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Utrecht: a "providential" detour?

Because the Utrecht General Conference session voted No to women's ordination, the writer (Alden Thompson, "Utrecht: a 'providential' detour?" October 1997) poses the question, "Do we decide biblical 'truth' by vote?" Later, in addressing this question, he writes, "Do Adventists determine 'truth' by ballot?" and answers his question, No. I disagree with the writer's implied and explicit conclusions here.

As Adventists we accept that the Holy Spirit is our guide in understanding biblical truth and applying it to our lives. As Adventists we accept that the Holy Spirit works through duly appointed delegates from the world field meeting in a General Conference session. Such decisions are for us authoritative in matters of doctrine and practice. In the preamble to our 27 Fundamentals statement it says that the present statement expresses our present understanding. This does not say that "Adventists determine 'truth' by ballot" but that Adventists are committed to the belief that truth is revealed by vote. We do not have perfect understanding; we only have growth in understanding, not detours.--Ian Rankin, retired field worker, North New Zealand Conference.

• Thompson's call for the issuing of genderless credentials is based on a faulty model of New Testament leadership. The Bible does not teach that the Spirit gives the "call" while the whole church recognizes this "call" by a laying on of hands, thus commissioning their leaders. Careful reading of Acts 13:1-3 shows that those who laid their hands on Paul and Barnabas were certain prophets and teachers of the church of Antioch, not the whole church. The SDA Bible Commentary comes to the same conclusion (6:281). This is also confirmed by Ellen G. White. She wrote that "the ministers of the church of believers in

Antioch laid their hands upon Paul and Barnabas" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 162). Furthermore, Timothy received the laying on of hands by the elders, or presbyters, not by the whole church (1Tim. 4:14). This is the accepted biblical practice.

Contrary to Thompson's suggestion that authority is not an issue, biblical ordination is associated with authority. Although those ordained should be servant leaders and not be authoritarian, Ellen White clearly states that ordination invested Paul and Barnabas "with full ecclesiastical authority," which means they were now allowed to baptize and organize churches (*The Acts of the Apostles*, 161).

Contrary to Thompson's suggestion that one should not assume greater holiness for those being ordained, the Bible teaches that candidates for ordination should have a Christian lifestyle that is manifested by high standards. Although the Scriptures and the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy bring out the equality of men and women before God (Gal. 3:28), they also teach that there are distinct roles that each gender fulfills. There is no office for which qualifications are so specifically spelled out as that of the office of the "overseer" of the local church. Paul clearly states that this is a gender related office. First, Paul supports his view of male leadership by an appeal to creation: "Adam was formed first, then Eve." Then he refers to the scenario of the Fall: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:12-14). Immediately following, Paul lists the qualifications for the leadership office of the local church (1 Tim. 3:1-7). These qualifications pertain to a man, not to a woman. Furthermore, not just any man would qualify. Only men who met the high standards associated with that office would qualify. A call for genderless credentials is therefore contrary to Scripture.

One should never forget that when the Holy Spirit calls a person, He does so in

harmony with the directions He has given in the Scriptures. Thompson's leadership view fails to consider the criteria in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.—P. Gerard Damsteegt, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Alden Thompson responds:

- 1. Who ordains? Since Acts names no recipients for the Spirit's command, "they" in 13:2, 3 could mean the leaders or the church. The return to Antioch is revealing, however, for Saul and Barnabas summoned the "church," not just the leaders (14:26, 27). Thus, in 13:2, 3, the Contemporary English Version also has "everyone" laying on hands and giving the send-off.
- 2. New Testament authority. Jesus transformed traditional views of authority, even within the family. A wife submits to her husband but both submit to each other (Eph. 5:21, 24); each has authority over the other's body (1 Cor. 7:4). Men, of course, in a world not yet fully touched by Jesus' teaching, are sometimes called to rule (cf. 1 Tim. 2:12-14). But Jesus' way is making its mark (cf. Gal. 3:28).
- 3. Holy people. Scripture knows only one way—for pastors, for everyone. Ordination tempts us to forget.
- 4. Common ground. The role of women divides us: Subordinate from Creation? From the Fall? Only within the family? Or full equality? Painful diversity, but all are "Adventist" positions. On what can we agree? That only the Spirit calls. Even Saul and Barnabas were "sent out by the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:4).

"Providential Detour?" seeks our common ground. In Scripture, God sometimes expected a wife to ask her husband (1 Cor. 14:35); sometimes, as with Manoah (Judges 13), the other way around. Even David "obeyed" Abigail, Bathsheba, and the wise woman of Tekoa. But now it's time for us all to step back, to "stand still and see the salvation of the Lord" (cf. Exod. 14:13). —Alden Thompson, School of Theology, Walla Walla College.

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t seems to me that the crowing of the rooster was still ringing in Peter's ears and the guilt and sorrow was still hardening into depression when

after some days of trying to relieve his demoralizing sense of failure he said, "I'm going fishing!" I think that the combination of his personal breakdown outside the place of Jesus' trial and the apparent collapse of Jesus' message and mission had been the one-two knockdown blow for this battling preacher. And so he said to his friends, who he sensed felt much as he did, "I'm going out to fish" (John 21:3, NIV). "I'm going back to a surer thing . . . back to an easier, less demanding, less controversial, less reproached, more socially accepted way of life. . . . I've got to get back to something in which I know I can be more than the failure I am.... I'm simply getting out." And giving him the confirmation he thought would be forthcoming, his closest friends agreed, "We'll go with you" (verse 3, NIV). Peter's colleagues apparently didn't need much persuading.

Reading the text thoughtfully definitely suggests that Peter's words did not simply suggest a nostalgic, one night fishing excursion on Galilee just for old time's sake. It rather implies that Peter was chucking his call to ministry and permanently returning to his old way of life. In this disciple's brief announcement there was disillusionment and exasperation, along with a shade of desperation. Behind it was the powerful desire just to be a simple fisherman again. I think Peter felt powerful urges to find relief from pharisaic scrutiny and to be part of a tested, traditional way of life where there would be consistency, normality, and respectability. And the others obviously felt much the same way, because they all got into the boat and sailed off (verse 3). Most significantly, the clarion call of Jesus, echoing so powerfully across those same shores just

Feel like going fishing?

W I L L E V A

three and a half years before, had dissolved into liquid pain and pain's frequent companion, timidity.

I must confess that in more than one part of the pastoral world in which I circulate, there are feelings similar to those of Peter and the others. And if you really think about it, there may be for some of us similar reasons for the presence of those feelings. The assaults upon the validity of our calling and our ministry are substantial. The suggestion confronts us to doubt the authenticity and significance of what we have thrown our lives and souls into. The pertinence of what we are all about is cross-examined and challenged by imposing people in impressive places. The weight of ministry in a predominantly post- or non-Christian culture can be daunting. And perhaps we have, much to our own consternation and camouflaged discomfort, found ourselves denying the significance of our message and identity or apologizing for its apparent lack of soundness as we stand seeking warmth with suspicious strangers around a fire on a cold night with Truth on trial, not understanding the significance of what is actually happening before our eyes (John 18:15-26).

It is fascinating to observe that after these seven disciples got into the boat and sailed off, any initial excitement was dampened when they fished all night and caught absolutely nothing (John 21:2, 3). It is even more fascinating to consider that divine Providence seemed to have a hand in the initial failure of this fishing expedition and that the same Providence stood on the shore in the early morning to bring success to the same expedition and meaning out of their bewilderment.

Jesus met them at the focal point of their confusion, offering them a productive suggestion about their fishing and providing them breakfast. But that was only after a dark, discouraging night.

It was not long, however, before Peter might have wished that Jesus had not appeared. Breakfast was just over when Jesus began to reinstate Peter, though restoration was the last thing that it felt like to Peter. He may have hoped that Jesus would pass over his horrible failure. But that could not be if Peter was to be salvaged. So the Lord asked Peter that penetrating, loaded question, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?" (John 21:15). "Peter, you need to think; you need at this most difficult, uncertain moment of your existence to be confronted by the bottom-line query, 'Do you love me?' 'Do you truly love me?' 'Do you love me more than you do fish and fishing or anything else?' If you do love me, then simply get back to feeding my sheep and lambs" (verses 15-17).

The implication is clear: Fulfilling the call of Christ is something that supersedes all priorities because it flows from that which is fundamental—love for Christ and the sheep and the lambs. Does it happen that when the passion to feed the sheep wanes and the itch to go fishing waxes, the fundamental cause may well have much more to do with whether or not our love for Him is fresh and alive?

We cannot, by the nature of things, afford to get soft on "the heavenly vision" itself (Acts 26:19). Doing so opens the door to all sorts of negative prospects. It is for us, as it was for Peter, to listen to the uncomfortable, yet magnificently restorative, words of the Lord and confirm our love for Him and our resulting "obedience" to the vision He has called us into.

Earth-shattering failures (our own and apparent failures in the essential aspects of our faith) have a definite way of overwhelming us. The oceans roar, the mountains shake, the earth seems removed. We stand on the cliff-edge of

Continued on p. 29

THE FALLACY OF "GETTING SOMETHING OUT OF WORSHIP"

n *Worship*, her 1936 classic, Evelyn Underhill drew a decisive distinction between private prayer and corporate worship. Prayer is an asking, Underhill argued, worship an offering. In prayer we petition God's mercy for our own sin and misery even as we beseech His interceding grace for the sins and miseries of others.

Ralph C. Wood is a professor of religion at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. In worship, by contrast, we seek to give God honor and praise for His unsurpassable worth: His worth-ship.

Like all sharp differentiations, this one is overdrawn. Surely gratitude to God is an essential part of prayer, even as confession of sin and seeking God's pardon are intrinsic to worship. Yet Underhill is right that the essence of worship lies in its impracticality, its needlessness, even its wastefulness. We do not engage in it to gain any obvious "good" but to grant all glory and blessing to God.

Traditional worship usually fails to offer God the adoration He is due. Rather than placing us actively in the presence of the Holy One, it often turns us into passive observers of a pathetic spectacle: hymns sung with neither conviction nor energy, illworded litanies listlessly recited, confessions enumerating the political sins of others and sermons that substitute storytelling for

biblical and doctrinal proclamation. Many churches are seeking to rectify such failures in traditional worship—and to increase the dwindling number of worshipers—by resorting to "user-friendly" methods. Rockband "praise teams," jeans and T-shirts as the preferred method of dress, sermonettes devoted to human-interest topics, and videos and other multimedia presentations having to do with practical problems are the means of worship designed to "reach people where they are," to enable the unchurched to overcome their allergy to institutional religion, to win over the young who have not been nurtured in traditional hymnody and preaching, and thus to save dying churches from their moribund condition.

