

Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

February 1997



FOCUSING OUR

M I S S I O N

*Recasting
the Original
Challenge*

Discipleship

A great Amen to James A. Cress's short but accurate article "Let's Abolish the Laity" and to the revealing study of James R. Kilmer's "Stop the Burnout, Enjoy the Ministry" (June 1996). I suspect that it would take many years for the Adventist ministerial mind-set to realize that the main job description of ministry is to make disciples (Matt. 28:19). For many years our church, as many other Protestant denominations, has gotten sidetracked from this New Testament teaching and particularly from the specific advice from the Spirit of Prophecy. Because of this, it has fallen also into the trap of institutionalism and clericalism, the root cause of the distance between the laity and clergy and also the delay in finishing the gospel commission.

However, because of the many books written on this important area, I'm beginning to see light at the end of the tunnel. Disciple-making should be incorporated in our colleges and seminary ministerial curriculum if we want to have in our next Adventist generation real Christian disciples instead of just religious believers.

Approximately four years ago, after 16 years in the ministry, I finally realized by special calling from God the importance of equipping the saints for the work of ministry. This awakening caused me to establish a lay training institute involving all the area churches and a discipleship center at my local church in Miami. It has been a wonderful and rewarding experience to see the laity come alive in spiritual renewal and commitment to disciple-making outreach. I could testify that this experience has brought wonderful changes in my personal life and within my overall ministerial experience. Disciple-making really works! That's what

ministry is all about. Nothing more, nothing less.—Manuel Fernandez, pastor, Miami, Florida.

Ministerial evaluation: pitfalls and opportunities

I read with interest Prudence and Leslie Pollard's article on ministerial evaluation in the August 1996 edition of *Ministry*. I am delighted that this subject is at last receiving active consideration within the church administration, but there are a couple points I would like to raise.

First, they appear to assume that the appraisal/evaluation will be done by someone from the conference office. Even a small conference will have upwards of 50 ministers. One person cannot possibly properly appraise that many people. In order for proper informed evaluation to work, and for other good cost-cutting reasons, there needs to be a radical restructuring of the church organization.

With the advent of new freeways, telecommunications, and computers, the need for separate conferences has disappeared. What is now needed is one union consisting of a number of areas headed up by an area superintendent or, may I suggest, a "bishop." (It is a good biblical title.) Each area should consist of about 10 pastors. The bishop should then be commissioned to spend at least 60 percent of the time working with the pastors, sitting in on their sermons, visiting them in their homes, attending board meetings, etc. After each session there should be a brief period of assessment, a curbside conference, where the good points are praised, suggestions are made for areas in which a little extra attention or a slight change of tactics might help, and some new targets set, based on what went on during the visit.

The bishop should be seen by the pastor as a supporter and by the congregation as a senior pastor. In

this way mutual confidence will be built up, and when the formal appraisal time comes around, there should be no fear. The pastor should be able to look forward to the opportunity to express hopes and aspirations and discuss further development courses or experiences according to particular needs or aspirations. Only those who know they are falling down on the job should fear appraisal. A conference president or ministerial secretary cannot possibly spend sufficient time with every pastor in the conference to carry out a fully meaningful and informed appraisal.

Each visit by the bishop should be viewed as on-the-job training and a demonstration exercise. People learn far more by example and practical, supported experience than they ever do in the classroom.

Second, the Pollards' paper suggests that the church elders and congregation should be involved formally in the appraisal process. I feel this would be a highway to disaster. If the process above were adopted, the good appraiser would pick up, in the course of time with the pastor, the congregation's reaction to that pastor without their knowing it, and that, I am convinced, would give a much truer picture. Abolition of the conferences would free up the resources to cover the cost of these bishops.

I also believe that this plan would do much to raise the morale of our ministry once they realized that the bishop was not there just to criticize, but to help and support. Also, the membership would have someone to go to in a much more formal way if they were dissatisfied with any aspect of the minister's work.—Antony P. Welch, Suffolk, England.

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Here's reality. Things change!

In the two years since my mother's death, I have been forced to revise my worldview of how things "ought" to be. I had always expected—as Mom, herself, believed—that she would live to see Jesus return. The consistency of her life as a confident believer, a pastor's wife, and parent to a brood of pastors-in-the-making was never in question. She was confident of her faith's outcome, and she never appeared to move her focus off the goal.

But things change. Despite my opinion of how things would turn out, Mom didn't live to see Jesus come. I admit to intense struggle in recasting my personal vision of life when "the end" cannot now occur as I had always thought it would.

In this issue you will see several authors struggle with recasting their vision as God's people in the reality of disappointed dreams and changing societies. The good old days are primarily good because of our nostalgic reflections. Few of us would really return if time travel were possible. Pastors today are called to minister despite fractured visions of how things ought to be. Our editor, Will Eva, is joined by Russell Staples, Ron Wisbey, Ralph and Beatrice Neall, and Dan Bentzinger in challenging our thinking about recasting our vision in the harsh realities of today.

The good news is that while things change, Jesus doesn't. And the victory will come—perhaps not exactly as I planned it, but *exactly* as He plans it!



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Recasting our vision

Will Eva

Every significant movement has been sired and then sustained by a vision that inspired people at the core of their spirit and the fountainhead of their imagination. Such visions have had the capacity to probe the most mystifying riddles of life. When we see them and allow them to confront us, they often strike our humanity in the thigh of its greatest vulnerability yet give us courage to ford our feared Jabboks and return to our true home (Gen. 32:22-33:20). Such visions touch down and settle like tongues of fire on the heads and in the hearts of those who are searching the face of God for something beyond that which they already have, or with which they have become vaguely dissatisfied.

It is not at all coincidental that the Bible begins with a description of this world as being formless, dark, and empty, waiting for the Spirit of God to move upon it to give it substance, shape, and soul. It is clearly not coincidental either that the overall framework of the Bible is fashioned from events similar to this first one. Noah burning with a vision that included the necessary breaking down and reshaping of the earth itself into a new order. Abraham called out of ancient Ur and the traditional gods of his ancestors into an at first rather vague new country that God would show him. Moses encountering the irrepressible urge to turn aside from his safe and secluded way of life to hear God's voice and receive a disturbing but far-reaching vision for himself and his people. Nehemiah hearing of the broken-down walls of Jerusalem, weeping and praying and confessing and then implementing the

great dream to rebuild the beloved city. Then of course there is the ultimate expression of this in Jesus and the arrival of "the fullness of time," when He, the foundational vision, arrived "to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons" (Gal. 4:5, RSV). And each of these biblical movements, especially the last, is prophetic of the final transition when Christ breaks into the present order, consummating the ultimate progression at His second coming.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church began with a primal thrust of energy fueled directly by an original insight, dream, or vision, centering in Christ and His second coming. This vision came from God and has been sustained by Him in miraculous ways. But in Adventism, as in almost all great visionary movements, such a vision has hardly brought a movement into being when, growing out of the passionate belief of the visionaries, monumental efforts are made to *organize* so that the great truth discovered may be communicated and expressed in action.

This effort to organize moves quite naturally into a stage of *institutionalization*, when not only are buildings built (churches, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, publishing houses, conferences, and a General Conference), but doctrinal formulations are put into writing, policy structures are constituted, and organizational designs are instituted. Such a state of things has, historically speaking, hardly become satisfying to a new generation when the next stage tiptoes in almost unnoticed: *institutionalism*—when the institution takes on a life of its own,

more or less independent of the original driving inspiration. At the same time a significant dissatisfaction begins to stir, at first almost unnoticed in a now more sophisticated, multigenerationed, and enlarged membership.

This malaise opens the way for the stage of *questioning*. In the midst of this advanced phase another new generation begins to question the meaning of it all. Some become apprehensive about the original vision, which for them is all but dead. They tend to favor discarding the original dream and replacing it with something meaningful to them at the moment. Others go to the opposite extreme, insisting on a rather simplistic adherence to a hastily conceived, loyalistic version of what they see the original vision to have been and calling into question anyone who objects to what they advocate. Both approaches seriously threaten the long-term life of the movement, which is clearly at a decisive crossroad moment in its history.

During this period of questioning, another approach emerges. A burgeoning desire rises in the hearts of people that calls for a careful revisiting of the original vision and that prayerfully searches out a fresh expression and even recasting of that vision. A divinely inspired restlessness takes over, until both the objective and the subjective elements of the present faith actually express the original vision and possess its same spirit and action, speaking just as profoundly in the contemporary situation as they ever did in the beginning.

(continued on page 18)



Doubling as pastor/evangelist

Walter Pearson

Many outstanding ministers have blended the skills of the evangelist with those of the pastor. They creatively infuse the worship services with all the positive elements of an evangelistic crusade. The combination has the potential to enhance the spiritual lives of church members regardless of the particular demographic profile of the congregation. This rare breed includes ministers whose peculiar talent mix enables them to double as pastor/evangelists—genuine “switch hitters” who are able to wear one title and then another, depending on what the situation requires.

The wall that separates a sensitive pastor from a successful evangelist is not so formidable as some might imagine. There are qualities that both pastors and evangelists ought to possess. Each must have a genuine love for people and be able to demonstrate God's love for their fellow beings. Additionally, they must be able to see the big picture. “The Lord has need of all kinds of skillful workmen. ‘And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ’ (Eph. 4:11, 12). . . . Each worker in every branch of work in the Lord's vineyard must have a head and a heart sanctified through the truth to enable him to see not merely the part of the work which is under his supervision, but its relation to the great whole. When the workers are consecrated to God they will reveal the love of God for their brethren who

work under the unseen, divine Master Worker. ‘We are labourers together with God’ (1 Cor. 3:9).”*

One key to mastering these related gifts is to understand an important difference: one gift requires the flexibility of a diplomat, while the other assumes a high level of certainty and the unflagging persistence of a field general.

The congregation of yesteryear either preferred or was willing to accept a relatively dogmatic leadership style. The district pastor was often the most well-educated person in the congregation. Accordingly, that person wielded an inordinate amount of influence within and without the church. That authority was rarely challenged.

The paradigm shift

The paradigm has obviously changed. Not only is the pastor less likely to be counted the greatest within the congregation in terms of experience and educational accomplishments, but increasingly talents and gifts that are germane to the success of the organization are recognized among the members of a congregation. The pastor/local church administrator had better learn quickly to enlist the assistance of members with various gifts. A successful pastor will seek to identify, involve, train, and empower new leaders. These divergent gifts will usually add to the corporate strength of the church body, but they will also produce occasional friction. The pastor will need to be competent at conflict management and consensus building. Superlative diplomatic skills will

complement natural leadership abilities.

The game plan changes when the clarion call to evangelism is heard. The evangelistic crusade and, to a lesser extent, evangelistic flavor within the church program demand giving the trumpet “a certain sound.” The leader given to equivocation is not normally suited for the direct confrontation with the archenemy in his traditional territory. Neither is equivocation the element that has characteristically driven evangelistic preaching. In the fierce battle that ensues when the Lord's army seeks to rout the enemy and claim its turf, there is little to be gained from the spirit of compromise that is perfectly appropriate in a pastor's efforts to build bridges between individuals and groups.

Negotiation is the stuff of which treaties are made. It is almost always out of place when the battle is joined. Preparedness, certainty, and confidence are the hallmarks of a successful leader in this spiritual warfare.

The leader who would do well both as a pastor and as an evangelist will need to learn the necessity and efficacy of adaptation. The autocratic district pastor will probably encounter as many difficulties as the leader of an evangelistic team who insists on a consensus management model. It can be something like putting on a baseball uniform to play football. Equipment and skills that are perfectly suited for their intended spheres are disastrous when they're used in the wrong setting. ■

* Ellen G. White, *That I May Know Him* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1964), p. 323.

Maintaining the Adventist vision

Russell L. Staples

Adventist vision can be vibrant and alive only as we remain faithful to our Lord, His message, and His mission.



Russell Staples, Ph.D., is a former professor of missions at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

The driving force of vision in a religious movement can hardly be overestimated. Powerful religious visions function in several ways. First, they generate commitment to a core of beliefs and values. Second, they guide in the selection of appropriate courses of action, and even more so if the vision is clearly defined theologically. Third, an abiding vision functions as a standard for correction when expansion and altered circumstances lead to internal change. For instance, agencies and institutions that are developed as instruments of mission tend to develop purposes that may slowly deviate from the original purposes for which they were established. In such cases the light of the original vision may call the community back to faithfulness and guide in the resetting of its course.

The Wesleyan revival in mid-eighteenth-century Britain is a good example of the motivating and life-changing power of a great religious vision, and to a lesser degree of developments that may deflect a community of faith from its original course. As the evangelical revival in Britain was gaining strength, John Wesley came to a personal conviction regarding the way of salvation—a synthesis of justification by faith learned from the Moravians and an understanding of sanctification as a gracious healing of the corruption of human nature learned from the early Eastern Fathers. He became the apostle of a great movement. The vision was contagious. It is estimated that 10 years after his death, around the turn of the century, one out of every 30 English adults was a Methodist.¹

The Methodist Church in America at its founding conference in 1784 accepted and endorsed Wesley's vision as its defining purpose. Inspired by this vision, a faithful core of circuit-riding preachers proclaimed in every city and settlement the doctrine of human renewal and godlikeness by the power of God's grace. To the amazement of historians, within 75 years of its founding Methodism became the largest denomination in the United States and is generally regarded as the "most powerful religious movement in American history."²

Methodism changed lives and made people better citizens. It also engendered characteristics that made members prosperous. However, with the accumulation of wealth they became less intent upon the heavenly quest. Wesley anguished over this. In addition to frequent denunciations of greed and surplus accumulation by professed Christians, six of his 150 published sermons deal specifically with the danger of riches. His last published sermon, written with "dim eyes, shaking hands, and tottering feet,"³ is an almost despairing appeal to Methodists to rise above the temptation of riches that distracts from the quest for scriptural holiness. Yet it is ironic that the discipline and qualities engendered in the Methodist classes and societies were precisely those that equipped the Methodists to gain riches.

The Wesleyan revival is thus an example on more than one continent of the tremendous force and power of a great religious vision and of the subtlety with which detracting factors may arise and operate.

The origin of Adventist vision

Few churches owe their origin to the unfolding of as bright a vision of God's purposes as our own. And yet for all this, factors giving rise to the expansion and subsequent developments in the church are not entirely dissimilar to those that can be seen to have been operative in other movements.

The Millerite vision of a soon-coming Christ generated contagious enthusiasm and attracted a phenomenal body of disciples whose dedication to the cause was without reserve. Inspired by and trusting in this vision, which received new direction and shape by the vision of the three angels, the Seventh-day Adventist Church launched a great worldwide missionary movement.

By the end of the 1901-1903 reorganization the General Conference—in fact, the entire church—became a great missionary society that dedicated almost all of its resources to the proclamation of the three angels' messages in every place. Everybody lived for the proclamation of the message. A vast network of missionary ventures of all kinds, from personal Bible studies and public evangelistic endeavors to educational and medical institutions and literature ministries, were established all around the world with a dedicated corps of workers. In fact, this missionary movement and the level of support given to it by the churches everywhere became the envy of the wider Protestant missionary community.

The above description is characteristic of the church of my youth. As I look back, it seems as if the majority of teenage Adventists looked forward to service in "the work," whether at home or abroad, and significant members of most established Adventist families were "workers" of one kind or another. Members of the "Adventist family" (a term W. A. Spicer loved to use) lived for the "cause" and sought to hasten the day of the coming of the Lord.

The fact and force of all this did not fully dawn on my consciousness until it was triggered by three events in the year 1939. At family worship one

evening my father, reading from the *Review*, announced that the church had achieved a membership of 500,000. I had seen many small Adventist churches and thought of the denomination as being relatively small. But this was a very large number, and I was overjoyed.

Second, World War II broke out that year, and among other things this led to a heightening of the Adventist eschatological vision.

Third, toward the end of the year a vast congregation of Adventists filled the city hall in Sydney, Australia, to hear Elder Spicer. I remember the occasion almost as if it were yesterday. Spicer spoke of the hand of God in history and of the special mission and purpose of the Adventist Church. As he described the triumphs of the gospel, with many references to the faithfulness of believers in nation after nation, from east to west and north to south, the conviction seemed to grow that the Adventist Church was the hinge of history and that the work was almost done. I had grown up on the sawdust trail and heard much Adventist preaching, but I had never experienced a meeting like this nor heard as clear a portrayal of the special mission and purpose of the Adventist Church.

Decline in Adventist sense of mission

The Adventist Church has a strong sense of identity and is possessed with a zeal for the things of God. In most places it is growing steadily and rapidly. However, during the past 30 years there has been a gradual slowing of the outward missionary thrust from homeland churches. Whereas earlier it was the missionary zeal of the Adventist Church that amazed mission analysts, they now ask why both the missionary consciousness of Adventists and their outreach programs have declined as much as they have.

Factors accounting for this would seem to be many and complex. Perhaps the most significant is the very success of the missionary movement and the fact that large, responsible, and very zealous young Adventist churches have

been established in many places of earth. The younger churches now comprise approximately 90 percent of the Adventist world membership. It is easy to reason that the younger churches must now complete the work that has been so well begun in their countries, while we in the secular West get on with the difficult task of mission in our own lands.

Perhaps our selfishness has turned back upon us. Preserving our resources for better church buildings and schools and our own use generally has deprived us of the heartwarming feedback regarding the triumphs of the gospel experienced by our own missionaries in their soul-winning endeavors.

Perhaps thinking of the world in terms of nations has lulled us into complacency with the feeling that the work is almost done and blinded us to the many unreached people groups. Or have we perhaps tended to concentrate on the external aspects of the great vision that launched us on our cause—blame for the change of the Sabbath, the judgment of Babylon and her daughters, the future link between church and state, and so on—until there is no song of joy in the soul about the wonders of redeeming grace and the blessed hope of union with our Lord?

