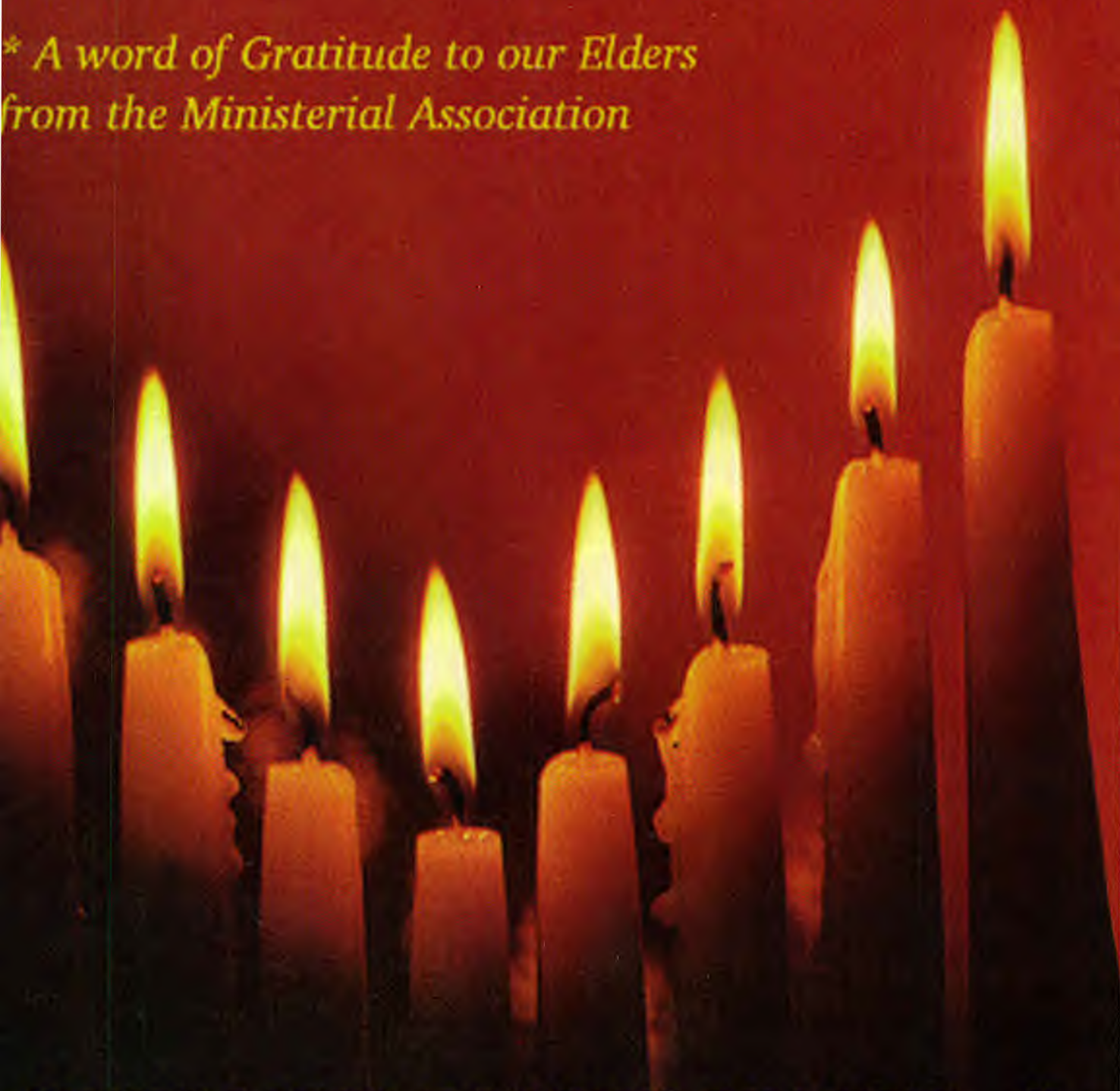


# Elder's Digest

A Quarterly Resource for Local Church Elders

Vol. 6 N. 1

*\* A word of Gratitude to our Elders  
from the Ministerial Association*



**"THIS LITTLE LIGHT OF MINE...."**

# A Word of Gratitude from the Ministerial Association to All Elders



SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST  
CHURCH

General Conference  
World Headquarters

Dear Elders of the World Church:

Warm and heartfelt greetings and gratitude to each of you throughout the world as we meet for this session of the General Conference in Toronto, Canada.

The past five years have been challenging ones for the church as we stepped boldly through the end of the second millennium.

The Lord has blessed the Remnant Church in its strong emphasis on growth and evangelism. During this time the church has grown in number and strength, from 8 million to over 10 million members in 2000. This the largest growth in a five-year period in our 155-year history!

Much recognition for this growth extends to each of you who have toiled diligently and faithfully for the Lord's Cause in your local congregation. God has indeed provided for you the strength and the wisdom that is required for this sacred duty.

Continue your close communication with your Saviour. Be sustained in His Word and in His promises. Study His Word of truth that you may have spiritual strength and be reaffirmed in your loyalty to the doctrinal message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The Lord is coming soon!

We thank you again and continue to pray with you toward this great hope that very soon will become a living reality.

Sincerely,

*Joel Sarli*

Joel Sarli

Associate Secretary for Elders' Training

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# Elder's Digest

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# The Greatest Need for the Third Millennium

Joel Sarli



**W**ait for the promise of the Father," Acts 1:4. Jesus was making reference to the words of John 14:16 and Luke 24:49. Jesus really was saying to the disciples: "Don't start your ministry by yourselves. Don't hurry up. You need the proper qualification. So wait." Those words were both a command and a promise. How the hearts of those first intern evangelists must have been thrilled when Jesus said: "Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." These men had been in the graduate course with our Lord as Teacher for forty days. He had been unfolding to them the great program of the future. They did not and could not at that time fully comprehend the meaning of His words, but true to His promise these and more than one hundred other disciples were imbued with supernatural power. And what tremendous things they accomplished for God in the next few years.

These were ordinary men and women by nature, but with the coming of the Spirit fear turned to courage and anxiety to confidence. The experience of that group is what every elder for God around the world needs and longs for.

## Community

The Holy Spirit took that group and first molded it into a community, then into an invincible force. The church is not just a society of culture, it is a fellowship of Spirit-empowered men and women. The disciples had not always been united. But the coming of the Spirit made all the difference. We read: "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33). And they "were of one heart and of one soul" (Acts 4:32). When they preached they not only set forth the his-

toric facts of Christ's resurrection but they revealed that the resurrection was a real experience in their own lives. They, themselves, had died to sin and had been raised to a new life in Christ Jesus. When they preached they were not lecturing on world problems, they were setting forth a living Christ in all His majesty and power.

## Qualification

The educated classes of that day spoke of them as "unlettered and ignorant men." That is to say, they held no academic degrees from the schools. But they had something no school of the world could give. These, on whom the Spirit came, moved into a miraculous ministry that compelled the world to listen. With confidence they could say to one who had been a cripple from birth: "Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Not only did he rise, he leaped to his feet and "entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:6,8).

## Result

The crowd demanded an answer, and the preachers were ready to give it. Again they turned the multitude's attention to Jesus, who had been crucified and buried but who had risen from the grave and was now at the right hand of God. Thus it was in the beginning of the apostolic church. The book of Acts does not give many statistics. In fact, this is the last record we have of specific numbers. Converts were coming in so quickly they could not tabulate the results. When things are really moving statistics mean little, for they are out of date almost immediately. And things were surely moving in those days. It has been said: "The church was born in a storm, moved on in a cyclone, and swept the field like a tornado."

*Continued on page 6*

# Interpreting Prophecies

## Is Historicism Dead?

Gerhard Pfandl

**N**oted Australian Adventist scholar, Desmond Ford, some years ago claimed that “the historicism that proclaimed dates such as AD 538, 1798 and 1844 as biblical is now dead among most Adventist scholars (*Spectrum*, January 1998). As evidence, he cites the title of the book, *The End of Historicism*, by another Adventist scholar, Kai Arasola of Finland.

Dr. Arasola currently teaches at the church’s Middle East college in Beirut. He submitted his doctoral dissertation on the prophetic interpretation of William Miller to the University of Uppsala in 1989. It was published by the university a year later.

Historicism is a method of interpreting apocalyptic prophecies that understands the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation as being fulfilled throughout history, hence the name “historicism.” Other methods used to interpret apocalyptic prophecies are futurism, which sees most of these prophecies being fulfilled in the future; and preterism, which sees them fulfilled in the past.

Historicism is the oldest school of prophetic interpretation. It can be traced back to some of the church Fathers, for instance, Irenaeus, Hippolytus and Jerome. It was taught by Joachim of Floris in the twelfth century and became the standard method of interpretation until the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth century.

During the Counter-Reformation, Roman Catholic scholars propagated preterism and futurism to deflect charges by the Reformers that the pope is the antichrist. Soon after the Counter-Reformation,

preterism gained a strong foothold among Protestants. Then, during the nineteenth century, futurism began to replace historicism as the dominant method of interpreting Daniel and Revelation among conservative Protestant Christians.

### What Arasola really says

The title of Arasola’s book *The End of Historicism* sounds ominous, but it is not as bad as it sounds. What Arasola says in his dissertation is that historicism reached its peak with the Millerite movement, and then declined. Today, it is primarily Seventh-day Adventist scholars who still use the historical method of prophetic interpretation.

Arasola says, “Very few, outside of former Millerites, dared to keep on using the continuous historical hermeneutic as it was charged with Millerism’s infamous failure. This is the reason for the title *The End of Historicism*. However,

*“Millerism had come to an end. With it historicism gradually ceased to be the only popular method of interpretation.”*

*one should not get the impression that historicism is dead.* There were people who remained faithful to the old hermeneutic, and the denominations that grew out of Millerism now have millions of adherents. The change that took place simply means that within a few decades from Miller, historicism was no more than standard Protestant method in the universities, theological seminaries or in the churches” (pages 1, 2, italics added).

After describing the characteristics of historicism, and evaluating Miller’s view of prophecy and history, Arasola concludes, “Millerism had come to an end. With it historicism gradually ceased to be the only popular method of interpretation. It was largely re

placed by futurism and preterism. *Yet one must acknowledge that in fact historicism did not die with Miller.* It still lives in a modified and partly renewed form within the groups that have some roots in Millerism.

