visually. All of us know the telltale signs to determine if a Christian lives a holy life: the conservative suit, slicked-back hair and no ring on the finger; or the loose blouses, pale faces and short, scrubbed finger nails. These are the first things that we notice (and all too often, unfortunately, the only things we notice). We are a great deal like some English teachers, who, not understanding the internal process of composition enough to comment on it, strike out at the more obvious surface errors, like spelling and punctuation, which actually does little to improve the student's writing style.

But perhaps here lies the key—understanding that a Christian lives a holy life because of something on the inside, not because of what he or she looks like on the outside.

Nothing illustrates this better, I think, than what happens when one loses his sight. When one can't see the person before him, he is forced to study that person in some other way, like talking with him. Imagine, if possible, a blind man confronting a stranger and launching into a series of questions, something like this:

"Pardon me, but I want to ask you several questions to determine if you are a Christian. Obviously, I cannot see you, so would you tell me if you wear your hair in a conservative way? Oh, I see. And do you have a ring

on your finger? Uh-huh. And are you wearing make-up? Pardon me! Does your wife wear make-up? Thank you. Now, are you . . ." And I have to smile at myself for even thinking up such an absurd idea.

Before I am misunderstood and branded as some sort of quiet heretic, let me say that I am not intending to minimize the importance of how the Christian looks; rather, I would like to suggest that a *holy life is unique, different and outstanding in the world—on the outside—because of what the Christian is on the inside.*

Some years ago, one of the major TV networks aired a game show called "To Tell The Truth." I can envision three Christians taking their seats and a panel of worldly celebrities questioning each of them vigorously to determine which of them is the real Christian. Those celebrities would be smart enough to leave unasked such surface questions as how one looks, and to turn instead to such questions as: "At what cost would you be willing to sacrifice your relationship to God? Would you rather be singular in the world than dishonor God? Do you conscientiously avoid anything which would weaken your experience with God? Do you daily discharge the duties of life, however small, with diligence?"

When the votes come in, my guess is that they will be unanimous—for, with the true Christian, such questions as these are particularly telling.

"Will the real Christian please stand up?"

by editors

Notes

"And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblamable and unreprovable in his sight" (Col. 1:21, 22).

Paul presents to the church at Colosse the purpose that Christ has for every member of the church, an ideal that allows for no weakness or sin. The writer to the Hebrews adds the thought that without holiness a man cannot **"see the Lord"** (Hebrews 12:14).

Because the Christian is holy—separated for God—the church is holy. And it will have nothing to do with sin. It cannot condone it or find excuses for it. For the church must always call sin by its right name, and wage war against it.

"To all that be in Rome," Paul wrote to the church members there, "beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:7).

In the days of Christ's ministry His followers were called "disciples." Later on they called one another "brethren." Paul calls them "saints," or "holy ones," or those "sanctified in Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2). And it is because the believer is in Jesus and Jesus is in him that he is a saint. Thus, "sainthood" is not a condition of perfection, but involves a daily growth in grace.

Therefore, Peter exhorts the believers, **"it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).** The Christian is to be holy at all times, in every circumstance, in all his activities. Just as God is holy and never loses His holiness, never sets it aside, so the goal for the Christian is to be holy in following the divine Pattern.

John said, **"And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3).** The Greek word for "purifieth" is in the present tense, which means that the Christian is always seeking to be pure in life. He does not do this by supposing that he can do anything to make himself clean, but he knows that if he comes humbly before the throne of grace and pleads the merits of Christ alone, God will be gracious to him, clothe him with His purity, and work in his life to make him pure.

For God has not called us to be His people with the idea that we shall remain in the same condition as we were before we were called. He calls us so that we may have the privilege of a new creation, a new heart, a new life, one of doing what is right and pleasing to God. **"That ye may be blameless and harmless," Paul said, "the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15).**

When the Christian accepts the goal that God has for him, he becomes active. In mind and heart he dedicates himself to God's purposes and allows the Holy Spirit to operate in his life. Then in his relationships with other church members he acts as a servant of God, doing what needs to be done to provide for the needy, showing hospitality to strangers and opening doors to fellow saints (Romans 16:1, 2). The holy and blameless life is not one lived away from the stream of humanity, but right in its midst.

by Georgina Hill

Enoch's exemplary life is a monument to the holiness sinful men can attain. Mrs. White says he was one of a "line of holy men . . . men of massive intellect, of wonderful attainments. They had a great and holy mission—to develop a character of righteousness, to teach a lesson of godliness, not only to the men of their time, but for future generations."¹

"After the birth of his first son, Enoch reached a higher experience: he was drawn into a close relationship with God. He realized more fully his own obligations and responsibility as a son of God. . . . The infinite, unfathomable love of God through Christ became the subject of his meditations day and night; and with all the fervor of his soul he sought to reveal that love to the people among whom he dwelt."²

"Enoch's walk with God was not in a trance or a vision, but in all the duties of his daily life. He did not become a hermit, shutting himself entirely from the world; for he had a work to do for God in the world. In the family and in his intercourse with men, as a husband and father, a friend, a citizen, he was the steadfast unwavering servant of the Lord."³

"The closer the connection with God, the deeper was the sense of his own weakness and imperfection. . . . Thus he waited before the Lord, seeking a clearer impledge of His will that he might perform it. To him prayer was as the breath of the soul; he lived in the very atmosphere of heaven."⁴

"In the midst of a life of active labor, Enoch steadfastly maintained his communion with God. The greater and more pressing his labors, the more constant and earnest were his prayers. . . . After remaining for a time among the people, laboring to benefit them by instruction and example, he would withdraw, to spend a season in solitude, hungering and thirsting for that divine knowledge which God alone can impart. Communing thus with God, Enoch came more and more to reflect the divine image. His face was radiant with a holy light, even the light that shineth in the face of Jesus. As he came forth from these divine communings, even the ungodly beheld with awe the impress of heaven upon his countenance."⁵

"By the translation of Enoch . . . men were taught that it is possible to obey the law of God; that even while living in the midst of the sinful and corrupt, they were able, by the grace of God, to resist temptation, and become pure and holy. They saw in his example the blessedness of such a life. . . ."⁶

"The godly character of this prophet represents the state of holiness which must be attained by those who shall be 'redeemed from the earth' (Rev. 14:3) at the time of Christ's second advent. Then, as in the world before the Flood, iniquity will prevail. Following the promptings of their corrupt hearts and the teachings of a deceptive philosophy, men will rebel against the authority of Heaven. But like Enoch, God's people will seek for purity of heart and conformity to His will, until they shall reflect the likeness of Christ."⁷

Key passage:
Genesis 5:21-24

Notes

Involved with society, Enoch was the steadfast servant of God

"The greater and more pressing his labors, the more constant and earnest were his prayers"

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 84.² *Ibid.*, p. 84.³ *Ibid.*, p. 85.⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 85.⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 86, 87.⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 88.⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 88, 89.

by Kurt Aland

Editor's Note: Through the ages, the quest for holiness has taken various forms within the church. Of these, monasticism is certainly the most ambitious.

Kurt Aland discusses monasticism and holiness below. As you read this article, consider the positive as well as the negative aspects of this pathway to holy living.

Who was the first Christian monk? According to Athanasius of Alexandria it was Anthony the hermit. According to Jerome, in one of his biographies of the monks, it was Paul of Thebes. One may debate to what extent fiction and fact vie with each other in the biography of Anthony by Athanasius, but there is general agreement that Jerome's report is a product of pure literary fantasy. The biography of Anthony became famous instantaneously; as soon as it became known it was read avidly. Jerome begrudged both Anthony and Athanasius this fame, hence his competitive writing.

No doubt there were hermits in Egypt before Anthony. This is clear from the report of Athanasius about him. But Anthony gave hermit life its characteristic form. The description of his life by Athanasius played just as large a role as the efforts of Anthony himself in the development of the hermit or monastic life. The colonies of hermits which sprang up in the first half of the fourth century in various places in Egypt can be traced to a large extent directly or indirectly back to his example. Each monk lived alone in his own cell. The cells were so far apart that one monk was unable to hear or see his neighbor. The monks came together only for religious services. They earned their livelihood by braiding mats, a purely mechanical activity which was chosen deliberately because in this way the monk was not distracted by his work from prayer and contemplation.

The monk had only one concern, the salvation of his soul. Here we are confronted with a most impressive striving for holiness, the reasons for which are not very difficult to find. Once Christianity came to power, it was in danger of becoming increasingly secularized. Emperor Constantine had begun to favor the church with very substantial gifts and endowments, and each succeeding generation added new wealth to the church's coffers. The bishops had become influential lords whose word carried weight even in the highest political circles. It was advisable to be a Christian if one wanted to get ahead in his profession. And the church found all this good! It had become a part of this world, completely in opposition to its real destiny.

It was then that the pious fled from the world and even from the church into solitude. They thought that only in isolation could they be safe from the temptation which lay in ambush all around them. The hermit chastised himself; he made fewer and fewer concessions to the demands of his body; he believed these things would bring him closer to God. Every contact with men was regarded by him as an obstacle in his search for detachment from the world. Anthony went deeper and deeper into the desert because he objected to every disturbance of his solitude, even though such disturbance came from disciples or those seeking help of some kind. This was an obstacle to his own salvation, for—and that is the limit of this asceticism—the hermit is concerned only with himself. At work here is a holy egotism which concentrates all of the individual's powers in an astonishing measure, but only for his own salvation. Despite the magnificence of this tremendous effort, it loses sight of the true goal of Christianity. A Christian who thinks only

Key passage:
Matthew 3:1-6

Notes

"The monk had only one concern, the salvation of his soul"

"They thought that only in isolation could they be safe from the temptation which lay all around them"

of his own salvation and is not concerned about the salvation of his neighbor has forgotten the central motive of Christianity. Thus even the greatest effort of these holy men—which they were without doubt—must seem in vain to us.

In the following period the degree of Anthony's asceticism was surpassed. There were monks who restricted themselves voluntarily to a certain place. They went only from their cell to the church nearby or they had themselves walled in. Others took up their abode on mountaintops and renounced even shelter over their heads. The so-called pillar saints pushed asceticism to its ultimate extreme. One of them, whose life is fully described to us, had himself buried for two years. He then climbed to a mountaintop where he lived inside a narrow wall, anchored by an iron chain, under the open sky. He spent the next five years on a rock about four feet high. He had more and more rocks placed on top of each other until finally the construction of a pillar was necessary. This also grew higher and higher until, for the final thirty years, he lived on a pillar about seventy feet in height, exposed to all the inclemencies of weather and immersed in constant prayer. He is not unique; there were a number of these "pillar saints" during the fourth and fifth centuries.

From Egypt this hermit life rapidly spread in its various forms into all the Christian churches of the East. But not only this form of asceticism, which can be admired even though it horrifies us, but also the system of monasteries as we know it came from Egypt. Pachomius was the founder of the latter.

Born of pagan parents, he came into contact with Christians for the first time during his period as a military recruit. Pressed into the military service by force and, according to the custom of the time, treated inhumanely as a recruit, he himself experienced the active Christian love of a neighbor. This event obviously caused him to become a Christian. For, as he tells us in his autobiography, he rejoined these Christians as soon as he was released from military service. He received their instruction with zeal. In a dream on the night after his baptism he had a vision which promised him the special grace of Christ. Thus Pachomius became a monk, for to be a Christian in the true sense meant in those days to become a monk.

Like Anthony, Pachomius also went into apprenticeship to one of the hermits of the area. But his path took a different turn from Anthony's. According to a contemporary tradition, he received a direct command from God. This divine command ordered him to found a monastery and gave him detailed regulations for it. In the biography of Pachomius, as in that of Anthony, we find many later pious additions, and no doubt this story about a divine command is one of them. Obviously there were monasteries before Pachomius' time, organized similarly to those founded by him, but they were only a small beginning. Pachomius is the real founder of the cloistered life. Very soon numerous monasteries were organized along the lines of his original monastery. And from Egypt the form originated by him spread into other lands.

A monastery of Pachomius looked quite similar to its modern counterpart: a wall closed the monastery building off from the outside world. Each monk was assigned to a certain building in which he had his individual cell containing his few possessions. All monks were to have an occupation. Either they engaged in a trade or else they cultivated the land on which the monastery was located. In addition, service was rendered to the community. In the morning and evening the house fellowships met for communal worship. The hours between were filled with work which was done for the good of the monastery fellowship; the products of the house fellowships were sold for the benefit of the

“ . . . he lived on a pillar about seventy feet in height, exposed to all the inclemencies of weather and immersed in constant prayer”

monastery. Asceticism was valued highly, but wise moderation kept it within appropriate limits. The whole fellowship was characterized by the principle of voluntarism, and everyone was examined carefully before he was admitted.

This form of monasticism is more familiar to us. But even here its limits are clearly visible. The Bible played an important role; it was learned by heart, and the more Scripture a monk could recite from memory, the more respected he was. But the role of the Bible stopped at this external memorization. It was the same with prayer. The more prayers a monk knew and the more often he prayed, the more saintly he was considered. But this praying was a mechanical recital. The sacrament was valued highly, and a service without Holy Communion was unthinkable. But this had no true significance for the monks' striving after salvation. The monks were very careful to stay within the designated form of church doctrine. But this also was no more than an external agreement. The most prized element in monasticism was the achievement of the will, the exertion of the moral strength of the monk. Through it the monk expected to receive salvation. And it is true of the monasticism of Pachomius that man, the neighbor in the world, was completely outside the view of the monks. The monk was concerned only for his own soul's salvation, not that of his neighbor. And even the thought that one could also serve God in the world was completely alien to him.

“The most prized element in monasticism was the achievement of the will, the exertion of the moral strength of the monk”

From SAINTS & SINNERS, MEN AND IDEAS IN THE EARLY CHURCH by Kurt Aland. Published by Fortress Press and used by permission. Pages 164-168.

by editors

Like Russian gymnasts or circus acrobats, some people are amazing with the spiritual feats they can perform.

I mean really! At times when I have had my hands full with just the rudiments of Christian living, saints pass me by doing spiritual handstands, cartwheels and flips—all the while smiling and telling me how easy it is to go the Christian way.

And on I struggle

Oh well, such is life.

Or is it? Is there not some way that I too may become more "holy" in my daily living? Now I don't care about performing spiritual gymnastic feats around other struggling saints, but I would like to live a more consistently holy life—and not find myself so frustrated and guilt-ridden over failure.

So this is what I've decided that I should do:

1. I need to remind myself that I'm still a sinner although I've been converted. Before conversion I was a lost sinner; now I am a saved sinner. And even though the spirit within me finds sin revolting, my flesh is weak, and I often fall—more times than I like (or would like to admit).

But this is the lot befallen to humanity. Discouraging? Not really. Because I know that while I see myself as very inconsistent at right-doing, God sees me as being justified, which means that He views my life as though it were consistent—even though it's not—since Jesus' life was consistent. And this is thrilling news!

Thus, I need to: **2. Keep my spiritual eyes on Jesus.** I need to accept His acceptance. And this is where much of the struggle is in Christianity.

When I see those spiritual gold medalists zooming past me, it's easy to start comparing my speed with theirs, and then I get discouraged. So what I need to do is to look at Jesus, and compare His speed with theirs, and His with mine. And then I'll see that apart from claiming His win for our records, we have *all* lost the race.

But keeping my eyes on Jesus will do something else: it will conform me more and more to His image. Just as a look at the sun will give a person "sun spots" in his eyes for a number of minutes, so a look at Jesus will give one an image of the Divine for some time to come.

"By beholding we become changed."

3. And then I need to remember that "God isn't finished with me yet."

In one sense, God has finished with me—in that I am justified, and one can't become "more justified." but practically speaking, the Lord and I have a long ways to travel. I need to overcome certain sins, break habits, learn to really care, develop more faith, etc., etc.

But I can still be at peace with myself. For even though I see a very "strait and narrow" pathway ahead, and a lot of people going at some amazing speeds along that path, I can rest my case with Jesus, and keep my eyes on Him, knowing that the work He has begun, He will complete.

Key passage:

Romans 7:24, 25;

8:1-4

Notes

by Bruce Closser

Key passage:
Psalm 51

Notes

Since the eldest son collected the inheritance, it was not uncommon in seventeenth-century England for the lesser sons of highly influential and powerful houses to take up a position with the church, accept a salary, and let some lower-paid curate perform the mandatory duties of the office. While there may have been little scandal in the lives of such men, there was certainly little religious fervor among them either.

One exception was George Herbert who accepted a living at Bemerton in Salisbury and became "learned, godly, and painful divine." It is recorded of Herbert that he preached, prayed, rebuilt churches from money out of his own pocket, visited the poor, consoled the sick, and sat by the beds of the dying. The fame of "Holy Mr. Herbert" rests on a single volume of quiet, graceful poetry known as *The Temple*,¹ published in 1633, shortly after his death. These poems of religious faith picture a man who knew how to live a holy life.

Herbert knew first that in order to live a holy life he had to see himself for what he was. In "Sin's Round" Herbert apologizes to his God for his sinful nature:

"Sorry I am, my God, sorry I am
That my offenses course it in a ring."

Herbert knew second that to live a holy life, a man needed to hear God's voice calling in the raging of his own heart, a thought expressed in "The Collar."

"But as I raved and grew more fierce and wild

At every word
Me thought I heard one calling, CHILD!
And I replied, MY LORD."

Herbert also knew, as he says in two separate poems, "The Altar" and "The Flower," that to live a holy life a man must accept Christ's sacrifice and allow God to sanctify his life.

"A broken ALTAR, Lord, thy servant rears,
Made of a heart, and cemented with tears . . .

Oh let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine,
And sanctify this ALTAR to be thine.

How fresh, oh Lord, how sweet and clean
are thy returns! even as the flowers in spring;

To which, besides their own demesne,
The late-past frosts tributes of pleasure bring.

Grief melts away
Like snow in May

As if there were no such cold thing.

Who would have thought my shriveled heart
Could have recovered greenness."

Finally, having recognized his own faults and turned to God for sanctification and salvation, Herbert knew that he needed to praise God. In "Easter Wings" he writes,

"Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store

. . . With thee

O let me rise

As larks, harmoniously,

And sing this day thy Victories."

¹ George Herbert's Poetry printed in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, Vol. 2 ed. by M. H. Abrams, et al. Published by W. W. Norton & Co. and used by permission.

1. Which of the following would a holy Adventist, or Adventist saint, refrain from doing?

- attend a movie at a secular theater
- attend a movie at a Christian college auditorium
- wear a brooch, or large pin
- wear a stick pin
- wear a ring
- wear a necklace
- wear earrings
- wear all of the above-mentioned jewelry
- kill in a time of war
- manipulate statistics so as to show his institution as being better than it actually is
- eat in between meals
- eat fish
- eat beef and chicken
- eat pork and lobster
- drink alcohol
- smoke
- drive an expensive car
- live in a \$100,000 home
- give a hitchhiker a ride

Explain your rationale for marking certain answers and not marking others.

2. "Ellen White says that the lives of Enoch and others prove that 'it is possible to obey the law of God . . .'. But in my own life I don't find this to be true. After praying and studying and meditating for long periods of times, and following every 'How To' article I have been able to read, I still find myself failing to overcome specific sins in my life." How would you respond to a person who feels this way?

3. After a careful reading of Kurt Aland's Evidence article for this week, list three negative and three positive factors of monasticism.

Negative

Positive

1. _____

1. _____

2. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. _____

Can you identify in any way with the monks in their quest for holiness? If so, in what ways?

The Church: Sinful, Yet Holy



Despite the admonitions and warnings of Ellen White regarding the worldliness of the institutions at Battle Creek, the Battle Creek Sanitarium and Hospital and the Review and Herald Publishing Association were greatly damaged by fire in 1902—which many saw as the judgments of God.



“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!”

