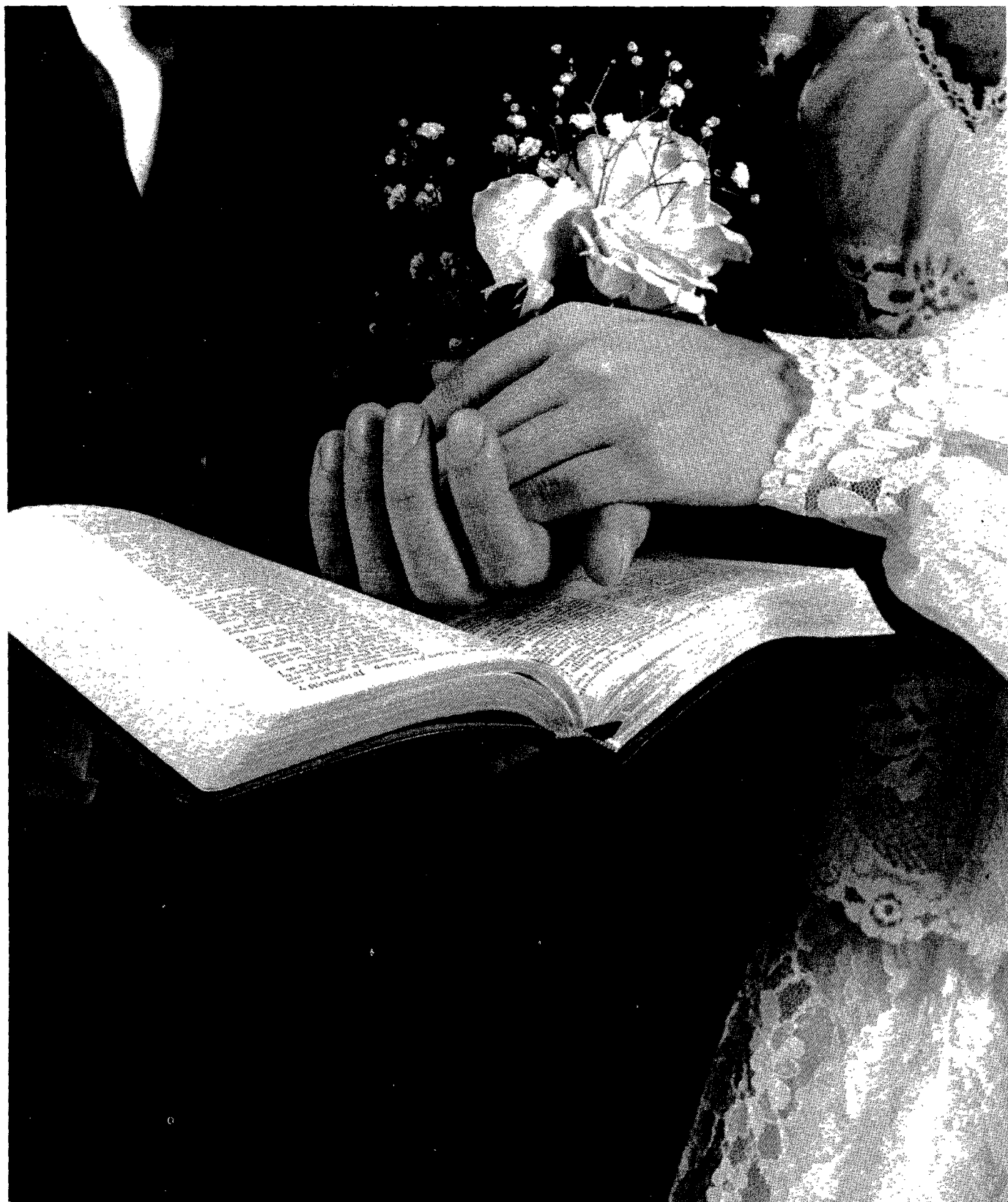


Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/September 1982



How Seriously Should We Take Marriage?

Letters

Letters this month are a typical mix of readers' reactions—praise, accusation, condemnation, appreciation, agreement, disagreement, even a threat. Whatever the response, we enjoy hearing from you!

Room for differing interpretations

I have particularly admired the cogent articles exposing the erroneous exegesis of modern dispensationalism. However, I have great difficulty with your exegesis of the books of Daniel and the Revelation of St. John. Of course, there is room in the universal church for different interpretations of Holy Writ as long as we maintain the atoning work of our Lord and Saviour as the only hope of our salvation.—Peter Katt, Texas.

"Christ or Antichrist: the Mysterious Gap in Daniel 9" (May, 1982) was very refreshing. I have understood these things for a long while. Tell the author to

An outstretched hand

If you are receiving MINISTRY bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it is not a mistake.

We believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Since 1928 MINISTRY has been designed to meet the needs of Seventh-day Adventist ministers. However, we believe that we have much in common with the entire religious community and want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help for you too.

We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use.

Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Each request should be on your church letterhead (if possible) and include name, address, denominational affiliation and position. Clergy outside the U.S. and Canada please remit \$2.00 postage. You may receive MINISTRY every month (the alternate issues as well as the bimonthly ones) for only \$16.95 per year.

continue the good work.—Lawrence Conger, Jr., Gospel Tabernacle, West Virginia.

Doesn't need three!

I enjoy MINISTRY very much; however, I don't need three copies! I recently moved to a two-church charge and found myself with three subscriptions—one to each of my new churches plus the old one, which I had changed to my new address. Please remove the attached mailing labels, and I will keep the one that is sent directly to me.

Although I don't agree with all you say (or even read it all), you do well with your publication. Keep it coming.—A. Ronald Helgersen, United Methodist Church, Wisconsin.

Other readers may be inadvertently receiving more than one copy of the magazine. If so, please send the label from the magazine you wish deleted and mark it clearly to be removed. We will be able to clean up our mailing list, and you won't have your mailbox so cluttered.—Editors.

Names still keep coming

I have been the recipient of your generosity for some time. Your gesture is much appreciated. Certainly extending your outreach in this way builds understanding of our common ministry in Jesus Christ. Each issue has at least one article of special interest to me. Thank you for including me.—Charles W. Muir, United Presbyterian Church, Washington.

I was given a copy of MINISTRY by a fellow clergyman and thought it was most helpful. Please enroll me on your list. Thank you.—Donald A. White, Reformed Church, Iowa.

I have shared MINISTRY with two of my fellow pastors, and they would like to receive it. Their addresses are enclosed. I would like to thank you also for the Professional Growth Seminar held in Shreveport, Louisiana. I found it profitable. Should another be held in my area, I will try to attend. Many of your views I hold myself, although I feel Christ is my Sabbath. And the church name? Well, I find the Church of God the only New Testament name that will fit Ephesians

3:14, 15.—John Dablemont, Church of God, Louisiana.

Costs for printing and postage are increasing, but at the present time, complimentary bimonthly subscriptions to MINISTRY are still available to those clergy who request them. See the announcement on this page.—Editors.

Christian greetings.

Christian greetings from England! I want to say how much I appreciate your excellent magazine. I have had no contact whatsoever with the Seventh-day Adventist Church and have always viewed such churches with great suspicion. However, after having read the past few editions of MINISTRY, I have been abundantly blessed, helped, and encouraged. Thank you.—John E. Partington, Pentecostal Church, England.

So smug!

You folks strain out the proverbial gnat and swallow the camel with your picky Biblical literalism. You're so smug about issues like homosexuality. But in the real world, issues aren't always so black and white. Sometimes the New Testament spirit of love and justice is not really served by narrow proof-texting. Even the devil can quote Scripture. I never read MINISTRY; please cancel my subscription.—Dan Schiefeling, New York.

So you see, not everyone is ecstatic about MINISTRY. In fact, some will go to great lengths to avoid it, as the following letter demonstrates. It isn't actually necessary to turn your lawyers loose on us; on days we're feeling good, we'll take your name off the list if you just say "Please"! Our only question is: What is a church called "Grace" doing with lawyers?—Editors.

Stop it, or else!

Recently we received a copy of your publication MINISTRY. We are not in agreement with the theology represented in your magazine. We do not want your magazine coming into our offices, and we do not want it posted in our box at the post office. This subscription must be deleted from your subscription file or we will consider taking action through the offices of our lawyers. If you have any questions, contact us at the address on this letterhead.—Pastor, Grace Brethren Church.

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Ministry

A Magazine for Clergy/September 1982/Volume 55/Number 9



COVER: LUIS RAMIREZ

How Seriously Should We Take Marriage?/4. John B. Youngberg and Luis del Pozo. Even among Christians, "until death do us part" often means "until the judge do us part." Have Christians begun to perceive marriage as do non-Christians—as simply a social contract to be dissolved at will?

A Report to the President of the United States/7. In April, Neal C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, met with President Ronald Reagan and representatives of various churches at a special White House luncheon where this report of the Adventist Church's involvement in humanitarian concerns was presented to Mr. Reagan.

Reform or Redemption: Must the Church Choose?/10. Enoch Oliveira examines how the Adventist Church views the Christian's responsibility to both his God and his fellow man.

The One Thousand Years of Revelation 20/12. Hans K. LaRondelle.

What Jesus Said About a Pre-Advent Judgment/14. From the parable of the wedding garment, Morris L. Venden draws important implications for the concept of judgment.

It Is Written/17. Editor J. R. Spangler recently interviewed George Vandeman, speaker of the well-known It Is Written telecast.

God's Perpetual Gift to Man/21. Gerhard F. Hasel. As one of the twin institutions given at Creation, the Sabbath continues to have significance and meaning for modern man.

Wanted: More Heart Attacks/24. Ron Watts.

Remember Southview!/25. B. Russell Holt. An unusual church in Nebraska teaches pastors a valuable lesson.

Esther and History—2/26. William H. Shea.

You Can Be Ann Landers Too!/28. Penny Estes Wheeler.

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Biblical Archeology/26
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LUIS RAMIREZ

How seriously should we take marriage?

Is marriage simply a social contract that can be broken when one party fails to fulfill his or her obligations? Should not Christian marriage involve something more binding, something more sacred and enduring?

John B. Youngberg and Luis del Pozo

I wanted a good deal. I got a raw deal. Now I want a new deal!"

That seems to be the way many people today feel about their marriage. Divorce ends one third to one half of the marriages made in the United States. The church fares a little better in this regard than the rest of society, but the advantage is growing steadily less as divorce makes increasing inroads into Christian homes. Why? Our conviction is that there is a direct relationship between how people perceive marriage and the rate of divorce. Is marriage a social contract, or is it a divine-human covenant?

Margaret Mead, the late anthropologist, suggested that because marriage is not working, perhaps we ought to abolish it. If marriage were primarily a human institution, perhaps we ought to search for some new kind of social bond to replace marriage. But if marriage is a divine institution, the picture changes. If societal marriage isn't working, perhaps Christian

marriage ought to be tried. "It isn't a case of marriage having been tried and found wanting. In this twentieth-century world, true marriage is deeply wanted, but largely untried."¹

The theory of social contracts says that if one party fails to fulfill his or her obligations, he or she has broken the contract, and thus there is no contract any longer. Both parties are now free to enter into other contracts. The emphasis here is on the rights of the persons involved. The relationship is conditional upon each fulfilling the obligations of the contract. If, however, marriage is a covenant made with God Himself, promising faithfulness within our sinful limitations, and if God agrees to supply us with the commitment and ability to maintain the relationship, then we are dealing with an entity very different from a social contract. Such a covenant, though buffeted by life's storms, can outlast them and find anchor in a safe port on the other side.

The covenant theory says that marriage is more than an agreement between two people; God is a party to the marriage covenant. The normative guide for the marriage relationship then becomes Yahweh's covenant with His people. The Hebrew word *chesed* is used some thirty times in the Old Testament, meaning "covenant love, lovingkindness, committed love"; it conveys the idea of stability and solidarity. God does not allow even gross sins to destroy His love for the sinner or annul His covenant promises to the one who seeks forgiveness. So man and wife are

to keep their promises to each other through forgiving love. The focus here is on God and what He does for the couple whose love flows from His unconditional love.

Does the Bible teach that marriage is merely a social contract, or does it hold marriage to be part of a covenant made with God Himself?

Covenant—a basic Biblical theme

The covenant, sealed between the Father and the Son before the world was, has always had total harmony and oneness as its goal. "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). Covenant is the dominant metaphor for Biblical faith,² the means for understanding human personhood and relationships. It sees human personhood and quality relationships with others as being ultimately grounded in a Source of unfailing strength.

Covenant, *berith*, is a common word in the Old Testament. It refers to a wide variety of agreements,³ including a covenant between two friends (1 Sam. 18:3); two rulers (1 Kings 5:12); a king and his subjects (2 Kings 11:4); or God and Noah (Gen. 6:18), Abraham (2 Kings 13:23), or David (Jer. 33:21). These latter covenants were clearly made between a Superior and inferiors. However, the agreement always implied relationship—whether human to human or Divine to human. Covenant is an affirmation that our lives depend on others, and in a special way, upon One

John B. Youngberg, Ed.D., is associate professor of religious education at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan. He and his wife, Millie, direct Marriage and Family Commitment seminars and codirect the annual Family Life Workshop, sponsored by Andrews University and the General Conference Home and Family Service. Luis del Pozo is studying toward his Ed.D. degree in religious education at Andrews University. He is professor of theology at Inca Union College, Lima, Peru.

who is our sovereign Lord and who will more good for us than we do for ourselves.

Three texts illustrate the idea of covenant and marriage. The first speaks of the marriage covenant of God with His people, and the other two refer to human marriage as a divine covenant.

"I plighted my troth to you and entered into a covenant with you, says the Lord God, and you became mine" (Eze. 16:8, R.S.V.).* Notice that God takes the initiative in His marriage to His people. It is He who plights the troth; we respond in love. Notice too that God's marriage to us is called a covenant. The passage graphically describes the unfaithfulness of God's people to their true Lover (verses 15-34). Yet, in spite of their wayward ways, God declares, "I will remember my covenant with thee in the days of thy youth, and I will establish unto thee an everlasting covenant. . . . And I will establish my covenant with thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord" (verses 60-62). In this passage God is reaching about salvation from the metaphor of marriage. He also teaches us the key to successful marriage relationships from salvation history.

The second text speaks of the strange woman "who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant [*berith*] of her God" (Prov. 2:17, R.S.V.). Many commentators on this text point out that the expression "covenant of . . . God" refers to the general idea of marriage sacredness, because, as one puts it, "the marriage-tie has a divine sanction."⁴ The expression also implies a condemnation of adultery and divorce, because they offend the human partner and the divine Witness. Says Matthew Henry, the text suggests that "God is not only a witness but a party, for He having instituted the ordinance, both sides vow to Him to be true to each other."⁵ Thus Proverbs 2:17 establishes the principle of the indissolubility of the marriage tie.⁶

The prophet Malachi wrote: "The Lord was witness to the covenant between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant [*berith*]" (chap. 2:14, R.S.V.). The entire passage of Malachi 2:10-16 deals with fidelity versus defilement of marriage as a covenant. These verses explicitly present God as the witness between the husband and the wife of his youth. The phrase "your wife by covenant" is equivalent to "the wife to whom you have pledged loyalty and support."⁷ Thus ill-treatment or faithlessness toward the wife is by its very nature an offense against God, for He Himself has witnessed the union. Such behavior makes one's worship of God unacceptable to Him.⁸

Angelo Tosato says that the perspective of this passage is to reprove not only the mixed marriages of Jewish men with heathen wives (verses 11, 12) but also divorce (verses 13-16).⁹ While divorce was

permitted under Mosaic law because of the hardness of the people's hearts, under the Elijah message (see chap. 4:5, 6) God asks not for heart hardening, but heart turning.

Malachi anticipates the full Christian marriage ethic given by Christ four centuries later. "For I hate divorce, says the Lord the God of Israel. . . . So take heed to yourselves and do not be faithless" (chap. 2:16, R.S.V.). Both Malachi (verse 15) and Christ (Mark 10:5-12; Matt. 19:4-9) maintain the indissolubility of the marriage relationship by invoking the Creation argument. (Christ's general teaching is that marriage is indissoluble, although Matthew's account does admit the possibility of an exception "for fornication.") The redeeming gospel of Jesus Christ contemplates a restoration of Edenic relationships.

A threefold covenant

In Biblical marriage there is actually a threefold covenant—two of parity and one of sovereignty.

In the first place, marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman who freely consent to enter into marriage. Monogamy is clearly implied. God didn't create two or three Eves and bring them to Adam; He created only one. Even as God's nation was distinguished among the nations of antiquity for its monotheism, one God who called for undivided devotion of all the heart, soul, and strength (Deut. 6:4, 5), so God's plan for marriage was monogamy, one spouse who was to occupy a place without rival in the heart of his or her beloved. Idolatry was equated with adultery.

The husband and wife promise to "love, honor, and cherish." Both vow to be faithful to each other amid all kinds of circumstances, including sickness and health, poverty and prosperity, and worse or better conditions. Each makes a covenant to remain with this one whom she or he has freely consented to marry until death breaks such union.

Second, marriage is a covenant between the marital couple and society. The vows are spoken in the presence of witnesses whose presence symbolizes that society acknowledges its responsibility in guiding and helping the new couple. The couple, in turn, agree with society to live together according to the ordinances of God and the laws of the State.

At a Family Life Workshop, a pastor

from Reno, Nevada, told of a man and woman driving through town from another State who found his name in the telephone book and insisted that he marry them on the spot. After counseling with them for several hours, he refused to perform the ceremony in spite of their entreaties. He didn't know them. If they were church members in good and regular standing as they claimed, it would be far more appropriate for their church community and their acquaintances to enter into this covenant with them. Society, their circle of friends and other significant persons, should set a seal of approval on this marriage relationship. This same pastor was offered a handsome salary to be the presiding minister at a marriage chapel annexed to one of the gambling casinos in Reno. He turned down the offer.

At the highest and deepest level, marriage is a covenant between a couple and God. Vows are uttered in the presence of God. Through the prayer of benediction, God's blessing is invoked upon their marriage.

The marriage covenant is based not on a covenant of works composed of what the couple promise to do for each other, but on better promises (see Heb. 8:6)—what God will do in them for each other and mankind. They will fail, but the forgiving, unconditional covenant love (*chesed*) they receive from God will restore and strengthen their relationship. The love drama enacted by God to His bride Israel is to be to them a pattern for their marriage covenant.

Hallmarks of the covenant

G. R. Dunstan, D.D., editor of *Review Theology*, points out five hallmarks of the marriage covenant—initiative, oath, commandments, blessings, and sacrifice.¹⁰

1. *Initiative.* The first is an initiative of love, inviting a response, and so creating a relationship between the lover and the beloved. God takes the initiative in His love relationship with man. He says, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3), and then reveals the secret of the new covenant relationship: "I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts" (verse 33).