We could easily advance a dozen more equally valid reasons to account for this complex phenomenon, but this is a *Ministry* magazine and not a missions journal. In any case, it is not the external factors that are of primary interest to us here. Our concern is with the basic question regarding the maintenance of the spiritual vision that defines what it means to be an Adventist.

Being an Adventist: two dimensions

It would seem that there are two major dimensions to this challenge. The first relates to the intellectual/theological task of maintaining the clarity and relevance of the mission. The second, a less tangible and more difficult to define dimension of the human religious experience, relates to the maintenance of a spiritual vitality and ethos that give power and force to the vision.

In a seminar session I attended, two experienced anthropologists, one having worked in the South Pacific, the other in Africa, concurred in saying that the Adventist Church tended to produce a "schoolroom religion." That is to say, we tend to emphasize knowledge of doctrine and correct belief to the neglect of those aspects of religion having to do with the effect. In other words, the Adventist experience is intellectual but not spiritually powerful. This analysis immediately raised a set of questions in my mind: How would they evaluate the contemporary religious consciousness of the Adventist Church in the U.S.A.? Would they think it was adequately intellectual to engage the Western secular mind? And what about our corporate spirituality? I mention this not to endorse their judgment—such evaluations are relative—but to stimulate thought. Are we doing all we can and should to maintain the vision in both of the above respects?

Regarding the intellectual/theological task, we certainly teach doctrine diligently, but are we paying sufficient attention to making the vision clear and credible to the secular intellectual of our time? Because understandings of reality and ways of knowing are constantly changing—and never has change been more rapid than at present—the theological task is never completed. There are two parts to this task. The first is that of providing an intellectually credible portrayal of the message and meaning of the vision in contemporary thought forms. The second is to avoid cluttering it with so many ancillary concerns that the vision itself gets blurred in the haze. Both of these require much study and prayer for divine guidance. The vision must be explicated with compelling clarity if we hope to pass it on to our young people and attract those of the wider society to join us on our heavenward pilgrimage.

Vision and discipleship

But intellectual assent to the vision does not of itself inspire to action. As Wesley was fond of saying: "The devils believe but they be devils still." We cannot master the task rationally. It takes spiritual

conviction, the working of the Holy Spirit within the soul, to bring the vision to life and to motivate to discipleship. Our anthropologist friends would certainly say that experience is the most powerful part of religion. How do we do when it comes to this dimension of what it means to be an Adventist Christian walking in the full assurance of faith and rejoicing in the hope of the coming of our Lord? Have we learned to really rejoice in the Lord in our corporate experience, to confess together our well-founded hope, to sing songs of praise with full-throated voice, to pray, as before His presence, with solemnity and joy? Would those strangers among us at the table of our Lord sense that we partake of the emblems with the full depths of our being, identifying in every respect with our Lord?

While there are certainly other dimensions to the faithful maintenance and transmission of that great vision and task delivered to our forebears in the faith, I believe that these are two major aspects of the challenge at present confronting every pastor.

The Christian Church was born at Pentecost in a great transforming experience that led people to God. So also the Adventist Church was launched on its course by a vision that called people to worship the soon-coming Lord in Spirit and truth and live in a closeness with Him that grows into a fitness for the kingdom of heaven. It is the task of every Adventist generation to keep this flame and sense of purpose beaming brightly. Mind and heart, study and prayer, sanctified reason, and a waiting for divine illumination must be united in this enterprise. Effectiveness in evangelism and mission demands that we offer a faith that is vibrant and alive. It is only the Holy Spirit that can lead beyond a dull rationalism to an intimacy with God and a power to witness for which we all long. ■

¹ Howard A. Snyder, *The Radical Wesley* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1980), p. 54.

² Nathan O. Hatch, "The Puzzle of American Methodism," *Church History* 63, No. 2 (June 1994): 177, 180.

³ Albert C. Outler, ed., *The Works of John Wesley* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1987), vol. 4, Sermons IV, pp. 177-186.



A Collection of Pastoral Wives' Favorite Recipes

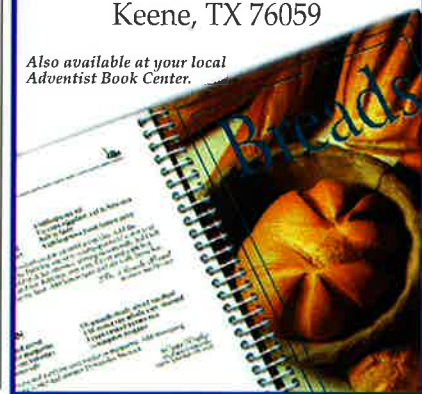
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Love beyond reason

Clifford Goldstein

On assigning reason a role that nature denies



Clifford Goldstein is the editor of Liberty.

After drafting the Declaration of Independence and the Virginia Statute for Religious Liberty, as well as establishing the University of Virginia (not to mention serving two terms as president of the United States), Thomas Jefferson did what he deemed a simple task: he separated the “gold from the dross” in the Gospels. Saying that “your own *reason* is the only oracle given you from heaven,”¹ he expunged from Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John whatever he believed contradicted reason, common sense, and rational thought.

The result was the Jefferson Bible, a highly abridged version of the Gospels in which the Annunciation, the virgin birth, the miraculous healings, the raising of the dead, Christ’s claims to divinity, the Resurrection, and the Ascension were all—among other portions—edited out. Excised too was the heart of New Testament theology: the atonement of Jesus Christ as “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

All of this infers at least one conclusion: authentic Christian faith, though sound rationally, must transcend logic, reason, and analytical thought, because if we submit what we believe merely to logic, reason, and rational thought, we will never be authentic Christians by New Testament definition. And nothing proves this point better than Jesus Himself.

Whether feeding 5,000 with food for one (Matt. 14:15-21) or declaring that “before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58), or telling Peter, “Go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou

hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: and that take, and give unto them for me” (Matt. 17:27), Jesus showed that aspects of reality transcend what our minds—processing knowledge and experience through logic and reason alone—can ever grasp. From His birth to His ascension, Christ’s entire ministry functioned on a plane that crossed the boundary of logic and reason—and those who refuse even to look (much less to step) across that boundary will, like Jefferson, remain landlocked in theological ignorance, unenlightened by the ultimate realities of universal and eternal truth.

Limits of logical thought

Jesus, of course, wasn’t the only one who showed the limits of logical thought. From Plato (who warned about the contingencies of reason), to Kant (who exposed its confines, particularly in the area of religion) up through the prophets of postmodernism (who deny its utility), humanity, in its quest for natural and spiritual truth, has always sensed that the “natural light of reason” is not that natural or that full of light.

“The deepest reason,” wrote Huston Smith, “for the current crisis in philosophy is its realization that autonomous reason—reason without infusions that both power and vector it—is helpless. Reason can deliver nothing apodictic. Working (as it necessarily must) with variables—variables are all that it can come up with.”²

Centuries ago Epimenides illustrated the limits of logic when he said, “This statement is false.” Is the statement true or false? If true, then the statement declares itself false; if false, the

statement must be true. But doesn't logic teach that something can't be both true and false at the same time? In this context, obviously, logic by itself doesn't work.

Also, how reasonable is Einstein's special theory of relativity, in which he proved that the faster one moves, the slower time does, until, at the speed of light, time itself stops? Quantum physics, meanwhile, teaches that under certain conditions, if two subatomic particles are created in a collision, the mere act of observing the spin of one member of the pair will immediately cause the spin of the other member to move in the opposite direction—even if they are separated by a million light-years!

"The structure of nature," said Harvard physicist P. W. Bridgman, "may eventually be such that our processes of thought do not correspond to it sufficiently to permit us to think about it at all."³

Relationship between faith and reason

Of course, reason and rational thought, whatever their limitations, are gifts from God, which is why neither should be ignored. To reject or even to suspect reason itself outright is to risk the mindless mysticism that can degenerate into everything from Waco to snake-handling. On the other hand, to make reason one's sole epistemological judge risks reducing faith to nothing but a generic morality reflective of the messages left to earthlings by "UFOs." By far, in a contemporary Western society reared on scientific rationalism, the danger comes from the latter, which is why evangelical scholar Donald Bloesch warned that the relationship between faith and reason is "probably the single most important issue in the theological prolegomena."⁴

The key, then, is balance, and Jesus helps establish that balance. When John, in prison, asked if Christ was the Messiah, Jesus answered by saying: "Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel

is preached" (Luke 7:22). In other words, Jesus said to John, Use your reason and logical thought: How could I be doing these things if I weren't the Messiah?

To look at Christ's life, which defied reason and logic, and to conclude that truth exists transcendentally beyond reason and logic is to draw a logical and reasonable conclusion. Although Jesus was always logically sound and rationally cogent, He proved that it is logical to believe in things that aren't necessarily logical or reasonable. In Christ we find that perfect balance.

Prophecy, reason, and logic

In fact, prophecy itself (often based on something as "irrational" as dreams and visions) is really premised on reason and logic. "Now I tell you before it comes," Jesus said, "that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am he" (John 13:19). With these words Jesus was appealing to the rationality that He Himself had implanted in humanity. Jesus would predict things before they happened, so that when they did, people would have reasons for believing in Him. To conclude that Jesus was the Messiah—especially after hearing what He said about Himself and then seeing it come to pass—was to perform a rational act. Prophecy can't impact humans to any significant extent until processed with rational thought.

Daniel 2 illustrates this point. Daniel first recounts and then interprets a dream that the king himself can't even remember. The whole concept is unreasonable. Yet in many ways Daniel 2 is one of the most rational parts of the Bible. Six centuries before Christ the chapter lays out the bold strokes of the history of the world up through and beyond modern Europe, which (as the former Yugoslavia shows) might "mingle themselves with the seed of men" but shall not "cleave one to another." The entire chapter is such an appeal to logic and reason that it's hard to see how anyone studying Daniel 2 could conclude anything except that it was inspired by God.

Rational and transrational

In Christ's life, as in Daniel 2, Scripture presents a mixture of the rational and the transrational, which is the essential Christian metaphysic. God presents the mind with reasonable and logical grounds for believing in things that are illogical and unreasonable. In fact, the central event of all Scripture, the cross, was not only illogical and unreasonable, but foolish, as the Bible refers to it. "For the preaching of the cross," wrote Paul, "is to them that perish foolishness" (1 Cor. 1:18). The cross takes this mixture of the rational and transrational to its apogee.

In *The Passion of the Western Mind*, Richard Tarnas wrote about the unreasonableness of the Gospel: "In an era so unprecedentedly illuminated by science and *reason*, the 'good news' of Christianity became less and less convincing a metaphysical structure, less secure a foundation upon which to build one's life, and less psychologically necessary. The sheer improbability of the whole nexus of events was becoming painfully obvious—that an infinite eternal God would have suddenly become a particular human being in a specific historical time and place only to be ignominiously executed. That a single brief life taking place two millennia earlier in an obscure primitive nation, on a planet now known to be a relatively insignificant piece of matter revolving about one star among billions in an inconceivably vast and impersonal universe—that such an undistinguished event should have any overwhelming cosmic or eternal meaning could no longer be a compelling belief for *reasonable men*."⁵

Reason and love

Of course, to pure reason alone the gospel would be irreducibly untenable, because pure reason alone can't grasp that type of love. If human love—which at its purest barely reflects God's love—often causes humans to act unreasonably and irrationally, how much more would God's love impel Him to act in ways that transcend human concepts of rationality and

reasonableness? This is exactly what happened at the cross: God's love impelled Him to act in a manner that totally defied reason. To believe that the Creator stepped out of eternity and was incarnated into humanity, only to be crucified as a propitiation for our sins—and that He did it out of self-sacrificing, self-denying love—is to accept a concept existing in a realm where reason itself simply cannot reach.

The sacrificial atonement of Christ, who suffered the second death in our stead, is not the kind of truth that one can find from pure reason alone. Logic in and of itself can take you far in the quest for truth but never to Golgotha. No equation proves "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:1). Systematic logic itself might point to the existence of a God, but never to the truth that Jesus, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:6-8). No wonder Paul wrote, "As God in his wisdom ordained, the world failed to find him by its wisdom" (1 Cor. 1:21, NEB).

At the same time, however, Scripture provides rational evidence for something as transrational as the gospel. From the entire Hebrew cultus, which prefigured the cross centuries before it happened, up through the Messianic prophecies of Psalms, Isaiah, and Daniel to the forceful testimony of the New Testament, God has left the world with powerful, logical, and rational reasons to believe in the "foolishness" of Christ's substitutionary atonement. In fact, with all the light given through the prophetic Word, for someone to accept something as transrational as the gospel is, one could argue, the only rational thing to do.

Of course, logical and reasonable evidence for the cross doesn't deny the

work of the Holy Spirit in salvation; instead, it simply shows that the Holy Spirit can use logic and reason in helping people accept what isn't especially logical or reasonable.

Jefferson, unfortunately, took the unreasonable position that only that which is rational is real. Jesus, in contrast, by His life and teachings, has shown that the real transcends the rational. Jefferson's abridged Bible, in which the core of Christianity is lost, proves not only just how limited the rational really is, but that Pascal was

right when he wrote, "The heart has its reasons which reason cannot know." ■

¹ Quoted in Edwin Gaustad, *Sworn on the Altar of God: A Religious Biography of Thomas Jefferson* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), p. 16. (Italics supplied.)

² Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (Wheaton, Ill.: Theosophical Publishing House, 1992), p. 137.

³ Quoted in Smith, p. 80.

⁴ Donald Bloesch, *Theology of Word and Spirit: Authority and Method in Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity Press, 1992), p. 35.

⁵ Richard Tarnas, *The Passion of the Western Mind* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1991), p. 305. Emphasis supplied.



Issues Solutions Ministry from Pastors

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Balancing an unbalanced ministry

W. Floyd Bresee

Look up—Jesus and
you can do it.

I was painting the house. I'd made a scaffold by laying planks across two sawhorses. But my reach was a couple feet short of the highest point. Foolishly I put a stepladder on top of the scaffold and started up. But the ladder pushed the planks away from the building, and I lost my balance.

Disaster struck. The paint can went one way and the brush another. Instead of being on the scaffold, I ended up with the scaffold on me. Blood dripped down my face from a gash in my scalp that required a trip to the doctor.

Losing one's balance can be disastrous to one's health. It can also be disastrous to one's ministry. Instead of being on top of your job, you feel crushed by the job being on top of you.

One of the struggles of my life's journey has been to balance everything a minister does: balance between public and private life, balance in healthful living, balance between doing and delegating, balance between the spiritual and the secular. Looking back at it all, I've recalled a few of the problems I've faced and lessons I've learned in my journey toward a balanced ministry.

Balance between public and private life

My problem: I literally grew up in church. Dad was a Seventh-day Adventist pastor. In two of his districts our family lived in the church basement. One basement was so small that I had to sleep upstairs in the little room at the front of the church where the elders met before going on the platform.

In one of Dad's districts we lived in the parsonage next door to the church. Mothers brought their babies to the parsonage to care for them during Sabbath services. Our house was their house. During the week my little sister and I would slip into the church when we could get away with it. She played the piano and I preached to an empty auditorium. Thus, I grew up with little separation between private and church life.

My wife, Ellen, on the other hand, had a father who was an hourly worker, always home evenings, weekends, and holidays. Work life and private life were emphatically separated. She quickly learned that ministry doesn't work that way. For 42 years of full-time ministry she put up with sitting in the pew without me next to her, even when she had four little ones to manage. She longed for retirement, when she'd have a husband to sit with.

Surveys indicate that pastors seldom make significant separation between their

Floyd Bresee, Ph.D., is a former secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association, and continues to pastor and preach in Oregon, where he and his wife, Ellen, live in retirement.

public and private lives. Virtually all our friends are church friends, nearly all our recreation is connected with church activities, almost all our time is spent for the church.

Somebody asked a housewife what time she went to work in the morning. She exclaimed, "I don't go to work. I'm surrounded by it when I get up!" Pastoral ministry is the same way. We don't "go to work"; we're surrounded by it 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If the doorbell isn't ringing, the phone is. Even at the church social, we're at work seeing that everything runs smoothly and that everybody's befriended and happy. How can we balance the public and the private?

Solution: put family first. Make your priorities: God, family, church. I've opened a discussion with preachers and church administrators around the world and been a bit shocked and disappointed by how many think their priorities should be God, church, family.

That isn't what you preach to your people, and your holy calling doesn't make you an exception. Be what you challenge your congregation to become.

God's love is demonstrated through family love, and love takes time. There are no shortcuts, no exceptions. Love always takes time. Take time for your spouse. Talk together. Pray together. Play together. Plan to do something special with each other every day.

Work together at home. Nobody should make a double bed alone; it's inefficient. Instead of one working indoors and one outdoors, do both together. Working together bonds together, and it doesn't take a bit more time than working separately.

Work together in ministry. A spouse who works elsewhere during the week can still work with you on Sabbath. Practice a foyer ministry if your spouse is comfortable doing it. Greet and befriend worshipers as they come and go. Do it together. And if you travel, try to do it together. In retirement I never take an appointment to which my wife is not invited.

Take time for your child. Why do so many preachers' kids feel disinterest, even resentment, toward the church? Too often it's because the church has become the child's competition for the parent's time and attention. And it's awfully hard to love your competition.

A father rushed out of the house heading for his car in the driveway, dashing off to some important duty. The son stood on the front lawn with a ball glove on one hand and a ball in the other. The father, intending to be a good dad, made a little detour and went to his car by way of his son. Patting him on the head, he declared, "I love you, son."

The boy retorted, "Dad, I don't want you to love me; I want you to play ball with me." If we don't take time for our children and do it early in their lives they have reason to question our love. Love takes time. There are no shortcuts, no exceptions. Love always takes time.

Balance in healthful living

My problem: As an Adventist minister, of course you preach healthful living, but how consistent is your own practice of it?