— Romans 7:25; NIV

by Hans Küng

This Church composed of human beings is also, through his grace, the Church of God, it is a fellowship which, for all its sinfulness, is at the same time holy and, for all its holiness, is at the same time sinful. . . . Looking at the Church from below, so to speak, we see only the sinfulness of man, and we lose sight of the grace of God which surrounds and embraces the Church; in this view, the Church is no more than an all-too-human religious organization. Looking at the Church from above, so to speak, we see only the holiness of God and fail to take into account the men who compose it and who are constantly weak and tempted; in this view, the Church is a heavenly entity, idealized and lofty, far above the human realm. In reality the Church is the battleground between God's Spirit and evil; the front line does not run between the holy Church and an unholy world, but right through the middle of the sinner's heart touched by the forgiving grace of God. There are not two Churches, one holy when seen from above and one sinful when seen from below. There is only one Church, holy and sinful at the same time, *casta meretrix*, as it has often been called since patristic times, echoing the Old Testament imagery. Holiness and sinfulness are two sides of the one Church, but they are not equal sides. The holiness of the Church is light, revealing its true nature, the sinfulness of the Church is shadow, darkening its true nature. Sin does not arise from the nature of the Church, but breaks into it; it is a dark paradox which does not belong to the Church's nature but must be reckoned as part of its "un-nature."

But this way of looking at the

matter is still much too static. The Church is in motion. Sinfulness and holiness are not simply two sides of the Church, they are the past and future of the Church in its historical existence; yet both are always present in the Church; its past continues, just as its future has already begun. The Church is conditioned by the fact that it is really and truly justified and sanctified. Through God's grace it has left its sinful past behind; sin and death are behind it, and it can never finally and completely fall back into them. This past has no future for its present existence. And yet it remains its past. The Church has been saved, but is still tempted; the holiness granted to it does not automatically make it sinless; its holiness is not a permanent possession which might be guaranteed by external means like baptism and the Lord's supper. The Church must constantly be turning away from its past again, towards its future, that is, its sanctification. God in his mercy has already granted this future to it, as an earnest of future fulfillment, and this fact conditions its whole existence. But it must constantly continue to seize this future, it must constantly be granted to it anew. Because it is holy, it must be holy; the indicative brings an imperative with it. With both humility and joy the pilgrim Church must bear its past, as something indeed past, carrying it out of the present into the future, until finally God's new mercy will cause its past to disappear for ever and its future will become its eternal and imperishable present.

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by editors

Notes

“If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (I John 1:10).

There is a mysterious paradox in the life of the Christian and therefore within the church: He is called a saint, and yet he recognizes still that he is a sinner. And this is one of the great riddles of Christianity.

One factor in understanding this which we must remember is that we are all born in sin. **“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)**, said Paul. The prophet Isaiah said it this way: **“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6)**. It is not that the flesh is evil, *per se*. It is not that we have pure spirits in wicked bodies. Rather, man as a whole is in a desperate state of disrepair, always in need of redemption.

But when one prays for forgiveness, we are told that he is forgiven and cleansed **“from all unrighteousness” (I John 1:9)**. This is because God is **“faithful and just”** and the **“blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (vs. 7)**.

But John is bold and says, **“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin” (I John 3:9)**. Here, the original Greek may best be rendered, **“does not keep on sinning,”** or **“does not habitually sin.”**¹ The child of God finds his whole aim and purpose in life in doing the will of his heavenly Father. But this is not to say that he is without sin and mistakes. For God through the Bible writers is always exhorting the Christian to higher standards of Christian living.

Thus, to the church it was reported, **“Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4)**. As are its members, the church is always in need of reform. The messages to the seven churches recorded in Revelation indicate that there are always areas in which the church must improve. Even the very first—apostolic—church, with all its good points, was told that if it did not repent of having left its first love it stood in danger of losing its place in the sisterhood of churches (vs. 5).

Indeed, there is in God’s holy church the shadow of sin. We should never excuse its presence, but neither should we deny it. Nor should we seek to establish our own righteousness, because that is a futile task anyway. Rather, we should be aware of our weaknesses and in the grace and strength of Jesus seek to bring about a change. It is not making a mistake that is so serious; what is serious is persisting in that mistake and not recognizing that an error has been made.

Unfortunately sin in the church can be a stumbling block to many, and that is one reason why it should be avoided. But since it exists, we often need to repeat the prayer of David, **“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness; according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1; read the entire chapter)**.

¹ SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 652.

by editors

Key passage:
John 15:4 & 5

Notes

It is said that the church is composed of sinners who are saints; it is holy and yet every Christian in it is a sinner. Some believe, however, that this will be the condition of the church only up to the "time of the end." At that time, some have thought, this dual nature of the church will not exist; it will be, in every sense of the word, "holy."

This idea has been fostered in the minds of some by the following passage from *The Great Controversy*: "Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling."¹

Certainly, if the church is without a mediator, it must also be without sin. So the terrifying question in the minds of many church members is, "How will I ever be able to live totally without sin?" Now don't get me wrong. I am a firm believer in the necessity of sanctification. I want the Lord to purify my life and cleanse me of every sin He can find. Yet I am still amazed with the thought of being able to stand before God without the intercession of our High Priest. So perhaps we should investigate further among Mrs. White's writings and the writings of the Bible prophets to better understand this problem.

One statement of Ellen White's which immediately comes to mind as possibly being of some help here is found in *Selected Messages*, vol. 1: "Oh, that all may see that everything in obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ."² Here we see that it is not only the sinful deeds of man that must be atoned for, but the "religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin . . . passing through the corrupt channels of humanity . . . are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God."³

It should be clear that even if man, at the end of time, is to arrive at some sort of a practical perfection, "passing through the corrupt channels of humanity" his "perfect" deeds are "so defiled that unless purified by blood," they are an abomination to the holy God. So at the end of time it will not be a matter of having been so good that we don't need Jesus any more. Never! Jesus must always in some way intercede on the Christian's behalf.

For remember the words of Jesus Himself: ". . . without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5), "Lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:20); and the words of the beloved John, ". . . if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Indeed, will the church be good enough to pass triumphantly through the time of trouble? No more so that it has been good enough to be called into existence by God. For Christ is the church's only hope now, and until the end of all time.

How then should one interpret Mrs. White's statement in *The Great Controversy*? Though in a certain sense Christ's official capacity as an intercessor in the sanctuary above may cease, Christians can be assured that the righteousness of Jesus must always cover their lives—their sins and their own "righteousness" — and that Jesus is with them, strengthening them and pleading His blood in their behalf, "even unto the end of the world."

"How will I ever be able to live totally without sin?"

"Jesus must always intercede on the Christian's behalf"

¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 425 (see also p. 614).

² *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 344.

³ *Ibid.* (read further in this paragraph).

by editors

For those people who like to have things either one way or another, this week's lesson could be difficult to understand. How can it be that the church is composed of sinners who are saints; that the church is holy and yet every Christian in it is a sinner?

"Simul justus et peccator" is the Latin way of phrasing this perplexing paradox. It means "at once justified and a sinner;" that Christ has *imputed* His righteousness (justification) to cover the sins of man, but that His *imparted* righteousness (sanctification) is still imperfectly revealed in the Christian's life. "If justification does not depend on our own righteousness, but on God's loving imputation, it follows that 'whoever is justified is still a sinner' [Luther]. Justification does not mean that we are made perfect or that we cease to sin. . . . Throughout his earthly life, the Christian will continue to be a sinner; but a sinner justified and thus liberated from the curse of the law."¹

Luther saw this to be the experience of Paul, as described in Romans 7.² Here we see a man who desires to do God's will (vs. 15), who delights in God's law (vs. 25). And yet, his experience is such that he cries out in despair, "but I am carnal, sold under sin" and "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (vs. 14, 24).

Paul summarized his problem: "We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. . . . For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out" (Romans 7:14, 15, 18; NIV). Thus, Luther saw Paul as an example of a man who was at the same time justified and a sinner.

In his third *Disputation Concerning Justification*, Martin Luther attempted to clarify this paradox of Christianity: "For we perceive that a man who is justified is not yet a righteous man, but is in the very movement or journey toward righteousness."

"Therefore, whoever is justified is still a sinner; and yet he is considered fully and perfectly righteous by God who pardons and is merciful."³

Thus, the Christian church, partaking of the nature of its members, stands justified before God, though sinful and defective it may be. It is composed of sinners, but justified sinners, and therefore, saints. But while the church is holy—in that it has the imputed covering of Christ's righteousness—it is still marked by its imperfections as sinful indeed.

¹ From A HISTORY OF CHRISTIAN THOUGHT by Justo L. Gonzalez. Published by Abingdon Press. Page 52.

² From LUTHER'S WORKS, vol. 32, ed. by Helmut T. Lehman. Published by Fortress Press and used by permission. Page 237.

³ From LUTHER'S WORKS, vol. 34, by Helmut T. Lehman. Published by Fortress Press and used by permission. Pages 152, 153.

Key passage:
Romans 7:14-25

Notes

"Throughout his earthly life, the Christian will continue to be a sinner; but a sinner justified"

Thus, the Christian church stands justified before God, though sinful indeed

by Gerald Brown

Key passage:
John 8:2-11

Notes

The church of God is like an auto repair shop.

Once upon a time there was a man who wanted to restore his old broken-down car. After carefully searching he found just the place that could do all the necessary work. He took his car there and left the keys with the man in charge. Now because the car was nearly twenty years old, the manager of the garage said it would take a little longer than normal for complete restoration, as some parts might have to be handmade in the shop. But no matter how long it took to repair and rebuild, there was an ironclad guarantee that the finished product would be at least as good as the original model. The owner was welcome to inspect the work at any time and if he was not satisfied with what was being done, he was free to take his car with him.

Now this repair shop looked like most any other mechanic's garage, and it had been highly recommended by friends who had recognized their need for similar work to be done on their own cars. Although the process had been time-consuming, they seemed to be well satisfied with the results. But when our man carefully inspected the shop, he began to wonder about the place. Inside he saw a dirty, greasy floor and a whole host of old autos in various stages of decay and repair. Could it be, he mused, that his murky garage was the place for his precious car? And yet he had seen a few of the finished products from this garage and they were splendid. Of course, common sense told him that neither the butcher, the baker, nor the candlestick maker had the talents, tools or experience to do this work, and so he must rest assured that the job would be done as promised.

After what seemed to be a lifetime, the manager called on the owner so that he could present to him his restored auto. It was, indeed, magnificent and acknowledged to be well worth the wait. The owner accepted the car and rejoiced that it had been restored.

Now, then, how do we deal with the paradox that the church is composed of sinners who are saints, or that the church is holy and yet every Christian in it is a sinner?

1. Remember that we are all sinners in need of restoration. The church is God's designated agency on earth through which the Holy Spirit brings sinners to a knowledge and oneness with the Father. Until Jesus comes, every member of the church is in need of some repair and restoration, no matter how long he or she may have been in the shop. The church is not a showroom for saints, but rather, a repair shop for sinners.

2. Accept the Holy Spirit as the "Master Mechanic" in your life. Through the working of the Spirit the desire for restoration is awakened in our lives. If we accept Him, we will bring our broken-down hearts to Christ, and He will give us new hearts of flesh—just like His own.

3. Share with others what good things God has done for you. As we are being restored we may lead others to be restored by sharing the joys of a restored life with them. Through this, others will not see so much the paradox of the church, as the product of a life in Christ.

by W. Earl Allen

Sin is a pain. It hurts me; it hurts God; it hurts His church. Well then, I ought to get rid of sin—become sinless.

But suppose my temper gets the better of me and I yell at my friend, roommate, or that nerd at the front desk who refuses to clear my late pass for Saturday night. I know losing my temper is sin, but when I try hard to get rid of it I find I never quite make it. Instead of yelling, I just stop talking to the person I'm mad at, making things all that much worse. At this point I feel like giving up, since trying hard to be sinless turns out to be like trying hard to be happy: the harder I try, the faster my goal recedes into the infinite distance.

But then I learn that I am "born in sin" — that I can't do anything about my original unbroken connection because of Adam's first disconnection from God. And this becomes a very handy excuse. I can overeat at the potluck after church, excusing myself with: "After all, I'm only human. And anyway, that big moist piece of devil's food cake was irresistible." But my bulky body soon becomes a pain to move around, and it looks ugly to boot. And so I'm back at square one—wishing I were sinless.

By now I'm frustrated enough to finally look to Jesus (and not at His picture, but what He *did*). And suddenly the light dawns. Here is a Man so unconcerned even about the weight of all the world's sins that He can turn to an unbaptized, non-kosher, self-admitted thief and welcome him into heaven. And I begin to think that perhaps my concern for outward sinlessness is just the flip side of my unconcern for my fellow sufferers in sin.

Instead of worrying about how well He was keeping the Sabbath, Jesus defied the rigid rules so righteously prescribed by the church elders in order to heal a withered hand, give a man his sight, or even glean a little food for His disciples—all on the very day such activities were forbidden. Then I hear Him tell those disciples that the gift of sinless eternal life is only for people whose loving concern motivates them to give their hungry neighbor some food to eat, give the thirsty encyclopedia salesman a drink, invite the lonely stranger in for dinner on Tuesday, clothe the naked and abandoned baby, look after the mentally sick and visit hardened criminals in prison. And it begins to look as if sinlessness doesn't have much to do with worrying about avoiding sin, but is instead a gift of God that grows out of my active concern for my neighbor's needs. And who is my neighbor? A mugger?

So now, instead of yelling about late passes to go to one of the local movie theaters (what I used to put on the pass was "Pizza Hut"), I get together with a friend I found in psych class who's pulling D's and getting discouraged about school. Instead of taking that second piece of devil's food cake at the church potluck, I've joined a prayer group that meets in the early morning to discuss a Bible passage and pray. Then we go out for a half-hour jog—still discussing the Bible thought. Every once in a while I still yell at my roommate for leaving his junk all over the floor, but now I'm mature enough to ask his forgiveness, knowing that God has also forgiven me.

Yes, sin is still a pain, but when I help others get rid of their pain, God seems to be able to get rid of mine.

Key passage:
Luke 6:36

Notes

"Perhaps my concern for outward sinlessness is just the flip side of my unconcern for my fellow sufferers in sin"

REACT

1. Martin Luther stated in the Evidence section for this week that "Whoever is justified is still a sinner." Is this true? If so, then what difference—other than being justified—is there between a Christian and one who is not a Christian?
2. When we say that the church is sinful (in that it partakes of the nature of its members), how sinful do we mean, and in what ways?

Is it as sinful as a "worldly" institution? Or could it be more sinful than a "worldly" institution and still be God's church?

Is there some inherent holiness about the church?

3. In this lesson we have described the church as being both holy and sinful—as are its members. Will this continue to be the case until the end of time, or will the last-day church be primarily or altogether holy? Why?
4. If one sees what he considers to be a serious sin in the life of a fellow church member, what should he do?

Should the "size" of the sin determine to any degree his response?

5. The idea that the church must reach a high level of purity in practice before the Lord can come is traditional with some in the Adventist church. And yet, it seems that people can only be "so good" — based on obvious historical fact. How do you handle this problem in your mind?

Unity Of The Church



"I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

— John 17:23; NIV

by Maylan Schurch

I hope that by the time you read this, most of the news events in the first part of this article will be out of date. But while I'm writing now, my American stomach has been slugged, twisted and kicked again by a sentence or two from a black-robed, gray-bearded, hostage-holding god.

If you're thinking of moving on to the next section and not reading this any more, I can understand. You probably got as sick of the whole situation back then as I am now, as it's happening. But there's a point to these bleary recollections, and it's this: the breath of one man, shaped into certain sounds, can freeze a nation's government in its tracks—because this man, at least for now, has a unity a god might envy. It's not a perfect unity, of course, and a glance back at recent history tells us this type of thing doesn't usually last too long, but at least it's unity enough and power enough to ignore for a while the opinion of an entire world.

Now: blink a couple of times, and stop thinking about the ayatullah, and consider America. Does America have unity? Well, we've all pretty much come to a consensus on Iran, haven't we? And on the need to balance the budget, to avoid nuclear war, and to universally badger the Russians out of Afghanistan? I'd call that unity—more unity than we've had in this country for thirty-some years.

But here's the scary part. America's had a taste of unity again, and it likes it. The inward bellows, squalls and pleas of every human settlement in our land, when finally fitted into coherent chorus, will sound like this: *We want security. We want prosperity. We want peace.* And have you noticed? America is talking about God again, and about the unity a common belief in God can bring. The man who rules Iran gets *his* unity with religion, and the same thing can happen here as well.

We hate murderers, and the Mosaic law backs us up; so let's get enough clout and round them up and put them all to death. We hate rapists, and so does Deuteronomy 22:25; lock the animals up and show them no mercy. We hate government corruption, and Psalm 26:10 agrees with us; so let's fill Congress with *Christian* men and women who are honest on principle. And with strong Christian leaders, and a huge Christian country, we'll lick these problems, stamp them out, erase them. And anybody who gets in the way will get run over. None of this fanatic, offbeat Jonestown stuff, either: any weird little sect who sets up camp and starts drawing people like flies, we've got to keep our eyes on. We're one nation, under God, *indivisible*.

See what may be shaping up? People are discovering that *unity* is the answer to the world's problems. Norman Cousins, former editor and present chairman of the editorial board of *Saturday Review* wrote in the March 29, 1980, issue of *SR*: "One thing we can do is to learn from the present impasse [the Russians in Afghanistan]. If somehow the world can be pulled back from the nuclear brink this time, we should recognize that the creation of a workable world order is a matter of both national and world survival. Let us define once and for all the fundamental issue before the world today. That issue is whether the behavior of nations can be regulated in the human interest."¹

And when all their unified heads turn slowly on all their unified necks, and all their unified eyes are fixed on you. . . .

Well, then's when *you* want a certain sort of unity, too. Right? Unity where it counts, and with Whom it counts. Study it through, Adventist, this week. Study it through.

¹ Norman Cousins, "Pulling Back From the Brink," *Saturday Review*, March 29, 1980, p. 8.

by editors

Notes

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

God is one, so the church must be one, one in spirit, one in plan and purpose. Whether the church is small or big, in the country or the city, in a primitive or advanced society, it is one with God. Unity is its divine characteristic.

People in the world cannot help but be divided. They are divided in their allegiances, in their culture and race, in their language and thought patterns. By contrast, however, the church is drawn together in unity. The Holy Spirit breaks down the barriers that keep people apart.

“There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to one hope when you were called—one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Eph. 4:4-6; NIV). Here we see that there is only one church because there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The differentiation between Jew and Gentile which had existed for many centuries no longer becomes operative. Although sons of Adam, we become the sons of the second Adam, and thus enter into one family on earth and in heaven. As Jesus prayed: **“I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:23; NIV).**

Unity is a characteristic that convinces the world that there is a superhuman power in the church, and therefore it is the object of attack on the part of Satan. For this reason the Christian must always strive to maintain the unity of the faith. He must resist all those human traits that would bring about division.

How is such a unity possible? **“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5; NIV).** Unity in the church comes as each Christian adopts the same attitudes toward life and its purposes as the Master. The Christian seeks to do the Father's will, and is willing to suffer any indignities that may be part of God's plan. He is not so much concerned about his rights and privileges, as he is that God's honor be vindicated, and God's purposes be accomplished.

But the unity of the church is not important because it merely bolsters up the church, or because without it the church would fail. The unity of the church is based on the unity of God and the consistency of His plans. **“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand” (Matthew 12:25; NIV).** The group that is not united is just not God's church; it is not the church in which God is working out His plans and purposes.

“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). It is the God-given characteristic of every living creature to grow and reach maturity. So it must be with every Christian and the church. Peter urges growth in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). He also indicates the means by which we may grow (I Peter 2:2). And as we grow into Christ we grow into unity with one another.

by Shelley Schurch

Key passage:
Ephesians 4:1-16

Notes

Before, during, and after reading this page, think on these things: 1) John 3:16 and the unity of believers. What's the connection here? 2) The secret of unity. Has it been too well-kept? Will you keep it a secret? 3) Individual responsibility, the diversity of gifts, and unity—can these be reconciled? 4) Barriers to unity—how many can you list? How many have you experienced? 5) What sort of power is the inevitable result of unity? 6) Is unity possible, or even desirable?