In the Eden marriage it was God who took the initiative, bringing Eve to Adam. God created marriage and initiated the institution. The Christian contemplating marriage today may also claim God's

The marriage covenant is based not on a covenant of works composed of what the couple promise to do for each other, but on better promises—what God will do in them for each other and mankind.

guidance and providential initiative in finding the right companion.

When things go wrong in marriage, because God's love and power have not been brought into the marital experience, God again takes the initiative to focus His redeeming love on the situation. But He needs one of the spouses to be His intermediary in renewing the covenant relationship. A woman who had come to America to study was shocked when her husband called her the day before he was scheduled to visit. The message was short and to the point: he wanted a divorce. Counseling, mediation, or even discussion was out of the question. Crushed, she did the only thing that love could do. She left her study program and flew home to communicate that she still loved him.

In a case of marital crisis in which one spouse has been unfaithful and is under the conviction of sin, or worse yet, is impenitent, the aggrieved party should take the initiative in renewing and restoring the covenant. God's Old Testament people broke the covenant with Him, although God was a husband unto them (see verses 32 ff.). Instead of abandoning them He comes back with a new initiative of reconciliation and motive power to keep the covenant. He says, "I will write it [my law] upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (verse 33, R.S.V.).

2. *Oath*. The relationship, once initiated, is made permanent by an oath. When God made His covenant with Israel, He first made a promise and then confirmed it by an oath (Heb. 6:15-18). When one tells his or her beloved that he promises to love, he has done a very serious thing. When he confirms it by an oath in wedding vows, by God's help it becomes immutable until death parts them. "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth" (Num. 30:2).

3. *Commandments*. The third hallmark of covenant concerns the commandments, or laws, that govern the relationship. Historically, law was a consequence, not a condition, of the covenant. God did not enter into covenant with an unredeemed people. First He redeemed them, saved them out of bondage, then as a consequence of His redeeming love, He asked them to obey Him. This is the great message of Exodus 20:2: "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." Now because I have redeemed you, you will have no other gods before Me, you will celebrate My weekly love memorial, you will not commit adultery, et cetera.

The law is a guide to citizenship within the redeeming covenant given to us by the Lord our Saviour. A redeeming relationship with Jesus will transform our life style

into total conformity to the law of the covenant. If because of human frailty one should fall, redeeming love should initiate a covenant restoration.

Perhaps no heartfelt drama in the Sacred Word illustrates how to deal with an erring lover better than the story of Hosea. Gomer was not just breaking the commandments of marriage, she was breaking a heart. Hosea searched her out and bought her back (redeemed her) from the prostitution market for half the price of a slave. He took her back to him to love her, with a determination that she should not leave him again. Is not this the way our Lord has dealt with us the many times we have broken His commandments and rent His heart?

4. *Blessings*. The fourth hallmark of covenant is the promise of blessings to those who remain faithful to the covenant. Deuteronomy 28 testifies of many material blessings; the new covenant of Jeremiah 31 pledges spiritual blessings.

The blessings of the marriage covenant are not best measured by material criteria. Happiness cannot be valued in dollars and cents. Trials and tears shared together may be some of the greatest blessings we will ever receive. Joining together in God's ongoing creation so that our love creates someone like ourselves is an inestimable blessing. Joining God in helping to redeem each other, sharing mutual forgiveness, and finding the way together to the Father's house—these are blessings of the marriage covenant.

5. *Sacrifice*. To ratify the old covenant there was the death of an animal victim. This sacrifice was to be offered continually, day by day, and yearly on the Day of Atonement. The new covenant was ratified on Calvary by sacrifice. There Jesus poured out His life vicariously for all mankind. The entrance into the marriage covenant is also marked with sacrifice.¹¹ There must be a death to the dependence of childhood on father and mother, a death of bachelor or spinster freedoms and relationships, and to certain rights of self-determination. Marriage requires this sacrifice—these sundry kinds of death—for its continuance; it requires the dedication of heart, mind, and body.

The real problem with divorce is not so much in the act of divorce itself, but in the unwillingness to let God bring restoration by His redeeming covenant love. God's everlasting covenant is designed to restore

us to unbroken relationship with our Creator-Redeemer. As erring human beings, subject to many sins and shortcomings, we are nurtured along, forgiven, put back on the right pathway, and encouraged on the heavenward road. In marriage we have the privilege of entering into covenant, helping along another erring child of God, forgiving each other, working together on our mutual failings, and laughing and sometimes crying as we journey together to our Father's house.

Culture today pretends that marriage rests upon a simple civil contract that can be invalidated by the stroke of a pen. But in reality the marriage covenant is a part of God's everlasting covenant in which He writes His law on our hearts, taking away the stony heart and giving us a heart of flesh that can love as He loved. Such a marriage covenant is the very cornerstone of the Christian family and is to exhibit as nothing else can the unfolding of contemporary salvation history before a watching world.

¹ Richard Lessor, *Love and Marriage and Trading Stamps* (Niles, Ill.: Argus Communications, 1971).

² Walter Brueggemann, "Covenanting as Human Vocation: A Discussion of the Relation of Bible and Pastoral Care," *Interpretation*, Vol. XXXIII, No. 2 (April, 1979), p. 115.

³ Colin Brown (ed.), *New Testament Theology*, 3 vols. (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1975), vol. 1, p. 365.

⁴ Crawford H. Toy, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Proverbs*, The International Critical Commentary Series, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1948), vol. 16, p. 47.

⁵ *Job to Song of Solomon*, A Commentary on the Whole Bible (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell Co.), vol. 3, p. 801.

⁶ W. J. Deane and S. T. Taylor-Taswell, *Proverbs*, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1977), vol. 9, p. 41.

⁷ John Merling Powis Smith, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Malachi*, The International Critical Commentary Series, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), vol. 26, p. 53.

⁸ Robert Althann, "Malachi 2:13, 14 and OT 125, 12, 13," *Biblica*, vol. 58, No. 3 (1977), pp. 420, 421.

⁹ "Il Ripudio: Delito e Pena (Mal. 2:10-16)," *Biblica*, vol. 59, No. 4 (1978), p. 552.

¹⁰ "The Marriage Covenant," *Review Theology*, Vol. LXXVII (May, 1975), pp. 244-252. This number is entirely dedicated to the marriage issue, under the general title On the Marriage Bond. (The five points are his; the discussion is largely our own.)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 250.

*Scripture quotations marked R.S.V. are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952 © 1971, 1973.

The marriage covenant is a part of God's everlasting covenant in which He writes His law on our hearts, taking away the stony heart and giving us a heart of flesh that can love as He loved.

On April 13, 1982, Neal C. Wilson, president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, accepted the invitation of President Ronald Reagan to join with him at a historic Tuesday-afternoon luncheon—the first White House gathering to include representatives of all major religious denominations in America. Approximately one hundred met in the State Dining Room at the White House.

At that meeting, President Reagan urged religious leaders to become involved with local community and business resources to improve the quality of life and the welfare of all people. “The story of the good Samaritan,” said Reagan, “has always illustrated to me what God’s challenge really is, the injured pilgrim lying by the roadside, those who passed by, and then the one man, the Samaritan, who crossed over to help him. He didn’t go running into town and look for a caseworker to tell him that there was a fellow out there that needed help. He took it upon himself. Today we’ve become so used to turning to government, rather than taking the personal time and effort required to help those in need.”

Of course, many churches and organizations—the Salvation Army, Mennonites, the Catholic Relief Agencies, and others—are heavily involved in humanitarian efforts and programs to bring a better quality of life to America and the world. As world leader of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Neal Wilson presented the following report to President Reagan, indicating what the Adventist Church has been doing, and plans to do, in promoting the physical and mental well-being of individuals, as well as caring for their spiritual needs. (See the following article, “Reform or Redemption: Must the Church Choose?” for an examination of how the Adventist Church views the Christian’s responsibility both to his God and to his fellow man.)—Editors.

A report to the President of the United States

*On Service to the Nation
Through Private Initiative:
A contribution of the Seventh-day
Adventist Church*

In terms of resources, our country is unbelievably wealthy. Though a variety of impressive resources could be listed, Seventh-day Adventists believe that the greatest resource of our nation is people. Every person is important. The value of the individual is incalculable.

From His earliest years, Christ lived but for one supreme purpose—to bless and serve others. He would have given His life to save just one of these whom He created in His own image. Because of this, from their inception Seventh-day Adventists have endeavored to improve the lot of the individual through a better way of life. This includes a philosophy that promotes love

for one’s fellow men, the dignity of labor, the responsibility and privileges of citizenship, better health habits, and freedom from fear through trust in a God who cares.

Major community concerns of the church include the stability of the home and family, the education of our children, and the relief of suffering from whatever cause. What follows is a report of current activities sponsored by the private initiative of the more than 650,000 baptized American Seventh-day Adventists as they help the individual citizen of every race, color, and creed to enjoy life to the fullest possible extent in our great land.

Preface

One of every 390 Americans is a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These 650,000 baptized members who believe in the imminent return of Christ attend 3,769 churches and last year gave an average of \$769 or a total of \$430 million, not including tuition for their children's education in the church's school system. The school sys-

tem itself includes 1,133 institutions from elementary to graduate levels.

Other types of institutions include 76 health-care facilities with about 12,700 beds, four publishing houses, and a broadcasting production center. These are directed through 59 administrative headquarters scattered across the country. Employees total 39,634.

Seventh-day Adventists originated in New England about 135 years ago following a broad-based religious revival. They now have established work—evangelistic and humanitarian—in 190 countries of the world. Total world membership as of September 30, 1981, was 3,615,507, and total world giving exceeded US\$660 million last year.

Community and disaster services

In conjunction with Red Cross and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Seventh-day Adventist Community Services is dedicated to helping the underprivileged and the emergency-stricken. Throughout the United States 2,000 Community Services centers and units provide clothing, bedding, food,

and crisis counseling to those in need. Last year alone over 2 million people received such aid. All services are rendered without cost to recipients. Unpaid volunteers provide the manpower, and thousands of high school and college

students give their time and youthful energies to assist regular Community Services workers. In the interest of coordinating disaster activities and avoiding duplication the Seventh-day Adventist Community and Disaster Services has joined National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster.

Our nation's young people

"As go the youth so goes the nation" is a valid axiom that Seventh-day Adventists believe and practice. "Good Neighbor" camps for youth not able to afford the experience of camping is one example. Integrated into an extensive camping program either through church-generated or community-generated funds, thousands of youth escape the cities for new and cleaner environments.

Youths who scorn the better values of life are placed in numerous rehabilitation homes and ranches. Run by dedicated individuals, the facilities provide extended care and return their tenants to society with more stable and positive attitudes. Young people must also be prepared for the possibility of a military draft. Exciting and imaginative weekend seminars that orient them to such an

eventuality have been blueprinted and readied for implementation whenever needed. Nineteen eighty-five has been designated the International Youth Year by the United Nations. Adventists note with pride that an artist of our fellowship submitted the logo that has been accepted by the UN Youth Caucus Committee. The design now goes to a larger international screening in Vienna.

Initiatives regarding higher education

Not satisfied with the annual support received from the 75,000 alumni of its ten colleges and universities, the Adventist Church created a \$2 million challenge fund to inspire greater financial support.

The General Conference (SDA World Headquarters) invested \$375,000 of this amount and invited wealthy Adventists to contribute the balance. (Gifts ranged between \$5,000 and \$375,-

000.) The fund—concluding its second year of operation—has more than doubled alumni dollar support and tripled alumni donors. When the program concludes in 1985, the \$2 million will have generated more than \$8 million and increased the number of givers from 3,500 to 20,000.

Over and above these important and interesting monetary considerations, the

ultimate value of this Business Executives' Challenge to Alumni centers about the emerging loyalty and commitment that graduates are now giving to Christian higher education. Our conspicuous private initiative is already stimulating other programs within the church as it continues to foster both academic achievement and the acquisition of salable skills, trades, and vocations.

The accommodation of refugees

Long before passage of the Displaced Persons Act during the 1949 influx of European refugees, Seventh-day Adventists assisted in the sponsoring and resettling of refugees. In recent years this work has been the responsibility of Seventh-day Adventist World Service (SAWS), a member of the Immigration and Refugee Program of Church World Service. SAWS programs respond pri-

marily to disasters outside the U.S., and the major part of its direct service to refugees involves the refugee camps of Southeast Asia. However, SAWS also locates sponsors in the U.S., and to date has done so for well over 11,000 refugees from Europe, Southeast Asia, Cuba, Haiti, and Africa. This is because the personal involvement of a sponsoring family in the life of a refugee is

believed to be the best guarantee of normal transitions from one culture to another. SAWS also encourages centers operated by Adventist churches in areas of high refugee concentration such as Miami, Chicago, New York, and Harrisburg. In these centers refugees are provided supplemental food, clothing, shelter, medical care, job counseling, and orientation into American society.

Provisions for the blind

Since 1899, Christian Record Braille Foundation, Inc. (International), of Lincoln, Nebraska, has provided the blind with free inspirational reading and listening materials. These services include Braille, large-print and recorded magazines and books, a lending library with over 800 titles, Bible Correspondence School, full-vision books (books that combine Braille, ink print, and pictures for parents to read to sighted children),

personal visitation to the blind by more than 100 district representatives in North America, and glaucoma screening clinics to help save sight. National camps for blind children, introduced in 1967, have attracted over 16,000 blind youngsters and afforded them the opportunity to discover and develop potential,

improve mental-physical vigor, and develop an appreciation of God's love and care. The services of Christian Record are mailed to some 89 countries free of charge to the blind. Materials produced annually in Braille by CRBF, if stacked together, would reach higher than the Empire State Building. The program at CRBF is funded through public and private contributions. No tax money or government aid is received.

The enhancement of health

Seventh-day Adventists help their neighbors add years to their lives and life to their years by adapting a healthy life style. Adventists as a group live six to eight years longer than the average population. They also have fewer incidents of cancer and heart disease. But they are not concerned only about themselves: Seventh-day Adventists also work to make their community a better place to live.

A broad community health program is maintained through 700 community centers, 80 hospitals, 50 nursing and retirement homes, 3,000 health seminars, 1,250 schools, and thousands of Adventist physicians' and dentists' offices.

Adventists publish and make available three health journals—*Your Life and Health* for general readers, *Listen* for youth with alcohol and drug problems, and *The Winner* for children.

Millions around the world, and over 15,000 in the U.S.A. last year found better health by giving up tobacco

through the Adventist-sponsored Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking. Health-education seminars conducted regularly in many communities help people deal with stress, obesity, nutritional deficiency, and mental health and family problems. Through our five New Day Centers for Substance Abuse Services (for alcoholics and drug addicts), Adventists introduce a professional, proven program that helps people help themselves.

In wellness centers individuals learn to maintain their own health, promote good health practices, prevent diseases, and when needed, find rehabilitation after the occurrence of major health problems.

Health-screening vans

To help the millions living in the Greater New York City area toward better health, Adventists started mobile blood pressure screening vans in 1975. Beginning with only one van operated by a volunteer staff, the project has mushroomed.

Supported by faith and freewill donations, the public service vans had served more than 300,000 by the close of 1981. More than 50,000 were served last year by a fleet of five vans shuttling from borough to borough in the metropolis. Of the 50,000—11,000 had elevated blood pressure, with 9,000 needing referral for immediate treatment. More

than half the number referred were unaware of their need.

Although the project has captured the interest of people in New York City and across the nation, with some donations even coming from people in other nations, there still are many times when faith and prayer alone provide the money to meet expenses. The current annual budget is \$325,000. Much of the

work is still done by volunteers. Two hundred sixty-six volunteers contributed 1,500 hours last year. Doctors, nurses, and technicians frequently go to New York to serve on the vans at their own expense.

While blood pressure screening remains their primary service, staff members also devote time to counseling and help in other than health-related areas.

Success of the project has sparked interest in major cities around the nation. Other van programs are taking shape in Texas, Florida, Minnesota, and California. And one van is now active in Taiwan.

Church prison ministries

There are approximately 1,700 Federal correctional institutions in North America with an estimated 330,000 inmates. Seventh-day Adventist Prison Ministries reaches about 5 percent of these prisons.

The church has 192 requests from local congregations for training programs

to help reach these many other prisoners. Director Russell W. Bates of Washington, D.C., says, "Laymen are funding this program and we expect to

reach many more prisons this year to help turn prisoners around so they can live useful lives for God and country."

Seven hundred have been baptized in the last five years. In the same period seven former inmates have come out of prison to graduate from college and seminary and enter full-time ministry.

Many of the citizens of this world are oppressed and exploited. Should this cause the church to espouse political and social issues with ever greater fervor? Can it do so and still proclaim the gospel?

Enoch Oliveira

Reform or redemption: must the church choose?

As unrest and dissatisfaction continue to ferment among many of the oppressed peoples of earth, liberation theology has become one of the most current theological buzzwords. The "liberal" element of Christianity has for years been involved in social and political causes around the world. And now the "conservative, evangelical" segment of the Christian church is showing an increased willingness to espouse political and social issues it feels are important.

How should Seventh-day Adventists view such trends, and what should be our stance?

This article was written in response to a question from an Adventist university student: "Why is the [Seventh-day Adventist] Church hiding behind a convenient escapism, indifferent to the sighs of the lonely and the moans of those who waste away, innocently, within the recesses of dark prisons?" Because of the "despotism, torture, tyranny, and social injustice" he sees in the world, he urgently requests the church to give him a statement on the matter.

Seventh-day Adventists are far from indifferent to human needs (see the preceding article, "A Report to the President of the United States," by Neal C. Wilson). However, the church believes in a proper combination of the Christian's horizontal and vertical responsibilities.—Editors.

A crisis is now shaking Catholicism, according to Mitchel de Saint-Pierre, that is dividing the clergy into two antagonistic groups: the *verticalists*, who are preoccupied with revelation, and the *horizontalists*, engrossed in revolution. One group is known for its fervent theocentrism, and the other for its absorbing anthropocentrism. The verticalists focus their interests on divine justice, while the horizontalists center their attention on social justice.

These two positions, which apparently

are dividing Catholic priests, also seem to be separating theologians and ministers who represent historical, contemporary Protestantism. Every day there is a growing number of evangelical leaders who support a temporal, nonconforming church, who participate in protest movements, and who cry aloud the need for radical changes in the present social structure. In contrast, we can also find conservative ministers, guided by an isolated verticalism, who defend the idea of a conforming, introverted church, separated from the world and indifferent to the problems caused by tyranny, poverty, and social injustice.

In the face of such dualism, where do we stand as a church? Are we verticalists or horizontalists?