God's call to holiness involves a call to physical as well as spiritual health. "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2, NKJV). God has no way of reaching us except through our nervous systems, which are, in turn, dependent upon our overall health.

If we feel miserable, it's hard to act sweet. If our stomach is sour, our disposition tends to be sour. If our systems are upset, we often keep both family and church upset. It's simply easier to be good if we feel good.

My solution: Are you practicing a *balanced* plan of health reform? It is a stark shame that Adventists all too often settle on vegetarianism, good as it is, as the total embodiment of our health reform practice. Let's include all of what Ellen White calls the "natural remedies": "Pure air, sunlight, abstemiousness, rest, exercise, proper diet, the use of water, trust in divine power."*

Notice that rest is not only desirable or acceptable, but essential. Since Christians tend to see work as a virtue, some ministers seem to assume that overwork must be doubly virtuous. On the contrary, workaholics may be struggling with the sin of pride, feeling that if they work more than most they must be better than most. Overwork is probably the sin of which pastors are most likely to be proud. But when workaholics neglect their families and their health, they cannot be pleasing God.

The Creation account says God set an example by resting one day in seven; and He set the day aside for us to rest. Genesis 2:1-3 teaches that rest time is not only acceptable and essential, but a sacred, divine requirement. To the Seventh-day Adventist pastor, the Sabbath is sacred, but it is not restful. We must see finding other time to rest as a divine requirement.

Balance between doing and delegating

My problem: I taught in the Religion Department at Union College for 16 years. For 12 of those years I did only a little pastoring. But I was teaching ministerial students how to do it, and so I read books on pastoring and finished a Ph.D. that left me with all kinds of ideas for pastoring a congregation.

Then I returned to pastoring and, during the next seven years, shepherded two large college congregations. My head and my files were bursting with dynamic, new ideas for pastoring a church. In both pastorates I put together a plan that included lots of great new methods. Then I went to the church board and business meeting and sold my plan to the church.

I felt certain that my congregations would move forward as never before. But I was soon disillusioned. Although they had voted my plan almost unanimously, my members supported the implementation of it quite unenthusiastically. When I made the plan they rather expected me to do the work. I was guilty of too much doing and too little delegating in preparing plans for my churches. How can we balance doing and delegating?

Some solutions: *trust your congregation.* Group decisions

are the best decisions. It may be efficient for the pastor to do the thinking and planning, but it isn't effective. This principle is true of all management that comes from the top down. It is doubly true in the management of volunteers, and pastors must be specialists in managing volunteers. Everyone, including a congregation, gets most involved and works hardest in reaching "owned goals"—goals they have had a part in setting.

Your work is not to do all the thinking and planning. If your people don't want to do a thing, they won't do it anyway. Your work as pastor is to make group thinking work. You do this by seeing that the group gets the necessary information, and by creating a united spiritual atmosphere. So trust your people and let the group process work. I suggest four steps in church planning:

1. Visualize. I want to be a window pastor, not a mirror pastor. Mirror pastors lead so that their ministry is simply a reflection of themselves—their gifts, goals, and interests. Window pastors look for some window through which they can clearly see their congregation. Where has the church been? Where is it now in terms of mission, programs, facilities, finances, available spiritual gifts? Where does it want to be in one year? five years? Window pastors see their job not as getting the people to do what the pastor wants done, but as working with their congregation to accomplish what God wants done. They trust the combined judgment of their people more than they do their own.

2. Organize. How can the church get from where it is to where it wants to be? Beware of getting too idealistic at this point. Be realistic. Organize to do only what the people and pastor have the spiritual gifts and interest to carry out.

3. Deputize. Follow the apostles' example in carrying out church plans. They said, "We will turn this responsibility over to them" (Acts 6:3, NIV). The problem with delegating, of course, is that it won't work without also delegating authority. And pastors tend to be possessive of their authority.

4. Supervise. This includes *training*. One of the basic tasks of pastoral ministry is "to prepare God's people for works of service" (Eph. 4:12, NIV). Supervision includes *motivating*. The apostles delegated so they could give more "attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4, NIV). The resulting preaching and spiritual power motivates the people to do more church work.

Unfortunately, supervision must also sometimes include *replacing*. Occasionally a member lacks the will or the necessary spiritual gift(s) to do the work the church has assigned. God gives every congregation every gift needed to do the work He wants done. He has not given every gift to every member—including the pastor.

Specialize in what you do best. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others" (1 Peter 4:10, NIV). Too many pastors try to serve their churches with gifts they don't have. No pastor is good at everything. Congregations tend to view their pastors as omniscient and omnipotent, as though, like God, they know everything and can do anything. And pastors tend to enjoy playing the part.

The gifts needed for a perfect pastoral ministry are simply too many: theologian, preacher, administrator, soul winner, trainer, counselor, visitor, promoter. The gifts are not only too many; they are also too varied. The gifts at the top of the above list are of an introverted, contemplative nature. Those at the bottom are extroverted, gregarious. No one is likely to be both. Churches tend to expect schizophrenic pastors!

On the other hand, every pastor is good at something. Surveys suggest that many ministers feel they spend as much as 80 percent of their time doing work that is not where their primary talents rest. This not only frustrates the pastors, but also deprives their congregations of their pastor's best.

In the worst congregations the members simply criticize pastors for their weaknesses. In the best congregations the members in general and the elders in particular compensate for those weaknesses and let their pastors specialize in those areas in which they have the gifts to make the greatest contribution.

Balance between the spiritual and the secular

My problem: One congregation I pastored was in the midst of a huge, multimillion-dollar church building project. We had to make decisions on location, architect, size, and plan. And that was only the beginning—we needed to choose a heating system, windows, colors, carpet, pews, and everything else that goes into a big church building. Our excellent building committee gave good leadership in all that, but when it came to raising the money, they looked almost exclusively to the pastor.

I began to feel more like a builder, promoter, and money raiser than a spiritual leader. How can we find balance when the secular threatens to outweigh the spiritual?

Some solutions: never do spiritual things in a secular way. In one sense, the apostles had it simpler than pastors today. There were perhaps as many as five million converts to Christianity in the apostolic time, but we have no evidence of even one church being built at that time. On the other hand, during the medieval years, when the church built its most lavish buildings, it languished spiritually. Along with church buildings comes the inevitable temptation to see the church as a building, thus secularizing the spiritual.

So many things we do seem to be of a secular nature: the church must be cleaned, lawn mowed, building painted, roof fixed, school maintained, money raised, and committees met. However, if we stay close to the Lord we'll find ways to accomplish all these tasks and solve all these problems in a spiritual way. If we can't, our churches lose their mission and we become disillusioned in ministry. Never do spiritual things in a secular way.

Have only one boss—but plenty of partners. Pastoring a 100-member church, you may feel you have 101 bosses—every one of your members plus the conference or mission. Jesus insisted, "No one can serve two masters" (Matt. 6:24, NIV). Whatever could you do with 101? And it wouldn't be so bad if they all wanted the same thing.

Part 2 of a 12-part series . . . Pastoral pressure points Finding a balanced ministry

The shut-ins want you to spend more time visiting, but your elders suggest you spend more time on your preaching. The board wants a bigger budget, but the school wants a new building. Your conservatives want to do it the old way, but the progressives do not want to do it the old way. The elderly want the "old truths" preached, but the young want "contemporary issues." Meanwhile, the conference or mission wants baptisms, tithe, and encouraging statistics.

To reject totally any of these is to flirt with failure, but to try to meet 101 different expectations is to court disaster and discouragement. Take all 101 as your partners in ministry to whatever extent is possible, with your conference or mission heading the list. And never forget that your true boss is the Great Shepherd. As His apprentice, you and He shepherd your flock together. He's your real boss.

Give daily devotions highest priority. It's natural for the urgent to crowd out the important. "I'm too busy" really means "That's low on my priority list." Everybody faces a "to do" list every day. Some even write it down. Somewhere on your list must be "private devotions." Whether or not they get neglected depends not so much on how busy you are as on how high they are on your list.

Don't be fooled. What you really stand for is proven not by what's on the list, but by what does and doesn't get done. To give a low priority to our time alone with our Lord is to start down the road to spiritual decline and pastoral discouragement.

A father was moving his library upstairs, and his little boy was helping. Wanting to prove his manhood, the boy picked up the biggest book he could find and started up the stairs. But the book was too heavy for him to handle. In his struggle to carry it upstairs, he fell down the stairs and the book landed in his lap. Tears came as he realized the task was just too much for him. Looking up, he saw his dad coming down the stairway. The father realized his son's predicament and sensed his feelings of failure. He simply reached down, picked up his boy and the book, and carried both up the stairs.

Next time the pastoral load seems too heavy and you feel a little like crying, maybe it's because you were trying to carry it alone. Look up. Together, Jesus and you can lift the load you could never carry alone. ■

* Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1905), p. 127.



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For Further Reading

Aycock, Don M., editor. *Apathy in the Pew*. South Plainfield, New Jersey: Bridge Publishing, 1988, 151 pages. Points out reasons for a lack of involvement in church activities on the part of church members. Shows how apathy was a church problem even in Bible times, but may have increased in our present church climate, where works are deemphasized and thus church work seems less necessary. Offers practical solutions.

Mace, David and Vera. *What's Happening to Clergy Marriages?* Nashville: Abingdon, 1980, 144 pages. The Maces are highly respected Christian marriage counselors and write with a blend of the scholarly and the practical. Emphasizes the problem of unrealistic congregational expectations and concludes with recommendations to denominational officials.

Wagner, C. Peter. *Your Spiritual Gifts*. Glendale, Calif.: Regal Books, 1979, 272 pages. Written by one of the world's outstanding authorities on church growth and spiritual gifts, the book deals with the whole subject of spiritual gifts and how they can help a church grow. Shows how the pastor's spiritual gifts relate to the growth and success of a church.

Weese, Carolyn. *Eagles in Tall Steeples*. Nashville: Oliver-Nelson Books, 1991, 190 pages. Subtitled "What Pastors and Congregations Wish They Knew About Each Other," this book emphasizes the pastor's personal need for spiritual growth. Shows how pastoral experiences that tend to produce brokenness can also lead to wholeness.

Continuing Education Exercises

1. What area of your life and ministry is presently most out of balance? What do you feel your Lord wants you to do about it?

2. Take out your appointment book. What appointments with your family are written there? Have you canceled any recent family appointments because of church emergencies? If so, did you reschedule them?

3. Have you tried using an evaluation instrument as a window to help you and your congregation see your church more clearly? The General Conference Ministerial Association has such instruments available (write to the Ministerial Association secretary).

4. Analyze the excuses you have made to yourself for neglecting personal devotions. What does it tell you about your real priorities?

**Next month:
Pastoral pressure points:
Journeying through anger**



Adventist HealthCare: Facing the twenty-first century

Ron M. Wisbey

Some of my vivid boyhood memories are of Portland Sanitarium and Hospital. Perhaps this is because of trauma within our family or a visit to have my tonsils out; but more so because of a calmness and serenity about the campus that was actually healing in nature.

Today I realize that Portland Sanitarium represented far more to the church and to the Oregon Conference than what was understandable to a small boy. Portland Adventist Hospital has been responsible for significant church growth over the past 80-plus years in the Portland community. Such is the case wherever we have health-care institutions. They are reservoirs of goodwill in the community and assets to the church expressing its ministry of healing and health.

Often church members speak of the need to get back to the "blueprint." In the midst of changing times and medical technology, it may well be that we need to remind ourselves of our heritage and rethink our relationship as ministers with our "health-care brethren."

Heritage and future

In 1863, the year the Adventist Church was formally organized, Ellen White had a comprehensive health vision that quickly influenced church leaders. She wrote about the intimate relationship between physical and spiritual health. Within three years, in 1866, the church opened its first health-related center designed to care for the sick and to teach neglected principles of preventive and restorative medicine. Areas of concern such as exercise, nutrition, sanitation, fresh air, fresh water, sufficient

rest, and sunshine were emphasized.

Thus began a health-care ministry that ultimately circled the globe. Today we have more than 150 Adventist hospitals around the world. The continuation of Adventist health-care ministry is a compelling illustration of the seriousness with which Adventists take Jesus' charge to the disciples to "heal" (Matt. 10:8, NIV) and His expectation to visit the sick (Matt. 25:35).

On the threshold of a new century, how will we handle this wonderful heritage? The question is of major significance, especially in the United States, where we have a strong group of hospitals that have been finely honed during the eighties and early nineties on the whetstone of a demanding health-care industry. Today we handle governance and church involvement differently than we did even five to 10 years ago.

In every one of the eight Adventist health-care regions of the United States the church has ultimate control. Through appropriate board actions, the members can control the future of Adventist HealthCare. The scene, however, is changing, and we can be sure it will be different in the future! Today's business environment requires new ways of operation that we did not consider in earlier times. In some regions we are now allowed or required to network or affiliate with former competitors. This has placed us in a position of leadership within the community, where we should have been many years ago. The result is a strengthening of our mission concept that will allow us to continue our Adventist mission into the future.

New ways of operation

Since 1990 Adventist HealthCare

officers and church leaders have met annually to discuss a broad range of health-care issues of mutual interest. This ad hoc group gives special attention to the spiritual dimension that is foundational to Adventist HealthCare operations. The meetings have taken place during a time of extraordinary challenges within the health-care industry that have made even more complex the process of strategic planning for Adventist health care and its unique approach.

Unprecedented technical advances complicate the delivery of health-care services. Ethical questions about who should receive treatment and under what circumstances require study in ways we have not had to face until recently. They include those with intractable pain who may wish to die, the destitute whose lives would be enriched by interventions for which no one is willing to pay, mothers with deformed fetuses agonizing over whether or not to bring their pregnancies to term, and the increased interest in alternative medicinal procedures not traditionally offered in hospitals. These and numerous other questions demand sensitivity, prayer, and an ethical balance that would be difficult to achieve even if the life-or-death aspects were not part of the equation.

But times of challenge are also times of opportunity. And Adventist HealthCare is orienting itself to the rapid fundamental changes in health-care delivery. For example:

- Focusing on making a designated population healthier through the concepts of wellness and prevention that have always taken us back to our roots.
- Turning hospitals from being seen as profit centers into being thought of as cost centers, thus making wellness a major

Ron M. Wisbey is board chair of Adventist HealthCare Mid-Atlantic and of Kettering Adventist Healthcare, Inc., Kettering, Ohio.

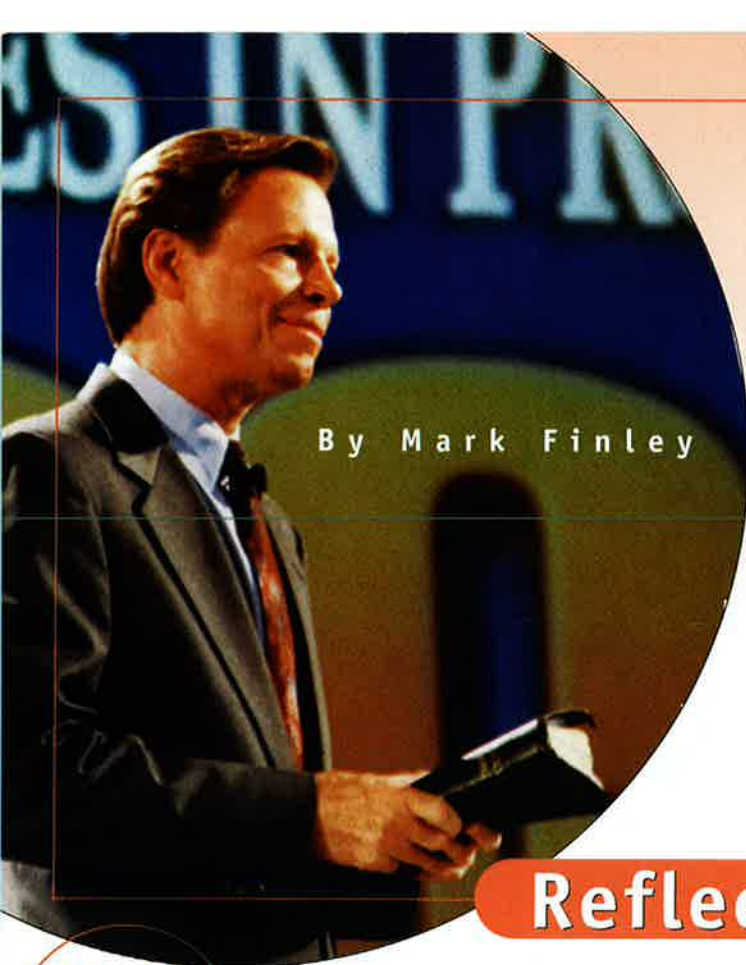
it is written PRESENTS

Touched by the *Spirit*

A special NET '96 Report

*Incredible
stories from
around the
world!*





By Mark Finley

power of thousands of Adventist Christians praying for me daily. No matter how exhausted I was, when I began to preach I received a burst of energy.

Ellen White said, "Prayer and faith will do what no power on earth will accomplish," (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 509). About 6:45 every night, as I saw our prayer group kneeling back stage, my spirit was renewed. Faxes, telephone calls, e-mail, letters from all over indicated that people were praying for me. I was deeply moved with the awesome power of corporate intercession. Never again will I take a casual approach to intercessory prayer.

Listen sensitively to criticism.

Make adjustments if necessary, but move ahead boldly in

too soft on the Papacy. Some felt I was unclear on the nature of Christ, downplaying obedience. Others felt the emphasis on obedience was too strong. The announcements were too long, or the announcements were too short.

Two things became apparent:

1. Only a small percentage of the overall audience was concerned. The vast majority of people were rejoicing that God was working in the lives of unsaved people. God impressed me not to be too concerned, over-anxious or sensitive regarding every negative response.