"Unity is the strength of the church. Satan knows this, and he employs his whole force to bring in dissension. He desires to see a lack of harmony among the members of the church of God. Greater attention should be given to the subject of unity. What is the recipe for the cure of the leprosy of strife and dissension? Obedience to the commandments of God."¹

"The cause of division and discord in families and in the church is separation from Christ. To come near to Christ is to come near to one another. The secret of true unity in the church and in the family is not diplomacy, not management, not a super-human effort to overcome difficulties—though there will be much of this to do—but union with Christ."²

"Then as the children of God are one in Christ, how does Jesus look upon caste, upon society distinctions, upon the division of man from his fellow man, because of color, race, position, wealth, birth, or attainments? The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ. The reason for all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ."³

"What tremendous consequences to the world depend upon the unity of those who claim to be Christians, who claim to believe that the Bible is the Word of God."⁴ "The most convincing argument we can give to the world of Christ's mission is to be found in perfect unity. . . . In proportion to our unity with Christ will be our power to save souls."⁵

"Differences of character exist by nature, but our unity depends upon the degree in which we yield to the transforming influence of the Spirit of God."⁶ "Through the grace freely given them of God, all will seek to answer the prayer of Christ, that His disciples should be one, even as He and the Father are one. . . . Christ will abide in every heart, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, and presenting to the world the unity of the followers of Jesus, thus bearing testimony that the heavenly credentials are supplied to the remnant church. In the oneness of Christ's church it will be proved that God sent His only-begotten Son into the world."⁷

"God's people will not be at variance, one believing one thing and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body. Through the diversity of the gifts and governments that He has placed in the church, they will all come to the unity of the faith. . . . Though we have an individual work and an individual responsibility before God, we are not to follow our own independent judgment, regardless of the opinions and feelings of our brethren, for this course would lead to disorder in the church."⁸

"But let us remember that Christian unity does not mean that the identity of one person is to be submerged in that of another, nor does it mean that the mind of one is to be led and controlled by the mind of another."⁹

"Unity is the strength of the church"

"The secret of true unity in the church is not diplomacy, . . . but union with Christ"

"That they all may be one . . . that they also may be one in us"

¹ *Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 159, 160.

² *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 501.

³ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 259.

⁴ *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 295.

⁵ *Our High Calling*, p. 170.

⁶ *Ibid*, p. 169.

⁷ *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 385.

⁸ *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 29, 30.

⁹ *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 708.

by Hans Küng

Editor's Note: How could one consider the concept of "unity in the church" and not give study to the ecumenical spirit so prevalent in the Christian community today?

Hans Küng, a Roman Catholic theologian and author of several books on the ecumenical movement, has given study to this ideal of reuniting the Christian churches in his book, *The Church*, from which we have selected the following article.

Seventh-day Adventists have traditionally appreciated the good will of those who have led out in the ecumenical movement. However, they are uncomfortable with the thought of being merged with other religious groups to the extent of losing their identity as a specially commissioned prophetic remnant of Christ's church. We reprint this material by Hans Küng, not as an endorsement of his position, but more as an alternate view of church unity by a great thinker with which the alert Adventist should be familiar.

Is a reunion, even on a limited scale, of the separated Christian Churches a real possibility? We are in the midst of an unprecedented and seemingly irresistible movement towards unity not only in the world, but also in the Church. The work of the World Council of Churches on the one hand and the Second Vatican Council on the other is bearing fruit. New relations between the great ecclesiastical centres of Christianity, between Rome, Constantinople, Moscow, Geneva and Canterbury, have been established, and close contacts have been achieved between all the Christian Churches. Churches which thought of themselves as being different "confessions," and so mutually exclusive, have come to see themselves as only of different denominations and have united or at any rate planned the union of their Churches. As far as the great schisms are concerned—between East and West, and Catholic and Protestant—any union is in the more distant future. . . .

The state of separated Christendom seems so abnormal, so contradictory, and so hopeless that it is easy to understand how ways have been sought to justify the unjustifiable:

A first evasion is to retreat from the disunited visible Church to an undivided Church. But can the real Church be split up platonically into a visible empirical Church and an invisible ideal one? As we have seen, the real Church is always both in one. And if the visible Church is divided, then so is the invisible one which is identical with it. Can the unity of the Church be merely "experienced" inwardly, and not also put into practice before the world? . . .

A second evasion is to see the divisions in the Church as a normal divinely intended development and to postpone the reconciliation of the Church to the time of eschatological [end-time] fulfillment. But is it really feasible in the light of the New Testament to regard these divisions as an organic development? Surely in the light of the New Testament they can only be seen as highly inorganic, abnormal, incongruous, a false development which any idealistic concept of development shows to be on the wrong track? . . . We must not try to perpetuate the divisions in the Church, either by the speculations of theological history or the consolations of eschatology. Precisely because we are confronted by a mistaken development, the fact of eschatological fulfillment obliges us to realize what our task is *now*.

A third and related evasion is to regard the different Churches which have arisen as a result of schism as the three or four great branches of

Key passage:
John 17:23

Notes

"We are in the midst of an unprecedented movement towards unity in the Church"

the one tree (the image has been used by Zinzendorf and by some Anglicans). There is certainly much that is true in this, provided that the different Churches are in communion with one another. But can these Churches be branches or off-shoots of the same tree when they disassociate themselves from one another, when perhaps for the sake of the Gospel they must disassociate themselves? Can contradictions in essentials co-exist in the same Church: in creed, in worship, and in the fundamental order of the Church? Can something be truth in one place and error in another, dogma here and heresy there? Can a Church which does not want simply to be absorbed into the world avoid drawing a boundary line, however vague, beyond which a church ceases to be the true Church? If one Church can complain that another has a different spirit, there can at best be an uneasy truce and not a true peace between them. Only when we can pray together, hear the word of God together, confess our faith together and share our meal together, can we speak of one Church. Only then do we confess one Lord and not many, one Spirit and not many, one God and not many.

A fourth evasion is to explain the schism by saying that there is only one empirical Church identical with the Church of Christ, which does not recognize any of the other Churches as Churches. A determined protest against all indifferentist levelling-down inside the different Churches, for the sake of the truth of Christ's Church, will certainly always be necessary. But how justified is this protest? Is this one Church—whichever it is—with its claim to absolute identity being fair to the other Christian Churches, which, it cannot be denied, have not only valid baptism and therefore membership in the body of Christ, but also much else. Is this one Church being fair to itself if it arrogantly overlooks the fact that in some respects it is not the *ecclesia* but merely a *vestigium ecclesiae*, and that what is only a vestige in its own case may be fully realized in the case of other Churches? To overestimate oneself in this way is surely a sign of pharisaical self-conceit, self-righteousness and impenitence. . . .

If we wish to avoid all these evasions, there is in fact only one alternative: not to look for any theological justifications for the divisions in the Church. We should not justify these divisions, any more than we justify sin, but "suffer" them as a dark enigma, an absurd, ridiculous, tolerable yet intolerable fact of life, that is contrary both to the will of God and the good of mankind. And in so far as it is against God's will and man's good, it is at the deepest level failure, guilt, sin—whether of individuals or of the community—and rarely of one "party" alone. However great the misunderstandings, however understandable the historical genesis of the separation and the circumstances of the break, it should never, never among Christians, have come to a division in the Church. A division in the Church is a scandal and a disgrace. Anyone who did not actively try to prevent it, anyone who furthered it in any way at all must bear part of the blame—how much it is not our place to judge. . . . This guilt weighs heavily upon the separated Churches, just as it does upon divided families who have not been reconciled. . . .

The Churches themselves can do nothing to free themselves from guilt in the sight of God, they can only seek to be freed: they are dependent on forgiveness. So the first step in healing the breach must be an admission of guilt and a plea for forgiveness addressed both to God, the Lord of the Church, and to our brothers: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." In asking for forgiveness, we ask for the healing of the division and in asking for forgiveness we declare that we are ready to do whatever is God's will to remove the division: *Metanoia!* . . .

"Can something be truth in one place and error in another?"

We should not justify divisions in the church any more than we justify sin

"The first step in healing the breach must be an admission of guilt and a plea for forgiveness"

Out of this self-critical investigation of the roots of the division and this common confession of our common guilt emerges clearly the task facing us. This does not mean that we should try to create unity with our own hands: through our desires and our efforts, our discussions and actions, our working-parties and commissions, conferences, congresses and councils, Church unions and alliances or even simply through our tolerance and open friendliness. If Church unity already exists and if it must be rediscovered and renewed, then this is fundamentally God's work. Unity—and this we should not forget even for a minute in all our very necessary work towards unity—has been given us by God in Christ. And this should be the point from which we start with confidence—without unnecessary thoughts about whether or to what extent our efforts will be successful—in trying to formulate briefly a few guided theological principles for the ecumenical journey of all Churches—for all of them are our concern.

1. *The existing common ecclesial reality must be recognized:* In Christ we are already united—in spite of the conflicting multiplicity of Churches. We know this by faith; the unity of the Church is a unity of faith. In him all Churches, whatever their disagreements among themselves, acknowledge the *one* Lord and at the same time in the *one* Spirit, his Spirit, the *one* Father, his Father. In him all Churches possess the one Gospel, his good news, however differently they may interpret it. . . . Is there not therefore much in common in the different faiths and hopes of the Churches, so much more in common than there is separating them? Cannot the love in the different Churches rise above, if it cannot obliterate, the differences in faith? Thus the different Churches should not search for the unity of the Church as though it had never been found, but on the broad basis of the unity which has already been found, which has indeed been given to us. . . .

2. *The desired common ecclesial reality must be found:* The recognition of the unity which already exists in Christ calls us to the search for unity. Since we cannot find it by our own strength alone, we need not only at the beginning but all through our search the help of prayer, to him who will give us the means and the fulfillment as well as the desire: a common prayer for redemption from the evil of divisions, from prejudices and misunderstandings, all mistrust and estrangement. Is it still necessary today to admonish the Churches to pray, not against one another (for their own victory), but for one another (in mutual love)? To pray not that their will may be done, but God's; that the reunion of the Churches may take place, not as we imagine it will, but as God wants it. . . .

From *oratio* springs true *actio*. It is not an *actio* which dissipates itself in externals, which still perhaps hopes to achieve union through force, no longer brute force, but legal sanctions (religious unity for the sake of national unity!) or political or social pressures. In fact the State merely harms the cause of Church unity by taking sides, and a Church which uses the power of the State to enforce unity of faith would merely discredit itself and its faith. Tactical or pragmatic action from non-ecclesiastical motives and interests eventually cancels out all efforts in the cause of Church unity. . . . The reunion of the Churches cannot be decreed from above, it must grow up from below, from within both communities and individuals. For this reason, the vital thing at all levels is that we should learn to accept and respect one another—something we are only now beginning to take for granted; we must come to know one another and listen to one another where what is really essential, faith, is concerned; we must feel that we are one, and work together, wherever possible, so as to affirm and witness to Christ together before the world, wherever we can do so in conscience. . . .

"In Christ we are already united"

"Is it still necessary today to admonish the Churches to pray, not against one another, but for one another?"

"A Church which uses the power of the State to enforce unity of faith would merely discredit itself"

3. *Work for unity must start in one's own Church, but with the other Churches in mind: . . .*

Given the present disparate Churches, we can do nothing but search, humbly, unpretentiously, soberly and clear-headedly, for common ground within our own Church, declaring our loyalty, with determination but without presumption, to the Church we belong to; this must be our starting-point. Our efforts for Church unity demand not less but more involvement in our own Church than ever; we have to discover what is sound in its roots, find out its true nature and follow its best intentions. If we become more involved in our own Church, we cannot be but aware of the other Churches as well. We must not look so hard at our own Church that we do not see the other Churches which make the same claims to be the true Church of Christ, claims which in many respects may seem more justified than our own, since in this or that respect they are more attentive to the Gospel and more conscientious in carrying out its message. It then becomes inevitable that these other Churches call our own Church in question, ask of us how we follow the Gospel in this or that respect, and explicitly or implicitly ask us to observe the Gospel in this or that respect in the same way that they do, and so find common ground with them.

Can a Church which desires the unity of the Church of Christ simply dispense itself from the need to grant the justified wishes and demands of other Churches? If we begin our ecumenical efforts by looking at our own Church, this is the acid test of a true desire for unity: the willingness to renew our own Church by fulfilling the justified request of other Churches. If this were done seriously on all sides, a rapprochement, indeed unity itself, would be inevitable. . . .

4. *Truth must not be sacrificed, but rediscovered:* The Churches cannot be unified satisfactorily on the basis of indifferentist faith and half-hearted allegiances. Diplomatic settlements and compromises in dogma are not the right way. We must be mistrustful of formulas or forms of unity which conceal our differences rather than overcoming them. If unity is to be genuine, dogmatic differences must be settled theologically. They will not be solved by pretending that they are not there or that they do not matter. Unless they are genuinely overcome, they will remain a constant source of infection, the more dangerous for being hidden. We must reject "unity at any price." A Church which abandons the truth abandons itself. . . .

Our faith must be stronger, not weaker, our judgment must be clearer, not obscurer, our ability to draw distinctions must be truly critical, not uncritical: this must be the basis of our efforts for unity. But this implies that it is not enough simply to repeat the truth. Truth must be rediscovered, reconquered anew in every age. Truths cannot be handed on like bricks, preferably undisturbed. Truth is not like stone, it is a thing of the spirit which is lost if it is allowed to petrify. Even dogmas and articles of faith are not frozen or petrified formulas, set apart from the course of human history. They too originated in specific historical situations and must constantly be prised out of their historical setting and put in wider (but of course still finite) historical perspective, so that we can appreciate them correctly, more fully, more truly. In particular, dogmas and articles of faith which were the products of fierce confrontations with hostile heresies, ramparts against particular errors, must be dissociated from the polemical plan of campaign they supported, from the narrow limitations of a specific historical moment; we must try to reinterpret them in a more balanced and suitable way, in a better way, by seeing them in the context of the saving fullness of the Old and New Testament message, a fullness which no formulas of the Church can ever exhaust. . . .

"Our efforts for Church unity demand not less but more involvement in our own Church than ever"

"Diplomatic settlements and compromises in dogma are not the right way"

"Truth is lost if it is allowed to petrify"

If the *truth* of faith is to be recognizable to men of any age, the *temporal guise* of faith must change with the times. A Church which truly desires to find unity with other churches must be a lover and follower of truth, completely devoted to truth, it must be a Church which knows in all humility that it is not the manifestation of the whole truth, that it has not fulfilled the whole truth, a Church which knows that it must be led anew by the spirit of truth into all truth. . . .

5. *The standard for unity must be the Gospel of Jesus Christ, taken as a whole*: What should be our guide as to what is, and what ought to be, common ground between the Churches, what should be our yardstick for the justified demands of other Churches and our measure of what is and what is not truth in theory and practice? What standard must we apply in our efforts for Church unity? The Church itself cannot be standard, nor can the individual Churches, otherwise we will merely perpetuate the divisions which exist. The only standard is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We must not seek unity through eclectic additions, whereby something is chosen from each Church and put together to form a new whole; the fundamental differences of approach between the Churches, which are what has led to the formation of these individual elements, would remain barriers just as they were before. On the other hand, unity is not to be sought by conciliatory subtraction of any elements which divide the Churches, after which we would simply make do with what was left over: a very thin and insipid distillation. No, the different Churches must be judged according to the programme which was laid down for all of them and which each acknowledges, the message which is the real basis of their existence and hence the basis of their unity: the original message of Jesus Christ, as revealed in its original, unique and irreplaceable form in scripture. . . .

While the genuine tradition of a Church must always be respected, there is a false traditionalism in old and new Churches alike; for while the older Churches recognize the value of tradition, the younger churches, which apparently deny tradition fundamentally, are nevertheless inextricably involved in it. Through national peculiarities, certain historical or social factors, or through particular leading personalities; but any kind of traditionalism must retreat and capitulate when confronted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the teaching of our own traditions and confessions that we should not listen to those traditions and confessions, but to Christ and his message. It is the Lord and his Gospel alone which can be the measure of how much in our tradition is justified and how much is unjustified; on the basis of the Gospel alone we can judge between that which has absolute and that which has only conditional validity, between those differences that are tolerable and those that are intolerable, between the points at which we must be unconditionally unanimous and the points at which we should be broad-minded and tolerant. The road to unity is not the return of one Church to another, or the exodus of one Church to join another, but a common crossroads, the conversion of all churches to Christ and thus to one another.

From *THE CHURCH* by Hans Küng. Copyright © Verlag Herder K.G., Freiberg in Breisgau 1967, English Translation Copyrights Burns & Oates Ltd. 1967, Published by Sheed & Ward Inc., New York. Pages 276-293.

**A Church must know
"In all humility that it is not the manifestation of the whole truth"**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is the Church's standard

"The road to unity is not the return of one church to another, but the conversion of all Churches to Christ and thus to one another"

by Ed Shakespeare

Key passage:
1 John 1:3-7

Notes

The basis of unity in the church is each individual's relationship with the Lord, for, as we know, the closer we are to Christ, the closer we'll be to one another. Also, if there is anyone in our group we have wronged, we certainly need to immediately make it right for there to be unity (Matthew 18:15-17). Unity obviously can't exist together with quarrels.

But after these conditions have been met, what more can be done to build unity? What more can the church do to engender a spirit of brotherhood? To bring about a confederation for good?

1. Turn the faces you see in Sabbath School each week into close friends. This "getting better acquainted" might mean having small discussion classes rather than a general lesson study. (Or searching around for a small class to meet with rather than the huge 100-member classes so common around our colleges!) To build unity within the group it is more important that you know each other and have fellowship with one another than it is to sit around in a think-tank and have your ears tickled by some eloquent speaker. The practice of worshiping with a small group seems to have been the basis of the New Testament church's unity, for we frequently find the phrase "the church at your house" in Scripture (Romans 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:19; Col. 4:15).

2. Another strategy for building unity is to get your group together to do things outside of the regular Sabbath School time or meeting place. I have taken the Sabbath School classes I have been in charge of to the mountains or to the beach for Sabbath School and an afternoon hike. Getting out into nature and spending time together is a good way to get to know each other better.

Or you can spend time putting together a program (music, etc.) that your group could present to other young-adult groups or small churches. I have spent many Sabbath afternoons working on a couple of plays with a number of friends which we later presented two or three times to others. But whatever your group decides to do, it is vital to make each member of the party feel accepted and wanted (1 Cor. 12:12-31).

I have also found that it is important to get together with other church members for social activities, about once a month or so. We have gone roller skating, have had a car rally, a New Year's Eve party, and sometimes just played table games over at someone's house on Saturday night. Providing the proverbial "good, clean fun" is an important part of building unity, and therefore an important part of the church's mission.

3. Probably the most important activity for building unity, however, is a small Bible study group, or several of them if possible. You can get to know each other at social activities, you can learn about the Bible at Sabbath School, but to really have unity, you need to get together and share your spiritual joys and sorrows with each other. Before I left the church where I was last a member, we met every Friday night with a group of friends. We read and discussed a passage of Scripture and then went through our prayer lists, talking about the needs of people we were praying for, mentioning any significant experiences we'd had during the week, and finally, we had prayer over the things we'd discussed.

Unity, then, is built by *spending time together* in order to get better acquainted, and by *sharing with others our spiritual experiences*.

by Catherine Jarvis Bath

Key passage:
John 15:12

Notes

Regardless of the uniquenesses of our personalities and no matter how dark our lives have been, when we come into association with Jesus we bear precious traits of character that prove to be blessings for the unity and support of the church.

Each of us is very unique and different. And each of us has faults. But day by day, in communion and fellowship with our Lord, we can learn the lessons of His life, and our unchristian uniqueness, our bad habits and our faulty dispositions will change.

Think about the disciples of Jesus and the example they can be to us. How varied their personalities were! But was there unity? I'm sure there was. But was it a spontaneous blooming? Highly unlikely. They were twelve very different—at times stubborn—men, men who had to really sweat over the problems of working together. It was only in and through Christ that they dwelt in the family of God and learned—as we must learn—to become one in faith, in doctrine and in spirit. The disciples, as our examples, became of "one accord," "of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 2:46; 4:32).

Differences and grievances will always be with us, but there need not be departure from the church body. For the love of Jesus leads to love for one another, to unity, to one mind and one judgment. With Christ at the center, we approach each other only as we approach Him, and as we approach Him, we come closer to one another.