"The fact that some of these groups are growing rapidly shows that the method still has vitality. Miller's heritage is twofold. On the one hand he contributed to the end of a dominant system of exegesis, on the other he is regarded as a spiritual father by millions of Christians who have taken some part of the Millerite exegesis as their *raison d'être*. Whether he would be happy to be so regarded is another matter? (pages 171-2, italics added).

Arasola's conclusion is correct. Conservative Christians today have, by and large, accepted futurism. Liberal Christians, conditioned by the historical-critical method, espouse a modified form of preterism.

In the light of these facts, it is disturbing to see Arasola's book misused. It is not very helpful to quote a dissertation to support a view that neither the dissertation nor its author share. Nor is it correct to say that historicism is now dead among most Adventist scholars. A recent Bible Conference in Jerusalem (June 1998) was attended by more than 200 Adventist Bible scholars from around the world, most of whom, if not all, still accept and use historicism.

The fact that Seventh-day Adventists today are the only major denomination that still holds to the historical interpretation of prophecy should not disturb us. It is the method used in the book of Daniel and, until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was the major method of interpretation among Protestant scholars. While most churches today have abandoned it, God, through the Spirit of Prophecy, has confirmed this method in the remnant church. ■

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*Gerhard Pfandl writes from Silver Spring, Maryland, where he works as Associate Director in the Biblical Research Institute in the General Conference.*

## The Greatest Need . . .

*continued from p. 3*

### In Our Time

But those scenes are to be repeated in our own day. To speak about the Holy Spirit is not enough, we must receive Him. Are we preparing our hearts and our dear people in the churches to receive Him? Or are we secretly satisfied with ourselves and our accomplishments? Ponder these words: "the reason why there is so little of the Spirit of God manifested is that ministers learn to do without it." *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 383.

Can we think of anything more tragic than for men, who have been elected to be elders, content to get along without the power and direction of the Holy Spirit? We need the Holy Spirit in both the former and the latter rain; the former to bring our lives into conformity with God's holy will and the latter to empower us for service.

When John the Baptist preached, multitudes responded. His was a message of repentance. It was the former rain preparing them for a greater experience to come. The reformer himself was looking forward to the time when the One he was proclaiming would baptize His people with fire. Poor John never lived to see the fulfillment of that. But his disciples, Andrew and John, who were with him at the Jordan when he made that prediction, not only witnessed its fulfillment but they themselves became firebrands for God. Greater than the water baptism of repentance was their fire baptism of power.

God wants to make every herald of the Advent hope a firebrand. Nothing short of that will finish His work in the world. In this great hour this should be our constant prayer: "Baptize us, O Lord, in Thy Spirit. Empower us for Thy service and prepare Thy church for the greatest ingathering of souls in all history."

No greater blessing could ever come to an elder of God's people than to be among those on whom the Spirit came. ■

# Don't Read Into Scripture What Is Not There

Francis D. Nichol

In the book of Deuteronomy is found a text which some of us are likely to remember only in part. The text reads thus: "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law." Deut. 29:29. We obtain great spiritual satisfaction from the thought that God has revealed certain things to us, that they are for our blessing and instruction. Accordingly, we study with constant enthusiasm the revelation of God as it is found in the writings of the prophets.

But at times we ought to give attention to the first part of the text, which informs us that some things are secret; they belong to the Lord and not to us. If we always keep this portion of the text clearly in our mind, allowing it to have its proper place in our thinking whenever we are studying the Word of God, we shall be saved from many unfortunate blunders.

There are certain types of mind that are much more tempted than others to forget the first portion of this text, persons who seek to explore areas that God has not seen fit to make clear to men. This is not a proper carrying out of the command to search the Scriptures. Oftentimes this seeking for the meaning of secret things proves quite harmless, and at other times it may have unfortunate results; but at all times it is alien to the true principles of Bible study. The matter can probably be made more clear in terms of illustration, and of the motives that apparently prompt such explorings of the secret things.

First, take that group who apparently are prompted simply by idle curiosity. Such persons diligently will seek to discover in some text or phrase a justification for spinning out many theories; for example, as to the whole manner of life of the saved in the new earth. In fact, sometimes even without the aid of a text they seek to construct such a detailed picture.

Now far be it from me to say or write anything that would discourage the devout from spiritual meditation upon those promises that God has given us of a new heaven and a new earth. But there is a real difference between meditations which confine themselves to the explicit words of Scripture and those idly curious questionings that spring from a restless spirit. Such questionings reveal an unhealthy state of mind, spiritually speaking, and tend to make one unwilling to apply one's thought to the matter-of-fact counsels and exhortations and reproofs with which the Scriptures abound.

## Seek to Bridge Gulf

Another group consists of those who by a series of finespun logical deductions seek to bridge the gulf between the revealed and the secret. They would build one plausible deduction or speculation upon another. An illustration of this presented itself some time ago when a brother attempted to show that when Lucifer was a covering cherub, he stood at a certain place in relation to the throne. The reasoning was long and impressive. He took the phrase "sides of the north," and applied it in relationship to the literal sanctuary, and having got his bearings from the points of the compass in that way, reminded us then of the fact that the earthly sanctuary is modeled after the heavenly, and *therefore*. But the *therefore* does not necessarily follow, and for a very definite reason: We must ever remember that heavenly things can be presented to our finite minds only in their simplest outline, and often with the aid of parables, pictures, and institutions like the earthly sanctuary. Enough is revealed to us by such aids to teach us certain great truths necessary for our salvation. But when we seek to take yardstick and compass to explore heavenly places, we are almost certain to fall into some grave error in our deductions.

There are definite things that God has told us; for example, about the heavenly sanctuary, its furniture, and its service. Of these we can be sure, and from them we can draw spiritual lessons needful for us without finespun reasoning. But beyond that, why should we attempt to go? There is nothing to be gained, but much that might be lost.

Christ's parables provide another illustration of the presentation of spiritual truths in material settings. A sower went forth to sow, a merchant sought jewels, and a man traveled into a far country. All these parables were intended to teach one or more central truths, but into what folly men are led when they seek to find a hidden truth in some feature of the story that is really irrelevant to the lesson the Master was seeking to teach. In variant form, the danger that thus presents itself in connection with the parables of Christ, presents itself in connection with all God's revelations to man which are set forth in terms of stories or symbols.

#### **Not Depth but Direction Questioned**

But this fact provides no reason for anyone to feel that, therefore, the Scriptures are rather an uncertain quantity and cannot profitably be explored deeply. The point in question is not the depth of the exploration, but the direction. We can dig, ever deeper into the mine of truth and be profited thereby, but we must be sure that we follow in the direction where the vein of gold leads, and not off into blind passages where we shall be lost in a foggy maze. Or, to change the figure, my protest is against the tendency of some to build a tall structure of finespun deductions, capped with some mysterious or awe-inspiring conclusion, and to claim that the whole edifice consists of a "Thus saith the Lord," that every brick, as it were, in the tall structure is a text of Scripture. Afterward, when such structures collapse, as they generally do, under the impact of scrutiny, some trusting souls are led to conclude that we cannot be sure of anything in the Bible. But it was not really the Bible that was on exhibition; it was the theory of some finite mind.

Another group, whose objectives are certainly most laudable, fall into the mistake of going beyond the bounds of clearly revealed truths because they are seeking to find added proof in support of the great doctrines that we preach. More than one obscure text has been made to bear testimony in support of a doctrine. Some brother feels that he has "added light" on one of

our great fundamentals of faith. However, my pulse rate rarely quickens when someone tells me he has found new Biblical support for a doctrine. Further proofs may yet be obtained from the Word of God in behalf of our distinctive teachings. But my limited experience has led me to feel little enthusiasm for searching obscure scriptures with this objective in view. Never forget, a chain is no stronger than its weakest link, and those to whom we present our doctrines are often inclined to believe that our doctrines are no stronger than the weakest piece of evidence presented in their behalf. Certainly our opponents make capital of any faulty bit of evidence we bring out. The man who is truly and intelligently seeking to advance this cause will confine his speculations and new ideas on unusual texts to his own mind, and will go forth to present our teachings in the setting of the clearly established, time-tried Scriptural evidences that bring conviction and cannot be disputed.

#### **Filling in Prophetic Details**

Finally, there are the ardent souls who violate the principle that some things are secret and belong alone to God, by seeking to fill in the details of an unfulfilled prophecy. It is remarkable how brief most prophetic statements in the Scriptures are. Evidently God did not see fit to tell us all the details. He has given us enough prophetic information to provide us with great waymarks that leave us in no doubt as to the direction in which the world is going, and the direction in which our feet should go in order to reach the kingdom of God. But how tempting it is to paint in detail where God has given only a few simple, bold strokes to the outline. And how plausible the painting looks when it has been completed with the aid of a vivid imagination. Yes, and how out of date the picture may look a little while after it has been painted, because conditions have not shaped themselves in the world as the painter believed they would. The world picture changes very rapidly, almost overnight in these times.

During the first world war, for example, there were some, not many, who felt constrained to declare that it was the last war this earth would witness. There were a few who seemed free to dogmatize even on the details of how that war would shape the closing events and merge into Armageddon.

When the war ended and the League of Nations was formed, there again were a few who hastened to dogmatize on what this new development meant, some



even going so far as to declare that this was the means through which the pope of Rome would come into the leadership of the nations of Europe. The pope was pictured, sometimes literally, as sitting at the head of the League table, discussing the affairs of the world.

When the Interchurch World Movement, that ambitious project to federate all Protestant bodies, was launched, there were again a few who felt free to speak with great certainty on the exact relationship that this happening bore to prophecy, some going so far as to picture the precise way in which Protestantism would be bound together by this new movement and would finally persecute the people of God. They were not content simply to point to it as illustrative of a trend.

Then came the great depression in the United States, and the bold program of economic recovery promulgated by the Government, known generally as the NRA. A few brethren immediately began to predict just how the NRA was related to certain prophecies in the book of Revelation, and exactly the way in which that governmental move for restoring prosperity would result in persecution.

That the first world war came to an end instead of merging into Armageddon; that the League of Nations failed to prove a dominating force in world affairs, with the nations going their own nationalistic ways; that the Interchurch World Movement died before it was scarcely born; and that the NRA likewise had a short and uneventful life—these are simple matters of record. They prove more eloquently than could any studied line of reasoning, the grave danger of speculating concerning the exact outcome of notable happenings in the world. Indeed, these exploded predictions put a wholesome check on restless, speculative spirits when the second world war came. Fortunately their number was small.

