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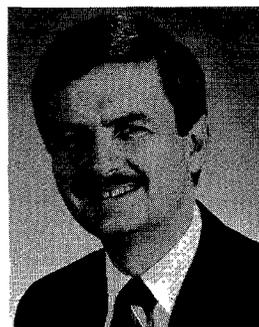
Ministry

Preach
Edition

International Journal for Clergy

March 1989

What is the New Age movement?



KENNETH R. WADE/4

Managing ministerial stress—MICHAEL G. MCBRIDE/8

Should we use professional fund-raisers?—MEL REES/12

Does Genesis 2 contradict Genesis 1?—
PAUL HOU KANG LUO/15

Making friends in your own church—LAURIE S. HERR/16

Of making books there is no end—MARCIA K. HORNOK/18

Challenges of the AIDS epidemic—HARVEY A. ELDER,
JOYCE W. HOPP, JOHN E. LEWIS/23

Editorials:

The return of Elijah
J. Robert Spangler/20

Is competition a moral issue?
J. David Newman/21

Departments:

Letters/2
Editorials/20
Pastor's Pastor/22
Health and Religion/23
Biblio File/28
Shop Talk/31

Right on target

The article by Hal Gates, "Alcoholism: What Pastors Can Do" (November 1988) was tremendous, timely, and right on target. I found considerable validation of my own training and experience. —Donald E. Jones, D.P.A., Gulf Breeze, Florida.

The church must teach

How do Christian teenagers fall into this terrible predicament ("The Christian Teenager and the Shotgun Wedding," November 1988)? Has the church failed to take a stand against sexual immorality, to teach the young people, and to set the proper example? We must stop treating symptoms and do something about this situation. —Mary C. Woodard, Port Hueneme, California.

Church leaders ought to take action

I wish to congratulate James Londis for his article "Where There's Smoke There Should Be Ire" (November 1988). I felt his article was one of the best ever written regarding our responsibility as Christians and Christian leaders. I believe that every church leader should receive a copy of this, prayerfully consider what Londis says, and take action. —John Beausoleil, pastor, St. Thomas Seventh-day Adventist Church, St. Thomas, Ontario, Canada.

Pay hike

One question should be asked in connection with the ministers' need for higher salaries ("Taskforce Recommends Pay Hike," November 1988). How will their higher salaries compare with the income of the people who pay the tithe that supports them? —Ralph Neall, Lincoln, Nebraska.

■ Your article on the task force studying remuneration is to be commended. These issues ought to be a matter of public record, for the wider the audi-

ence discussing them, the more sensible the policy that will result.

However, it seemed to me that much of the force of raising the question about the church wage scale was diminished by the way you ended the article. Citing your own case, you described a time when you and your wife apparently lived at or below the poverty level in Scotland. You survived because someone gave you an "electric central heating system," the "Lord provided a car" (does that mean someone else gave it to you?), and you were allowed to use your bus allowance to gas the car.

You use these incidents to illustrate that God will provide if we work where God places us, that God will supply "all [our] needs," that, like Paul, we need to be "content in any and every situation."

We can't have it both ways. When funds are in short supply because of war or economic disaster, or—as in Paul's case—because of political opposition and persecution, the preacher will not stop preaching. Like Paul, pastors may have to work to support themselves (and their families), but in their spare time the proclamation of the gospel will get their full energies.

In a time of relative abundance, however, it demeans the ministry to ask pastors to depend for their sustenance on the gratuities handed out by members. The ministry is a calling *and* profession. Leaders of congregations are *expected* to dress professionally, be educated at a professional level, pay their bills on time, and maintain a standard of living that does not embarrass the community. To the extent that is the case, a wage that allows pastors to do their work relatively free of undue financial stress is a necessity. —James J. Londis, president, Washington Institute of Contemporary Issues, Silver Spring, Maryland.

■ I am wondering if the commission considered parsonages. Since the cost of

housing is largely what necessitates the pay raise, it seems that if we could find an inexpensive way to provide housing, we could save money, expand the ministerial field force, and maintain our efforts to win people to Christ and His last-day message.

Here are my suggestions: (1) Since the problem is more prevalent in larger cities than small towns, the construction of parsonages should begin in the large cities. (2) In those cities where schools are located, perhaps some of the land could be used for worker housing, thus saving the expense of land purchase. (3) To reduce the cost of construction, a committee could devise two or three house plans that a housing manufacturing company could produce. (4) To recoup the costs of these houses, the conferences could charge the worker a reasonable rent, based more on the cost of the construction than the price of similar housing in the area in which the worker is living.

One of the main arguments against parsonages is that those who live in them during their working lives do not accumulate the equity they will need for housing when they retire. To solve that problem, the church could set up trust funds for those workers living in the parsonages. A fund of \$100.00 a month would more than cover the equity that most purchasers are able to enjoy from their home purchases, particularly during these times of low inflation. And that would amount to a lot less than what the conference would have to provide in Washington, D.C., where housing may cost \$1,200 per month.

For those who do not like the parsonage they live in, the advice at the close of the article is very appropriate: Let us learn to be "content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:12, NIV). —Pastor Robert L. Fuller, Arcadia, Florida.

If you're receiving MINISTRY bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928, MINISTRY has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers, but 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. We want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help to 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. Requests should be on church letterhead.

Just where are the roots of the New Age movement? Its mantras, belief in reincarnation, and links with the sixties tempt one to guess that Hinduism and/or Buddhism provided the ground from which this movement of the eighties grew. But while noting that these religions have had their influence on it, Kenneth R. Wade in his article in this issue of *Ministry* points out that Pierre Teilhard de Chardin laid down the rationale that made New Age thought palatable to Western minds.

Ministry editor Wade, who has just had a book on the New Age movement published, will conclude the two-part series in our May issue by suggesting how you can reach out to those whose spiritual consciousnesses have been stirred by this movement.

This issue itself sees the conclusion of another series. Having laid out the problems ministerial stress causes, Michael G. McBride now offers practical suggestions you can use to manage the stress you face.

Other articles in this issue deal with problems in the areas of practices, health, biblical studies, and the social life of the minister's family.

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God bless your ministry in this productive season of the church year.



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What is the New Age movement?

Kenneth R. Wade

Hope for a better tomorrow is coming from many directions today. Is it a conspiracy? Or is it just wishful thinking?



*Kenneth R. Wade is an assistant editor of Ministry. His book *Secrets of the New Age* has just been published by Review and Herald.*

It was February 1971 and Edgar Mitchell was standing on the moon.

Suddenly a light flashed on in his mind, and as he described it, "the presence of divinity became almost palpable and I *knew* that life in the universe was not just an accident based on random processes."¹

This knowledge, the astronaut wrote, did not come to him through analytical or logical thought, but "noetically," through "experiential cognition." When he returned to earth, Mitchell doffed his space suit, donned the philosopher's robe, and set out to share with the world the enlightenment he had gained in space.

He founded the Institute of Noetic Sciences to support research into, among other things, the nature of knowing, and ways to help humans reach their full potential through cooperation and development of the powers of the mind. In the process of trying to sort out just how the human psyche works, he consulted the mystical sages of the East along with the computer doyens of the West. Now 18 years later he is still seeking to sort out the full meaning of that experience on the moon.

Mitchell's great leap from exploring the vastness of outer space to probing the inner reaches of the mind in search of answers about why we are here, what we should be doing, and how we can best profit from the powers in our hands is typical of a shift of human thinking that was taking place in the moonwalk era. We see the fruits of that shift in the New

Age movement today.

Just a year before Mitchell's noetic experience, Charles A. Reich, in a book that hit the top of the best-seller lists, had called Americans' attention to the fact that a revolution was taking place in our world. "It is now spreading with amazing rapidity, and already our laws, institutions, and social structure are changing in consequence. It promises a higher reason, a more human community, and a new and liberated individual. Its ultimate creation will be a new and enduring wholeness and beauty—a renewed relationship of man to himself, to other men, to society, to nature, and to the land."²

Reich was right. Things were changing in America and in much of the world in the late sixties and early seventies.

We had reached the moon. Science and technology had triumphed. But the shell of success we had built had a hollow core.

Mitchell sensed its emptiness even on the moon. After marveling at the beauty of Earth, the blue and white gem on his horizon, and its ideal adaptation to supporting life, he said, "My wonderment gradually turned into something close to anguish. Because I realized that at the very moment when I was so privileged to view the planet from 240,000 miles in space, people on Earth were fighting wars; committing murder and other crimes; lying, cheating, and struggling for power and status; abusing the environment by polluting the water and air, wasting natural resources, and ravaging the land, acting out of lust and greed; and hurting others through intolerance, bigotry, prejudice, and all the things that

add up to man's inhumanity to man." ³

While Mitchell's response was to found an institute to explore human potential for making a better world, the youth of the sixties and seventies responded by forming a counterculture that rejected the values they believed had led to earth's problems. They went in search of mystical experiences that could give meaning to the spiritual side of their nature.

These two responses to the emptiness of life in Western society represent two separate yet intertwined strands of the New Age movement that we see today. I call these the intellectual strand and the mystically-oriented strand.

The big picture

The New Age movement as most people perceive it today is perhaps more a product of the media than of its own roots. Because those who report the news today are always looking for the sensational, it is the spectacular elements of the movement that have caught attention and become identified as the movement itself.

While the movement does have roots deep in the occult, and while spectacular phenomena such as channeling, UFO contacts, and astrology do play a major role in the hopes of a majority of the New Age faithful, concentrating exclusively on these aspects brings chiefly the mystically-oriented part of the movement into view.

In order to see the bigger picture, let's look first at some of the intellectual roots of the movement.

At the core of the intellectual branch of the movement is a sense that our own understanding of ourselves is leading to a transformation in which we are becoming aware, for the first time in history, of ways that we can take charge of our own development.

"For the first time in history, humankind has come upon the control panel of change—an understanding of how transformation occurs. We are living in the *change of change*, the time in which we can intentionally align ourselves with nature for rapid remaking of ourselves and our collapsing institutions," wrote Marilyn Ferguson in *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, a book that did much in the early eighties to make people aware of the developing New Age movement. ⁴

Theodore Roszak, a historian of modern culture who has been closely associated with the movement, posits that we

can even go so far as to take charge of our own evolution to bring about a better future: "We undergo the development we envision for ourselves; we get the evolution we deserve. If we continue to see evolution as an empty game of chance in which will and aspiration play no part, then we doom our own higher development. We will, in effect, have *willed* ourselves into impotent drift and stagnation. If we recognize evolution as the unfoldment of visionary energies, then we will have liberated those energies as an evolutionary force, and not only within our own lives, but within the history of our species as a whole." ⁵

George Leonard, another prominent New Age intellectual, writes that "the anticipatory sense of the coming of a new age is shared by soothsayers, astrologers, and others of a visionary turn of mind. At the same time, social observers of various persuasions have examined the possibility of a forthcoming overturn in the way society in the industrial nations is organized."

After pointing out that expectation of imminent change for the better is ubiquitous in human history, he goes on to argue that now is the time when such change can come about: "It is my thesis, however, that the current period is indeed unique in history and that it represents the beginning of the most thoroughgoing change in the quality of human existence since the creation of an agricultural surplus brought about the birth of civilized states some five thousand years ago." ⁶

People like Mitchell, Ferguson, Roszak, and Leonard peg their hopes for a brighter tomorrow on the potential that resides within human beings to harness themselves and nature to the task of overcoming the world's problems. "Rich as we are—together—we can do anything. We have it within our power to make peace within our torn selves and with each other, to heal our homeland, the whole earth," Ferguson opines. ⁷

Intellect and the spirit realm

Those who seek to bring in the New Age through intellectual pursuits cannot ignore the mystical side of the movement, though, because many people's hope for the New Age is based at least in part on sources of information such as astrology and channeling.

Definitions of channeling abound. One of the best comes from John Klimo, author of the 1987 book *Channeling*. He

The spectacular elements of the movement have caught attention and become identified as the movement itself.

describes it this way: "Channeling is the communication of information to or through a physically embodied human being from a source that is said to exist on some other level or dimension of reality than the physical as we know it, and that is not from the normal mind (or self) of the channel." ⁸

The channeling phenomenon typically involves a person (channel) going into a trance and allowing his or her vocal cords to be taken over by a spirit entity who proceeds to philosophize about the meaning of life, answer questions, and in general wow listeners with its erudition.

Douglas James Mahr describes what happens to J. Z. Knight, one of the most popular New Age channels, when she begins to channel an entity that calls itself Ramtha: "When Ramtha begins his appearance in the embodiment of J. Z. Knight, a completely different sensation from that of J.Z.'s embodiment is felt. The body of J. Z. Knight is still present, but a totally different personality emerges—her body seems larger and stronger, bursting at the seams; the softness of J.Z.'s mannerisms and facial expressions are replaced by those of a man; body postures and gestures are surging with power; his concentration becomes an intensity, the voice is that of another knowingness." ⁹

Of course, to a Bible student the channeling phenomenon bespeaks contact with demons. It immediately calls up pictures of Lucifer speaking through the serpent in Eden. It evokes images of the "consulter with familiar spirits" condemned in Deuteronomy 18:11. And it reminds us that when Jesus walked on earth He recognized the discarnate spirits who took over others' vocal cords as demonic.

In 1987 I attended a "Greater Self" conference sponsored by Edgar Mitch-

ell's Institute for Noetic Science. In an interview with Mitchell, I probed his understanding of what is necessary for the development of a better world.

Because the conference schedule included a presentation on channeling, I had anticipated that Mitchell must believe that guidance into the New Age must come from nonhuman spirits. But in the course of our conversation I learned that his view of the universe is essentially atheistic. That the presence of divinity he sensed on the moon was something quite different from what I think of as divinity. He indicated to me that he sees our present period of turmoil as a symptom that the universe is trying to reorganize itself from the disordered state that began before World War II, and said that he believes that we may reach a higher level of order early in the twenty-first century.