Isaiah's vision

Within every human being there is an uncontrollable verticalistic nature. We come from God, and without Him we feel empty, incomplete, and disoriented. There is in every soul a longing for the eternal, a desire for a life beyond the boundaries of this earth. This mysterious inner impulse leads pious souls to a vertical experience, to an encounter with God.

When the prophet Isaiah felt himself submerged in the mystical world of the spirit, he left us a poetic description of his experience: "I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up" (Isa. 6:1). Certainly this was a unique experience in his life. It was so sublime that human words were incapable of describing it, and so he used symbolic figures. But while contemplating the majesty of God, he heard a voice saying, "Whom shall I send?" Facing that challenge, he responded without hesitation, "Here am I; send me" (verse 8). Such a willing disposition reveals he had a vision that embraced not only the transcendent God, high and lifted up, but also the entire world and its tremendous needs.

From Isaiah's vision we can conclude that genuine verticalism (worship of God) leads believing souls to a horizontal experience (action for others). These two lines,

one directed toward the Most High and the other directed toward our neighbor, give us a true vision of the cross and its significance. As we contemplate the cross, we comprehend in all its greatness the challenge of a world shaken by uncertainty and covered with the wreckage of disillusionment.

But what type of action should motivate us in this horizontal experience? In the face of exacerbated and clamorous subversive movements, strikes and protest marches, many ask themselves, How should we relate as a church? Is it right for us to join forces with the activists in their struggle for a more humane and just society? Can we, in our horizontal experience, lift the banner of subversion?

The example of Christ

Much is being said today in some religious circles about "Christian violence" and "justifiable violence" as a legitimate recourse against the violation of human rights and "unjust laws." Defenders of liberation theology present Jesus as the first Christian who used violence in the name of God. The disciples, who saw Him with the scourge of cords in His hand, driving out the hucksters who profaned God's sanctuary, understood His attitude, recalling what the Scriptures prophesied: "Zeal for thy house has consumed me" (Ps. 69:9, R.S.V.).* But it was the only time Jesus used even the threat of violence. And His action was directed against the church and religious abuses, not against society and political wrongs. When Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant, he heard from Christ's lips the admonition "'All who take the sword will perish by the sword'" (Matt. 26:52, R.S.V.).

The only sure path for the church is to follow the remarkable example of Christ. He exhorted the rich that they would have difficulty entering the kingdom of God; nevertheless, He never took part in protest movements or denounced the unjust distribution of wealth. He never joined subversive groups carrying posters that

Enoch Oliveira is a general vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

read, "Down with the Romans!" Never did He deliver a speech against the tyranny and imperialistic oppression of Caesar. On the contrary, one time He said: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Luke 20:25, R.S.V.).

By studying His life and teaching, we can better understand what action we should take in the face of corruption and injustice. We are told by inspiration: "The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 509.

The church and violence

The early Christians also refused to raise the banner of sedition against "institutionalized" violence. But by the fourth century, when Christianity had become recognized as the official religion of the empire, Saint Augustine (354-430) frankly approved the use of violence to combat injustice. In his *Treatise on the Freedom of Choice*, he defended the establishment of a dictatorship, under the leadership of an elite, when the people showed themselves incapable of selecting honest and competent government leaders.

The thinking of the bishop of Hippo had a great influence upon Thomas Aquinas (1225?-1274), who wrote: "When laws are unjust, the subjects are not obliged to obey them." In a legitimate cause, Aquinas maintained, "death can be inflicted upon any man," with no injustice.

These, and similar concepts proclaimed by influential religious leaders of that time, inspired the hated tribunals of the "Holy Inquisition" that were responsible for horrendous and vile crimes perpetrated "in defense of the Christian faith."

In his encyclical *Populorum Progressio*, Pope Paul VI justifies violence against "prolonged tyranny that gravely offends human rights and threatens the common good of the country."

However, in contrast with the thinking of Pope Paul VI, we have the attitude of the apostle Paul, the apostle to the nations. He lived in a time when one of the most hated of all evils was prevalent—slavery. According to Roman laws, a slave was not a person; he was a thing, an animal. His master had complete authority over him and could torture, mutilate, and even

kill him with total impunity. Nevertheless, we do not find in Paul's writings any protest against the system of slavery. On the contrary, he insisted that Christian slaves should obey their masters, even those who might be hard and cruel. In the specific case of Onesimus, a slave converted in Rome, Paul sent him back to his master. Paul did not concern himself with the systems or institutions of law enforcement, but rather with the proclamation of the gospel and its redeeming power.

"It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system. 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' he declared. 2 Corinthians 3:17. When converted, the slave became a member of the body of Christ, and as such was to be loved and treated as a brother, a fellow heir with his master to the blessings of God and the privileges of the gospel."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 459, 460.

Sociology or salvation?

One well-known religious leader, who became famous for his participation in protest marches, made the following statement: "I see religious activity in terms of social action. Preaching and other ridiculous things that we did formerly no longer are justified in our time. We are more concerned with man than with God. God can take care of Himself. Man needs our help."

It seems clear, however, that when the church makes social action its first priority, it loses its identity as a Christ-centered, spiritual institution and transforms itself into a man-centered, political organism. It may maintain a religious appearance, but it will lack spiritual power. Under the pretext of promoting the restoration of the kingdom of God, it hastens, in reality, the establishment of the kingdom of man. In its eagerness to improve the socioeconomic conditions of the individual, it loses the vision of its prophetic mission, its spiritual responsibility.

"We are not sent to preach sociology, but salvation; not the economy, but evangelism; not reform, but redemption; not culture, but conversion; not progress, but pardon; not a new social order, but a

new birth; not revolution, but regeneration; not a renovation, but a revival; not a resurgence, but a resurrection; not a new organization, but a new creation; not democracy, but evangelism; not a civilization, but a Christ. We are ambassadors, not diplomats."—Hugo Thomson Kerr, cited by Samuel M. Zwemer in *Evangelism Today*, p. 16.

The church and social action

We don't believe it is the function of the church to formulate casuistic programs of social action. "The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9. The church's task should be the proclamation of the gospel that liberates man from a self-centered life, void of ideals and meaning, and gives him a life that is abundant and full.

But the proclamation of the gospel should not be the church's only concern. The world has a right to expect the church to be more than a mere ambulance, gathering up the unhappy, wounded, destitute victims of vice, disease, and social oppression. It is fitting for the church to take the initiative in the fight against man's enemies. For that reason we spare no efforts in our fight against drug abuse, alcoholism, smoking, gambling, pornography, prostitution, ecological contamination, and other evils that weaken society. Furthermore, we are busy with an extensive benevolence program that gives social assistance to the oppressed and helpless.

By precept and example we preach a new concept of life in which the motives are not egoism, ambition, or competition, but brotherly love and respect of human dignity. As we extol the merits of love, we denounce the dialectics and systems that encourage hate and that are responsible for rebellion and war.

In the meantime, we will not allow ourselves to be deceived by the illusion that we can transform the established order of things. God must ultimately accomplish this. According to prophecy, He will soon intervene in the destiny of the world, establishing "a new heaven and a new earth," thus completely transforming the social structure.

* The Scripture quotations credited to R.S.V. are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952 © 1971, 1973.

Christ never took part in protest movements. He never joined subversive groups carrying posters that read "Down with the Romans." Never did He deliver a speech against the tyranny and imperialistic oppression of Caesar.

In reference to this prophetic span of time, Christians have divided themselves into premillennialists, postmillennialists, and even amillennialists. It has been interpreted as a long period of earthly peace, the entire Christian Age, a time when the redeemed will reign with their Lord in heaven, or the restoration of the Temple and its sacrifices in Jerusalem. In one way or another, a fully developed Biblical concept of end-time events must recognize and deal with the millennium revealed in the Apocalypse.

Hans K. LaRondelle

The one thousand years of Revelation 20

The term *millennium* does not occur in the Bible. By itself the word denotes merely a certain stretch of time—one thousand years—without any religious qualification. However, in the last Bible book such a period is endowed with a specific theological content. In Revelation 20, John saw in vision “an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time” (verses 1-3).*

In subsequent portions of the vision another theological aspect is added to this millennial period. The attention now focuses on a scene in heaven in which a work of judgment has begun and in which the resurrected Christian martyrs are reigning with Christ: “I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or

their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (verses 4-6).

These two features in Revelation 20, the radical binding of Satan’s deceptive power over the nations and the reign of Christ with the resurrected martyrs, have charged the word *millennium* with theological content and a challenging apocalyptic significance. In one way or another, a fully developed Biblical eschatology must recognize and integrate the divine revelation of the millennium in John’s Apocalypse.

Revelation 20 is one of the most controversial apocalyptic passages of the whole Bible in Christian theology. Historically, four major philosophies of history concerning the millennium have developed. A recent book calls these: historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism.¹

To start with the last, *amillennialism* considers the millennium as a purely symbolic, atemporal phase signifying the whole period of the Christian church. It allows for no specific thousand-year reign

of Christ on earth. The Old Testament prophecies concerning the Davidic kingdom are applied to Christ’s spiritual reign in the church, while they still await their full realization on the earth made new. Amillennialism does *not* reject the expectation of the second advent of Christ “at any time.” After Augustine systematized this view it became the traditional position in both Catholicism and Protestantism, specifically in the conservative Reformed and Presbyterian churches of today.

Postmillennialism, likewise, holds that Christ’s kingdom is a present reality because He reigns in the hearts of His believers. It expects, however, a conversion of all nations prior to the Second Advent. Consequently it looks forward to a long period of earthly peace without friction among nations, races, or social groups. The kingdom of God will grow gradually through ever-expanding gospel preaching. Thus the millennium is conceived to be not a quantity of time, but a quality of existence differing from our present life style only in degree. The millennium will end with the apostasy of the antichrist and the personal return of Christ in glory, followed by one general resurrection of the righteous and the wicked. Postmillennialism considers the first resurrection in Revelation 20, which introduces the thousand-year period, to be the new birth, a spiritual resurrection only.

The Lutheran Augsburg Confession and the Puritan Westminster Confession are

Hans K. LaRondelle, Th.D., is professor of theology, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

basically postmillennial. Some extreme postmillennialists, however, have believed that a so-called social gospel or certain political programs would transform the world from the outside. World events of recent decades have left few believers in the idea.

In premillennialism two basically different types must be distinguished: historicists and dispensationalists. Both believe that the millennium is sharply marked off by two literal resurrections from the dead: the resurrection of the righteous at the beginning, and that of the wicked at the end. Both believe that the millennial kingdom will be dramatically inaugurated by Christ's visible return and characterized by His continued reign over the earth. A short, fierce persecution of true believers, a so-called great tribulation, will immediately precede the millennium. But here the general agreement among these two groups of premillennialists has already ended. The basic underlying differences of interpretation become apparent in the applications given to the terms *church* and *Israel* in the Old Testament kingdom prophecies.

Historic premillennialism has consistently held the church to be the true Israel of God and the focus of an earthly millennium.² Dispensationalism is based exclusively on the premise of a consistent literalism in all prophetic applications. This requires that all Israel's kingdom prophecies must be realized in a Jewish kingdom in Palestine. Because the church does not fulfill these promises in any respect (according to dispensationalism), the millennium of Revelation 20 is seen as the only time predicted in the New Testament for their literal fulfillment.

Dispensational writers give the impression that dispensationalism, with its dichotomy of Israel and the church, is the only form of premillennialism in Christian theology. It is, however, simply one type of premillennialism. Out of the patristic school grew two types of premillennialism in the nineteenth century: the literalists (or dispensationalists) and the Millerites. LeRoy E. Froom explains: "The Millerites, like nearly all other premillennialists, placed the millennial kingdom on earth, but they regarded it as composed of the redeemed and glorified saints on the regenerated earth, the first thousand years of the eternal state. Their placing of the end of human probation at the beginning of the millennium was the root of the differences between them and the Literalists of all categories." "Millerism, midway between the extremes of 'spiritualizing' postmillennialism and 'Judaizing' Literalism, protested against both extremes in defense of the unity of the church and the covenants."³

After the dissolution of the Millerite movement in 1844, its main successor became the Seventh-day Adventists, who

continued their premillennialism with one new facet: the millennial kingdom or reign of the glorified saints would be *in heaven* and not on earth. Only after the millennium would the New Jerusalem—together with the saints—descend to the earth to be made new as its eternal abode.

J. F. Walvoord explains how, for dispensationalists, the millennium is given its significance exclusively from the Old Testament: "The promises to Abraham, the promises to David, the promises to Israel of future possession of the land, and the promises to Jeremiah that Israel would continue as long as the sun and moon endure (Jer. 31:35, 36) combine to provide a symphony of prophetic truth which is the grand prelude to the millennial reign of Christ."⁴ According to dispensational literalism, the scores of prophecies concerning a peaceful Davidic kingdom on earth "demand" the restoration of the theocratic kingdom to the Jewish nation in Palestine. However, this Jewish form of millennial kingdom, called chiliasm, includes also the rebuilding of the Temple and the literal reinstatement of the Old Testament ritual of bloody sacrifices as prescribed in Leviticus and in Ezekiel 40-46.⁵ Dispensationalists who insist on the restoration of the Temple sacrifices explain them as being "commemorative, not typical. They are retrospective then, not prospective, as of old."⁶

Walvoord sees the teaching of the book of Hebrews—that Christ has once and for all fulfilled the typical cultus of Israel—as "the major obstacle" to the whole idea of a restored Temple in Jerusalem during the millennium. Consequently he does not want to insist on a future Temple, but simply admits that the literal reinstatement of the sacrificial system is "in keeping with the general principle of literal interpretation."⁷ However, Hebrews declares categorically that Christ's first advent "abolishes the first [the sacrificial system] in order to establish the second [the will of God]" (chap. 10:9, R.S.V.).† And it further announces with divine authority: "By calling this covenant [of Jer. 31:31-34] 'new,' he has made the first obsolete: and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear" (chap. 8:13). How the cultic futurism of a Jewish millennium can be harmonized with the book of Hebrews seems inconceivable and impossible.⁸

G. E. Ladd has called the superimposing of the literal application of the Old

Testament prophecies upon the New Testament "the basic watershed between a dispensational and a nondispensational theology." He explains: "Dispensationalism forms its eschatology by a literal interpretation of the Old Testament and then fits the New Testament into it. A nondispensational eschatology forms its theology from the explicit teaching of the New Testament."⁹

Before we can ascertain the significance of the millennium and its organic function in the total plan of redemption, we need to look for both its immediate and wider contexts in Revelation 20, as well as for a possible Old Testament taproot. The connection with John's preceding vision in Revelation 19 strongly suggests a chronological sequence between chapters 19 and 20.¹⁰ There is no doubt that Revelation 19:11-21 pictures the glorious second advent of Christ. His return to earth from heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords in order to execute judgment on the antichrist in the battle of Armageddon cannot be spiritualized away as descriptive of the progress of the church between His first and second advents. This is the apocalyptic climax of the age-long controversy between heaven and earth, in which Christ returns "to strike down the nations" with a "sharp sword" coming out of His mouth. Couched in semipoetic language, it points to the final destruction of all God-opposing powers, as predicted by Isaiah (Isa. 11:4) and Paul (2 Thess. 2:8). The apocalyptic call from heaven to the birds of prey to assemble for "the great supper of God" and to devour the slaughtered enemies of God (Rev. 19:17, 18) cannot be spiritualized away; it stresses the total destruction of God's enemies. This vulture vision is borrowed from Ezekiel 39:17-20. Its new application in Revelation 19 indicates in what way Ezekiel's prediction concerning the destruction of Israel's enemies will be apocalyptically fulfilled—by the destruction of the antichrist and the allied enemies of the church at Christ's second advent. It is significant that not yet Satan himself but only his two chief allies on earth, the beast (antichrist) and the false prophet, "were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur" (verse 20).

The vision about the binding of the serpent-dragon (chap. 20:1-3) logically

Revelation 20 is one of the most controversial apocalyptic passages of the whole Bible in Christian theology. Historically, four major philosophies of history concerning the millennium have developed.

follows, then, *after* the Second Advent. Satan, as the mastermind of all rebellion against God, is seized and "bound" and kept in detention for a millennium before his public arraignment as the world's deceiver before the assembled saints in the New Jerusalem. Only after the millennium will he be thrown into the lake of fire, where his two allies had already been cast at the beginning of the millennium (verses 1, 2, 10). The context of the millennium then establishes the conclusion that it begins with Christ's second coming (see chap. 19:11-21). This is further confirmed by the internal evidence of the millennium vision itself—during the thousand years the martyrs who had refused to accept the end-time mark of the beast and had lost their lives in the eschatological battle with the beast reign with Christ as priests of God after coming to life again (chap. 20:4-6).

This resurrection of the executed saints takes place not before but at the second advent of Christ (see John 5:28, 29; 6:39-44; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; cf. 2 Thess. 1:8-10). The inductive exegetical approach to Revelation 20 points clearly to a future, premillennial concept of fulfillment.

Further light can be shed on the theological significance of the millennium if one takes into account its Old Testament taproot. This we take up in the next study.

¹ Robert G. Clouse (ed.), *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1977). This instructive work is coauthored by a representative of each of the four different views, and allows all authors to criticize one another. See also Millard J. Erickson, *Contemporary Options in Eschatology: A Study of the Millennium* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1977).

² L. E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1954), Vol. IV, pp. 1220-1227. He concludes, "A Jewish kingdom on earth was no part of the faith of the early church."—Page 1227.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 416, note 12; p. 1226.

⁴ *The Millennial Kingdom* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Pub. House, 1974), p. vii.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-315.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 314, referring to H. Bonar.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 311, 315.

⁸ Cf. G. E. Ladd in Clouse, *op. cit.*, p. 94. Also F. E. Hamilton, *The Basis of Millennial Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1942), pp. 42-44, in connection with Ezekiel 46:2.

⁹ In Clouse, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

¹⁰ This vital link of continued narration in Revelation 19:20, 21 and 20:1-3 is stressed also by J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (New York: Harper & Row Pubs., Inc., 1973), p. 625, who quotes G. R. Beasley-Murray on this point. See Mathias Rissi, *The Future of the World: An Exegetical Study of Revelation 19:11-22:15* (Naperville, Ill.: A. R. Allenson, Inc., 1966), pp. 29-38, for a convincing exegesis of the progressive order of Revelation 19 and 20.

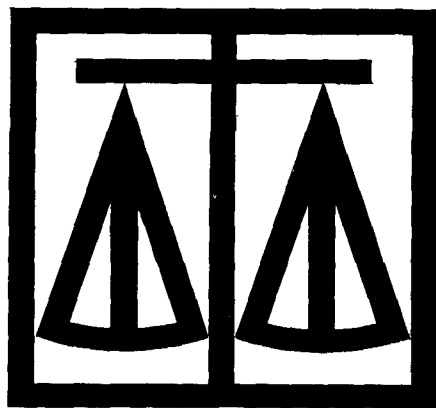
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What Jesus said about a pre-Advent judgment

When God examines those who have come to the wedding of the Lamb (Matthew 22), it is not for His own benefit, but to reveal to the universe who has put on the wedding garment.