Despite their much-touted success, most contemporary forms of worship are, I believe, premised on a deadly fallacy: the notion that the value of worship depends on our "getting something out of it." Christian

faith is indeed meant to benefit human beings, to transmute our wretchedness into a life of joy and service. But the slow process of our liberation and transformation in Christ, insofar as it is meant to serve humanity, occurs not in worship but through the various ministries of outreach. There the church seeks to meet people's needs, serving them where they are. Weekly study groups, prayer meetings, summer camps and weekend retreats, community service and work projects, Meals on Wheels and Habitat for Humanity, skits and mimes, puppets, and even the trite repetitions of so-called praise music, can all be used for outreach. If we neglect to engage in outreach and to school believers in the rudiments of the faith, we have denied our Lord's commission to take the gospel to all the world.

The things we do in outreach are not, however, the things we should do in worship. Because it should express the glory of God, worship should minister to people where they ought to be. There we seek not to have our needs satisfied but to have them redefined in light of the Cross and the resurrection.

One of our most insistent human needs, for example, is the desire for happiness. Yet worship that turns our attention away from our own desires and to the glorification of God teaches us that we are meant not to be happy but joyful. Happiness depends on our outward circumstances, while joy springs from a right relationship to both God and neighbor-even amid miserable conditions. In worship we celebrate and participate in this restored relation, which is our redemption. Discussing our marriages, watching film clips about Nicaragua, or seeing skits about overcoming depression are not acts of worship. Such devices belong to other occasions. In worship we need hymns that have dignity, confessions and prayers that have depth, sermons that edify rather than gratify-the whole service thus magnifying and glorifying Jesus Christ. As Søren Kierkegaard said so sharply about the church in his own day, anything less makes a fool of God.

Can worship become selfish?

It also makes fools of us. There are the fools whom the psalmist describes as consciously declaring that there is no God,

and these are the fools who unconsciously worship God as if He were not God. A deep atheism lurks in contemporary worship. When we cease to believe in what the old Book of Common Prayer called our "bounden duty" to give glory and honor to God, worship becomes a selfish seeking after our own good. It becomes a human-centered occasion for entertainment rather than a God-centered summons to high praise and holy living.

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This is evident in the many old-line churches where an aggressive informality now reigns. Its unconscious ritualism contains its own rigidly stylized features: the pastor or priest's call to worship by way of a friendly "good morning," the frontal hugs (during the exchange of peace) that would bring sexual harassment charges in other settings, the vigorous applause that follows the choir or soloist's performance, the raucous laughter evoked by the preacher's one-liners.

Similarly, the current mania for "dressing down" for worship openly flouts Jesus' parable of the wedding garment, which teaches us that we are not meant to dress like boors at the wedding banquet of the King. The command to cast the dressed-down man into outer darkness (Matt. 3:13) makes clear

the connection between garments and God. Casual dress reflects the notion that these people have an easy regard for God. Such a casual relation to God is worse than no relation at all. It is a terrible dis-relation because it deceives us about the most fundamental matters: the nature and character of the triune God. There is nothing comfortable about His redemption of the world's evil. Worship should reflect our own deep discomfiture with sin, even as it enables us to declare the joy of salvation. Though worship need not be somber and morose, neither should it be silly. If wit and irony are present, they should be theological rather than trivializing. As G. K. Chesterton liked to say, nothing is worth believing that we cannot treat with great gaiety.

Can life before God be frivolous?

By contrast, to have the choir wave its greeting to the congregation—as the oncestaid Presbyterians now do—is to make our life before God seem a frivolous business. Such carelessness about holy things makes both the manner and the matter of our worship gimmicky, faddish, and tacky. It's church lite, a dumbing down of worship that is all the more deadly for seeming so soothing. This new nonchalance in worship reveals our secret unbelief: our conviction that the maker and redeemer of the cosmos is a friendly fellow rather like ourselves—in short, a false god whom we have made in our own likeness.

"What all these changes add up to," Peter Berger observes about such contemporary styles of worship, "is the statement that nothing extraordinary is going on, that what is happening is a gathering of ordinary people enjoying the experience of community." Berger applies the scalding phrase "the triumph of triviality" to the new insouciance in worship.¹

At the risk of committing my own alliterative sin, I would call to the new nonchalance about worship a sacerdotalizing of the sentimental. Flannery O'Connor once declared that sentimentality is to religion what pornography is to art. They both commit sacrilege against truth by seeking shortcuts to the real thing. Sentimental Christianity denies the hard road of the

Cross, the rocky path we must tread if we are to work out our redemption in fear and trembling. Pornographic art disconnects sex, O'Connor argues, from its true procreative and communicative purposes, making it an experience for its own sake.

Can worship be sentimental?

Sentimentality is an excess of emotion built on a false estimate of its object, C. S. Lewis observes. True sentiment, by contrast, esteems things properly, loves them rightly, orders them truly. To modify what Lewis says about great works of art, real worship should instill "just sentiments" toward God and the world: "to feel pleasure, liking, disgust, and hatred at those things which really are pleasant, likable, disgusting, and hateful." We must be trained in true sentiments, Lewis argued: They do not come naturally. Proper worship is one of the chief means for schooling Christians in the unsentimental love of God.

Much of popular worship, even in traditional churches, promotes a dreadful sentimentalism in faith. I am not the first to wonder whether "In the Garden" and "Love Lifted Me" are unintentionally sexual hymns. I recently witnessed a more direct link between the sentimental and pornographic in contemporary worship. Some of my students had invited me to attend one of their Friday evening worship services. As these earnest evangelists belted out the banal lyrics and bouncy tunes of their praise songs, one young man began to gyrate his hips in a sexually suggestive way. An embarrassed student leaned over to whisper his apology to me. I told him that such pelvis-pumping in church revealed an honest consistency with the mood of the music and the atmosphere of the service. Their thoroughgoing sentimentality unconsciously prompted a pornographic response.

Paul may have been concerned about such sentimentality when he warned against holding believers back in a childish faith, keeping them mere "babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1, 2). Even at its best, contemporary worship often encourages a perpetual and sentimental adolescence in faith. It may attract people into the church by giving them the milk of initial outreach, but it fails to make them mature Christians who have learned to feed on the solid food of worship.

Against the popular argument that our old-line churches will die if we don't make our methods of worship contemporary, I contend that we may well attract quantity while sacrificing quality. The stunning numerical growth of the antitraditional churches may prove to be cancerous. The hard truth is that the church's first duty is to grant God true honor and praise through authentic worship, even if this means that Christ's flock will remain quite small by worldly standards.

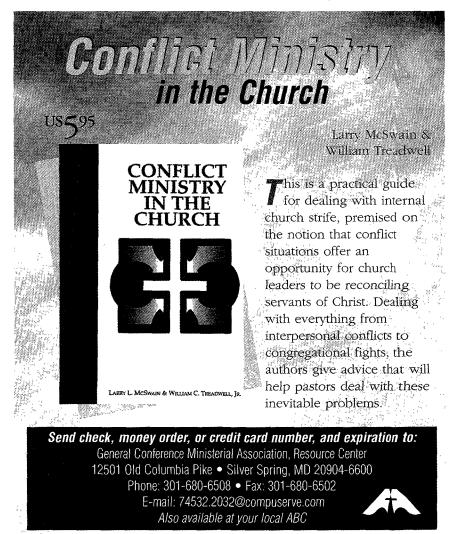
Yet vertical and horizontal growth are not always mutually exclusive. I believe that most people stay away from church because they are underwhelmed by its message and ministry. We challenge them too little in the deep things of the Spirit. The great preponderance of people come to church not in order to feel good about themselves but, as the Westminster Shorter

Catechism describes the chief end of human existence, "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever." This is the proper order of things. We seek first the kingdom and righteousness of God in worship. Our own benefit is but the by-product, not the avowed intent. We will restore life to the church's worship when we cease marketing it as a user-friendly product. When we have been both formed and transformed by true worship, we will seek not to "get something out of it" but to honor God by offering Him what the Book of Common Prayer calls "a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving."

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¹ A Far Glory: The Quest for Faith in an Age of Credulity, 1992.

² The Abolition of Man, 27.



Unplugged?

e was sailing alone in the ocean when a sudden storm threw him off course and sank his vessel. With great struggle, he found himself on a lonesome, uncharted island. After a whole day, and with no rescue in sight, he built a shelter. Days later, he turned bitter.



Ralph S. Watts III is senior pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Ukiah, California.

Why did God allow this to happen? Why me? Am I going to starve to death?

One day, after hunting for food, the man returned to his hut, only to find it had caught fire and gone up in a stream of smoke. He fell to his knees and cried: "God, why me? How can I learn to trust You when things like this happen?"

An hour or so later, he looked up and to his surprise saw a ship coming to rescue him. When he asked how they found him, they said: "We saw your smoke signal."

A humorous yet tragic story. Alone on a desert island, he had everything needed to send up a signal. By not tapping into this potential, he almost missed out on the rescue.

Could it be that we're like that man, having the most explosive power and potential within our reach—yet not utilizing it? I refer to prayer, an abundant but underused power.

Peter Wagner suggests that "more than ever before, some of today's most outstanding church growth pastors are affirming the importance of prayer, not simply as rhetoric but as action, for the growth of their churches." When prayer is given priority, the church grows.

Prayer and ministry

If you doubt the importance and power of prayer in the church today, consider the story in Exodus 17:8-16 about Moses and

Joshua fighting Amalek at Rephidim. Here is a vivid, visual reminder of the relationship between prayer and ministry. Joshua goes to the battlefield with the elite fighting forces, while Moses, taking Aaron and Hur, goes to the crest of a hill overlooking the battleground. As Joshua enters the battle, Moses raises up his hands toward heaven and prays.

Yet, as the day elapses and Moses, tiring, lowers his arms, a bizarre thing happens: Joshua was winning as long as Moses was praying, but when Moses rests his weary arms and pauses from prayer—Joshua and his men begin to retreat and run for cover!

The three men perched on that pinnacle soon realize that Moses' hands must be lifted up in prayer until the battle is won or else the battle will be lost. Taking a large stone and placing it under Moses so he can sit comfortably, Aaron and Hur each hold up one of Moses' arms until Amalek is defeated.

God is not limited in His ways of winning wars, of course. But could it be that two equally important battles were being fought that day? Joshua needed to fight the battle on the front lines, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur needed to fight from behind. Joshua needed Moses, and Moses needed Joshua.

Though the connection between ministry and prayer is clear, could the lack of understanding that connection be a reason that certain programs fail? Are the church and its leaders not taking prayer seriously enough? Don't we often find ourselves so caught up in our work that we end up forgetting how desperately we need people behind the scenes, holding up both leadership and laity in prayer?

Two dimensions of prayer

At times we are tempted to think that prayer is the easy way out. Think again. Prayer is hard work. It has two dimensions: inspiration and perspiration. Notice how prayer took so much out of Moses that he had to stop and rest. When was the last time you or I tried praying intensely for a few hours? We don't because it's hard work! Moses prayed the entire day. No wonder he needed a couple of friends to stand with him and sustain him.

A pastor whose congregation was experiencing phenomenal growth was asked the secret. "Prayer undergirds everything," he said. "When we work, we work; but when we pray, God works."