In this reorganization scheme Mitchell does not see any need for a God or a supernatural power as religions have typically pictured Deity. The universe is capable of reorganizing itself on its own if human beings will just cooperate to the extent of not destroying the environment that gives them life.

But that left me puzzled about something else. "Why then the interest in channeling?" I asked him. Didn't he see this as communication with supernatural spirits?

No, he did not, he said. He believes that channels and psychics are simply people who have a highly developed ability to receive information from what Rupert Sheldrake has called a morphogenetic field—a field of knowledge that takes in all of human experience and wisdom and is available to everyone who learns to tune in to it. (Carl Jung referred to something similar under the term *collective unconscious*; Pierre Teilhard de Chardin called it the *noosphere*.)

Actually Mitchell, in his attempt to explain channeling from a purely rationalistic standpoint, seems to be almost alone among New Age believers. Most would accept the channeled entities as supernatural in some sense.

Teilhardian spirits

Foundational to the New Age understanding of spirit entities and channeling is the thought of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Teilhard, a Jesuit who spent much of his life in China, was forbidden by Roman Catholic authorities to publish his writings because of their unbiblical con-

tent. But after his death in 1955 friends saw to it that several of his books were rushed into print.

Marilyn Ferguson reports that in a survey of New Age-oriented people "Teilhard was the individual most often named as a profound influence" on the lives of respondents.¹⁰

Teilhard's philosophy makes room for channeling because he saw the human spirit as the product of a continual evolution of spirits that has been going on since eternity past. Based on Teilhard's view, it is easy to assume that other spirits may have been evolving on other levels, and may be interested in communicating with us on the spirit level.

Understanding this is essential to understanding the New Age movement. Most people think that the roots of the movement are found in Hinduism or Buddhism because reincarnation is one of the most prominent beliefs attributed to it. (Actually, only 57 percent of the respondents to Ferguson's survey affirmed belief in reincarnation, but 76 percent believed in a "consciousness that survives bodily death.")¹¹

In reality neither the Hindu teaching about transmigration of the soul nor the Buddhist belief in reincarnation appeals to people raised with a Western ideology. Hinduism teaches that souls transmigrate to various physical forms until they finally achieve union with Brahman and are absorbed as a raindrop in the ocean, losing all individuality. Buddhism teaches that the goal of the spirit's many incarnations is to achieve nirvana—a blowing out of the spirit flame—which frees the spirit from having to suffer through any future incarnations.

The Western ideology of progress is frustrated by either of these journeys to nothingness. The centrality of Teilhard to the movement stems from his supplying a philosophy that translates reincarnation into a form more palatable to Western minds.

Armed with a Teilhardian under-

standing of progressive incarnations, New Age believers have by and large come to accept channeling as a given. After all, if there are progressive spirits currently incarnated on our level, there must be others who have moved on to higher levels. And certainly this is an adequate explanation for the phenomenon of channeling.

Spirit smorgasbord

It is hardly surprising, then, that the modern phenomenon of channeling, with its spirit entities conforming to the Teilhardian theory of evolution, burst into full flower within a few years after Teilhard's books were published.

The first of these channels to achieve prominence was Jane Roberts, whose books were based on messages spoken through her mouth by an entity who called himself Seth. Seth's main message to the world, reiterated again and again throughout the hundreds of pages of Seth books, is that life and death are mere illusions we create out of our own minds. He wants us to believe that our spirits survive death and may come back to live on earth again in a different body, or may move on to a higher plane of existence such as he has achieved.

He wants us to recognize that "reality" is not what we think it is, but rather that we, by the powers of our own minds, create the very world in which we live, including the inanimate objects we see.

In other words, he wants us to believe exactly what the serpent told Eve in Eden: You shall not surely die; rather you'll be a god capable of creating your own world.

Seth is not alone in serving up this tasty morsel that allures the human ego with its promises of omnipotence and irrevocable eternal life. The channels proclaiming essentially this message are multitude and multiplying.

While Seth had little or nothing to say specifically about the imminent New Age, the years (1963-1984) during which Roberts channeled his messages witnessed the emergence of other channels to proclaim the era's approach. Based on some of these channeled entities' messages, groups of people all over the world began to anticipate that the present order would come to an end and the New Age be established at the end of 1967. In Denmark one group followed channeled instructions to build a lead-lined bomb shelter to protect them during the "nuclear evolution" event that



To obtain Kenneth R. Wade's book *Secrets of the New Age* send US\$3.95 (includes postage) to "Secrets" c/o Ministry Services, P.O. Box 425, Fulton, MD 20759. Make checks payable to *Ministry*. The book is ideal for sharing with Christians as well as with people involved in the New Age movement.

would mark the transition.

One of the most prominent groups to accept the 1967 transition message was a New Age community located on Findhorn Bay in northern Scotland. Findhorn was central in the development of the New Age movement in the British Isles, and through the influence of activists who studied there has influenced the movement around the world.

Limitless Love and Truth, the entity who had promised the 1967 transition, was channeled at Findhorn in 1970 by the American psychic David Spangler. His messages yielded a book titled *Revelation: The Birth of a New Age*, which was originally published on Findhorn's printing press.

Another prominent proponent of New Age promises is Ruth Montgomery, a Washington, D. C.-based political columnist who became involved with psychic phenomena under the tutelage of the spirit medium Arthur Ford. Ford had for years wowed audiences, including Episcopal Bishop James Pike, by going into a trance and making contact with spirits who claimed to be deceased friends and relatives. In 1962 he encouraged Montgomery to try automatic writing. After she had, for several days, spent 15 minutes each morning in meditation, a powerful force seized her hand and the pencil it held and began to trace circles and figure eights on a piece of paper. A few days later words began to come from the pencil, signed with her father's name. Later she was instructed to sit at a typewriter, and then the words from various entities came in a flood.

Montgomery's messages from beyond include the usual promises of immortality and godhood for all, but also promise that the earth will shift on its axis some time before the year 2000. Beings in flying saucers will rescue some enlightened people from the resultant catastrophes, educate them, and finally place them back on earth to begin the New Age after the environment settles down. (Those who are not rescued will simply have their next incarnation elsewhere.)

The intriguing thing about the multitude of channeled entities who are promising an imminent New Age is that although they all agree with the basic idea that human beings are really immortal gods, they can't agree on much else—especially on just how the New Age will be ushered in. Some see it as coming about only after catastrophes, while others steadfastly deny that any catastrophes

must come. Still others proclaim that, since we create our own reality, how the New Age comes just depends on what we believe will happen. If we expect catastrophes, we'll get them. If we expect a peaceful transition, we'll get that.

Astrology

Astrology plays a prominent role in many people's expectations of the New Age. Most significant here is the "fact" that earth is currently going through a transition that occurs only once every 2,160 years. In the words of the songwriter, this is the dawning of the age of Aquarius.

According to astrologers, we are moving from the Piscean age into the Aquarian age. The Piscean age began just before the birth of Christ and is symbolized by a fish, the early Christian symbol for Christ. Some astrologers hope that the Aquarian age will be an age of more peace and harmony because Christianity will have less of an influence.

The transition to the Aquarian age will not be complete until about 2062, but according to one astrologer the transition period began in 1846. The first phase of the transition concluded in 1918 with the rise of the Soviet Union and increase in power of the United States. The second phase will end next year, and the world will have become entirely Aquarian in nature by 2062.¹²

Although it is not directly related to traditional astrology, there is a related body of belief that expects the New Age to dawn in 2012. This is founded on Jose Arguelles' interpretation of an ancient Mayan calendar. His interpretation led thousands of people to gather for a "harmonic convergence" at "power points" around the world to hum the Hindu creation-word *Aum* together on August 16, 1987.

Anti-Christ

All in all, the New Age movement includes under its heading beliefs as diverse as those held by all of the rest of the world's religions put together. And the current popular representation of it has been strongly shaped by the media's focus on the extraordinary, not to mention the potent pressures exerted by commercialism—it seems like everybody is out to make a buck off the term *New Age*.

But the underlying root of it all is mankind's rebellion against God and his desire to have immortality and omnipotence apart from God.

The New Age movement really started in Eden. The lies on which hope for a better tomorrow independent of God is based have not changed since Eve listened to the first channel.

Every aspect of this movement, from the most rationalistic hope founded on the latent powers of the human psyche to the most blatantly channel-based belief in rescue by flying saucers, is rooted in rebellion against and independence from God.

Some Christians have pointed to the movement as the antichrist power. In one sense it is anti-Christ because its philosophy replaces Christ with another savior—mankind itself. But as to its being an organized conspiracy like the Nazis, to which the movement is so often compared, the diversity and petty differences between the various factions of the movement have convinced me that a workable conspiracy is not present now, and could not be easily developed within the movement we see today.

And there is even a sense in which the movement is not all bad. It has served to awaken people to their spiritual needs. And to bring spirituality out of the closet—to allow people in our technocratic society to admit that they are on a spiritual journey in quest of something beyond the material world.

How can a Christian minister today capitalize on this spiritual awakening? How can we reach out to people who have been stirred to search for spiritual things, even if they have begun searching down the New Age's perilous paths? Stay tuned—that's the topic of the concluding article in this two-part series, which will appear in the May issue. ■

¹ Edgar D. Mitchell, *Psychic Exploration* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1974), p. 29.

² Charles A. Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), p. 2.

³ Mitchell, pp. 29, 30.

⁴ Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1980), p. 29.

⁵ Theodore Roszak, *Unfinished Animal* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 150, 151.

⁶ George B. Leonard, *The Transformation* (New York: Delacorte, 1972), pp. 1, 2.

⁷ Ferguson, p. 406.

⁸ Jon Klimo, *Channeling* (Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., 1987), p. 2.

⁹ Ramtha with Douglas James Mahr, *Voyage to the New World* (New York: Fawcett, 1985), p. 17.

¹⁰ Ferguson, p. 50.

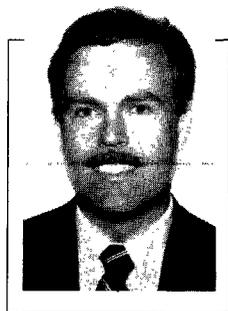
¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 434.

¹² Dane Rudhyar, *The Astrology of America's Destiny* (New York: Random House, 1974), pp. 204, 205.

Managing ministerial stress

Michael G. McBride

While you can't eliminate stress, by using these strategies you can manage it and control its effects. Concluding article in a three-part series.



Michael G. McBride, Ph.D., who himself has served in the ministry, is a family mental health counselor in Sequim, Washington.

Every pastor experiences the pain of vocational stress during his or her ministry. The nature of the calling and the position the pastor occupies between parishioners and prelates make it unavoidable. But while no simple, clear-cut solutions exist, nevertheless, by implementing the following psychological and spiritual strategies pastors can reduce stress-related problems.

Negotiate with role senders

One key strategy for minimizing vocational stress is negotiation with role senders. A pastor can implement this strategy at any time in his or her ministry, but it is particularly useful when he or she is considering an invitation to a new congregation.

D. P. Smith argues that at the time of such a call, both the minister and the local congregation should give careful consideration to such questions as: What is the meaning and purpose of the church? What is the mission of this particular congregation? What do the people of this congregation expect of a minister? Are those expectations relevant to the congregation's goals? Does the pastor share the understanding and goals of the congregation? Do their expectations fit reasonably well with his or her expectations, with his professional concerns, spiritual needs, predispositions, and style of ministry?¹

Where possible, the pastor should always ask to meet with the church board, board of elders, and any other formal or informal leadership groups within the

church to consider the kinds of questions stated above. By facing these issues systematically, directly, and in sufficient depth a congregation and pastor may uncover serious differences that later would disrupt their relationship.

The pastor should also initiate a similar process with the administration of the calling conference to identify any marked discrepancies between his or her goals and the goals and expectations of the conference administrators. Learning about such discrepancies can enable both parties to avoid later role problems.

By drawing up a list of pastoral roles from the inventory of religious activities referred to in part two of this series, pastors can provide themselves with a tool useful in negotiating with role senders. This list can be helpful in the negotiations that take place before the pastor accepts a call, but it is also useful anytime during the pastor's tenure when conflict and ambiguity evince themselves.

In the latter situation, the pastor may present the list of clergy roles to the congregation, board, elders, or any other group from which the conflicts arise, asking them to rank the roles in order of importance. When they have completed the rankings, the pastor asks individuals to share their lists with the group. When several have done so, it will generally become evident that the members of the group hold significant differences of opinion.

The pastor should allow the group to argue for their various positions until it is clear that they cannot reach unanimity. Then he or she can discuss the issue of ambiguity and role conflict and call attention to how their confusion affects his

or her ministry. Next the pastor should present his or her personal role priorities, strengths, and weaknesses, informing the role senders as to what they can expect and what roles must be fulfilled or supplemented by other individuals or through other means.

P. Higgins and J. Dittes discovered that when clergy and laity discuss the minister's role in this way, consensus concerning that role increases both between minister and laity and among the laity themselves. They discovered that generally the more those involved discussed a given role subject, the more agreement developed—but that the increase in agreement was limited to the subjects discussed. The largest changes came in the laity's understanding of the importance of study to the minister, the necessity of reduced emphasis on routine visitation, and the importance with which the minister regarded the training of lay leadership.²

The negotiating process, then, provides a thorough procedure for clarifying role expectations and matching those expectations with role performance, thus reducing or minimizing ambiguity and unnecessary conflict.

Avoid withdrawing

People tend to avoid those things that cause psychological discomfort. So although pastors ought to strive to increase communication when they are experiencing role conflict or ambiguity, research suggests that at such times communication is likely to decrease.³ Robert Kahn and his associates found that those who experience a great deal of role conflict tend to discount the importance and power of role senders, to trust them less personally, and to withdraw from them.⁴

In the case of ambiguity, withdrawal is a self-defeating practice in both the short and long run. Basically, ambiguity results from a lack of information, and withdrawal cuts still further the flow of information. Communicating more frequently with the others involved in the situation and engaging them as information gatherers and providers would be far more effective. According to Kahn, the best way to find out what others expect is to ask them.