Morris L. Venden



What would you think if the first thing you discovered when you got to heaven was that Billy Graham was missing? And then, on top of that, suppose you found out that Adolf Hitler was to be your next-door neighbor. Probably your first question would be "Did I somehow get to the wrong place?" But if you became convinced that you actually were in heaven, you'd have some big questions to ask, wouldn't you?"

Can you imagine going up to one of the heavenly beings passing by at that moment and saying, "Pardon me, but can we ask questions up here?"

"What is it you want to ask?"

So you voice your questions, but he replies, "Don't ask about that. The Lord knows who are His."

You surrender at that point, because you

do love the Lord. But you go through eternity wondering about Graham and Hitler.

Now let's thicken the plot a little. Suppose that you get to heaven and find out that your own son is missing! At the same time you discover that the person who led your own son down the road into sin is living next door to you! You go back out into the street, stop an angel, and say, "Pardon me. Is it all right if I ask some questions?"

"About what?"

So you tell him your problem. And he replies, "No, don't ask that. The Lord knows those who are His."

About that time you say, "Could you please show me to the gate?"

I would like to propose that when we get to heaven and we have some big questions, the beings there are going to welcome our questions. They are going to say, "We're glad you asked. We want you to understand." Because God has always treated His creatures as intelligent beings.

One of the reasons we need a pre-Advent judgment is for you and me to understand the decisions God makes in reference to our loved ones. Another reason is to silence the accusations of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. And a third reason is to vindicate God in the eyes of the entire universe.

Let me try to demonstrate the need for a pre-Advent, or investigative, judgment by a parable. It comes in two parts. The first part: "The Way It Was."

There was great excitement in the little town of Mill Creek, Illinois, that afternoon in 1845. Eighth Illinois Circuit judge David Davis, of Bloomington, had just arrived, accompanied by several circuit

Morris L. Venden is pastor of the College View Seventh-day Adventist church in Lincoln, Nebraska.

lawyers, including one named Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln's presence added to the stir of excitement, for in addition to being a good lawyer, Abe told the funniest stories anyone had ever heard.

It had been almost six months since the last court session in Mill Creek, and there was quite an accumulation of cases to be tried. Old Thomas Jacobs was suspected of setting fire to the blacksmith's shop. He and the blacksmith had had words; old Thomas had made some pretty dark threats; and that very night the blacksmith's shop had burned to the ground. Witnesses said that they had seen old Thomas there at the fire, laughing and slapping his knees.

Then there was the fight at the tavern between Henry Whitney and Ebenezer Bates. Whitney had finally pulled out his pistol and shot Ebenezer in cold blood. Some said that Ebenezer had asked for it and that Whitney was only defending himself, but others sided with Ebenezer and said it was murder, plain and simple.

Finally there was the case of Jesse Adams. He had ridden into town one day, gone straight to the Mill Creek Bank, shoved his gun under the teller's nose, and demanded all the bank's cash. He'd managed to get about fifteen miles out of town before the sheriff and his deputy caught up with him. He had been in the town jail ever since.

In addition to these more spectacular cases, there were the usual disputes over property lines, debts and foreclosures, and slander suits, and the case of a man named Silas Foster, who had been accused of stealing pigs.

The announcement was made that court would convene the following week, and people brought in their legal business. The lawyers went to work at once on the cases assigned to them, and when the announced time arrived, the circuit court convened. The whole town crowded into the courthouse, and during each recess a number could be heard hotly discussing the pros and cons of each case. The lawyers examined and cross-examined and called out objections at every opportunity. Abe Lincoln had a knack for bringing the truth to light, and in the cases he defended, even the prosecuting attorney ended up admitting that he was right. As the people listened and heard the evidence for themselves, they were convinced that justice was being dealt.

One by one the cases were brought before the court. The juries withdrew to deliberate, and a verdict was reached—guilty or not guilty. As Judge Davis sentenced those who had been found guilty, and as those found innocent were acquitted, the town was satisfied. The last morning the judge and his lawyers were in town, there was a hanging. Henry Whitney had been found guilty of murder. And the circuit judge and his company moved on to the next town.

That is the parable "The Way It Was." Now let's back up and go through the same story again, this time, "The Way It Wasn't."

There was great excitement in the little town of Mill Creek, Illinois, that afternoon in 1845. Eighth Illinois Circuit judge David Davis, of Bloomington, had just arrived, accompanied by Abe Lincoln and several other circuit lawyers. It had been almost six months since the last court session in Mill Creek, and quite an accumulation of cases waited to be tried.

Old Thomas Jacobs was suspected of setting fire to the blacksmith's shop. There had been a fight at the tavern between Henry Whitney and Ebenezer Bates. Bates was dead. Jesse Adams was in jail awaiting trial for bank robbery. And there was the usual assortment of lesser disputes.

Judge Davis announced that court would convene immediately. The whole town crowded into the courthouse; the judge banged his gavel on the desk and declared, "Thomas Jacobs, not guilty. Silas Foster, not guilty. Henry Whitney, guilty as charged, to be hanged at sunrise. Jesse Adams, not guilty. Court is closed."

The prosecuting attorney jumped to his feet. "You can't do that!" he cried. "Who do you think you are? You can't acquit these people without a fair trial or sentence them before they're proved guilty."

The townspeople sided with the prosecution. "He's right," they shouted. "How does the judge know who's guilty and who isn't?"

Abe Lincoln raised his voice to be heard above the tumult. "Don't you people trust the judge? The judge knows those who are his to acquit. He's been keeping tabs on things while he's been back in Bloomington. He has kept careful records. He has evidence and he doesn't make mistakes."

But the people became even more upset. "The judge may have evidence, and he may not," they said. "But we don't have evidence. It's not enough just to claim to have evidence. It must be examined openly before sentence is given. The whole court, not just the judge, needs to see the evidence."

The circuit lawyers kept trying desperately to convince the people of Mill Creek that the judge could be trusted. But the people insisted that trust had to be based on an intelligent understanding of the reasons for the judge's decisions.

The last morning the judge and his

lawyers were in town, there was a hanging. It was the judge who was hung.

Does that speak for itself? God intends to handle this great controversy so transparently, He wants to lay out the evidence so clearly, that even Satan and his angels, and the wicked of all ages, will bow the knee along with the redeemed and say that God has been fair and just (see Phil. 2:10, 11). Those in His kingdom, even if some loved one is missing, will have no misgivings or questions forever, but will say from the heart, "Great and marvelous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints" (Rev. 15:3).

Some have gotten the idea that the purpose of a pre-Advent judgment of investigation is to allow God time to pore over the books to decide who is going to make it to heaven. God could settle that question in a microsecond. The real purpose of the investigative judgment is not simply to decide who is going to make it, it is to reveal something about God and about His people that needs to be revealed to the entire universe.

I don't have space in this article to go into a detailed exegesis of Daniel 7, 8, and 9, and the book of Revelation, to trace the doctrine of the investigative judgment. But God never does anything this significant without revealing it to His servants and the prophets (see Amos 3:7). So we can expect that an investigative judgment will be taught in prophecy. If Daniel 7, 8, and 9 are studied as a unit, realizing that they are parallel prophecies covering the same time period, there will be no problem seeing the prophetic delineation of a pre-Advent judgment of investigation. The first angel of Revelation 14 announces, pre-Advent, that the hour of God's judgment is come. Not that it is coming, or will come, or shall come, but it is come.

One of the purposes of such a judgment is to reveal those people who have accepted Christ's invitation, and who have, as described in Matthew 24:13, endured to the end. And during this pre-Advent judgment, not only are God's people vindicated but there is also preparation for the vindication of God's character before the entire universe.

When Jesus died on the cross, He purchased the right to forgive everyone in the entire world. But not everyone is forgiven. So during the pre-Advent judg-

The real purpose of the investigative judgment is not simply to decide who is going to make it, but to reveal something about God and about His people that needs to be revealed to the entire universe.

ment, God's course in forgiving those who are forgiven is vindicated. And during the thousand years following Christ's return (see Revelation 20), God is justified for not forgiving the ones who are not forgiven.

What did Jesus have to say about the pre-Advent judgment? Both His parable of the net and His parable of the wheat and tares indicate a time of determination and decision-making *before* the final rewards are given. But His major comment on a pre-Advent judgment is in Matthew 22. You may want to read the entire chapter to get the background. Verses 2-7 give the history of the Jewish people and God's invitation to them up until the destruction of Jerusalem, in A.D. 70. Verses 8-10 indicate the gospel being taken to the Gentiles. "And the wedding was furnished with guests." What is the wedding? Revelation 19 tells of a time just before Jesus comes when He is united with His bride, the church, and the marriage and wedding feast takes place. So Jesus' parable is referring to the last events before He comes again.

In the days of Christ a wealthy person, a king in particular, sent not only a wedding invitation but a wedding garment for the invited person to wear. That solved a lot of problems. Imagine receiving an invitation to the wedding of a king's son today! What would be the first thing the wife would say? "What am I going to wear?"

Back then, the problem was already solved. It made no difference whether you were rich or poor, whether you were from the palace or the ghetto. Anyone who received an invitation to the wedding of the king's son also received a wedding garment. Even the poorest could look like a millionaire.

Obviously, the king went to a great deal of expense to provide the wedding garment. If anyone was to show up at the wedding without wearing the provided garment, it would be an insult to the king and to the king's son, and in a sense, the whole kingdom would feel the sting. So two things came with a prominent wedding in the days of Jesus—an invitation and a beautiful robe to wear to the occasion.

With that in mind, notice verse 11: "And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment." Evidently the king came in to investigate, to examine, the guests *before* the festivities began. And he saw this man without the wedding garment. In Revelation 3 we find that the ones who lack the robe of Christ's righteousness are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and *naked*. So this man wasn't just dressed in common apparel; he was *naked*! If you think this is going too far, the most we could allow him, scripturally, would be a few filthy rags, because all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags.

Notice what the king said to this guest, verse 12: "And he saith unto him, Friend,

how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless." The king called him "friend"! Isn't that good news? God is not interested in seeing how many people He can keep out of heaven; He's trying to see how many people He can get in. He said, "Friend, was there some misunderstanding? You must have received the invitation; you're here. But was there some slip-up about the robe? Do you have an explanation?"

The king gave him a chance, didn't he? He treated him with dignity. But Scripture says the man was speechless. He had nothing to say. Only then did the king say to his servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen" (verses 13, 14).

What is Jesus trying to tell us in this parable? First of all, we are all invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb. All we have to do is to accept the invitation. Jesus provided it all. When He bowed His head and died He earned the right to forgive everyone who was ever born in this world. We have only to accept His forgiveness. We are all invited to the wedding.

But what about the wedding garment? Revelation 19 describes the marriage supper of the Lamb. "For the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (verses 7, 8). Some modern translations say the fine linen is the "righteous deeds" of the saints.

What are the righteous deeds of the saints? What is the righteousness of the saints? Jeremiah 23:6 reminds us that the Lord is our righteousness. So any kind of righteousness seen in the saints is still the Lord's work, isn't it? This story reminds us of the twofold aspect of righteousness: first, the righteousness of Christ for us at the cross, in providing the invitation; and second, the righteousness of Christ in us, worked out in the life through the power of the Holy Spirit, which is represented by the wedding garment. Both are of faith; both come from Him.

So the king came to examine the guests. He saw there a man who had not on the wedding garment. Evidently he wanted to accept the invitation, but he didn't want to wear the wedding garment. This man was interested in getting to heaven, but he

had no desire to accept Christ's righteousness lived out in the life, for the purpose of bringing honor to Him. "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psalm 23:3). There is something more important than just getting ourselves to heaven, and that is to bring honor and glory to the King and His Son.

So when the King comes to view the guests in this pre-Advent judgment, He finds a man without the wedding garment. Apparently the King examines at least two things before the Advent in this investigative judgment. First, He examines whether or not the invitation has been accepted, and second, He investigates whether the wedding garment has been accepted and put on.

Revelation 3:5 uses the same imagery: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." God wants us not only to respond to the invitation to the heavenly country but to be overcomers, by His grace, as well. And that's what putting on the wedding garment is all about.

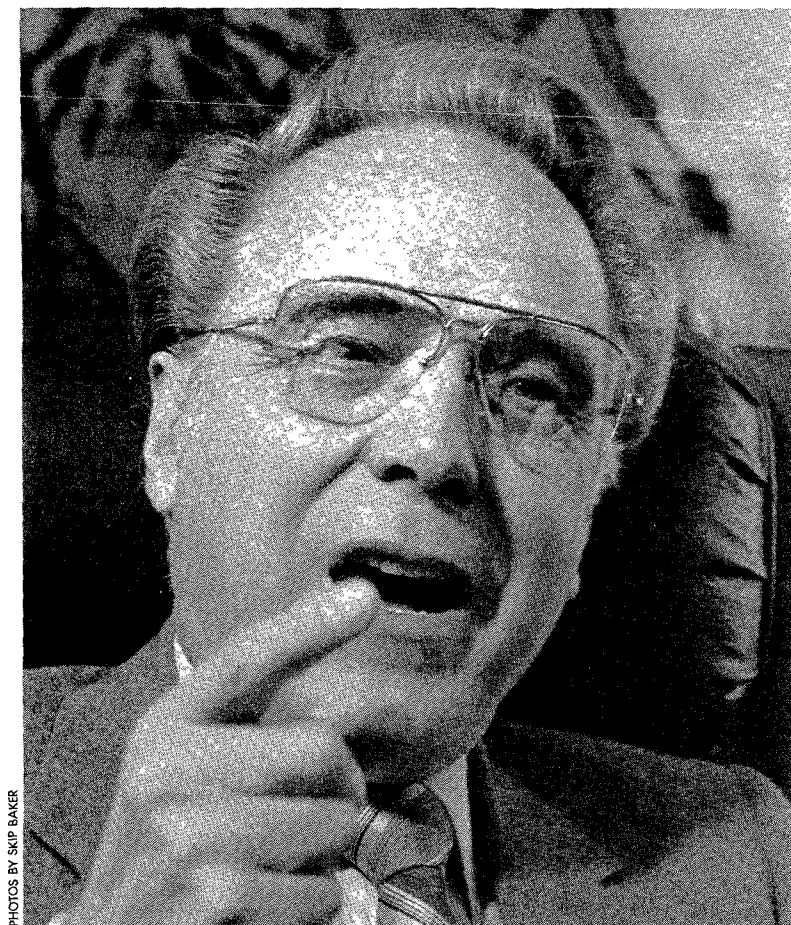
So when He comes in to examine or investigate the guests, it is to reveal before the universe those who not only have accepted the invitation but have become overcomers through His power, as well.

Well, you may say, "I'm not doing too good on that. I fall and fail every day." I'd like to remind you that overcoming is primarily God's area of responsibility, not yours. The invitation to the wedding is free, and the wedding garment is free too! Obedience comes by faith alone in Jesus Christ. It isn't something we *achieve*; it's something we *receive* through a continuing relationship with Christ. Putting on the wedding garment is simply accepting what God has offered.

Sanctification is just as much a gift as is justification, and many in the Christian world are still waiting today to hear and understand that good news. Some of us have worked hard to try to obey, to try to overcome, to try to get the victory. We forget that one doesn't work for a gift. The wedding garment is free—a gift from the King Himself.

Are you interested not only in the invitation to the gospel feast but in wearing the robe, as well? Both are offered to you freely today.

Obedience comes by faith alone in Jesus Christ. It isn't something we achieve; it's something we receive through a continuing relationship with Christ. Putting on the wedding garment is simply accepting what God has offered.



PHOTOS BY SKIP BAKER

Thousands of viewers across North America are familiar with the *It Is Written* telecast. Recently Editor J. R. Spangler interviewed George Vandeman, founder and speaker of the 25-year-old broadcast, about the history and goals of this unique television ministry, including the recent nationwide satellite seminar, *Teleseminar*.

It Is Written

Q. *George, how long have you been on television and how did you get started?*

A. We've been broadcasting for twenty-five years, Bob. During 1981, *It Is Written* celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary year.

How did we get started? Well, back in the early fifties, certain individuals felt we ought to put some Bible messages onto film for church members to use in winning their friends to Christ. The 16-mm films had some production shortcomings but were effective nonetheless. We used the old Hal Roach studios in Hollywood. With nothing more than a pulpit and a few flowers for props, I just stood there and preached my heart out. And the Lord blessed in spite of our inexperience.

I'll never forget those early years. It was

a cooperative project. H. M. S. Richards, Sr., made several films; I made several; Roy Anderson and Phillip Knox, an astronomer-evangelist, made several as well. One day Richards was speaking when right in the middle of his talk the cameraman broke out with a string of oaths. After his colorful expletives, he blurted out, "I'm sorry. I was so interested in listening to what you had to say, pastor, that I must have run out of film a half-hour ago!"

Several years later, a businessman in Midland, Texas—a Seventh-day Adventist builder—and his Roman Catholic partner took these films and put them on television to advertise their building business. Some of the programs were thirty minutes in length, some forty, and some fifty minutes. They purchased an hour of TV time on Sunday night and filled in the rest of the time with music.

After my return from two and a half years of evangelistic preaching in England, the church sent me to Midland to see what was going on. People there would stop me and say, "Vandeman, I believe everything you've said on the screen in my living room." And that reaction as we visited with the people was in spite of the fact that these programs actually had not been prepared for television.

Church leaders then asked me to prepare a teaching program for TV. We

already had a fine drama program, *Faith for Today*. But the church wanted to see what a teaching program would accomplish. They sent us to California, and a new convert, a young movie star by the name of Penny Edwards, suggested the name *It Is Written*.

Q. *I was going to ask where that name came from. How many stations are you on now and what is the scope of your present ministry on television?*

A. God has opened many doors since those early trial and error days. We now cover about 55 percent of the United States and 85 percent of Canada and Australia. We're on twenty stations in Australia and nearly ninety across North America. It would cost us another \$1.5 million a year to enter the rest of the country, but that's our goal.

Q. *What services does *It Is Written* offer, George?*

A. I once heard E. Stanley Jones, the Methodist missionary, say, "Evangelism, to be permanent, must be educational." And I never forgot it. Bob, it would be of little permanent value to bring the viewers



a message of significance and not ask for some response or follow through with services that would meet the felt needs expressed. We follow the plan of giving a scriptural, message-filled book on the subject of the day. If the viewer has been impressed with the presentation—a message such as “The Why of Sudden Death,” for instance, or something on prophecy or health—he can call in and request something to read on the subject. I believe that a reading Christian is a substantial Christian. By the way, our largest responses come from our health messages. Just last week, our response practically doubled when we aired “The Vegetarian Mystique.”