2. God impressed me to learn everything I could from every message whether I agreed with it or not. While my mind should be open to modification, I should not allow criticism to

Reflections on NET '96

Lessons

NET '96 was a profound learning experience. I'm a different person because of it. A friend of mine once said, "There is something more important than the work we do. It's the work God does in our lives as we do the work."

You will read thrilling reports of the Spirit of God moving on lives during NET '96. But I would like to open my heart and share what God taught me during NET '96.

The value of teamwork.

Hundreds of people participated to make the program a success. NET '96 was not an independent effort by any individual. Committees spent hours deliberating each aspect of the program. As an evangelist, I'm used to making quick decisions. Someone has said, "There is no problem so simple that a committee cannot make it complex."

Working through issues on committees frustrates me. I'm a person who wants to look at an issue, see the problems, take

charge and attempt to solve them. Some aspects of NET '96 distressed me. But God continually burned the following lesson into my mind: Working together on a team produces far greater results than working on your own. Proverbs 11:14 speaks to my heart: "Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety."

I'm learning that it's part of His plan to bring varied minds together — people whose life experiences are different, each sharing their uniqueness in harmony with Jesus' prayer of John 17 — "That they all may be one." I praise God for a team of consecrated, committed workers who shaped the program in ways I would never have imagined.

The power of intercession.

Somebody asked me what it felt like walking onto the platform night after night in Orlando, Florida, knowing that my messages would be translated into 13 languages in 45 countries to over a half million people on three continents. I responded, "Night after night I sensed that I was being carried on the wings of the Spirit." I literally felt the

face of criticism. NET '96 made me more vulnerable than I have ever been in my life. Every evening as I preached, theologians, historians, scientists, homiletics, English professors, sociologists, graphic artists, computer experts, pastors, administrators and lay people analyzed what I said and how I said it. The sermons were discussed from church boards to college classrooms. I received hundreds of faxes and scores of phone calls. Overnight letters marked "Personal, Confidential" arrived at our office daily.

A scientist pointed out a wrong date on a slide. Someone else reported misspellings on the screen. Others indicated mispronunciation, and some pointed to what they perceived were theological errors. Some claimed the meetings were too grace-oriented. Others declared I was a legalist. One claimed I was anti-Catholic. A CompuServe message said I was

change my basic course of action. God moved me with Proverbs 27:17, "Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend." He impressed me to distinguish between friendly faxes with advice and those with a particular axe to grind. I prayed, "Teach me, Lord, what I need to learn, help me to be a sensitive listener, but give me a heart for You and a sense of direction."

Grit to persevere.

The energy drain was enormous: Each morning up by 7:30 for prayer, meditation, study, and breakfast. Off to the auditorium by 9:30. All morning working with our computer graphics people on the evening's sermon. Hopefully, by 1:30 grab a quick lunch. By mid-afternoon preview the sermon in the auditorium, meet with translators. At 5:00 p.m., 30 minutes for rest and prayer. Early evening I made any

additional changes to the sermon and went to make-up. Afterwards at 9:00 o'clock, I visited with interested people, watched snatches of the program via the Central Time Zone feed, and arrived home around midnight. This was repeated for five successive weeks. To take a day off would put the entire computer program in jeopardy since we were scrambling to input latest current events information. Sabbaths were the only exception to the grueling pace, although I often preached three times on Sabbath.

God taught me that there are times when one must hang in there, when days off and vacations must wait. Obviously, you cannot live this way year 'round. But when the fruit is on the vine and the harvest is ready in the field one must put priority on harvesting. NET '96 taught me that there are times when

technology to accomplish His mission at end time utterly amazed me.

Each night as I walked onto the platform I had this overwhelming sense that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was making history. Our church—my church—had focused on mission, outreach, soul-winning.

God taught me to be sensitive to brothers and sisters in other parts of the world. When I received stories of people slogging through miles of mud to attend, or husbands beating their wives, parents locking children in their rooms, people losing their jobs because they attended the Discoveries in Prophecy meetings, my heart wept. Those stories reshaped the context of my meeting the next evening. When I heard of pastors and their congregations stepping out for Christ and

attendance and the Olympic Stadium meetings in Moscow with 15,000 - 20,000, and NET '95 and '96 with a possible audience in the millions.

Evangelistic preaching is knowing how to reach the heart, how to touch lives for the kingdom.

My experience helped me avoid some disasters. On opening night when I pressed my signal button to change the slides, it malfunctioned. Thankfully, I knew the material well.

Experience helped — when some sermons were too long and we stopped eight or nine slides before the end to make an appeal. Had I not been through that material for years and known where to break, we easily could have run out of time.

Experience helped when I sensed that the response cards and decision cards weren't having the desired effect, and I

men and women in this movement to give His final message to the earth.

God is teaching me there is no substitute for the Three Angels' Messages. When those messages are watered down, compromised, their integrity cast aside — when the fear of offending overwhelms a sense of conviction for preaching truth, the results are minimal.

The results of NET '96 were not because of eloquent words, but because of a message that He has entrusted to His last-day church. Evangelistic preaching will be relevant until the coming of Jesus.

At the end of time God will raise up a whole new generation of Adventist preachers who, proclaiming the message of the Three Angels, will touch hearts with the preached Word. The earth will be lightened with the glory of God, the commission will be finished and Christ will come.

God Is Teaching Me

you must be totally absorbed in that which matters most — souls for the kingdom of God. The promise in Galatians 6:9 constantly supported me. "And let us not be weary in well doing for in due season we shall reap if we faint not." I clung to the promise.

The sheer joy of belonging to the Adventist community worldwide.

During the NET '96 meetings God impressed my mind with this thought — WE'RE DOING THIS TOGETHER. From Vancouver, British Columbia, to the Virgin Islands, from Bangor, Maine, to Budapest, Hungary, to Portland Oregon, from Thousand Oaks, California, to thousands of cities throughout Central and South America, God was on the move. This sense that the Holy Spirit was moving among us, that we were doing it together, enlarged my vision. To think God was using satellite

joining the Adventist Church, when I heard of people having miraculous visions and dreams and direct impressions of the Holy Spirit, my heart soared with rejoicing. God taught me that powerful biblical messages must be prepared in the context of the human life experience.

The value of experience.

The principles in Mark 4:28 are so true. "For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." For my first evangelistic series in 1972 in Trenton, Georgia, in a tent with few attending, I read every sermon from notes.

As far as I know, no one was baptized. Preaching in tents, in motel ballrooms, in little country churches, conducting meetings in out-of-the-way places, prepared me to later preach in the great capitals of the world. I was prepared for the Kremlin meetings with 13,000 in

needed to make an altar call. Thousands came forward.

Experience helped me remember that the goal of evangelistic preaching is not necessarily to maintain a large crowd but to proclaim the biblical message of Christ and allow God to break hearts and produce genuine conversions and solid decisions.

Relevancy of evangelism in our day.

Lastly, God taught me the significance of the Three Angels' Messages and the relevancy of evangelism in our day.

Personally I'm convinced God has raised up the Seventh-day Adventist Church as a unique, divine movement of destiny for this last hour of earth's history.

I believe God will use Adventism to reveal the final, full display of His glory to the world, that Revelation 18:1 will be fulfilled. I'm greatly humbled with the sense that God will use

"There is something more important than the work we do. It's the work God does in our lives as we do the work."

Live from 0



Charles
Haugabrooks



Jennifer
LaMountain



Manuel
Escórcio



Merrilou
Luthas

Scores of musicians from various parts of the world came to touch hearts with their talent. Ernestine Finley (right) music coordinator, worked with pianist Kelly Mowrer and Walter Arties to plan the music.



Three Angels Broadcasting Network relayed the signals to Europe in eight languages with translators at their facility in West Frankfort, IL. L-R, Front: Milan Susljic (Serbian), Roman Chalupka (Polish), Josef Svilasi (Hungarian), Artyom Khachataryants (Russian), Klaus Schmitz (German), Back: Odd-Henrik Olsen (Norwegian), Adrian Bocaneano (Rumanian), Miroslav Didara (Croatian), Brad Thorp (Coordinator), Hinko Plesko (Croatian).



Amin A. Roder
Portuguese translator

Orlando...



"I praise God for a consecrated team who shaped the program in ways I would never have imagined."



Collin Mead
Producer

...carried to 45 countries



Frank Gonzales
Spanish translator



Georges L. Hermans
French translator

As the satellite signal beamed 23,000 miles into space and returned to earth, a journey of over 46,000 miles in just a second, it was rebroadcast to Croatia, Serbia, Russia, Hungary, Poland, Norway, Germany and Romania. Tapes of the program were rushed via Federal Express to the Czech Republic and Iceland where translations were done on site.



Teamwork

A United Evangelistic Endeavor



M

any are the critics and cynics who cherish their "destiny" to doubt the effectiveness of evangelism. It takes no courage to doubt, worry and wonder. However, it takes courage, faith and a great deal of hard work to move from a vision to reality. The fruit of your labors will continue to be seen as the programs are rebroadcast time and time again around the world. So, though NET '96 has concluded, let's continue to pray for God's blessings, for in another sense, NET '96 is just beginning and its effects will ripple on through eternity."

—R.S. Folkenberg
General Conference
President



Lonnie and Jeannie Melashenko of **Voice of Prophecy** radio with Ernestine Finley opening night. There were 1,400 Bible Schools across NAD electrifying the churches in preparation for the crusade. Lonnie was the host announcer for NET '96. Finley's wife, affectionately known as "Teenie," coordinated months of preparation and organization for the local Orlando meetings.



David Wolkwitz, **It Is Written** Director of Field Services, commented, "To know that we were at the very hub of what was taking place worldwide made me feel that I had an awesome, sacred responsibility."



C.D. Brooks of **Breath of Life** Television hosted the Bible Question and Answer Series during the satellite crusade.



Don Gray was the national coordinator of NET '95 and '96. Because of Don and Marge Gray, evangelism has been reborn. They said, "Many small churches could never have a meeting of this magnitude without NET evangelism."

"I never tire of hearing the Adventist message preached. Every evangelistic sermon I heard during NET '96 confirmed my faith in Jesus and the Seventh-day Adventist Church."

—A.C. McClure



Alfred McClure, president of the North American Division, conferring with Mark Finley backstage.



Glenn Aufderhar, (right) overseas coordinator and executive producer, was home only four days during five months while he traveled 75,000 miles to set up NET '96 worldwide. Aufderhar is pictured in production with producer Colin Mead (center) and director Bruce Braun. Not present is Warren Judd, co-executive producer.



Dan Matthews of **Faith For Today** Television hosted "LifeNet," a series of health-related vignettes sponsored by hospitals in the Adventist Health System. "LifeNet" ran each night during the NET '96 meetings.

My Maytag and Her Money

Wy Gloria Bentzinger, Editor

hen I'm on the road traveling with my evangelist husband—and that's most of the time—I struggle with laundromats and long to be standing over my Maytag. I drag loads of dirty clothes into a laundromat, try to learn the nuances of these machines, then drag the folded clothes out to the car, worrying about whether the snow will make my work meaningless.

I love my Maytag!

Today I heard about an Adventist pastor's wife in Eastern Europe who almost got a new washing machine. Her family had saved for five years. No more hand scrubbing. No more walking to the community laundry spot. But then she and her family heard about NET '96, desperately wanted to be a part of it, and longed to bring people into the church.

She took all of that money—their complete five-year savings—and put it into evangelism. She could continue to wash on a scrub-board. Maybe in another five years they could think again of purchasing that washing machine.

Tonight I did three loads of wash in my Maytag. I thought of that woman. We haven't met. I don't even know her name. But I was moved by her sacrifice. Suddenly I wished I could give her my Maytag. And surprise her with clothes for her entire family to wash in it. And beautiful linens for their beds and soft thick towels to dry on.

I folded my hands over my Maytag and prayed for my sister in Jesus. A warm peace filled my soul as I pictured her church full of people hearing the truth. She doesn't have a washing machine. But she has something that many of us with Maytags need.



Tale of Two Judges

Remember seeing the story of **Roberto Alvarez** in many publications? He's a former Communist judge who was baptized during NET '96 by the pastor whom he had once sentenced to jail in Cuba.

THE REST OF THE STORY:

His Baptism Touched the Heart of another Judge in Romania

Judge Peter Molnar was invited to Finley's meetings by a literature evangelist who had befriended him. As he watched the baptism of the Cuban judge, his heart was touched. He remembered the times when he sent to prison Adventist colporteurs. As he watched the baptism from Orlando, this Romanian judge made the decision to be baptized also.



He Still Uses Dreams

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions" (Joel 2:28 NIV). **God has been dramatically fulfilling His promise!**

A mother and daughter attending the meetings in Romania were seeking God for truth, asking Him to open their minds. They wondered whether Seventh-day Adventists were a bizarre cult. One night, they each had a dream. They dreamed on the same subject—Creation. They saw the creation of the world and God resting on the seventh-day Sabbath. The next morning as they shared their dreams, they were astounded! Why? Both had the same dream, the same night—a dream that the Bible Sabbath was Saturday, the seventh day of the week! With their thoughts in a whirl, they attended the meetings that evening. The subject that night? The Bible Sabbath! Absolutely amazed, the mother and daughter recognized that God miraculously gave them the same dream to impress them before the Sabbath message was presented. They were among the first ones to come forward on the appeal to follow Christ all the way and keep His commandments.

In Eastern Europe, a family of Orthodox Christians were attending NET '96 meetings in a city close to them. They were impressed with the presentations, but after a few nights the heart of the wife was filled with anxiety: "Lord, where is the truth? O God, show me where is the truth!" That night in a dream, she heard a voice saying these distinct words: "What you have been hearing is the truth! Tell it to others, too!" She was very impressed and shared the dream with her husband. He replied, "This is clear. This is what we have to do!" The next Sabbath morning both were in church, and amid tears, she gave a powerful testimony of her experience and decision.

A man in New York had just completed an eight-week class to become a member of an evangelical church—until he was instructed in a dream to join the Adventist church! In his dream he saw a large Sunday-keeping church. As he approached the door, a voice told him to go around to the back of the church. There he saw a massive group of people going through a large dark tunnel. "Where are you going?" he asked them. "We really don't know—just like you," they answered. Then he saw a narrow tunnel, light brilliantly streaming out. Before the small tunnel was a stream. He then heard Jesus' voice saying, "You have to go through the stream and be baptized into the Seventh-day Adventist church in order to enter this tunnel." When he handed in his decision card during NET '96 he told the pastor, "God told me to do this!"

Lives Touched In

A young pastor was reading a religious book on a train. The soldier next to him started a discussion and showed him a copy of an old Sabbath School lesson given by a friend in the army. The pastor spoke to him about NET '96 and to their amazement discovered the soldier was to finish his military service on the very opening day of NET '96! After attending every meeting he was baptized November 9, and his desire now is to become a literature evangelist.

A young Catholic woman was brutally beaten by her parents for attending the meetings. "They hit her and trampled on her with their feet, badly hurting her," the members said. Those members prayed and fasted for her and then sent a lay person to speak to the parents. God softened their hearts, permitting her to return. Now she is in the Church.

A mayor of a village asked an SDA pastor if he would show Finley's videos for the whole village. "I will give you free of charge the city hall for that; will you come?"

One couple had frequent quarrels because of the wife's SDA faith. She went to Spain for temporary employment and in her absence her husband was amazingly impressed to take the money she sent home and give it to her church for NET '96 equipment. Arriving home she was shocked. NET '96 began and her husband suddenly needed medical

Romania

The Never-Empty Gas Tank

One member was very busy driving visitors to and from the meetings, and one day was completely penniless. He was asked again to drive some visitors home, and agreed. Going to the car, he found some money on the driver's seat. Enough to buy food for the family—or to fill the tank. He filled the tank. After that he drove the car for three weeks and to his amazement the fuel meter didn't move from the "full" position. He was convinced that the gauge was malfunctioning, so he went to the gas station to fill his tank again. The station attendant informed him, "You don't need any gas. Your tank is full!"

testing. His wife brought home the video tape every night. He watched them one by one, not missing any. Then the terrible news from the hospital: terminal liver cancer. Though he couldn't be with the church to see the meetings from the equipment he helped purchase, he felt that God spoke directly to him as he was alone in front of his TV screen. "This was just for me," he gratefully said. He was one of Romania's first baptisms during the crusade. He died one week after the meetings ended.

A new Adventist who had been Catholic went to a village without Adventist

that came to the meetings ended up being a total of 75 people, pressed into seven compact cars, some children riding in trunks.

A man's car ran out of fuel directly in front of a church, with many cars parked for the Net '96 meeting. He was confident that with so many cars he would find help. At that moment an Adventist member drove up, late for the meeting. The stranded man began to tell our member his predicament at which the Adventist said, "I'll gladly give you half a gallon, but I'm in a hurry to hear the meeting. Why not join me?" He was so impressed he continued to attend, and is now a baptized member of the church where he ran out of gas!



NUN BAPTIZED:

Tatsiana, a former Orthodox nun was baptized during NET '96. Several nuns across Romania made decisions for baptism, and priests are watching the videos in secret.

via



7-MILE WALK: Merima (left), a backslidden Adventist, walked seven miles each night to the meetings, carrying her three-year-old child, Danko. During Finley's first altar call she came forward, sobbing. At that very minute her husband, Miodrag (right) was in a bar, but suddenly felt impressed by the Holy Spirit to leave his friends and go to the church. He did not miss any of the remaining meetings. They were baptized and now their dream is to both become literature evangelists.

- There have been 6,000 firm decisions for baptism, 2,300 already baptized as a result of NET '96 in Romania. The remainder are finishing baptismal classes.

- Three quarters of a million U.S. dollars were raised for equipment at a time when the average salary was 60-80 U.S. dollars per month.

- Romanian membership is 70,000. Opening night attendance was 80,000.