If ambiguity persists, most people eventually quit trying. At this point, communication deteriorates and withdrawal begins. This self-defeating mechanism increases the conflict, adding momentum to the developing vicious cycle.

The withdrawal further reduces the flow of information, making less data available with which anyone can work to minimize the conflict. Cooperation and negotiation become difficult, if not impossible. Finally, in frustration, the role senders increase their pressure on the pastor and invoke even stronger sanctions in an effort to make him or her hear and respond favorably.

Rather than running away from the personal discomfort that role conflicts and ambiguity bring, pastors must reduce the pressure through communication.

Know yourself well

Another important factor in minimizing role conflict and ambiguity is knowing yourself well. Pastors who want to minimize ambiguity in the expectations others have of them must also minimize it in themselves. Confusion tends to breed confusion. Those who are not clear as to who they are, what they believe, what their understanding of the church and ministry is, what their goals are, and where their strengths and weaknesses lie are not well prepared to evaluate or relate to the expectations of others.

Self-evaluation, administrative evaluation, peer evaluation, career counseling, personality and vocational testing, and congregational evaluation—all can help pastors assess who they are.

Get sufficient exercise

A person's primary response to any threat—physical or otherwise—is the "fight or flight" mechanism, a reaction of the sympathetic nervous system meant to help one attain safety in times of danger. Once the stimulation of the event penetrates the psychological defenses, the body prepares for action. The heart and respiratory system increase their rate, circulating more blood and oxygen to the muscles and to the control centers in the brain. Hormonal secretions increase, and sugar and fats pour into the blood to feed the muscles and the brain, preparing them to fight the stressor that has provoked the system. The pupils of the eyes dilate to enable the person to see the apparent threat better.

According to D. Girdano and G. Everly, the threats we face endanger our egos more often than our lives. Consequently, physical action is not warranted. Unfortunately for the organs of the body, what took only minutes to start takes hours to undo. The stress products flowing through the system will continue

The negotiating process provides a procedure for clarifying and matching expectations with role performance.

to activate various organs until they are either absorbed into storage or used by the body. While these gradual processes take place, the body's organs suffer.⁵

When we are stressed, we need to use up the products the body produces in reaction to the stress; to release the fight-or-flight mechanism by putting it to its intended end—physical movement. In our society, which does not permit the killing of lions or the harming of our neighbors, physical exercise is the most effective release of such arousal. By channeling the increased energy intended for fight or flight into walking, running, swimming, or hiking, we can safely dissipate stress products. Vigorous activity may even create a rebound effect that results in a state of deep relaxation.

As pastors undergo the general stresses of the ministry and of specific tensions and conflicts related to roles, it is critical that they implement a regular program of physical exercise to guard against the physiological effects of stress. Pastors often claim that time does not permit them to exercise and that their busy schedules militate against systematically employing such activities. Nevertheless, they would benefit remarkably from such a program. Seemingly insurmountable problems and conflicts appear in a new perspective when pastors act upon their need to exercise.

Use relaxation exercises

When under stress, the body experiences excessive muscle tension. Much of this harmful, stress-producing muscle tension is extremely subtle and almost impossible to detect. Permitting such a condition to continue for an extended

By giving pastors a degree of professional autonomy, administrators can assist them in minimizing the effects of role conflict and ambiguity.

period of time may produce or exacerbate a wide variety of physical disorders, such as tension headaches; muscle cramps and spasms; limitation of range of movement and flexibility; susceptibility to muscle injuries such as tears and sprains; insomnia; urinary problems; dysmenorrhea; and a wide range of gastrointestinal maladies including constipation, diarrhea, and colitis.⁶

The best means of ending these dysfunctional physiological effects is by breaking the tension through neuromuscular relaxation exercises. There are literally hundreds of techniques, but all have the same basic objective of teaching the individual to relax the muscles at will, developing an awareness of what it feels like to be tense and then what it feels like to be relaxed.⁷ Relaxation is an effective coping tool that helps minimize the adverse physiological effects of the tensions generated by the role problems pastors commonly face.

The supervisor's role

There are some strategies for minimizing vocational stress in ministry that pastors cannot implement. Rather, they must be implemented at the administrative level of the church. These strategies relate to the role of supervision.

As the result of a 1976 study, T. Beehr concluded that people in roles with certain situational characteristics do not suffer as severely from stress. His conclusion has important implications for the management of conflict and ambiguity, because organizations can modify these situational characteristics.

Beehr stated that "autonomy is the strongest and most consistent moderator

of the relationship between role ambiguity and role strain. Organizations that wish to reduce the role strain associated with ambiguity should increase the autonomy in their employees' roles."⁸

By giving pastors a degree of professional autonomy, administrators can assist them in minimizing the effects of role conflict and ambiguity. And conversely, by stifling their pastors' autonomy, conference administration or local church leadership subject them to increased stress.

In addition to pointing out the benefits autonomy provides, Beehr's study indicated that people with supportive supervisors do not feel some role strains even if their roles are ambiguous.

Another way in which supervisors can help pastors minimize vocational stress is by involving them in the decision-making process. John Flora found that in situations in which workers feel they are an integral part of the decision-making process, they are likely to experience more satisfaction with their jobs, have less anxiety, be more optimistic about their future, and are more likely to desire to stay in their positions.⁹

Administrators, then, can minimize role-related problems by allowing pastors to participate in making the decisions that affect them. How they address this matter has implications for how well their staff members will deal with stress-related issues.

Spiritual stress reducers

In addition to implementing the psychological stratagems given above, pastors can strengthen their attempts to manage role-related stress by practicing certain spiritual disciplines.

The primary spiritual focus must be the life and ministry of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the role model for ministry, and thus He serves as the paragon upon which pastors pattern their personal and professional behavior. Since Jesus knew role conflict, ambiguity, stress, and pressure during His earthly ministry, we may gain some insights about how to deal with these problems by observing the manner in which He dealt with them.

Because of their servitude during nearly 600 years of foreign occupation, the Jewish people emphasized the kingly nature of the Messiah to the exclusion of those prophecies that focused on His role as a suffering servant (e.g., Isaiah 53).¹⁰ Consequently, they held many notions regarding the Messiah that were unrea-

sonable, unrealistic, and at variance with the work Jesus had come to perform. Their preconceptions prevented many from accepting Him as the Messiah.

That even Jesus' disciples accepted the popular beliefs about the Messiah is demonstrated by their frequent disputes concerning the positions they coveted in the earthly kingdom they presumed He was about to establish. And they rejected any suggestion that the Messiah's mission would end in death (Matt. 16:21).

To meet the people's deeper needs of healing and wholeness, Jesus upset these shallow expectations regarding the Messiah that involved magical, military, and superstitious desires. Amid conflicting voices and mixed signals He faithfully created the role He understood Scripture, God's call, and the people's need to point to. He faithfully carried out His mission in spite of the ambiguity and role conflicts that doing so raised.¹¹ Clergy can similarly color the content of their roles by bringing their own expectations to bear upon those of the laity. They too must be faithful to their sense of calling; they must fulfill the ministry God has given them.

The key to Jesus' success in living with conflict and ambiguity was His devotional life with God. Mark notes that in the beginning of Jesus' ministry, "in the morning, a great while before day, he rose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed" (Mark 1:35, RSV). In describing His later ministry, Luke states that "in these days he went out to the mountain to pray; and all night he continued in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12, RSV). And as Jesus' ministry came to its climax, Judas knew where He could be found, because He went out "as was his custom" to the Mount of Olives in the evening to pray (Luke 22:39, RSV).

Luke reveals that prayer was connected with all of the highlights and crises in Jesus' life. Jesus prayed at His baptism (Luke 3:21), before His first confrontation with the Pharisees (Luke 5:16), before He chose the disciples (Luke 6:12, 13), before He questioned His disciples as to who they thought He was and first spoke of His own death (Luke 9:18), at the Transfiguration (verse 29), and upon the cross (Luke 23:34).

Jesus knew well that He could not live without the Father; that if He was going to give of Himself in ministry, He must sometimes receive; that if He was going to spend Himself for others, He must summon spiritual reinforcement to His

aid. In other words, Jesus knew that He could not live without prayer.¹²

Jesus' devotional life sets the example for pastors who experience the pain of role conflict and ambiguity. Their devotional lives are their personal counseling sessions with God. In prayer, not only are they open to receive the Lord's grace and mercy, but they may also experience the catharsis of confession. Through devotional exercises ministers may clear from their minds the confusion regarding priorities in their work. In secret prayer they can express to the Father the anxieties, tensions, and pleasures that their work engenders.

During their devotions pastors can think clearly about what they can and cannot do. And through their relationship with God they can receive the courage to do what needs to be done and the confidence to commit to God what they cannot do. These times of prayer will refresh them in spirit and restore them emotionally.

If ministers need human dialogue to sustain themselves and to negotiate and resolve vocational stress, how much more they need the divine. And it is a disciplined devotional life on which the divine-human relationship that supplies their need is built.¹³

A third spiritual element that helps minimize vocational stress is peace—a peace that exists in the midst of toil and conflict. It is the peace that comes when we experience with Paul the reality of Christ's promise that "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor. 12:9, RSV). It is the peace that leads us beside still waters and restores our souls (Ps. 23:2, 3). It

is the peace with God that we receive through our Lord Jesus Christ because we are justified by faith (Rom 5:1). When pastors believe that both they and the church belong to God and that God will work His purposes out, even if they cannot do it themselves, then they can relax in the peace that only Jesus can give.

Another aspect of the peace that pastors can experience in their relationship with God is contentment, in other words, coming to terms with the Giver of life. During his second imprisonment in Rome the apostle Paul wrote of this contentment: "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content" (Phil. 4:11, RSV). Paul could say this even though he was imprisoned and did not know if the verdict would be life or death. Similarly, he could write to the Corinthians: "For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Cor. 12:10, RSV).

Pastors must develop the mind-set of Paul that allows them to be content. Perhaps one of the greatest joys of the ministry comes when pastors no longer crucify themselves on the cross of their own idealism. They can realize peace, contentment, and happiness only when they let go of intense, inappropriate, and unrealistic ideals and expectations for themselves, others, and the church. One's ability to "listen" to, challenge, and change oneself is a major key to finding contentment.

Yet another type of peace is available to the troubled pastor—the peace of surrender. Jesus experienced this kind of peace in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was there that He went through the greatest of His crises as the darkening events pointed to the cross. The conflicts, stresses, and ambiguities that surrounded His ministry now reached their peak. He was facing death. He knew what crucifixion was like; He had seen the ugly process. He could have, even then, refused to complete His mission and ministry. He could have turned from the cross.

But Jesus fought the mental anguish and won. He went to Gethsemane in the dark; He came out in the light because He had talked with God. He went in agony; He came out with the victory won and with peace in His soul because God's everlasting arms were underneath Him, even on the cross. His victory came as He maintained His surrender to a love that

Through their relationship with God they can receive the courage to do what needs to be done and the confidence to commit to God what they cannot do.

would never let Him go. "Life's hardest task is to accept what we cannot understand; but we can do even that if we are surrendered to God and are sure of His love."¹⁴

¹ D. P. Smith, *Clergy in the Cross Fire: Coping With Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1974).

² P. Higgins and J. Dittes, "Change in Laymen's Expectations of the Minister's Role," *Ministry Studies* 2:5-8.

³ Smith.

⁴ Robert Kahn et al., *Organizational Stress: Studies in Role Conflict and Ambiguity* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1964).

⁵ D. Girdano and G. Everly, *Controlling Stress and Tension: A Holistic Approach* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1979).

⁶ Girdano and Everly.

⁷ According to Herbert Benson (*The Relaxation Response* [New York: Avon Books, 1975]), four components are necessary to eliciting the relaxation response: (1) a quiet environment with as few distractions as possible; (2) a mental device that shifts the mind from logical, externally oriented thought; (3) a passive attitude; and, (4) a comfortable position that relieves unnecessary muscular tension.

Specific description of relaxation techniques is beyond the scope of this article. One can study progressive relaxation techniques, autogenic training, sensory awareness exercises, and other techniques in such volumes as Benson's book and Girdano and Everly's *Controlling Stress and Tension: A Holistic Approach*.

⁸ T. Beehr, "Perceived Situational Moderators of the Relationship Between Subjective Role Ambiguity and Role Strain," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 61:35-40.

⁹ John Flora, "Role Conflict and Role Ambiguity in the Elementary School Principalship" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1977), *Dissertation Abstracts International* 38, No. 6A: 3173.

¹⁰ For a delineation of their expectations, see, e.g., "Messiah, Expectations of, Among Jews," *SDA Bible Students' Source Book* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1962).

¹¹ James D. Ashbrook, "Discussion of Hadden Paper," *Ministry Studies* 2:35.

¹² William Barclay, *The Gospel of Mark* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956).

¹³ W. Hulme, *Your Pastor's Problems: A Guide for Ministers and Laymen* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1966).

¹⁴ Barclay.

To get all of this series

We have run Michael G. McBride's series on stress in the ministry in three consecutive issues, January through March. Those of our readers who receive only the alternate issues may obtain a free copy of the article published in February by sending us a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Write to us at February Stress Article, *Ministry*, 6840 Eastern Ave., NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.
—Editors.

Should we use professional fund-raisers?

Mel Rees

The difference between a contribution and an offering may make the difference between failure and success in your building program.



Mel Rees, a retired stewardship educator, hasn't really retired yet. From his home base in Woodland, Washington, he continues writing and holding seminars.

Life seems to run in cycles—or circles. Solomon expressed it best: “That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been” (Eccl. 3:15). Unfortunately this seems to be true of church fund-raising. Just when it appeared that the true concepts of stewardship, as they relate to the support of God’s work, were being generally accepted, some church leaders began reverting back to old methods and accepting offers of help from professional fund-raising companies.