Wagner gives an illustration of this concept: "Bob Logan is known to church leaders across the country as what many consider the number-one expert in new church planting today. He is an experienced church planter himself, having started a church that grew to 1,200 and having spun off many other new churches in the process. Now he gives full time to researching, consulting, teaching, and supervising church planting. When he speaks to church leaders, he outlines 'The Seven Most Important Things I Have Learned About Church Planting.' Number one is prayer. He says, 'I agree with E. M. Bounds, who said, "Prayer is not preparation for the battle; it is the battle." ' "2

We don't have to search far into Bible and human history to find examples of people who plugged into the power of prayer.

- Abraham prayed and persuaded God to have mercy on Sodom if ten righteous, faithful people were there.
- Elijah prayed and called fire down from heaven.
- Daniel prayed and was rescued from the lions' den.
- Paul prayed and the prison walls were shattered.

- John Knox prayed and Queen Mary shook.
- John Wesley prayed and a revival began in England.

God hears and answers prayer. As churches, pastors, leaders, and members, when we choose to become intensely committed to prayer, we can expect prayer to have an impact on people for Jesus Christ.

The power of prayer

Jesus certainly left us a pattern for tapping into the power of prayer. Jesus was a Man of prayer. There were times He prayed alone and at times with others. Jesus also encouraged and taught His followers

Don't we

often find ourselves so caught up in our work that we end up forgetting how desperately we need people behind the scenes, holding up both leadership and laity in prayer?

to pray (Luke 11, NRSV). In Matthew 6:5, Jesus assumes His people will pray: "And whenever you pray..." Prayer is a vital link in our relationship with Jesus.

Consider the importance Paul places on the practice, when he wrote to Timothy. "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for everyone. . . . This is right and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1, 3, NRSV). As the youthful Timothy embarks into ministry, Paul makes sure he understands the importance of prayer, a theme reiterated over and over in the Scriptures.

As Jesus cleanses the temple, He quotes the prophet Isaiah (56:7) on the true purpose of His Father's house: "My house shall be called a house of prayer" (Matt. 21:13). This is still God's will and wish for the church today—that it be a center of prayer for not only the congregation but also the community.

The local church and prayer

How can the local church tap into that power of prayer and make an impact for Jesus Christ in the community? Terry Teykl writes on the attitude of many local churches concerning a special place for prayer: "It is interesting that we spend thousands of dollars on sanctuaries and family life centers and yet spend so little to create places to pray in these buildings. We plan elaborate structures with everyone in mind—youth, children, singles, persons with disabilities—yet we provide no space for continued or occasional prayer focus. We have music rooms for sheet music and robes, but no place to pray. We have a parlor for the bride, but no room to wait on the coming of the Groom of Glory. We have a room for youth recreation, but no place for prayer re-creation. We say people could pray in the sanctuary, but for security reasons it must be locked. Besides, to turn the air conditioning on would cost too much. We have room for everything and everybody, but no room to seek His face."3

Do you remember the experience of Christ's followers? With the last, lingering instructions of the Master echoing in their ears, they returned to Jerusalem, went to the upper room, and prayed. They were to do nothing until they had bathed themselves in prayer. "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers" (Acts 1:14, NIV). No preaching or teaching. No organizing or training. No financial reports or budgets. No setting goals or objectives. Only praying.

A prayer center

Why don't we have today an "upper room" in each church? Teykl suggests several advantages of establishing such a ministry:

1. A prayer center makes it possible to schedule prayer in a systematic manner.

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Could it be that we don't pray because we don't schedule it? Our lives get so busy that prayer usually gets squeezed out. We schedule time for worship, committee meetings, socials, potlucks, and ingathering. Why not prayer?

- 2. A prayer center provides a place to promote agreement in prayer. Remember the promise of Jesus? "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (Matt. 18:19, NIV). Everyone can now be seeking the same thing from God—the salvation of your community. Systematically, you can present the vision of citywide revival to your prayer warriors so they can soak the city in prayer. Maps, pictures, and globes can visually help motivate prayer. People who pray want to know what to pray about, and making a room to pray that contains pertinent, practical information is helpful.
- 3. A prayer center is a great place to register the deeds of God in the life of the church. The Bible invites us to "enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name" (Ps. 100:4). "Who can proclaim the mighty acts of the Lord or fully declare his praise?" (Ps. 106:2). We can better remember the acts of God and proclaim them if we write them down.

Why not have a special wall of notebooks that record the miracles of God? Each book could contain a month's worth of answered prayers. This kind of recording and remembering will produce a sense of praise and thanksgiving in those who pray. Many Christians journal and record their requests and answers to prayer. A church needs its own journal to recall and rejoice over all that God has done.

4. Prayer centers give an advantage to evangelism by the image they cast in the community. When prayer is targeted to personal needs of hurting people, they are touched by the compassion of Jesus. To pray for someone can be an incredible expression of love. People in the community will consider your church a caring church when they hear of the prayer center. Their hearts will be blessed in knowing there is a place of prayer for family crisis, marriage problems, financial squeezes, and other needs. The Holy Spirit can use this caring

compassion in drawing people to Christ and into your church.

- 5. Prayer rooms provide a place for people to practice prayer. Perhaps the high point of Jesus' teaching ministry came when His disciples asked Him, "Lord, teach us to pray." When pupils ask the right question, the teacher is happiest. Listen and learn the art of intercessory prayer.
- 6. Prayer rooms can have an inclusive impact on your church. Friends of Jesus were made up of apostles, women, new converts,

Having a

prayer room specifically
dedicated to prolonged,
uninterrupted prayer is a
tangible reminder of our need
to slow down and stand
before God. Consider what
might have happened if
Jehoshaphat and his people
had bolted instead of standing
waiting before God.

Jesus' own brothers, and other saints. They came from all different walks of life—fishermen, religious leaders, ex-tax collectors, soldiers, the poor. They varied in education, nationality, social status, and economic background. Yet "they were in one accord."

Prayer unifies. It has the power to make us one in Christ. A prayer center brings in new converts, seasoned saints, new members, and mature members.

7. A prayer room is a place where people can be quiet and hear the voice of God. In our high-tech, fast-track world it's not easy to find a quiet place for reflection and solitude. Our homes are bombarded with

telephones, televisions, and information super highways. But take a peek into the life of Jesus. What was the secret of His strength? Prayer. He rose early in the morning just to find a few quiet moments alone with His Father (Mark 1:35-37). At times He spent all night in prayer. Often He withdrew from the crowds to find a peaceful place to pray (Luke 5:15, 16).

A prayer room can provide a comfortable and quiet haven to seek and find God. "Be still, and know that I am God," says the psalmist (46:10, NIV). When people pray, God speaks and guides.

8. A prayer center provides a place for prolonged periods of prayer. In 2 Chronicles 20, Israel is under heavy attack. Jehoshaphat calls a prayer meeting. Listen to his prayer. "For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are upon you." What happened next? "All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord" (2 Chron. 20:12, 13). How long did they stand before the Lord? No one knows for sure. But this much we can be sure of: They stood before the Lord as long as they had to. They stood there until they understood the word and will of God clearly.

Having a prayer room specifically dedicated to prolonged, uninterrupted prayer is a tangible reminder of our need to slow down and stand before God. Consider what might have happened if Jehoshaphat and his people had bolted instead of standing waiting before God. What if they had rushed out and rashly done something on their own? Instead, they stood together and persevered until the answer came. The final result was that the enemy was pummeled and Israel prevailed.⁴

Why not choose to establish a prayer center in your church and "carry everything to God in prayer"? Otherwise, your church might find itself, like that poor shipwrecked sailor on the deserted island, stranded and ineffectual when all that was needed for success was there all along.

4 Ibid., 56-63.

¹ C. Peter Wagner, Churches That Pray (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books, 1993), 79.

² Ibid., 80.

³ Terry Teykl, *Making Room to Pray* (College Station, Texas: Renewal Ministries, Inc., 1991), 55.

DEALING WITH CRITICISM

arcus, fresh out of seminary, got his first district. Full of enthusiastic plans for outreach, personal ministries, and church growth, he soon found himself immersed in what he thought was a barrage of unfair criticism.



William McCall is pastor of the First Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana. Some folk complained about his sermons, others about his leadership style. An elder thought he was spending too much time at home. Others complained that he wasn't receptive enough to their needs. No matter what Marcus did, it seemed that someone didn't like something. At times, the discouragement was so overwhelming that he questioned his whole future as a minister.

No one, for sure, likes to be criticized. But no minister can avoid it. To believe you can is a fantasy. Thus, those individuals contemplating the ministry should seriously ask themselves how they respond to criticism. If you indulge in self-pity or have a high need for affirmation from people—the ministry is *not* for you.

People seldom give a pastor emotional support, because it seems like an inappropriate role reversal. A pastor is expected to be a source of spiritual strength, nurture, and compassion for others; one, in contrast, who seeks reassurance and support from parishioners for himself will often threaten those same people. You are expected to support *their* emotional needs and not have any yourself.

The most common cause of criticism is rooted in *transference*, the psychological phenomenon in which the pastor is subconsciously perceived as a parental figure. This means that people's reaction to authority figures or unresolved emotional issues of their childhood will be placed in the pastor's lap. If people felt neglected by their parents, they will tend to feel neglected by their pastor. If people felt rejected by their parents, they will be quick to see "rejection" in the pastor. Inevitably, criticism will follow.

You heard it through the grapevine

Because of the perception of the pastor as an authority figure, people seldom take the time and effort to confront you directly. What you get, instead, is indirect criticism. It is best to either ignore "grapevine" criticism or to water it down. Listening to criticism that comes through gossip can give undue weight to offhanded remarks and petty grumbling. People sometimes complain about the pastor as one might complain about government: as a symbol, not a human being. If the pastor listens to complaints filtered through the grapevine,

he can become discouraged and lose perspective. After all, bad news travels faster than good news. The grapevine seldom repeats compliments. Also, people sometimes say things in a moment of irritation that they may forget ten minutes later. Never give too much weight to the grapevine.

Of course, some criticism can be overtly hostile. More often than not it is simply an attempt to influence the pastor to fulfill the needs and wishes of the one criticizing. Many times people think they are being helpful, not realizing that pastors get criticism from all sides.

Interestingly enough, the problem of transference can work the other way as well. Powerful local church leaders can be perceived by the pastor as a threat, especially if they utter criticism. The pastor may regard his administrators with the same unrealistic emotional expectations that the people place on him.

Tips for dealing with criticism

Cultivate your support network. The best way for the pastor to deal with criticism is by seeking peer support from other ministers and friends who are not parishioners. Here is the most appropriate place to be human. Free from role expectations and symbolic responsibilities, the pastor can get support among those more apt to understand his struggles.

Cut criticism down to size. Criticism needs to be processed, not swallowed whole and raw. Realize that you probably hear criticism more loudly than praise and that satisfied "customers" usually take the service for granted and do not express appreciation.