The layman or minister who falls before this temptation to speculate is often very devout. In fact, the very devotion and sincerity of such an individual often give to his dogmatic forecasts a ring of certainty that causes the listener to accept such unsupported predictions as gospel truth. If the failure of time to prove the predictions of such persons true reacted only against the individual himself, small harm would be done. But this is not the case.

### **Evil Effect of Prophetic Speculation**

When events fail to work out exactly as someone

has declared they must and will, there are always those whose faith is thereby weakened regarding the whole subject of prophecy and the signs of Christ's coming. Of course, such a weakening of faith is unwarranted, for all should be able to see that there is a clear distinction between the definite signs of Christ's coming as marked out in the prophecies, and the detailed speculations of a few individuals regarding the exact outcome of particular happenings. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the faith of some in the general subject of prophecy is injured by the failure of speculations to prove true. At the same time, the skeptic is provided with what he believes is another reason for making sport of the whole subject of religion in general and prophecy in particular.

But there is an even more serious possibility, yes, even probability, in connection with these speculations and forecasts in the present troubled state of our world: there is a very real danger that unnecessary handicaps may be placed upon the work of God, and persecution unnecessarily provoked because of unwarranted declarations concerning the future in relation to present events. We live in a time of unstable emotions on the part of the great masses of the people throughout the whole world, in a day when intense hatreds can be quickly generated and translated into action against this or that party or group which arouses the ill will of the majority. Too many illustrations of this from all corners of the earth come immediately to mind to require any added proof here. But it is this very state of affairs in the world that should cause us to exercise the greatest good judgment in all our utterances. If ever there was a time when, in our speech, we should follow the Scriptural injunction to be wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves, it is now.

### **A Wide Difference**

We have a message that must be preached, and with courage we should preach it. But there is a wide difference between proclaiming the great time prophecies, with the related Bible forecasts of conditions in the last days, and unwarranted speculation on particular happenings of the day. Surely we have a sufficiently positive and startling message for the world when we stay by the clear statements of prophecy. Of course, to a certain extent we must deal with unfulfilled prophecies; but if we will confine ourselves to what is stated by the prophets, we shall be safe. The temptation is to fill in details

where the prophets are silent.

Sir Isaac, Newton, who was as devout as he was learned, well remarked that “the folly of interpreters has been, to foretell times and things by this Prophecy [of the Revelation], as if God designed to make them prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the Prophecy also into contempt.” *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*, p. 251.

With such a wide field of fulfilled prophecy to expound to the world, how unfortunate that any should fall before the temptation to wander off into speculation on unrevealed details of unfulfilled prophecy, or to attempt to construct out of some present happening a whole chain of closely connected links to tie together that happening in direct and logical relationship to the day of Christ’s coming! It is not a sufficient defense for a person who thus makes predictions to inquire, “Well, is not my explanation of the outcome of these present happenings plausible and reasonable?” Experience proves that too often in this uncertain world what is plausible and apparently reasonable today becomes impossible tomorrow. Where the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy are both silent as to the details of future events, reverence and a realization of the blunders of former speculators prompt us to be silent also.

Fortunately, there are not many who allow themselves to fall before this temptation to speculate. But sad to say, it takes only a few such people to bring great perplexity, embarrassment, and even confusion to many. It is one thing to view with godly fear the events of our present troubled day as playing a part in the last act of this world’s sinful drama, and to declare with confidence that all these events provide increasing evidence that the day of the Lord is near and hasteth greatly. It is an altogether different thing to single out some particular happening and dogmatically attempt to find in it the key to unlock the mystery of all the remaining details of this world’s history. We will never go astray, nor will our message ever be brought into disrepute, if we confine ourselves to the definite utterances of the prophets. Nor will we lack for a timely, soul-saving message for the world.

In a closely related category is the tendency of a few to give credence to unsupported bits of hearsay concerning what Mrs. E. G. White is supposed to have said at some time or other about future events. Some time ago a worker wrote, stating that in his part of the field a stir was being created by the circulation of the story that Mrs. White had foretold by name the man who would be in charge of the United States Government when Christ should return.

It is unfortunate enough to have someone wander afield in idle speculation about future events; it is even worse when an attempt is made, though perhaps unwittingly, to obtain the support of the Spirit of prophecy for such speculations. Is it reasonable to believe that an important revelation to the servant of God concerning the events of these last days would await the light of day until someone in a far corner of the field heard of it through the precarious process of word of mouth, and began to broadcast it? The question answers itself. Why turn aside our ears unto fables?

We need to be careful lest our pious desire to learn more fully God’s purposes for this world, be displaced by an idle curiosity to discover what God has not seen fit to reveal. Let us not add to the words of the prophets, lest we come under the judgments God will mete out to such. And let us not assume the role of prophets ourselves, by attempting to dogmatize on the exact outcome of various happenings, lest we be found guilty as false prophets.

No people has ever had a greater message to preach than we have today, or clearer Scriptural proof to support it. Let us stay by the main outlines of faith and the tried and true Scriptural proofs, in presenting our message to men. Following such a course, we shall never have to make excuses for our teaching, and, what is more, we shall be bringing to the heart of sinful men the clear-cut, emphatic “Thus saith the Lord.”

Instead of predicting, let us prayerfully keep our eyes on changing events and on the Scriptures. It is always proper to “*watch and pray.*” E

---

*Francis D. Nichol was the editor of Review and Herald when wrote this article.*

# The Lisbon Earthquake

E. P. Mansell

*On a certain Sabbath morning, I was attending one of the largest Seventh-day Adventist congregation in North America. The preacher was a celebrated speaker. His subject was on the signs of the second coming of Jesus. On this morning he tried to prove to the congregation that the signs that Jesus mentioned in the chapter 24 of Matthew have no relationship whatever with our time and the proximity of His coming.*

*This new way of looking into the texts that mention the signs of the second coming is circulating widely among our members and becoming very popular bringing confusion and frustrating some of our good evangelists.*

*In view of this tendency and trying to show the other side of this fundamental teaching of the Bible and so vital to us Adventists, we decided to review some articles written by solid preacher and professors of the past in Elders's Digest. Our prayer is that the truth and only the truth may be the basis of our faith. The Editor*

**T**o many the quake that destroyed a large part of the city of Lisbon was a direct judgment of God, as attested by historians and other writers.

Concerning the wickedness of the city of Lisbon at the time of the quake, one famous historian says, in almost Biblical terms:

*"For many, God was judging, condemning, and chastising Lisbon, as in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah."* Oliveira Martins, *Historia de Portugal*, vol. 2, P. 74.

It is said that a conscientious, pious priest walked up and down the streets of the city shortly before the disaster, crying out against its wickedness. He warned the people and the court of the coming judgments of God. He wrote a booklet on the subject, calling to witness the declarations before the catastrophe. It can be found in the *Biblioteca Nacional* of Lisbon. Because of his plain talk before and after the quake he walked to his death in the *Auto da Fé*, September 20, 1761.

Lisbon normally had a population of 260,000 at that time. There seems to be some difference of opinion as to the number killed, but both *the Encyclopedia Britannica*, eleventh edition, as well as the book *Histario Portugal*, volume 7, page 44 (by Fernandes Mendes, Lisbon), do not set the number of victims above 40,000. The final number, however, will never be known short of the great day of judgment. Thousands were buried under falling buildings when the earth opened and the great tidal wave came in over the lower city. Other thousands were sucked under as the waters receded to the wide river Tagus.

"On the morning of Nov. 1, 1755 at 9:40 o'clock, there occurred the never-to-be-forgotten Lisbon earthquake. It will go down in history as the most destructive and of the strangest violence. There were three distinct phases of the quake. . . . The first lasted one and one-half minutes. The time between the first and the second shock was sixty seconds. The second shock lasted sixty seconds. The third shock lasted three minutes. The surface of the land seemed to move like the waves of the sea before a heavy tempest. . . . The living went about with fearful and pale faces. Many believed that the final day of judgment and the end of the world had come. . . . All in the temples were killed. . . . The Tribunal of the Inquisition was located on the spot where the present national theater stands, in the famous Rocio. It was once the palace of King John 111, and was turned over to the Holy Office in 1571." *Biblioteca Nacional*, Lisbon, vol.3, p. 579.

A little to the east of this building, and within sight, was the famous ancient convent of Santo Domingo, which was among the first to fall. It was from here that many of the "autos da fe" started. These "autos da fe" were solemn occasions in Portugal. High dignitaries of the church as well as court officials were usually present.

November 1, 1755, was All-Saints Day, and at this time fell on a Saturday. Announcements had been sent out to the surrounding districts, and many thousands were in the cathedrals and churches. All good citizens closed their doors and attended mass on such days. The setting was opportune for one of the worst disasters of

earth's disturbances as recorded up to this time. Portugal was loath to give up the Inquisition, which had lasted more than two centuries, and was yet to endure another seventy-five years before being finally abolished.

Idolatrous Portugal was slow to learn the lesson. Centuries of idol worship, the mass, the confession, the Holy Office, and the union of church and state prepared the populace to turn to the saints instead of to God for protection and help.

"Shortly after the earthquake (only six months later), there came a request through the Portuguese Minister at the Vatican, soliciting from the Holy Father, as a spiritual blessing, the granting of a patron saint, a mediator and protector against earthquakes. . . . Pope Benedict XIV, in an *Omnipotens Rerum*, given at Rome, May 24, 1756, granted this request and sealed it with the ring of the fisherman." J. M. Latino Coelho, *O Marques de Pombal*, Ed. Popular.

A Portuguese citizen by the name of Francisco Xavier d'Oliveira was a gentleman of the Order of Christ. He had evidently journeyed to England and become a Protestant. In the year following the earthquake he published a book in the French language, which was later published in English, concerning the Lisbon earthquake, and giving his opinion as to its true cause. It was dedicated to his king, Joseph I. Copies fell into the hands of the inquisitors at the capital, and the author was ordered home to give answer to the Holy Office. He refused the invitation, evidently considering the climate of London superior.

"This gentleman, Francisco d'Oliveira, having been educated in the superstition of popery, was thoroughly convinced of his errors upon reading the Holy Scripture, and abandoned his native country in order to enjoy that liberty of conscience which was denied him at home." W. Sandby, *Authentic Memoria Concerning the Portuguese Inquisition Never Before Published*, P. 178.