Their reasoning appears sound: there is a need for money; this is a way to get it. But can bringing in outside help really solve the problem?

Possibly today’s church leaders weren’t around or were just toddlers when professional fund-raising firms swept across the religious world. These leaders didn’t experience the pressures, nor see some of the results, of these “blitz” programs. To them the glib salesmen with their colorful brochures filled with promises and testimonials might seem like a ray of sunshine on an overcast day—a panacea for the church’s financial problems.

A money machine?

The midafternoon phone call from a church leader asked my opinion about a certain fund-raising firm. I explained that my knowledge was limited to what I had read in a brochure, and a report I had from a church that had used its services. I asked why he was interested.

“We are considering building a new church,” he explained, “and we need to

raise a large sum of money.”

His answer highlighted a dilemma common in many churches: the question of finance. But is a lack of money the problem? If it is, then any method that would produce the required funds would seem to be a satisfactory solution. If, on the other hand, a lack of money is not the problem—if the problem is more basic—adequate funds might ease a temporary situation but leave the real malady untreated.

He explained that the church board was going to finalize its plans that evening, and he wanted my opinion. I asked him how much the church was going to cost and how much the fund-raising firm was asking for its services.

“The church cost is projected at \$700,000,” he said, “and the fund-raiser’s fee is \$28,800.”

“I’m curious,” I continued. “Does this company provide a money machine, or where will the money for this additional expense come from?”

There was a significant pause. Then he replied, “I guess it will come out of our pockets.”

“Really,” I pointed out, “from a practical point of view, this doesn’t make much sense to me. Instead of a \$700,000 project, you will now have one costing \$728,800! Have you thought this through? Have you considered the benefits versus the disadvantages?”

“I’m not sure I understand. Please explain.”

“Well, for starters,” I answered, “you will no doubt have the advantage of a carefully planned and executed program run by a trained professional. Your members, under varying types and degrees of

pressure, will be expected to indicate the amount they are going to contribute. The church will end up with a fistful of slips of paper, not all of which will be honored. These will represent instant commitments—not instant money.

"But," I continued, "you may also inherit a current of resentment by members who have been forced to give more than they originally intended and those who are opposed to any kind of pressure—who feel their giving should be between them and God and want no outside interference."

"I surmise," he laughed, "that you are less than enthusiastic about looking for help outside the church."

"That is my opinion," I replied, "for I believe that if a congregation has to go outside for assistance in raising money to build a church, it is not ready to build a house of God. A church is only an architectural design, but a house of God is a people worshipping together in love and unity, with common aims and objectives. To build a church requires a site, plans, and money, but the requisites for preparing a house of God are first, *devotion to God*, and second, a *spirit of sacrifice*.

"If your membership had these requisites, it wouldn't be necessary to seek professional assistance; they would give eagerly and joyously, making such a plan unnecessary."

He thanked me and hung up. I don't know what the board decided to do.

Biblical principles

The thoughts I expressed to him are not just my personal opinion. They are based on definite biblical principles that can help determine the spiritual climate of the church.

In the first place, fund-raising for a new church is not biblical. One can find ample precedent in the Bible for encouraging voluntary giving, but none for fund-raising.

It would be impossible to harmonize the motive factor in the story of the widow's mites with the "influence, like water, flows downhill" concept in so-called creative fund-raising. Pressure of any kind would be suspect in light of Jesus' words "if ye love me," or Paul's "if there be first a willing mind."

In the record of the building of the first church (the tabernacle in the wilderness), we don't find God advising Moses to bring in an Amalekite (or even a brother Ephraimite) to head the fund-

raising program. Moses was directed, "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that *giveth it willingly with his heart* ye shall take my offering" (Ex. 25:2). No pressure is implied here; it was to be a heart experience. One finds no record of a canvass organization, nor a banquet to whip up enthusiasm. The results were so immediate, so spectacular, that the people had to be "restrained from bringing" (Ex. 36:6).

It was a disappointment to David when he was refused permission to construct a house for God. But he was so enthusiastic for the project that he made preparations "with all his might." Following his example, "the leaders, . . . the captains, . . . with the officers . . . offered willingly. . . . Then the people rejoiced, for they had offered willingly (1 Chron. 29:6-9, NKJV). Nothing is said about anyone soliciting anyone. There were no signed pledges, just freewill gifts. And while Solomon did send to the king of Tyre for a man to superintend the construction, this had nothing to do with fund-raising. The willingness of the people made fund-raising unnecessary.

Have times changed so much? Have we changed so much that we have to resort to man-made methods to finance construction of a place where we can worship God—a place where He has promised to meet with us? Does it seem reasonable to increase the cost of the project by hiring someone to coerce us to give? This is another objection to seeking for help outside our own communion—it is unreasonable.

An exhaustive search might locate a church that has unlimited resources, but this isn't the norm. Usually the construction of a new church, school, or other facility requires real sacrifice on the part of the membership. It is not only unreasonable but unfair to lay an additional burden on these people. It is also unnecessary, because the work of God is not dependent upon human resources. To resort to paid outside help to coerce us to give is an evidence of a lack of faith in God's promise to supply all our needs.

Luther Powell, in his book *Money and the Church* (New York: Association Press) writes: "There is something lacking in the spiritual life of the church when secular professional money raisers have to be employed. One's giving should be a manifestation of his faith, and it seems to be a reflection on the church that the faith it proclaims has not

If a congregation has to go outside for assistance in raising money to build a church, it is not ready to build a house of God."

produced the necessary funds for maintaining and extending her program" (p. 182).

Instead of looking around for assistance, we should look up! Our daily sustenance is dependent upon our efforts combined with divine power. When we have worked to the limit of our capacity, using the time, talents, and resources lent to us, we are promised that God will supply any lack. This is a basic principle. But sometimes we forget this when faced with a formidable task such as building a house of worship.

Heart trouble

Employing human methods to solve our apparent financial problems is ineffective because human methods treat only the symptom, not the problem. In reality, we do not have a money problem, but heart trouble! This must be the case, for a person will support anything he believes in, regardless of the cost. One must question the belief and/or motive of anyone who has to be urged, begged, or forced into giving. Any response could only be termed a contribution, not an offering. The definition of an offering implies a gift, an expression of love and gratitude.

If we would only consider the privilege permitted us in building a house of God, referred to by David as "the footstool of our God" (1 Chron. 28:2) and by Solomon as a place "to burn sacrifice before him" (2 Chron. 2:6), we would consider this such a precious opportunity that,

like the people of Israel, we would give joyously, willingly, and liberally.

One wonders why, when working in cooperation with God is such a beautiful experience, we would revert back to methods that have caused so many negative reactions. We cannot measure the success of any program by buildings or even large sums of money; the end never justifies the means. Rather we must consider what effect the fund-raising has had on the givers. Has anyone been led to a closer, more trusting walk with God? Or has anyone been hurt by the pressure applied?

A professional man, a dedicated Christian, was telling me of his experience in a building program. He said that he wasn't in favor of the church hiring outside help, but that he "went along" with the majority vote. After hearing some of his experiences as the general chairman of the canvass committee, I asked him if he would welcome a repeat performance. He replied, "Never! I'd change my membership first!"

Then there was the man who was "put on the spot" during a fellowship dinner at the climax of a canvass program. He got up from the table, picked up his hat and coat, and left. He never returned to the dinner. Or to the church.

Possibly another reason for the difficulty in funding a new church building program is that the church has lost some of its aura of sacredness.

In reply to a letter asking if people felt their churches were getting away from serious worship and becoming too social, Ann Landers received an overwhelming response. This is a sampling of the comments made: "very little spirituality," "the music is a disgrace," "too much fun stuff in the service," "very little worshiping and quiet meditation," "show-biz time," "might as well be an amusement park," "too much leaning on parishioners to shell out money."

There could even be a danger in our friendliness during the church service, for this might affect our reverence for this meeting place with God. We might forget that this is sacred ground. This could cause us to view church building and maintenance projects in the same light as we would regard the building and care of, say, a Grange hall. In which case, we might be concerned with such earthly considerations as site, plans, and money rather than such spiritual virtues as devotion to God and a spirit of sacrifice.

Devotion

The building and maintenance of a house for God should be a devout exercise of the highest order, one of the most rewarding a congregation can experience. It is a collective response to the promise "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). Such a project should electrify the church; it should call for the combined energies of every man, woman, and child.

In a church in which love for God gives impetus to actions, time, abilities, and money will be offered with eagerness and rejoicing that will overflow into the surrounding community. A building project carried out under these conditions would be an irresistible exhibition of love for God and our fellowmen.

No one denies that choosing the right site, drawing careful plans, and assuring adequate financing are essential in the building of any structure, but we must never allow a building, no matter how grand its style, to overshadow the God whom it is to honor.

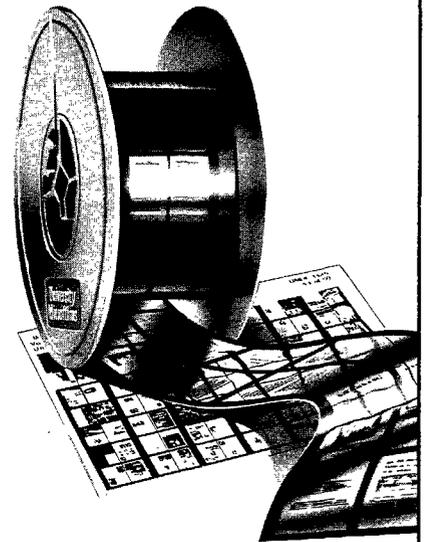
Careful planning is also essential, and the most experienced advice should be sought and followed. Jesus said: "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?" (Luke 14:28). Establishing a rate of anticipated income is also an element of good planning. However, in our determining of this, care must be used to be sure no pressure is involved. The decision must be between the individual and God—it must be anonymous unless the individual chooses to reveal it.

All of these necessary procedures—preparing a site, planning the construction, evaluating the potential of the church—must be accomplished under biblical guidelines. This is the only way a house of God can be prepared!

When in our love and fervor for God we have worked and given to the limit of our individual and collective capacity, then we can expect the impossible, for God never gives a work to be done without making provision for its accomplishment. We are limited to following directions; He is unlimited in producing the results.

We worship a God whose resources are inexhaustible. How could we ever have a money problem? If there is a problem, it is a heart problem! ■

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Does Genesis 2 contradict Genesis 1?

Paul Hou Kang Luo

One day a minister said to me, "There seems to be a contradiction between chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis. Chapter 1 tells us that God created the animals first and then created man, but chapter 2 says that God created man before the animals. How do you explain this difficult problem?"

I was studying biblical Hebrew at the time, and so as soon as I got home I took out my Hebrew Bible and looked at the problematic passage, Genesis 2:18-20. I was relieved to find that the seeming contradiction was in reality only a mistake in translation.

Biblical Hebrew verb tenses are very simple and yet sometimes very confusing. As the book *Biblical Hebrew Step-by-Step* indicates: "Strictly speaking, biblical (i.e., classical) Hebrew has no tense similar to those used in English, French, or German. The action is regarded as either complete or incomplete. . . . The perfect tense, in Hebrew, expresses a completed action. Thus *lamadti* means I studied, I have studied, I had studied, I had been studying, or I did study. The imperfect tense expresses an incomplete action: 'emor, I shall shut, I shall be shutting. . . .

"Thus, many different types of past action are expressed by the Hebrew perfect tense. This reductionism is largely true of the Hebrew imperfect tense in expressing various types of future (and sometimes also present) action."¹

Paul Hou Kang Luo, a scriptwriter, editor, and assistant director of the Program Department of Adventist World Radio—Asia, writes from Hong Kong.

The context, then, must determine the tense used to translate the verb.

Genesis 2:19 reads: "And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them."

The verb "formed" in this verse comes from the Hebrew *wayyiser*. This is a *waw* consecutive Qal verb of the third person singular masculine. It is in the perfect tense and so could be translated "and He formed," "and He has formed," "and He had formed," etc. In this case, the context points to the translation "and He had formed." Similarly, the verb "brought" of verse 19 (*wayyabe'*) should be translated "and He had brought."

Genesis 2:18-22 then reads: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an

help meet for him. And [or "Now"²] out of the ground the Lord God [had formed] every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and [had brought] them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man."

The context implies a link between verse 18 and verses 21 and 22: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (verse 18), and "Then the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, . . . [and the Lord] made . . . a woman and brought her unto the man" (verses 21, 22).

Evidently verses 19 and 20 serve as a kind of parenthetical explanation. They indicate that among all the animals that existed at that time (and the search had been thorough; God had formed every animal and Adam had named them all), there was none fitting to be Adam's mate. The realization of this lack, then, helps to set the stage for God's creation of Eve. So even though the Hebrew verbs of verses 18 and 19 are in the same tense (perfect), translating them with differing English tenses is justifiable. ■

Even though the Hebrew verbs of verses 18 and 19 are in the same tense, translating them with differing English tenses is justifiable.

¹ Menahem Mansoor, *Biblical Hebrew Step-by-Step: A Significant Breakthrough for Learning Biblical Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), pp. 69-71.

² The *waw* consecutive translated "and" offers a broad range of meaning, including also, but, yet, so, then, when, now, and in that time.

Making friends in your own church

Laurie S. Herr

Being a pastor's spouse can lead to loneliness. But you can find friends in the churches you serve.



Laurie S. Herr, a freelance writer and pastor's spouse, writes from Burnsville, North Carolina.

This is just a friendly warning," the note said. "Beware of playing favorites in church."

This "friendly warning," written by a blue-haired lady to her pastor's wife, echoes the advice ministers and their spouses often receive. Sometimes they even give it themselves. One veteran clergy wife, for example, once cautioned a young woman upon her engagement to a seminary student. "Let me tell you about being a minister's wife," she said with a congratulatory hug. "If you do make a friend in your church, never let the other members know it. I have friends with whom I do things during the week, but at church I hardly speak to them. Otherwise, people think you're partial."