Practice the art of positive self-talk. Do not try to counteract the pain of criticism by seeking out positive affirmation from parishioners; otherwise, you'll leave yourself vulnerable to greater hurt feelings if you fail to receive support. You can, however, give public support and praise to others. People are more apt to express appreciation if they feel appreciated.

Focus on your own identity and mission and reach out to people in love. Do not nurse the wounds of words that hurt. Sometimes even your friends and supporters can utter careless words. Don't risk alienating friends

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by dwelling upon criticism. Let it go. The person who criticizes you today may sing your praises tomorrow.

Stay calm. Under the stresses of job pressure and the sense of alienation, it is easy to exaggerate the threat criticism poses. Accept it for what it is: criticism—an inevitable thorn on the rose of life. Let your mind dwell on the positive, nurturing aspects of your ministry and not the negative side.

Don't persecute yourself. Why define yourself according to the most negative impressions of others? Everyone makes mistakes. Life's a learning process, and ministry is an infinite job. Is there truth in the criticism? Do the best you can to correct the situation. How do you expect others to forgive you if you don't forgive yourself?

Be humble. No one can perform at such

a level or manipulate public opinion in such a way as to avoid criticism. In time everyone has got to live with it. Perfectionism is a vanity that ministers cannot afford.

Do not retaliate! This is essential. Do not criticize in return or gossip about your perceived adversaries. You will do only harm. Make peace with yourself and end the conflict by dropping it and moving on.

In short, expect criticism. It's an inevitable part of the job. But with a little calm detachment, we can put criticism into perspective and, in fact, use it as a tool for growth.

Unfortunately, that's a lesson Marcus never learned. He retaliated, didn't stay calm, and always took criticism personally. Within two years, bitter, discouraged, and hostile to the church—he left the ministry.

PACK RATS

r. Moore walked with a shuffle. Cataracts had turned his eyes into blue clouds. His lower lip trembled as he spoke. I wondered if he was one of the hordes of the Manhattan homeless.



Jennifer Jill Schwirzer is the manager of a health-food store in Manhattan, New York I wondered if he was just another of the sad, pathetic figures haunting these cold, dead streets. I wondered if he was just one more of this heartless city's seemingly endless human refuse . . . that is, until I saw his spread in posh Englewood, New Jersey, and learned that his office address was One Wall Street.

Though tottering on the threshold of death, Mr. Moore sat on a hoarded fortune. I once rode with him to his home. He went 20 minutes out of his way to buy a loaf of bread on sale and another 20 minutes out of his way to get a free newspaper from the YMCA lobby. He spent more money on gas than he saved on the bread and the newspaper combined. When we arrived at his house, I saw that the evidences of obsession littered his life: Mr. Moore was a pack rat. The floor was covered with browned, warped piles of Wall Street Journals from 1940 on; drawers were full of pill bottles, empty but too precious to be thrown away; dull razors, plastic bags, boxes, and every mundane item that normally passes through a garbage can were all over the house.

He was drawn into the Seventh-day Adventist health-food store and restaurant that I managed because John Harvey Kellogg had saved his mother's life when the doctor had introduced her to soy milk to treat a rare condition. Drawn by our health message, he soon found that we were of the same religion as his beloved Kellogg. He came in every day,

not to buy a meal but to pilfer fruit and whatever else he could get away with.

His stinginess was clinical, his greed neurotic. We gasp, roll our eyes, laugh—but we don't realize that he acted out in the material realm what we all are by nature. We hoard, in less obvious ways, whatever we can. We grab, cling, clutch because we're innately insecure. Fear-driven, we obtain, if not wealth, then education, knowledge, influence, popularity, and accomplishment, attempting to steel ourselves against that supreme fear—death, utter, ultimate, total loss.

But the most criminal of all hoarding must be the hoarding of truth. Isn't that what ancient Israel did? "Unto them were committed the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2), yet they hoarded the treasure. They allowed the "oracles" to become objects of pride and in so doing made them unavailable to the world for whom they were meant to share what they had been given.

In the Jerusalem temple a low wall surrounded the court. Upon the wall was written the warning: Gentiles are forbidden to enter, upon the penalty of death. Thus they portrayed an unspoken picture of a sacrifice unavailable to any but themselves.

Then the sacrifice Himself came, living out the reality that He had "broken down the middle wall of partition . . . and came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:14). From His pulpit-tree, His death cry ripped

through the barriers of culture and privilege and declared Him to be "the Savior of all" (1 Tim. 4:10).

It's human nature

Snobbery is a universal human problem. We love to hoard. When we "have" the truth, our natural impulse is to hoard it, then lord it over those who have not. Sometimes we even call it witnessing, but it only makes the truth seem repulsive to the unbeliever. We're spiritual pack rats, the worst kind of all.

The clutter in Mr. Moore's home was a health hazard. One spark to the foot-deep newspapers and he and his lovely home would have gone up in smoke. We organized a crew to visit one day, and while some of us distracted him with conversation, others walked out with loads of worthless junk.

These snapshots of his life remind me, years later, that selfishness is ever ready to invade my religion. The devil would love Seventh-day Adventist Christians, including me, to hoard the gospel. Fortunately, the gospel itself declares a solution.

Tearing down the middle wall of partition

Justification by faith is Paul's topic of choice, but interwoven with that theme we find the idea that the "wall" between Jew and Gentile was torn down at the Cross. Applied to today, we could say that we have a wall between Adventists and non-Adventists. The Jews had the truth, the Gentiles didn't. Most Seventh-day Adventists believe that God has entrusted them with what are the modern-day oracles of God; the prophetic gift, special light on the Sabbath, prophecy, etc. So, if human nature hasn't changed, which it hasn't, there is a wall between the Jews and the Gentiles today.

Paul pinpoints what destroys the wall, the understanding that "a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). The text then asks, "Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith (Rom. 3: 29, 30).

A few verses later Paul explains how a righteousness-by-works religion causes the dreaded wall. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory.... Now to him that worketh is the

reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt" (Rom. 4:2, 4).

As soon as we believe that our works have contributed to our salvation, we glory. We get conceited. We think that God is in debt to us. It's the ultimate ego trip—playing god with God.

The only thing that can humble our hearts is the realization that we don't deserve God's gift of salvation. That is why Paul hammered on justification by faith almost to the point of being obnoxious. We are so prone to find some way to fit righteousness by works into the picture. We find it tough to accept the simple truth that justification is through faith alone, and we have no part in it except to accept it.

The doctrine that produces loving people

Once grasped, justification by faith produces obedient people, not presumptuous ones, as many have feared. Paul is all the proof we need of that. Did Paul believe in justification by faith alone? Yes, of course. Did Paul bear fruits of obedience? Yes, again.

You can't fit love into a proud heart, but humility and love are twin sisters. The best study we can make in preparation for evangelistic effort is the cross of Christ and the doctrine of justification by faith. We have never, as a people, lacked cutting-edge scholars and well substantiated arguments, but we have lacked a Christ-centered focus and the humility and love that naturally accompany that focus.

Mr. Moore battled city hall because of neighbors' complaints that his garage was raccoon infested. The junk piled up there drew the animals. This prince of pack rats could well have piled his belongings into a wall of Jericho. Perhaps that wall would shield him from the world, but it would never save him from death. He could have blessed so many with his treasure, but he was too afraid of letting go.

We stand atop a mountain of truth that will one day turn the world upside down. May we search our hearts to discover any legalism that would impede its progress. May we proclaim the gospel without stingy fear, for "God our Savior... will have all men to be saved, and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

It's something that Mr. Moore would have never understood.



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FUNCTIONING AS THE FAMILY OF GOD

he Seventh-day Adventist Church has viewed evangelism as the work of leading people to Jesus Christ and the church through baptism. Under this definition, evangelism generally means public meetings, Bible studies, and radio and television programs like *Voice of Prophecy* and *It Is Written*.



Lyle M. Arakaki is pastor of the Japanese Seventh-day Adventist Church in Honolulu, Hawaii.

Most Adventists maintain that evangelism is successful when many are brought into the church. And usually, God's blessings upon each effort are considered proportional to the number baptized: the greater the number, the greater God's blessing.

However, one crucial question regarding Adventist evangelistic efforts needs to be addressed. When many of those baptized in an evangelistic crusade are, within a short time, no longer actively involved in the church—can we really call that success?

Let's be honest. As a church, we have quite rightly placed a lot of energy and resources into bringing people to Christ and baptizing them. Yet, zealous to fulfill the evangelistic mission, the church has neglected the experience of nurturing those who have joined. For this reason, though membership continues to increase, an alarming number of newly baptized converts walk away from the church—often within a year after their baptismal experience.

What can we do to solve this problem?

Root of the matter

To begin, our concept of "evangelism"

needs to be expanded. It must include the issue of assimilating new members. Evangelism should not be seen as ending with baptism. Evangelism—the sharing of the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ—should seek for the transformation of an unbeliever into an active church member, a mature disciple of Jesus Christ. Evangelism must be seen as an ongoing process that leads a person to become an active disciple of Jesus Christ, rather than an event that produces a commitment to Christ and merely stops there.

Interviews with successfully assimilated members reveal two crucial elements that need to be included in any growing church: a continuing study of the Bible and the development of friendships with other members.

These factors are crucial because of two false assumptions: first, that once baptized, new members will naturally—through the existing church programs (such as Sabbath School lessons, midweek prayer meeting and, in many churches, small Bible study/fellowship groups)—continue to grow spiritually and in their knowledge of the

Bible; second, that once baptized, new members will just naturally fit in.

The truth is, however, that many new members do not take full advantage of the existing programs, either because they are not aware of the impact these programs can have on their spiritual growth or because they're reticent about getting involved in unfamiliar activities. Whatever the reason, the new member, usually in the midst of reordering his or her life, does not automatically gravitate to church programs.

Also, establishing new friendships within the church is not always easy. For a new member who is outgoing and gregarious, it may be easier; many others, however, find it difficult to take the initiative. In such cases, the church itself must reach out and take the initiative instead.

A new culture

When a person joins the church, he or she is joining a new culture at odds with the surrounding society. Seventh-day Adventist Christianity calls an individual to a new commitment to God, a new system of values, and a new way of life. Helping converts through this transition requires that the church function as a support system. To do this, the church must include in its models of evangelism definite plans for assimilating and nurturing converts. And these models should be based on the image of the church as "the family of God."

Where we have a milieu of many cultures, where family is such an integral part of one's life experience, the church needs to function like a family to the new believer, especially one who finds himself or herself estranged or isolated from his or her natural family and circles of friendship because of new beliefs and commitments. Given the possibility of this deep sense of loss, the church must be prepared to fill that void.

An example from Hawaii is helpful. For Adventists there, the most critical loss would occur in the area of family, or *ohana*. For Hawaiian natives, the experience of *ohana* is foundational for one's life. When a commitment to Christ causes a person to lose his or her place in the *ohana*, the church must recognize that what this new member needs cannot be provided simply through

weekly worship services or other church meetings but rather through activities and experiences that offer social and emotional support to help replace what has been lost.