And yet, it is Satan's prime effort to bring jealousy, gossiping, backbiting, etc., into the midst of God's people so as to cause division. For Satan realizes that if he can keep God's people apart, he is weakening the body of Christ. Thus, the most important thing Jesus has asked us to do is to love one another.

Now as members and parts of one body, we are in a loving, close and harmonious relationship with each other. We have unity. But need there be conformity? I think not. Many different parts are needed for a healthy functioning. We become dexterous and coordinated in our movements (with practice) but we never lose our individuality. A left hand will always be a left hand. Though every part is tamed and mannered, each always maintains a separate identity.

Indeed, it is only through uniting with Christ and thereby with one another that our efforts will be rewarded. And certainly, as we learn to work together and are one in mind and faith, we will have the power of the Holy Spirit working for and through us.

"Was there unity? I'm sure there was. But was it a spontaneous blooming? Highly unlikely"

"We become coordinated in our movements but never lose our individuality"

REACT

1. If all were led by God, would all arrive at the same conclusions?
2. What differences do you see between "unity" and "conformity"?
3. In the Testimony article for this week, Ellen White states that "God's people will not be at variance, one believing one thing and another having faith and views entirely opposite, each moving independently of the body."

But as our church has developed, we see that Adventists have changed their positions on certain points of belief which they once held tenaciously. And those who sought to change these traditional but unbiblical beliefs were "at variance" with the rest of the body, yet they were seemingly doing *God's work*. How do you reconcile this fact with the statement above? When, if ever, is it proper for one who is dissatisfied with the generally held beliefs to go against the majority and the *status quo* for the sake of what he considers to be truth?

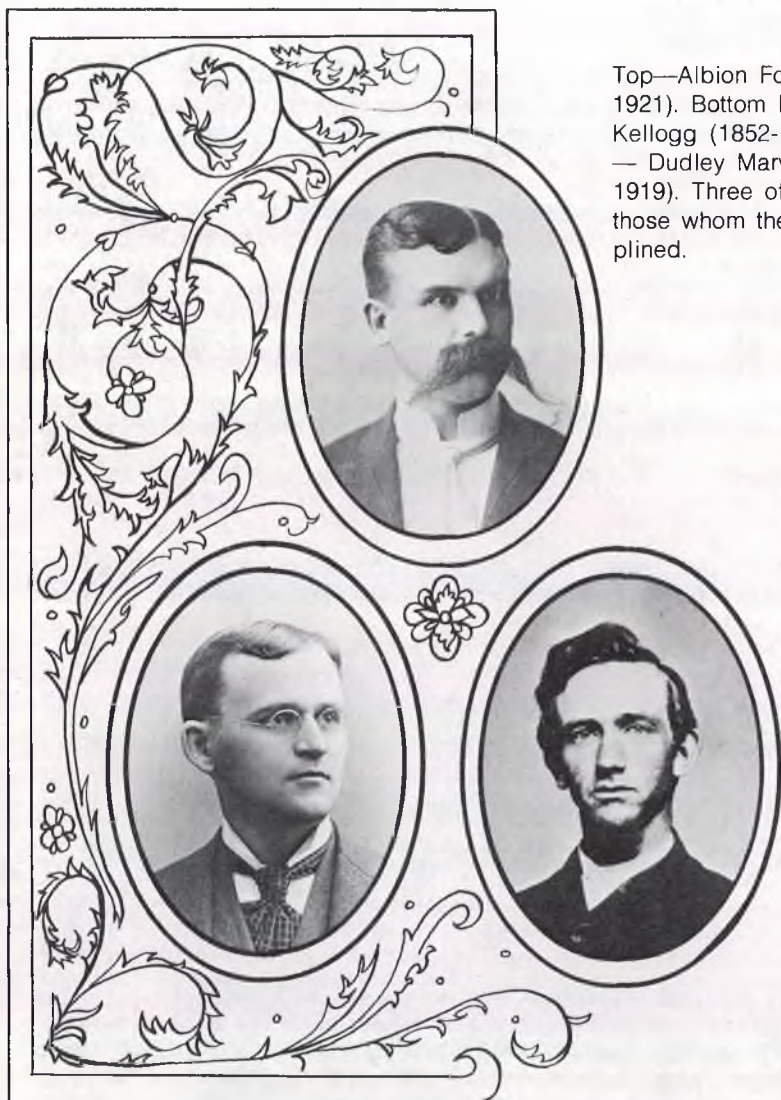
4. After considering the article on the unity of the church by Hans Küng, list below those points you found which you consider to be valuable, and opposite of this list, those points where you felt Dr. Küng was mistaken.

Of Value

Mistaken

5. Adventists tend to stress the necessity for unity among their own membership, yet they downplay the importance of unity within the Christian church as a whole as they fear to compromise their uniqueness. Also, why would they wish to unite with "Babylon"? But what role do you believe Seventh-day Adventists should play in the ecumenical movement (the movement to reunite the Christian churches)?
6. Can something be truth in one place and error in another?

Discipline



Top—Albion Fox Ballenger (1861-1921). Bottom left — John Harvey Kellogg (1852-1943). Bottom right — Dudley Marvin Canright (1840-1919). Three of the best-known of those whom the church has disciplined.

“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.”

— Matthew 18:15; NIV

by Julie Woods

Big tears were welling up in her brown eyes and her words climbed coarsely out of her throat as she started talking. I squirmed uncomfortably in my seat.

Three of us girls had been friends for several years; we had graduated together from eighth grade and were now chattering about all our exciting expectations for academy. But somehow the conversation had switched to "parents;" that's when Emily started crying. She was telling us how her father had had his church membership taken away.

I had heard about it earlier, just after it had happened. The gossip scrambled over the pews of the church and I had all too eagerly listened. I'm not so heartless that I didn't immediately think of my friend and feel sorry for her, but I did think she would rationally view it like all the rest of us did. After all, her mom and dad were divorced and her father was clearly going against biblical principles by his actions; a black and white, open and shut case.

But my self-righteous little mind was not prepared for the tears, pain and questions Emily brought up. Her

father hadn't done anything wrong, she said, he had just wanted to be happy. What right did the church have to destroy that happiness? I didn't answer; somehow all my logic faded and seemed indecisive when confronted with Emily's hurt and confusion.

Emily's father was also very hurt by the church's decision and, no doubt, somewhat bitter. He did continue to attend church though, sing in the choir and take part where he could. But Emily did not attend much after that.

And now, a bright and ambitious girl, Emily is going to a secular college, and the church has no part in her life. Her confusion began when her father was put out of the church, and it was fostered when no one was able to offer her any more satisfying answers than I had been able to.

I still don't have any answers. And when I think of Emily crying that night, I still squirm uncomfortably inside.

by editors

Notes

“Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul” (Prov. 29:17).

The Bible tells us that there is a close correlation between love and discipline. It is because the church is where love is, that there must be discipline. God Himself disciplines, and thereby sets an example of what parents and leaders in the church should be prepared to do.

“The Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son” (Hebrews 12:6; NIV). The writer to the Hebrews quotes from Proverbs 3:11 and 12 to point out that a loving relationship between father and son leads to a process of correction and discipline. It must be expected, therefore, that God will treat His children in the same way.

Besides being under the discipline of God, however, as members of the church we must also be prepared to discipline ourselves, as did Paul. **“I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (I Cor. 9:27; NIV).**

But many of us are more anxious to control and correct others than to do the same for ourselves. And there is a place for such activity. But there are principles to be observed. **“If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over” (Matthew 18:15; NIV).** Here Jesus outlines three steps to take in Christian discipline: 1. Go to the one who has made the offense and speak to him personally. 2. If the matter is not resolved by the first step, then take one or two witnesses so that there will be clear evidence of the grievance involved (vs. 16). 3. The third step is to take the matter to the hearing and judgment of the church.

If a member continues to live in open sin after periods of encouragement and counsel, Paul says to **“hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (I Cor. 5:5; NIV).** Paul certainly makes himself clear that open sin cannot be tolerated in the church. Apparently there was a case of incest in the church at Corinth and the church members had done nothing about it (vs. 1, 2). But there is good reason for acting definitely in such matters. The church must be pure, and no flagrant sin should be tolerated in it. Furthermore, the power of example is strong, and if others see sin going unpunished they may be encouraged to do the same (vs. 6, 7).

But above all, disciplinary action is for the good of the wrongdoer. Discipline awakens the guilty party to the seriousness of sin. And it sometimes takes such strict measures to so impress the mind in order to bring about necessary change.

Finally, when dealing with this matter of discipline, remember that it is human to condemn, divine to show mercy. **“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity” (Col. 3:12-14; NIV).**

selected by Julie Woods

Key passage:
Matthew 18

Notes

In dealing with erring church members, God's people are carefully to follow the instruction given by the Saviour in the eighteenth chapter of Matthew.

Human beings are Christ's property, purchased by Him at an infinite price, bound to Him by the love that He and His Father have manifested for them. How careful, then, we should be in our dealing with one another! Men have no right to surmise evil in regard to their fellow men. Church members have no right to follow their own impulses and inclinations in dealing with fellow members who have erred. They should not even express their prejudices regarding the erring, for thus they place in other minds the leaven of evil. Reports unfavorable to a brother or sister in the church are communicated from one to another of the church members. Mistakes are made and injustice is done because of an unwillingness on the part of some to follow the directions given by the Lord Jesus.

"Men have no right to surmise evil in regard to their fellow men"

"If thy brother shall trespass against thee," Christ declared, "go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Matthew 18:15. Do not tell others of the wrong. One person is told, then another, and still another; and continually the report grows, and the evil increases, till the whole church is made to suffer. Settle the matter "between thee and him alone." This is God's plan. "Go not forth hastily to strife, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame. Debate thy cause with thy neighbor himself; and discover not a secret to another." Proverbs 25:8, 9. Do not suffer sin upon your brother; but do not expose him, and thus increase the difficulty, making the reproof seem like a revenge. Correct him in the way outlined in the word of God.

Do not suffer resentment to ripen into malice. Do not allow the wound to fester and break out in poisoned words, which taint the minds of those who hear. Do not allow bitter thoughts to continue to fill your mind and his. Go to your brother, and in humility talk with him about the matter.

"Whatever the characters of the offense, this does not change the plan that God has made for the settlement of misunderstandings"

Whatever the character of the offense, this does not change the plan that God has made for the settlement of misunderstandings and personal injuries. Speaking alone and in the spirit of Christ to the one who is in fault will often remove the difficulty. Go to the erring one, with a heart filled with Christ's love and sympathy, and seek to adjust the matter. Reason with him calmly and quietly. Let no angry words escape your lips. Speak in a way that will appeal to his better judgment. Remember the words: "He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." James 5:20.

Take to your brother the remedy that will cure the disease of disaffection. Do your part to help him. For the sake of the peace and unity of the church, feel it a privilege as well as a duty to do this. If he will hear you, you have gained him as a friend. . . .

"Mercy implies imperfection of the object toward which it is shown"

God's love for the fallen race is a peculiar manifestation of love—a love born of mercy, for human beings are all undeserving. Mercy implies imperfection of the object toward which it is shown. It is because of sin that mercy was brought into active exercise.

Taken from *Testimony Treasures*, vol. 3, pp. 200-204.

by J. W. C. Wand

The attitude of the Church to the sinner within her fold was dictated by the threefold need to uphold a good example to the flock and to bear a good witness to those who were without as well as to restore the wrongdoer. The most difficult cases were those of people who had given way in persecution, and they provided controversies with which we must deal later. The other great difficulty was the case of those guilty of fleshly sins. We have already traced the development of the church's practice in this respect from Hermas to Callistus. The *Didascalía* endeavors to keep the mean between harshness and laxity; it warns the Bishop against being afraid to bring the sinner under discipline and at the same time tells him that his business is not to condemn but to save. 'Judge severely, O Bishop, like Almighty God, and receive those who repent with compassion like God.' The guilty are to be excommunicated, and to be received back only after due penance.

Excommunication involved literally staying outside the church during the service. 'When he is put out, be not angry with him and contend with him, but let him keep outside of the church, and then let them go in and make supplication for him. . . . Then thou, O Bishop, command him to come in and thyself ask him if he repents. If he be worthy to be received into the Church, appoint him days of fasting according to his fault, two or three of five or seven weeks, and thus allow him to go, saying to him all that is proper for admonition and doctrine.'

An important element in this penitential system was the *exomologesis* or public confession of sin before the assembled congregation. This was part of a period of penance voluntarily entered upon. Where a sinner did not know whether he ought to submit to such a period of probation or not, advice could be sought in a private confession. If a sinner did not voluntarily seek discipline but was charged by a fellow-Christian (no charge from a heathen being admitted), the case was tried by a sort of court presided over by the bishop but so representative of the whole Church that even the laity seem to have taken a share in pronouncing judgment. It will be remembered that not only S. Paul but also the organisers of pagan clubs and *collegia* condemned the practice of resort to the civil courts: it was held that the members of any brotherhood ought to be able to settle their differences among themselves. Cases that might come before the Christian bodies for jurisdiction were those of fraud, false witness, fleshly sins, homicide, heresy, schism, idolatry, and magic. The severity of the period of penance imposed varied with different churches. The most elaborate system comes from Asia Minor, where we hear of three successive stages through which the penitent must pass. The first was that of the Hearers, who were dismissed from the Eucharist after the sermon; the second was that of the Kneelers, who stayed only a little longer while the congregation prayed over them; the last was that of the Consistents who remained throughout the service but were not allowed to join in the oblation or to make their communion.

From A HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH TO 500 A.D. by J. W. C. Wand. Published by Methuen & Co., Ltd. Pages 92-94.

Key passage:
I Corinthians 5

Notes

"... his business is not to condemn but to save"

"An important element in this penitential system was the public confession of sin"

"It was held that the members of any brotherhood ought to be able to settle their differences among themselves"

by Sieg Roeske

Key passage:
Hebrews 12:6

Notes

Christian discipline is the work of God. It is a work of love that seeks to save, no matter how painful the experience may be (an element of pain seems unavoidable in the process of separating sin from the sinner). And Calvary's cross with its demonstration of God's love, in spite of pain, serves as the basis of all true discipline.

When the church overlooks the sins of its members and lets them continue unrebuked, she, by this act of omission, makes herself a partaker of their sins. Thus, we are to "Deal faithfully with wrongdoing. Warn every soul that is in danger. Leave none to deceive themselves. Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil . . . the church must show that she does not sanction their deeds or she dishonors the Lord."¹

Church discipline often goes unadministered. There is a fear of being misunderstood, or of being considered unloving. But perhaps the church has most often failed to discipline because her leaders are not willing to meet the requirements that prerequisite discipline. For it requires a great deal of time and effort to do this most important work. "No church officer should advise, no committee should recommend, nor should any church vote, that the name of a wrong-doer shall be removed from the church books until the instruction given by Christ has been faithfully followed. When this has been done, the church has cleared itself before God."²

It may be easy to raise the hand in a church board or business meeting to vote a certain measure of discipline upon an erring member. It is more difficult to take the time to visit, pray with and encourage an erring one, in order to win that person back to God. But without the practical demonstration of love seen in sacrificial service in behalf of the erring, one is disqualified to participate in the process of administering discipline.

Some general principles to follow in Christian discipline are as follows:

1. **Do not shun discipline; it is part of God's work.**
2. **Since it is always humiliating to have one's errors pointed out, do not make the experience more bitter than necessary by needless censure.**
3. **Do not attempt to destroy the erring one's self-respect.** Do not seek to bruise and wound, but rather to bind up and heal.
4. **Do not allow your forbearance toward the erring to degenerate into toleration of sins, or even participation in them.**
5. **Do not publicly expose the failure of a member and thus increase the difficulty.**
6. **Be careful to guard against making the reproof seem like a revenge.**
7. **Let the repentance of the sinner be accepted by the church with grateful hearts.**
8. **Discipline when, because of your love for the sinner, it hurts you more than it does him.** Do not discipline when you enjoy doing it.

The one most qualified to help administer discipline is the one who, because of his great love for the erring, finds it most difficult to do so. The one who enjoys discipline may be the one least qualified.

9. **Remember that love is the greatest power to help a sinner turn from sin to righteousness.** Someone has said, "Love me, and you'll make me good."

"Love me,
and you'll
make me
good"

¹ *Gospel Workers*, pp. 502, 503.

² *Gospel Workers*, p. 501.

by Julie Woods

Key passage:
Colossians 3:12-14

Notes

The church is composed of individuals. It is going to be individuals—not stereotyped groups—that are taken to heaven. Therefore, a major function of the church is to provide an atmosphere that will nurture a family of joyous, dedicated individuals who can share and grow together. But individuals each develop in different areas and at different rates. And this is what makes the whole concept of church discipline difficult. For none of us has the ability to read minds or determine whose best interest is being met in making judgments on one’s behavior.

Christ realized our limited ability to deal fairly with problems like these, so He has given us in the Bible suggestions for dealing with such situations. If we carefully and prayerfully follow these instructions, they will save a great degree of heartache for all concerned.

But so much for generalities. Specifically let me say that when dealing with disciplinary matters, fairness and consistency are of the utmost importance. For example, Jesus did not establish a hierarchy of sin with sexual promiscuity at the top. But this is what many in the Christian world have done. Promiscuous actions are oftentimes thought of as being more abominable than other sins, so a large number of church disciplinary actions deal with them. But what about cheating on income tax, abusing children, or neglecting aged parents? Are these sins “not so bad,” or are they “worse”?

“Fairness
and consistency”

Inconsistencies in church discipline may also be seen when one compares the discipline meted out to those who are highly visible with those who are not. The church’s leaders who have problems are often quickly and sometimes sharply dealt with. Whereas others, who are members in name only, can be involved in similar situations and receive no censure. Or, the opposite can happen: the church leader, who, because of his position, can receive little censure (or can simply be transferred to a different region) while the “unknown” member can receive a stern rebuke or dismissal.

Some believe that perhaps this is the way it must be. For in each situation, unique individuals, congregations and organizations are involved, making it difficult (impossible?) to be totally consistent. But this much we do know: that disciplinary judgments must each be made as consistently as possible, but always on an individual basis—considering the uniquenesses of those involved.

And now let me add one other thought. When someone is put out of the church, it is important for all to realize that this is not to be a period of ostracism on the part of the church members. Remember the words of Christ when He said that He came to heal the *sick*, and not to treat the people that are well. So among those disciplined, Christians need to lavish all the love and attention and support that is possible to give them; they are in much greater need of encouragement than are secure members of good standing. It might be easier on our missionary spirit to try and convert the derelict on the street corner, but those who were once close to Christ need our efforts all the more.

“The disciplined
are in much
greater need of
encouragement
than are secure
members of
good
standing”

Discipline is certainly a very sensitive issue—both for the disciplined and for those disciplining. But both Christ and Paul offer instructional help in the pages of Holy Writ, and the Holy Spirit offers aid for every duty one must face as a Christian and church member. And it would be well if we would each remember to do whatever we must do in the spirit of Christ’s mercy and longsuffering love.

REACT

1. In many of the larger churches there are often scores of people who, some feel, should without doubt be disfellowshipped from the church. Such make no pretense at living according to Adventist standards. So should these churches engage in "house-cleaning," as it were, and thereby purify the church? If so, how should this delicate situation be handled? If not, explain your reasoning.

2. If one is disfellowshipped from the church, is it certain that he—at that time—is also lost? May a person be both saved and disfellowshipped? Explain.

3. In the Introduction for the week's lesson the author, when discussing the troubles and perplexities of Emily and her disfellowshipped father, confessed, "I still don't have any answers." After reconsidering the events in this story, what answers could you provide?

4. J. W. C. Wand, in the Evidence article for this week, tells us that "An important element in this penitential system was the . . . public confession of sin before the assembled congregation." What purposes do you think such public confessions served? Should this practice be instituted today? Why?

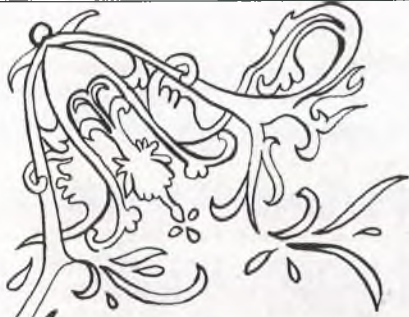
5. The Logos article for this week says, "The church must be pure, and no flagrant sin should be tolerated in it." What is "flagrant sin"?