Such a fear of appearing partial is just one of the obstacles that spouses of ministers, and wives in particular, face when it comes to making friends in their own churches. Some of these obstacles are caused by the nearsightedness of church members. Others the pastor's wife herself may unknowingly create. By becoming more aware of these obstacles, however, the pastor's wife can more successfully overcome them.

While we all crave close friendships, there are several reasons that a minister's wife especially needs them. Frequent moves are not only hard on the fine china; they can also damage a fragile self-esteem. Her husband's odd work hours often keep him away from home. Usually she is the only one who ever hears her husband fume after a frustrating board

meeting. She is also an easy target for criticism on everything from how she dresses to how her children behave.

Added to all this is the constant underlying pressure to please. One parishioner, for instance, once informed her new pastor's wife that she always judged a pastor by his wife's performance!

For a minister's wife, all of these factors combine to create a very real need for emotional support beyond that which her husband and family can give. Even a strong relationship with God cannot replace the need for a hug or human conversation.

It would seem that one of the most logical places to find such a friend would be in one's own church. Yet of the eight women I interviewed whose husbands are ministers,¹ most found their church friendships superficial. Only two felt satisfied with the friendships they'd formed, and for one this was a happy change. "For the first time in our ministry," she said, "we are in a place in which we have real friends—not just church relations."

The way that many church members perceive their pastor and his family poses part of the problem. Because ministers move frequently, some parishioners tend to view them as temporary members of their community.

They may even express this in not-so-subtle ways. During my husband's internship, for example, we learned that none of the past several associate pastors of the church we were serving stayed more than a year or two. Within six months of our arrival, people began asking when we planned to move. While this may have been only polite interest, we couldn't help wondering if maybe

they were a little too eager to help us pack!

Nevertheless, it's important to realize that some church members are deeply hurt when it comes time to say goodbye to clergy families they've grown close to. Rather than risk being hurt again, they hesitate to make another emotional investment in a pastor and his wife. As one member explained: "It's always easier for the ones who move than for those who stay behind."

The false distinctions some members make between clergy and laity raise another serious obstacle to close friendships. One pastor's wife of 15 years remarked that ministers and their families are "not thought of as part of the real world." Parishioners don't necessarily consider a pastor's wife as better than others (although some people mistakenly believe that as well); rather, they may view her as "out of it" and basically not much fun. Unable to see beyond their picture of "Mrs. Pastor" (a term many church members think is cute, but in reality strips a woman of her individuality), they fail to get to know a complete person who has the same ambitions, faults, quirks, and spiritual struggles as the rest of the world. As one pastor's wife put it: "It's hard to get close to someone who assumes that all we do at our house is pray and hum hymns."

Some laity have preconceived ideas not only of what their pastor's wife should be like, but also of how she expects them to be. "In general, people are wary of being too open or honest with their pastor's family," one clergy wife said. Because the pastor—and somehow his wife—represent so much more to them than what they actually are, these members resist exposing too much of their true selves, preferring instead to keep the relationship on safe, superficial levels.

In her book *Who Is the Minister's Wife?* Charlotte Ross points out that some people may even treat the pastor's wife as a personified conscience. She quotes one woman who experienced this type of rejection: "People, I think, shy away from me if, for example, they've missed church. It's not much fun to be a walking judgment on others."²

Such distinctions blur the focus of God's ministry. They distract both clergy and laity from the true church Leader, the only One who can judge hearts. And they keep us from being genuine with one another.

It's easy to blame church members for

their apparent lack of understanding, yet we must also recognize the obstacles to friendship the pastor's wife herself often sets up.

Frequent goodbyes, for example, can harden clergy as well as laity. Without realizing it, a pastor's wife may succumb to the thinking of the woman who told her daughter not to love her dog too much because it would only die someday and make her sad. By steeling herself against loss, the pastor's wife can miss out on a great deal of love.

As mentioned earlier, the fear of showing partiality may also inhibit a pastor's wife's friendships. To an extent this concern may be valid. But it can also be overestimated. Surprisingly, not everyone is dying to be the pastor's wife's best friend. Ruth Senter, author of *So You're the Pastor's Wife*, tells in her book how she had a hard time grasping this: "There is a myth about the pastor's wife that contributed to my lonely times during the first years of marriage. . . . Somewhere along the line I picked up the idea that a pastor's wife had to be a friend to all and close companion to none. Somewhere I got the picture that the church was full of people who were just waiting for the chance to be friends with the pastor's wife. In order to be fair to everyone and not have anyone get jealous over the fact that she was not my friend too, I would have to be friends to everyone. "That kind of thinking did a lot for my ego."³

Ego-boosting as it may be, the concept is, as Senter says, a myth. She goes on to point out that while she would never want to close herself off to others by maintaining exclusive friendships, she believes that "it is possible to have close friendships without having cliques."⁴

Occasionally a pastor's wife will run into someone who accuses her of "playing favorites." While she must be sensitive to the opinions of others, she cannot let them control her personal relationships. Rather than hiding such friendships when in public, she can decide on ways to handle criticism with tact and kindness. Doing so will enable her to be truer to her church members, her closest friends, and herself.

Sometimes meeting the problem head-on may uncover the fact that her personal friendships are not the real issue at all. For example, when the pastor's wife who received the note mentioned at the beginning of this article confronted its writer, she learned that the woman

had been deeply hurt by a former pastor who had shown blatant favoritism in his church management. But was she jealous of this pastor's wife's close friends? "Oh, my dear, no!" the older woman said. "I didn't mean you shouldn't have friends! You go right ahead and make all the friends you can!" Both women left with a deeper appreciation for the other.

But the greatest obstacle to friendship that a pastor's wife faces may be the fear of confiding in a church member. The women I interviewed shared these complaints: "Hard to know whom to trust with certain information"; "Not really able to let your hair down"; "Difficult to share personal concerns unless they're fairly general." When asked whom, other than their husbands, they usually confided in, only one of these women specifically mentioned a good friend in her church (and one woman responded with an emphatic "I don't!").

Naturally the fear that last night's argument with her pastor-husband might become a tasty after-dinner treat for some members at the next potluck is legitimate. But assuming that everyone in her church likes to gossip may keep a pastor's wife from enjoying some truly trustworthy friendships. Just as others trust her to keep their confidences, she must show enough faith in others to trust them with hers. As one pastor's wife said: "Once you've found a friend you can totally trust, you have something very special and worth keeping." Unless she risks trusting a few souls, a pastor's wife will never know that kind of friendship within her church.

What can pastors' wives do to overcome these obstacles? The women I interviewed suggested everything from the familiar "Be yourself" to "Get out of the ministry!" Fundamentally, however, a pastor's wife must make sure she opens herself to new friendships.

This means being patient. The women interviewed said it took them anywhere from three months to a full year to feel at ease in a new church. During these transition periods they often relied heavily on friends from former districts.

It also means being willing to take the initiative in making friends rather than waiting for the dinner invitations to come rolling in. "If you're patient, the Lord will usually send you some friends," said one minister's wife. "But be careful to be looking for them. They may not be the persons you're expecting to find."

(Continued on page 26)



Of making books there is no end

Marcia K. Hornok

The Bible includes many things we would rather not know; things that interfere with our comfort, conscience, or complacency.

On the other hand, I suspect there are things the Bible should have included but somehow missed. Not to worry. These indispensable truths seem to have been revealed to contemporary scribes who are publishing books faster than a speed reader turns pages. The result? Those who regularly patronize Christian bookstores will find complete enlightenment.

Thanks to this form of progressive revelation, the following verses have now been clarified:

"The man and his wife were both divorced and were not ashamed."

"Eve gave birth to a son while Adam coached her through labor and delivery."

"Joseph was highly favored because of his Spirit-controlled temperament and the Reality Discipline Jacob used upon him."

"So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess with her, because of Friendship Evangelism."

"Hannah presented a new coat to Samuel every year, thus making a memory for him."

"Now the sons of Eli were wicked because he didn't spend quality time with them."

"Lo, children are a threat to the ecological balance, and the fruit of the womb is the cause of world overpopulation."

"Who can find a virtuous woman, for she is out jogging."

Free-lancer Marcia K. Hornok writes from Salt Lake City, Utah.

"To every thing there is a season, and a time management principle to every purpose under the heaven."

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; visualize, and it shall become a reality."

"If the Son therefore shall make you financially free, ye shall be free indeed."

"This is a true saying; if a man desire the office of a bishop, he better take out malpractice insurance."

"The servant of the Lord must not strive, but may offer useless trinkets at quintuple their value."

"Bodily exercise profiteth little, but aerobic fitness is essential to good health and overall well-being."

Older women may "teach the younger women to have an adequate self-image, to know their colors, and to achieve identity."

"Marriage is honorable in all, and must be maintained by attending marriage enrichment conferences."

Since there is no end to the making of books, we can look forward to many more insights in print. Future revelations might solve some perplexing problems we now face.

Perhaps a modern scribe will discover that the rapture will occur in proportion to one's faith: a Christian will go up at the beginning, middle, or end of the tribulation, depending on his doctrinal belief.

When will some daring author pen *The One-Minute Christian*, teaching us to cultivate a vital relationship with God in just minutes every day? (This book would validate the current practice of some readers.)

Other books of the future might focus on the fine lines of Christian doctrine, teaching us, for instance, how to distin-

guish between God's provision and a boat going to Tarshish (title: *Waiting for Your Fleece to Dry*).

How can we know when we have met our responsibility to God's house and can begin to panel our own? When does disciplined faithfulness, (say, in church attendance or tithing) become only legalistic routine? Is plastic surgery an acceptable alternative to self-acceptance (when some Christians enter heaven, God might say, "Peter I know and Paul I know, but who are you?")

We need a bibliography of all the books about marriage and parenting. If we could carry that volume home, I'm sure we would be edified simply by reading all the titles.

Several more how-to books are needed, don't you think? For instance: *How to Change Churches Successfully Without Making Your Pastor Feel Inadequate*, *How to Minister Without Needing Ego Rub*, *How to Live Below Your Means* (the lost art of self-denial), *How to Forgive What You Can't Forget*, and finally, *How to Discern False Profits* (are your contributions to the Lord's work used with integrity, or do they merely pad the lifestyle of some towering leader?).

Last of all, consider the dichotomy between sacred and secular employment. Some people yearn to be in full-time Christian work, yet lack the education or social skills to be accepted by an organization. Is their desire from God and thus worth pursuing, or should they become writers?

These and other questions may soon be answered by contemporary authors. Until then, keep those Christian romance novels rolling off the presses. How would we grow without them? ■

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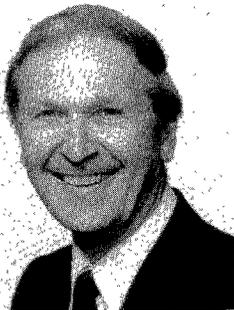
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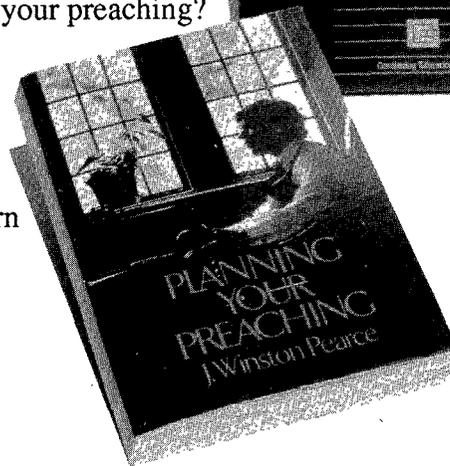
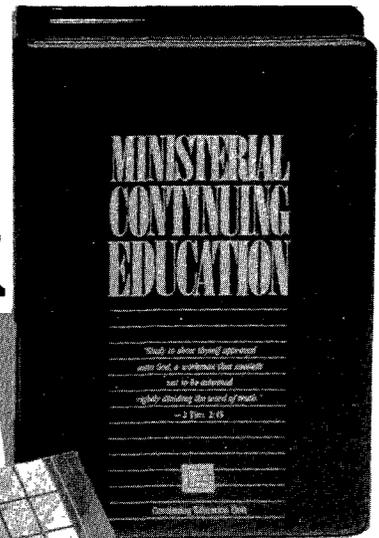
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The return of Elijah

J. Robert Spangler

More than 2,800 years ago, Elijah, God's special messenger, labored untiringly for Israel during the great apostasy Ahab and Jezebel instigated. God honored his enormous faith and zeal by taking him to heaven without his tasting death (2 Kings 2:11, 12). Elijah's fearless ministry qualifies him as one of the greatest of the prophets.

The last two verses of Malachi 4 contain the Old Testament's final reference to this prophet of fire. Bible students have puzzled over this striking prediction: "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" (verse 5, NASB).

Because of this prophecy, many first-century Jews believed that Elijah would literally return to earth to herald the Messiah's appearance. During the Transfiguration event, Peter, James, and John witnessed Christ conversing with Elijah and Moses on the mountaintop. The supernatural glory of the Transfiguration convinced these disciples anew that Christ was truly the Messiah. Aware of Malachi's prophecy and seeing Elijah in person, they asked Jesus, "Why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?" (Matt. 17:10, RSV).

Christ's response clearly indicates that Elijah had come, but neither God's people of that day nor those of the world had accepted him. "Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist" (verse 13, RSV).

Was John the Baptist the reincarnation of Elijah? The angel Gabriel standing beside John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, predicted that their son

would be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb, and that he would turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. Using some of the wording of Malachi 4:5, 6, Luke 1:17 states, "He [John] will go before him [Christ] in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared" (RSV).

Gabriel's testimony and the word of Christ Himself indicate that John the Baptist came, not as literal Elijah, but rather in the *spirit and power* of Elijah to prepare a people for Christ's first advent.