- By May, 1997, practically all 1,000 churches in Romania will have run NET '96, those without equipment by utilizing the videos.



ORTHODOX PRIEST POINTS OUT SABBATH:

A man of the law, this policeman, Costantin Dutu was in a terrible car accident. After he regained consciousness in the hospital he realized that he had lost his right eye and the left one was seriously injured. He asked his wife to bring him an old Bible that had been given to him years before by an old Romanian Orthodox priest. He had never opened it. Fighting against discouragement, he saved his sight to read only what seemed most important—some Bible texts marked by the priest. These underlined texts directed his attention to God's commandments. He was led to read different underlined texts that showed him the true Sabbath was Saturday rather than Sunday. He longed to question the priest, who had died long before, "If you knew that, why didn't you tell it to anybody?" During NET '96 God miraculously gave him power to overcome cigarettes and drinking. Before his baptism the last day of the series he testified, "Up to now I have been in the business of enforcing the law; now I am more interested in keeping God's law."



OFFSHOOTS RECONNECTED: This dear family had been strong pillars in the Reform Movement, away from the Adventist church. But the harder they tried to please God the more discouraged they became. The grandmother (right) spent sleepless nights praying, "Lord, show me what is missing." Curiosity and heated debates in their church made them come to observe NET '96. They became convinced that the real church to fulfill the Gospel Commission was not theirs, full of internal conflicts, but the SDA church. The joy of this discovery was so overwhelming that they insisted on being baptized into the SDA church as soon as possible, and they are now among the happiest members.

ON THE ROOFTOP: Some members in Bucharest recount the historical windy day on May 2 when co-executive producer Warren Judd and some local members were the first to receive a test broadcast from America to Europe. "It was a big encouragement for us to continue to invest money in this expensive equipment," said Adrian Bocaneanu, Union President.



A Global Guam

Largest Attendance of Evangelistic Meetings in the History of Guam

Guam pulled out the stops to advertise the whole island in a variety of ways. One night they wrote: "Our church was packed and we had approximately 120 overflow in our fellowship hall to watch the series on video. We had 140 non-members tonight—total attendance 420. Our parking lot was so full that someone in the community called the church to find out what was going on there. We're ordering more materials. We have never had an experience that would even come close to matching this—so many people coming directly to our church!" When a typhoon struck and the meetings had to shut down for a night, the crowd actually grew from hearing radio announcements that they would be cancelling and resuming on another night. One young man who was baptized wrote, "I've never, in my entire life, experienced such a high, even with all the drugs in the world, as I was experiencing during these meetings. The more I listened, the more I became convinced, and the miracles started happening to me on a daily basis."



Pedro and Delores Salas in love with each other and the Lord at their baptism. They are part of 40 baptisms so far from the crusade.



started attending Discoveries in Prophecy. "As pastor Mark Finley spoke I found, to my delight, my search was over," Luis said. After their baptism, Luis and his wife, Jessica, gave a wonderful testimony of what God did for them and made a tremendous appeal to those who had not yet made a decision. Luis sent IIW a handwritten fax saying, "I now proclaim loudly, I have found my God, and I dearly love Him. GOD BLESS THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH." Pictured with them are Pastors Stahlnecker (far left) and Krunich (far right).

"I had always wanted to become a priest,"

Luis Mafnas (center) shared. "I thought all other religions were fanatics. I thought I would be Catholic for life—to be otherwise would be blasphemy." While reading Catholic material, Luis was upset upon discovering deceit in his church, and left. He prayed that God would lead him. Jessica, who was also raised Catholic, had been going to a Bible study group with Adventists and was finding peace in her life. She invited him to join, and they

John, a young man in the city of Enniskillen, became convinced after studying of the Saturday Sabbath. He wrote to the Voice of Prophecy asking if there were other Sabbath keepers in his area. The local pastor received his name from the VOP and he invited John to NET '96. His parents explicitly forbade him to attend, since his father is a lay minister of a well-known Protestant church. The pastor arranged to meet him in the public library, because of his family opposition, where John expressed his desire to live for Christ and be baptized. His smile broke ear-to-ear as he said, "Pastor, I feel that God has been calling me into His work."

Robert and Pat, who are brother and sister, faithfully attended every meeting of NET '96 where they decided to be baptized. Over the phone, Robert shared their decision with his father who had been separated from the family. His father angrily shot back, "You will absolutely not be baptized... because I said so!" That night Robert shared his experience with the pastor, but added, "nevertheless, I am going to go through with it!" Despite obstacles, these two courageous young people made plans to be in the next baptism.

In Belfast, Victor, along with his girlfriend, two sisters, son, and some other friends attended every NET '96 meeting and requested baptism. He asked the pastor, "Where have you been hiding for such a long time with such wonderful truths from the Bible?"

Poland

In Wrockaw, a former member who left the church 40 years ago returned and was rebaptized. Another backslider who left 30 years ago was also rebaptized. In that same church, a prestigious university professor attended the meetings and decided to become an Adventist.

Switzerland

A pastor in Burgdorf writes: "We were very pleased to see our video clip. You cannot imagine what this means to our 13-member church. We have had 15 non-Adventist visitors attending every meeting. As a result of NET '96, a couple who was very passive during the last few years has become very helpful and supportive. The brother now has become our new technician, and the sister has asked to sing a song before the meeting. Before, the church was at the point of dying. Now the members are proud and excited about their church again as they see what God has done!"

Yugoslavia

Germany

In Neumuenster, a non-Adventist husband volunteered to help with NET '96 as a technician. His wife had been baptized a year ago. Pastor Daniel Strimbu told fellow pastors at a workers' meeting, "Even if we have no one else, it's worth it for him!" This man was very moved when he received his Bible. "I want to drink fresh water from the spring directly," he said. He was a heavy smoker, craving 40 cigarettes each day. When NET '96 came he said, "Do you know, Daniel, I am so calm and content when I listen to Mark—I do not need to smoke." Then he told the pastor, "You MUST offer a follow-up program, otherwise you're throwing out a lot of money. And it's not your money!" So now there is a follow-up Bible circle in this man's home!

Thomas and Claudia of Neustadt, Germany, were very angry. They had responsibilities they didn't enjoy in the inter-religious community in which they lived. One was the unpleasant job of caring for the garbage. One day while attending to the trash, Thomas found a NET '96 brochure. When he showed it to his wife she quickly phoned the pastor, whose number appeared on the bottom of the handbill. Even though eight meetings had already passed, they began attending. Never before had they heard about the Sabbath. During Pastor Martin Ryszewski's first visit they told him, "We are searching for a church." Claudia is of Catholic background, but since the presentation on the Sabbath, their lives have changed dramatically. When they began to keep Saturday holy, there was pressure and unrest from the community. "The Adventists—they are a cult," they were told. It became clear to them that it would be nearly impossible to live there if they wanted to live by what is written in the Bible. They are making a complete new start in life through baptism, and the 27-member church is lovingly looking after them, making them feel a part of God's family.

Macedonia

Two television stations broadcast the NET '96 program in Macedonia where the feeling of isolation is widespread. 150,000 people in this war-torn region viewed Finley preaching the gospel, bringing a message of comfort and peace.

Though much of their earning power is lost, people in Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia have made major sacrifices, giving generously to help buy a projector to assure that NET '96 is available in their communities. Their faith was rewarded. Eighty-one churches in those lands recently wracked by war had an attendance of over 8,500 people!



For sixteen years brother Pantic faithfully visited Milivoj and Bilija Jankovic, a young couple in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, sharing with them the love of God. He invited them, along with Bilija's mother, to attend NET '96. After the first meeting, Bilija's mother asked, "When is the baptism going to take place?" During NET '96 Milivoj and Bilija, her mother and their two sons excitedly planned for baptism. "The thing that fascinated me the most," said Milivoj, "was how the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation fit so perfectly into world history. We were searching for answers in the wrong places. The meetings finally answered our questions."

A professor in Belgrade, one of only a few with a digital receiver, stumbled across NET '96 in the Serbian language! Satellite technicians say the chance that he would have the complex code in place, without which video reception would be impossible, to say nothing of the Serbian language code, is so remote that mere coincidence is impossible. When he saw it was an Adventist program, the professor called the only SDA he knew, a businessman in Chicago, who told him about NET '96 and who called a pastor in Belgrade to visit him. The professor, thrilled with the truths from the Bible says, "I've been waiting for this all my life!"

Croatia

Michael and Johana Kis are thrilled with the miracles and continuing growth of NET '96 in their church in Osijek. The 300-seat capacity church was packed with over 200 members plus 180-240 visitors every evening. One lady of wealth and influence who had been in their prayers for many years, came regularly. When she witnessed the first baptism aired from Orlando, she searched the tightly-packed, darkened sanctuary looking for Michael. "When can I be baptized?" she queried anxiously. She was baptized, along with others the following week. She is among 150 people Michael has brought into the church.



Healing Hearts in

The United States



After no evangelism for 10 years, Capital Memorial church in Washington, D.C., participated in NET '96, with a large number of the church's young people making it successful. Youth spent hours working to get out brochures designed for their community, handled all the electronic equipment, welcomed visitors, and ran a children's program. Jeff Beck, electronic technician, said, "The meetings have really brought to life Bible truths that I had learned previously. The illustrations were very effective and I really enjoyed being involved."



"Without Finley's school of evangelism, NET '96 may not have happened here, as we were without a pastor," states Joe Urbin, a sergeant at Charleston Air Force Base. "What Finley, Bentzinger and Schreven taught me when I attended the ten-day school of evangelism at the Media Center, was invaluable. I relied on the things I learned there." One of the NET '96 attendees, Annette Renaud, was rebaptized. She said, "Giving my life back to Christ has made all the difference in the world! I used to think that I could not go back to church until I was perfect; now I realize that the church is like a hospital."

Did you know?

- More than 1,900 churches in the U.S. and Canada participated and thousands more watched in homes.
- NAD estimates 17,000 people in US and Canada have been baptized.
- NET '96 was the largest evangelistic program in the history of the SDA church.
- NET '96 transmitted 23,000 miles into space in fractions of a second—relayed by satellite in 13 languages to 45 countries.
- Best estimates are that close to half a million people attended these meetings.
- 3,000 packed Orlando's closing night, forcing 400 more to view by screen in a nearby church.
- Video tapes of NET '96 sermons are available from HART Research Center at 1-800-487-4278.

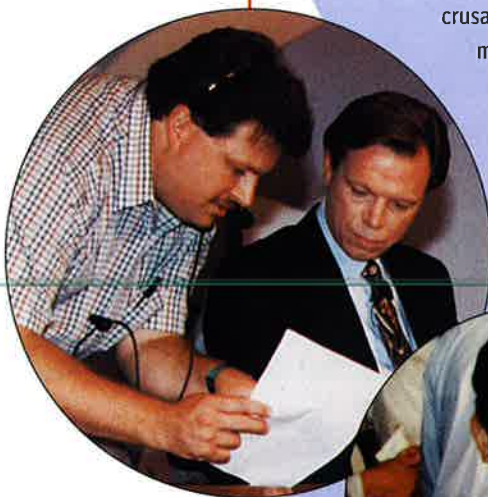


"I didn't hear a word of Mark's presentations," conveyed Brian Kondracki, "because I am deaf." He was thrilled to accept God's truth through the closed captioning feature. "My feelings and outlook on life changed. God came very close to me through the closed captioning." Brian and his wife Tina eagerly requested baptism, and at Christmas he played the part of a shepherd at their church in Reading, Pennsylvania. When asked what he would like to hear for the very first time in heaven, he conveyed through sign language that he wanted to hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Welcome, Brian, to eternal life!"



"I don't see a solution to your marriage problems—humanly speaking," Pastor Robert Costa (left) observed to Nancy and Juan Wong, pictured with their children. "But why don't you try one more thing? Give God a chance, one hour each night and come to our church for Discoveries in Prophecy." After attending, a change took place in their lives. They not only renewed their vows of commitment to each other, but were among the 28 baptized into the Austin, TX, Spanish church during NET '96. Immediately following the baptism an emergency business meeting was called to resolve the problem of space. The attendance was even more at the end of the series than at the beginning and an additional 40 people had requested baptism. It was unanimously resolved to enlarge and remodel the old sanctuary with capacity for 200, and adapt it for 350 people. The contractor chosen? Juan Wong, hair still wet from his baptism, was assigned to be in charge of the project.

Terry Cantrell, floor director of NET '96, had the thrill of seeing his son Tyler baptized during the crusade. He shared, "Seeing my son baptized brought the whole event to a more personal level, and made all the hard work even more rewarding."



*Dear Pastor Finley,
When I got baptized it felt good, one because Jesus was coming into my heart and two because all my family could be there with me. My dad could because he was the floor director. Thank you for sharing Jesus with me.*
Tyler J. Cantrell



"At first it was a feeling of loneliness, facing the challenges of running the crusade alone rather than working live with Mark as I did in Chattanooga during NET '95," confided Pastor Robert Fancher of Hixon, Tennessee. But he stated that quickly changed with the warm and caring way the presentations came across on the screen. "The workers' meetings were most helpful, and bridged the gap. I was pleasantly surprised how the team spirit came through." Fancher is pictured with Tiffany Thompson, who represents many young adults who grew up SDA, left the church and returned during the crusade. She described her baptism "like coming home."



Too ill to attend the meetings, Richard Wallace (right) watched every night with his wife (pictured) on their home satellite. As a patient at Park Ridge Hospital in Fletcher, North Carolina, Wallace was invited to sign up for the DISCOVER Bible course before the meetings began. Dr. DeWayne Butcher, Medical Director of Emergency for the hospital (left) said that Richard and Linda were the first Bible graduates from the Arden church where he coordinated NET '96. After their baptism they are welcomed into fellowship by Butcher, who is an IIW Executive Committee member, and Donna Hellings. Donna was baptized in NET '95 in Arden as a result of Butcher's endeavors and was one of the greeters this year for NET '96.



"We lived together with our baby, but weren't married," related Matt and Marlene. "God spoke to us through Mark's preaching and we realized we should be married before we could be baptized," they said. The local church was thrilled to help this needy couple by quickly going into action and giving them a classy wedding two days before their baptism. Members were elated to receive the beautiful wedding gown from the Community Service of another Adventist church who heard about their plans and realized they had just what was needed!



"Some people dream of becoming professional basketball players,"

Finley shared with Forest Lake Academy students. "God had another plan for my life—not throwing a ball into a NET—but winning souls for Him through NET '95 and NET '96." Finley warmly thanked the students for giving up their basketball court for several months while the auditorium on campus was under renovation for NET '96.



A High Priest in the Mormon Church,

Ray Smart and his wife Evelyn were convinced of new truths after hearing Finley. They were among nearly 300 in Orlando who were baptized. "The temple in heaven is better than any temple on earth," Finley told this priest in a personal visit. Evelyn has taught Sunday school for 23 years, but quit teaching during NET '96. The Smarts said that the Adventist church has been extremely warm and they are accepted as family, which is important to them. "As I visited with this sincerely committed couple," said Finley, "I was deeply impressed that they were indeed honest truth seekers."

Changing Lives in

Canada

The Willowdale Church overflowed with 900 people pouring into every available



Kingsbey, who was brought up in Kuwait, fled with his Adventist family during the Gulf War. That experience of fleeing during terrible fighting and bombings helped influence him toward his commitment to Christ. He was baptized with many others into the Willowdale church by Pastor Alvin Kurtz in Ontario.

space on closing night of NET '96. Normal seating is 650. "We had people in the balcony, youth chapel, and spilling out the doors of the sanctuary," one member reported. The Adventist congregation represents 53 cultures, who followed Finley's recommended plans carefully. The church brought Bible Instructor Rosalie H. Lee from the U.S. to work and train during the crusade. She shared that there were four prayer groups praying regularly, sometimes by telephone, often as early as 5:00 a.m. "During the crusade a group met before and after each meeting to pray for the people attending, for Mark Finley and his team, and above all, for the outpouring of God's Spirit."

New Truth Revealed at Baptist Prayer Meeting

An elder and choir teacher in a large Baptist church watched Finley from his home and became so convicted that he called the Adventist pastor and asked for more Bible texts. He then presented the Sabbath to his Baptist church at prayer meeting that night! On the phone with our Adventist minister he said, "Pastor, I've been keeping the wrong day holy for years! Can you help me?"

Meals and Ministry on Wheels

For years Melanie Lenzion has been running her own "licensed portable kitchen" in Calgary to serve meals to street people. She was one of the many baptisms in that city

during NET '96 and is now using her expertise and business contacts as part of the church's health ministry in Calgary. Since she had a terrible struggle but successfully quit smoking before being baptized, she asked "What can I do to be involved in a ministry to teenagers in the schools to help educate them and help them stop or never start smoking?"

The Search Is Over

A lady had tried all kinds of philosophies seeking peace of mind. After she started attending the satellite crusade, her Yoga teacher noticed she had been absent for several

days. Soon the lady sent him a message: "I have found the truth. My search is over." Her powerful testimony when interviewed at her baptism touched many hearts in that congregation.

Family Ties—Worldwide

Forty-one-year-old Jonathan Macalua decided to be rebaptized during Finley's meetings in Orlando. He was raised Adventist by his grandmother in the Philippines but left the church as a teenager. Jonathan's sister, Emily, who lives in Saudi Arabia, was visiting him during the crusade and attended with Jonathan. She was impressed to break apart from Catholicism and be baptized, but she feared what her Catholic husband, still home in Saudi Arabia, would think. After much prayer support, Emily phoned Saudi Arabia and told her husband of her plans for baptism. He cheerfully said, "Ok, go ahead. I'll be next!" Then the phone

rang—it was their Aunt Edith in Canada, wanting them to know that she and her three adult sons were planning to be baptized during NET '96.