The following quotation is from a well-authorized

Catholic historian who comments as follows: "Francisco Xavier d'Oliveira, gentleman of the Order of Christ . . . abandoned Catholicism while in England where he lived many years. The inquisition proceeded against him in a legal process of 1756, being accused of having written a book filled with Lutheran heresy. The book was entitled, "*Discours pathétique au sujet des calamités présentes arrivées en Portugal, adressé a mes compatriotes et en particulier a Sa Majesté Tres Fidele Joseph I le Roy de Portugal, par le chevalier d'Oliveira, a Londres, 1756.*"

In this book he claimed that the 1755 earthquake was a direct divine chastisement because of the public sins of the nation, which were declared to be idolatry committed through the worship of images, and also because the nation approved of and sustained the Tribunal of the Holy Office. He also attacked the Catholic

doctrine of purgatory and defended the use of the Bible in the language of the people. He accused the pontiffs of being adulterers, sodomites, and salesmen of unholy indulgences. The gentleman was *d'Oliveira*. He was condemned and burned in effigy in the *Auto*

*da Fé* that was celebrated in Lisbon within the cloister of the convent of S. Domingo on September 20, 1761, *Historia da Igreja em Portugal*, T4-L3, p. 43.

"The convents of the religious orders were more or less totally destroyed. The convent of S. Domingo was the first to catch fire." Francisco Lutz Pereira Souza, *O terramoto de Lisboa, 1 de Nov. 1775*, vol. 3 p. 541 (S. Domingo was partially restored by 61.)

On the day that Francisco d'Oliveira was burned in effigy the pious priest and prophet of doom perished at the stake, according to the records. E

*E. P. Mansell was director of Munguluni Mission in Angola, East Africa when wrote this article.*

*Crying out against its wickedness, he  
warned the people and the court of the  
coming judgments of God.*

# What I Wish I Had Known About Nominating Committees

Larry R. Evans

Once tried moving a mountain! The inspiration came from a Sabbath School class I had attended as a small boy. I had never seen a mustard seed, but I knew it was small. Surely my faith was big enough to move the big hill in our backyard. With childish courage I walked outside, away from everyone, and boldly shouted, "Move!" There was no earthquake. I shouted again, but again I was confronted with silence. I went back into the house very happy that I had not announced what I had intended to do. I was also sobered by what I thought the whole episode said about my faith.

## Challenge Your Assumptions.

Somewhere along the way I was given the idea that the responsibility of the nominating committee was to fill church office positions for the coming year. That's an impersonal, mechanical, and limiting way of looking at a very important task. Now I'd rather look at it as an opportunity for building people and a dream for the church.

## Go for the Gold.

Although it's not usually said verbally, willingness is often the first criterion in the selection process. It is obviously important, but it isn't enough. Research shows that churches on the growing edge work hard at preparing future leaders. Spiritual gifts, not only a spirit of willingness or availability, should be the first consideration. We are not simply talking about talented people. We are talking about individuals who can minister effectively within a particular church body. The first elder of a university church, for example, may not be qualified to be the first elder of a small church.

## It Doesn't Have to Be Long and Boring

A glimpse into the meaning of eternity can sometimes be gained by being asked to serve on the nominating committee. We changed this by choosing a large enough committee that could be divided into two groups. Before dividing, we met as one large group to discuss particular needs and the general philosophy of a church dedicated to "building" people. Then one group took charge of church offices and the other took Sabbath School offices.

After a couple hours we came back together for a bread and salad supper to discuss what recommendations had been generated and to work out duplications. The stimulus of meeting a defined church mission, the social of supper, and the enthusiasm on unexpected progress carried the day. No, we didn't finish in one or two meetings, but we did cut in half the petty debates and the number of late-night meetings.

## Roles Are Important Too!

The nominating committee is only a small part of an ongoing process. It is sometimes helpful to form a leadership development committee that among other things has the responsibility of implementing a mentoring system for new leaders and helping every member find a meaningful role or group. From this year long process comes recommendations for the nominating committee. **E**

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*Larry R. Evans is presently the president of Georgia-Cumberland Conference.*

# Dealing with Ineffective Officers

Barry Campbell

**A** preschool worker loves children and is faithful in attendance. But every Sabbath he is late. Parents and other workers are frustrated and inconvenienced.

A teacher of teenage girls is always unprepared to teach. She is well liked by the teens, but most Sabbath School time is spent discussing schoolwork or TV. Rarely do they get around to Bible study.

One of the most difficult problems faced by leaders today is how to deal with ineffective worker. Here are a few ideas.

## Understand Why Workers Are Ineffective

- Workers may be serving with the wrong age group.
- Workers may be serving in wrong kinds of positions.
- Workers may not understand what they are supposed to do.
- Workers may be experiencing health or personal problems.
- Workers may not have been enlisted properly.
- Workers may have too many jobs in the church.

## Deal with Ineffective Workers Positively

- Talk with the person face-to-face.
- Pray with the person.
- Provide some options. In what other positions might this person serve?
- Enlist people properly.
- Encourage attendance at team meetings.
- Compliment them on something they are doing well.
- Provide all workers a list of training opportunities and encourage participation.
- Show continuing concern for all workers.

## Consider These Guidelines

- **When in doubt, consider the group involved.** An effective worker in the preschool department may demand more immediate attention than an ineffective worker in an adult men's class. Both are

important, but adults may be better able to care for themselves. Both situations need your attention and action, but consider the group.

- **Consider giving the ineffective worker a leave of absence.** Most ineffective workers realize they are ineffective and that something must be done. A leave of absence may be welcomed (and it may not).
- **Provide resources workers need to be the best they can be.** Make sure they have the best teaching materials or other resources. Also provide training resources.
- **Continue to help ineffective workers and be patient as long as they recognize a need to change and are willing to improve.** You are an elder. These ineffective workers are *members* of your *team*. Don't be hasty in removing them from the positions in which they were enlisted to serve.
- **Only when all else has failed and the worker feels no need for improvement should he or she be relieved of his or her responsibility.** Take this action with love and yet firmness. Striving for excellence in the ministries of your church is important, but remember that you are dealing with a *person*.
- **Don't prolong the situation.** You may choose to delay action because the ineffective worker is in training or because prayerful deliberation suggests that the time for action has not yet come, but *do not* put off the action you know you should take now.
- **Remember, the worker probably knows he or she is ineffective but feels he or she made a commitment and must abide by that.** Work with the person to come up with a win-win solution. E

Barry Campbell writes from Nashville, Tennessee

Adapted from Great Commission Breakthrough: "How to" Ideas for Great Commission Churches (Nashville: Sunday School Division Office, The Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1992), 5.

# Adventist Worship

Floyd Bresee

**A**dventist leaders in several parts of the world are frustrated about the form of their weekly worship hour. We have used pretty much the same order of service, made the same announcements, sung the same songs, prayed the same prayers, and preached almost the same sermons decade after decade, generation after generation, until recently.

Young people say we're out of tune with the times. Significant numbers of members seem **bored** with worship. They are voting for change, with their feet. Thousands of Adventist congregations have twice as many names on the books as they have worshipers in the pews. Perhaps yours is one of them.

Church leaders are experimenting with new ways to worship. But these innovations can have their problems too. We must not replace traditional worship, from which time may have drained the meaning, with gimmickry and entertainment that have no biblical basis.

Adventist elders should not be afraid to experiment with ways to worship, but we need some guidelines. There's no better place to find them in Scripture than in that uniquely Adventist chapter, Revelation 14. Verse 7 insists we must be a worshipping people. It is *worship* of our Creator that makes us unique.

## Ingredients of Adventist Worship

### 1. *Adventist worship should be awe-inspiring.*

Revelation 14:7 says the first angel declares, "Fear God, and give glory to him." As Adventist ministers know, this word *fear* suggests reverence, awe. Worship does involve having a good relationship with your fellow worshipers; a gospel of love cannot be realized in isolation. And it involves having warm feeling toward God. But these are no more than parts of worship. In corporate worship, God's people inter God's throne room together. Worship is not primarily for feeling good, but for seeing God.

### 2. *Adventist worship should be joyful.*

Revelation 14:2, 3 describes God's redeemed in

worship: "The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. And they sang as it were a new song." This heavenly harp-playing and singing reveal that joy and feeling belong in worship. When we who are preparing for heaven worship as we will in heaven, our worship will be joyful. It will include both our thoughts and our feelings, demanding both clear heads and warm hearts.

Too many of us Adventist leaders have had the emotion educated out of us. Too many of us so fear emotionalism, excess emotion, that we're afraid of any emotion at all. But we are wrong in presuming we defend our pioneers when we defend only the formal and the rational. Early Adventist worship included great gobs of relating and participating. And sometimes it was highly emotional.

### 3. *Adventist worship should be experiential.*

Of the song God's people sing Revelation declares, "No one could learn the song." Why? Because it is a song of personal experience. Nobody else can do it for us. Worship is experiential.

Worship is not a routine, a tradition. It is an event, a happening. It is not a passive, spectator sport, but personal interaction between Creator and created. Worship is encounter.

## Adventist Worship Controversial

Adventist worship has become controversial. Myriads of leaders worldwide have been communicating with the General Conference Ministerial Association, asking for guidance as they seek a way through the minefield surrounding change in worship practice. Some don't know where to turn. What should we change? What should never change?

The subject demands far more than the cursory treatment this brief article affords. We have begun research for a book on Adventist worship, and plan to survey a sample of Adventist congregations. Preliminary plans include addressing such questions as:

1. How did early Adventists worship?

2. What are our current worship customs or traditions, and where did we get them?

3. What do our pastors and congregations think about worship?

4. What do our young people think of our worship services?

5. What are the Bible principles that will keep us balanced between divine adoration and human fellowship and between reason and emotion?

6. What about "celebration" worship?

Elder, how does your worship service measure up?

Sometimes you ought to sit alone in the sanctuary, when the people are gone and the pews are empty, and ask the one question that counts: "Did they or did they not meet God today?"