Q. Do you think It Is Written and Adventists are in a position to offer the public something special and significant in the area of health?

A. I certainly do. Seventh-day Adventists have a message of healthful living that I believe is balanced and progressive and that encourages a life style God can bless. “To make men whole” is the goal. We’ve produced two programs recently about the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Loma Linda University Medical Center. One of these, “Miracle in Slow Motion,” featured that little doll Mary Van Dyke, the 3½-year-old daughter of a Dutch Reformed minister. This plucky little thing put up with seventeen operations before she was 2 years of age. She was actually rebuilt by God and LLUMC. God will use physicians and health-care institutions, along with prayer, for the restoration and healing of the sick.

Q. So, you do believe in the medical aspect and the work of physicians and nurses?

A. Absolutely. Adventists have demonstrated that health and religion go hand in hand as a balanced combination for humanitarian service in the community and for winning hearts for God’s kingdom.

Q. What is your present budget?

A. Right now we operate on about \$5.5 million a year, about \$2 million short of what we should have to do the job right.

Q. How much of this \$5.5 million comes from church coffers, and how much comes from donations?

A. Canada and Australia have their own budgets for airing the telecast, and we provide the programs. So far as the United States is concerned, only about 4 percent of our budget comes from the church treasury. Ninety-six percent of our income comes as donations from the public and from church members. Of course, Bob, the

church has provided the facilities of the Adventist Media Center, where we are talking today. We share the center with Adventist Media Productions, Breath of Life, Faith for Today, and the Voice of Prophecy. Thus we are all able to spend more dollars on direct ministry than on brick and stone, mortar and steel. The church organization helps us in other ways, too. No one can look over this center and conclude that the church is not taking mass media evangelism seriously. We have our own complete studio that CBS consultants helped us plan.

Q. When you talk about “response” from the public to It Is Written, can you give me an idea of the average response that comes in?

A. For some time, responses—viewers who write or call—averaged about twenty thousand a month. Recently they have climbed to thirty thousand monthly here in North America. We service these responses with books, and we have also a limited telephone ministry for emergency needs.

Responses arise from a variety of topics. Health-related topics, I would say, bring the best response. Science and religion subjects such as “Who Told the Honeybee?” “Born to Fly,” and others like them appeal particularly to men and to youth. Then, prophecy—the second coming of Christ, the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation—is popular. Home and marriage is another area that brings an excellent response. These are practical subjects that meet life where it is lived.



We made one program entitled “Written in Ash” at the time of the eruption of Mount St. Helens and aired “God’s Yellow Ribbons” on the return of the hostages. All these topics of current interest are springboards. But the springboards are tied into felt needs. And the felt needs are met in the transforming power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Q. So you believe in the gospel and Christ as the center of your programs. Do you teach people victory through faith in Jesus Christ over these habits or whatever problem they face?

A. That’s basic, of course. Presenting the gospel in the most vital and alluring terms is the reason for our existence. Our use of these exciting current-interest items simply is a springboard to the mind and the heart. They broaden the appeal to the unchurched as well.

Q. What about the secular audience? There’s a great discussion among Christians on how to reach the secular mind. There’s a move among intellectuals to reach these people in some unique, unusual, phenomenal way that has nothing to do, initially at least, with religion. You’re moving directly in with a religious approach. Are those who respond mainly religiously oriented people, or do you reach individuals who are secular-minded?

A. I would be less than honest if I didn’t say that any religious program commands a majority of responses from people whose hearts are open to the gospel. And many are open, many are searching. About 42 percent of the population of North America listens to at least one religious program a week.

But, Bob, the answer to your question is in the apostle Paul’s attempt to reach Athens. He tried to answer the critics of his day, just as you suggested some intellectuals would do, remember? He wasn’t very successful, was he? It was one of his poorer success stories. So he changed his approach. He moved into the pagan world of his day with the message of the cross. Our world today is largely a pagan society. The solution, as I see it, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is first to arrest the attention of the people and second to meet their needs. We know that hearts will be won. The power of the Holy Spirit will

Our world today is largely a pagan society. The solution, as I see it, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, is first to arrest the attention of the people and second to meet their needs.

and does cut through the crust of apathy, unconcern, and worldliness.

Our program doesn't begin with the traditional hymn and prayer followed by a sermon. We start out, as I said, with some interesting documentary, a springboard, and then before the viewers realize it, Scripture is lodged in their minds. We believe the power of the Word. The scriptures we use in the program roll right over the screen. With this procedure, we feel we can broaden the spectrum of viewers and make a bid for the secular audience as well.

Q. Are you able to reach such people—the secularist—with the broadcast?

A. Frequently such letters as this reach us: "I'm an unbeliever. I'm surprised at myself for being interested in a religious program."

One young man wrote: "Vandeman, you're a fake, a phony. You'll never see this letter. Some secretary will read it and answer and put your name on it." I wrote back and said, "I did read your letter—I am interested in you." He wrote back: "You're a liar; you didn't read that letter. You're not interested in us out here." I wrote a second and a third time. The Holy Spirit did His work. Church members and the local minister helped, and when that young man was baptized into Christ weeks later, a number of his friends were baptized with him.

Q. How do you feel about the accusation that religious TV broadcasters are building an "electronic church" to the detriment of the local congregation?

A. Bob, for a moment, let me go back to the value of mass communication—the "electronic church," if you will. I've been a pastor; I've been an evangelist. When I went to London as an evangelist and faced the challenge of those millions, I was restless. And I thought of New York City, where more people live above the twenty-fifth floor than there are in the State of Nevada. Many a single complex in the giant cities houses several thousand people. How are we to reach these masses battered with tensions and incessant noise? At the close of each hectic day, they retreat into their little castles and will not move. I once tried to bring men and women out to meetings. We all did.

Q. Now, you're taking the meeting to them.

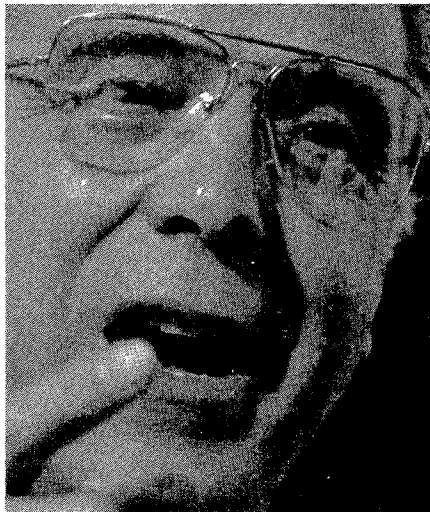
A. Yes, we feel television has its place in the evangelism of the church. It is essential in our day. It is an attention-arresting, seed-sowing agency. But it in no way replaces the powerful personal appeal or the heart-to-heart contact by the dedi-

cated pastor or church member in the home. People are not brought into church fellowship through mass media seed sowing alone. Reaching the masses can be satisfactorily done only by linking all of the witnessing and soul-winning forces of the church. None of us can tackle this staggering job alone. The able pastor, his willing members, the itinerant evangelist—all are needed. You see, what really matters is not who is at bat, but whose team is winning in the struggle against evil—that's the question! It's the team that counts, and that takes in all of us.

Q. I understand you've been assisting the fields during recent years in their follow-through and reaping of souls for Christ by means of seminars. Could you tell us about this?

A. At It Is Written we believe that seminars are a popular and effective in-depth method of study and growth. People even pay to attend a seminar! Our charge is not exorbitant (in fact, it is very reasonable), but it lends an atmosphere of strength and stability to the teaching program. People who have listened to the program for weeks, months, or even years are willing to come out to study, in a more direct way in a seminar, the things they have been viewing on television.

At the seminar everyone is given a Bible. The people become involved with the Book. The Holy Spirit works. They mark their Bible as we study the great themes of redemption and God's final message to mankind. With such group



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dynamics, one cannot hire these people to leave! They're involved. After six and a half hours of the seminar (with appropriate breaks, of course), many are eager to arrange for continuing Bible studies in their local area. So, the pastor is able to continue the work of teaching.

In a recent major round of seminars, my associate and I visited twenty cities in seven weeks. Two hundred and fifty pastors were involved, and ten thousand people attended.

Q. Now tell us about Teleseminar. That's exciting!

A. Yes, we're very much impressed with the way God led in our initial use of Teleseminar. On just one day—March 1, 1981—seven thousand people attended, all the way from Los Angeles to Montreal. Two hundred and fifty pastors were involved.

Q. By the way, George, if some of our readers would like more information about this program, could you send them something?

A. Certainly. Anyone may write: It Is Written, P.O. Box O, Thousand Oaks, California 91360. Just address your request to Royce Williams, field services director. He has some most interesting things to share, particularly the new and rapidly developing plan for a pastor to hold his own seminar. We will help any way we can.

But more about Teleseminar. People gathered just as in our single seminars, except that they were in various locations across North America. The other difference was that my associate and I and our wives were not there personally. We taught live via satellite by way of the giant screen. Surprising as it may seem, the eight-foot image on the screen seemed to hold the interest more effectively than our teaching in person! People caught the inspiration of this new departure, and the results were encouraging. One CBS official attended the originating seminar in Los Angeles and said as he left: "George, I came to see the concept but got caught up in the content."

The story of Teleseminar is not yet finished. I believe there is tremendous potential in it to help in every segment of the world field as this idea develops.

Q. What subjects do you teach in the seminar or Teleseminar?

A. Men and women are led to the Lord Jesus Christ. They are taught how to be saved. They learn how to understand the Bible and how to rediscover truths that have been confused or lost through the ages.

Q. Restoration theology?

A. Definitely. That's the basis of the seminar teaching plan. We share what we believe to be neglected truth while we make basic the great truths of redemption common to all Christians.

In fact, for some time I've wanted to produce a series of television programs on what each of the leading denominations has contributed to the faith of the whole of Christianity. Luther, for instance—"the just shall live by faith." Thank God for justification, the priceless truth that our standing with God is restored through the merits of Jesus. Wesley emphasized the growth factor—sanctification. Knox, Calvin, and others each made his unique contribution. I want to make one show on each group and give a fair treatment of its strength. I feel it would be an excellent series for television that would be appreciated by the Christian community as well as the general public. All we need are funds and time.

Q. I like that idea. But let me ask you about your own personal beliefs. Are you a Seventh-day Adventist because of your rearing, or are you one by choice?

A. I am one by choice. You see, I'm a PK [preacher's kid]. And of course that creates its problems as well as its blessings. I was born in the church. But it wasn't until my late teens that I personally trusted in Christ for my salvation and joy filled my heart. The experience was deep and genuine.

Q. Tell me, George, do you believe that the church is in need of a greater emphasis on justification?

A. Definitely. Let me explain. As Adventists, we have been impressed with the need of reformation—or more specifically, the need of rediscovering truths that have been lost to the church during the confusing early centuries of the Christian Era. We believe reformation is an ongoing necessity. We think the concerns about the early signs of waning faith, clearly expressed by the apostle Paul, as well as the predictions of a needed reformation in the book of Revelation, are to be taken seriously. But there is danger that such emphasis, however legitimate, could, to a certain extent, eclipse and overshadow the

precious basic Christian truth of justification. I believe it is my privilege to claim justification not only at the outset of my conversion experience but daily.

However, and this is very important, I believe justification leads to behavioral changes. Jesus added, you remember, "Go, and sin no more"—that touched behavior. If the Lord in His mercy can release me from the guilt of sin, He can release me from the power of sin. There must be structure to my Christianity. My God wishes to restore in me the image of my Maker. There is a beautiful balance between justification and sanctification. And these priceless truths do not in the least limit or short-circuit my assurance of eternal life. Works, as we so often say, are not the root but the fruit of righteousness.

Q. What is your attitude toward Ellen White in view of recent attacks against her?

A. It's stronger than ever. I've made several television programs on the subject and will continue to do so. One was entitled "She Never Owned a Crystal Ball." Another was "Science Trails a Prophet." I think it's our attitude toward her work that makes all the difference. Just as the giant polished eye of the Palomar telescope, reaching out into limitless space, does not bring any new stars into existence but rather reveals more clearly the ones that are already there, just so, the gift of prophecy through the writings of Ellen White does not bring any new doctrines into existence but reveals more clearly the existing ones. I know men of the cloth in denominations other than our



own who consider this gift a strength to their own ministries. Nothing but good has come from Mrs. White's prophetic insight.

Q. Tell us about the prayer ministry at It Is Written.

A. Rex Humbard and others who have a definite prayer ministry have led the way in this, and we honor them for it. Our program is called Prayer Alert. We borrowed the idea from our Portland, Oregon, Adventist hospital. Most hospitals operate a Medic Alert, a Code 99, or emergency call. Well, the chaplain in Portland thought, as he heard those repeated signals for help, Why not encourage the staff to pause and pray for the one in danger? When he gathered the staff together, he discovered that they were already doing this without any guidance from the chaplain's office. That experience gave birth to the Prayer Alert idea.

We feature men and women in all faiths who have had dynamic answers to prayer—Joni Eareckson, who was not healed but was sustained through prayer; Richard Morefield, the returned hostage; Mrs. Lowell Thomas, Jr., who was saved in an Alaskan earthquake. Men and women can identify with these people. This portion of our program makes our prayer ministry vital. We offer the little book *Unlocking Heaven's Storehouse*. It's loaded with prayer promises and has become a strength to all who receive it.

Q. How would you sum up the work of It Is Written? How would you describe what you are trying to do?

A. Bob, I can describe it best perhaps with an incident that still sticks in my mind after many years. In the earliest days, when we were shooting our programs in New York City, I had a Roman Catholic director. We were resting between takes when someone who had come in happened to say to the director, "Who's the star of that show?" And without a moment's hesitation the director answered, "The Bible is the star of this show."

That's what we're trying to do at It Is Written. We're trying to lift up the Bible and make it available to the thousands and thousands who need its message and the Saviour, Jesus Christ, who shines from every page.

People are not brought into church fellowship through mass-media seed sowing alone. Reaching the masses can be satisfactorily done only by linking all of the witnessing and soul-winning forces of the church.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.
—Exodus 20:8-11.

This We Believe/10

Gerhard F. Hasel

God's perpetual gift to man

The search for an extra-Biblical origin of the Sabbath has been going on now for about one hundred years. Scholars have developed hypotheses that the Sabbath is derived from astrological, agricultural, or sociological backgrounds. However, so far, neither a single hypothesis, nor any combination thereof, has been successful in providing an answer to the question of the origin of the Sabbath.¹ To our present knowledge, the Sabbath as a weekly day of rest and worship is unique to Biblical religion and faith. No pagan nation or people in the ancient world are known to have kept the seventh-day Sabbath or worshipped on it.

Secular sources may be silent on this topic, but Scripture is unambiguous about the origin of the Sabbath. It presents the seventh-day Sabbath as a lasting gift of God from Creation to all mankind. Its beginning is linked to the climax of Creation week (see Gen. 2:1-3; Ex. 20:11; 31:17). The Inspired Record states, "Thus the heavens and earth were completed, and all their hosts. And by the seventh day God completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made" (Gen. 2:1-3, N.A.S.B.).* This first scripture on the Sabbath expresses a number of key ideas: 1. Creation reaches its goal of completion and perfection in the seventh-day Sabbath. Thus the seventh day of each week is a renewed Creation Sabbath, a day of sacred time derived from the beginning of history. While ancient cosmogonies of the Canaanites and the Babylonians concluded in temple build-

ing,² that is, in sacred *space*, the Biblical Creation narrative concludes with the inauguration of the Sabbath, that is, the origin of sacred time. 2. God *rested* from all His work that He had done on the Sabbath. God's resting (cf. Ex. 20:11; 31:17) provides an example for man. Mankind, made in the image of God, is to follow his creative Exemplar by resting on the seventh day as the Creator has done. Resting in the sense of cessation from regular activity means for every person a gift of time for communion with one's Creator and Lord. 3. God *blessed* the Sabbath. When in Scripture God blesses a thing or a being, that thing or being is imbued with the power of fruitfulness and prosperity, providing life, happiness, and success. The Lord of life who in His creative work had blessed fishes and birds (see Gen. 1:22) and then Adam and Eve (see verse 28), also blessed the Sabbath as the day of rest, thus equipping it with enlivening, vitalizing, and beneficial power. This blessedness of the Sabbath is to enrich mankind's existence and life. 4. God *sanctified* the Sabbath. This divine act of sanctifying and thus dividing the Sabbath from the remaining days of activity imbues it with a holiness not possessed by any other day. "This division between the day of rest and the working days is to prove itself as much of a benefit to man as the division of light from darkness."³ We must also note that holiness is an act of God's bestowal and not of man's doing. Holiness for the day of rest is derived, not from man keeping this day holy, but from a prior divine action.

These foundational aspects of the Sabbath, rooted in the divine activities at the climax of Creation, provide bountiful and meaningful life for man and invoke in him a worship response. G. H. Waterman's insightful summary is worth quoting: "It seems clear, therefore, that the divine origin and institution of the Sabbath took

place at the beginning of human history. At that time God not only provided a divine example for keeping the seventh day as a day of rest, but also blessed and set apart the seventh day for the use and benefit of man."⁴ It is fully evident, then, that the Sabbath originated at Creation and not at Mount Sinai or later in Israel's history.

Biblical support for the origin of the seventh-day Sabbath at Creation is found not only in the Old Testament (see particularly Ex. 20:11; 31:17) but is also explicitly supported in the New Testament in Hebrews 4:1-11 and implicitly by Jesus Himself in Mark 2:27: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Jesus affirms that the Sabbath was made for the benefit of man, protecting his physical, spiritual, and social well-being.

Lord of the Sabbath

Jesus Christ announced that He Himself is "Lord . . . of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28; Matt. 12:8). The New Testament gives ample evidence that the world was made by Jesus Christ (see John 1:3; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 1:1-3), indicating that He is the active agent in Creation. At the beginning of human history, the Creator of man and the world made the Sabbath for the benefit and blessing of mankind.