Out of the Blue

In Moose Jaw, Alberta, a lady called the home of the nearest Adventist pastor and told him she wanted to become a Seventh-day Adventist. When he inquired how she heard the Adventist message, he learned she lived 60 miles from the nearest SDA church. She had discovered the meetings on her home satellite dish and watched every night. Through Discoveries in Prophecy on her satellite dish, she was led to Christ and the Adventist message and decided to be baptized.



RAIN, RAIN, GO AWAY!

On the Sabbath

members of Willowdale Church were to distribute handouts for the DISCOVER Bible course, it rained all morning. It suddenly stopped as they began to pass the handbills out. At the very moment the last handbill was distributed, the rain started again.

Because of the prohibitive cost to mail, they also planned to hand deliver 30,000 NET '96 brochures. Jim Bruce, head of Willowdale's steering committee, spent countless hours carefully orchestrating how the distribution of 30,000 brochures could be accomplished by 350 members in a two-hour venture. However, the Sabbath they were to be delivered it was raining—again! Remembering how God had powerfully intervened a few months earlier, Jim announced to the congregation that God would reward their faith—to continue preparing to distribute that Sabbath after church. As he spoke, the rain was pouring down. He told the congregation, "I believe it will stop raining at 12:05." The rain continued to pour. At 12:00 members anxiously looked out the windows. It was still raining. Suddenly at 12:05 the rain stopped. It stayed sunny while they accomplished distributing the brochures.

"I grew up on people's front porches," said Mike

Morris, who made his decision during NET '96 to be baptized. A practicing Jehovah's Witness, he had much difficulty accepting some truths. The family pull was strong, as he comes from three generations of Jehovah's Witnesses. The Langley church in British Columbia was overjoyed at Mike's baptism in November. His mother witnessed the event, and has even started coming to Sabbath School. He has really become involved in the pastor's class, where no subject is off limits. As a new Seventh-day Adventist, Mike is elated! "I'm really glad that I can associate with people who take the Bible literally and don't twist things around," he said.

Soulwinning

Continues

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—Mark Finley
Speaker-Director
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Mark & Loyda Fox

A series of miracles led the "prodigal son" Mark to evangelism. Personal experiences enable him to see potential in people. Loyda, an architecture graduate, uses her ability to transfer experience in business skills to the Lord's work. She is bi-lingual, holds a Bible worker certificate and works very hard behind the scenes.



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element of our health-care philosophy.

- Making home health a major part of the health-care delivery system.
- Replacing many former inpatient procedures with outpatient services and same-day surgery.

Health-care and church leaders in their annual conference in December 1996 issued a document entitled "Defining and Fulfilling the Mission of Seventh-day Adventist HealthCare Institutions in North America in the Twenty-first Century." In part the document stated:

"Searching for models and metaphors to guide us, we think of this ministry in three concentric circles. We do not choose between them; we pursue all three. In the outer circle is the professionalism and quality the public has a right to expect in a modern health-care facility. Within this outer circle is the second, an overt Christian environment that sets the institution apart from secular institutions. And at the core is the third circle, the Seventh-day Adventist belief system and lifestyle modeled by Adventist administration and staff. While it is our pleasure to share the philosophy and beliefs that make us who we are, that drive us to offer compassionate care to the members of the communities we serve, and that raise the quality of life in those communities, we would not impose our spiritual beliefs on others."

But how exactly do we handle this heritage of "faith-based" hospitals that have been passed on to us? Do we turn our backs on them and say to our professional health-care executives, "You manage these church assets for us, and we will stand by and watch from a distance"? Or do we partner with our Adventist HealthCare executives and offer them our prayer support, our moral support, and our public support, as well as personal friendship and spiritual guidance?

The Adventist pastor and health care

In a community where there is an Adventist HealthCare institution, how does an Adventist pastor interface with the institution and its administration? Actually, this question should be expanded to include all pastors who have a community hospital that is available to their ministry, be that hospital "faith-based" or not. Here are

some considerations:

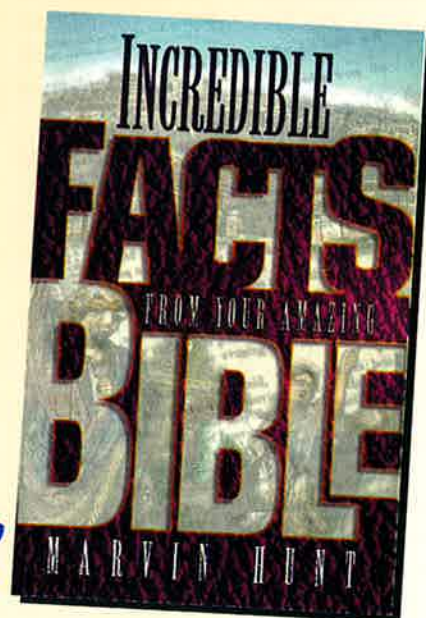
- Get acquainted with the hospital president/CEO. Make an appointment and make yourself available to him or her. Ask the question "What can I do to help you and the institution?"
- Minister to them spiritually. These are very busy people who are regularly challenged beyond human capacity. They need to be spiritually energized and know that they have your personal and congregational support. If necessary, invite

them to visit your congregation and share how their institution can utilize the talents of your members.

- Check to make sure that all the facts are known when questions arise in the community or congregation regarding institutional life. Your personal relationship with the administrator or key executive will make a difference.

- Although you may relate to a community hospital differently than you would to an Adventist institution, you still owe it

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to your community and congregation to build a relationship with key executives within the institution that provides care for your congregation.

- Do all that you can to engender a friendship and even an appropriate partnership with the physicians and other key health-care providers in your community, Adventist or not.

Another important element in the pastoral role in a hospital is the concept of volunteering. As you visit almost any hospital, you will notice active community volunteers, primarily non-Adventists. The pastoral care department of any hospital longs for professional clergy to assist with patient care. Often Adventist pastors are better trained than clergy of other faiths.

However, often non-Adventist clergy seem to be far more interested than our Adventist pastors in attending pastoral-care committees and assisting pastoral-care departments of hospitals. Why is this so? Is it because of the denominationwide drive for "soul winning," and the concept that church administration judges everything by "baptisms"? Is hospital ministry not thought to be fertile evangelistic ground or an area where a minister should spend much time? Our focus on baptismal growth has been one of our greatest strengths, but it can also be a significant weakness if we are unable to project an atmosphere of openness and ministry within the community setting.

The church is called to do more than teach and baptize. It is also called to heal the sick, to care for the afflicted, to serve God's creation, and to practice disinterested benevolence in behalf of everyone in need. Adventist HealthCare exists to provide these functions.

The responsibility of health-care providers to the church

Adventist pastors should practice the art of disinterested benevolence, and at the same time be spiritual leaders in the community. As we have described, the church and/or pastor also has responsibility for designing relationships with health-care personnel. It is equally true, however, that health care also has responsibilities in these areas. Quite frankly, our health-care executives have been so busy through the

eighties and nineties, saving the health-care enterprise for the church, that they have not had or taken the time to communicate with the local pastors and churches as they may have desired.

Fortunately, most institutions or regions are now holding mission conferences and other programs, attempting to reach out to the church, local and corporate, and assist with a better understanding and mutual appreciation of Adventist HealthCare.

We may best view the viability of an Adventist HealthCare system in the context of the harvest cycle. We should not ask each person or each organization to do the same work or to obtain the same results. The Bible speaks of some people being commissioned to sow, others to cultivate, and yet others to reap. On a small farm the same person could do all three, but in the field of "the world" there needs to be a team of workers specialized in each of the aspects of the enterprise.

Adventist HealthCare sees itself as primarily contributing to the aspect of "soil preparation." In terms of sheer numbers there is no place that compares with an Adventist hospital for opening the way for Adventists to meet with other members of the community. It is "comfortable ground." Of the millions of people who come to Adventist hospitals every year, almost all come away with a name recognition of Adventism and a more positive sense of the church that supports the ministry.

But Adventist health-care facilities are not churches. They provide health care in an Adventist/Christian setting. Adventist hospitals are rather part of Adventism's "get acquainted" bouquet of opportunity. We can improve the ways on which we follow up on this opportunity.

Central to the future of Adventist health care is a commitment to continue the healing ministry of Jesus Christ. We may do this by inviting individuals to participate in the promotion of wellness and the treatment of illness, ensuring that patients receive quality care that is cost-effective and accessible and that addresses each person's physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs, and allows terminally ill patients to die "whole."

Thus Adventist HealthCare, as it faces the twenty-first century, seeks the inte-

gration of a personal faith in Jesus with competent health-care delivery. This is health-care *ministry*. ■

Recasting our vision

(continued from page 4)

There is no movement immune to the effects of an aging sense of vision. It is not the vision that at its heart is aging, but rather our sense, expression, and commitment to the vision.

The Adventist Church is now a worldwide movement whose global development has occurred over decades, and thus whose geographical and cultural parts are at different stages in this aging process. But in many parts of the Adventist world body there is certainly the need for recasting the original vision or simply having the vision ourselves in terms of our here and now.

I believe that the most urgent need and the most challenging task for us as pastors is to see this kind of vision and to lead our people into this kind of freshness. We live in a time that demands and dares us to search out the original realities eagerly, coming to know them for ourselves in the now, and casting them in terms of our present cultures. When I speak of originals, I definitely speak of the original vision of Seventh-day Adventism. But even more, if I am to be consistent, I think of the bottom-line essential of the apostolic spirit that said such things as "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. . . . And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:1-14, RSV).

And then there is the clarion call of God's voice one night as He spoke directly to Solomon: "When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command the locust to devour the land, or send pestilence among the people, if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chron. 7:13, 14, RSV). ■

Passing on the torch

Ralph and Beatrice Neall

Covenant renewal sustains the faith of the individual and the community.



Ralph Neall, Ph.D., and Beatrice Neall, Ed.D., retired professors of religion at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, now teach pastors in Cambodia.

You have lost your first love!" So what else is new? Faith, if not sustained and nurtured, naturally runs downhill.

Consider how a sect is formed. Someone concerned with worldliness or lack of vision in an existing church chooses to do something about it. That person is poor, unpopular, and usually persecuted, but he or she has definite beliefs that they are willing to live and die for. Those who decide to follow the new leader count the cost, weigh the consequences, accept the dream, and make it their own.

As time goes on, the second generation cannot make the commitment of the first. They do not have to decide whether they will be members of an unpopular group, because they are born into it. The cost is less for them, the consequences less far-reaching, the commitment slightly reduced. In fact the despised sect is becoming an accepted church. The parents have the challenge of passing their vision on to their children, who ask why they have to be so different from everyone else. They question the beliefs and lifestyle of their forebears.

Beginning with Moses and Joshua, many situations exemplify this scenario. It's one thing to eat angels' food and walk through the sea, but another simply to hear your parents talk about it. The vision of Jesus and the apostles held true for one or two generations, and then, "thou hast left thy first love." Martin Luther protested the deadness and corruption of the Roman Catholic Church at the risk of becoming a martyr. His vision was clear, but one or two generations brought deadness and formality among his own followers.

Joseph Bates and James and Ellen White had a dream and burden that laid the foundations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Everyone who joined them in those early years knew what the cost would be. But their children, born in the Advent movement, did not face the same pressures from unfriendly neighbors. In a significant sense they were taught, rather than caught, the faith of their fathers.

The role of covenant

This is not to say that faith *must* run down. There are answers. God foresaw the problem and made provision for it. His plan involved making a covenant with His people and renewing it periodically. Its main features are recorded in Exodus and Deuteronomy.

God stated His name, the Lord your God, in Exodus 20:2 (NIV), and referred to His bringing Israel out of Egypt as the basis of the covenant. Then He spoke the requirements, the Ten Commandments, stating first of all, "You shall have no other gods before me." Deuteronomy 27 and 28 record the blessings and curses of God's covenant. The witnesses to the covenant were there: "I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses" (Deut. 30:19; see also Deut. 31:28, NIV). Then Moses put the Ten Commandments and the book of the covenant in the ark (verse 26, NIV), and commanded Israel to read it every seven years during the Feast of Tabernacles (see verse 11, NIV).

The original, inaugural initiation of that covenant was a dramatic event. God led the people to Mount Sinai and commanded them to prepare themselves

and their camp for three days. Then He gathered them at the foot of the mountain with an awesome display of thunder, lightning, and a loud trumpet call, and spoke the terms of the covenant. Obedience would show their gratitude. Salvation preceded law and was a gift of grace in itself (Ex. 20:2). It was God's gift to show the way to life.

When the Lord asked for their response, they answered, "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do" (Ex. 19:8). The covenant was ratified with animal blood, which pointed forward to the blood of Christ. The Lord promised that if they would keep His covenant, He would be their God and they would be His people.

Forty years later a new generation arose that had not seen the Lord's mighty acts at the Exodus and at Sinai. They had to decide for themselves whether they would serve the God of their fathers. For them Moses conducted the first of Israel's covenant renewal ceremonies. His four powerful orations on this occasion make up the book of Deuteronomy.

First he reviewed the history of God's kindness (Deut. 1-4). Then he repeated the Ten Commandments (Deut. 5) and called them to teach these things diligently to their children (Deut. 6:7 and 11:18-21). In Deuteronomy 27 and 28 he listed the blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience. In Deuteronomy 30:19, 20 he appealed for a new commitment. Finally he commanded them to read these teachings to the people publicly for new covenant renewals every seven years (Deut. 31:10-13). They should have observed this command, for whenever it was read, the book of Deuteronomy brought revival, but it was lost for centuries.

Covenant renewal

A few weeks after Moses' death Joshua gathered the 12 tribes to renew their commitment at Mounts Ebal and Gerizim, near Shechem (Joshua 8:30-35), one of the most impressive sites in the land. As he reviewed the blessings, the tribes standing on Gerizim answered, "Amen," and when he read the curses, the tribes on Ebal said, "Amen." Their commitment lasted during Joshua's life, and the Lord gave them victory over their enemies.

Shortly before he died, Joshua called for one more covenant renewal at Shechem (Joshua 23 and 24). He reviewed the history of God's kindness, updating it to his own time (Joshua 23:14 and 24:1-13). Then he called for a new commitment (Joshua 24:14-27), and wrote it on a large stone for a memorial (verses 26, 27).

True to the norm, that renewal lasted for only one generation, however. Those who had themselves experienced the Lord's mighty acts were faithful, but their children forsook the Lord and followed other gods (verse 31). This is the sad story of the judges.

Hundreds of years later there were other covenant renewals. Hezekiah said, "I intend to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us" (2 Chron. 29:10, NIV). He called the people together for the greatest Passover they had held for hundreds of years—a memorial of the Exodus.

Nearly 100 years later King Josiah, conscience-smitten by hearing of the discovery of the book of Deuteronomy in the Temple, conducted a covenant renewal ceremony at another great Passover service (2 Chron. 34:31).

After the exile, Ezra and Nehemiah reviewed their history again and called for a new response (Neh. 8:6 and 9:38). Once again the reading of Deuteronomy had a powerful effect.

The new covenant

The last thing Jesus did for His disciples before His death was to give them the new covenant (see Matt. 26:27, 28 and 1 Cor. 11:25, 26). For this intimate celebration He chose the seclusion of the upper room.

His covenant differs from the previous ones in that it was confirmed at a covenant meal. If that entire evening is seen in a covenant setting, then these insights emerge:

1. The foot-washing ceremony was a preparation for entering into the covenant, like the washing at Sinai (Ex. 19:10).

2. Judas's act of receiving the covenant meal from the hand of Christ and then betraying Him was a shocking breach of covenant.

3. The law of the covenant was "that

you love one another, even as I have loved you" (John 13:34, NASB).

4. The blessings of the new covenant were: the peace of Christ (John 14:27); the friendship of Christ (John 15:15); the gift of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17); and union with God more intimate than under the old covenant: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us" (John 17:21).

The point of the supper as a whole was not only to renew, but to reveal and express graphically the ultimate essentials of God's covenant relationship with His people.

The need for covenant renewal

We need covenant renewals just as much as the Israelites did. Like them we also forget. Our children also need to be taught, and specifically what needs to be communicated to them. We, as Christians and as Seventh-day Adventists, have a pivotal need right now to know what the light is all about, and to pass the torch on.

Fortunately we do have such covenant renewal ceremonies, although perhaps we do not realize what we are doing and do not have them as often as we should.

Centennials in our churches are times for covenant renewals.

The meeting at the William Miller farm in October 1994 was a covenant renewal.

General Conference sessions are covenant renewals. Sermons at these gatherings review our history and call us to new commitment. Faith is strengthened in fellowship with other believers.

Conference camp meetings are covenant renewals, although in many places they are no longer well attended. We need to find other ways of gathering ourselves as ministers and of gathering our people for deeper renewals of our faith, even the distinctive elements of that faith.

Rural churches have district meetings that function as covenant renewals. Members of small churches are encouraged as they meet with larger groups.

Covenant renewal: how?

How should a covenant renewal be conducted?

Someone must be the leader. For a church, the pastor would be the leader;

for an institution, the manager, chair, or chaplain; for the family, a parent.

In Scripture, the leader played a vital role. Israel's great covenant renewals began with spiritual leaders who made their own covenants with God and felt a burning desire to lead the nation with them. Whoever leads the renewal, a covenant revival must begin with a totally committed man or woman whose soul thrills with the high resolve to be true to God.

To prepare the members of a church or institution for a covenant service, the leader should study the subject of covenant and present it to his or her people in several special sermons or talks. There is a wealth of Scripture material, with inspired commentary from the Spirit of Prophecy. If presented in the context of genuine spiritual power, it will stir the souls of people with the realization that God is present there, that He makes agreements with human beings, that He is utterly trustworthy, and that He honors those who honor Him. So let us preach from the mighty covenant Scriptures, making a special study of Deuteronomy.

As God's covenants in ancient times were based on His law, so God has instructions for His institutions today—purposes, plans, and methods that He presented in a special way to His messenger to guide in the establishment and growth of His work in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These are chronicled in the works of Ellen White and in the histories of the church.