Keep preaching the old message. But keep experimenting with more meaningful ways to worship, until you feel certain that sincere worshipers are encouraged to encounter God. Worship is encounter. **E**

*Floyd Bresse former Ministerial Secretary of the General Conference. Today he lives in Oregon.*

## Code of Ethics for Elders

Paul H. Olm

*Responding to God's sacred call, and recognizing His claims upon me and my work as a gospel minister, I pledge that:*

1. I shall spend sufficient time in personal study of the Scriptures and in personal prayer and meditation to maintain a continually growing relationship with my God.
2. I shall avoid anything that will weaken me mentally, physically, or spiritually.
3. I shall not abuse the authority given me by the Word of God, but will ever remember the apostle Peter's warning against lording it over the flock.
4. I shall not cheapen my calling by seeking special privileges, gratuities.
5. I shall keep in the strictest integrity all confidences that come to me.
6. I shall refuse to prostitute myself by using information about or from members for personal advantage.
7. I shall not go into the pulpit unprepared, nor shall I use it as a platform to expound my personal views on society, politics, or matters unrelated to the gospel.
8. I shall not play favorites nor ally myself with factions within the church.
9. I shall give prompt aid to colleagues or members in times of distress or need.
10. I shall consider seriously the counsel of colleagues.
11. I shall spurn to speak disparagingly of my predecessor.
12. I shall not encourage nor perform professional services in other congregations except upon invitation of the minister.
13. I shall be alert to the physical and/or spiritual needs of a retired pastor who may be a member of my church or who may live in the community. **E**

*Paul H. Olm, in an issue of The Christian Ministry, suggests that just as attorneys (and other professionals) have a clearly defined code of ethics that governs their responsibilities, so ministers of the gospel could profit from similar standards of professional conduct. Elder's Digest has taken the liberty to adapt and revise Mr. Olm's list of fifteen rules for the benefit of our readers.*



# Footprints of God in Creation

Frank Breaden

## Introduction

Acts 14:15-17 "God hath not left Himself without witness."

Though God has not revealed Himself to our senses; for we cannot see Him, or hear Him, or touch Him, He has not left us to grope blindly in confusion and doubt, without any evidence of His existence.

The writer of the well known book *Steps to Christ*, puts it this way: "God never asks us to believe without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His Word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason, and this testimony is abundant." (p. 105)

*What are some of these evidences of God's existence, and where do we find them?*

In this lesson we will study three of the plainest evidences for God, which we will call "Footprints of God in Creation". These evidences are readily available to every man who is willing to use his eyes, ears and rational powers.

## Footprints of God in the Earth

Job 12:7-10 "Ask now the beasts, the fowls, the earth, and the fishes and they shall teach thee."

Matt. 6:28, 29 "Consider the lilies of the field."

Rom. 1:19, 20 "The invisible things of God may be understood by the visible things which He has made."

All around us, in earth and sea and sky, there are countless evidences of order, beauty, accuracy, adaptation and intelligent planning. Consider these marvels of creative design: The beauty and perfume of the flowers. Snowflake crystals. A butterfly's wing. A spider's web. A bird's feather. A cob of corn. The marvelous instincts and mechanisms of the honey-bee. The annual miracle of bird migration. The bat's ingenious "radar" system.

*Now let us ask: Could these wonders of creation have made themselves?*

## Footprints of God in the Heavens

Ps. 19:1 "The heavens declare the glory of God."

Gen. 15:5 "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars."

Neh. 9:6 "Thou hast made the heavens, and Thou preservest them all."

Isa. 40:26 "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things."

In the heavens above us there are the same evidences of pattern, order, beauty, accuracy and apparent purpose which we see in our own world, only magnified to a breath taking degree. Consider these wonders of the starry heavens: The enormous sizes, weights, speeds, numbers, distances and temperatures of the billions of planets and stars. The precise calculation and co-ordination of their weights, motions, speeds, temperatures and orbits. The fine balancing of attractions and repulsions. The split-second timing. The perfect synchronization. The clock-like regularity. All maintained in a state of harmony by constantly operating laws and controls.

*Now let us ask again: Could these marvels of creation have made themselves?*

## Footprints of God in Our Bodies

Exod. 4:11 "Who hath made man's mouth? Have not I the Lord?"

Ps. 94:9 "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear?"

Ps. 94:9 "He that formed the eye, shall He not see?"

Ps. 139:14 "I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

In the human body there are the same amazing evidences of ingenious design, coordination, adaption and creative forethought which we see in the earth and in the heavens. Consider these wonders of the body-temple: The living cell, the heart, the brain, the eye, the ear, and the hand. Not to mention the senses of touch, taste and smell, the nervous system, the gland and the digestive system. The prolonged and intricate miracle of reproduction and growth. The body's marvelous

defense and healing mechanisms.

What shall we do with these countless evidences of intelligent planning and forethought in the earth, in the heavens and in our bodies? We cannot ignore them. They demand a rational explanation. They have come into existence either by design, or by accident. They are the product of God or of chance. There is no neutral ground.

*So, let us ask, for the third time: Could these marvels of creation have made themselves?*

Illustration: Did you ever hear the story of the watch that made itself? It goes like this: Late one night Joe Brown woke up with an uneasy feeling that something unusual was going on in his bedroom. He lay very still, listening and wondering. Presently he heard faint scratching and clicking noises from the direction of the dressing table. Reaching for his flashlight, he shone the beam towards the mysterious noises . . . Joe's eyes bulged. What seemed like a miracle was happening on top of the dressing table! Scattered about its surface were the parts of a watch. But the curious thing was that they were not lying still. Like actors in a play, they were all dancing about as if they were alive! The case of the watch was lying face downwards, and the other parts were scrambling into the case and snuggling down into their correct positions, as if directed by some invisible intelligence!

While Joe watched, open-mouthed, the main-spring, hairspring, and balance wheel jumped in, and

adjusted themselves with perfect precision. Then sundry minor cogs, wheels and plates appeared, all in correct order, took their places, and lay still. Next a swarm of screws danced up, hopped in, and screwed themselves deftly and snugly into place. The back cover clicked itself on with a sharp snap. Then, with incredible ease, the whole watch flipped itself over on its back. Face, hands and glass fitted themselves expertly into position. Finally, the winding staff appeared, slid smoothly into place, gave itself a few brisk winds, and the watch began a rhythmic Tick-tick! Tick-tick! Tick-tick!...

Do you believe this story? It doesn't make sense, does it? Yet such a fantastic impossibility as a watch that made itself would be a small miracle, indeed, compared with an *eye*, or an *ear*, or a *heart*, or a *brain*, or a *universe* that made itself!

### Conclusion

In the book of Hebrews, Paul sums up the evidence for God in these decisive words:

Heb. 3:4 "For every house is built by some man, but He that built all things is God."

*Honestly, now: Can you find any fault with this conclusion?*

It is the only rational explanation for the marvels of creation which we have studied in this lesson. **E**

*Frank Breden writes from Melody Park, Australia*



### Seasoned With Love

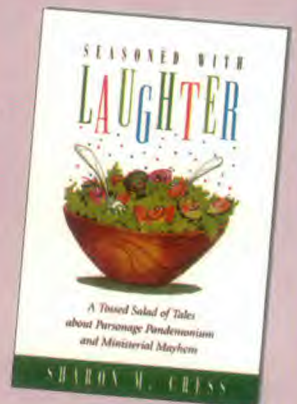
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# “As I had mercy on thee”

Otavio Costa

## I. Introduction

The parable of the unmerciful servant illustrates in reverse the truth of this beatitude. To the debtor to whom the king would have forgiven all of his enormous debt, had he in turn been willing to forgive his fellow-servant a paltry sum, the king said, “I forgave thee all that debt, because thou besoughtest me; shouldest not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee?” (Matt. 18:32b-33).

“As I had mercy on thee”— that is the moral of this parable; and in substance it may be phrased like this: “Woe unto the unmerciful: for they have not, nor can they receive the mercy of God.” This is the exact reverse of our beatitude: “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” This self-acting law of the moral realm never fails, and from which there is no appeal. This is an absolute in the kingdom of God. If God’s mercy does not awaken in our hearts some sense of mercy towards our fellowman, let no one deceive himself into thinking that he has received God’s mercy; he hasn’t.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” Three things demand our attention about this beatitude. Each can be stated in one word.

## II. Mercy Explanation

Remember: In these beatitudes Jesus is not speaking of seven different individuals; rather He is describing seven qualities of excellence He desires in one man. But before Jesus commended these qualities to others, He exhibited them Himself. His own life is the best commentary on them. In Him all of the strength and tenderness, all of the patience, long-suffering, and compassion, all of the love of a God of love was illustrated before men’s eyes in His gracious life for our example and in His atoning death for our redemption.

A. *Christ was long-suffering with error, patient with failure, and kind with stupidity.*

How thankful we ought to be for that. He was

gracious and generous in His appraisal of men who were sincere. Andrew brought Simon, his brother, to Jesus. Looking past the rough qualities, the impetuosity of that man as he was, Jesus spoke of him as he would become: “Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)” (John 1:42b).

B. *Christ was forgiving in spirit toward those who wronged Him and sinned against Him.*

His great love for the sinner overflowed in free pardon and forgiveness. On the cross He prayed for forgiveness for those who crucified Him, pleading, “They know not what they do.” (Luke 23:34b).

He had mercy on the sick, the halt, the lame, the blind. His word to His followers is: “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons: freely ye received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8) Mercy is Christlikeness.

A view of the goodness and mercy of God will lead to repentance. There will be a desire to possess the same spirit. He who receives this spirit will have discernment to see the good there is in the character of others, and will love those who need the tender, pitying sympathy of forgiveness. He sees in Christ a sin-pardoning Saviour, and contemplates with hope and confidence the pardon written over against his sins. He wants the same work to be done for his associates also. True faith brings the soul into sympathy with God. He who possesses the spirit of Christ will never be weary of forgiving.—EGW., *The Home Missionary*, “Treatment of the Erring,” pr. 17.

## III. Mercy’s Demonstration

A. *If we are merciful as Christ was merciful, we will exhibit the generosity of His judgments of others.* Like Christ, we will search for the best, not the worst, in our fellow-man. Like our Master, we will be slow to condemn and quick to commend our brother, and this not out of a sense of duty, but as the natural expression of a loving heart.

expression of a loving heart.

- B. *If we are merciful, as Christ was merciful, we will exhibit His spirit of forgiveness.* We will be forgiving in spirit, refusing to hold a grudge, casting hate—by the Spirit’s power—out of our hearts, blessing those who curse us, and praying for those who persecute us. How we need the compassion of Christ to flood our unfeeling hearts to send us out to give, forgive, and serve for His sake.
- C. *If we are merciful, as Christ was merciful, we will give ourselves for a world’s need as He did.* Is there any spark of His love for a lost and dying world in our hearts? Are there any of the tender mercies and compassion of Christ in us at all? Mercy is to have its demonstration in the minds and hearts and deeds of those who have received God’s mercy and grace freely shed abroad in their hearts.

**IV. Mercy’s Benediction**

“Blessed are the merciful.” What is the benediction pronounced upon the merciful? . . . for they shall obtain mercy.” The blessing upon the merciful person is that he shall receive in the same manner as that in which he gives. This is a self-acting law of the moral realm. It never fails. “They shall obtain mercy.” The certainty of that blessing is based on the reciprocal law of life that Jesus stated so often, a law more dependable than the law of gravity.