The Old Testament has repeated references to the seventh day as "the sabbath of the Lord" (see Ex. 20:10; Lev. 23:3, 38; Deut. 5:14), and time and again the Lord speaks in Scripture of "my sabbaths" (see Ex. 31:13; Lev. 19:3, 30; 26:2; Isa. 56:4; Eze. 20:12-24; 22:8, et cetera). Jesus' affirmation of being "Lord of the Sabbath" may reflect this Old Testament emphasis on His Lordship over against all others who claimed to be able to put a fence around it. His Lordship over the Sabbath is related to His Lordship over man. As man, fallen under the domination of alien powers, is

Gerhard F. Hasel, Ph.D., is dean of the Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

freed from all false, ritualistic, and legalistic ways, so the Sabbath is also freed by Jesus Christ from its multitude of ritualistic and legalistic regulations superimposed on it by human powers in post-exilic Judaism. (One source cites 1,521 derivative Sabbath laws.)⁵

As "Lord of the Sabbath" Jesus Christ is the great restorer of the Sabbath. In His life and ministry, Jesus in no way abrogated or annulled the Sabbath. He lifted it to its rightful and proper place, restoring its meaning and dignity and putting it back as a center of blessing for mankind. The Gospels record no less than seven Sabbath healing miracles. At the very beginning of His public ministry, Jesus healed a demon-possessed man in a synagogue on the Sabbath (see Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37) and followed this act with the Sabbath healing of Peter's mother-in-law (see Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38, 39). The redemptive liberation of humans from evil powers or disease is thus linked to the Sabbath. The Sabbath healing of the man with the withered hand (see Mark 3:1-6) demonstrates that in spite of legalistic Jewish restrictions it is "lawful on the sabbath to do good . . . [and] to save life" (verse 4, R.S.V.).[†] Jesus was again teaching in a synagogue on another Sabbath when He miraculously healed an infirm woman. He defended the healing as an activity completely appropriate for the Sabbath day—a release of the woman from Satan's bond (see Luke 13:10-17).

The Messianic liberator also liberates the Sabbath from human tradition. The healing of the man with dropsy on the Sabbath (see chap. 14:1-4) demonstrated this once again. The two Sabbath healings recorded in the Gospel of John (chaps. 5:1-18; 9) indicate the intimate connection between Christ's redemptive work and the Sabbath. In both actions Christ broke again with the Sabbath laws of the rabbis (see chaps. 5:10, 16; 9:14-16), liberating the Sabbath from human restrictions and setting it free to be the kind of blessing He originally designed it to be for mankind. These incidents reveal that Christ's claim to be "Lord . . . of the sabbath" (Matt. 12:8; Mark 2:28) was a claim to be the restorer of the true meaning and purpose of the Sabbath, revealing its divine intention, aim, and goal for the benefit of men and women at every stage of life and in every age.

The famous incident of the plucking of the ears of grain by the disciples on a Sabbath day (see Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5) was regarded by Jewish authorities as Sabbathbreaking, because "by plucking the ears of grain they were guilty of *reaping*, by rubbing them in their hands they were guilty of *threshing*, by separating the grain from the husk they were guilty of *winnowing*; and by the whole procedure they were guilty of *preparing a meal* on the Sabbath day."⁶ In defense, Jesus referred to David eating the shew-

bread in the temple when he was hungry (see 1 Sam. 21:1-7), arguing that if it was right for David to eat bread dedicated for sacred use, then His disciples could surely allay their hunger by plucking grain on sacred time. Thus Jesus set aside rabbinical laws and freed the Sabbath from legalistic restrictions and casuistry.

These various incidents reveal that Jesus restored the Sabbath to its intended meaning, freeing it from human traditions that tended to enslave both the Sabbath and its keeper in legalism. Jesus Himself kept the Sabbath in its real intent and thus set an example for His followers throughout time. He is the exemplar and model of true Sabbathkeeping from the day early in His ministry when He read the Scripture in the Nazareth synagogue and observed the Sabbath "as his custom was" (see Luke 4:16), through the days of doing good on the Sabbath, to His rest at last in the grave on the Sabbath. Indeed, Jesus Christ is in every sense the Lord of the Sabbath, as the Sabbath is in every sense the day of the Lord. We believe there is no scriptural evidence that either Jesus or His disciples ever changed the Sabbath to Sunday.⁷ This change took place much later.⁸

Gift of divine rest

The Creator's own rest provides a foundation for man's rest on the seventh-day Sabbath (see Gen. 2:1-3). The fourth commandment in the Decalogue affirms explicitly, "In it you shall not do any work, . . . for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day" (Ex. 20:11, R.S.V.). The seventh day is identified as Sabbath. This distinction had already been illustrated in the earlier manna experience (see chap. 16:23, 25, 26). It should also be noted that "the seventh day is a sabbath to [or for] the Lord" (chap. 20:10, R.S.V.; 16:23, 25; 31:15; 35:2; Lev. 23:3; Deut. 5:14), indicating that the Sabbath is owned, as it were, by God, who graciously gives it as a gift of rest to His people following the six days that are designated for human labor.

The Sabbath commandment requires men "to keep it holy" (Ex. 20:8). We have already noted that the Sabbath derives its holiness from an act of God at Creation (see Gen. 2:3; Ex. 20:11). God's command "to keep it [the Sabbath] holy" is both a charge and an invitation and involves: (1) following the divine Exemplar's pattern of

rest; (2) acknowledging the Exemplar as Creator; (3) accepting God's gift of rest every seventh day; (4) participating in divine rest; and (5) refraining from work and activity appropriate for the six days during which humans shall labor and do all their work. Indeed, "cessation from work on the seventh day amounted to a rite of communion with the cosmic creator."⁹ All in all, it is what God has done for man that causes man to keep holy the Sabbath day by laying aside all the activity usually associated with his livelihood. After all, God graciously provided enough time, six days per week, for these pursuits. The gift of six days of purposeful activity each week is followed by the seventh-day Sabbath, a greater gift of holy time in which man is freed from the normal cares of life. Simply put, the Sabbath is the divine gift of sacred time, hallowed and set apart by God for man, to provide rest from labor, freedom for fellowship and communion with both God and fellow man, and a weekly foretaste of the rest for which the whole creation yearns (cf. Isa. 66:22, 23; Heb. 4:1-10).

A gift of redemptive liberation

At times some claim that the Sabbath was first instituted at the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. But Israel kept the Sabbath and were taught its meaning before the Mount Sinai experience. Exodus 16 clearly indicates that Israel were provided with the miraculous gift of manna for physical food on each of the six working days of the week. The manna kept Israel alive after their redemptive release from Egyptian slavery, and it was the occasion of renewing in their minds the greater gift, the seventh-day Sabbath, for on the Sabbath no manna fell, in order to teach God's people that physical liberation is but the prelude to the Sabbath experience when redemption is celebrated as God's gift. The Sabbath is a "sabbath feast" (Ex. 16:23; *sabbaton*), not a day of taboos, fasting, and mourning. It has a festive ring, designed in its celebration to express joy, happiness, and satisfaction.

It is also striking that the Sabbath was designed as well to remind Israel that "'you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out thence with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day'" (Deut. 5:15, R.S.V.). This text

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elaborates the soteriological aspect of the Sabbath. In Exodus 20:11, God's Creation and His subsequent rest are given as a motivational reason for celebrating the Sabbath as holy; in Deuteronomy 5:15 the divine act of redemption and liberation is cited as a motivational reason for Sabbath celebration. We need to keep in mind that the Exodus event is an act of "Creation" in which a people is brought into existence (cf. Isa. 43:1, 7), and thus it forms an analogy to God's Creation at the beginning when a world is brought into existence. The creative act of deliverance from servitude is to be remembered and thus celebrated and reexperienced by each one who keeps the Sabbath. The believer himself is a new creation and becomes joined to God's people, the body of Christ. Therefore, on the Sabbath day we are recalling and remembering our Maker, and One who acted in the creation of the physical world (see Gen 1:1, 2; 3; Ex. 20:11) and who acted again in the creation of His people (see Deut. 5:15) and in our own re-creation. The Sabbath is a gift day, celebrating God's Creation of world and man, of His people, and of our own individual re-creation to new life in Him.

This liberation aspect of the Sabbath extended to the entire household, including those of an inferior status such as manservant and maidservant (see Ex. 20:10). On the Sabbath everyone in society, high and low, resident and alien, is to rest together. This liberation from work and freedom to rest makes all human beings equal, whatever their status in life. On the Sabbath men stand as equals before God and in society. As such, the Sabbath is a present anticipation of the eschatological removal of every sort of inequality. Even in the here and now the Sabbath already functions as a gift and points to the liberation of humans from all sorts of societal inequities and inequalities.

A gift of belonging

Once God had created His people in the liberating and redemptive Exodus event, He graciously offered to enter into a profound covenant relation with them in order to provide them the power and the means to remain a redeemed, liberated, and free people under Him. A basic part of this redemptive covenant given to Israel on Mount Sinai (see Exodus 19-24) was the Ten Commandments, at the heart of which is the Sabbath commandment. According to Exodus 31:13, the Sabbath is singled out as "'a sign between me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I, the Lord, sanctify you'" (R.S.V.; cf. Eze. 20:12, 20). It is revealed here that the Sabbath is God's covenant "sign" between Himself and His people, who are to observe "'the sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant'" (Ex. 31:16, R.S.V.).

The Sabbath's nature as a "sign" relates both to God and to man. As the rainbow is

a perpetual guarantee that God will never again destroy all flesh on earth by a universal flood (see Gen. 9:13, 15), so the Sabbath is a "sign of guarantee" whereby God assures in His efficacious grace that He will sanctify His people and make them holy. Because the Sabbath is part of the covenant that establishes the beneficial relationship between God and His people, it has been pointed out that "the Creator has stamped on world history the sign of the sabbath as his seal of ownership and authority."¹⁰ Indeed, the Sabbath commandment identifies (1) the Lord of the Sabbath as Creator (Ex. 20:11; 31:17); and (2) the sphere of His ownership and authority—"heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them" (Ex. 20:11, R.S.V.). The Sabbath functions as a "sign" or a "seal" having characteristics typical of seals ratifying ancient Near Eastern international treaty documents. This nature of the Sabbath as a sign of seal allows the true Sabbathkeeper to acknowledge God as the Creator and Re-Creator who has ownership and authority over all creation and also over himself or herself.

In keeping the Sabbath, the believer manifests that he or she belongs fully to God and His commandment-keeping people. Thus the Sabbath is a sign that communicates the unique relationship between God and those who belong to Him who is both their covenant God and sanctifier.

The intent of the new covenant is not to abolish or abrogate the old and the law; it renews the true intent of the covenant and internalizes the law (see Jer. 31:31-34). The old and the new covenants have the same law. There is nothing wrong with the law. The covenant made with Israel became old because the law remained something outside the Israelite; in the new covenant God will write the law in the heart (verse 33), internalizing it, making it a part of the innermost being of man for him to accept, assimilate, and live from within his being. In the new covenant the law, with the Sabbath at its center, will not be satisfied with mere mechanical obedience and lifeless gestures, but with a new life of the Spirit (see Rom. 7:6) that leads to genuine, profound, and authentic obedience and heart worship. Sabbath-keeping is a love response on the part of the Christian to the greatness of God, His creative, liberating, and sanctifying purposes accomplished in the free gift of life

for service through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sabbathkeeping reveals that one belongs to God and Jesus Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath, then, is sacred time that holds together past, present, and future. It provides holy time for profound communion and fellowship with the Lord of life. It grants a present experience of renewal, redemption, and liberation. It brings joy and peace and frees the believer for the worship of God and for service to Him and to fellow men. The Sabbath transforms present realities, pointing forward to the promised future reality of a new heaven and a new earth undisturbed by sin.

* Scripture quotations credited to N.A.S.B. are from the *New American Standard Bible*, © The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, and are used by permission.

† Scripture quotations marked R.S.V. are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952 © 1971, 1973.

¹ See J. H. Meesters, *Op zoek naar de oorsprong van de sabbat* (Assen, 1966); W. Rordorf, *Sunday* (Philadelphia, 1968), pp. 19-24; N. E. Andreasen, *The Old Testament Sabbath* (Missoula, 1972), pp. 1-16; N. Negretti, *Il Settimo Giorno* (Rome, 1973), pp. 31-108.

² H. L. Ginsberg, "Poems About Baal and Anath," in J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament* (Princeton, N.J., 1955), pp. 137, 138; E. A. Speiser, "The Creation Epic," in Pritchard, *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 69.

³ H. W. Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia, 1981), p. 131.

⁴ G. H. Waterman, "Sabbath," *The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975), Vol. V, p. 183.

⁵ This figure comes from R. Johanan and R. Simeon ben Lakish; see G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962), Vol. II, p. 28. Cf. E. Lohse, "σαββατον," *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975), Vol. VII, pp. 4-14, for a concise survey of the development of Jewish Sabbath laws.

⁶ For a penetrating recent study of the background and the change from Sabbath to Sunday, see Samuele Bacchiocchi, *From Sabbath to Sunday: A Historical Investigation of the Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity* (Rome, 1977). Material quoted appears on page 49.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ In 1961 Pope John XXIII issued the encyclical *Mater et Magistra*, in which it is stated, "The Catholic Church has decreed for many centuries that Christians observe this day of rest on Sunday."—In A. Fremantle, ed., *The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context* (New York, 1963), p. 384.

⁹ S. Terrien, *The Elusive Presence: Toward a New Biblical Theology* (New York, 1978), p. 391.

¹⁰ M. G. Kline, *The Structure of Biblical Authority* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1972), p. 120.

As the rainbow is a perpetual guarantee that God will never again destroy all flesh by a universal flood, so the Sabbath is a "sign of guarantee" whereby God assures that He will sanctify His people.

*We need not only
the mind of Jesus but
His heart as well.*

Ron Watts

Wanted: more heart attacks

The Adventist Church has devised several effective community programs to help people reduce the risk of coronary heart disease—stop-smoking clinics, weight-control classes, stress-control clinics, et cetera. However, among Seventh-day Adventists we need *more* heart attacks like the one Jesus suffered: “But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36).

When Jesus saw the multitudes, He suffered a “compassion coronary.” His great heart of love was moved with pity and concern that so many, in such great need, could be helped by so few. This intense love for helpless, and apparently hopeless, human beings led Him to Calvary to sacrifice His life on their behalf.

How do we, as Seventh-day Adventists, view the multitudes of earth today? As an obstacle to be overcome in achieving the objective of carrying the gospel to all the world? Or as a vast potential to be won for the kingdom of Christ and His eternal glory? If Jesus was “moved with compassion” at the scattered multitudes who had no shepherd, what should we feel as we look at the world today?

Present world population is about 4.5 billion; by the year 2,000 there will be an estimated 6.2 billion. Ninety percent of this growth will occur in the lesser

developed countries of Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Demographers project that by the turn of the century India will have 1.4 billion people; Brazil 275 million; Bangladesh 245 million; and Mexico 175 million.

Annual per capita income ranges from more than \$15,455 in Switzerland to only \$85 in Bangladesh. On July 7, 1973, the *Indian Express* reported that one million children in India were dying every year because they didn’t get enough to eat. The Indian Health Ministry reported in February, 1973, that one fifth of the babies being born in that country would not live beyond the age of 5.

Governments in most of these less-developed countries are putting forth Herculean efforts to improve the health, education, and economic well-being of their peoples. Many are endeavoring to accomplish in a few decades the industrialization that took Europe several hundred years to achieve. This effort is usually accompanied by heavy migration from the rural countryside to huge metropolitan areas. The technological society in which these people are thrust seriously strains centuries-old ethical traditions and religious beliefs. The close family ties that provide stability in rural societies are broken without being replaced by other stabilizing structures.

The refugee problem created by wars and revolutions has achieved gigantic proportions as well. On the continent of Africa alone, there are presently more refugees than have ever existed before at any given time in history.

The Lord’s description of the multitudes as sheep without shepherds aptly suits most of the world’s population in the 1980s.

What should be our response? The response of Jesus was compassion. Divine compassion must move God’s people as it moved their Saviour. The principle of love must motivate them to alleviate suffering and provide hope of a better life in a better world. Programs that do not consider the eternal destiny of these people do not reflect the compassion of Jesus. The most serious situation facing the multitudes in the developing countries is that most of them have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, and will not unless the church arouses to fulfill its divine commission.

When Jesus saw human society in such a state of crisis that the people were as sheep without shepherds, He instructed His disciples to expect a high degree of readiness to receive the gospel. “The harvest truly is plenteous” (verse 37). This responsiveness is especially apparent today in the developing countries. While the adversary works in society, causing such difficulties that people lose all hope and faith, God is at work amid these same problems, preparing a harvest for His kingdom. The Holy Spirit is at work creating conditions in which whole peoples and tribes are becoming responsive to

the gospel. In India today there may be more than 200 million people who could be led to follow Jesus Christ, if the funding, organization, and personnel were available for the task. Christians in Canada and the United States possess 80 percent of the wealth held by evangelical believers in the world, while 80 to 90 percent of the people who are giving their hearts to Christ for the first time live in the developing countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

But this receptivity is a two-edged sword. The conditions that make people receptive to eternal truth make them also receptive to other systems of religious and political thought.

What is the response of Seventh-day Adventists? We are now engaged in a program to win one million men and women to Jesus Christ, to lead them to keep His commandments and prepare for His return. We don’t look upon this Thousand Days of Reaping as an end, but as a beginning of a great evangelistic outreach that will lead us to experience the time when thousands will be converted in a day as at Pentecost. Such an outpouring of the Spirit of God and evangelistic successes will be accompanied by deep spiritual commitment as was seen among the disciples at Pentecost. Many of the believers in the apostolic church were not only willing to give of their income for the advancement of God’s cause but willing to deplete their capital as well.

As our work nears its great and glorious triumph under the power of God, we will see people giving not less for world missions, but increasingly more. Plans must be made in every church on every continent so that more and more of our giving may be apportioned for the advancement of the gospel in all the world.

A present opportunity to make a sacrifice for world evangelism is before us. On October 30, 1982, the annual Week of Sacrifice offering will be received in all Seventh-day Adventist churches, to assist in financing the church’s world mission. The committee responsible for planning this offering has set an objective of \$3 million. What do you plan to sacrifice for this offering? What plan do you have to encourage your people to sacrifice?

There is great enthusiasm for the Thousand Days of Reaping in the developing countries. Adventists there know that this is a day of great opportunity for the gathering of souls. Some of the most sacrificial supporters of world evangelism live in absolute poverty. Many in the developing countries will give more than they are able. Let us not do less for God than they.

“For the love of Christ leaves us no choice” (2 Cor. 5:14, N.E.B.).*

* From *The New English Bible*. © The Delegates of the Oxford University Press and the Syndics of the Cambridge University Press 1961, 1970. Reprinted by permission.

Ron Watts is personal ministries director of the Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Remember Southview!

In more despondent moments, you may have decided your church really didn't need your services. Here is a church that proved it could get along without its pastor, but he was a success just the same.

If you ever get to thinking that your church would roll over and die without your constant ministerial intervention, consider the 400-member Southview Southern Baptist church of Lincoln, Nebraska.