But many times, as generations pass and as past generations have done, we become preoccupied with the machinery and keeping the organizational engine purring, not noticing where we are going in the vehicle. We have the vague satisfaction of being a part of the "Lord's work," yet have an uneasy feeling that we are not really accomplishing what God requires of us. How can we find out?

There is no better way than to study the history of the institution and the purpose for which it was founded, and

then to take up the search under God for ways to take those purposes and apply them in the here and now. Covenants of the Bible always contained a review of the goodness of God toward His people.

In planning a renewal service, the leader will want to include a history of God's direction in the founding and growth of the congregation, church, or institution. It is possible for us to forget the essentials of our past and the direction in which our destiny truly lies—where we came from and where we are going. A

Study the history and original purpose for the institution. Search for ways to apply these in the here and now.

review of the vision of the founders, their sacrifices and struggles, and the providence of God that overcame formidable obstacles, helps build the faith and dedication of present-day workers. This study should go not only as far back as our Adventist heritage, but always farther back to the original biblical and Christological essentials.

In ancient covenant renewals it is crucial to note that the leaders reviewed not only God's mercies but also Israel's failures. We know that our founders sometimes made serious errors and that God corrected these by drastic measures, such as the Battle Creek fires. A review of such failures would help us to learn the lessons of history and to look at the present struggles of our congregations or of the church at large in a more thoughtful biblical and historical light.

Then a covenant document should be drafted. Leaders could do it themselves, presenting their findings to the people as a sermon or paper. But the people will grasp, believe, and retain best what they have studied out for themselves.

So in the work of drafting a covenant, a large group should be involved. Perhaps a series of prayer meetings or study

sessions could be conducted on the *raison d'être* of the congregation's or institution's existence. Afterward, a smaller group should write up the text of the document and submit it to the larger group for approval.

Covenant renewals in Bible times were great outdoor convocations, Passover feasts, or even an intimate gathering in an upper room. The setting should be chosen to suit the type of covenant needed. We have attended some most inspiring outdoor services constructed after Bible models, such as "The Sermon on the Mount," "Feeding the Five Thousand," and "Preaching From a Boat." How would it be to reenact "the blessings and the curses" at Shechem, Ezra preaching from a wooden platform in a street setting, or a supper scene around a table?

Natural scenes are most inspiring. God has come close to His people in majestic mountain settings, beside the lakeshore, in flowering meadows, and even among haystacks. With prayer and planning, the covenant service can be made a never-to-be-forgotten event.

After the reading of the history and purpose of the church or institution, there should be a call to commitment.

And then there should be a memorial of some kind to remind the group of what they have done. In times gone by the people erected a stone pillar or a heap of stones. Today we might put our document in a special book, with signatures of the faith community's leaders, repeated from time to time. And the ancient idea of erecting an altar may be different, but could be quite effective, even today. We might even design and hang a banner to represent the unique mission and history of the church. We were inspired once when we heard a sermon on banners in a Presbyterian church that represented eight of the great historical creeds of the Christian church.

If we prayerfully plan periodic but momentous covenant renewals, they can be memorable events that will bring life-altering revival and renewal to us and to our people. ■

The Adventist uniqueness

Dan Bentzinger

Three angels in Revelation 14 define the unique mission of our church.



Dan Bentzinger is an evangelist associated with the It Is Written telecast.

As a child I grew up hearing our church was different. Not just in keeping the Sabbath or in refraining from unclean foods, but in mission. Our existence had a uniqueness. We weren't just the run-of-the-mill church on the block. Somewhere back then I heard that it had something to do with a few angels in the sky.

Now, as a minister in the church in which I grew up, I should understand our mission. Everybody knows what it is, don't they—the Great Commission! Tell the world the gospel of Jesus Christ, and make disciples of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. But does a glib rehearsal of this commission really do it justice, especially if you are an Adventist?

Christianity's global commission

For 2,000 years the Christian church has taken literally Matthew 28:19, 20 as its commission. "Making disciples" has been the mission of Christianity. Making disciples is to proclaim Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, that men and women may come to put their trust in God through Jesus Christ so that they will (1) accept Jesus as their Saviour, (2) serve Jesus as their Lord, and (3) live in the fellowship of His church. This must be the mission of all Christians.

Yet through the years we Adventists have insisted that our message and mission are unique in the Christian community. Is the Adventist gospel commission different from the rest of Christianity's? How does our challenge to make disciples differ from other churches'? Do the angels flying "in the midst of heaven" (Rev. 14:6-12) have any bearing anymore? If so, what is it?

The three angels' context

I can hear the old-timers saying, "Absolutely! Our mission is different. Our message is preaching the everlasting

gospel of Jesus in the context of the three angels' messages." That sounds good. I've heard it at workers' meetings, lay training seminars, Sabbath school classes. I've seen it scattered churchwide on paper. Yet what about this prophetic message of three angels we have been preaching for 150 years? Does our average member in the pew care anymore about the "everlasting gospel in the context of the three angels' messages"? As ministers, do we?

It is fascinating to travel widely and visit all kinds of Adventist churches. During my short ministry I must have visited about 300 Adventist churches. Almost always I find some reference to the "three angels"—either on stationery, church signs, bulletins, or even stained-glass windows. Some feel more comfortable with just three trumpets! In one form or the other we have chosen the three angels as our logo. It didn't start out as a logo, but as mission!

The three angels' messages were the uniqueness that caused the Adventist birth. "The message of Revelation 14 is the message that we are to bear to the world."¹ "The third angel's message is most solemn, fearful, and important. To us God has entrusted it, and we are accountable for the way we handle this sacred testing truth."² "In a special sense Seventh-day Adventists have been set in the world as sentinels and light bearers. To them has been entrusted the last warning for a perishing world. On them is shining wonderful light from the Word of God. They have been given a work of the most solemn import—the proclamation of the first, second, and third angels' messages. There is no other work of so great importance. They are to allow nothing else to absorb their attention."³

Early Adventists understood this movement as a prophetic movement, occupying a specific place in prophetic

time, with a specific message to go to the world in a short, loud, and powerful burst just before the return of Jesus. In the middle and late nineteenth century the impact of the beginning of God's judgment was overwhelming! In those days America and Europe were composed mainly of practicing Christian people. The mainline churches, in comparison with today's, were full. Clergy were looked up to for moral and spiritual leadership. Therefore, when people heard the words "Babylon is fallen," they cut deep. Sweeping away traditions contrary to the Bible affected many people profoundly. The Adventist Church boasted of no located or settled pastors, because all were evangelists, busy preaching, teaching, and organizing churches the world over.

Now, a century or so later, America is almost as secular as it once was religious. The idea of following the Bible doesn't have the same impact that it used to have, even for Christians. If ever there was a time the everlasting gospel of Jesus needed to be heard in the context of the three angels' messages, it is now as we approach the twenty-first century.

Why is it then that in so many places the preaching of the three angels' messages is so distasteful, even to many multigenerational Adventists? The perception of many Adventists is that evangelism does not center upon Christ. On the contrary, the "everlasting gospel" stands at the head of the three angels' messages (Rev. 14:6). The context of these three messages makes them pure Christ! The book of Revelation is Christ revealed. It is His good news that He has come, that He is the Lamb before the throne, that He holds the destiny of the earth in His hands, that He was here, and that He will return soon.

Shying away from the message

Upon arriving in any city, I hear such things as "I hope you are not going to present the mark of the beast." Or "Why can't we just preach about Jesus and His love?" Or "You are not going to preach on the judgment, are you?" There seems to be a drawing back by many in the church on the distinctive messages in prophecy that fueled the early Advent people.

Proclaiming the three angels is a dirty job to many of our pastors and members. Why? I would like to suggest three reasons. First, when the everlasting gospel of Jesus is shared in the context of the three angels, by its nature it ultimately comes down to drawing a line in the sand. Drawing that line has the potential of separating relationships and profoundly disturbing apparently secure lives. For instance, let's say you are a professional and have worked in an office for years. You have wonderful friends at work, and they accept you. For the most part your distinctive Advent faith and your work are kept separate. One day the church board votes evangelistic meetings. The pastor urges you to "invite your friends." "Oh, no!" says an inner voice. "Some of my good friends at the office belong to other confessions. What if I invite them, and they come and hear the message but don't accept it, or feel disturbed by it?" In many cases when people reject the message, they also pull away from those associated with it. In other words, many of us are afraid that by inviting our friends to such meetings we could lose our friends and our relationships at work or elsewhere could become strained.

Second, the manner in which evangelists present the three angels' messages have burned many members, as well as some of the public. ("You should have heard the last evangelist who came in here!") If that is the case, why don't pastors and members have their own evangelistic meetings separate from a public evangelist? Some do, but the majority don't. Why? Because sooner or later up pop Daniel 7-9 and Revelation 12-18! We can't clear our throat through them all. "People will misunderstand!" we rationalize. "They will think we are weird. When I enter the pastors' association meeting, they will whisper to each other, 'cultist,' 'sheep stealer,' 'Catholic basher.' Let the evangelist be the bad guy! Let's grit our teeth and have him present our angel logo in a couple nights and then be done with it until the next evangelistic meeting, say in four or five years!"

Last, no one wants to be different. We cry out to be accepted. No other church is proclaiming the prophetic aspects of the sanctuary message as Adventists do,

so that it announces the judgment hour in progress. No other church understands or preaches Babylon as we do. No other Christians understand the prophetic meaning of the seventh-day Sabbath in the context of Revelation 14:9-12. We are different, unique. Courageous to some. Kooks to others. So for the most part, we try to look, sound, worship, and act as though we are like the rest of Christianity.

Three angels' victory celebration

So where does this leave us? Yes, it is the three angels' messages that make us Seventh-day Adventists. Our church was born to proclaim them. Our mission is to announce that in the context of living on the verge of Jesus' second coming, Christ is victor in the great controversy! We are to call every nation, tongue, and people on earth to come out of falacy and falsity, accepting Christ as the only source of salvation, and swelling the celebration of victory by worshiping Him in loving obedience to all His commandments, embracing truth as it is found in the Bible.

We are living in the last moments of the game, even though it was won 2,000 years ago at the cross. It is now our opportunity to proclaim victory in the context of the last few seconds that are left. In the stadium of humanity, our churchlike cheerleaders announce to the world, "Jesus has entered into final phases of judgment in the Most Holy. There is no condemnation to those in Christ." It is ours to shout, "Come over to the winning side! Join the ranks of the victors in Jesus! Jesus is coming!" Satan knows the score. He has lost. He desperately continues his losing battle against God, waging his war against God's people (see Rev. 12:17). But there is no fear for those in Christ. The beast has already been defeated. The promise of standing on the sea of glass in victory over the beast is assured. Then a small, unusual cloud appears on the eastern horizon. It's Jesus! It's over!

Our message? Yes! There is no other like it! ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 8, p. 27.

² Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, Md.: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), vol. 5, p. 313.

³ ———, *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 19.

Evangelism in a non-Christian culture

Carlos G. Martin

Some insights from Taiwan

Two years ago I was invited to conduct a reaping crusade in Kaohsiung Seventh-day Adventist Church in south Taiwan. Even though I have served as a pastor and evangelist for 20 years, this invitation made me realize my two limitations: first, I am an outsider; second, I have had no exposure to the Taiwanese culture. Also, some students and colleagues at the Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies (AIAS) had warned me how difficult evangelism is among the Chinese. From my experience, I have learned that there are some universal principles and ideas that are common to evangelism in any culture.

Universal hunger for truth

First, I have learned that there is a universal hunger for truth. We began with a simple invitation to attend a Christian church to find out what we believe. "All over the world," says Ellen White, "men and women are looking wistfully to heaven. Prayers and tears and inquiries go up from souls longing for light, for grace, for the Holy Spirit."¹

Six pastors came to observe the crusade. Some had never conducted or participated in an evangelistic campaign, but all had reservations about the viability of evangelism in Taiwan. Finding out that it can work is perhaps one of the most important results of the crusade. When the right principles are followed, the gospel demonstrates its power everywhere. When the truth is presented with prayer and the power of the Holy Spirit, baptisms do follow, even in places known to be challenging.

Some pastors have never been involved in public evangelism because

they did not know how to do it. Some had an improper understanding of what public evangelism was. Others had tried it but became discouraged because they defined success in terms of baptismal numbers.

That leads me to the second lesson I have learned.

A definition of evangelism

Pastors need to regularly review their definition of evangelism. Primarily evangelism is the proclamation of Jesus and the truth of the Bible as it centers in Him. Evangelism means proclaiming Him in such a way that people will be persuaded to accept Him as Saviour and choose to serve Him in the fellowship of the church. Good church administration cannot convert souls. What we need are pastor-evangelists who love people and have deep-seated desires to see them at the foot of the cross.

The campaign venue

A third insight gained in our crusade is the importance of location. We chose our local church as the venue. The church had about 50 members in a city of two million. A crusade in a neutral place such as a school, an auditorium, or a gymnasium may bring more non-Christians. However, a church setting has some advantages. It has an honesty and openness—those who come already know that the meetings have to do with the Christian truth. A slow approach is necessary as ground preparation, but a reaping crusade hardly provides enough time for such a strategy. Those who came to the meetings knew they were going to be exposed to Christian teachings.



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Spread the word

A fourth simple evangelistic axiom was reaffirmed: members must spread the word that something is happening in their church. People will not come if they have not been invited. The Kaohsiung church distributed about 3,000 invitations. A few hundred would not have been enough. Although a town needs to be saturated with written invitations—in the marketplace, in homes, in business centers; through telephone, mail, posters, streamers—the best invitation is personal. Invite friends, family members, neighbors, and work associates. There is nothing like a personal invitation. It expresses care and conveys the message that you have something important to share.

The people were busy, and I was told that although they might come on the weekend, they would not attend three or four meetings during the week. This proved false. Out of about 70 non-Christians who attended, 15 had perfect attendance records.

Present a loving God

Fifth, we learned that no evangelism can succeed without presenting a loving God. In our evangelism in Taiwan we learned that people are looking for a God who loves and cares and who is compassionate and deeply interested in their lives, their families, and their future. I used personal testimony to express my own love for Him, and how He loves my family and me. I told them that I am not afraid of God, and that I can approach Him boldly in prayer and meditation. I read from the Bible many assuring promises of protection against demons and evil spirits. Once they saw the full picture of God, as revealed in the Bible, it was not difficult for them to make their choice.

Out of this biblical perspective I was able to address other concerns rooted in their culture. One of these concerns was ancestor worship. From the Bible, I showed them what it says about the dead, and what it says about honoring one's parents while they are alive. When they die, we should not forget them. Presenting such a high view of the

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children's responsibility to their parents helped to eliminate the issue of ancestor worship for many.

Ask for public commitments

Sixth, it became clear that we should not conclude that certain cultures do not lend themselves to public response and commitment. Each evening I asked people to make a specific decision. In this I used different approaches: show of hands, standing to show acceptance, altar calls, coming to Sabbath morning meetings, and finally the baptismal call. We were delighted that 15 non-Christians chose to accept Jesus.

Often pastors do not ask for public decisions because they do not want to embarrass the audience. They may be afraid that no one will respond when they make the call. That kind of fear cannot be a part of evangelism. The evangelist must call for a decision, and leave the matter of ultimate persuasion and response to the Holy Spirit.

Promote personal work

Seventh, we also learned all over again how important personal evangelism is in fulfilling the goals of public evangelism. Pastors and supporting church members found ways to be involved in both forms of evangelism in this unique non-Christian environment. They saw immediate and positive results. Public evangelism is an ideal setting for friendships to bloom into the new dimension of soul winning.

Use appropriate visuals

Eighth, I found that my audiovisual presentation was not necessarily suitable in that setting. My presentation had no local flair. Nevertheless, what I had was better than nothing. Pastors need to develop slides and illustrations that are appropriate to their culture and environment. Localized illustrations will naturally grip audience attention more effectively. A Revelation Seminar may be quite appropriate in a Western setting, but may not be so to the Eastern mind.

Every night I showed about 300 slides, simultaneously using three projectors operated by remote control.

As expected, audiovisual presentations attracted a larger crowd than a regular sermon. If evangelists are unable to illustrate their sermons with slides, they should use oral pictures. Jesus never preached without using parables (Matt. 13:34).

Seek out the youth

Ninth, I returned to the Philippines with the conviction that something significant must be done for our youth. There were no children or teenagers in the church in which we had the meetings! The youngest person in the church was 19 years old. Adventist schools are indispensable to our youth and to retaining them in the church. So are Pathfinder Clubs and other attractive programs for children and young people. Providing creative ways of attracting the young in our secularized societies must be a priority.

Follow the interest

No evangelism is complete without executing a consistent follow-up plan. After our series the church pastor held a follow-up crusade four nights a week for four more weeks. We have it on the best authority that this second series is more necessary than the first.² Without earnest and prayerful follow-up the level of dropouts can be quite high. The second series has another advantage: the newly baptized persons will have an opportunity to bring their friends to the church before they themselves lose their first love.

The challenge of missions

Evangelism should be the watchword of the church and one of its institutions—seminaries, colleges, schools, industries, publishing houses, language schools, health-care centers. On the second floor of the building that housed the church, an English language school was holding classes for numerous college students, yet none of these young people came to our meetings. A clinic next door served many patients, but as far as we know not one visited our services. Evangelism cannot succeed unless the evangelistic vision

is thoughtfully and intentionally made a part of the passion of all our institutional functions.

We must see in every person a potential citizen of the kingdom of God. It is our God-given calling to go out proclaiming that the wedding feast is ready. We must invite the people in, uniting all the agencies of the church for this superb task. ■

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1911), p. 109.

² ———, *Evangelism* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 334.

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Pastor, do you have doubts sometimes?