As we give, we get. As we sow, we reap. But in an infinitely higher sense this holds true. As between God and man, the merciful obtain mercy.

- A. *To be like Christ in His judgments is to claim this blessing.* To be gracious, generous, seeking and thinking the best— what if we are like that in our judgments? Jesus says, “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measures unto you”(Matt. 7:2). James tells us, “For judgment is without mercy to him that showeth no mercy: mercy glorieth against judgment”(2:13).
- B. *To be like Christ in His forgiving spirit is to claim this blessing.* To have an unforgiving spirit is to forfeit the same. Jesus tells us, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, you

heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive no men their trespasses, neither will you Father forgive you trespasses”(Matt. 6:14-15). One of the petitions of the Model Prayer is: “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors”(6:12). The unforgiving heart cannot receive forgiveness, nor the unmerciful, mercy.

- C. *To be like Christ in deeds of compassion is to claim the blessing.* In the story of the Good Samaritan Jesus answered the question, “Who is my neighbor?” When He had completed the story and asked, “Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers?” His questioner was compelled to reply, “He that showed mercy on him” (Luke 10:36-37).

**V. Conclusion**

In that picture of judgment in Matthew 25, to whom did Jesus say, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”(v. 34b)? He said this to those who had exhibited mercy in their lives. To whom did He say, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire” (v. 41)? He said this to those who showed no mercy.

**Illustration: The Mercy of God**

When a former mayor of New York befriended a poor, dejected outcast of society, he was reproved by the prosecuting attorney who said, “That tramp’s no good. He’s getting only what he deserves.” hearing this, the judge interrupted the harsh counselor by asking with a smile, “Did you ever hear of the mother who visited Napoleon on behalf of her condemned son? The emperor told her the young man had committed the same offense twice, and justice demanded the death penalty. ‘But Sire,’ she pleaded, ‘I don’t ask for justice—only for mercy.’ ‘He doesn’t deserve it,’ said Napoleon. ‘No, he doesn’t,’ she admitted, ‘but it would not be mercy if he deserved it.’ ‘You’re right!’ said the ruler quickly, ‘I’ll grant your request and show him mercy!’” TS. E

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*Otavio Costa writes from Brazil.*

# Preparing and Presenting Bible Studies

Frank Breaden

## Choosing your topic

This will be determined by factors such as:

1. **The immediate point of interest of your prospects**, as indicated by their conversation or questions; e.g., World conditions. Questions about the existence of God. Life after death. Doubts about the truth of the Bible. Problem of suffering, etc. Philip, in his first Bible study with the Ethiopian eunuch, “Began at the same scripture” that his prospect was puzzled about (Acts 8:35). A good cue for us!
2. **The special needs or circumstances of your prospects**; e.g., A recently bereaved family would need comfort, assurance and hope from the Bible. A man battling with the drink, habit and longing for freedom would need the positive gospel assurance: “Christ can break the grip of this evil habit!”
3. **The stage your prospects have reached in hearing the Advent message**; e.g., We are instructed to “melt” the prospects’ hearts with “the love of God”, to teach them the gospel and lead them to surrender their hearts to Jesus, before confronting them with testing truths, such as the Sabbath, the Tithes, or the Mark of the Beast. This procedure is always best. Otherwise, we put the cart before the horse! See *Evangelism*, pp 230, 231
4. **The Church connections or religious background of your prospects**. Obviously there would be somewhat different approaches for Anglicans, Catholics, Baptists, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc.  
NOTE: Do not be stereotyped in your selection of topics. There is no one set order or pattern of Bible studies, to be followed rigidly in all cases. Adapt your approach to the individual circumstances of you prospects. **Advanced doctrines or testing truths should not come before their time!**

## Collecting your material

1. **“Pray yourself teachable!”** Maintain a constant attitude of dependence upon the Holy Spirit.
2. **“Think yourself empty!”** Exhaust your own knowledge of the Bible first and, when you have done this, go to other sources.
3. **“Read yourself full!”** Consult Adventist books and printed Bible study outlines that are available. Use you concordance. In extremity, get help from your Pastor.

## Constructing your study

1. **Have a definite aim in view** (i.e., concerning what you want your prospects to *understand, believe, or do*).
2. **Analyze your subject by asking questions** about it, such as: “How?” “When?” “Where?” “Why?” “What?” “Who?” “What are the common opinions about this subject?” “What are the common objections?” “What is my responsibility?” etc.
3. **Prepare you main steps**, headings, or divisions.
4. **Avoid rambling or disconnectedness**. Strive for a logical sequence or order of arrangement, so that your study grows naturally and persuasively, like a plant: “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn is the ear.” The above mentioned questions will help greatly in achieving this logical development.
5. **Avoid using too many texts**. Three or four plain, pertinent texts under each heading are usually sufficient.
6. **Avoid long Bible studies**. About 45 minutes is sufficient for the average Bible study.
7. **Plan an introduction and conclusion**. Think out some novel, interesting or timely introduction. The

reading of the newspaper, or close observation of the happenings of daily life can often provide this. A summary of the main points provides a good conclusion. Be sure to ask, "Is it all clear?" Make personal application of the truth explained and, when appropriate, make a direct appeal. Example of a personal application: At close of Bible study, ask, "Why do you think God has given us a chance to hear these things, Mrs. Brown?" Example of a direct appeal: After a full presentation of studies on the Sabbath truth, say: "Well, Bill, I suppose the day is not far distant when you will be keeping your first Sabbath! . . . Am I right?"

8. **Master your subject thoroughly.** If possible, do this in such a way that your notes can be discarded.
9. **Make every Bible study Christ centered.** Help your prospects to see the face of Christ in every doctrine and prophecy (see *Evangelism*, pp 142, 163, 164, 169, 170, 184-193, 223, 232, 248, 264, 298, 299, 300, 350, 484-486).

#### Presentation

1. **Be guarded and prudent** in your preliminary conversation. Let your conduct show that you have come to study God's Word, not just for a social visit.
2. **Commence and close** with a brief, simple, sincere prayer.
3. **Avoid formality**, and sustain interest by employing novelty, variety, surprise features, suspense. Do not let your prospects know all that is coming next. **"Satisfy curiosity and you kill interest."**
4. **The wise use of visual aids**, music (recorded or live), tape-recorded talks, film strips or slides, can add stimulus and variety to your visits.
5. **In manner and deportment be as friendly, human**, and approachable as possible. Be relaxed and natural. Avoid stiffness, starchiness, or austerity. Never underestimate **the value of a chuckle**. It relaxes tension; it disarms prejudice; it dispels hostility; it wins trust.
6. **Adopt conversational rather than lecturing manner.** Talk with, not at your prospects. Act as a friend, not a superior.
7. **Let the Bible speak.** Make it a settled practice to offer the Bible's answer to questions asked. Keep the Bible central in your whole program of indoctrination.

8. **Encourage your prospects to participate** by taking their turn at reading texts from the Bible; by asking questions and entering into discussion, and, as you gain their confidence, by learning to offer short prayers for themselves.
9. **After the study, do not linger.** Avoid exerting an influence that may detract from your message. Aim always to leave the message paramount in your prospects' minds.

#### Guidance on Selection and Order of Bible Study

##### Topics

##### Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*

1. Speak first on points of doctrine on which you can agree. Give "milk" before "strong meat" to babes! 164, 200.
2. Win prospect's confidence before presenting unfamiliar, advanced, or testing truth. 164, 165 (see also pp 246, 485).
3. Best plan is to present subjects that arouse the conscience; that teach practical godliness . . . i.e., How to come to Jesus. How to pray. How to receive the assurance of sins forgiven. How to take hold of God's help. 226
4. The very first and most important thing is to melt and subdue the soul by presenting our Lord Jesus Christ as the Sin-bearer. 264
5. Do not feel it your duty to present the Sabbath question immediately you meet people. Tell them this is not your burden now. Reserve the Sabbath truth till they have surrendered heart and mind and will to God. 228, 442
6. Do not present the Law of God as a test until prospects have been warmed, melted and subdued with the presentation of Christ, and have given themselves to the Lord. 230, 231
7. If the heart of the unbeliever is not softened, to try to impress him is "like striking upon cold iron." 247
8. There is always perfect safety in talking of the hope of eternal life. And when the heart is melted and subdued, the enquiry will be: "What must I do to be saved?" 248, 272 (see also pp 125, 126, 142, 143 163). **E**

*Frank Breaden writes from Melody Park, Australia.*



# “To Such Belongs the Kingdom of Heaven”

Alvin C. Rose

**T**he congregation of Placid Place Community Church took out their bulletins and looked again. There it was! “Minister’s Moments With the Children.” Could it be that, finally, after months of crayons, paper, mints, and gum, the children were going to have their own special part in the service? Sure enough, there was an uneasy shuffle on the platform. Pastor Jay Cale stepped to the pulpit and cleared his throat (was that a tremor in his voice?)

“The worship committee met Friday and decided that the children should be included in our services . . . and . . . uh . . . so . . . will the children please come forward?”

Jimmy, who had already gone through three pieces of candy, four sheets of paper, and two broken crayons, caught the trailing invitation, and promptly responded. Leaping from his twelfth-row seat, he exercised all the energy of his 7 years to give the congregation an instant replay of the recently televised track meet. The race was on, with only a few parents having time to make an ineffectual grab at their departing young athletes.

Pastor Cale momentarily seemed about to disappear under the “hooves” of the thundering herd. Narrowly escaping, he seemed a bit shaken as he gestured for them to be seated on the steps of the chancel. The great moment had come, but it had to wait. Three year old Robbie, one of the first up front, discovering that her mother was not with her, began to scream at the top of her lungs, and headed back to the security of her mother’s lap.

“Now, children,” began Pastor Cale in a brave at-

tempt to regain the initiative, “the Bible says that Jesus loves us all, and the picture I have here . . .”

“Johnny! Let go!” (Johnny was pulling the pigtales of the interrupter, a girl seated a step below him.)

“The picture I have here shows a fisherman”

“My daddy has a boat too!”

“Yes, I know your father has a boat. This fisherman—children, please be quiet! This fisherman is trying to do what?”

“Get away from his mommy so they won’t fight,” loudly responded a red-haired 5 year old.

Cringing, Pastor Cale ignored the response. Johnny (bless him), who momentarily had stopped pulling pigtales, broke in with “Catch a fish!”