To create such support requires a broader vision of "the church of Jesus Christ." Spiritual nurture must always be a primary consideration.

One of the goals of this nurturing has been to help the new member understand better the beliefs and practices of the Seventh-day Adventist Church within the context of a personal relationship with God. When a Christian experiences this kind of growth, then he or she is better able to understand how the teachings and practices of the church are meant to enhance one's Christian life

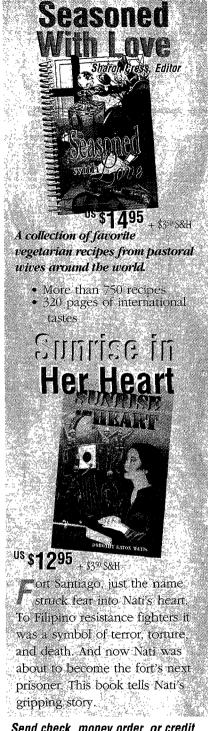
What form of ministry?

What form would such a nurturing ministry take? The answer would be as unique as each congregation. A church with 100 members could not offer the same programs as one with 1,000. However, both could still offer opportunities for members to meet the social and emotional needs of new converts. Each church would need to evaluate prayerfully its resources and develop programs and activities accordingly.

The greatest resource in every church is, of course, people. Simply reaching out to another, especially to the new member, in a caring and compassionate manner, will help that person immensely in his or her spiritual growth. The sense of identity, caring, fellowship, guidance, and mentoring that are so much a part of the *ohana* experience must also be the experience that one finds within our churches.

This program of growing and nurturing new members does not require a great deal of finance or materials. What it does require is the commitment of members to care for the needs of new converts. Whatever program or process is used, the church must take seriously its responsibility to help newly baptized members grow and mature into active disciples of Jesus Christ.

Until it does, we're going to lose large proportions of those who join after an evangelistic series. And as long as this loss continues, our evangelistic efforts cannot be called "successful," no matter how many numbers are added to the books.



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SPIRITUAL CHRISTIANS

he Lord is doing a marvelous work, creating everywhere in our church a hunger for spirituality as if there's some great growing thirst inside us that will not be satisfied with anything other than deep drafts from God Himself.



Graeme Loftus is
pastor of the
Bishopdale Seventhday Adventist Church
in South New Zealand.

Doctrine and theology will not by themselves satisfy this God-given desire; neither can evangelistic outreaches or the best administrative decisions and policies. Our hearts are created so that nothing can quench this thirst but the presence and power of the Lord in our lives. And the fact that He alone is creating this desire assures us that He will satisfy it, if we go to Him. After the bankruptcy of our efforts to gratify ourselves become evident, we cast our inner beings on God, who waits for us to cry out in recognition that anything less than He Himself will never satiate the deepest longings of our soul. God has waited until we have expended the energies of our flesh to accomplish His work, until we are exhausted from trying, in order for us to realize that everything comes from Him, is through Him, and goes back ultimately to glorify Him (Rom. 11:36).

It would indeed, however, be a tragedy if like the foolish virgins we didn't respond to His initiatives, either because of spiritual obtuseness or spiritual timidity. For too long we have allowed understandable fears about Pentecostal excesses, abuses, and counterfeits to hold us back from moving deeply in the things of the Spirit. The Lord doesn't expect us to shelve our rational, reasoning powers

when we approach Him or to deny or lose control of our emotions. Both emotion and reason have crucial roles in the life of a Christian. The key is to balance them.

Yet to remain a rational Christian or an emotional Christian or a behavioral Christian—at the expense of the Spirit—is to breed a sterility that falls far short of God's ideals for us. He calls us to be spiritual Christians, which means that our minds, emotions, and wills find their deepest fountain and expression from intimate communion with the Holy Spirit—with God Himself.

What does it mean to be a spiritual Christian? More than anything else, it means that we can, from a totally different perspective than before, meet, confront, and defeat the challenges that inevitably face us.

When seemingly insurmountable problems face the church board or the board of elders, prayer assumes a new dimension for spiritual Christians: Instead of a formal, perfunctory role at the beginning of every committee meeting, prayer becomes not an appeal to pass a specific agenda but a wrestling with God, for weeks if necessary, until He reveals His will in a manner that's abundantly clear.

When a desire to win souls for His kingdom burns within us, as spiritual Christians we need to be sensitive that God may forbid us to preach in Asia or Bithinia but may call us into Macedonia instead (Acts 16:6-9). We need to be open to His calling, in whatever direction it leads.

When children in our schools are trapped in the vice of cynicism about the church and the things of God, it's time to wage war. But our weapons are not the weapons of behavioral science and secular, materialistic methodologies. We are facing a spiritual battle, and so we need spiritual weapons. As spiritual Christians, we can no more solve this problem with terrestrial methods than we can fight disease with astrological charts. God has given us divine power to demolish strongholds and arguments and pretensions that set themselves up against the knowledge of Him (2 Cor. 10:3, 4).

That power comes by waging war in the realm of the spirit, mainly through prayer. But to do this, ministers themselves must be spiritual Christians. The time is past when academic qualifications alone entitle us to stand before our people and impact them in ways that could determine their destiny.

When pastors prepare their sermons and minister to the personal needs of their congregations, they must search God's will for those individuals. It becomes imperative to cooperate with His will in their lives rather than work against it, which often happens. How tragic to feed them with food for the mind or the emotions or the will when He yearns to feed their spirit with Himself.

Whenever we're faced with dilemmas of any kind, no matter the circumstances, operating in the Spirit enables us to learn how to hear God's voice individually and communally. This is what being a spiritual Christian is all about.

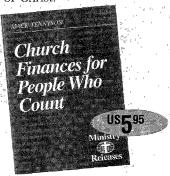
But this can happen to us only when, responding to the God-given desire that burns within us—we choose to drink deep of the drafts that the Lord Himself yearns to pour out upon all who in weakness, dependence, and sinfulness cry out to be filled with the things of God.



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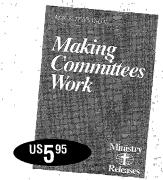
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THE NEGLECTED DIMENSION OF SABBATH REST

sk any Adventist why we keep the Sabbath, and the answer will be because "It is the memorial of Creation." True. Besides the clear testimony of Scripture, Ellen White repeatedly gives this reason as well.



Lyndon K. McDowell is a retired Seventh-day Adventist pastor living in Scottsdale, Arizona.

In fact, at the time this church was being founded, Darwin published his *Origin of the Species*, and with it the first heavy shots against the Genesis account of origins were fired. No wonder our pioneers believed that God had called them to defend the biblical doctrine of Creation. And, of course, central to that belief was the Sabbath.

Yet, is the Sabbath only a memorial of Creation? Is that all that the Sabbath contains? Or does it also symbolize something just as crucial: the personal experience of resting in Christ?

Jewish scholar Abraham Herschel suggests that what was created on the seventh day was "tranquility, serenity, peace, repose." He says that the Sabbath includes more than mere physical rest but has what the Jews call menuha, a state "in which there is no strife and no fighting, no fear and no distrust"—the kind of rest into which Christ invites us to enter (Matt. 11:28).

The Exodus experience

In light of this consideration, have we preachers failed to fully express God's rest in our own lives and to lead our people into a true experience of what Sabbath rest means? Both goals are difficult. Even God found it hard to teach Israel the truth about restful trust, as revealed in the Exodus story. Exodus teaches that Israel was a chosen race. "The Lord your God has chosen you... to be his people, his treasured possession" (Deut. 7:6). They were chosen not because of any inherent excellence but because of God's covenant promise to Abraham. God's choice made them a holy—a set-apart—people. They were privileged, and with that privilege came protection. They, his "treasured possession" (Deut. 7:6), could safely rest in God's loving care.

The Sabbath is inextricably related to this privileged status. "You must observe my Sabbaths. This will be a sign between me and you for the generations to come, so you may know that I am the Lord, who makes you holy," or set apart for himself (Exod. 31:12). The Sabbath celebrated their fellowship with God, and they were to rest in the assurance of His saving love. "Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the Lord your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the Lord your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day" (Deut. 5:15). Later

Ezekiel gave the same message: "I even gave them my sabbaths to be a sign between me and them, so that they might learn that I, Yahweh, am the one who sanctifies them" (Ezek. 20:12, The Jerusalem Bible). The emphasis is always on God's choice and His redemptive act, not on the worthiness of the people (Deut. 7:7). The Sabbath provides a spiritual rest in Christ, a memorial and celebration of God's saving act and His loving concern for His people.

The same is true today. In Christ we are a "chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God" (1 Pet. 2:9), and in Him we may rejoice in the assurance that "He chose us in him before the creation." of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.... In him we have redemption" (Eph. 1:4-7). The Sabbath is a "holy day, a Sabbath of rest to the Lord" (Exod. 35:2), a celebration of a relationship of which the Twenty-third Psalm is a quintessential expression: "Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me." Hebrews amplifies that relationship in the framework of redemptive grace. "There remaineth, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience" (Heb. 4:9-11).

After mentioning Bunyan, Baxter, Flavel, and other men of "deep Christian experience," Ellen White wrote that "the work accomplished by these men, proscribed and outlawed by the rulers of this world, can never perish. Flavel's Fountain of Life and Method of Grace have taught thousands how to commit the keeping of their souls to Christ. Baxter's Saints' Everlasting Rest has done its work in leading souls to the 'rest that remaineth for the people of God."

Rest in Christ involves rest in Him for our temporal needs

The failure to practice trust in God is part of the original sin, which is why, since the Fall, God has sought to teach His people this trust. For Israel, the first dramatic lesson after leaving Egypt came at the hopeless situation at the Red Sea. They could do nothing to save themselves. "He brought them down to the Red Sea—where,

pursued by the Egyptians, escape seemed impossible—that they might realize their utter helplessness, their need of divine aid; and then He wrought deliverance for them. Thus they were filled with love and gratitude to God and with confidence in His power to help them. He had bound them to himself as their deliverer from temporal bondage." Moses and the people sang, "Who is like you—majestic in holiness, awesome in glory, working wonders?... In your unfailing love you will lead the people you have redeemed. In your strength you will guide them to your holy dwelling" (Exod. 15:11, 13).

Yet, is the

Sabbath only a memorial of Creation? Is that all that the Sabbath contains? Or does it also symbolize something just as crucial: the personal experience of resting in Christ?

One of the most persistent problems of modern life is the daily stress of earning our livelihood. The Sabbath is designed to be a weekly stress remover because its rest involves trusting God to supply our needs. We pause and learn again to place our stress and care on Him who first rested on the Sabbath and gave it to man. Ellen White wrote, "The invitation of Jesus is 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls' (Matt. 11:28, 29). Thus He unites with Himself by a new inspiration of grace all who will come unto Him. He puts upon them His seal, His sign of obedience and loyalty to His holy Sabbath."5

Israel was taught lessons of trust all through the wilderness wandering. The daily provision of food and water was dramatic evidence of God's care. As a young pastor giving Bible studies about the Sabbath, I emphasized the fact that for more than two thousand Sabbaths the manna did not fall nor did that which they had collected on Friday go bad. This demonstrated to Israel the importance of keeping the Sabbath.