When Southview's pastor left in 1980, a full year passed before the new pastor arrived on the scene. Now, you might expect that after a year with no pastor, the first order of business would be to revive the church, gather the scattered flock, and try to get things going again. Not so at Southview. Eddy Hallock, the new minister, found a group that was growing spiritually and numerically. The twelve deacons (there must be some apostolic significance here) had gone right on leading worship, preaching, baptizing converts, and counseling members. Bob Rung, one of the twelve, admits there was a void with the pastor gone, but "we didn't close shop," he remembers. "We encouraged one another and shared. Our body grew from that experience. We learned to rely on the Lord."

Southview's experience may be a bit unsettling for men of the cloth. What if every church were able to do without a pastor for a year? Some of us get nervous if the church survives our three-week vacation! But Southview ought to bring some lessons to mind:

First of all, it ought to teach us "not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think" (to paraphrase the apostle Paul). Pastors, probably more than most professional groups, are prone to delusions of grandeur with a Messianic twist. We talk about being servants, but most of us have to fight the temptation to play the king. So, whenever you feel an attack of the "indispensables" coming on, remember Southview and picture your congregation flourishing, growing, thriving—after a year without your leadership!

I'm not saying that your role is unnecessary and that churches would get along better without their pastors. Some pastors are, and some churches would—but not most. I am saying that the pastor who truly believes his church cannot function without him is sooner or later disabused of the

fantasy, usually by extremely unpleasant means.

Second, Southview ought to suggest to us some different standards for determining pastoral success. Have you never experienced the subtle rejoicing of heart that steals over you at tidings of difficulties befalling the congregation you recently left? Things were going along just fine as long as you were there, and now the church or the new pastor can't keep together what you built. Isn't this evidence of your personal pastoral prowess? Southview, it seems to me, points us in the opposite direction. What a successful pastor the departing minister, Dennis Wood, must be to so inspire and equip his members that they could carry on the work of the church by themselves for a whole year! The successful pastor is not the one whose church falls apart when he leaves, but the one whose church has been so built up spiritually by his ministry that it can take over many of his functions and continue to operate.

In Deacon Rung's words, "We learned to rely on the Lord." That is the key to this kind of successful ministry. Too often the message our members receive is that we will rely on the Lord, and they are to rely on us. No wonder that when we leave, things sort of collapse until a new pastor comes that the people can lean on! The whole relationship is self-perpetuating: the people like it because it takes the responsibility for doing anything much off them and places it all on the pastor; the pastor likes it because thereby he gets to be the "father figure" for the church. And a little appropriate chafing over the burden of responsibility he carries can also make him look good. Such a system may make "strong" pastors, but it makes weak churches, and thousands are in just such a situation.

A truly successful pastor is secure enough to turn over responsibility to his flock without worrying that it will jeopardize his position as shepherd. It's true that most pastors don't like to turn over responsibility. But it's also true that most members resist, tooth and nail, having responsibility turned over to them. This is

no doubt true even in such a shining example as Southview Southern Baptist church, for Deacon Rung feels that most people don't know how to be used by a church. They don't realize the potential they have. But part of the Christian message, if you take it seriously, is: "We are adequate in Christ."

Getting such a concept across to your congregation, as well as training and motivating them to do for themselves, is a complete topic in itself. But Southview ought to be telling us that a pastor is successful to the extent that he can train his people to accept and carry out responsibility successfully. For a whole year the Southview Baptist church members cared reasonably well for much of what their pastor had been doing, even though no pastor was there to help them. Don't you suppose that your members ought to be able to do quite a few of the tasks that you have been doing, especially with you there to guide them? Smart pastors—and those that avoid heart attacks—delegate everything they can.

Perhaps even more interesting than the fact that the twelve deacons at Southview Baptist were able to keep the church functioning so long without a pastor is the fact that when a new pastor arrived, they didn't gratefully "retire" and leave him to assume all the usual leadership functions alone. These deacons are now serving in a sense as "assistant pastors," leading out in various fellowship and study groups within the church. And the new pastor is happy about it. Says he, "I can't personally minister to all 350 to 400 members of the congregation. There aren't that many hours in the day. A pastor ought to pray for qualified leaders."

Southview Baptist church seems to have been fortunate in both its departing and arriving pastors. The one left a church that was able to function fairly well without him, and the other apparently was not intimidated that this was so.

So the next time you begin wondering what on earth your church would do without you, remember Southview. Like that church, yours might do just fine. And if so, that makes you a success.—B.R.H.

Esther and history—2

The historian cannot prove beyond all doubt the accuracy of the Bible's account of Esther, but when the known historical data is compared with the Inspired Record, the results are in every case compatible.

Scholars have questioned whether there is a rightful place in Persian history for Esther as queen of Xerxes, the Biblical Ahasuerus. Four pieces of chronological data from the book of Esther can be shown to fit the ancient Greek and Persian accounts: (1) The six months of Xerxes' third year (484-483 B.C.) spent at his winter capital of Shushan with his army or its officers (Esther 1:1-4) corresponds well with a period of time allotted to laying plans for the invasion of Greece. (2) The following seven-day celebration involving all of the city of Shushan (verses 5-12) fits well with a celebration of the New Year's festival in the spring of 482 B.C. (3) Since data from the book of Esther indicate that Xerxes' order for the most beautiful women of his realm to be gathered and prepared for his evaluation in searching for a new queen was acted upon in Shushan during the winter of his sixth year (chap. 2:1-4, 12, 16), he must have issued it from his winter headquarters at Sardis in 480-479 B.C. during the lull between his army's two campaigns into Greece. The chronological factors involved here are compatible, and the Bible does not indicate where Xerxes was when he issued that order. (4) Xerxes departed from Sardis for Shushan in the fall of his seventh year (479 B.C.) after he heard that his army had been defeated. His itinerary allows for a few months' travel time before he received Esther and the other candidates the following winter at the Shushan palace.

Thus these four chronological points in Esther can be harmonized satisfactorily with what is known from Persian history of Xerxes' activities. Since the fourth is connected with Esther's acceptance and installation as queen, we must consider the problem of the preceding queen, the Biblical Vashti.

While at his winter quarters in Sardis in 480-479 B.C., Xerxes turned his attention from making war to making love. Herodotus, the Greek historian, reports that during that time the Persian king fell in

love with the wife of Masistes, his brother, and endeavored unsuccessfully to carry on an affair with her. In connection with this incident, we should note that Greek sources indicate that Amestris, the only queen of Xerxes to which they refer, was not with him in Sardis during the winter of 480-479 B.C. This raises the interesting possibility that Amestris may have been Vashti, the only queen of Xerxes, besides Esther, known from the Bible. If so, Vashti's refusal to appear before the king, recorded in Esther 1:10-12, could have provided the reason why she was left home during this campaign, whereas the wives of lesser military figures were included in the royal entourage. The possibility of identifying Amestris with Vashti raises two questions, one linguistic and the other historical.

The linguistic question is whether these two names can be equated on the basis of known phonetic shifts between the languages involved. Vowels play little part in such an equation, since the text of Esther was originally written without vowels. The initial vowel of Amestris in Greek (alpha) might lead one to have expected an initial aleph in Hebrew. However, this need not necessarily be the case, based on the way in which some other personal names in Esther were transcribed in the Greek Old Testament, the Septuagint. There Abataza appears for the Hebrew Zethar, and Arkesaios appears for Karshena. The *s* in the middle of Amestris can be equated with the *sh* of Vashti's name in Hebrew, since the Greek alphabet does not have an exact equivalent for this Hebrew consonant.

The difference between the *m* in Amestris and the *w* in Vashti (the first Hebrew letter of this name is a *waw*) can be explained best by going back to Old Persian, from which this queen's name undoubtedly originated. Since Old Persian had no *w*, the initial *waw* in Hebrew implies an original Old Persian *v*. Furthermore, Old Persian had a *v*, but Greek and Hebrew did not. In this case the original Old Persian *v* dissociated into different labial letters in Greek and Hebrew, *m* and *w* respectively, neither of which reflected precisely the consonant from which they stemmed. All three of these letters, *v*, *m*, and *w*, fall into the class of sounds known

as labials, because they are pronounced mainly with the lips. The differences, known as phonetic shifts, reflect the way in which such sounds were pronounced among different languages and dialects. The *r* in Amestris cannot be explained on the basis of such a shift, and it can be seen only as intrusive, probably deriving from a corruption of this name as it was transmitted in Greek. From Vashti in Old Persian, therefore, it is quite easy to go to Washti in Hebrew, and only slightly more difficult to derive from it (A)mvest(r)i(s) in Greek.

Thus the identification of Amestris, mentioned by Herodotus, with the Biblical Vashti offers no insurmountable difficulties on linguistic grounds. The next question, then, is How well does she fit that identification historically?

If Xerxes was also in search of a new chief wife, or queen, at that time, his amorous affairs, which Herodotus describes, may have been more than the usual liaisons. His attention to these women under such circumstances could also explain why Amestris' reaction was so violent. Position rather than affection may have been the issue as far as Amestris was concerned, since the royal harem doubtless provided ample competition for the king's affections.

Upon returning to Susa from his Greek campaign, Xerxes immediately became enmeshed in yet another amorous affair, this time not with Masistes' wife, but with his daughter, Artaynte. This matter came to a crisis when he promised Artaynte the desire of her heart. She chose Xerxes' coat of many colors, which Amestris herself had woven for him (a very unqueenly activity, perhaps designed to court his favor). Xerxes gave her the robe, but Amestris got revenge when the time came to celebrate the king's birthday. On that occasion she, Salomelike, asked Xerxes to give her Masistes' wife, and according to the custom of the day he was obliged to comply with her request. Amestris promptly had her mutilated.

If Amestris is the same person as Vashti, and the verdict on Vashti was that she was "to come no more before" Xerxes (Esther 1:19), then what was Amestris doing at the birthday banquet described by Herodotus? It appears that Xerxes' advisers recom-

William H. Shea, Ph.D., is associate professor of Old Testament at Andrews University Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

mended not divorce in the modern sense of the word, but rather demotion from being the chief royal wife and bestowal of that position upon someone else. Connected with this demotion was the prohibition upon her coming before Xerxes, which probably exiled her to a considerably less important position in the royal harem. To interpret this phrase too literally—to mean that Vashti never could come within eyesight of Xerxes again—probably is pushing its significance too far. As an idiom, it probably could be paraphrased to mean that she could not appear again with Xerxes in her official capacity as queen. The reverse of this occurs in the case of the seven princes who “saw the king’s face” (verse 14), which may be interpreted to mean that they could converse personally with the king, i.e., they could minister to him personally in matters of state.

In essence, Herodotus breaks off his account of Xerxes’ reign after describing these events of the king’s seventh year following his return from the Greek campaign. We are overstating the case when we say that Amestris was Xerxes’ queen between his seventh and twelfth years, since we have no further information about her until the time her son Artaxerxes I occupied the Persian throne. In view of this silence, we have no specific evidence to indicate whether or not Amestris was Xerxes’ chief wife from his seventh year to the end of his reign. This silence at least allows a place in Persian history for Esther, although it does not prove that she occupied it.

We now turn our attention to an examination of the episode in which the book of Esther reaches its climax, the events resulting from the decree that Haman engineered against the Jews. Unfortunately, our written sources are largely silent on the remainder of Xerxes’ reign; therefore the events attributed in Esther 3-9 to his twelfth year lie outside the scope of an investigation of contemporary written documents.

Based on nonwritten materials from Palestine, we find possible clarification for the warfare between Jews and non-Jews that was the aftermath of Haman’s decree. If the fighting “in the king’s provinces” referred to in Esther 9:16 did take place, as we believe, it would be difficult to detect it archeologically in Persia or Babylonia because one would not expect to find a related destruction layer in the larger cities there, and because the scribes who might have written a tablet recording such an event would have been biased against the Hebrews. Thus the chances seem rather slim for any illumination upon this episode from that quarter.

Archeologically speaking, the situation is somewhat different in Palestine. There, in contrast with the larger cities of Persia and Babylonia, smaller towns were located on their respective tells. Although written sources recovered from those tells are more

scarce than those recovered from the great centers of the East, the destruction layers in their strata at times can be correlated with historical events known from written sources.

Of special interest in this connection is the gap in occupation on the summit of Samaria that commenced with the end of Period VIII, the so-called “chocolate-soil layer.” In the British report of the excavations at Samaria, Kathleen Kenyon observed that the date for this gap “cannot be much later than the sixth century B.C.”; but in a more recent work on Palestinian archeology, she refined that date to “probably early in the fifth century.” This date puts the gap well within the range of Xerxes’ reign (486-465 B.C.). However, the occupation of the city did not terminate by means of a destruction; it simply lapsed. Remains after that period are extremely fragmentary until well into the Hellenistic period.

The findings from this period of occupation at Shechem are of a more dramatic and precise nature than at Samaria. Stratum V at Shechem ended with a destruction by fire. The date of this destruction has been derived from fragments of important Greek pottery found in the debris. These fragments of black and red Attic ware lend themselves to a rather precise date for the destruction. According to Nancy Lapp, “The latest example of figured ware, No. 9, dates ca. 480 B.C. Allowing time for its importation into Palestine and consideration for its value, a conservative terminus for the end of Stratum V at Balârah (Shechem) would be the end of the first quarter of the fifth century B.C. or ca. 475 B.C.”

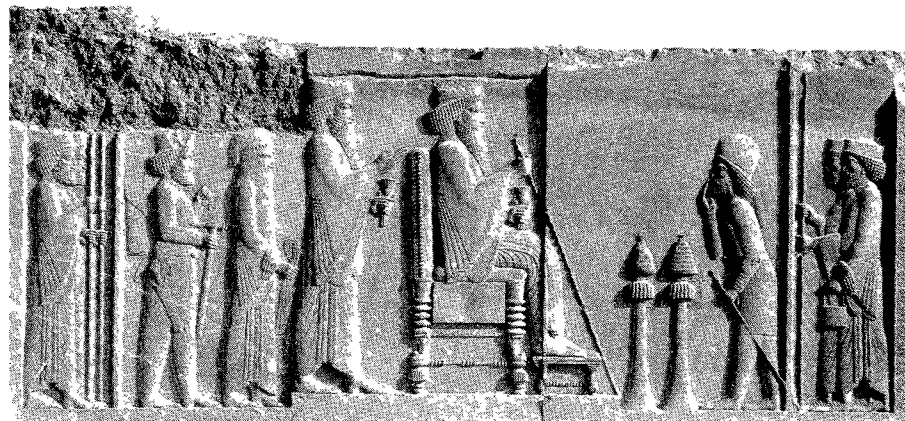
G. E. Wright, director of the renewed excavations at Shechem, was puzzled about the historical significance of this destruction: “That age is a dark one as far as the history of Palestine is concerned, and we simply do not know what hap-

pened.” Esther 9:16 dates the fighting that broke out “in the king’s provinces” to Adar of Xerxes’ twelfth year, which is March, 473 B.C. A reasonable estimate would indicate most of the fighting occurred in areas where the Jews were located. Aside from Egypt and Babylonia, where the exiles resided, from which no records of fighting at this time are known, the single largest concentration of Jews was in Judah. Thus the close proximity of Jews living near Shechem at the time of its destruction around 475 B.C. leads to the hypothesis of a cause-effect relationship here.

Ezra 4:1-5 traces the frictions between the Samaritans and the residents of Judah back to the last half of the sixth century B.C. This provides some plausibility for the idea that these frictions could have erupted in armed clashes in the first half of the fifth century under the aegis of Xerxes’ decrees. In that case, two of the most likely places to look for archeological evidence for such clashes would be in the strata of the two principal cities of the Samaritans. Thus a potentially positive correlation can be proposed between the lapse in occupation early in the fifth century at Samaria, the destruction of Shechem, dated ca. 475 B.C., and the fighting in the Persian Empire, dated early in 473 B.C. by the book of Esther. Likewise, this event described in Esther provides a possible historical explanation for these archeological findings in Palestine that have hitherto gone unexplained.

In summary, we have considered historical matters in the book of Esther: the identification of Vashti, the date when Esther came to court, and archeological evidence from Palestine that may have resulted from fighting involving the Jews as a consequence of Xerxes’ decrees. In each case the details described in the book of Esther have been found compatible with the available extra-Biblical evidences. These correlations do not prove the historical accuracy of the book of Esther, but they certainly point in that direction.

Relief showing Darius I seated, with his son Xerxes (Biblical Ahasuerus) standing behind. From Persepolis (Map XII, E-9). Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago.



You can be Ann Landers too!

Why do people bare their innermost problems to a columnist they don't know, who will print them for all the world to read? When you find out why, you may decide to try your hand at being a columnist too.



Dear Penny, I am a 40-year-old man on a disability pension. I write to a 60-year-old lady who is on Social Security. Somehow she has gotten the idea that we're getting married and plans to come across the United States to meet me. I don't want to marry her, but I don't want to hurt her feelings. Do you have any suggestions?"

"Dear Penny, last week my boyfriend said he loved me, but this week he won't even look at me. I thought love was supposed to last longer than that."

"Dear Penny, one of my girlfriends has started smoking pot really bad. I don't know whether to keep her as a friend or what."

"Dear Penny, I'm 14 and I know all about sex."

I have a unique ministry—writing an advice column in a family-centered weekly magazine. As would be expected, a good part of the mail is from teen-age girls with

boyfriend problems, the type of problems that a mere mother could never understand but that a "dear Penny" in a magazine just might be able to help. A friend and I try to answer them all.

Much of the mail is from sad people, lonely people, hurting people with problems that years of probing the why and how of their lives could not help. Think of the emptiness of life that would allow a 60-year-old woman to cross the country searching for happiness with a man she's never met. Consider the loneliness that led a 40-year-old man to answer a letter in a "friends wanted" section of a magazine. These people need something that only God through His children can give them: a regaining of self-respect and an awareness of their value as children of the King.

A couple of teen-age girls write again and again. Both were neglected children, now being raised by family members who are doing their best to give them a better life than they had before. "Pray for me," Cara writes from New Mexico. "I want to go to California and visit my boyfriend. By the way, my aunt and I have both gone back to school to work for our G.E.D. It's kinda fun."

"Thank you for that book you sent," Darcy writes. "I've started going to church with my grandma. I'm beginning to think that God does care about me."

I've discovered that most of the people who write don't need a social worker or psychiatrist. They don't even need a preacher. They simply need a friend. Alice wrote from a small Eastern town. "I lived with my alcoholic husband for more than ten years and did everything in my power to make our marriage work. I prayed. He was confined to a wheelchair, but he still drank and physically abused both me and my little girl. Finally I left him, and here's the problem. We're in a small town, and everyone thinks it's terrible that I've left a crippled man. They won't let their kids play with my daughter, and she's really hurt by it. What can I do?"