(Deliverance!) “Yes, that’s right . . . No, Susie, he won’t hurt them, either . . . No, Dickie, I don’t own a boat.” (Occasionally, Pastor Cale’s voice was heard amid the din.)

“Yes, I know your daddy went fishing this weekend, Margaret.” (Desperation.) “The point is this: Jesus said we ought to . . . uh . . . be . . . fishers of men. We ought to share God’s love. . . You’ve got to go what?” (The audience tittered in expectation.) “Oh, go fishing with Jesus.” (Relief.) “Yes. . . uh. I mean . . . oh, let us pray! Thank You Lord for Your patience and Your love amen.”

As the cherubs raced proudly to their families (hadn’t they contributed to the education of their pastor?), Pastor Cale fled to his pulpit, where his eleven-o’clock presentation seemed characterized by a strange, distracted air.

Indeed they had contributed to his education! It’s

unfortunate he could not have advanced a few grades under other teachers before joining the School for Aspiring Communicators of the Gospel to Little Cherubs. As one who has had experience in both schools, let me share a few lessons that would have helped Pastor Cale.

### Lessons That Can Help

**1. First, the decision to have a Minister's Moments With the Children should not be made by a worship committee, or even the pastor himself, on the Friday before the big moment.**

**2. Planning is in order.** The committee should ask, What do we want to accomplish? What help can we give the person we ask to lead out? How can we best use the time? (Other questions will come to mind.) To place the burden of these decisions entirely upon the "anointed" leader is only to add to his apprehension and anxiety. A spirit of mutual support and encouragement should exist between leader and committee.

There are valid reasons for including children in the morning worship service. Says Dr. Harriet Miller, professor of Christian education at United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio: "Children learn by experiencing a closeness with God, and with others. There are few moments of real awe and wonder in a regular worship service. Pastors need some direct relationship with children on an informal, learning basis."

**3. Preparation is essential,** more essential than Pastor Cale seemed to realize. Says Dr. George Boone, a United Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. clergyman: "Instead of being simple, kids really do understand profound things. Preparation for Children's Worship Sharing often requires more exegesis than for adults."

If props and objects are needed, they should be in place beforehand. Always check before the service to make sure that they have not been removed by someone cleaning up the clutter."

*Pastor Cale momentarily seemed  
about to disappear under the "hooves"  
of the thundering herd.*

**4. Rehearse.** Do not read from a script. Children sense discomfort. When you lose your train of thought, they'll be only too glad to change the subject. Maintaining communication with the majority of children before you is more than important; it is essential! Stand or sit where both the children and the congregation can see and hear you.

**5. Speak clearly, but not too loudly.** Children shrink from too loud voices. Move around, your audience of children does! Children enjoy movement and will relate to your freedom of movement. How you respond to their movement will determine the result of your mutual learning experience.

**6. Preach the Word.** Be sure you are sharing something worth communicating. Help the children into the rest of the worship service by hints about the sermon to come that may give them entry points. You may also be enhancing adult interest in what is to follow.

**7. Don't be disturbed by divided attention.** You will usually enjoy the undivided attention of your adults and the divided attention of your children. Most of those squirmy, wide-eyed creatures before you have come to listen. Don't worry about the few who aren't. It is difficult for any speaker to hold the attention of such a variety of ages and interests, the usual children's audience will range from 2 1/2 year old toddlers to sixth-graders. Make it your objective to share something of worth with the majority gathered before you in a manner that will command their attention and interest.

### Dealing with Behavior

You will likely observe many forms of youthful exuberance, some of which will be difficult to overcome. Your response will determine, to quite an extent, how effective your sharing is with the larger group. Here are some of the more common types of distractions and some possible means of response/control/inclusion:

**1. The showoff.** This child's need for attention is extremely high. He will do anything to gain your at-



tention and acceptance. Your response can mean the difference between behavior improvement and chaos. A gentle word can do much to change the situation. If the child knows that he is loved and accepted when acting less aggressive, better behavior will come.

2. *The talker.* This child will compete with you for the attention of your audience. Encourage his participation in the group's listening activity by such a response as "Thank you for sharing. Now, children, let's all hear what the Bible (pastor, object lesson, et cetera) has to say."

3. *The frightened child.* This child is intimidated by the environment. A moment taken to comfort him is not out of place. Sometimes the child can be calmed by encouraging him to come close to you.

4. *The wanderer.* If the child is not destroying the Grandmother Jennings Memorial Bud Vase or some equally important church artifact, don't get distracted by his wandering. Should it become necessary to "rescue" the child, do it without comment and with as little disturbance as possible.

5. *The bored child.* Occasionally, you will be greeted by blankly staring eyes, impervious to your commentary. Don't be alarmed; include this child in the presentation by motion or touch. Make him aware that you care about his presence. Warmth will do much to open a child's personality.

6. *The big kids.* Remember Brother Fred? For the moment, you've got even his interest. Like most adults present, he's listening and not just for the cute response (or embarrassing response) his child might make. He may be remembering when he was a child and first heard the gospel message. This special moment is not just a time for children to become little adults; it is a time also for adults to become as little children, listening in simple faith and trust to the message of the gospel.

7. *But a word of caution:* Don't use the children's special time to send "coded" messages to your adults. You've got the next half-hour for that purpose.

What should leaders share with children? One pastor spent several months explaining objects from the sanctuary and relating their importance for worship.

Another printed a bulletin especially for children each week and explained a different aspect of worship. Telling about the origin of hymns or the experience of hymn writers is always appropriate. Well known church leaders may offer a rich source of stories.

### Helping Rules

Experiment with a broad variety of resources and ideas. A few simple rules may help you share the gospel:

1. *Use variety.* No one style of communication can be effective for all children in all situations. Variety is the key to meaningful communication.

2. *Be yourself.* Don't try to "perform" or be someone different than you are under other circumstances. If you are not at ease in your role, the children will sense it.

3. *Communicate enthusiasm for what you are doing, but never talk down to children.* Strive to treat each one as an individual who has come for sharing and instruction.

4. *Allow for the unexpected.* Don't be dismayed by laughter at a child's comment, or the lack of laughter. Be patient when distractions occur. After all, you do have the floor, and some are hearing the message you're sharing.

5. *Be prepared.* The attentiveness of your audience generally will be in proportion to your preparation.

6. *Have a sincere desire to share the love of God through His Word.* This is the only requisite of these rules.

How will your sharing affect the children? You can only speculate how your lessons will be applied. But inevitably the cherubs will become the adults of your congregation. And each will have some harvest from the seeds you have planted in his faith garden.

What is left but to march forth in peace and love, inviting the little children to come and participate in growth experiences that will activate their faith? **E**

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*Alvin C. Rose was pastor of the Jennings and Dresden United Methodist churches in Jennings, Kansas when he wrote this article.*

# Christ and the Law

Ellen G. White

## The Character of the Law of God

David says: "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. 19:7). "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever" (Ps. 119:152). And Paul testifies: "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good" (Rom. 7:12).

As the Supreme Ruler of the universe, God has ordained laws for the government not only of all living beings, but of all the operations of nature. Everything, whether great or small, animate or inanimate, is under fixed laws which cannot be disregarded. There are no exceptions to this rule; for nothing that the divine hand has made has been forgotten by the divine mind. But while everything in nature is governed by natural law, man alone, as an intelligent being, capable of understanding its requirements, is amenable to moral law. To man alone, the crowning work of His creation, God has given a conscience to realize the sacred claims of the divine law, and a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good; and of man prompt and perfect obedience is required. Yet, God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent.

The subject of man's personal responsibility is understood by but few; and yet it is a matter of the greatest importance. We may each obey and live, or we may transgress God's law, defy His authority, and receive the punishment that is met. Then to every soul the question comes home with force, Shall I obey the voice from heaven, the ten words spoken from Sinai, or shall I go with the multitude who trample on that fiery law? To those who love God it will be the highest delight to keep His commandments, and to do those things that

are pleasing in His sight. But the natural heart hates the law of God, and wars against its holy claims. Men shut their souls from the divine light, refusing to walk in it as it shines upon them. They sacrifice purity of heart, the favor of God, and their hope of heaven, for selfish gratification or worldly gain.

Says the psalmist, "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Ps. 19:7). How wonderful in its simplicity, its comprehensiveness and perfection is the law of Jehovah! Is so brief that we can easily commit every precept to memory, and yet so far-reaching as to express the whole will of God, and to take cognizance, not only of the outward actions, but of the thoughts and intents the desires and

emotions, of the heart. Human laws cannot do this. They can deal with the outward actions only. A man may be a transgressor, and yet conceal his misdeeds from human eyes; he may be a criminal, a thief, a murderer, or an adulterer, but so long as he is not discovered, the law cannot condemn him as guilty. The law of God

takes note of the jealousy, envy, hatred, malignity, revenge, lust, and ambition that surge through the soul, but have not found expression in outward action, because the opportunity, not the will, has been wanting. And these sinful emotions will be brought into the account in the day when "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccles. 12:14).

## God's Law Is Simple

The law of God is simple, and easily understood. There are men who proudly boast that they believe only what they can understand, forgetting that there are

*To those who love God it will be the  
highest delight to keep His  
commandments, and to do those things  
that are pleasing in His sight.*

mysteries in human life and in the manifestation of God's power in the works of nature, mysteries which the deepest philosophy, the most extensive research, is powerless to explain. But there is no mystery in the law of God. All can comprehend the great truths which it embodies. The feeblest intellect can grasp these rules; the most ignorant can regulate the life, and form the character after the divine standard. If the children of men would, to the best of their ability, obey this law, they would gain strength of mind and power of discernment to comprehend still more of God's purposes and plans. And this advancement would be continued, not only during the present life, but during eternal ages; for however far we may advance in the knowledge of God's wisdom and power, there is always an infinity beyond.

The divine law requires us to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves. Without the exercise of this love, the highest profession of faith is mere hypocrisy. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments," says Christ, "hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

The law demands perfect obedience. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Not one of those ten precepts can be broken without disloyalty to the God of heaven. The least deviation from its requirements, by neglect or willful transgression, is sin, and every sin exposes the sinner to the wrath of God. Obedience was the only condition upon which ancient Israel was to receive the fulfillment of the promises which made them the highly favored people of God; and obedience to that law will bring as great blessings to individuals and nations now as it would have brought to the Hebrews.