But my emphasis was wrong. The lesson they had to learn was that "man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. 8:3). The manna represented the Bread of Life. "The bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." "I tell you the truth . . . I am the bread of life" (John 6:32, 33). We read that "each man gathered as much as he needed" (Exod. 16:18), and when we eat of the spiritual bread, we will never go hungry.

Compare Israel's experience with the temptation of Jesus. When Christ was hungry, the devil said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." The question was not just one of appetite but of His Sonship. In distress would He rely upon the assurance given at the Jordan: "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17–4:4). The test came to Adam; it came to Israel; it came to Jesus—and it comes to us. In times of distress can I keep the assurance that I am a child of God, the subject of His love? The Sabbath reminds me that I can.

True Sabbath rest means that we trust Him completely for our salvation

To rest in Christ means trusting Him not only for our temporal needs but for our righteousness. Paul made a spiritual application to God's providences in the desert when he wrote: "They drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:3, 4). According to Ellen White: "To eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ is to receive Him as a personal Saviour, believing that He forgives our sins, and that we are complete in Him."

Sinai also has lessons to teach, not just about law keeping but of righteousness by faith. The prologue to the law is important: "You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles'

wings and brought you to myself" (Exod. 19:4). In other words, you have seen how I helped you in your temporal needs; now will you trust me in spiritual things? Israel readily promised they would. "Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, 'All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient,"... yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken; and now, seeing their sinfulness and their need of pardon, they were brought to feel their need of the Saviour revealed in the Abrahamic covenant. . . . Now they were prepared to appreciate the blessings of the new covenant."7

In God's plan, there is no "old covenant." The old covenant became the practice in Israel because they failed to learn the lesson of Sinai, hence they never really kept the Sabbath. Nehemiah's attempt at a legislated reform evolved into the dreadful legalism that Jesus had to confront head-on centuries later. "So we see that they were not able to enter [God's rest] because of their unbelief" (Heb. 3:19). "Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not obtained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works" (Rom. 9:31, 32). They resisted the message of righteousness (10:3).

Are we any better than our spiritual ancestors? As Adventists we talk about righteousness by faith probably more than any other denomination, but have we really experienced it? Too often, when rest in Christ is emphasized, some will immediately ask, "You mean there is nothing for us to do? That is cheap grace!"

Grace, by its very nature, can never be cheap. To accept the gift of justification and sanctification is not a passive act. It is intensely active. It can come only out of a deep sense of our utter sinfulness—not merely out of acts of sin but the realization that we are sinners at the core of our being, and because of this we need forgiveness and long for righteousness. Then, when forgiveness is received, we rest in Christ—gladly doing His will and resting in His care. "A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your

hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ.... It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness."9

True Sabbath keeping, then, should be a celebration of the gift of righteousness. "Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1, 2). Genuine faith in Christ means that each Sabbath we can celebrate our passage from death into

e have been

told that with the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we will go out and preach the Sabbath "more fully."

Does this mean that we will truly accept by faith the righteousness of Christ as our only hope of salvation, without any ifs, ands, buts?

life. Should this not be the central theme of every Sabbath? Would it not banish forever the pessimistic complaint "I don't think I can make it!" as well as give hope and courage to many a struggling soul?

The Sabbath as a celebration of rest in Christ puts a completely new dimension on how one keeps the Sabbath

Too often the Sabbath has been associated mainly with what we should or should not do. One Sabbath afternoon many years ago, while walking an attractive young lady home from Loma Linda, I bent down and pulled up a weed from the otherwise well-kept lawn.

She chuckled and asked, "Lyndon, how many weeds can one pull up before one breaks the Sabbath?" She was kidding, of course, but the question illustrates our approach to Sabbath keeping as merely a matter of ceasing from physical labor.

But doesn't the commandment read, "On it [the Sabbath] you shall not do any work"? True enough, but because that is exactly how the Pharisees understood the commandment, they constantly sought to regulate their lives and the lives of others in order "not to do any work" or to cause others to work on the Sabbath. Jesus condemned this approach (Matt. 12:1-18).

Does the commandment mean instead that on Sabbath we put aside the stress and care of providing for our daily needs and reaffirm our faith in God's providential care, in both temporal and spiritual things? Is it not to reflect in a special way on the Word: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear."

Eugene Peterson, in Christianity Today, wrote that the "American bargain-basement sin, on sale in virtually every American church," is "the willful violation of the fourth commandment." Convicted on this point, he and his wife decided that they were going to keep Monday as their Sabbath, for Sunday he worked too much. It was not to be just a day off but a true Sabbath. They needed, he wrote, a sanctuary and a ritual; they chose the forest trails for their sanctuary—meditation, prayer, and play for their ritual. "No other single thing that we have ever done comes close to being as creative and deepening in our marriage, our ministry, and our faith."10 He might have the day wrong, but at least he's getting this principle correct.

We have been told that with the final outpouring of the Holy Spirit, we will go out and preach the Sabbath "more fully."

Does this mean that we will truly accept by faith the righteousness of Christ as our only hope of salvation, without any ifs, ands, buts, or codicils about perfection? Even the statement "I can do it with Christ's help" still leaves "I" in the center. It is not just the things we do or don't do that make us unworthy of the kingdom; it's the inbred fallenness of our natures. It is possible for

Continued on p. 29

STEPS to ACTION

Member Has a Sabbath Workplace Problem

- Call your local conference or union PARL director IMMEDIATELY.
- Let your member know that the PARL Department of their church is ready to help.
 - If a member tells you of a Sabbath employment problem, document the following:
 - Member's name, address, and phone number.
 - Employer's name, address, and phone number.
 - Name of person who has authority to resolve the problem for the employer.
 - The nature of the problem and whether it is reoccurring or a single incident.
 - Whether the member belongs to a union and if the union is supportive of our position.
 - The nature of the job, the shift worked, and if the member has any suggestions of how accommodation can be achieved.
 - Schedule a time when the PARL director can talk to the member.
 - Don't make promises to your church member that cannot be fulfilled.
 - Counsel your members to maintain an attitude of compliance with and respect for authority as far as possible, without violating his or her conscience.

Presented by the North American Division Public Affairs and Religious Liberty Department and Liberty Magazine.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

he name "Seventh-day Adventist" moves in two directions: "The Seventh-day" points backward to the belief that God created the world, while "Adventist" points forward to the belief that God has an eschatological destiny for that world.



Marco T. Terreros, Ph.D., is chair of the School of Theology, Colombia Adventist University, Colombia, South America. While the seventh-day Sabbath roots us to the origin of life's Creator, the Advent hope takes us to the end of history and the beginning of the new heaven and the new earth.

Considering, therefore, how much of who we are and what we believe is found within our name itself, it's reasonable to ask What is a Seventh-day Adventist?

An Adventist is one who holds non-negotiable Creation-related beliefs.

The word Adventist describes someone awaiting the advent of the One by whom "all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible" (Col. 1:16).* This belief in eschatology, the second coming of the Creator, is, however, linked to protology, the beginning of all things in the creative activity of that same God. Adventists would have no right, biblically speaking, to expect that the advent they await will mark the end of this world, unless the One who comes is the Creator of that world. We are correct in connecting the Second Advent with the initiation of a new order of things only because He who comes has revealed Himself able to originate a "very good" creation (Gen. 1:31), even out of nothing (Heb. 11:3). It is on the basis of this biblical truth that Seventh-day Adventists believe that the redemption of humanity will materialize—not through the improvement of the present world but through the creation of a new one.

The term Adventist, far from implying

the exaltation of a doctrine, implies the exaltation of a Person—Jesus Christ. We await His coming. It is the Person who gives relevance to both the event and the belief, not the other way around. We wait for the advent of the Creator, and the Creator is the Redeemer. Thus, He can promise, "the old order of things has passed away. . . I am making everything new," and we, in turn, can trust that "these words are trustworthy and true" (Rev. 21: 4, 5).

In our name, the word Seventh-day points to the Sabbath, which comes from Creation. Creation is the visible and tangible demonstration of who God is; it is the greatest evidence of His power, greatness, and divine nature (Rom. 1:19, 20). Besides redemption, it is also the greatest demonstration of His love. Seventh-day Adventists celebrate these two events—Creation and then redemption. The Sabbath symbolizes both.

Sanctifying the Sabbath is such a powerful exaltation of God as Lord of life that, as Ellen White has said, "had the Sabbath always been sacredly observed, there could never have been an atheist or an idolater." I Just by keeping Sabbath holy, without any additional proclamation, every Seventh-day Adventist believer exalts God and testifies that He made the world in six days and rested on the seventh. Such observance would also testify of God's love for humankind as revealed since Creation by giving to His children each week a day for rest and special fellowship (Mark 2:27). By worshiping on the Sabbath, Seventh-day

Adventists demonstrate their personal conviction that God, not an evolutionary process, is responsible for the existence of all that exists. Belief in the Sabbath "constitutes the greatest bulwark against the progress of the theory of evolution."²

As with the Second Advent, so it is with Sabbath-keeping. The day is important just because of the Person we adore and fellowship with during its hours. No other day holds the same significance as a day of worship for Seventh-day Adventists, because the Creator set apart only the Sabbath for that special purpose.

An Adventist is one who accepts a biblically based recent creation

Adventists believe that all forms of life were created by God, but they do not stop there. They believe that accepting God as Creator is the foundational issue. How He created, how long ago, and how long it took Him to create is also pivotal. Adventists perceive these as inter-related issues that speak to the character and power of a personal Creator. Bible passages about creation indicate that it was an awesome miracle performed in a very short time period (see Gen. 1:3, cf. 2 Cor. 4:6; Gen. 1:6-7, 9, 24, 26, 27, etc.; Ps. 33:8, 9). As Lubenow points out: if we inject a long time frame into one of God's miracles, we spoil it and it is then no longer a miracle.3

Scripture does not stop with the miracle of an instantaneous (six-day) Creation. Through its genealogical listings and depiction of generations back to Adam, it strongly suggests a recent creation, as opposed to the evolutionary premises of a lengthy one. Adventists, therefore, accept the account of a recent Creation, based on the credibility of Scriptures as God's supreme revelation. Ellen White's writings help to formulate, support, and effectively articulate the Adventist stand.⁴

In order to alleviate the discrepancy between the Bible and science regarding the age of the earth, some Adventist scientists in recent years have proposed that while life on the earth is young, the planet itself is as old as radiometric dating suggests, which leads to an interpretation of Genesis in which the earth was created "in the beginning" (a very distant past) while the organization of the planet and the creation

of life on it occurred only six to ten millennia ago.