Twentieth-century Elijahs

If God, in mercy and love for the world, sent a messenger to prepare people for Christ's first advent, surely the most cataclysmic event of all ages, the Second Advent, calls for similar treatment! Malachi's prophecy implies as much: One would come in the spirit and power of Elijah "before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord."

Our battered world needs a ministry that has the power of Elijah and John the Baptist, a ministry that will fearlessly call sin by its right name, pleading for people to serve the true God with love and obedience! The characteristics common to Elijah and John the Baptist help us to discover whether or not we are preaching the Elijah message.

Elijah and John the Baptist each stood alone, one on Mount Carmel and the other in the desert. Both labored under corrupt governments—Elijah under Ahab and Jezebel, and John the Baptist under Herod and Herodias.

Both chose to forgo the enjoyments and luxuries of life for the stern discipline

of wilderness and country living. Both were trained in the classroom of nature by God Himself rather than in the schools of the day. Both were committed to a simplicity of lifestyle and dress. Both experienced at times a severe loneliness of spirit. By precept and example, both taught that those who would perfect holiness must learn the lessons of temperance and self-control.

Both believed that the most important qualification for any leader is implicit obedience to the word of the Lord. Both resisted the influence of the human devisings that would have disqualified them for their missions. Both understood the importance of the work of reform to be carried on in their eras. Both had a stern fidelity to God's rule yet were filled with love and pity for His people.

Both men sensed the importance of their God-given missions and exercised an enormous amount of faith. Both experienced success in their missions because of their submission to the Holy Spirit rather than because of inherent qualities. Both made mistakes—Elijah fled for his life from Jezebel, and John momentarily questioned whether Christ really was the Messiah. Though each had his imperfections, through union with God they each became an irresistible power for good.

Both Elijah and John the Baptist labored in a time of great unbelief and apostasy from God's law, warning of coming judgments. Both denounced national corruption and rebuked prevailing sins. Both were ministers of reconciliation. Both lifted up God's authority as supreme. The messages they each proclaimed were based on a "Thus saith the Lord."

Both realized the sacredness of their offices and the holiness of their work,

staying clear of worldly politics and policies. Both bore their messages with faithfulness regardless of the consequences.

God used both of these men to bring revival and reformation to His church. Both helped many to return to the worship of the true God.

Meditation upon the qualities Elijah and John exhibited brings conviction to my heart. Am I calling people from modern Baal worship to worshipping God as the Creator and Sustainer of all life? Am I bravely upholding God's holy law of ten commandments, both in the letter and in the spirit? When I present the gospel, do I call for repentance? Am

I, through the power of the Spirit, placing the feet of men and women solidly on the eternal Rock, Christ Jesus? Am I humbling my own heart before God, pleading for an understanding of the times in which we live? Do I sense that the end is near and that our Lord Jesus is soon to come?

I firmly believe that preaching in the spirit and power of Elijah means warning our judgement-bound world that its probation is soon to end and that soon our Lord Jesus Christ will appear as King of kings and Lord of lords. Where do you stand, fellow minister?—J. Robert Spangler. ■

Is competition a moral issue?

The students at the Christian college I attended organized a soccer match with the local village team. When the faculty heard about it, they forbade us to play any team outside the college ever again. That was competition, and competition was forbidden.

Five weeks later the college held its annual festival of speech and music, with cups and certificates presented to the various winners. Those of us still smarting from the soccer decision wondered why the faculty did not consider this competition. We had been introduced to the double standard regarding competition.

At its 1988 year-end meeting the North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists debated the issue of competitive sports in Adventist schools. The conclave tabooed intermural sports (between schools some distance apart) but blessed intramural sports (between teams on campus and between local institutions). No one raised the more delicate subject of the appropriateness of competition itself.

Is competition a moral issue? Is it OK on some levels but wrong on others? Should we restrict discussion about competition only to sports, or should we discuss its relevance to all phases of church life? Competition so pervades our society that we take it for granted. We only no-

tice it when flagrant violations take place or when someone raises the issue of whether sports belong in a Christian environment.

What do we mean by the term *competition*? *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* defines it as "a contest between rivals." *Chamber's Twentieth Century Dictionary* describes "to compete" as "to seek or strive for something in opposition to others." *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* renders it "to enter into or be put into rivalry with" and "to strive with another, for, or in doing, something."

Competition, then, generally involves rivalry and always means gaining something at another's expense. Competition demands a winner and at least one loser. Should Christians involve themselves in such activities?

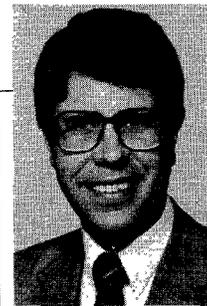
Someone will say that competition is an attitudinal problem and not inherent within the activity itself. But any activity that produces a winner and a loser is competition. Some activities are designed for the express purpose of producing a winner and a loser—for example, most sports. However, competition also lurks in many other places. In reports, for example, we may list churches randomly, alphabetically, or in numerical order from the largest to the smallest. The latter ranking tends to pit the churches against each other—encouraging competition.

If we honor the pastor who baptized

the most people during the year with a trip to Hawaii we have introduced competition. We encourage competition in school when we grade on the curve. Ribbons, cups, and plaques for outstanding achievement invoke competition. These are all such an accepted part of our society that we seldom question them. But as Christians we should prize consistency like a precious jewel.

Where did competition, this striving to be first, this striving to obtain at someone else's expense, originate? Lucifer said, "I will be like God. I will exalt my throne above His. I want what He has" (Isa. 14:13, paraphrase). Paul tells us that "there must be no room for rivalry and personal vanity among you, but you must humbly reckon others better than yourselves" (Phil. 2:3, NEB). That's kind of hard when sitting on top of the league, whether in basketball or in church growth.

Competition introduces comparison with others, suggesting that my success is based on your failure. We do not think cooperatively because our superiority will not be so clearly demonstrated. Paul cautions us: "but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing



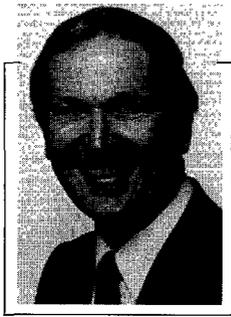
J. David Newman

themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Cor. 10:12).

Competition fights the gospel of justification by faith. Justification says that I am declared righteous not because of my performance but because of the performance of Jesus Christ. Competition says that I am successful when my performance supersedes everyone else's. Justification says I am nothing and Christ is everything. Competition says I am everything and others are nothing.

When the disciples wanted to know who would be the greatest Jesus reminded them "if anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35, NIV). "Rubbish," cries our culture. "That's not the way to

(Continued on page 26)



Living as Jesus died— Easter sermon seeds

Floyd Bresee

Jesus' death shows us how to live:

1. *He died forgiving.* As the cross bearing our Lord dropped with a thud into its black hole, Jesus mounted His last pulpit. "And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him. . . . Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:33, 34).

We all tend to have forgiveness problems. We have trouble forgiving those who abuse us and so have trouble believing that Jesus really forgives us when we abuse Him. Thus we have a double forgiveness problem—trouble forgiving and trouble accepting forgiveness.

The first thing Jesus did on the cross was to forgive. We're not going to get anywhere in our Christian experience until we first learn to forgive and accept forgiveness. And if Jesus was able to forgive those who nailed Him to the cross—if He did it even before they asked to be forgiven—then surely I can believe that when I come seeking forgiveness He'll forgive what I've done to Him.

2. *He died proving the seriousness of sin.* Working as a hospital orderly during my college years, I was pleased when one of the doctors invited me into surgery to do some insignificant task assisting him in an operation. All went well until he drew the scalpel across the patient's soft skin and it parted like the Red Sea. The gushing blood made me turn away for a moment. But the doctor didn't! Years before, his first sight of surgery had probably upset him a bit too, but now he had become so accustomed to it that he wasn't bothered in the least.

Sin can be like that. The first time you

committed that sin, you were so conscience-stricken you immediately turned away. Next time, it didn't seem quite so sinful. Now it hardly seems serious at all.

Jesus' words from the cross remind us how sinful sin is. "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46).

Sin had come between the Father and the Son. And Jesus' dilemma was so much worse than ours. When sin comes between us and Christ, we can confess it and be one again. But Jesus couldn't confess the sins He bore, for they weren't even His sins.

What killed Christ? Not the cross—it took days to die from crucifixion. Not the spear—He was already dead. The thing that killed Him was the agony of separation from God caused by sin. If separation killed Christ, how foolish of us to think we're really living while separated from God.

3. *He died thoughtful of His loved ones.* How long has it been since you phoned or wrote your mother?

Jesus' death reminds us to be thoughtful of our loved ones. "When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple

standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home!" (John 19:26, 27).

We excuse our thoughtlessness by saying we're just too busy to take the time to be kind. Surely none of us has ever been as busy as Jesus dying on the cross—yet He took time to think of His mother and His disciple.

Turning to Mary, He said, "Woman." Now, that doesn't sound too tender—but it was. If He had called her "Mother," the mob would have taunted, "Well, Mother, where's Father? Hail, Queen Mother!" Jesus was too thoughtful to let that happen. The great Giver gave His mother a new son, and He gave John an ongoing reminder of Jesus' confidence in him.

4. *He died having finished what He started.* We all start a lot more things than we finish. We begin the new year resolving to read our Bibles through, but give up halfway through the "begats." We make overwhelming promises at the wedding altar, then let our home relationships deteriorate into bickering and battling.

Jesus was different. The Crucifixion story climaxes, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost" (John 19:30).

Some of us have changed sides more often than a windshield wiper. When we're with the religious, we're religious. When we're with the worldly, we're worldly. Like Peter, we confess Jesus, then deny Him before the next sun rises. Don't give up. What Jesus started at Calvary, He finished. What He has started in you, He plans to finish too. ■

**All went well until he
drew the scalpel
across the patient's
soft skin and it parted
like the Red Sea.**

Challenges of the AIDS epidemic

Harvey A. Elder, Joyce W. Hopp, John E. Lewis



Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) has spread worldwide and, because of its inevitably fatal end, has left fear, rumors, and panic in its wake. Fear of the disease has robbed many Christians of their compassion, health workers of their commitment to caring, and employers of their fair practices.

What does AIDS mean to a minister of the gospel?

The minister's role

The AIDS epidemic presents challenges to all who minister: chaplains in health-care institutions and the armed forces, pastors of congregations, and administrators who serve on boards of educational institutions. Today's world is fueled by information. The epidemic of fear accompanying AIDS is fueled by misinformation and a lack of information. To fill their educational and counseling roles properly, ministers need to

have accurate information about AIDS.

The epidemic is not something that happens only to the sexually promiscuous and the intravenous drug users. It happens to family members. It happens to children of "good Christians"; it happens to children who were reared with family worship, regular Bible reading, and prayer. Yes, it is spread to those who only experiment and who are sorry and wish they never had.

The number of cases is increasing so fast that by December of 1991 there will be 170,000 AIDS patients in the United States; 75,000 will die from AIDS in 1992! In practical terms, that means almost every family will be affected. Everyone will know someone who is HIV-infected. AIDS will be the major cause of death among babies and young adults. Much of ministers' time and efforts will be spent counseling those suffering with AIDS or grieving from the loss of a dear one through AIDS. AIDS will be hidden pain, the unspeakable sorrow.

Ministers are in a unique position to counsel AIDS victims and their friends and family. They are trusted counselors who know how to help individuals face a life-threatening disease, they can apply the same skills they have used in the past for those suffering from cancer. A significant difference, and one that touches every caregiver, is that AIDS primarily strikes young people who are in the productive years of their lives, as well as babies and young children. Ministers are experienced at helping people face the eternal question of death and a life hereafter. Their assistance can be valuable when patients learn they are infected with the AIDS virus.

The educational role of ministers ex-

tends beyond their congregation or institution to the community. Although sexual promiscuity and intravenous drug abuse are major factors in the spread of the AIDS virus, the church cannot merely oppose these behaviors. It must do something more. What does the church have to say about healing for the broken people who trade life for sex and drugs? The caring church must become so grateful for the gift of grace that it will extravagantly share the good news as it provides healing from loneliness, ostracism, and guilt. We must realize that gays, prostitutes, and intravenous drug users are Christ's children also.

We need to become communities who realize that ethnicity enhances education, including education to avoid HIV infection. Black and Hispanic churches need to make major commitments to their own young. Inner-city churches need to become refugees for the disadvantaged and those in despair. In these communities, the incidence of infection with HIV is increasing alarmingly. In the United States 24 percent of persons with AIDS are Black, while Blacks represent only 12 percent of the population; 14 percent of persons with AIDS are Hispanic, while Hispanics represent only 7 percent of the population. Seventy percent of women with AIDS are Black or Hispanic.¹ The high rate of AIDS in these ethnic groups appears to be related primarily to intravenous drug users, their sexual partners, and babies born to infected women.

When school boards are forced to deal with students known to be HIV-infected, they need the wise counsel of individuals knowledgeable about the disease. Often when groups lack adequate information, they tend to substitute

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The virus cannot attach to skin cells or to the cells in the respiratory system.

opinion for fact. Ministers, as members of those boards, can recommend the best of scientific counsel before making policy decisions.

What are the latest facts?

AIDS is caused by a virus called the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), so named because it attacks and depresses the body's immune system. In particular, the virus attacks the T-helper lymphocyte, the thymus-educated cell that serves as the "leader of the orchestra," to coordinate the reaction of the immune system to invading cells. When a person has a depressed or deficient immune system, he or she becomes susceptible to infections and cancers that his or her immune systems normally could ward off.

Under an electron microscope the HIV looks as if it has spikes all over its surface. These spikes are like the hooks of Velcro. When the virus enters the body, through the blood or by sexual intercourse, it binds to body cells that have the appropriate loops, or receptors, for virus attachment. Specific receptors on the host cells, called CD₄, are the only sites where the HIV will attach and enter. T-helper lymphocytes, brain cells, macrophages, and colorectal cells all have these receptors. The virus cannot attach to skin cells or to the cells in the respiratory system. This helps to explain why you cannot get the virus by touching a doorknob, tableware, toilet seat, or by breathing in the virus, shaking hands, or touching a person with AIDS.