Obedience to the law is essential, not only to our salvation, but to our own happiness and the happiness

of all with whom we are connected. "Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them" (Ps. 119:165), says the Inspired Word. Yet finite man will present to the people this holy, just, and good law, this law of liberty, which the Creator Himself has adapted to the wants of man, as a yoke of bondage, a yoke which no man can bear. But it is the sinner who regards the law as a grievous yoke; it is the transgressor that can see no beauty in its precepts. For the carnal mind "is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (Rom. 8:7).

"By the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20); for "sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). It is

through the law that men are convicted of sin; and they must feel themselves sinners, exposed to the wrath of God before they will realize their need of a Saviour. Satan is continually at work to lessen man's estimate of the grievous character of sin. And those who trample the law of God... are doing the work of the great deceiver; for they are rejecting the only rule by which they can de-

fine sin, and bring it home to the conscience of the transgressor.

The law of God reaches to those secret purposes, which, though they may be sinful, are often passed over lightly, but which are in reality the basis and the test of character. It is the mirror into which the sinner is to look if he would have a correct knowledge of his moral character. And when he sees himself condemned by that great standard of righteousness, his next move must be to repent of his sins, and seek forgiveness through Christ. Failing to do this, many try to break the mirror which reveals their defects, to make void the law which points out the blemishes in their life and character.

We are living in an age of great wickedness. Multitudes are enslaved by sinful customs and evil habits, and the fetters that bind them are difficult to break. Iniquity, like a flood, is deluding the earth. Crimes almost too fearful to be mentioned, are of daily

*There are mysteries in human life and in the manifestation of God's power in the works of nature, mysteries which the deepest philosophy, the most extensive research, is powerless to explain.*

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occurrence. And yet men professing to be watchmen on the walls of Zion will teach that the law was designed for the Jews only, and passed away with the glorious privileges that ushered in the gospel age. Is there not a relation between the prevailing lawlessness and crime, and the fact that ministers and people hold and teach that the law is no longer of binding force?

The condemning power of the law of God extends, not only to the things we do, but to the things we do not do. We are not to justify ourselves in omitting to do the things that God requires. We must not only cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. God has given us powers to be exercised in good works; and if these powers are not put to use, we shall certainly be set down as wicked and slothful servants. We may not have committed grievous sins; such offenses may not stand registered against us in the book of God; but the fact that our deeds are not recorded as pure, good, elevated, and noble, showing that we have not improved our entrusted talents, places us under condemnation.

The law of God existed before man was created. It was adapted to the condition of holy beings; even angels were governed by it. After the Fall, the principles of righteousness were unchanged. Nothing was taken from the law; not one of its holy precepts could be improved. And as it has existed from the beginning, so will it continue to exist throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. "Concerning thy testimonies," says the psalmist, "I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever" (Ps. 119: 152). By this law, which governs angels, which demands purity in the most secret thoughts, desires, and dispositions, and which shall "stand fast forever" (Ps. 111:8), all the world is to be judged in the rapidly approaching day of God. Transgressors may flatter themselves that the Most High does not know, that the Almighty does not consider; He will not always bear with them. Soon they will receive the reward of their doings, the death that is the wages of sin; while the righteous nation, that have kept the law, will be ushered through the pearly gates of the celestial city, and will be crowned with immortal life and joy in the presence of God and the Lamb.—*Selected Messages* Vol. 1 pp. 216-222. **E**

*Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

# Questions and Answers

## Child Participation in Communion Service

*An elder wrote to ask whether it is proper to permit the unbaptized children of our church members to participate in the communion service, the ordinance of the humility and the service of the Lord's table.*

It has not been our practice to invite unbaptized children of our church members to participate in the communion service, either in the foot washing or in the partaking of the bread and wine.

Inquiry of several ministerial brethren reveals that they all hold that participation in this special service should not begin for our children until they are baptized and thus become members of the church. One of the purposes of the communion service is to make evident the fellowship of the family of believers. Now, while it is true, in a sense, that young, unbaptized children may believe, the full meaning of belief calls for baptism and entry into the church.

See Mark 16:16.

Unless we hold that there is a great and real significance to church membership, we undermine the whole idea of the need of joining the church. If unbaptized children may partake of Communion, we are preparing the way for them to continue to participate on through the years even though they are never baptized and so never join the church. Thus we destroy some of the prime symbolic value of the Communion and make it a common thing in which any may join without an open avowal of Christ and a dedication of life to *Him*.

## Dealing with erring members

*A brother from Brazil writes to protest what he believes is a "too conciliatory" way in which the church presented in general, and the Elder's Digest in particular, dealt with erring church members.*

I would yield to no man in my belief that straight doctrine should be preached and that sin should be purged from our ranks. What some fervent souls forget is that there is a right way and a wrong way of preaching the truth and crusading against sin. The way that results routinely in driving out the sinner as well as the sin, is most certainly the wrong way. Our business is to *seek* and to *save* sinners, by leading them to

Him who can cleanse them from sin.

While the day of mercy lingers, our God is pictured in the role of a compassionate father and not a cold calculating judge. As His representatives we should follow His example. A compassionate father never boasts that he is planning to disinherit even the most wayward son, and certainly he will never let him go until he has exhausted all the love and solicitude he is able to bring to bear upon him. All of us need more of the compassion of Heaven in dealing with the wayward. We should remember that it is not severity but mercy that breaks the stony heart: "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). It is our business to reconcile men to God and to one another. And a spirit of love and conciliation provides the setting for reconciliation.

I would not challenge the vigorous maxim: "Hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may." But I would differ with a certain type of ardent person as to where to draw the line in some instances.

When Christ rebuked Simon's self-righteousness He modified this maxim, or rather, adapted it to the circumstances. "Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee," spoke our Lord to this Pharisee. Then followed, not a shower of chips, falling where they might, but a quietly presented parable, with its moral and application.

It is true that at times Christ did denounce unsparingly the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees, but those instances were few, and furthermore the hypocrisy was most aggravated and insufferable. It would be a caricature of Christ's method of spiritual labor to point to those few instances as exhibits of His usual way of dealing with sinners.

Even so in the church of God today. There are doubtless instances when vigorous, open denunciation of certain sins and sinners may be called for. But in most instances a wholly different method is required if we are to follow in the steps of our Lord, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. The psalmist comforts us with these words concerning our heavenly Father: "He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust" (Ps. 103:14). We shall have success in laboring for the erring only as we likewise remember the frailties of the children of men and display vast compassion toward them. **E**

*Send in your question to Elder's Digest and find your answer here in this new section.* The Editor

# Slices of Life

Henry Feyerabend

## Luther's Hymn "Mighty Fortress"

The most widely used hymn among congregations of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) is "Holy, Holy, Holy," according to a recent survey.

Martin Luther's hymn "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God" turned up in second place.

The survey was conducted by the Reverend Ralph R. Van Loon, LCA worship coordinator, to assist the Inter-Lutheran Commission on Worship in selecting hymns for a new service book and hymnal.

Congregations were asked to list hymns they had used in the past two years, and responses came from 3,169 congregations, slightly more than half of the denominational total.

Other hymns in the top ten were:

- (3) "The Church's One Foundation,"
- (4) "Joy to the World,"
- (5) "Beautiful Saviour,"
- (6) "Jesus Christ Is Risen Today,"
- (7) "Come, Thou Almighty King,"
- (8) "Praise to the Lord,"
- (9) "My Faith Looks Up to Thee," and
- (10) "I Know That My Redeemer Lives."

Congregations were also asked to recommend hymns not included in the currently used hymnal. Those receiving 'most frequent mention were "How Great Thou Art," "Amazing Grace," and "We Are One in the Spirit." *Religious News Service*

## Ten Commandments for Churchgoers

1. You shall worship God rather than your pastor.
2. When you enter God's house you will treat it with respect.
3. When you see other people you will pleasantly speak to them.
4. You shall ask people their names and give them your own.
5. You shall express friendship with a handclasp that says, "I'm glad to meet you!"
6. You shall flash the sign of friendship, a smile.
7. You shall be friendly to all persons, even the ones who "snub" you.
8. You shall be concerned about the needs of others, and share help from your spiritual resources.

9. You shall find greater happiness by giving praise rather than criticism.

10. You shall begin your service after the benediction, sharing your Sabbath blessings with those you meet. *Dr. Lester L. Haws, St. Andrew's United Methodist Church Used by permission.*

## The Work of the Minister

"If I stop speaking by 11:45 don't think it is because I have nothing more to say." This was our new pastor speaking at his first Sabbath morning service in our church. He explained the reason for his short sermons as follows:

"When I was a lad my parents always took me to Sabbath school and church. At times the service lasted until 12:30 and often longer. I made up my mind that if I ever became a minister (and that was my plan) I would not weary children, young people, or older folks with long sermons, thinking that everyone was so eager to hear what I had to say that I must say it regardless of the time."

He faithfully carried out his promise to the delight of all. His sermons were short, well-planned, and no one was wearied by them. Members living in divided homes were able to get home early to their husband or wife, as the case might be.

By contrast we had one pastor who would often say, "I am going to talk until 12:30; if any of you have to be home before then you better leave now." To keep from being embarrassed or embarrassing the pastor, most did stay, but reluctantly. Consequently they received very little from the sermon. *John Herbert*

## Bible Be's

1. "Be ye therefore *perfect*" (Matt.5:48).
2. "Be ye holy in all *manner of conversation*; . . . *Be ye holy*; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1: 15, 16).
3. "Be *patient*" (James 5:7).
4. "Be *at peace*" (Job 22:21).
5. "Be *of good cheer*; . . . *be not afraid*" (Matt. 14:27).
6. "Be *diligent* that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot" (2 Peter 3:14).
7. "Be *subject one to another*" (1 Peter 5:5).
8. "Be *clothed with humility*" (1 Peter 5:8).
9. "Be *sober, be vigilant*" (1 Peter 5:8).
10. "Be *ye kind* one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another" (Eph. 4:32).

11. "Be strong and of a good courage" (Joshua 1:6).

**Hold the Line**

"O, how Satan would rejoice if he could succeed in his efforts to get in among this people, and disorganize the work at a time when thorough organization is essential and will be the greatest power to keep out spurious uprisings, and to refute claims not endorsed by the word of God! We want to hold the lines evenly, that there shall be no breaking down of the system of organization and order that has been built up by wise, careful labor.

License must not be given to disorderly elements that desire to control the work at this time." Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies*, Series B, No. 9, p. 19. (Italics supplied.)

**From church bulletin board**

"If Your Day Is Hemmed With Prayer It Is Less Likely to Unravel." **E**

*Henry Feyerabend writes from Oshawa, Ontário. He is the speaker for It Is Written in Canada.*

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