6. In your opinion, for which of the following should a person be disfellowshipped from the church:
 - not going to gathering
 - alcoholism
 - consistently working on Sabbath
 - rejecting the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14
 - not paying tithe
 - child abuse
 - eating unclean meats
 - wearing jewelry
 - disregarding the needs of the poor
 - divorce and remarriage without "sufficient" grounds
 - disbelief in Ellen White as a prophetess of God
 - consistent income tax evasion

Explain why you marked some answers but did not mark others.

Concerns

Of The Church



"Wash and make yourselves clean. Take your evil deeds out of my sight! Stop doing wrong, learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow."

— Isaiah 1:16, 17; NIV

by Greg Brothers

The first meeting of the town's Safe Driving Advisory Council was, uh, energetic.

"The Mayor has called this group together for His own special purpose," the chairman began. "This evening we will discuss the need for. . ."

"New members! New members!" shouted a man near the front. Motions for the house lights to dim, the authorized speaker continued.

"My topic for this evening is, 'New Members—the Lifeblood of an Organization.' If I could have the first slide please. . ."

"Mr. Chairman, I must speak!" The interrupter, a middle-aged man clad in burlap, clearly looked distraught. "How can we speak of bringing in new members when our own house needs to be put in order? Let us first rectify our shocking lack of knowledge of the Driver's Manual; let the driving records of our own members improve—then the *example* of our group will most clearly accomplish our goals!"

"Nonsense!" exploded another. "Look—most of the traffic deaths around here occur on that twisted old road that leads out of town. If we could get that changed—put in a four-laner, or at least get rid of some of those blind curves—we'd stop a lot of misery around here, and that's what we're here for, right? Now the first thing we need to do is form a political action committee. Next, we lobby with. . ."

"And while we're lobbying, the people still die." The speaker adjusted her stethoscope, then continued. "If we formed an ambulance company. . ."

"If we formed an ambulance company," interjected another, "we'll be helping people *after* the fact instead of *before*. No, what is needed is prevention—and the key to prevention is education. We have got to train people—rid them of the bad

habits that are causing them so much misery! Driver education programs, spot announcements in the media, 5-Day Plans to Stop Tailgating!"

"Mr. Chairman!" The gray-suited businessman waited for his well-accustomed silence, then resumed speaking. "As this meeting has made apparent, what is needed above all is organization. If we had some orderly way of carrying out business, we could conduct our affairs efficiently and effectively, instead of having all this chaos. Officers should be elected, dues collected, protocol established, committees formed! The council's first priority should be to set priorities."

The chairman was about to flee the meeting when he noticed a tiny, white-haired lady, patiently waiting to speak. Gaveling the crowd to silence, he motioned her to speak.

"As Safe Driving Advisors," she said in a surprisingly powerful voice, "we certainly don't have a lack for advice. Some have proposed that we as SDA's be most concerned with recruiting other SDA's. Others have proposed that we develop either our organization, or our own driving abilities. People have said that others would be best helped by removing hazards, by aiding victims, by educating drivers.

"Now all of these are good suggestions and all of them will be necessary. But our first concern should be to hear what the Mayor feels that we should do—since He was the one that formed this council. Since He is with us this evening, I yield the floor to Him."

The Mayor moved to the podium. "I believe that this council's chief concern," He began, "must be. . ." (The rest of the Mayor's speech is to be provided by you. Check this week's lesson for help.)

by editors

Notes

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you make your good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (I Tim. 6:12; NIV).

Paul, writing to Timothy, urges the young minister to keep well away from the practices of the world. In the world, he says, there are those who reject the teachings of Christ. But by contrast, the man of God is to follow after **“righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness” (vs. 11)**. Thus, the member of the church differs from the man in the world in that his interests and goals are entirely different. In this lesson we will look at some of those differences.

First of all, the primary concern of the Christian is to be a worthy witness for his Lord. **“And he said unto them, go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15)**. This witness arises naturally out of the Christian’s experience. He need not be a skilled preacher or careful scholar in order to witness. Rather, like the blind man who was healed by Jesus said to the Jewish leaders, **“whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25)**, so the Christian’s most forceful testimony is to tell others of his own spiritual experience.

Besides being known for his witness, however, the members of the church are to be diligent students of the word. **“Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true” (Acts 17:11; NIV)**. The believer knows that the word of God is his life. He studies it daily. He shares insights gained with others. And it alone is the Christian’s final authority.

The Christian is also concerned about his health, as Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **“Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (I Cor. 6:19, 20)**. So the conscientious Christian desires to keep his body physically fit. He is concerned about getting proper exercise and plenty of rest. He tends to avoid too much sugar, high-cholesterol foods and caffeine. And he (or she!) diets when he realizes that he is overweight.

Another concern of the Christian is to be a law-abiding and responsible citizen. Commenting on this, Paul has said, **“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1)**. The Christian knows that God has ordained these authorities to maintain peace and order. But as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven, he also recognizes his allegiance to God as taking predominance over the ordinances of men.

Finally, James defines true religion, summarizing the concerns of the church: **“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27)**. And the prophet Isaiah says it this way, **“Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow” (Isaiah 1:16, 17)**.

selected by editors

Key passage:
Acts 23:11

Notes

Without a doubt, one of the great concerns of the church is evangelism. And one important area of evangelism, which for many years was nearly an unentered field, is the work in large metropolitan areas. Recently, however, the church has begun directing its efforts to these great mission lands, and we have heard of the work in New York City and like areas across the United States.

Concerning this great missionary activity, Ellen White makes some very important comments. As you read her thoughts below, ask yourself the following questions: 1) What is the best means of evangelism the church can employ in the large cities: Revival meetings? Health and social service work? Political activities? 2) Should there be large numbers of Christians moving into the cities so they can be active as lay evangelists? What about admonitions to live in the country? 3) Should I, personally, be involved in anyway with this type of work? If so, how?

“The Message to Go. — While in New York in the winter of 1901, I received light in regard to the work in that great city. Night after night the course that our brethren should pursue passed before me. In Greater New York the message is to go forth as a lamp that burneth. God will raise up laborers for this work, and His angels will go before them. Though our large cities are fast reaching a condition similar to the condition of the world before the Flood, though they are as Sodom for wickedness, yet there are in them many honest souls, who, as they listen to the startling truths of the advent message, will feel the conviction of the Spirit. New York is ready to be worked. In that great city the message of truth will be given with the power of God. The Lord calls for workmen. He calls upon those who have gained an experience in the cause to take up and carry forward in His fear the work to be done in New York and in other large cities of America. He calls also for means to be used in this work . . .

“Medical Missionary and School Needs of the Great Metropolis. — We need a sanitarium and a school in the vicinity of New York City, and the longer the delay in the securing of these, the more difficult it will become.

“It would be well to secure a place as a home for our mission workers outside the city. It is of great importance that they have the advantages of pure water, free from all contamination. For this reason, it is often well to consider the advantages of locations among the hills. And there should be some land, where fruit and vegetables might be raised for the benefit of the workers.

“The Best Help. — To start medical missionary work in New York will be the best thing that you can do. I have been shown that if in this work there could be men and women of experience, who would give a correct representation of true medical missionary work, it would have great power in making a correct impression on the people.

“Plans to Reach Businessmen. — You should feel a decided responsibility for the working of New York City. The men in the business houses of New York and other large cities, as verily as the heathen in foreign lands, must be reached with the message . . .

“Pray, pray, pray, for if possible Satan will close the doors which have opened for the entrance of truth. The Lord desires a center for the truth to be established in the great, wicked city of New York.”

Taken from *Evangelism*, pp. 384-388.

by Ronald Sider

Key passage:
Amos 5:10-15

Notes

Editor's Note: Today, at least 460 million people are actually starving, with 900 million people in 1975 subsisting on less than \$75 per year. Hence, mass starvation and poverty are two of the most pressing issues of our times—and therefore issues which must be concerns of the church. Thoughtfully consider Ronald Sider's article below.

Since God cares so much for the poor, it is hardly surprising that he wants his people to do the same. . . .

Equal justice for the poor in court is a constant theme of Scripture. The law commanded it (Ex. 23:6). The psalmist invoked divine assistance for the king so that he could provide it (Ps. 72:1-4). And the prophets announced destruction because the rulers stubbornly subverted it (Amos 5:10-15).

"The fatherless, widows, and foreigners," John F. Alexander observes, "each have about forty verses that command justice for them. God wants to make it very clear that in a special sense he is the protector of these weak ones. . . ."

The Bible specifically commands believers to imitate God's special concern for the poor and oppressed. In the Old Testament, Yahweh frequently reminded the Israelites of their former oppression in Egypt when he commanded them to care for the poor. God's unmerited concern for the Hebrew slaves in Egyptian bondage is the model to imitate (Ex. 22:21-24; Deut. 15:13-15). . . .

God thundered again and again through the prophets that worship in the context of mistreatment of the poor and disadvantaged is an outrage. Isaiah denounced Israel (he called her Sodom and Gomorrah!) because she tried to worship Yahweh and oppress the weak at the same time [see Isaiah 1:10-15]. . . . What does God want? "Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:26, 27). . . .

The prophetic word against religious hypocrites raises an extremely difficult question. Are the people of God truly God's people if they oppress the poor? Is the church really the church if it does not work to free the oppressed? . . .

To those who do not feed the hungry, clothe the naked and visit the prisoners, he will speak a terrifying word at the final judgment: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41).

But still the question persists. Are professing believers no longer Christians because of continuing sin? Obviously not. The Christian knows that sinful selfishness continues to plague even the most saintly. . . .

But that response is inadequate. Matthew 25 and 1 John 3 surely mean more than that the people of God are disobedient (but still justified all the same) when they neglect the poor. . . . [There] comes a point (and, thank God, he alone knows where!) when neglect of the poor is no longer forgiven. It is punished. Eternally.

Is it not possible—indeed very probable—that a vast majority of Western "Christians" have reached that point? . . . Can we claim that we are obeying the biblical command to have a special concern for the poor? Can we honestly say that we are imitating God's concern for the poor and oppressed? Can we seriously hope to experience eternal love rather than eternal separation from the God of the poor?

Taken from *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ronald J. Sider. © 1977 by Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship of the USA and used by permission of InterVarsity Press. Pages 58, 78-83.

"God's unmerited concern for the Hebrew slaves in Egyptian bondage is the model to imitate"

"Is the church really the church if it does not work to free the oppressed?"

by Greg Brothers

Key passage:
Luke 14:28-33

Notes

The church today is faced with an all but infinite array of issues, problems, concerns and needs. Temporally, the church can only meet these with very finite resources of manpower, money and time. Though it would undoubtedly like to answer all questions, meet all needs, speak to all issues, the church must make priority decisions. Some issues must be, for the moment, ignored. Some needs must be met by other agencies. The church must use its talents wisely, using its resources where they will do the most good.

So how should the church—and how should you—decide what to be concerned about? Some suggestions:

1. BALANCE the need against the resources. Write down whatever it is you believe the church should do, or what you want to do. Now write down what you're going to have to give up—in terms of money or time—in order for you or the church to achieve that goal.

As Christ said, before you plan something, you had better count the cost. It is one thing to wish that you could play the piano—it is quite another to be willing to sit down and practice for several hours a day. It is one thing to state that the church should concern itself with the elderly—it is quite another to be willing to volunteer at the local nursing home. It is one thing to argue for increased lay involvement—it may be quite another to sit through a constituency meeting. Count the cost of your concerns.

2. BALANCE the mental, the social, the physical and the spiritual concerns. We Adventists believe that one can't split these four elements, that man is a whole. Very well then, we should be concerned with the whole man. That means that the church should speak to how people use their free time (social) — and shouldn't be afraid of providing ways of enjoying that free time. Again, the church cannot be just concerned with some "soul," but should be involved with people as they think, play, eat and pray.

Beware of people whose concern for one aspect of man has crowded out concern for the other areas of his life. Be it the "salvation by carrot juicer" who has let his concern for the body run away with him, or the "nouveau intellectual" that heaps scorn upon the less sophisticated, his one-sidedness betrays him. Let your concerns be balanced.

3. BALANCE the ideal against the real. Americans especially tend to go for the panacea—the one, simple solution that will instantly and painlessly cure all problems. In the church, this shows itself in the sentiment expressed by, "If we could just get everybody to:

- A) study their Sabbath School lessons
- B) favor the ordination of women
- C) give up the use of fats and oils in the diet
- D) witness door to door

'things' would be a lot neater." Well, maybe.

4. Add to your list of "What the Church (or you) Should Be Doing" a list, as specific and realistic as possible, of what benefits and what problems you can expect if your list of solutions is implemented. Don't let your list of concerns be just fuzzy, wishful thinking. Let your concerns be realistic, and work to make them reality.

What should you choose to be concerned about? Be concerned about those needs that best balance against your resources. Be concerned about all aspects of man. Be concerned about real things—don't just think wishfully.

by Greg Brothers

I confess to some apprehension about how the different Sabbath School classes will tackle this week's lesson.

My misgivings go back to college. A friend and I were talking about the different fads that had swept over the campus—a partial list of which would include UFO's, the Kime diet, "The Shaking of Adventism," John Todd, competition, Arianism, and pet rattlesnakes. (That last one used to make taking room check in the dormitory a particularly risky activity.) Each fad had its own devotees—each convinced that this was either the final crisis or the last hope for Adventism.

After musing over what the next great fad would be (we decided that it would be the Middle East—always a safe bet) we turned to the question of, *Why?* Why is it that some concern will sweep in, captivate the campus for a few months, then disappear?

"Intellectual junkies" — that's what we decided upon for an answer. Life's tough and real answers often require hard work. It's so much easier to latch onto a panacea—to rest secure in the sure knowledge that you are one of the few with real truth. Once the initial adrenalin rush starts to fade, once you start to see that maybe you don't have all the answers, it's time to move on to a new fad.

That's what I fear will happen with this week's discussion. All the old "addicts" will unearth their favorite cure-alls, and the discussion will be little more than a comparison of nostrums and "I've been telling them for years that what the church should be concerned about is. . . ." The sound of axes being ground makes for a lousy discussion.

So what's my solution?

Brighten the corner where you are.

It's a trite phrase. It's trite because it's often used; it's often used because it's true.

In a way, my philosophy on this is the result of the time I was first on the scene at a car accident. There were some very definite needs there—needs that were frankly beyond my capability to meet. There are many people that would have been better qualified than I to handle these needs, but right then, they weren't there. I was. My job—my concern—was to do the best I could with a job I had to do.

There are a lot of "car accidents" all around us in everyday life. There are the elderly that need visiting, little brothers or sisters that need time, parents that need to be written to, roommates that need to be encouraged. There are needs that are close at hand, and often they are needs that only you can fill. Do the best you can.

Do the best you can with the job that lies at hand. That's what each of us should be concerned with. And in a sense, that is what the concern of our church is.

Key passage:
Ecclesiastes 9:10a

Notes

**"Do the best
you can with
the job that
lies at hand"**

1. From the Introduction article for this week's lesson we read, "The Mayor moved to the podium. 'I believe that this council's chief concern,' He began, 'must be . . .'" How would you complete the "Mayor's" sentence? Be prepared to defend your answers.
2. In the "How To" article for this week, Greg Brothers admits that "though it [the church] would undoubtedly like to answer all questions, meet all needs, speak to all issues, the church must make priority decisions. Some issues must be, for the moment, ignored." Do you agree with Greg's statement?

If so, then what areas of outreach do you feel should be among the first to be ignored? Rank order the following (#1 the first to be ignored, or least important, etc.).

- ___ direct evangelism
- ___ welfare work
- ___ medical work
- ___ providing good entertainment
- ___ education
- ___ public health work

Explain your reasons behind your ordering.

3. In light of the fact that there are 460 million people who are actually starving in the world—with 10,000 people per day dying of starvation—how concerned should the church be with providing for the physical well-being of the human race? (Consider the Evidence article for this week for more information.)
4. In the Opinion article for this week, Greg Brothers, in an attempt to discourage the readers of this quarterly from "grinding their axes" of concerns for the church, suggests that Christians should simply "Do the best . . . [they] can with the job that lies at hand." Do you totally agree with this statement? Why?

The Church Organization

James Springer White (1821-1881).
Founder of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.



"Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

— I Corinthians 14:40; NIV

by Greg Brothers

Now a great company of pilgrims were journeying with Christians to the Celestial City. And in as much as they greatly benefited from one another's company, and in as much as they had accumulated various and sundry travel aids, and in as much as it seemed a good idea at the time, they decided to invest in a mode of transport—yea, verily a set of wheels.

So it was with one accord that they besought the Yellow Pages for guidance, and it was in consultation with thereof that they hurried themselves on down to "Honest Niebuhr's Used Ecclesiastical Lot." There they beseeched Honest Niebuhr, saying, "Greatly we desire a means of transport that combines efficiency and economy."

"Efficiency, eh?" quoth Honest Neibuhr. "Such a deal I have for you. It just so happens that stock is now available in 'Episcopal Trailways.'"

And the travelers wondered greatly at this, as to what manner of transport was a bus company.

"You see," continued Honest Niebuhr, as he busily polished a liturgy, "while you would be a part of the corporation, the decisions would be taken care of by those trained in such matters. The management would take care of such things as maintenance, routes and schedules. Believe me, no other set

up is designed to be quite so efficient, so effective at making and carrying out decisions quickly."

But at this the pilgrims cried out with a loud voice, saying, "But what of local control!" And others, greatly wroth, were heard to mutter things like "priesthood of all believers" and "Babylon!"

So Honest Niebuhr, knowing a "No Sale" when he saw one, led them to another part of the lot.

"This may be more of what you had in mind," saith he, motioning towards a Congregational-Harvester school bus. "You own it yourself, make your own decisions, choose your own drivers."

Now some were greatly pleased with this, but others were greatly wroth.

"But what of my lumber!" cried one, pointing to a stack of Mission Boards. "That one bus can't support all this!"

And another was heard to sob, "My publishing house—how is it to be carried!"

So there was a great hub-bub, with one side crying, "Efficiency! Continuity! Organization!" and the other shouting, "Flexibility! Responsiveness! Control!"

And Niebuhr smiled, for he was taking notes.

by editors

Notes

“And thou shalt bring in the table, and set in order the things that are to be set in order upon it; and thou shalt bring in the candlestick, and light the lamps thereof” (Exodus 40:4).

One cannot read the accounts of the history of the Children of Israel without being impressed with the organizational detail that was laid down. God was very explicit in the details regarding the Passover (Exodus 12). He gave precise instruction for the building of the tabernacle (Exodus 25). Even the words of blessing to be used by the Aaronic priesthood were laid down by God (Numbers 6:23-27).

Why all this detail? Because order is a part of God's being, and therefore everything He sets up is orderly and efficient. Thus, the church partakes of the divine order and system to allow every part to function in harmony with every other part.

Paul gave the believers at Corinth some specific instruction regarding the order of the worship services of the church: **“Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Cor. 14:40)**. The reason for this, according to Paul, is that **“God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints” (I Cor. 14:33)**. A study of the context of these verses indicates that Paul was not pleased with the worship services in Corinth. There seemed to be much confusion and disorder. Therefore, he laid down some guidelines: visitors ought to be able to understand what is going on; only one person should speak at a time; etc. And the reason given for all this was that God is a God of order and not of confusion.

Among the Children of Israel, a system of order was suggested by Jethro to Moses. **“You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone” (Exodus 18:18; NIV)**. Jethro could see that the task of judging the people according to the law of God was too much for one man. Moses needed to get organized! Thus, by the distribution of responsibility (see Exodus 18:19-27), more work could be done in less time.

Likewise Paul, when he left Titus on the island of Crete, was concerned with the organization of the people of God. **“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you” (Titus 1:5; NIV)**. Paul recognized that it was not sufficient to simply win followers to Christianity wherever he had preached the gospel. These people needed to be organized into a cohesive community, each with its own elder. In this way could each group best provide for its own needs and for the needs of others.