Perhaps this is how it happened. Some questions could be posed, however, in the light of this interpretation of the evidence: First, Genesis 1:1, 2 declares that when God created the earth, it was "formless and empty." And Isaiah 45:18 adds that God "did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited" (cf. 45:12). If this is so, why should the earth be empty for 4.5 billion years or so (according to evolutionary

dventists

believe that all forms of life were created by God, but they do not stop there. They believe that accepting God as Creator is the foundational issue. How He created, how long ago, and how long it took Him to create is also pivotal.

dating of the earth's core), and be inhabited for only about 6,000 years, if God "did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited"?

The traditional understanding of Genesis 1, that God created the earth (Gen. 1:1) and placed humanity on it in harmony with His purpose for the planet, seems more consistent with God's actions as revealed in Scripture elsewhere than is the option of leaving His declared purpose unfulfilled for billions of years. "Like the stars in the vast circuit of their appointed path, God's purposes know no haste and no delay." 5

Also, because evolutionary science usually dates the fossils on the basis of the rocks or strata in which they are found, the question arises: How consistent and

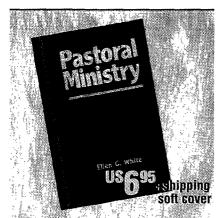
defendable is the basis upon which Seventhday Adventists accept evolutionary science's age of the rocks and strata while, at the same time, rejecting its age for the fossils (hence for life) contained therein?

The implication of a discontinuity between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2ff is similar to that proposed by Gap theorists. (The Gap Theory proposes that millions of years elapsed between the events described in Genesis 1:1 and those narrated in Genesis 1:3 and that Creation took place in three stages: A pre-Adamic period when the earth was perfect and beautiful [Gen. 1:1]; an intermediate period in which it became empty and formless [Gen. 1:2]; and the "reconstitution" period described in Genesis 1:3ff.) But are we aware of what the acceptance of such a gap (passive, granted) entails? Is it not the result of a rather broad concordist endeavor between Scripture and science?6 The point is that science, not Scripture, forces us to accept the Gap. "One thing is certain," writes evangelical author Clark Pinnock, that "they did not find out about an ancient earth from reading Genesis."7

Meanwhile, what should we do with verse 2? Shall we consider it a thought unit with verse 1 or with verse 3? In either case, we have two problems. First, we have the Spirit of God "hovering over the waters" for millions or billions of years to no effect, which is not a typical result of the Spirit's activity or intervention in world affairs. When the Spirit intervenes, something happens-a change of conditions; a renewal. "When you send your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the earth" (Ps. 104:30). Second, verse 2 contains three clauses whose fundamental function in Hebrew is to express something fixed, a state, and not to mark a becoming, a progression, or a sequence in action.8 So the text would not allow us to conclude that the Spirit was hovering over the waters for the eons elapsed since "the beginning" but instead entered into action only at the beginning of Creation week initiated just a few thousand years ago.

An Adventist is one who declares to the world that God is the Creator

Seventh-day Adventists are conscious of their high origin, created in God's own image



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General Conference Ministerial Association, Resource Center 12501 Old Columbia Pike Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 Phone: (301) 680-6508 Fax: (301) 680-6502 E-mail: 74532.2032@compuserve.com and likeness (Gen. 1:27). Thus, they recognize that they are the stewards of what God has created. As such, they are mindful of their status as co-workers with fellow human beings. Even though God commanded Adam and Eve to rule "over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground" (Gen. 1:28), they were not commanded to lord over other humans. A neglect of this principle has brought about oppression and unhappiness throughout human history.

Because the creation is God's, Adventists proclaim His glory (Isa. 43:7, 20, 21) and exercise loving care over the world that surrounds them by:

- a. being thoughtful and diligent in cultivating the earth (Prov. 28:19);
- b. being ecologically responsible and taking good care of such natural elements in the ecosystem as water, air, soil, etc. because the land is the Lord's (Jer. 2:7, 9);
- c. selecting, preparing, and sowing only the best seeds possible (Matt. 13:24);
- d. studying, learning, and applying the best, most adequate farming (planting, pruning, grafting, etc.) methods (Isa. 18:4, 5);
- e. giving the land periods of rest in order to get from it the best yield possible (Lev. 25:3-7);
- f. being careful in the disposal of waste materials and in the use of chemical products to avoid adding to the contamination of the planet;
- g. being concerned about and taking loving care, all plant and animal life in general (Prov. 12:10); and

h. being just, faithful, and solicitous with employees, subordinates, and fellow workers, who also reflect the image of God. Malachi expresses it this way: "Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us? Why do we profane the covenant of our fathers by breaking faith with one another?" (Mal. 2:10).

Conclusion

Who, then, is a Seventh-day Adventist? In the context of the biblical doctrine of Creation, a Seventh-day Adventist is a Christian who believes and upholds biblical Creation, who declares to the world that God is the Creator of all things, who worships and serves the Creator—the only

One to be forever praised (Rom. 1:25), who observes the seventh-day Sabbath as a memorial of Creation and redemption, and who hopes for the final consummation of of all things when the creation joins together in proclaiming, "You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being" (Rev. 4:11).

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

- ¹ Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets* Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1958), 336
- ² Seventh-day Adventists Believe . . . A Biblical Exposition of Fundamental Doctrines (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 165.
- ³ Marvin L. Lubenow, "Does a Proper Interpretation of Scripture Require a Recent Creation?" in *Decade of Creation*, eds. H. M. Morris and D. H. Rohrer (San Diego, Calif.: Creation-Life Publishers, 1981), 90-104.
- ⁴ Henry M. Morris, scientific creationism's main leader, observes that "Adventists to some degree have remained solidly creationist because their main teacher/founder, Ellen G. White, taught literal creationism." Henry M. Morris, History of Modern Creationism (Santee, Calif.: Institute for Creation Research, 1993), 92.
- ⁵ Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1940), 32.
- 6 Without ignoring the validity of science when checked by revelation, it is important to keep in mind Langdon Gilkey's observation as to what has been happening in recent history. "The most important change in the understanding of religious truth in the last centuries—a change that still dominates our thought today—has been caused more by the work of science than by any other factor, religious or cultural" (Langdon Gilkey, Religion and the Scientific Future: Reflections on Myth, Science, and Theology (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 4). Gilkey's words imply that on the understanding of religious truth in modern history, science has had a greater influence than the Bible.
- ⁷ Clark Pinnock, "Climbing Out of a Swamp: The Evangelical Struggle to Understand the Creation Texts," *Interpretation* 43 (Jan. 1989), 154.
- ⁸ See Richard M. Davidson, "In the Beginning: How to Interpret Genesis 1," *Dialogue* 6 (1994), 3:11.



(JUNE 8-14, 1998)

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new congregationally based
church, and half

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Flash: Pastors of multiple-church districts demand reductions in bureaucracy to place more workers in the field and to reduce their workload.

Flash: Donors, frustrated with the church's utilization of funds, redirect their tithe and offerings to media ministry for direct proclamation of the message.

Flash: Rumors abound of a secret study commissioned to describe what the church would be without departments and the services they provide.

What's going on? Are the above cases the issue or symptoms of a deeper, potentially more destructive, problem?

Whatever your observations of the state of the church, most of the above items are symptoms of a deeper spiritual problem that prophetic insight foresaw long ago. "In every religious crisis some fall under temptation. The shaking of God blows away multitudes like dry leaves. Prosperity multiplies a mass of professors. Adversity purges them out of the church" (4T 89).

What's going on? A shaking of God's people.

These flash points are indicators of spiritual lethargy or even rebellion. Congregationalism is not new nor are independent-minded pastors who lead their members away from the unified body. "I was shown that it is Satan's special work to lead men to feel that it is God's order for them to strike out for themselves and choose their own course independent of their brethren" (TM 29).

Of course there is growing dissatisfaction among pastors, as well as laity, when the organization is perceived as consuming resources that are more urgently needed at the local church level. Too often

What's going on?

IAMES A. CRESS

pastors see resources wasted in bureaucratic structures that have been sacrificially given at the local level. I felt concern for this as a pastor, and I feel the same today.

But the appropriate response is not independent separation. Inspiration says that is the work of Satan. Likewise, it is an inappropriate response for church structure merely to pronounce that all is well and to ignore legitimate concerns.

On the other hand, overreaction is equally dangerous. We might become so enthusiastic in dismantling structure that we throw the baby out with the bath water. The French Revolution is an excellent example of a system that waited too long to respond to real issues coupled with resultant anarchy when constituents finally seized power for themselves.

While we certainly need some of the things the structure provides—I like to believe we need the resources for pastors, local church elders, and pastoral families that are prepared by the Ministerial Association—we may not need every service and every resource, and we definitely need more in the local church.

At the same time, hard-working, multiple-church pastors do not need fewer congregations as much as they need to refocus priorities. The reality is that most multichurch pastors serve far fewer members than single-church pastors who need staff help and frontline evangelists who need teams of Bible workers and musicians to assist them.

Why do I say that multiple-church districts don't need additional pastors? At the risk of offending my colleagues in multichurch assignments, an example from my last pastorate demonstrates reality. In that metropolitan area, where people live, I was serving approximately seven hundred fifty members with two

associates. The same number of members "downstate" were served by eight pastors.

Some in church organization would worry about "dark counties" but seem unconcerned that more people reside in one highly populated county, with just two congregations, than the entire population of several states. Someone mentioned to me, "But the downstate pastors have to drive longer distances between churches and members." Another commented, "And those pastors must hold three board meetings or prayer meetings rather than just one."

My response remains: Let's stop trying to make small churches act like big churches. Perhaps only quarterly board meetings are necessary in small churches. My congregation functioned well with only seven board meetings per year. As for extra prayer meetings and other services, utilize your elders. Their leadership function must be wider than guarding the platform and pews during services.

Does the church need to reallocate resources? Definitely. But we need to place such "freed up" resources and personnel in major metropolitan areas, where the people are. Let us release these funds and capable individuals to minister to millions of lost souls in the world's great cities.

Let me hasten to add that before we advocate dismantling bureaucracies, we remember that they provide us with useful infrastructures which we tend to take for granted, but which we nevertheless rely on substantially for many servic important to us personally and professionally. Bureaucracies also help to provide us with a certain cohesiveness and identity. Let me add, however, that I have heard some say with tongue in cheek that bureaucracies provide a place for warehousing those among us who are marginally effective and who would cause serious damage if released back into the real world!

As for how a church without departments and services would appear, it would look just like the emphasis of the administrator in charge at that moment. Every individual, including every church administrator, has special areas of interest

PASTOR'S PASTOR

and expertise. The temptation is always to emphasize our strong suits and neglect other areas.

God's plan to assign some individuals the task of focusing on specific areas of church life that otherwise might be neglected remains a necessary balance for all avenues of the mission to flourish.