The virus is transmitted from one person to another by sexual intercourse

(either homosexual or heterosexual), by intravenous drug use, by transfusion with infected blood or blood products, and perinatally, from infected mother to baby. Semen, blood, pus, and vaginal secretions contain large numbers of the virus. These account for 96 percent of HIV transmission. The remaining 4 percent are transmitted perinatally or by accidents that occur in the health-care setting. Although saliva, tears, urine, and feces may occasionally contain HIV, they have very low infectivity. None of the first 70,000 reported cases of AIDS studied were transmitted by these fluids.

The virus knows no sexual orientation. It is transmitted by people with high-risk behaviors. High-risk behaviors include sharing blood-contaminated syringes and needles, sexual relations with an intravenous drug abuser and/or an HIV-infected person, and anal sex with infected persons. There is an increased transmissibility if individuals are already infected with another sexually transmitted disease that produces genital lesions, such as syphilis or herpes.

Before 1985 the virus was frequently transmitted by transfusion of infected blood and blood products. Since that date, the blood supply in the developed countries of the world has been protected by a laboratory test, and the risk of acquiring AIDS from a transfusion is now very low (1 in 40,000 to 250,000). There is not now, nor has there ever been, a risk from donating blood. In fact, with the continuing need for uninfected blood, Christians can give the "gift of life" by donating blood regularly.

Mosquitoes or other biting insects do not transmit the virus. There is good epidemiological and laboratory evidence for this.² In Belle Glade, Florida, the documented high infection rate was caused by intravenous drug use, not mosquitoes. Children, who have the most exposure to mosquitoes, had antibodies to mosquito-borne infections, but they did not have antibodies to the HIV. Those with HIV antibodies did not have antibodies to mosquito-borne infections.

For an infectious disease to be vector-transmitted, the infectious agent must survive in the insect long enough for the vector to inoculate another host. HIV cannot do this. Laboratory studies show that after mosquitoes eat a blood meal from an HIV-infected person, the RNA (genetic material) of the HIV can be found in the mosquitoes, but that RNA

quickly disintegrates in mosquitoes. HIV does not survive, let alone multiply, in mosquitoes. Even when mosquitoes feeding on HIV-infected blood have their meal interrupted, they do not transmit HIV to a person they bite a few seconds later.

Within three to four weeks of inoculation by the virus, a person becomes capable of transmitting the virus. The person is *infectious* and remains infectious for the rest of his or her life. The antibody test currently being used, called ELISA (enzyme-linked immunoabsorbent assay) does not test positive until at least six to twelve weeks after inoculation with the virus, and may not yield a positive result for as long as three years. This means that an infected person can infect others even though he or she tests negative. The antibody test remains positive for life, occasionally becoming negative in the late stages of AIDS, although the individual is still infectious. Newer tests under development may be able to detect the virus within two weeks after inoculation, before the individual becomes infectious.

In adults the incubation period, the time between inoculation and appearance of symptoms of AIDS, varies from two to twelve years, and may be even longer in some individuals. Accumulated data has shown that the period from the onset of symptoms to death may vary from one to four years. Newborn children die faster, usually not living beyond two years.

There is no known cure for AIDS. There is no way to remove the virus from the body once it has entered the host cells, although researchers are hunting for points at which to intervene in the life cycle of the virus. Health promotion activities, such as maintaining good nutrition and getting sufficient rest and exercise, may help an HIV-infected individual deal with opportunistic infections, but will not cure the infection. Once the virus has entered the host cells, it can remain hidden for years as a "provirus." It produces no symptoms, but the individual remains infectious and will eventually develop symptomatic AIDS.

Studies indicate that in at least 40 percent of persons with AIDS there is evidence of central nervous system involvement.³ Often symptoms of central nervous systems involvement, such as forgetfulness, loss of concentration, confusion and slowness of thought, depres-

sion, and loss of fine motor skills, precede the onset of other symptoms of AIDS by a year. AIDS dementia complex describes a wide range of impairment of the central nervous system that presents special problems to home caregivers or to employers of individuals thus impaired.

Challenges to Ministers

How will you answer the parents who fear sending their youth to a boarding school when they hear a student with AIDS has been accepted there? Is AIDS transmitted casually, by drinking fountains, in bathrooms, or in the food service? The answer is no. Schools should not discriminate against HIV-infected students, but rather should educate all students about the means of transmission of this virus. The lifestyle that Christians have advocated for centuries is still the best protection: no sexual experimentation before marriage and a committed monogamous relationship with a trusted spouse. Schools can accept students with AIDS who are physically and mentally able to benefit from school attendance.

How will you counsel families caring for persons with AIDS at home? Because of sexual intercourse, spouses risk becoming infected. Studies indicate, however, that other family members are at no risk, even when sharing bathrooms, kitchen facilities, food, even toothbrushes.^{4, 5} A simple disinfectant of chlorine bleach (1:10 solution) is sufficient to clean equipment soiled by contact with the patient's body fluids. Ministers can safely visit such patients at home or hospital, and need not fear giving a comforting touch, even a hug.

Since thus far 78 percent of the cases of AIDS have been among homosexual or bisexual males, what counsel are you able to give to parents of gay sons? First, assure them that today gays are among the most knowledgeable individuals on AIDS. They now know the high-risk behaviors to avoid. Second, avoid judgmental comments about the choices the son has made. Parents have already asked themselves, "Why? What did we do to cause this?" Third, encourage parents to maintain contact with their sons as nonjudgmentally as possible. They need not agree with the choices their sons have made, but rejection will only hurt everyone concerned.

What if persons with AIDS attend your church? Welcome them. Shake their hands, give them a hug. Ask them to become members. Invite them to par-

ticipate in foot-washing and Communion services. Bring them home to dinner after the services; invite them to the social functions of the church.

How will you help the youth in your church avoid high-risk behaviors? Es-

tablish a warm and open relationship with them. Don't use scare techniques, but do make clear the risks involved with sexual and drug experimentation. Even one such contact with an HIV-infected person can be one too many.

A statement about AIDS from the Seventh-day Adventist Church

The acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is a disease caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). The disease AIDS usually occurs years after a person is first infected with HIV. This disease usually results in death. Because AIDS disrupts the immune system, a person is unable to resist life-threatening infections and certain cancers. AIDS can also begin as "slim disease," with fever and wasting, or with neurological impairment that includes dementia and personality changes.

HIV is transmitted when body fluids (primarily blood, semen, and vaginal secretions) from an infected person enter the bloodstream of another. Most commonly this occurs during sexual intercourse. HIV can be transmitted during heterosexual as well as homosexual activity. The risk of infection increases with certain sexual practices and when there are multiple sexual partners. The second most common means of transmission is by the sharing of needles and syringes by intravenous users. In this way they inject themselves with both the drug and infected blood. Because most poor countries have inadequate health-care dollars, they cannot afford to test to ensure that blood used for transfusions is free of HIV contamination, nor can they afford an adequate supply of sterile needles for health care.

During the past few years the number of diagnosed AIDS cases has been doubling each year. The disease has been reported in more than 150 countries. In some countries the problem has already reached epidemic proportions and threatens a large segment of the population.

The Christian's response to a person with AIDS must be personal

—compassionate, helpful, and redemptive. In Jesus' day leprosy carried the same social stigma that AIDS carries today. Jesus cared about those with leprosy. He met with and touched lepers so that He might offer hope and healing (see Matt. 8:1-4). Christ gave of Himself so that He might care for the leper. Those who care for patients with AIDS, feeding and bathing them and rubbing their aching bodies, do not by such actions increase their personal risk of becoming infected with HIV. We need to heed James's advice: "What good is there in your saying to them, 'God bless you! Keep warm and eat well!'—if you don't give them the necessities of life?" (James 2:16, TEV). While a person with AIDS needs a listening ear, that person also needs someone to bring food and to be near, someone who will care and share in suffering.

Human sexuality is God's gift to humanity. God created sexuality and called it "good." In our sexuality we experience God's love. Giving, serving another, sharing intimate love with another, is the biblical view of human sexuality. Biblical sexuality prevents the trivializing of sex and the consequent increased exposure to HIV.

AIDS is preventable. It can be prevented by avoiding sexual contact before marriage and by maintaining a faithful, monogamous, heterosexual relationship with an uninfected person in marriage for life. It can be prevented by avoiding illicit intravenous drugs. It can be prevented by ensuring that there are sterile needles and equipment for medical care. Through educational efforts all known measures that reduce the risk of AIDS transmission should be encouraged.

While health scientists have been shown to be the most credible sources of information about AIDS, well-informed ministers who avoid judgmental pronouncements may also prove trusted confidants.

Chaplains have special opportunities to become members of health-care teams in dealing with the psychological and spiritual needs of HIV-infected individuals and persons with AIDS. Times of particular need are: when a person first learns of an HIV-positive test (it is not an immediate death threat); when an HIV-infected mother delivers an infected baby (50 percent of babies delivered to infected mothers are infected); when a patient comes in with the first opportunistic infection (most of these can be successfully treated); when the AIDS patient is dying (spiritual peace is especially meaningful then).

The church can be an island of sanity in the hysterical response to the AIDS epidemic. The church needs to be about its mission incarnated in a sinful and dangerous world. It needs to move forward with confidence, knowing that it is God's agent of redemption. It can trust God, and with courage minister to those afflicted with HIV infections. It can touch them, knowing that touch heals and does not spread the infection. We can bring a last message of hope to persons with AIDS. God, not AIDS, has the last word regarding eternal life, and persons with AIDS need to know the good news that ministers can share. ■

¹ D. R. Hopkins, "AIDS in Minority Populations in the United States," *Public Health Reports* 102, No. 6 (1987): 677.

² W. Booth, "AIDS and Insects," *Science* 237, (1987): 355.

³ D. A. Navia, R. D. Jordan, and R. W. Price, "Central Nervous System Complications of Immunosuppression," in J. E. Parrillo, H. Masur, eds., *The Critically Ill Immunosuppressed Patient* (Rockville, Md.: Aspen Publishers, 1987).

⁴ J. E. Kaplan, J. M. Oleske, and J. P. Getchell, "Evidence Against Transmission of Human T-lymphocyte Virus/Lymphadenopathy Associated Virus (HTLV-III/LAV) in Families of Children With the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome," *Pediatric Infectious Disease* (1985): 469-471.

⁵ M. A. Fischl, G. Dickinson, G. Scott, M. Klimas, and W. Parks, "Evaluation of Household Contacts of Adult Patients With the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome," quoted in *Morbidity-Mortality Weekly Report*, January 1981-February 1986, p. 109.

Making friends

From page 17

Most important, being open to new friendships means acknowledging your need of them. Ross points out in her book that "the admission of such needs by clergy wives and the abandonment of a phony posture of self-sufficiency will lead to a greater maturity."⁵

One young pastor's wife hadn't even realized how she had assumed this falsely superior attitude. "I was shocked when a friend told me that I came across as highly self-sufficient in our church. Unintentionally I had been putting others off, keeping them at a safe arm's length even when I was feeling my loneliest. Ironically," she smiled, "it took a good friend to help me see this."

Another woman said that she didn't realize the potential for friendship in her church until it was time to leave. "When my husband and I decided to take a call to another part of the country, we explained to our members that it was because we needed to be closer to family. Later one woman who had always been very kind to us met me with an indignant look on her face and said, 'But we're family too!'"

"I realized she was right. There were some wonderful, funny, interesting people in that church. But I'd been so busy feeling sorry for myself that I'd failed to notice many of the times they'd reached out to me."

Acknowledging her needs for friendship and doing what she can to overcome the obstacles that may exist in her church will help a pastor's wife feel more a part of her church family. It will better enable her to break through some of the phony facades that both clergy and laity sometimes hide behind. And hopefully, it will help find some irreplaceable friends. ■

¹ These women ranged in ages from 27 to 40, and had spent anywhere from 1½ to 17 years with their husbands in the ministry. One woman's husband had left the pastoral ministry and had gone into another related career. While these interviews in no way pretend to be an exhaustive study, they do reflect some common feelings of pastors' wives in different situations.

² Quoted in Charlotte Ross, *Who Is the Minister's Wife? A Search for Personal Fulfillment* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1980), p. 67.

³ Ruth Senter, *So You're the Pastor's Wife* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), pp. 87, 88.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

⁵ Ross, p. 53.

Is competition a moral issue?

From page 21

get ahead. You've got to be first, number 1, have the most numbers, compete."

We cannot humble ourselves before God and exalt ourselves before humanity simultaneously. Jesus descended from the highest to the lowest position in the universe. By contrast, Lucifer strove for the highest position, and he tries to dupe his subjects into following his philosophy.

Like polygamy in Old Testament times, competition so permeates our culture that we accept it and shrug our shoulders as if to say who can fight one's culture. But the gospel offers us hope: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God remake you that your whole attitude of mind is changed" (Rom. 12:2, Phillips).

Jacob and David did serve God while practicing polygamy. And we can serve God while retaining competition as a part of our lives. But is that God's ideal? As Christians who believe in the soon coming of Jesus we should be aiming for the very highest of moral standards rather than seeking accommodation with this world as it passes away.

In his book *No Contest—The Case Against Competition*, Alfie Kohn lists four myths regarding competition: (1) competition is an unavoidable part of human nature; (2) competition motivates us to do our best; (3) contests provide the best way to have a good time; and (4) competition builds character and develops self-confidence. His book demolishes each of these myths and then makes the case that cooperation rather than competition encourages the optimum character development.

Kohn quotes Vera J. Elleson concerning the danger of competition: "The prevailing mode of competition in American culture thus continues despite convincing evidence that it is dangerous to physical, spiritual, emotional, and social health" (p. 182).