There is a danger, however, in becoming over-organized. At such a time, truth can be sacrificed at the expense of organizational maintenance. And such a system God overthrows — sometimes literally! **“So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple area, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables” (John 2:15; NIV)**. There was no question about the need of sacrifices to be offered in the temple. Likewise, offerings were also a part of temple worship. But the organization itself had come to encroach upon the very purpose for organization, and thus it had to be set aside. For the sole purpose of organization in the church is to enable it to function most efficiently.

selected by Greg Brothers

While it is true that the Lord guides individuals, it is also true that He is leading out a people, not a few separate individuals here and there, one believing this thing, another that. . . . The spirit of pulling away from our fellow laborers, the spirit of disorganization, is in the very air we breathe. By some, all efforts to establish order are regarded as dangerous—as a restriction of personal liberty, and hence to be feared as popery. They declare that they will not take any man's say-so; that they are amenable to no man. I have been instructed that it is Satan's special effort to lead men to feel that God is pleased to have them choose their own course, independent of the counsel of their brethren. . . .

Some have advanced the thought that as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent. The stars of heaven are all under law, each influencing the other to do the will of God, yielding their common obedience to the law that controls their action. And in order that the Lord's work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw close. . . .

But this does not authorize any one man to undertake the work of ordering his brethren arbitrarily to do as he thinks advisable, irrespective of their own personal convictions of duty. Nor are God's chosen laborers to feel that at every step they must wait to ask some officer in authority whether they may do this or that. While cooperating heartily with their brethren in carrying out general plans that have been laid for the prosecution of the work, they are constantly to look to the God of Israel for personal guidance.

Sometimes a man who has been placed in responsibility as a leader gains the idea that he is in a position of supreme authority, and that all his brethren, before making advance moves, must first come to him for permission to do that which they feel must be done. Such a man is in a dangerous position. He has lost sight of the work of a true leader among God's people. Instead of acting as a wise counselor, he assumes the prerogatives of an exacting ruler. God is dishonored by every such display of authority and self-exaltation. No man standing in his own strength is ever to be mind and judgment for another man whom the Lord is using in His work. No man is to lay down rules and regulations to govern arbitrarily his fellow laborers who have a living experience in the truth. . . .

I must speak to my brethren nigh and afar off. I cannot hold my peace. They are not working on correct principles. Those who stand in responsible positions must not feel that their position of importance makes them men of infallible judgment. . . .

Let us all remember that we are not dealing with ideal men, but with real men of God's appointment, men precisely like ourselves, men who fall into the same errors that we do, men of like ambitions and infirmities. No man has been made a master, to rule the mind and conscience of a fellow being. Let us be very careful how we deal with God's blood-bought heritage.

Taken from *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 488-489, 491-492, 493, 495.

 Key passage:
 Matthew 23:8-12

Notes

“In this work there is no such thing as every man's being independent”

“Sometimes a leader gains the idea that he is in a position of supreme authority. . . . Such a man is . . . dangerous”

“Let us all remember that we are not dealing with ideal men, but with men like ourselves”

by Greg Brothers

Editor's Note: After reading this article, read the Introduction for this week's lesson again.

"Man—Movement—Machine—Monument"

Richard Niebuhr gets the credit for developing this maxim. It was his hypothesis that churches develop and mature in much the same way as does an individual.

Religious movements start with a *man* — a man with a conviction, an idea or ideal. Be that man Martin Luther, John Wesley or Arthur Semple MacPherson, a group of like-minded individuals gather, drawn by the leader and his ideals.

This group (or *movement*) is, at first, often poorly educated. Its leaders become so by personal initiative and drive, rather than by education or credentials. Its message is highly ethical, and often dogmatic. It may regard "outsiders" with some suspicion, and in turn it is regarded by "outsiders" as a schism, a sect or a cult.

Gradually though, the group gains respectability. Its members, and especially its leaders, become more educated. Its message becomes more "sophisticated." More attention is paid to the systemization of its theology; orthodoxy is defined; creeds are drawn up. The church structure becomes well-defined—indeed, it becomes rigid. Entering into a prosperous and efficient middle-age, the church has become a *machine*.

Gradually though, the church mellows into its "Golden Years." With truth already well established and understood, emphasis is now placed upon the beauty of worship. Liturgy and sacrament, architecture and music are all orchestrated to provide the "awe-full" feeling in the worshiper. Freed at last from any true sense of mission, the church now has time to dabble in all the things it never had time for before—politics and art and economics and science. The church has become a *monument* — aesthetically pleasing perhaps, but still just a marker to denote that something once lived there.

In reaction against this comes a man—a man with an idea. A group of like-minded individuals gather around him. . . . The cycle begins anew.

How true is Niebuhr's maxim? Well, like any fast paint job, he's had to use a wide brush. Elements of each stage of development are present in all churches. It is obviously unfair to affix the same labels to both the Adventist church in Takoma Park, Maryland, and White Sulphur Springs, Montana.

Still, the maxim does a fairly good job of describing the trends in a church. The maxim is analogous to a description of the Gulf Stream—eddies and riptides aside, the overall flow of the current is clear.

How inevitable is Niebuhr's prediction? Is there a way of "beating the system"? Must we watch the Adventist church slide into a "golden era" of theological senility and evangelical decay?

I am aware of no significant church body that has not, with time, fallen prey to the process. Even our own church, as Robert Pierson has pointed out, is not immune. History seems to suggest that the problem is not one of over-ambitious leadership, or lack of education, or doctrinal error. Rather, it seems that the problem is a biological one: the pioneers die. And it is as their sons and grandsons try to build upon their fathers' experiences that the cycle begins again.

Key passage:
Matthew 5:21, 22;
27, 28; 31, 32;
33-35; 38-39;
43, 44

Notes

"Must we watch the Adventist church slide into a 'golden era' of theological senility and evangelical decay?"

by Greg Brothers

Key passage:
Titus 1:5

Notes

Everyone is able to see problems with the church and its organization, but not everyone knows what to do about them. Indeed, what can be done? Here are some suggestions.

1. Study. What are the alternatives to our church's structure? Why did we develop the way we did? What authority does the church have? What guidelines should be set up for the use of this authority? What is the probable outcome of certain courses of action? Spend some time puzzling over questions like these.

But besides questioning, check into what others have questioned and written about. Reading can help you avoid "re-inventing the wheel." Some books that have helped me include: *In Place of Sacraments*, by Vernard Eller (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans); *The Problem of Wineskins*, by Howard Snyder (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity); and *Testimonies to Ministers*, by Ellen White. Church history can also be very helpful—it sure punctured a lot of my pet solutions. Check any good text.

2. Evaluate. After you've reviewed the biases of others, it's time for you to face your own. What are your attitudes towards the organized church? Are they based upon experiences? Scripture? Emotion? What are your solutions?

3. Look at your local church, find a need and fill it. Sabbath Schools can always use help—both in the children's and in the adult divisions. So call one of the superintendents and offer to help. Church business meetings are notoriously poorly attended—ask your pastor when the next one is and go to it. While you're talking to him, drop a hint that you wouldn't mind getting involved. Think of the things you've been wishing your church would become involved with: a vespers program, a tutoring service, nutrition classes, etc. And after *thinking*, start *doing*. Like they say, if you don't do it, it probably won't get done.

4. Look beyond. I would suggest that you not get involved *beyond* the local church level until you've gotten involved at the local church level. But once you've gained the experience, the humility and the knowledge of your own limitations that working with your local church can give you, there are some ways that anyone can widen his sphere of operations.

Letter writing is one way. Sure, you and your roommate have finally worked out the solutions to the church's problems—but do you believe in them enough to sign your name to them? Write a letter to your school paper, to your conference, to the *Review*. Let them know what you're thinking.

While you're writing, write to your conference or union youth director and ask him how you may get involved with his programs. Most conferences have some sort of youth or lay advisory board; if they're meaningless, it's because no one has bothered to make them work.

Ask questions, speak up, find a need and fill it. That's how youth observers at the General Conference Session, how the Adventist Intercollegiate Association, how the Taskforce and Student Missionary programs, and how the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY got started.

by Greg Brothers

When I was twelve, my Mom began watching *It Is Written*. As a result, I am now the one that leads the Juniors in "His Banner Over Me is Love" at camp meeting.

The decade between those two events saw me attend a General Conference Session, counsel a Pathfinders' unit, go Ingathering, sit on a church board, and become a minister. The result of this has been to give me more than just a nodding acquaintance with our church's organization and, as the lesson this week has shown, some definite opinions (biases) about it.

One opinion that has been reinforced again and again is that a church, regardless of its structure, is only as good as its members. The most carefully worded resolution on the Christian's proper usage of time is just so much wasted paper if people ignore it and watch *The Empire Strikes Back*. Exactitude in our church's soteriology (the study of salvation) is nice, but futile if the members aren't studying and praying and thinking for themselves.

What this means is that any discussion about our church—be that during a Sabbath School class or the General Conference in full session—had better take place in light of real, as well as ideal behavior. For example, it's one thing to talk about lay involvement, but it may be something else altogether to actually get it going.

Another thing that has impressed me has been the importance of the local church. For most, non-members as well as members, it's the only contact they have with church organization. Also, while the General Conference may set policies, it is in places like Salina, Kansas, that those policies are either implemented, bungled or ignored. If the local church doesn't do it, it doesn't get done.

To me, this suggests that each of us should take a special interest in how our local church operates. I've noticed that a good many of my friends are quite definite as to what needs to be done at conference, union and General Conference levels, but are curiously uninvolved in things like putting on Sabbath School programs or showing up for constituency meetings.

Another opinion I've expressed has been the need for organization and structure. Face it, among those of us who are college-age, most are anti-authoritarians, and it is all too easy to transfer this feeling to "the brethren." But church programs need continuity, and continuity (among other things) is something that a hierarchical structure may offer. The trick comes in balancing the advantages of structure against its weaknesses (there's a thought question for you Sabbath School teachers!)—in balancing the interests of church and member, of what is and what should be.

Finally, I'm basically optimistic about our church—both the people and the organization. I am aware of the failings of both—I defy anyone to be a Pathfinder counselor and not be!—but I am also aware of their strengths. Inasmuch as there are good, decent, capable people at all levels (and I believe there are) the church will continue. We will make mistakes, we will bungle and waste and miscalculate, we may sometimes act from the wrong motives, but God has chosen to work through people. And to the degree that we allow Him to work through us, to that degree will the church be successful.

Key passage:
Exodus 40:4

Notes

"The trick comes in balancing the advantages of structure against its weaknesses"

"To the degree that we allow Him to work through us, to that degree will the church be successful"

1. Greg Brothers, in the Evidence article this week, suggests that church institutions follow a pattern of development which has been labeled, "Man—Movement—Machine—Monument." According to Greg, this is a biological problem—the pioneers die. And "it is as their sons and grandsons try to build upon their father's experiences that the cycle begins again."

Do you see this process as being inevitable? What about the Adventist church? In time, will it too become just a "monument," to be replaced by a more progressive movement?

2. At one time the Adventist church was considered by the majority of Christians to be a sect or cult. Now it is becoming more and more acceptable to the mainline churches. Is this good? Is this progress? Or is this acceptance something the church should shun?

3. Below, list what you believe to be the three primary advantages and disadvantages of the organization of the Adventist church.

Do you believe the advantages outweigh the disadvantages? Explain. What can be done to make the disadvantages less that way?

Disadvantages

Advantages

1. _____

1. _____

2. _____

2. _____

3. _____

3. _____

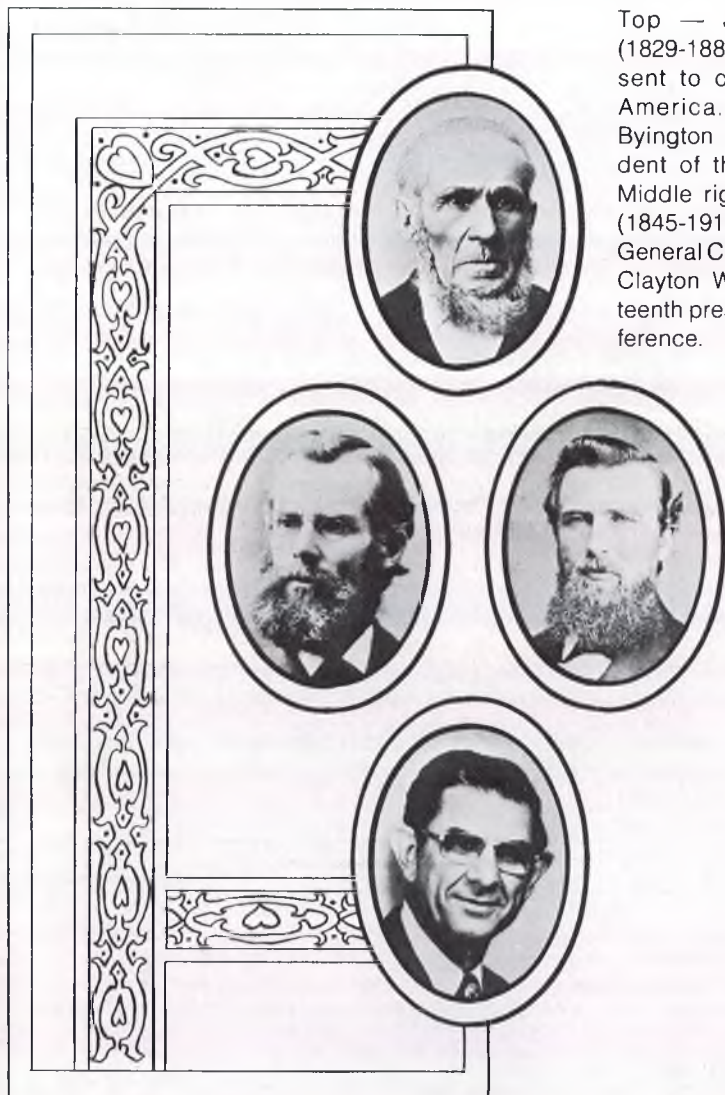
4. On a separate sheet of paper write down your suggestions for improving the church organizational system. Be as specific as possible.

Compare your suggestions with those in your Sabbath School class and, as a class, compile a new list of suggestions.

If you would like, you may send this list to the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY office (address given on page 3) and members of the COLLEGIATE QUARTERLY staff will see that your suggestions are directed to the appropriate departments of the church organization.

The Leaders

Top — John Nevins Andrews (1829-1883). First SDA missionary sent to countries outside North America. Middle left — John Byington (1798-1887). First president of the General Conference. Middle right — Ole Andres Olsen (1845-1915). Fifth president of the General Conference. Bottom — Neal Clayton Wilson (1920-). Fourteenth president of the General Conference.



"Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you.' "

— Mark 10:42, 43; NIV

by John Cowen

What is a "servant leader"? Is there such a thing? The concept seems unworkable—a paradox. But one has only to study God and His word for a short time to realize the concept has brothers: "You must lose your life to save it," "The meek shall inherit the earth," "You must become as little children." The list goes on. To our adult minds the logic just isn't there. And yet the concepts work.

A search throughout history will render many leaders, but how about "servant leaders"? We have all seen film footage of Nazi Germany forty years ago when a short, moustached leader, eyes ablaze and arms flailing, rhetorically led his followers to disaster. What a contrast between this leader and the "servant leader" Winston Churchill. Although many acquainted with Churchill would shy away from describing him as a "servant leader," I have chosen to do so because he saw himself as being one with his people. History bears this out. With determination in his voice, determination that reflected the nature of the people he loved and served, Churchill led his fellow countrymen through that dark storm of history, declaring, "We shall fight the enemy. . . ." The man was indeed a part of his country, a servant to his people, and a leader.

What Churchill was to England, Christ is to this world a millionfold. Christ's enemy, our enemy, is as real as was Hitler. Lucifer is a leader. But Christ is *the* "servant leader." Lucifer with his inflammatory rhetoric leads a

third of heaven's angels in an assault against us. But Christ, who became a part of us, cries out to us who huddle in the darkness, "We shall fight the enemy. . . ."

Another quality of a servant leader may be seen in Truman's expression, "The buck stops here." Where there are problems within his organization, the servant leader accepts the responsibility and understands it as ultimately his duty to see that corrective measures are taken. He refuses to "pass the buck" of responsibility and blame to some subordinate.

Probably the most important trait which should characterize "servant leaders" is the attitude by these men that they are not all that important. The world has existed for thousands of years without them, and so it will continue to exist once they are gone. Servant leaders do not feel that they are indispensable; but humbly seek to simply do the will of God.

With such an example of leadership as Christ has given us, what then is our duty as leaders of the Adventist movement? It seems clear. Our "servant leaders" should be humble, courageous and reflect the nature of the people from which they come. Certainly our church's "servant leaders"—from local church leaders to General Conference leaders—should call upon the Holy Spirit for the strength and wisdom to fight our common enemy—a leader who will soon succumb to our "Servant Leader."

by editors

Notes

“Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16).

The concept of leadership in the church is entirely different from that practiced in the world. In the world there is always competition for the highest place, the highest honor. But in the church the highest honor is to serve.

Jesus set the example in word and deed. **“The Son of man,”** said He, **“came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28).** From beginning to end the life of Jesus was one of service. He exemplified this, not only in His daily ministry, but also during the last supper with His disciples when He took a towel and washed their feet (see John 13:4, 5). Then He enjoined that His disciples, those who were to be the first leaders of the church, follow His example. Although the world confuses greatness with arbitrary authority, the disciples were to recognize that true greatness consists in service (see Matthew 20:25-27).

For Christian leadership is primarily a function of service. It is significant to note that the gifts of the Holy Spirit are given **“for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry”**—for service (Eph. 4:12). And when appointing leaders for the apostolic church, the members were exhorted to **“choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3; NIV).** If one analyzes the various gifts that are distributed by the Holy Spirit among the members of the church, it will be seen that their primary purpose is to equip every believer for servant duty, as we read in Ephesians 4:12. But in too many churches the leaders have undertaken to do most of the work, and the members are allowed to sit as spectators. But this is not the plan as outlined in Scripture. Nor was it the practice of the early church. The divine plan involves the concept that God gives gifts to certain ones in order that they may teach others by their example how to engage in service, so that the body of Christ may be built up by all.

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers” (Eph. 4:11). Here it should be noted that in the divine plan, the leaders in the church are not self-appointed; Christ has reserved this electoral duty for Himself. In this regard church office is very different from positions held in the world. In the world a man may choose the type of work he wants to do, train for it, and then enter his field when the opportunity arises. But in the church, effective leadership comes only when Christ is in control, and His will is done.

“Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord in whom they had put their trust” (Acts 14:23; NIV). In the appointment of elders there was not the setting up of a hierarchy that would dominate the church. The elders were commended to the Lord on whom they believed, and from whom they would receive direction and help. The connection between member and Lord, and officer and Lord, is always open, always vital. Indeed the church finds its unity, not in organization, but in a relationship to Christ, and it is the spirit of Christ, the spirit of service, that prevails.

This Logos article has been condensed and rewritten from the week of March 15-21 from the adult Sabbath School lesson.

selected by editors

Returning to Capernaum, Jesus longed for peace and quiet and a time when He could instruct the disciples. Jesus spoke of His death and resurrection in order to prepare the disciples for future events, but they did not comprehend His words.

As the disciples walked with Jesus that day, there was a spirit of rivalry among them. "They disputed among themselves which should be accounted greatest in the kingdom. Jesus read their thoughts, and He longed to counsel and instruct them."

Having reached Capernaum and being settled into their temporary home, Jesus asked, "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way?" The disciples saw their desires in a different light when Jesus spoke of it, and filled with shame at their selfish motives they kept silent. Christ was willing to give all He had in order to help man, and here the disciples were interested in only one thing — their position in the kingdom.

At last one of the disciples ventured to ask Jesus, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

"The Saviour gathered His disciples about Him, and said to them, 'If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.' There was in these words a solemnity and impressiveness which the disciples were far from comprehending. That which Christ discerned they could not see. They did not understand the nature of Christ's kingdom, and this ignorance was the apparent cause of their contention. . . . The strife for the highest place was the outworking of that same spirit which was the beginning of the great controversy in the worlds above, and which had brought Christ from heaven to die. . . .

"Very tenderly, yet with solemn emphasis, Jesus tried to correct the evil. He showed what is the principle that bears sway in the kingdom of heaven, and in what true greatness consists, as estimated by the standard of the courts above. . . .

"Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can cooperate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls. He who feels most deeply his need of divine aid will plead for it; and the Holy Spirit will give unto him glimpses of Jesus that will strengthen and uplift the soul. From communion with Christ he will go forth to work for those who are perishing in their sins. He is anointed for his mission; and he succeeds where many of the learned and intellectually wise would fail. . . .

"It was not enough for the disciples of Jesus to be instructed as to the nature of His kingdom. What they needed was a change of heart that would bring them into harmony with its principles. Calling a little child to Him, Jesus set him in the midst of them; then tenderly folding the little one in His arms He said, 'Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The simplicity, the self-forgetfulness, and the confiding love of a little child are the attributes that Heaven values. These are the characteristics of real greatness.

"Again Jesus explained to the disciples that His kingdom is not characterized by earthly dignity and display. . . . All meet as blood-bought souls, alike dependent upon One who has redeemed them to God."

Key passage:
 Matthew 18:1-5;
 Mark 9:33-37

Notes

"If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all"

"The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God"

by Hans Küng

This service which is meant by the Greek word "diakonia" is in no danger, unlike words which suggest political or priestly services, of being misinterpreted as an honour or a new kind of rule. Diakonia means an activity which every Greek would recognize at once as being one of self-abasement: waiting at table, serving food and pouring wine. . . .

This kind of service was unthinkable for a free Greek, for whom the development of his own personality and the exercise of power were supreme things. For a Jew it was not necessarily an inferior activity; service, especially of a great master and above all when it was service for God, he could see as representing something great. *Jesus*, however, gave this notion of service a radically new meaning; at the very heart of his eschatological message lies his commandment to love one's neighbor, a love in which the love of God is manifested. For him the diakonia becomes an essential characteristic of discipleship. . . .

This is a point where something distinctively Christian can be discerned, as the choice of a completely new word shows. The consequences are enormous. Is it possible for there to be among the followers of *Jesus* any kind of office which is based on *law* and *power* and which corresponds to the office of secular potentates? . . . "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many" . . . [Mark 10:42-45; see also Mark 9:33-35].

Or can there be among the followers of *Jesus* any kind of office which is based on *knowledge* and *dignity*, and corresponds to the office of the scribes? "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practise and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practise. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders. . . . They do all their deeds to be seen by men. . . . But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. . . . He who is greatest among you shall be your servant; whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted" . . . [see Matthew 23:2-12].

It is not law or power, knowledge or dignity but *service* which is the basis of discipleship. The model for the disciples in their following of *Christ* is therefore not the secular ruler and not the leader scribe, nor even the priest who stands above his people (*Jesus* remarkably enough, never once takes him as an example; cf. Hebrews); the only valid model is that of the man who serves at table: "But I am among you as one who serves (at table)" (Luke 22:27). This attitude must be correctly understood. It is not just a question of a voluntary external self-abasement, as practised on certain days of the year by the leaders of some religious communities, but a total existence in a life and death of service for others, as prefigured by the service of *Jesus* himself (Mark 10:45; Matthew 20:28) and as demanded by *Jesus* himself of those who would serve him. . . ."

Key passage:
Matthew 23: 1-12

Notes

"Understanding leadership as primarily a function of service is a point where something distinctively Christian can be discerned"

The only valid model for Christ's disciples is that of the man who serves at table

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by Les Pitton

Key passage:
1 Timothy 3

Notes

Styles of leadership in the institutions of our church are just about as varied as the kinds of books stacked on the shelves of the college bookstore. Even among student body presidents you find an array of leaders from those who run the show to those who let the show run them, those who care to those who could care less, those who devote countless hours to those who have no hours to count.

But by the number of management and leadership courses being offered around the country, one would assume that there is a great deal of concern as to what constitutes the best leadership. Or at least that there is some vague hope that a style of leadership will emerge which will be more in tune with the years ahead.

Are you interested in being a leader? "To aspire to leadership is an honourable ambition" (1 Tim. 3:1; NEB). In this statement Paul is not applauding the office of a leader but rather the function of leading. Robert K. Greenleaf, who has published three analytical papers on leadership at the Center of Applied Studies in Cambridge, Massachusetts, writes, "Our greatest need today is for more servants to emerge as leaders." He goes further in stating, "The only truly viable institutions in the future will be those that are predominantly servant-led."

If you are presently in a leadership position or someday hope to be, consider the following points on "Being a Leader."

1. Be a servant first. J. Oswald Sanders in his book *Spiritual Leadership* suggests that "true greatness, true leadership is achieved, not by reducing men to one's service, but in giving oneself in selfless service to them."

The best indicator of this kind of service is if the leader's main concern is that of assuring that the highest priority needs of others are being served. In other words, do those being served grow as individuals, feel healthier about themselves, find satisfaction in their work, see their lives as being fulfilled and grow towards being servant leaders themselves?

2. Always be sensitive. A boy about sixteen years of age telephoned a supermarket manager and asked if there was a part-time stock clerk position available. The manager replied that it had been filled three months ago. The boy asked, "Is your present stock clerk hard working, dependable, honest; does he show initiative, potential, follow instructions, bring about results, get along with people?" The manager responded affirmatively to all the questions but was so impressed by them that he told the caller that another stock clerk position would be open soon, and asked whether he wanted the job. The caller responded, "No thanks. I already have the job as your part-time stock clerk. I was calling just to find out how I was doing."

In an era of increasing concern for productivity and performance we need leaders who are sensitive to other's needs. As in the prayer of St. Francis, "Lord, grant that I may not seek so much to be understood as to understand."

3. Foster a creative mind. Sometimes it's necessary for a leader to move ahead and face the unknown. A creative leader will not be threatened by change but will rather look carefully at ways to improve the paths of those being led. It has been said, "Behind every great achievement is a dreamer of great dreams."

If you have these attributes, then by all means lead. If you don't have them, consider them worthy goals.

by John H. Wagner

Key passage:
Ephesians 4:11-13

Notes

It is more than a truism that "without wise leadership, a nation is in trouble" (Proverbs 11:14; Living Bible). Skillful leadership is essential to the proper functioning of any organization. But the motivating force in Christian leadership differs greatly from that of the secular leaders: the only justifiable motive for Christian leadership is soul winning. This is not to say that Christian leaders are to ignore proven skills and techniques, but rather that these must be focused to enhance the soul-winning capability of the church in such a way as to bring glory to God, not to the leader. Sometimes I wonder what would happen to some "Christian" leaders if all the glory and recognition and attention were taken away!

So what are some qualities of leadership which would bring God glory and insure greater efficiency in soul winning? Christ's example of leadership leads to the conclusion that unselfish service to humanity is basic to success in the leader whose function is "to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (Eph. 4:12; NIV). Service is a value which must be practiced in the life of the leader. Why? Because a leader must *be* what he or she desires others to *become*, a principle that is beautifully developed in the spirit of prophecy counsel concerning the leadership roles of teachers. And Edgar Guest's simple poem speaks directly to leaders as he challenges each one with the declaration, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day."

Another necessary dimension of Christian leadership is skillful human relations. Here again we can learn from Christ's example. "He was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He did not censure human weakness. He spoke the truth, but always in love."¹ Christian leaders, like their secular counterparts, are expected to produce results, but the Christian leader is unique in that he *must* practice leadership skills in the context of the Golden Rule. Dealing with people demands sensitivity and kindness, especially when those dealings are focused on soul winning. We can learn from Bishop Festo Kivengere who, at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelism, said, "When you cast your stones of truth, first wrap them in a soft cloth."² The Christian leader will deal kindly and patiently with others, recognizing his or her role as Christ's representative.

Leaders are necessary for the church today—leaders with a vision focused on soul winning; leaders who reflect the qualities of Christ's leadership; leaders who give God the glory for any success; leaders whose lives and words are congruent; leaders who deal gently with people.

Does your life—does mine—exemplify the qualities of leadership which clearly demonstrate the Christian commitment to soul winning?

"When you cast your stones of truth, first wrap them in a soft cloth"

¹ *Steps to Christ*, p. 12.

² *Christian Leadership Letter*, July, 1980, p. 3.

1. Military people are educated to accept without question the orders from their superiors. It is not the responsibility of those of lower rank to question the demands from above, but to simply act as commanded. Is this the way it is—or should be—in the church? How much questioning of “orders” among the laity is encouraged—or should be allowed—within the church?
2. The lesson this week has emphasized that leadership is primarily a function of service. But what does it mean to be a “servant leader”? Are there really such leaders, or is such an unreachable goal?
3. Jesus said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you” (Mark 10:42, 43; NIV). What does Jesus mean by this statement? How is it that Christians are not to “exercise authority” over one another? How does the church’s hierarchical system relate to this text?
4. In the Logos article for this week we read, “. . . in the divine plan, the leaders in the church are not self-appointed; Christ has reserved this electoral duty for Himself” (see Eph. 4:11).

Though it may be the “divine plan” for Christ to appoint His church leaders, do you believe that this is always the way it happens in reality? Explain.

5. When Jesus said that the servant is the one who is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (see Matthew 18:1-5; Mark 9:33-37), do you think He was literally serious? Does God consider the church janitor to be greater than the General Conference President? Carefully think through this question.

The Church And The Second Advent



The 1980 General Conference Session in Dallas, Texas.



"I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband."

— Revelation 21:2; NIV

by Calvin Miller

Elan could not believe it. Four Vollkons had perished in the encounter. In the days that remained he had to mobilize his legions. They were at battle stations on the Plains of Man, facing the east in numbers so abundant that their armor seemed a silver ribbon around the walls. Alert, the soldiers waited and watched the road to catch sight of the alien horde. But the bleak day ended and nothing yet was visible. . . .

Fear gnawed the capital. The city had been sealed. The gates were bolted and the drawbridge drawn.

Inside the city those who wore the chain and seal heard rumors that an alien army stretched around the planet.

Who were they? Where was their kingdom? Who were the flying knight and singing general? And most plaguing of all, "Why could Vollkons not destroy them?"

The Singerians inside the city were jubilant. "He comes!" they said as they met each other in the dismal streets.

At the beginning of the second day, while the soldiers gathered in formation on the plains, the Prince of Mirrors rode through the streets. For the first time he was on his horse. He wore a helm, breastplate and sword. His eyes searched every crowd he met. He sought but could not find Dreamer. The Death Stallion, a black steed who matched the giant's hulk, was ominous.

"Dreamer is in the city," the Prince of Mirrors said to Elan, who showed small concern. "Elan! . . . He is preaching in the streets that Ellanor will perish in the War of Fire. He dismays those who wear the seal and chain. He cries that all must now repudiate the doctrine of the glass."

Elan sensed the fury in the voice.

"His bleak words," continued the Black Knight, "set the city in dismal doubt about your ability to defend it.

Let us now impound all Singerians not already in our prisons and put them to death!'" . . .

When all had been collected, the Hater rode his horse through the guarded doorway of the temporary compound. When they saw him in their midst, the Singerians began to chant, "He comes! He comes! He comes! . . ." Their voices grew in volume till the Black Prince could not stand the roar.

Then they began the chorus: "The Prince of Dragons soon must fall before the Prince of Planets."

The World Hater had no tolerance for their music. He had heard it through too many centuries. He once had hoped to grind the music into silence. . . .

The Prince of Mirrors reined the horse so sharply that it reared into the air and wheeled upon its haunches. He swung his long sword in each direction and the hooves of his steed fell again and again. The brandished blade cut indiscriminately. Then quickly he departed.

Dreamer had been arrested with the others. Yet he had not been discovered by the Dark Prince. From the shadows of the makeshift prison he beheld the massacre and wept. He embraced an old and dying woman, careless of the gore clotted on her wrinkled face.

"He comes!" he said to her.

"He comes!" she said through pain. Her smile froze into silence.

The Invader swirled hope through the darkened room like hurricanes of light. His brilliance pushed back the gloom. Joy washed down their faces. "He comes!" they cried.

The dead were moved to the center of the room as the Singerians voiced the words of the finale they had left too long unsung:

"He comes in power, Rejoice the hour of jubilee is near. Lift up the cry before we die, our Singer will appear."

by editors

Notes

“Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?” (II Peter 3:11, 12).

The church at present is a pilgrim church, but the time will come, and that very soon, when it will be the church triumphant (see Rev. 7:9-17). That will indeed be a glorious day. But meanwhile the church must prepare to meet the Bridegroom. Therefore, in this lesson we look at some warnings that have been given and changes that will take place at the final consummation of time and events.

First, let us look at the parable of the ten virgins. **“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom” (Matthew 25:1).** In the previous chapter Jesus had been describing the conditions that will exist in the world just before His coming. He mentions that some will claim that His coming has been delayed (Matthew 24:28), and will therefore grow careless and indifferent. But at such a time are the principles of the parable of the ten virgins particularly applicable.

Because no one knows the time of Christ’s coming, it is important for God’s people to be watching all the time (vs. 13). They are to have their lamps ready—filled with the Spirit (cf. Zech. 4:1-14) and the truth of God’s word (cf. Psalm 119: 105).

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Peter 1:3; NIV). Though some may become discouraged over the apparent delay of Christ’s coming, the Christian’s hope for the second coming is based on the fact of Christ’s resurrection. However long the apparent delay, believers are never citizens of this world, and so they wait expectantly for the blessed hope, trusting the judgment of the omniscient One to decide when to come. But of one thing all may be sure: the “delay” is for the good of all, being based on God’s mercy and longsuffering, because He does not want **“anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (II Peter 3:9; NIV).**

The church of the last days will be aware of the changes that must take place before God’s purpose can be fulfilled. **“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (II Peter 3:10).** Sin has caused so much havoc in all of creation that it must be utterly destroyed, and all creation groans in expectation of change. But Adventists know that the solution to the world’s problems is not in science or technology, not in politics or show of force, but in the second coming of Jesus. Thus, Paul says that he **“would not have you ignorant” (I Thess. 4:13)** regarding the reality of the cataclysmic final events.

“Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready” (Rev. 19:7; NIV). The picture that is given us of the grand reunion of the church with its Master is in the imagery of a wedding supper. But all who accept the invitation must also accept the provisions that God has made. All must wear the wedding garment to meet the Bridegroom.

an interview with Ralph E. Neall

by Eugene Shirley

Editor's Note: Many Adventists believe that the Lord's coming has, in every sense of the word, been delayed. Some hold that those who are to be translated to heaven at the second coming must reach perfection of character. And some blame the Adventist church for the two world wars and all atrocities since, as they hold that because of the church's failure to accomplish its mission, the Lord has not been able to come.

Ralph Neall, an associate professor of religion at Union College, is completing a Th.D. at Andrews University with his dissertation discussing the nearness and delay statements regarding the second coming of Christ in the writings of Ellen G. White. He has shared with us some of the insights which he has gained in the interview below.

Notes

Often one may read in the writings of Ellen White that there has been a delay in the second coming of Christ. And yet, with an all-knowing and all-powerful God, how could there be a delay? Hasn't God always known when He is going to come?

Beginning with 1845 and on through the rest of her life, Ellen White wrote what we might call nearness statements. On the surface they seem to contradict the delay statements which began to appear in 1883. But the way I harmonize them is by looking at the second coming from both God's and man's perspectives. You look at it from God's side and you must admit that the time is known, it is fixed, it is determined, He is sovereign—*there is no delay*. But you look at it from man's side and see that it is delayed, and we have a work to do—to preach the three angels' messages to the whole world—and that puts the burden on us.

Now between the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man there is indeed a tension, but it is needed. If we were just to look at God's side of this situation and say that whatever will be will be, when the appointed time comes the Lord will come, then we would just sit down, and do nothing, and wait for the Lord to come—and not be ready when He did come. On the other hand, when we emphasize the responsibility of man and the delay of the advent too much, then we despair, realizing that we will never be good enough to bring about the Lord's coming.

This "tension" — as you described it — is difficult to understand.

Well, perhaps this is a paradox that we can't solve in this life. It's the paradox of divine will versus human responsibility. We are responsible; He is responsible. We are to work; He is sovereign. And there is no final way to harmonize it, either in the Bible or in Ellen White.

Thorlief Boman, however, in the book *Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek*,¹ may give a partial answer. He says that Greeks are bothered by contradictions: they are logical; they want to make sure that two and two equal four and they want to find out why. And we are Greeks. Jews, on the other hand, are more dynamic. They will see paradoxes—for instance in the nature of God—and they won't bother them at all. The Greek says, "Now explain that to me." But the Jew, when he sees a paradox, says, "Praise the Lord! God is great." And I think we need a little Jewish thought when we are thinking about these things.

Thus it is that in 1883 Ellen White wrote that the coming of Christ had been delayed,² while in 1888 she wrote that *the apparent delay is not so in reality*.

Aren't these two statements contradictory?

They do seem to be. But I am convinced that when trying to under-

"He is sovereign — there is no delay"

The apparent delay is not so in reality
— E. G. White

stand contradictions in the writings of Ellen White, we should look carefully at the situations to which she was speaking. For instance, in 1883, when answering the charge claiming that she was a false prophet (for saying that the Lord's coming was near), she said that the coming had been delayed. But in 1888, when she tried to give comfort to a sister who worried that maybe Jesus wouldn't come at all, she said that there was no delay in reality, but only an apparent delay.

Elder Neall, for what reasons do you believe the Lord has not come yet? What is He waiting for?

From His side He is waiting for time. He will come at His appointed hour. But if you look at it from our side you see that we do have a work to do. If we overemphasize His side then we do nothing. If we overemphasize our side, then it takes Him off the throne and makes us the fulcrum of history—with everything depending on us. And somehow you must have both sides to get the whole picture.

But is it right to say if we emphasize this sovereign view of God that we will just sit back and “do nothing”? Isn't the Christian life motivated by ideas and principles which are so strong that regardless of whether or not one believes in the nearness of the Lord's coming, he will still be motivated to live a Christian life?

Sister White uses many motives for exhortations, and getting ready for the second coming is only one of many. She can talk about the love of God, she can say we *ought* to work for souls, etc. So you are right. The second coming of Christ is just *one* of these motivations.

Now, let me get back to this idea of man's responsibility in the “delay.” I think that the duty of preaching the gospel to the world is a constant goal—like the North Star is for the mariner—which you can aim at but can't reach. I argue this because it is impossible to reach the entire world; you can't reach the world that has died already. How do you preach the gospel to the whole world when the world keeps dying? I think the goal of preaching the gospel to the world is a goal without boundaries—there will never come a time when we can say, “Well, we have reached X number of nations, now we can quit.” It's always more. It's a continual challenge which we must keep working on until the Lord returns.

And the goal of perfection I look at in the same way. While Ellen White continues to hold up this goal, I think that, as an absolute standard, sinlessness is a goal to aim at but not something we can attain in this life. It is a goal without boundaries. One can never say, “I'm good enough—I have no more growing to do.”

From our human perspective then, what is it that we can do to “hasten” the Lord's coming, if we cannot preach the gospel to the whole world or become “perfect”?

What are we talking about when we say “hasten”? This idea comes from II Peter 3:12 — “Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God . . .” (margin). Now it is important to remember that this text was written by Peter 1900 years ago, and it must have applied to every Christian who has lived ever since. In other words, every Christian, by preaching and by holy living, hastens the end. It isn't just the last generation that does this, but every Christian—ever since the time of the apostolic church. It is more true of us since the time prophecies are finished, but it has been true of every Christian who has ever lived.

Another factor I see here comes out of a statement written by Ellen White in *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69. Now *Christ's Object Lessons* was written for the public, so some distinctive Adventist emphases do not appear in it. *Christ's Object Lessons* is the type of book any Christian can read and enjoy and get a great blessing from. But in this book

“How do you preach the gospel to the whole world when the whole world keeps dying?”

“Sinlessness is a goal to aim at but not something we can attain in this life”

Ellen White says that by preaching the gospel we have the privilege of hastening the end. It's not just Seventh-day Adventists then that can "hasten" the end. It's every professed Christian. So, we need not say that Seventh-day Adventists are to blame for two world wars by preventing the second coming—if we say that, we have to say that all professed Christians are to blame, if indeed it is right to blame the Christian church for such a tragedy at all.