And those who refuse to support the structure and donate their tithe to media or other independent ministries are as wrong as those who refuse to support the structure and establish independent congregations. Both groups are, alike, headed down the same slippery slope-

different motivations, perhaps, but just as entrapped by Satan.

You see, whatever the excuseperception of wasted tithe, pastors who are too liberal and/or too extreme, topheavy structures, etc.-all those who will ultimately depart will fall into the same trap and will be swept away by the same tide of apostasy.

I admire those media programs that reject such tithe donations and avoid the trap of reasoning that "it won't be given otherwise." But from others, I hear a strange silence on this issue.

What's going on?

Just exactly what we expected. A shaking of God's people is underway and will escalate. In describing the antidote to the poisonous atmosphere of such shaking, Ellen White says, "Their only safety was in keeping their eyes directed upward" (1T 180).

I have great faith in the Adventist message and fully expect the church to go through triumphant to Jesus' return. A great falling away is before us. While we should pray that it will not come, we should embrace the reality that prophetic insight says it will and do everything possible to prepare our people to meet the Lord.

Feel like going fishing?

continued from p. 4

doom, but God is in the midst of her, and she shall not be moved. God shall help her . . . There is a River . . .

"Step out of the traffic! Take a long, loving look at me, your High God, above politics, above everything" (Psalm 46, The Message).

For each of Peter's three denials, his Lord offered him an occasion to affirm the reality that it was his waning love that underlay his failure. He was given the threefold opportunity to affirm his heartfelt love.

The same magnificent opportunity is offered us. And it is decisively important that the last words of Jesus in the Gospels are addressed unequivocally to Peter the struggling minister: "You must follow me" (John 21:22, NIV).

Sabbath rest continued from p. 22

one to live a perfect life in terms of outward lifestyle, but no religious exercise or practice can eradicate the sin that entwines itself in our very thoughts and emotions. Only Christ can do this.

To keep the Sabbath merely as a memorial of Creation has the inherent danger of making it like a Martin Luther King Day. Most ignore the meaning of the day because it's nothing to them but a legally paid holiday. In contrast, those who celebrate the day do so because of what Martin Luther King did for them. They

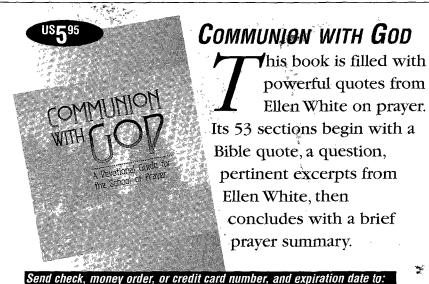
remember the freedom march. Our freedom march is from the Egypt of sin to the heavenly Canaan.

In summary, the Sabbath reminds us of the privilege of being chosen by God. It is a celebration of the protection that His people enjoy, an assurance of the perfection that is ours in Christ.

"There remains, then, a Sabbath rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall (Heb. 4:9-11).12

Genesis rabba, quoted by Abraham Joshua Herschel, The Sabbath: Its Meaning for Modern Man (New York: Straus and Girous), 23.

- ³ Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, 253.
- ⁴ Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 371.
- ⁵ Ellen G. White, Manuscript 104, Sept. 28, 1997.
- 6 Ellen White, The Desire of Ages, 389.
- ⁷ Ellen G. White, Patriarchs and Prophets, 372.
- 8 There is no reference anywhere in Scripture to any period in history when Israel kept the Sabbath properly; rather, the contrary. See Ezekiel 20:13, 21; Jeremiah 17:19-27; 2 Chronicles 36:20-22; Romans 9:30-10:3.
 - 9 Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ, 70.
- 10 See also Tough Questions Christians Ask, David Neff, ed. (Victor Books, 1989, Christianity Today, Inc.),
 - 11 Ellen G. White, Early Writings, 33.
 - 12 NIV used throughout unless otherwise specified.



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SHOPTALK

SDA Heritage event remembers "Great Controversy" vision

The Ohio Conference will commemorate the 140th anniversary of the March 14, 1858, giving of the Great Controversy vision to Ellen White at Lovett's Grove [now Bowling Green], Ohio, by a series of five special public services at the Toledo First Church, March 13, 14, 1998.

Speakers will include General Conference President Robert S. Folkenberg; retired seminary church history chair and author C. Mervyn Maxwell; and three current or recently retired Ellen G. White Estate staff personnel: Robert W. Olson, James R. Nix, and Roger W. Coon.

Possibilities for videotaping all meetings are presently being explored, and a further announcement regarding tape availability may be made shortly.

Some pastors may desire to commemorate within their own congregations this significant Adventist heritage milestone in the transmission of the prophetic gift to the remnant church. Those looking for appropriate sermonic material may obtain a free one-sheet inventory of topic categories to be dealt with by each of the various speakers in Toledo by forwarding a self-addressed, stamped (U.S. postage, please) envelope to: Planning Committee, c/o Roger W. Coon, Route 2, Box 133-K, Berkeley Springs, WV 25411.

Clinical Pastoral Education residency in Orlando, Florida

The Clinical Pastoral Education residency at Florida Hospital has five openings for the year-long program beginning in September 1998. In this multifaceted medical center residents will have experience in a number of specialty areas, interaction with two CPE supervisors (Wes Monfalcone and Dick Tibbits), colleague relationships with staff chaplains, and an opportunity to enjoy

Orlando, Florida. Applicants should have a previous unit of CPE in preparation for this experience. Send applications to Gwynne Drummond, CPE Registrar, Pastoral Education Department-Mailbox #84, Florida Hospital, 601 E. Rollins Street, Orlando, FL 32803.

"Spirituality and Ethics in Patient Care"

A continuing education class entitled "Spirituality and Ethics in Patient Care" will be presented at the Wong Kerlee International Conference Center, Loma Linda University, on March 1 and 2, 1998. It will be presented by the LLU Center for Christian Bioethics, Center for Spiritual Life and Wholeness. CME and CEU credits available. Sponsored by the Loma Linda University, School of Medicine Office of Continuing Education. For more information, write to the Center for Christian Bioethics, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, CA 92350; call 909-824-4956; fax 909-824-4856; or Email gSample@ccmail.llu.edu. Web site: http://www.llu.edu/llu/bioethics/

Suggested guidelines for the election of the nominating committee

With church elections just around the corner, the enclosed Suggested Guidelines for the Election of the Nominating Committee might be helpful to pastors. I have used them effectively as an aid to a smoother election process, and I believe that other pastors may benefit from them.

- 1. Only members shall be elected who are in good and regular standing in the church.
- 2. Only members shall be elected who are faithful tithers and support the local church budget.
- 3. Only one member of each family may be elected to serve on the nominating committee.
- 4. No more than one-third of the large committee shall be nominated to the nominating committee.

- 5. No more than one-third of the previous nominating committee may serve on the present nominating committee.
- 6. No member of the large committee may nominate a family member for the nominating committee.
- 7. Nominating committee members should represent a cross section of the congregation—youth, young adults, adults, and senior adults.
- 8. Both male and female genders should be fairly represented on the nominating committee.
- 9. No member of the large committee may make more than two nominations for the nominating committee.
- 10. Caution should be taken in electing new believers to serve on the nominating committee.
- 11. No member of the large committee may nominate himself to the nominating committee.
- 12. These guidelines are to be voted at the outset by the large committee and should govern all its deliberations.

 —Patrick E. Vincent, pastor, Mt. Sinai SDA Church, Orlando, Florida.

Instructions for finding the SDA periodical index online

This procedure can be done in several ways. The easiest is to simply type in the address of the library search page: http://143.207.5.3:82/screens/opacmenu.html.

The other option is to begin at the Andrews University homepage: http://www.andrews.edu.

- 1. Click on "Academic Support."
- 2. Select "James White Library."
- 3. Click on "Library Catalogue (JeWel)."
- 4. Select the "Adventist Periodical Index."
 - 5. Begin search.

Introducing new library technology at Andrews University

During the past years many changes have taken place in libraries across the country. The card catalog has been replaced by an online public access catalog (OPAC), and numerous periodical indexes are on CD-ROM (compact disc read only memory). In addition, there is the introduction of the Internet and the World Wide Web.

The James White Library at Andrews University subscribes to 73 databases. For more information contact Wolfhard Touchard, reference librarian, James White Library, Andrews University; E-mail: Touchard@andrews.edu.

Widow's mites/ancient oil lamps

The Boughman Antiquities Collection is offering a limited number of genuine Holy Land oil lamps and ancient coins. Excellent for Bible studies, evangelistic meetings, or personal gifts. One lamp, one coin, and historical write-up from \$79.95. Call or write: Pastor Marvin Hunt, Boughman Collection Caretaker, 112

Spruce Street, Union, SC 29379 or call 864-427-4979.

The Boughman Collection of the Union Seventh-day Adventist Church, Mary Boughman, Treasurer. Profits from sales are used to enlarge the collection.

VOP Update

Thank you for your continued support of the *Voice of Prophecy*. We appreciate what you do to keep this radio broadcast, Bible School, and crusade ministry strong. And what a great year of ministry this has been for the *Voice of Prophecy*! Allow me to share a few highlights:

- Kenneth Cox and "Dimensions of Prophecy" are now fully incorporated into the VOP.
- The success of local Discover Bible Schools last year led us to add staff who will assist churches across the NAD with this community outreach.

• We've begun a weekly television series.

The *Voice of Prophecy* is your special radio arm to assist you in winning souls. We're praying for you—every day—as you join us in giving the trumpet a certain sound.

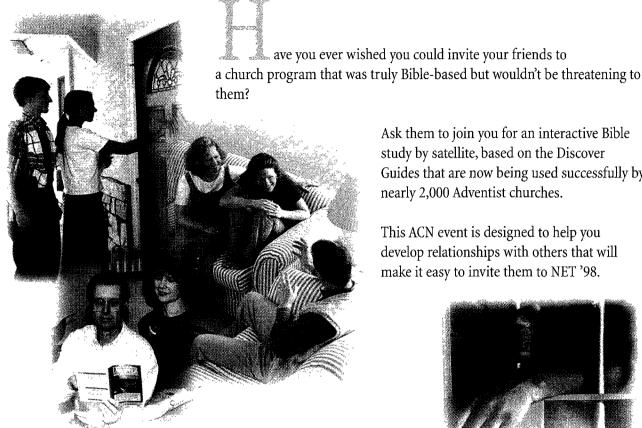
Be of good courage, ever going forward in faith!—E. Lonnie Melashenko, director-speaker, *Voice of Prophecy*.

\$25 for your ideas

Please send us your suggestion about how pastors can make *Ministry* more effective or less stressful. If we publish it, we will send you \$25. If your idea promotes a product or service, we'll be glad to consider it for publication but won't pay you \$25! Send ideas to *Ministry*, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. U.S. citizens must include Social Security number.



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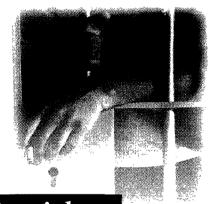
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Phone 800-ACN-1119 for further information.

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