If a secular sociologist can be so concerned, should Christians be any less concerned? What do you think? Should Christians support competition, cooperation, or both? Is competition a moral issue?—J. David Newman. ■

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God: A Biography

Steven R. Mosley, *Questar Publishers, Phoenix, Arizona, 1988, 320 pages, \$14.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Kenneth R. Wade, book review editor, Ministry.*

To know what a man or woman is really like, you must watch him or her in action. The same is true of God. To really know Him we need to see how He acts and reacts in day-to-day life.

That is the beauty of this biography of God. It is no theological treatise, but a seemingly unending stream of factual accounts of God's dealing with people from Arkansas to Zion via Bucharest, Chicago, Dallas, Kiev, Rawalpindi, Siberia, Tokyo, and a hundred other places.

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Mosley's training and expertise is in writing screenplays for movies and television. He brings the techniques he developed there to the printed page by leading readers through a series of fascinating vignettes illustrating God's activity, and sometimes His seeming refusal to act, in human lives.

This is not a haphazardly arranged collection of stories, though. Each account is carefully woven into the fabric of a chapter on a particular aspect of God's character. And the 20 chapters are gathered under seven major headings, including "Shimmering Sword," "Omnipotent Restraint," "Sovereign Servant," and "Absolutely Personal."

This biography would make a great gift for someone who is struggling with questions about faith. But it will serve equally well for a Christian whose strong faith thrives on timely fortification.

Free to Soar

David and Jan Congo, *Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 192 pages, \$10.95, hardcover. Reviewed by Sally Streib, a pastor's wife who works with Shepherdess International.*

As the central theme of their book, David and Jan Congo focus upon the idea that the "power of love" surpasses the

"love of power" as a basis for the marriage relationship.

The intriguing chapter titles lure the reader into a lively and practical text that gives creative suggestions to enrich the marriage relationship. Checklists provide for evaluation and comparison.

Three basic marriage styles are presented and contrasted. The first, called the unhealthy hierarchy, describes marriages in which the male or female dominates an overly submissive spouse. There is also the "two-headed monster," in which both partners attempt to control the relationship.

A second style, the isolated marriage, occurs when each person lives independently of the other, sharing only a house and a minimum of togetherness. It is typified by self-centered behavior and brings little satisfaction to either partner.

Most of the book centers on the third style, interdependence. The Congos have ideas that can help readers use the power of love to share their real selves and nurture and accept their mates. The book is loaded with creative ideas to help readers adopt a more affirmative and enjoyable approach in the marriage relationship, and even learn to use conflict as a tool for mutual growth.

From Mind to Heart: Christian Meditation Today

Peter Toon, *Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, 1987, 142 pages, \$6.95, paper. Reviewed by Leo R. Van Dolsen, retired Seventh-day Adventist minister and editor.*

Christian meditation concentrates on the revealed Word of God and includes the full use of the capacity of the mind. It differs from the meditation of Eastern religions in which the attention is on the repetition of a single word and special emphasis is given to one's posture and breathing. A more important difference is that in Eastern meditation people are primarily engaged in a search for their "true selves." But in Christian meditation they are in search of their Maker.

Meditation is important because Christians need to "be still" in prayer and contemplation in order to escape the

constant cacophony of noise that surrounds them and come into close communion with God.

In this volume meditation includes self-examination, careful thinking on spiritual things, quiet reflection, insight, illumination, and thoughtful application. The author defines it as "a duty before God which is inextricably united to the hearing, receiving, remembering, and recalling of the truth; to the work of the Spirit in the heart and mind; to the obeying of the gospel; to trust in God; and to loving and serving Him, in Christ's name."

How does this differ from what most Christians already practice to some degree? The author gives a more direct, organized, systematic approach, listing nine specific steps to assist in achieving a formal fixed-time meditation. Toon likes to begin with Bible study, feeling that the fruit of such meditation is prayer.

The book contains a valuable, although slightly overdrawn, discussion of meditation in the Bible. There is also a brief survey of the methods of meditation practiced by Catholics, Reformers, and Puritans. Toon emphasizes the importance of the sanctified imagination, suggesting that we let the mind dwell on scenes of Christ's life and ministry.

The Reincarnation Sensation

Norman L. Geisler and J. Yutaka Amano, *Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois, 1987, 192 pages, \$6.95, paper. Reviewed by Ella M. Rydzewski, editorial assistant, Ministry.*

The Reincarnation Sensation presents its subject from a mainstream Christian perspective. Spreading out from its original roots in Eastern religion, belief in reincarnation finds fertile soil in Western society among those seeking to transcend a threatened world.

Many Westerners claim that their belief in reincarnation is based on hypnotically induced past-life regressions. But the authors point out that those who experience such regressions usually already believe in reincarnation or have been culturally conditioned to believe it.

Geisler and Amano describe 10 different models of reincarnation from

Hinduism to "Christian" models. The Christian models are based on speculations that reflect a common desire not to die. Christian reincarnationists read their doctrine into numerous Bible texts, and the authors deal skillfully with these.

Reincarnation speaks to the human desire for love, mercy, justice, morality, and life after death. The part of the book that most interested me was the authors' discussion of reincarnations' abhorrence of the doctrine of hell. The authors point out that Christian reincarnationists seek to prove their belief by saying that it fits better with the idea of a loving God. The authors' attempts to justify belief in a loving God who torments people eternally sound hollow beside the reincarnationists' arguments. The reincarnationists appropriately call an eternally burning hell "penal overkill." And while the authors defend eternal torment, they accuse the reincarnationists of being unjust when they claim that people are punished for sin in a past life they don't remember!

Although reincarnation is definitely not a biblical doctrine, it seems that Christian reincarnationist Geddes MacGregor hit closer to the truly biblical viewpoint than Geisler and Amano. MacGregor suggests that "the notion that many people might be simply extinguished, fading gradually out of existence, seems to me more intelligible. Such people do not want existence. Why, then, should the gift be thrust upon them?"

Neither reincarnation nor the doctrine of eternal torment in hell is biblical, for both present a distorted view of the nature of God and man. This book should cause Christians to analyze the role their nonbiblical traditions have played in setting the stage for the reincarnation sensation.

Christian responses to the New Age movement

The New Age movement has in some ways been a boon to Christian publishing houses. Many books on the topic have been printed in the past five years, with the majority having arrived in 1987 and 1988. The following list is not exhaustive, but represents a good sampling of the most commonly available Christian books about the movement.

The Hidden Dangers of the Rainbow

Constance Cumbey, *Huntington House,*

Inc., Shreveport, Louisiana, 1983, 268 pages, \$6.95, paper.

In many ways this is the book that got it all started as far as Christian concern about the New Age movement goes. Cumbey feels she has carefully documented the basis for her fear that the movement is a closely knit conspiracy to wipe out Christianity, but she tends to draw on quotations from people on the fringes of the New Age movement to prove her point. Using her tactics, one could easily make a similar case against almost any highly diverse movement, including the Christian church. In one chapter she draws parallels between the New Age movement and the Third Reich. While there is some validity to the point she makes, the fact is that the movement includes people with such diverse beliefs that it is unfair to attribute the evil motives of some to all.

The Seduction of Christianity

Dave Hunt and T. H. McMahon, *Harvest House Publishers, Eugene, Oregon, 1985, \$7.95, 240 pages, paper.*

The chief point of this book, which has been one of the most popular books dealing with the New Age movement, is that New Age philosophy is infiltrating the church and turning Christian leaders into New Age apostles unawares. The authors are careful to document all of their charges with quotations from the offending Christians, yet the book aroused enough of a furor that Hunt wrote *Beyond Seduction* to answer the charges of those who felt *Seduction* had been unfair.

Beyond Seduction

Dave Hunt, *Harvest House, 1987, 282 pages, \$7.95, paper.*

This is Hunt's defense of the thesis of his previous book. The subtitle indicates that this book calls for a return to biblical Christianity, but the majority of the book follows the pattern of its predecessor in documenting the move away from true Christianity. Both books suffer from the tendency of the authors to read ideas into the writings of other authors, yet these books are valuable as correctives to protect Christians from being led astray because of an inadequate biblical foundation.

Peace, Prosperity, and the Coming Holocaust

Dave Hunt, *Harvest House, 1983, 282 pages, \$6.95, paper.*

As one of the first Christian books to

address the movement, this helped to spread the "Nazis in New Age disguise" fear that alarmed many Christians. Hunt here posits the demise of civilization as we know it at the hands of many devious forces that will unite against Christians. But not to worry, Hunt believes the true Christians will be raptured away from all this trouble. The book does have several good chapters that are helpful in explaining various facets of the movement.

Dark Secrets of the New Age

Texe Marrs, *Crossway Books, Westchester, Illinois, 1987, 288 pages, \$8.95, paper; Mystery Mark of the New Age* Texe Marrs, *Crossway Books, 1988, 288 pages, \$8.95, paper.*

The dark secret is that New Agers are just revitalized Nazis who are awaiting their chance to destroy Christians. Much like Cumbey, Marrs delights in quoting people from the fringes of the movement and attributing their thoughts to the movement as a whole. When that won't do, he quotes New Age leaders out of context and implies that they are saying something different from what they intended. If that is the best way he can find to prove his point, the point shouldn't be made. The alarmist methodology employed in these two books can only serve to alienate Christians from people who may be attracted to New Age philosophy but could just as well be attracted by true Christian spirituality.

The New Age Rage

Karen Hoyt and the *Spiritual Counterfeits Project, Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey, 1987, 263 pages, \$6.95, paper.*

This book has been carefully written by eight authors, each of whom has dealt with a particular area of expertise. There is no intention to alarm here; rather there is a chapter that points out that conspiracy claims are easy to make but difficult to prove. And another chapter deals with ways of building bridges to reach out to New Age people. The one weakness of the book is that the collection of essays is never brought together to form a unit that the reader can easily grasp.

Unmasking the New Age

Douglas R. Groothuis, *InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Illinois, 1986, 194 pages, \$6.95, paper.*

Groothuis takes a calm, rational stance

similar to that found in *The New Age Rage*. Indeed, he is one of the contributing authors of that book. This is one of the best introductory works available for helping a person to understand the movement. Groothuis offers an easily comprehended definition of the major tenets of the movement, complete with examples, in the first chapter. From there he deals with leaders of the movement and what they teach, gives a critique of the major tenets, and suggests ways to reach out to people involved in New Age activities.

Confronting the New Age

Douglas R. Groothuis, *InterVarsity Press*, 1988, 230 pages, paper, \$7.95.

Groothuis wrote this book to develop further some aspects of Christians in relation to the New Age movement that were touched on lightly in his earlier book. He has continued his balanced approach to the New Age movement, and suggests that there are six pitfalls to avoid in dealing with the New Age. These pitfalls range from the quarantine method that totally avoids contact to the chameleon method that absorbs too much of the New Age culture.

The book not only suggests positive ways of reaching out, it provides good sound theological arguments for use in confronting the New Age movement.

New Age Medicine

Paul C. Reisser, Teri K. Reisser, and John Weldon, *InterVarsity Press*, 1987, 204 pages, \$7.95, paper.

This specialized book deals with just one area of New Age activity—holistic health. It gives good, well-thought-out consideration to many of the “new” therapies. The section on acupuncture is especially enlightening. The authors have not been content to deal only with techniques, but have taken a probing look at the philosophy that undergirds holism and the search for alternative forms of medicine. In doing this, they set the stage for one of the final chapters in which they suggest ways an individual can make his or her own decision about a therapy.

The Universe Next Door

James S. W. Sire, *InterVarsity Press*, second edition, 1988, 246 pages, \$8.95, paper.

Sire deals with several philosophies that confront Christians today. The fact that he deals with the New Age movement near the end of the book contributes to the strength of his treatment, because he points out how the movement

has absorbed or reacted to the other philosophies he has mentioned. Sire also ventures to define the basic tenets of the movement, and gives examples to help the reader understand. The definitions are accurate, but somewhat complex.

Understanding Cults and New Religions

Irving Hexham and Karla Poewe, William B. Eerdmans, *Grand Rapids*, 1986, 192 pages, \$8.95, paper.

This is one of the most helpful books for giving a basic understanding of the background of the New Age movement. Hexham and Poewe (who now, incidentally, share the same last name) have produced a thoroughly researched book dealing with the mythological background of many of the belief systems that contribute to the New Age movement. This book is required for anyone who wishes to understand the basis of New Age belief. ■



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Hebrew and Greek vocabulary software

Many who learn a biblical language end up making little use of their study because they fail to maintain their vocabulary. Memorization Technology, a Silicon Valley-based software company, is improving the long-term value of biblical language study by focusing the visual and computational power of the personal computer on the tasks of vocabulary acquisition and maintenance.

Their new programs, MEMCARDS: *Biblical Hebrew Vocabulary* and MEMCARDS: *Biblical Greek Vocabulary*, work like on-screen flashcards, but with a twist: they keep track of all your responses and continually calculate whether each item is in your long-term memory, your short-term memory, or not memorized at all. With this information, you can focus your attention on those items that need further work. The programs also feature large, readable on-screen characters and a unique, high-speed drilling method. This all adds up to a vocabulary acquisition tool that is faster and more effective than

traditional methods.

The programs include grouping and subsetting facilities, editing and customization facilities (these allow you to put your own material on the flashcards—a feature *Ministry* editors have found useful), a printing capability, and compatibility with stu-

dent vocabularies that are available as paperback booklets. The programs cost \$29.95 each and require an IBM-PC or -compatible with graphics capability. For more information, write Memorization Technology, Dept. M1, P.O. Box 778, Menlo Park, CA 94026-0778.

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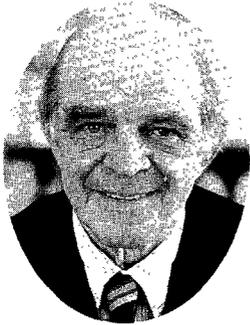
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