"We need not say that Seventh-day Adventists are to blame for preventing the second coming"

We sometimes hear that we must be so good—reach a certain level of Christian maturity—before the Lord can come. The idea is that the Lord hasn't come yet because of the sins of the people. But how good does one have to be in order for Christ to come, and why does this make any difference?

There is no doubt that Ellen White calls for perfection. She bases it in *The Great Controversy* on the doctrine of the cleansing of the sanctuary. That is, while the sanctuary is being cleansed in heaven, there is to be a work of purification here on earth. Then she writes some things which some interpret as saying that the final generation must—in every respect—be perfect. The idea is that this work of preparation has not been done yet and it must be done before the Lord can come. But we must remember that there never has been a perfect generation, in Israel or in the church. And the likelihood that a generation in the end can do what nobody has ever done before is quite slim.

"The idea is that this work of preparation must be done before the Lord can come"

Now what does Ellen White mean by "perfection"? I know of three doctoral dissertations that deal with that, and I'm not going to write another. Sister White says in *Christ's Object Lessons*³ that we are to be like corn—or any other plant for that matter—perfect at every stage of development; perfect as a sprout, perfect in leaves, perfect in the ear, and so forth. Some conclude from this that being perfect as a young shoot or even as a nearly-mature plant is not enough to bring about the second coming of Christ. What is required, they say, is *completeness* for the harvest.

Why is this?

Well that's not my interpretation, and I don't agree with it.

The interesting thing is that Ellen White uses John the apostle as an illustration of what she is talking about⁴—how he developed and was "perfect" and loved the Lord so much. This plant illustration is a model, a metaphor of Christian growth, and it's not the only metaphor she uses. She uses another model; it's the model of warfare and of fighting; struggling against sin, struggling against the devil, struggling against the flesh, etc.⁵ But the interesting thing is that while she uses John the apostle as an illustration of perfection in development, she also uses him to illustrate the Christian's battle with sin too. He was perfect at every stage of development, and yet a son of thunder, struggling against sin.⁶

So what is perfection?

Do you know that Ellen White admitted before she died that she was not perfect? In an article entitled "The Last 153 Days," published in the *Review* in 1970, she says: "I do not say that I am perfect. I do not expect others to be perfect; and if I could not associate with my brothers and sisters who are not perfect, I do not know what I should do.

**"I do not say that I am perfect"
— E. G. White**

"I try to treat the matter the best that I can, and am thankful that I have a spirit of uplifting and not a spirit of crushing down. . . . No one is perfect. If one were perfect, he would be prepared for heaven. As long as we are not perfect, we have a work to do to get ready to be perfect. We have a mighty Saviour. . . .

"I am going to keep my mind as much as ever I can on the prominent things of eternal life. They are not dwelt upon enough. I rejoice that I have that faith that takes hold of the promises of God, that works by

love and sanctifies the soul. A sanctified soul will not blunder a great deal. I will not keep talking, talking, talking about what this one should do, and what that one should do. The Lord wants us each to do all we possibly can, and fight the good fight of faith. That is what I mean to do. I will not give up to a mind of despondency.”⁷

Now that’s the most practical thing I’ve seen on the subject. I think that when she calls to perfection that she is holding up an unlimited goal to aim at. But when it gets right down to the practical side of whether anyone has done it or not, then that’s a different story.

I am uncomfortable with this idea that the last generation must reach a level of holiness beyond that of Paul. If you choose carefully, you can find statements in Mrs. White’s writings that support that—but you have to choose carefully and ignore other things. You know, she says in one place that as long as Satan reigns we will have self to overcome.⁸

What then do you make of the hastening and delay statements found so frequently in the writings of Ellen White, and in the Bible as well?

It seems to me that talking of the near coming and the delayed coming of Christ are two sides of one coin—and the coin is the reality of His coming. Sister White had a lot to say about those who *claim* the coming is delayed. In her mind, to say that the coming of Christ has been delayed is synonymous with loving the world. On the other hand, believing in the near coming of Christ she saw as being equivalent to not loving the world and putting God first. Thus, I think that a belief in the soon coming of Christ is not a chronological statement, but an ethical statement. Saying that Christ’s coming is near is less a question of the calendar than a question of ethics and morals. In other words, to say that Christ is coming soon is to say that He really is coming and that this reality must influence the way we live.

Do you know something Ellen White said which was very interesting? It was the last thing she wrote before she died: The Lord is coming soon—let us choose proper reading material for our young people.⁹ Now that’s a strange exhortation to be based on the near coming of Christ. But this is an evidence that when she writes of the nearness of Christ’s coming, it is more of an ethical than a temporal statement. If the Lord is coming soon—say within six months—then reading material is beside the point. The Lord is coming soon—let’s build churches. The Lord is coming soon—let’s establish medical centers. The Lord is coming soon—let’s send missionaries all over the world. “The Lord is coming soon” — it is one motive for every good thing we ought to do.

It has been a real pleasure for me, Elder Neall, to hear your thoughts on these important—and often misunderstood—issues. Do you have any closing comments you would like to make?

It seems to me that we need to take more seriously Mrs. White’s many warnings against time-setting. Because of those warnings, no faithful Adventist will actually name a year for the coming of Christ, but our curiosity still wants to pinpoint the time of this event as accurately as possible. So we do the next best thing: we blame ourselves for the delay. By this position we say that we know when He is coming: it will be when we are ready. This concept becomes a mere substitute for date-setting.

There are two serious dangers in this concept. First, it puts a whip in the hands of would-be reformers to scourge the church to do what *they* want it to do—and that is legalism. And the other danger is that it makes the Adventist church repellent to non-Adventists. If I were a prospective member who found out that the Adventist church claimed that its own failures were the reason why the Lord hasn’t come yet, would I want to join it? The antidote to this faulty theology is to study first the

“I am uncomfortable with this idea that the last generation must reach a level of holiness beyond that of Paul”

“A belief in the soon coming of Christ is not a chronological statement, but an ethical statement”

The Adventist’s substitute for date-setting: He will come when we are ready

Bible, which says very little about the church delaying the advent; and second, in Mrs. White, not only her delay statements, but also her nearness statements.

¹ Thorlief Boman, *Hebrew Thought Compared With Greek* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1970).

² *Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 68.

³ *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 65, 66; see also *Steps to Christ*, pp. 67-75.

⁴ *Steps to Christ*, p. 73.

⁵ *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 557-567, especially 560, 561.

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 558.

⁷ "The Last 153 Days," *Review and Herald*, July 23, 1970, pp. 2, 3.

⁸ *Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 560, 561.

⁹ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 547.

by Hans Lietzmann

Editor's Note: It is interesting to note that from the second to the fourth centuries A.D., there existed a sect—considered heretical by the main-line Christians—which closely parallels in some ways the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Below are excerpts from the book *A History of the Early Church* which describes Montanism, as this system of belief was called. As you read this article, carefully consider 1) how the Adventist church both compares and is dissimilar with this group, and 2) what gives the Adventist church the assurance that its eschatological (end-time) expectations will be fulfilled.

The first new flame of the early vehemence of the spirit took place c. A. D. 156 in Ardabau, a village on the borders of Mysia and Phrygia; its situation cannot now be determined. Here Montanus, newly baptized, was suddenly seized by the spirit; he fell into ecstasy, and showed all the manifestations of glossolalia; this soon changed into rational speech, and revealed the speaker as a prophet of the Holy Spirit. Two women, Prisca and Maximilla, became his disciples, and they also, when in an unconscious state, uttered strange things, and spoke in the name of the divine Spirit. Doubt and faith struggled with one another amongst those who were present, but faith conquered; and, throughout the land of Phrygia, the news spread rapidly of a new, and now quite final, revelation of God through these His new prophets. Their pronouncements were written down and gathered together as sacred documents similar to the words of the Old Testament prophets, the sayings of Jesus, and the letters of his Apostles. . . .

Originally there were but three persons who were seized by the spirit and who laboured as prophets, and they were conscious of their uniqueness: "After me," said Maximilla, "no other prophet will come, but only the final End." This prophecy was not meant to be imitated, but to be recognized as God's concluding revelation.

What was its content? In the first place, expectation of the immediate end of the world as proclaimed by wars and rebellions. The severe distresses, occasioned by the wars of Marcus Aurelius and the dreadful years of epidemic, were really quite fitted to pass as heralds of the final age, and reveal the four apocalyptic horsemen riding over the earth. In other regions, also about this time, there was a feeling that the world would soon end. In the province of Pontus, a bishop was tortured by visions in dreams which revealed the future to him. He prophesied to his church that the Last Judgement would come within two years: thereupon the members of the church got rid of house and goods, cultivated the fields no longer, but, in fear and trembling and with tearful prayers, waited for the last day. In Syria, a bishop led his whole church, including the children, into the wilderness to meet Christ at His second advent: they wandered about, and were saved from dying of starvation by a none too friendly intervention on the part of the police. . . .

On the basis of these clearly defined "chiliastic" eschatological expectations, the new prophecy led to a very rigorous code. Marriage was an earthly bond which prevented full consecration to God—Paul had already taught that much in a similar situation. Hence, the prophetesses abandoned their husbands in order to live entirely for their calling as preachers. Possibly they recommended others to follow their example; certainly they advised against new marriages, as was also done by the bishop of Pontus already mentioned. . . .

Fasting was a spiritual exercise by which the early Christians prepared

Key passage:
Revelation 22:7

Notes

There was an expectation of the immediate end of the world

"The new prophecy led to a very rigorous code"

themselves to welcome the second advent of the Lord: by fasting they stood "on the watch" (guard-duty fasting). When the new prophecy infused life again into the expectation of the parousia, a new emphasis on fasting was a closely parallel phenomenon. We are told of regulations for fasting which went beyond the custom of the Church, and Tertullian tells us more exactly what were the rules prevailing in his time and district. The guard-duty fastings, universally practised on Wednesday and Friday, were not only observed until the early afternoon (3 p.m.), but continued until the evening, a week of abstinence (*Xerophagia*) during which succulent foods, meat, and wine were not used.

These matters were precisely prescribed because Montanus had a penchant for organization, and, consequently, they created, in orthodox circles, a stronger feeling of being novelties. He organized the distribution of the sacrificial offerings within the churches, and the prophetess, Prisca, demanded the delivery of gold and silver and valuable clothing. Special officials were instituted to care for the collected moneys; itinerant preachers of the new prophecy were supported from the central funds, and were not dependent on the goodwill of the churches they visited, which was frequently quite uncertain. This sort of thing gives the impression of a strong and purposeful will controlling the entire movement, and continuing to be effective after the death of the founder. . . .

In content, Montanist preaching apparently offered nothing that could be seized on as contrary to the doctrine of the Church, and to the canon of Scripture; hence it was not possible to refute it from this standpoint—in the way that one could deal with gnosticism.

Therefore, the only remaining recourse was to attack the persons, i.e., to raise doubts about the genuineness of the prophetic movement itself on the ground of a "proving of the spirit" by the deeds of its instruments. This method was then diligently employed, and we are told of commissions sent out in order to expose Maximilla as a fraud: but the adherents "stopped the mouths" of these critics. Thereupon their moral conduct was tested, and all sorts of objections were brought against them, and finally also against their adherents; to the extent of circulating stories that Montanus had committed suicide, and that their patron, Theodotes, threw himself over a precipice—stories which our informant himself did not believe. Later, we are told of the horrors of mysteries in which the blood of a slaughtered child played a part. Here we have got down to the level of the usual gossip about heretics. . . .

Thus, in spite of itself, Montanism became a sect; nevertheless it spread extensively. It was soon to be found in Rome; c. A.D. 200 it laid hold of Africa, where Tertullian became an enthusiastic advocate of it; and, even at an early date, it found friends with Asia Minor. Irenaeus of Lyons spoke in very earnest tones of sin against the Holy Ghost in the case of those who refused to recognize the new revelations of the paraclete. . . .

A repudiated sect, they disappeared less than 200 years after their first appearance. Nevertheless their characteristics continued to live in the Church under other forms and names: faith in the continued renewal of revelations of the Holy Spirit given to men and women specially endowed by grace; passionate contempt for this world, and an all-consuming expectation of the second advent of the Lord.

From A HISTORY OF THE EARLY CHURCH by Hans Lietzmann, trans. by Bertram Lee Woolf. Published by The World Publishing Co. and used by permission. Pages 194-203.

**In content,
Montanist
preaching
was biblical**

by William Cole

Notes

Few times throughout history has the church fully realized its purpose and risen to meet its calling. More often the church has misunderstood the Lord's commands and sought to meet its own limited vision. But above all of man's falterings and failings, God's vision for His church has remained steadfast, for His purposes will be accomplished. A people will catch His vision, preach His gospel, share His love and meet the needs of His children. And each of us is called to be a part of such a remnant people.

But to be "called" does not necessarily mean to align oneself with the nominal Christianity that we may associate with the "call of God." God's calling is not merely to regular church attendance at the right church, with the right people, on the right day. No—the vision is much greater than externals. It is even much more far reaching than "orthodoxy" in every aspect of belief, important as this is.

Rather, God's last-day call to His people is a demanding, radical call—totally altering their views on life and society. For to be a part of the remnant movement of God's people upon earth means, among other things, to:

1. Value truth above all else.

Although we often think of ourselves as valiant truth-seekers, it is possible that we don't measure up as well as we may think. It is important to realize that valuing truth involves more than accepting certain doctrinal propositions, even though these positions may be unique and rather demanding. To value truth above all else means primarily that we must keep an open mind concerning what is truth, realizing that truth is a dynamic process rather than a concrete position.

Valuing truth above all else also means that we must be willing to bring our lives into conformity with God's revelations. This will not only involve cognitive modifications but relational changes as well. Indeed, for one who values truth properly, it is the most powerful force in the life.

2. Understand that although salvation is free, discipleship is costly.

Following God's progressively revealed truth almost invariably will place us at odds, not only with a godless society, but with the nominal church. To see that this is true one must only glance at the lives of such men as Jesus, Paul and Martin Luther, and even many of our contemporaries. For God is not, for example, a white, middle-class, politically conservative American god. And if we are honestly willing to follow Him, it is possible that we will be led in directions that may have once been inconceivable to us. But following God will always be its own reward and God's remnant people will joyfully pay the costly price.

Indeed, how may one be sure that he is a part of the remnant people—that he is living within the last-day call of God? Not necessarily by his affiliation with any earthly organization, but by allowing God, now, to make a radical difference in his life.

by L. S. Gifford

The young people at the youth center in London had enjoyed a beautiful, exciting evening. It was wartime, and the brightness of the social hours had momentarily outshone the dreags of war.

J. B. Phillips, who would later become prominent as a Bible translator who could express things in up-to-date language, was there, and he suggested that the group close the evening with worship. Someone called out to him, "You know, we haven't any idea what you mean by *worship*." And Phillips unhesitatingly replied, "Well, it's *three cheers for God*."¹

If you were to ask me, "What does it mean to 'be ready' for Christ's coming," I'd probably give Phillips' answer. In the middle of all our sobriety over the coming of Jesus, and our worry over how we and the church will survive the time of trouble, we ought to be cheering for God.

I know a church where there used to be bickering, ill will between members, and lots of angry thoughts floating around. One day a member, concerned about all this and the failure of the church to grow, made what might be considered a profound statement. She said, "After all, why should God bring a happy Baptist into this unhappy Adventist church?"

"Three cheers for God!" That's what that church needed to do.

Had her church been cheering for God, there would have been lots of love, and people would have been attracted to the church. For when the church beholds God, great things will happen. It will become like Jesus, who, beholding the rich young ruler, "loved him" (Mark 10:21). The original language would suggest that Jesus "beheld him intensely." And the more Jesus looked, the more potential He saw in that young man.

What a thought! It was electrifying to the Savior, and so it can be to the church. If the church concentrates on what people can become, there will be no room for the fighting within the church that regularly appears among so-called Christians.

"Three cheers for God" will translate into "three cheers for people," and will bring about happy, positive, Christ-like churches. How pleased Christ will be, knowing that the joyous, caring atmosphere of heaven is present in His church. And then He can safely bring His wandering children from all over the earth into this church.

His character will be reproduced in His people. And *then* He can come.

¹ J. B. Phillips, *Plain Christianity* (London: Epworth Press, 1954), pp. 86, 87.

Key passage:
Mark 10:21

Notes

"What does it mean to 'be ready' "?

"Well, it's three cheers for God!"

1. In the Logos article for this week's lesson, it was mentioned that "All must wear the wedding garment." What does it mean to "wear the wedding garment"? Is this a metaphor illustrating justification or sanctification or both?

2. Relative to the Testimony article by Ralph Neall, consider the following questions. In your opinion, has the second coming of Christ in all actuality been delayed? If your answer is *yes*, then explain how your philosophy in this matter allows for there to be an all-powerful and all-knowing God. If your answer is *no*, then give your interpretation of the nearness and delay statements as found in the Bible and the writings of Ellen White.

Elder Neall has stated that both preaching the gospel to the world and living a life of perfection are goals to be aimed at but impossible to reach. After re-reading what he says concerning this matter in this week's Testimony article, decide whether or not you agree with him and prepare to thoroughly discuss this issue in your Sabbath School class.

Elder Neall sees the belief in the soon coming of Christ, not as a chronological statement (dealing with time), but as an ethical statement (dealing with how Christians ought to act). Do you see any problems with this interpretation?

3. Relative to the Evidence article for this week, below list five ways in which you see the Adventist church either comparing or being dissimilar with the Montanists of the early Christian church.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What gives the Adventist church the assurance that its eschatological (end-time) expectations will be fulfilled?

4. To you, what does it mean to "be ready" for the second coming of Christ?

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**It was a desolate spot.
The heat was oppressive.
After the breakdown
I abandoned the car with
disgust and started walking.**

**I had been going for maybe
half an hour when one of those
compact cars that look so
terribly sensible pulled up
beside me.**

**Such is my dislike of
those cars that had it not been
oppressively hot, I would have
waved the driver on.**

Let me start by admitting to a certain amount of irrationality when it comes to cars. Like my friends, I buy because of tradition. (I buy what my father bought.)

I have always had cars that are faster than they need be, more luxurious than they should be and more expensive than they've any right to be.

In short, when on four wheels, I am a confirmed seeker after pleasure.

In the opposite corner, I've always imagined cars such as the one I found myself in at the moment.

The kind of car your mother would say was good for you.

Judge then my feelings as the little car stopped beside me on that over-baked dusty roadside.

The driver was not some elderly farmer from the hill country, but a man I'd have put in his early thirties.

"Can I give you a lift?" he inquired as he held open the door. "I passed your car down the road — beautiful looking machine."

As I slipped into the passenger seat, I noticed that I was sitting in quite adequate, even supportive, surroundings.

My rescuer was obviously less uptight than I and introduced himself easily as a record producer saying that he had a home some thirty miles away.

"Have you driven far?" I asked.

"About 400 miles," he answered.

"But it's very easy in this car. It handles the long trip dependably and its lean design makes it economical. I've tried bigger and fancier cars but after the first little bit the frills and size become boring and really quite superfluous."

At this point I began to go through one of the most uncomfortable of human emotions — a change of mind.

"Yes, this is a practical car," he said. "It seems to keep on going when the others just sit there and look good."

Looking back, I'm surprised he didn't dump me right there when I said, "I should think that you'd get tired of the small size."

He just smiled lightly and pointed out how well it took a series of "S" turns we were coming to just then in the road.

The heat was being tempered with a breeze and I was cooling off in the airconditioned comfort. I recovered a little of my customary good humor.

"Well, it's certainly more comfortable than I thought, and it's proven its dependability in this dust and heat. But is it expensive?"

"It's the least expensive in its class," was the pleasant response.

When I thought of what I had in-



vested in that overrated piece of exotica languishing on the road some 15 miles behind us, I was stung and lashed out with one more attempt to justify the big car.

"Of course my car is much faster. I can do 150 on a good straight stretch."

"But how often do you find those stretches in real driving conditions?" he asked in the mildest voice possible.

After a moment's hesitation (to my credit) I burst out laughing.

"Touché," I said. And for the rest of a very enjoyable journey we talked about Mozart.

THE MORAL

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Middle East	191,766,000	34	2,674	1,806
Tanzania	17,552,000	244	40,055	58,144
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