Heikki Silvet

Addressing our doubts with God's assurances



Heikki Silvet is the ministerial secretary of the Euro-Asia Division of Seventh-day Adventists.

*"He who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord" (James 1:6, 7).**

It was a quiet evening at Zaokski Theological Seminary in Russia. One student—a future pastor—wanted to talk to me. We found a quiet corner, and I waited expectantly for the student to begin. After a long silence he began with a confession: he was not sure about his calling. He was not sure if he should pursue a pastoral career. He sounded desperate. One word from me, and he was ready to drop out of the seminary forever.

That was a few years ago. Today this young man is the pastor of a large church. His members love him. They love him for his warmth and sincerity. They appreciate him as a pastor. They feel free to go to him with their problems. They flock to hear him preach. I know he has found his calling.

Have you ever had doubts about your calling? Your commitments to ministry? Your faith? Your family? Yourself? How serious are a pastor's doubts about such things?

Consider John the Baptist, described by Jesus as among the greatest "born of women" (Luke 7:28). In the loneliness of Herod's jail, his doubts almost overwhelmed him. He sent his disciples to ask Jesus, "Are you the one who was to come or should we look for another?" (verse 20). This was the same John who had baptized Jesus, proclaimed Him as the "Lamb of God," and devoted all his life to preparing the way for Jesus. This same John had said of Jesus, "He must become greater; I must become less"

(John 3:30). How could such seminal doubt enter the soul of a man who possessed such mature convictions?

When doubt enters

Doubt need not mean disbelief in the existence of God. Lucifer doesn't doubt the existence of God. Nor did Job. Nor did John the Baptist. Nor our seminary student. The issue of doubting is much broader.

To begin with, doubt often enters when we do not take our problems to God. We try to lock our problems in some remote corner of our hearts. We neglect our study of God's Word. We hardly pray. We may be pastoral workaholics or capable administrators, doing our duties perfectly well, performing at optimal levels, and yet deep down there is a hidden emptiness—and it begins to express itself in doubt or even despair. "As activity increases and men become more successful in doing any work for God, there is danger of trusting to human plans and methods. There is a tendency to pray less, and to have less faith. Like the disciples, we are in danger of losing sight of our dependence on God, and seeking to make a savior of our activity."¹

I know a pastor who was very upset with himself because he felt he didn't have a real interest in the study of the Bible. "Bible study for me is just a duty," he confided in me. "I set a time for study, but then I always seem to find something more interesting to do!"

Does that sound familiar? Can doubts assault us in the face of our own proclamation? Can we preach good news and yet experience nothing but sadness? Take, for example, the good news of the second coming of Jesus. For

more than 150 years we have been proclaiming it. Are we tired of waiting? Or did we ever really, personally, wait? In some corner of our heart, is there a little doubt about the Second Coming? Has the good news become sad news?

Doubt assaults when we struggle to understand the fine points of doctrine. Adventist theologians do not have a unified understanding of Adventist beliefs. There are varied interpretations of redemption, Christian perfection, inspiration, the nature of Christ, the function of the Spirit of Prophecy, etc. And some pastors are asking: "Then what about me? Where do I go from here? What is the truth and what is my future?"

Doubts can also be of a personal nature. Just two hours remain for a pastor to leave for church. He is giving his sermon a last look and meditating on the details. Just then someone in the family says something angry or wrong. The pastor reacts, perhaps harshly. Now doubt questions his right to preach. Can the Lord bless his sermon? Is he really fit to be a pastor?

Overcoming doubt

Is it possible in our Christian life to avoid doubt? Is it possible to avoid fluctuations, internal struggles, and uncertainties? The answer is no. But while doubt and despair are unavoidable in life, we need not fall victim to them. We can overcome doubt. We can minister without despair.

Watch Jesus in Gethsemane. Hear Him pray, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me" (Matt. 26:39). Jesus' internal struggle didn't begin there. A few days earlier, when a group of Greeks wanted to see Him, He revealed something about the storm inside: "Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say?" (John 12:27). And then, during the final hours: "My God, my God, why . . . ?" (Matt. 27:46). Ellen White comments on the struggle in Gethsemane: "As Christ felt His unity with the Father broken up, He feared that in His human nature He would be unable to endure the coming conflict with the powers of darkness. . . . With

the issues of the conflict before Him, Christ's soul was filled with the dread of separation from God. Satan told Him that if He became the surety for a sinful world, the separation would be eternal. He would be identified with Satan's kingdom, and would nevermore be one with God."²

Doubt is Satan's studied method for derailing us from our journey of faith. He tried it with Jacob, Moses, Job, David, Elijah, and John the Baptist. And he will surely try it with us. But the point is that we can overcome doubt by holding on to God and looking up to Him.

Let us go back to John the Baptist. When out of despair John sent messengers to find out about the authenticity of Jesus, the Master did not say anything at first. While the messengers waited for an answer, Jesus, instead of speaking to them directly, did something. "At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind" (Luke 7:21). The messengers didn't hear as much as they saw. They saw the Lord in action. They saw God. And this they could tell John. What they saw was the healing balm for John's doubts. And he accepted this with relief and with gratefulness.

When Jacob, under the pressure of his guilt and deceit, doubted his future, his remedy was the ladder, above which stood the Lord Himself. When Job sought a reason for his suffering, the Lord didn't give him an answer. Instead He gave him a powerful picture of Himself, and Job understood. When darkness surrounded Isaiah, his hope came in a fresh vision of God.

Of course, not always do we see a ladder going up to heaven where the Lord stands to speak to us. However, the Bible provides us a picture of a God who cares, who loves, and who never leaves us alone. In His strength we can have victory over doubt.

If we take time to be with God, if we commune with Him in His Word, if we learn to talk with Him and listen to Him, we will have strength to carry on our journey and complete it. His strength

will be ours. We will never have all our questions answered. For now we see only "a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12). Until then it is important for us to learn to live with questions. We cannot avoid these questions. Meanwhile, we are to walk in the light we already have. "God gives light to guide those who honestly desire light and truth; but it is not His purpose to remove all cause for questioning and doubt."³ "Faith grows by conflicts with doubts."⁴ ■

* All Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.

¹ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), p. 362.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 686, 687.

³ —, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, Calif.: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1948), vol. 5, p. 303.

⁴ —, *Sons and Daughters of God* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1955), p. 191.

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Proclaiming freedom

James A. Cress

At our creation, Jesus took a great risk to grant humanity freedom of choice. That risk, of course, meant that we might choose slavery to sin over freedom. Unfortunately, we made the wrong choice, and one on-going consequence of our rebellion is our willingness, even eagerness, to impose our personal viewpoints upon the minds and lives of others.

Intolerance is ugly in any setting and particularly so in the realm of religious belief and expression. If my convictions are so weak that they need compulsion or force of law to attain adherence, then they are more devilish than divine. Furthermore, forcing outward compliance never attains the real objective of committed belief.

Because of our denomination's long-standing heritage of valuing and promoting religious freedom, Seventh-day Adventist pastors face the recurring challenge of making an "old-fashioned" value relevant and meaningful to today's members. After all, it is difficult to whip up excitement about impending persecution if our members are experiencing a comfortable lifestyle that does not envision imminent "hard times."

Growing from recent conversations with Clifford Goldstein and Richard Fenn (religious liberty specialist colleagues), permit me to share several doable focuses that we pastors can implement as we make religious freedom a relevant and realistic discussion for our congregations.

Freedom should be a core value for all Christians. Knowing Jesus means experiencing freedom. Satan enslaves. Jesus liberates. Of all people, Adventist believers should exalt the reality of freedom in Christ and extend this benefit to all with whom we associate or to those we hope to evangelize.

Good people can disagree. It is neither possible nor necessary to achieve lock-step agreement on all concerns in the public sector. Politically and socially conservative believers will view certain issues far differently than politically and socially liberal believers, and we must continually affirm that this is acceptable.

Information liberates. As we provide current data of what is going on locally, nationally, and internationally to our members, we will increase not only their knowledge but also their commitment to religious freedom for all people everywhere.

Pastors need to instruct. An interpretation of world events within the context of the great controversy between Christ and Satan needs to be consistently brought to the minds of our members. Far too many political and social issues arise which are not seen within the wider view of prophetic significance.

Teach discernment. Not every rumor is true. In fact, most rumors are false. Pastors should develop a healthy skepticism when they hear about the anonymous, undocumented "they" alleged to be doing dark and dirty deeds. We should also help our members to love truth, reject evil surmisings, and "prove all things" before jumping on the rumor-mongering bandwagon.

Defend others, even those who are different. By deeds as well as words, we should make public our commitment to the concept that religious liberty is for everyone. If my Baptist, Catholic, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Shintoist, Islamic, Rastafarian, or Zoroastrian neighbor is not free, then neither am I. A person should not have to look, dress, live, or worship like I do in order for me to vigorously defend their freedoms.

Encourage and model community involvement. Become friends of elected officials and community leaders in your area now so that when the opportunity or need arises, they will be open to hearing your opinion on matters of religious rights. Also, by your deeds and actions you can distance yourself from those who advocate enforcing their own viewpoints upon society.

Become an activist for religious freedom. Take the initiative to go to employers of those members who may be facing challenges in the workplace. If you are a bit nervous about being on the frontline for liberty, don't worry. Your union or division's Public Affairs and Religious Liberty (PARL) director will offer you professional support.

Beware governmental gifts for the operation of religious institutions. The reality of even well-meaning governments is that what they support, they will ultimately seek to control. Also, remember the Golden Rule as it relates to this issue. Do we really want our taxes paying the freight of our neighbor's religion? Do our neighbors want their taxes paying for the pervasively sectarian program of our schools?

Preach what you practice. It is not enough just to live in freedom and to advocate freedom for all. Preach religious freedom. Enthusiastically. Frequently. Because it goes to the very heart of the gospel.

Read, promote, and sponsor Liberty magazine. Urge your members not only to sponsor subscriptions to thought leaders in your community, but also to subscribe and read *Liberty* for themselves.

Following these suggestions will lead to the fulfillment of a prime objective of Jesus' own ministry—to proclaim liberty to the captives! ■

■ ***A Dangerous Woman: The Life and Times of Lady Deborah Moody (1586-1659?)—New York's First Lady Liberty***, by Victor Cooper. Heritage Books, Inc., 1995, 197 pp., paperback.

Lady Deborah Moody, a seventeenth-century widow who fled persecution in England, was excommunicated from the church in Salem, Massachusetts. Called "dangerous" for dissenting from the orthodox belief concerning infant baptism, the new immigrant departed to found the first U.S. town (Gravesend, Long Island, New York) where inhabitants enjoyed statutory liberty. That was 350 years ago. Now the New York City mayor has memorialized Moody's work by issuing a proclamation in her honor.

Lady Moody was one of a group of precursors of the Seventh-day Baptists who in turn passed on to Adventists the truth about the Sabbath. This documented account of the "woman who wrote our Declaration of Independence 150 years before the men got around to it" provides fascinating insights into the early history of religious toleration in the United States.—Victor Cooper, Bracknell, Berkshire, England.

■ ***When Loving You Is Destroying Me***, by Alanzo H. Smith. Brentwood Christian Press, 160 pp., paperback.

This book probes into the difficult issues of

divorce and separation among Christians. It raises cogent questions about biblical teaching on divorce and looks at several of the difficult texts dealing with the issue. The book is not definitive, but certainly is instructive and thought-provoking.

A second section of the book reports on pilot seminars on divorce and separation conducted by the author at local churches, held with the purpose of increasing the sensitivity of the church to the multiple issues involved in divorce and seeking to broaden congregants' vision for the emotional support of divorced and separated members.

This book is valuable for family life counselors, educators, and pastors. It answers some questions and raises many more.—Richard (Dick) Stenbakken, director, Adventist Chaplaincy Ministries, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

■ ***Narratives on a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture***, by William C. Placher. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994, 192 pp., paperback.

If Jesus really is God's ultimate self-disclosure, if the gospels chronicle a love that risks suffering and loss, that portrays Him increasingly powerless before the world's authority, then everything changes. The angle of

vision becomes a paradigm shift in the way we view God, eternity, church, authority, and discipleship. If we meet God in Christ first as vulnerable in love and putting aside His almighty in power, we begin anew to discover not

only very God but our true humanness. Too often "the stories of how love led very God of gods to end up hanging on a cross are taken as somehow the allies of oppression," and when it happens, "something has surely gone desperately wrong" (p. xv). This book takes us into the heart of Christian ideas and values and asks hard questions. It is well argued and lucidly written. And it will preach! Placher will stretch your mind and your faith.—Andy McRae, associate pastor, Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Takoma Park, Maryland.

■ ***Hollywood Dreams and Biblical Stories***, by Bernard Brandon Scott. Augsburg Fortress Press, 1994, Minneapolis, paperback.

"All of life's questions are answered in the movies." With this controversial quote Bernard Scott begins a conversation about listening to what speaks with authority in our culture today. He steps forward to listen to what is being said in this modern mythic medium. Having heard the underlying story, he begins to construct a bridge of interpretation between the electronic age and the themes of

Scripture. Every pastor who wants to understand and communicate with the MTV generation should read this book.—Norman Yergen, pastor, Beltsville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Beltsville, Maryland.

■ ***Giving Birth: Reclaiming Biblical Metaphor for Pastoral Practice***, by Margaret L. Hammer. Westminster/John Knox Press: 1994, Louisville, Kentucky, 226 pp., paperback.

This book is an example of what happens when women take up the great themes of theology. When a woman committed to the Bible as God's revelation begins to express the insights of Scripture, men are gifted with fresh and compelling pictures of God. Beginning with a reevaluation of meaning of the pain of childbirth in Genesis 3, Hammer surveys the birth/mothering images throughout the Old and New Testaments, and Christian theology through the Reformation and beyond. She not only restores a whole matrix of images of the way God loves us, but reconstructs the church's ministry to women giving birth, and to their families. This book is filled with good Bible study and abundant practical approaches for the nurture of people at the vulnerable points of life.—Andy McRae, associate pastor, Sligo Seventh-day Adventist Church, Takoma Park, Maryland.

New CD-ROM released

Adventist Pioneer Library has released a second edition of "Words of the Pioneers" on CD-ROM. The Loma Linda-based organization says that the new CD is available by writing P.O. Box 1844,

Loma Linda, Calif. 92354.

Sermons and writings of the following pioneers are included: J. N. Andrews, Joseph Bates, Charles Fitch, J. N. Loughborough, Uriah Smith, J. H. Waggoner, James White, and ten others, some not as well-known.

In addition there are entire issues of *Present Truth* (1849, 1950); the *Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald* (1850-1863); and the General Conference Session Bulletins (1857-1913). The CD contains some 39,000 pages and 175 megabytes.

A spokesman for the organization, Dr. Fred Bischoff, says that one of the major items of interest in the new CD-ROM is Ellen G. White Estate material on the pioneers.

Also included in the new release are recent works of Adventist writers and theologians as well as those of the pioneers. The list includes Leon Cobb, Leslie Hardinge, Carsten Johnsen, David Lin, John Peters, and Virginia Steinweg.

The release of the pioneer material by Adventist Pioneer Library has the endorsement of the Ellen G. White Estate. James Nix, a vice-director of the Estate, writes that "The service that Adventist

Pioneer Library is providing our church is incalculable."

Dr. Bischoff also says that the new CD-ROM has Power-Point slide programs on the importance of the writings of the pioneers.

Each word is indexed and searchable by Folio VIEWS software, included in the purchase price of \$195.00.

The organization has undertaken to make material available and accessible that will recall the biblical and historical roots of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. They offer three major resources: books, CD-ROMS, and a quarterly publication "Lest We Forget." For more information contact Adventist Pioneer Library, P.O. Box 1844, Loma Linda, CA 92354-0380. Phone and fax (909) 824-1361.

Biblical marathon

To celebrate the month of the Bible (September 1995), we recently broadcast a biblical marathon from the radio station at our university. We were on the air for approximately 30 hours, broadcasting every 15 minutes. Our broadcast included readings from several Bible versions in at least eight different languages. Over 350 readers from several denominations participated, including some who phoned in from distant parts of the country.

For further information, contact Radio Universidad Adventista, Religious Programs Department,

P.O. Box 7-D, Chillán, Chile, South America.—Pastor Jaime Chandía, Chillán, Chile.

A new training course

Is your church witness program dying? Do you need to increase your

church growth? Do you want to involve more and more laypersons in the work of your church? Try this new, invaluable, motivating training manual: *Bible Instructor Training Class*. This flexible teaching resource, complete with well-designed teacher and student manuals, uses a simple approach to empower your congregation to give Bible studies to friends and family—our best candidates for church membership. It is inspirational and practical, Christ-centered, and emphasizes "sharing" rather than "converting." It is designed for five one-hour sessions to be used in a small group setting, such as Sabbath School class.

I used these materials in my church with a class size of six. After the fourth session this small group was giving over 50 active Bible studies! Some of those receiving Bible studies have now been baptized, and others are attending church on Sabbath.

To order the manual, send \$25.00, along with your name and address, to The Bible Instructor's Training Class, P.O. Box 1527, Elizabeth City, North Carolina 27909, or call (919) 264-4428 for more information.—John

Seaman, pastor, Elizabeth City, North Carolina.

Especially for pastors and elders

Adventist Communication Network (ACN), the satellite network of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, will hold the following live training workshops for pastors, elders, and church leaders as part of its cross-training series.

A Look at Churches That Are Growing and Why will highlight North American churches that are experiencing growth and share what they're doing right. The broadcast airs March 8, 4-6 p.m., Eastern time.

Sermon Preparation for Elders will empower local church elders to prepare and deliver dynamic sermons. This broadcast airs April 13, 4-6 p.m., Eastern time.

Church leaders planning to attend these workshops should register and order workshop materials by calling 1-800-ACN-1119, ext. 6.

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