I wrote a common-sense letter giving practical suggestions for finding a job in a new town before moving, suggesting that she might get a friend to help her resettle. I felt inadequate in my advice, having some idea how a mother feels when her child is

hurting and she can't prevent it. And when I began the letter, I wrote, "Dear Friend."

Her reply came a few weeks later. "I've found a good job in a town several miles away," she wrote. "When I opened your letter I sat down and cried because you called me 'friend.' I felt like I didn't have a friend in the world and you called me friend."

Most of the people who write don't really need my advice. They have a fair idea of the best thing to do. But they need a nudge in the right direction. They need reaffirmation that they are God's children, unique, and of infinite value. Those in trouble don't need condemning. They already feel guilty and stupid and ashamed. Take Margaret. "I never drink, only when I'm out with friends," she told me; "maybe once a year." But while visiting a girlfriend several hundred miles away, Margaret drank too much. She passed out on her friend's bed, and sometime during the night her friend's boyfriend raped her. She didn't know it until several weeks later when 16-year-old Margaret realized she was pregnant.

I suggested to Margaret that a lot of Christian couples would be thrilled to give her baby a good home, but she said, "I could never do that." We've been writing for a few months now. By the time you read this, her baby will be here. "I've got to get a job as soon as it comes," she wrote, "so I can pay back my folks for the doctor bills. . . . My mom doesn't much like going out with me now that I'm getting big. I guess she's ashamed of me and I don't blame her."

What can I do? For now, tell her enough about labor and delivery to help take away some of the fears that she mentions. I remind her that God loves her, that both she and her child are precious to Him. Perhaps later I will send her a book on mothering and suggest that she think about the values she wants to teach her little one. But mostly I'm being her friend.

The kids in these deplorable situations aren't bad kids. Not even 14-year-old Lindy, who knows all about sex. Why wouldn't she think she does? The television programs and movies she's been allowed—encouraged—to watch since

Penny Estes Wheeler is a mother, homemaker, author of *The Appearing*, and advice columnist!

before she could read or reason have been pretty good teachers. Advertising reinforces her belief that a good body shown off to its best advantage is what counts in this world. The Lindys of today's culture need a Christian perspective to life and loving. They must discover that a lasting love is based on mutual respect and goals, not outward appearances, and that God is a necessary member of a good marriage.

I was touched by a note from Ida, a woman in her 80s. She was lonely, her grandchildren were grown up, "and it's not the style to have babies these days, so I don't even have great-grandchildren to care for. What can I do all day long?"

I kept her letter a while, thinking and asking people for practical suggestions. Some involved getting out of the house (being a hospital "granny"), while others were things she could do alone (writing a family history). I wonder about her and hope that at least one of the suggestions helped. I hope she has become involved with people again, for when she wrote, Ida had stopped living, spending her days lonely and alone.

I'm not an outgoing person. I'm pretty good with little kids, and I can get choked up watching a little grandma hobble into church on her skinny legs. But I'm not one of those people who "never met a stranger." I wish I were more outgoing, but that's my personality.

Why am I telling you this? Because though I'm not great at meeting people, I can write a column. And if I can, so can you. Right now I'm a reluctant working mother off four kids from preschool to earliteen, and I have a lot more hills to climb before I "know it all." My advice is basically common sense. Now, you have strengths that I don't have, that nobody else has, and you can reach and identify with people that nobody else can.

Have you been married thirty years? Are you still together and happy? Have you and your spouse fought and made up, forgiven and forgotten and are the stronger for it? Then you have a message for today's young couples living in a culture in which divorce

is becoming the norm instead of the exception. You have something to say.

Have you raised a family? Did you spend years going without things that you wanted and even needed so the money would stretch to cover the bare necessities? Have you survived? Then you have a mission all your own for people struggling with today's inflation. You have empathy for them and something to say.

Have you spent days in an intensive-care waiting room, waiting . . . waiting . . . waiting for someone you cherish to live—or die? Have you trudged that long, lonely road of grief? You have a special message for those who wait and grieve.

Joan recalls how she felt at 10 years of age when her father died. "I sat on my front steps all alone," she says. "Friends were bustling around, caring for my mother and giving me quick hugs and saying, 'Oh, you poor little thing.' I wanted to die too. Then Mary came, and I'll never forget her as long as I live. She was the greatest comfort."

"What did Mary do?" someone asked.

"She sat next to me, held my hand, and cried. She cried with me. That's all."

A lot of the world doesn't need sermons or lectures. They don't need advice or flowery platitudes or even Bible verses. All they need is someone to sit with them and weep. Someone who has been through the same valley, who knows their fears and who cares.

I know that many people don't follow my advice. I even smiled when I received an answer from a woman who had written telling me how her boyfriend treated her "like dirt." You can imagine what I told her. This was her reply. "I got your letter, but I've decided that I just can't leave him no matter what he does to me. If I really love him, I'll stay with him."

You can't win 'em all, they say, but you can try. Carole wrote that she plans to be married in a few months, but when her fiancé gets mad he hits her. Hard. Could this be a problem?

What can I say? Again, common-sense advice about problems before marriage

intensifying afterward, but this time I went a step further. I gave Carole's letter to a friend of mine who was a battered wife. At one time Shari did not value herself enough to realize that she didn't deserve being beaten up every week or so. Like many battered women, Shari's lack of self-esteem led her to reason her husband wouldn't do it if she didn't deserve what she was getting. Shari had to learn to like herself, to accept herself, before she could accept God's love. Shari is now a happy Christian, and she has something to tell Carole.

Where do you come in as a minister's wife, a woman with needs and problems of her own? You too are special. You have learned through your problems, your successes, yes, even your failures. You can read Christian-oriented books for statistics to back up the things you've learned from simply living. Perhaps a weekly column in your hometown newspaper would be a good place to start sharing your Christian philosophy with the general public.

A lot of people won't read the minister's column, but few can resist an advice column. You can write up a half-dozen problems and answers, using a variety of ages and situations, and submit them to your local paper. Perhaps they'll run them for a time to see whether there's a response. Eventually you might get paid enough to cover your paper and stamps if you choose to answer personally. And you will reach people who would never come into your church, people that no other Christian is speaking to.

In Matthew 25 when Christ told the story of the last judgment, the saved ask the King, "When did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee?" And the King answered them, "'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'" (verses 37-40, R.S.V.).*

* From the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1946, 1952 © 1971, 1973.

Prayers from the parsonage

"And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey" (Matt. 25:15).

I seemed to be looking through a stranger's possessions as I sorted my piano music today. Had I once actually performed these pieces? The titles were familiar, but not one strain of melody came

back to me.

You know I didn't bury this talent, Lord. I've played piano for children's departments in the church since I was a child myself. I used to accompany soloists and occasionally played for a church service or evangelistic meeting.

But for years we've served churches with excellent musicians whom I could never equal. I've filled other needs and developed other talents. Music, in which I'd invested much money and time, ceased to be a "number one" priority. I discovered more natural gifts and relegated piano "to

the exchangers" (verse 27).

"Then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury" (verse 27).

True, Lord. Here is the increase I bring: A base of knowledge on which other musical skills have been built.

A willingness to play when I am needed (if I can practice first)!

Joy in playing for my family.

Appreciation for good music.

Improving some talents takes so much effort that I must weigh their ultimate use and worth.

I hope You understand.

Cherry B. Habenicht



Is Martha Smith parking on Deacon White's dime?

Have you ever parked at a meter with time left on it? The person before you had put some coins into the meter and left. You found the vacant space and got to park *free* on somebody else's dime!

Every church has people who "park on somebody else's dime" (you can probably think right now of several in your congregation). They enjoy the privileges, and benefits, and the fellowship, but don't support the church according to their

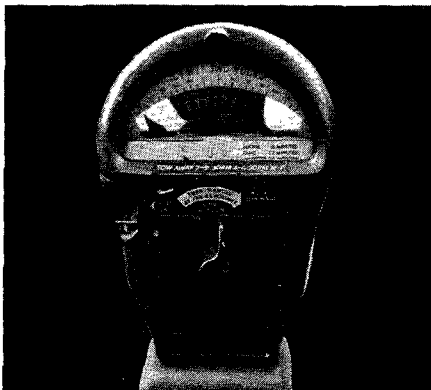
proportionate ability. Parking on "somebody else's dime" at a parking meter is all right; parking on somebody else's support to the church is not.

Responsible Christians follow Biblical principles in providing for their church. But some church members are still learning—they need help from you.

The publishers of **MINISTRY** would like to share with you some Christian stewardship resources (brochures, pamphlets, bulletin

inserts, et cetera) that have proven helpful in Seventh-day Adventist congregations. We've put several of these in a sample packet that can be yours for only \$1.00. After examining the samples, you may want to order quantities of some for use in your church, or you may want to adapt the samples to meet the needs of your congregation.

What will the Martha Smiths in your congregation do when the dimes run out?



MINISTRY Services

Box 217
Burtonsville, Maryland 20866

☐ Yes, send me the sample packet of stewardship material. I enclose \$1.00.

Name _____

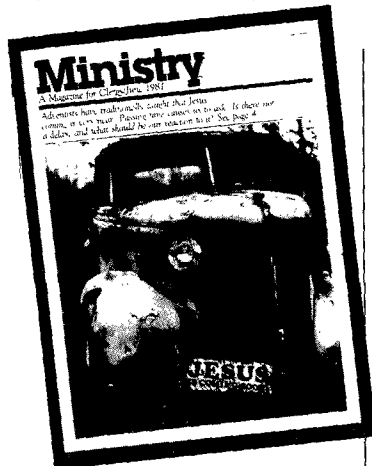
Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

(Offer good only in the United States and Canada; expires December 31, 1982.)

Shop talk

Here's a smorgasbord of information, publications and announcements to help you in your ministry. And (to toot our own horn) "Ministry" wins the Associated Church Press award for black-and-white covers.



"Ministry" cover wins top award

For the second year in a row, MINISTRY took the top award in the black-and-white cover category at the Associated Church Press Convention held April 26-29 at Minneapolis.

The judges selected MINISTRY's June, 1981, cover, photographed by Vernon C. Tooley III, for the Award of Merit, citing the "curious impression" made on the viewer. The winning cover depicts an abandoned, rusting 1930s-era automobile on which a weathered bumper sticker proclaims, "Jesus Is Coming Soon!" The article inside explores why human history has lingered longer than many Christians anticipated it would.

The annual contest is open to all of the approximately 125 magazines belonging to the Associated Church Press.

Computer software

The Church Record System (CRS) is a system of computer programs designed to aid the pastor of a church in keeping church membership records and mailing lists (this is the system referred to in the June, 1982, MINISTRY letters column).

Written for the TRS-80 Model III microcomputer,

CRS is easy to use, even with no prior computer experience. Names and addresses of up to 1,400 members can be stored, along with dates of birth and baptism, church offices held, Sabbath school department attended, head-of-household status, and more. Also, the file of members may be utilized according to any desired category—mailing labels (sorted in order of ZIP code) for all the members who have been designated heads-of-household; or an alphabetical list of all the professionals in the church; et cetera.

Cost for the Church Record System is \$199. For more information or to order, write or call: John Ratzlaff, Mount Pisgah Academy, Candler, North Carolina 28715. Phone: (704) 667-1290.

Sermons by Venden

Printed sermons by Morris L. Venden, currently pastor of the College View Seventh-day Adventist church in Lincoln, Nebraska, are now available. Pastor Venden has traveled worldwide as a guest speaker and has authored several books, and his sermons have been circulated on cassette tapes for some time.

Available series include Obedience by Faith; Marriage and Family; Witnessing; et cetera. Each series contains six sermons and sells for \$5.00. You may order, or request a catalog, by writing to Voice of Faith, Box 6143, Lincoln, Nebraska 68506. Most of these sermons are intended for a general Christian audience. Those of a doctrinal nature are clearly indicated.

Stewardship resource

Planning sermons on stewardship may not be difficult, but finding true-to-life stories

to illustrate stewardship principles may be almost impossible. *Principles to Live By*, by Mel Rees, is filled with just those kinds of stories. This 95-page paperback contains thirteen chapters on various Christian stewardship topics—all solidly based on Biblical principles and containing fascinating illustrations.

Chapter titles include: "Rules vs. Principles," "Steward or Slave," "Fringe Areas," "I Work for God," and "Accidents and/or Mistakes." To obtain your copy, send \$3.00 (postage included) to MINISTRY Services, P.O. Box 217, Burtonsville, MD 20866. (For other stewardship resources, see ad on page 30.)

Training center for the deaf

Have you ever stopped to think what it would be like to be deaf? Most of us probably haven't. After all, we can hear. But the world of the deaf is a silent world—no voices, no music, no laughter or chatter of happy children, no song of wind in the treetops or rustling of leaves.

Often 12 to 15 years of specialized training are required to provide a deaf child with eight grades of education. Why? Because the deaf are not intelligent. No. The problem is reaching the mind of one who cannot hear.

The Christian Training Center for the Deaf is a non-profit organization established to provide opportunities for the deaf to obtain a practical education in a Christ-centered environment. Its goal is to train the head, the hand, and the heart. Located on 260 acres, the center offers instruction in Bible, basic educational subjects, agriculture, and industrial skills. The classroom and actual work

experience are combined.

Tuition and boarding costs are minimal, and students of any race, color, or ethnic origin are welcome. For more information write: The Christian Training Center for the Deaf, Rt. 1., Box 270, Alpena, Arkansas 72611.

Your opinion counts

Rather than simply trying to "hand down" a program, the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists is asking more than 400 randomly selected ministers to "hand up" a program of their own choosing. These choices will help to guide the curriculum development of the new Andrews University Center of Continuing Education for Ministry (see MINISTRY, January, 1982, pp. 22, 23).

The new center is following the concept of service and support to those in ministry as does its parent organization, the Institute of Church Growth.

An accurate picture of ministers' needs and desires cannot be accurately reflected without a high return of the questionnaires. If you have received one of these surveys, please take advantage of the opportunity to express your views and return it promptly.

You can help

Are you receiving more than one copy of MINISTRY each month? If so, would you take just a moment to let us know? Drastically increased postage costs have caused us to look carefully at such duplication.

Just send the address label of the copy you want dropped to: MINISTRY, 6840 Eastern Ave., NW., Washington, D.C. 20012. Mark it "Duplicate copy; please delete." We'll do the rest—and save postage.

Recommended reading

A distinguished Dutch scholar questions traditional Vatican views on ministry, and the Lutherans report on a survey identifying growth factors for clergy. Plus "Jubilate!" the new book on evangelical church music.

Ministry: Leadership in the Community of Jesus Christ

Edward Schillebeeckx, Crossroad Publishing Company, 1981, 160 pages, \$12.95. Reviewed by Raoul Dederen, professor of historical theology, Andrews University.

Any new book by Professor Schillebeeckx is an event, and *Ministry* is no exception. It seems to be the kind of book the Catholic hierarchy had in mind when it warned theologians not to expose people to the results of speculative and historical studies. Here again, indeed, the distinguished Dutch scholar is questioning traditional Vatican views.

Distressed by the shortage of priests, Schillebeeckx argues for a better understanding of priesthood and ministry in the light of his church's tradition and contemporary pastoral needs.

Beginning with the New Testament, the author attempts to establish just what that tradition has been. This historical study of ministry is an attempt to discover which elements of ministry are variable and which are essential by virtue of having remained constant during changes.

He finds that the New Testament and the early church ministry was primarily leadership in the community. Gradually, however, especially after the Lateran councils of the twelfth century, the emphasis on leadership and service yielded to the notion of the sacral nature of the priesthood. Whether or not appointed to a particular community, the priest came to be considered as the one who conferred sacraments on the people, presiding over the celebration of the eucharist and hearing confessions. The Council of Trent, affirms Schillebeeckx, gave this medieval change great emphasis, along with the Second Vatican Council of more recent fame.

Such divergences are not called upon to show that either a council or a period—even New Testament times—was right or wrong. They merely indicate that the structure of the ministry is not an unchangeable doctrine, and that the constant elements alone are of importance. He recognizes two of these. On the one hand, no genuine celebration of the eucharist exists apart from the Christian community; and on the other, no local Christian community can deem itself to be the autonomous source of its own ministries, without reference to the church universal.

Having looked carefully at the historical evidence, Schillebeeckx moves from his survey of the Catholic tradition to an analysis of the current pastoral problems and experiments, touching on a number of highly charged issues, such as the institution of priestly celibacy and the exclusion of women from the ordained priesthood.

The author has already attracted worldwide attention—and a Vatican investigation—for his views on Jesus. Many readers will find some of his conclusions on ministry unpalatable. Yet this book will certainly make all Christian readers—not just Roman Catholics—think seriously about ministry. It will help them to see its development through history, and move them to be more open to the possibility of different forms of ministry in the future.

Growth in Ministry

Thomas E. Kadel, ed., Fortress Press, 1980, 180 pages, \$5.95, paper. Reviewed by Rex D. Edwards, director of MINISTRY field services.

Under the auspices of the Growth in Ministry Project, involving three major Lutheran bodies in North America, a comprehensive plan was undertaken to determine the kind of growth that clergy were experiencing and to identify specific factors that either encouraged or inhibited growth. Nearly four thousand persons from four hundred randomly selected congregations participated in the project's survey. This book addresses a number of significant issues that surfaced. Among them, discussed by eleven persons of diverse experience and varying viewpoints, are: roles in pastoring, shared ministry, conflicts and satisfactions, images of ministry, continuing education, and the pastor's family. In this forward-looking resource book, clergy, congregations, committees, and administrators of all traditions will discover a new sense of direction for growth in their shared ministry.

Jubilate! Church Music in the Evangelical Tradition

Donald P. Hustad, Hope Publishing Company, 1981, \$14.95. Reviewed by Harold B. Hannum, emeritus professor of music, Loma Linda University.

This timely book covers an enormous amount of territory—from a philosophy of church music in the evangelical tradition to present-day electronic influences in the church. Dr. Hustad's basic approach is that

church music is a functional art. He discusses the history of church music, briefly surveying worship music from early times to the present. Some of the topics covered are: Music Languages: Communication and Conflict; Authority and Leadership in Evangelical Church Music; The Drama of Worship for Contemporary Evangelicals; Music in Evangelism and Fellowship; Music in Weddings, Funerals, and Baptisms; Music in Foreign Missions; Evangelicals and Congregational Singing; Evangelicals and Instrumental Music; Evangelicals and Music for Choirs; and Evangelicals and Music for Soloists and Small Ensembles.

Dr. Hustad has produced a volume that is characterized by common sense, good judgment, and a sympathetic understanding of the problems evangelicals face. It is evident that he believes in high standards. His emphasis upon congregational singing and participation is needed to stem the trend toward spectatorship.

MINISTRY does not have the facilities to sell or order these books for readers. If you wish to obtain a book reviewed here, please order through any bookstore.

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