

Ministry

International Journal for Pastors

August 1999

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Ministry

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Original manuscript and *Ministry of Healing* book courtesy of the Ellen G. White Estate

Subscriptions: For 12 issues: United States

US\$29.95; Canada and overseas US\$30.95; airmail

US\$39.95; single copy US\$3.00. To order, send name, address, and payment to Jeannette Calbi, *Ministry* Subscriptions, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904 U.S.A.

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E-mail: calbij@gc.adventist.org; fax: 301-680-6502; telephone: 301-680-6503.

To Writers: We welcome unsolicited manuscripts. Editorial preference is to receive manuscripts on diskette with name, address, telephone and fax numbers, and Social Security number (if U.S. citizen). Send editorial correspondence to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600.

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Writer's Guidelines available on request.

Ministry (ISSN 0026-5314), the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 1999, is published monthly by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and printed by Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193. Member Associated Church Press. Standard mail postage paid at Nampa, Idaho.

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Vol. 72 Number 8

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February 1999 issue

James Hopps' plea for "balance in theology" (February 1999) rightly lays the blame for the lack of "holy living" on "cheap grace." Yet, simultaneously, mailboxes are jammed with literature urging "victorious living" and "translation character." These extremes, not justification and sanctification, create the "polar positions" Hopps decries. Our mistake is perceiving justification and sanctification as discrete entities, not bound in indivisible union. Kept bound in tandem they create the desired dynamics that transform believers into willing servants. "Balance" ceases to be an issue.

"Faith without works is dead," James tells us. Question: What is dead? Answer: Faith is dead. Conclusion: If we want works, *preach biblical faith* and works will come. So, justification by faith, properly received, precedes and energizes sanctification. Our mistake is not properly teaching justification to our members—old and new, especially our children. Are our members born again? Or do we baptize "good people" who rise out of the water alive and whole? That makes grace cheap—failure to put self to death.

It is crucial to define the complementary roles of justification and sanctification and how they work together. Justification comes first and is 100 percent Christ's own perfect, meritorious work done *for us*—and imputed to us solely by faith. Sanctification follows 50/50 as a cooperative work—I work, and God works, *working together* to facilitate the believer's spiritual growth. The critical point is that justification and sanctifi-

cation go together and remain for the rest of the believer's life.

The church's need is to gather in the center of the cross. One look upward at the bleeding body of our Savior will instantly mortify our self-righteousness. In mutual humiliation, we will lay our pride in the dust at Christ's feet. Our conscience, Christ's blood-bought *gift of enmity* against Satan and evil (Gen. 3:15), produces loathing of our evil lives that require His crucifixion. Jesus said so, "If any man comes to Me and does not hate . . . his own life . . . he cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:26).—Norman L. Meager, Sonora, California.

● A fervent Amen to Dr. Christenson's article "Salvation: Faith versus Works." I sometimes wonder whether in our church many of us have drifted away from and so fail to live the Biblical balance he discusses. —Thomas A. Davis, Armstrong, British Columbia, Canada.

April 1999

"Wrestling With Theological Differences" by Dr. Angel Rodriguez is a truthful but sad portrayal of the current situation in Adventism! As a nearly lifelong member, former missionary, and hopefully centrist pastor, sometimes I feel like saying, "They have taken away my church, and I know not where they have laid it!"

Concerning the controversy of "progressive" (a term I consider quite euphemistic) versus "historic," let it be known that it is quite possible, and in my opinion, quite natural to be conservative but not legalistic. The outcries against legalism, though not always without foundation, are

unfortunately often nothing more than a smokescreen for liberal theology and behavior. . . .

This Adventist has found authentic Adventism more often in third-world countries, where the simple message of truth is proclaimed, unencumbered by theological and ecclesiological debates, and the emphasis and energy are properly directed at soul-winning; where members love the Lord and pray for His soon return. . . .—James Hoffer, pastor, Hagerstown, Maryland.

● Dr. Rodriguez has sounded the alarm over theological differences among us. Hear his words, "The potential for division is enormous." "Significant changes could have a devastating effect on the church." "If it ever happens, [it] will radically alter Adventism by weakening or destroying its self-identity." "Appropriate leaders in the church have the responsibility to respond" to this crisis facing the church.

But saving the church as an institution need not be our concern. In fact, it is the church's strict adherence to God's *single objective truth* that will save the church. Following today's apostatizing churches, Christ is being displaced as substitutionary Savior in favor of a theology of healing and harmony community by "progressives" among us. In addition, some "historicists" among us press for cultic total-victory-over-sin triumphalism, again, in place of Christ's substitutionary atonement—making both groups legalists. This shutting out of Christ could very well seal our doom as a viable church. . . .

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If you're receiving Ministry bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 Ministry has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.



I still remember going to a toy shop in my hometown as a child. Usually, there were about a dozen toys, no more, to choose from. Now the same shop

displays thousands of different toys, thousands of different options. In one sense, it was easier to make a decision then than now.

Today, moral decisions, ethical dilemmas, lifestyle options are in many ways like a modern toy shop. We are given numerous options, a plethora of choices. The culture no longer hands down an accepted set of rules for how to live, nor does it provide a single standard for judging right and wrong. As never before, we are living in a multiple-choice era. Another word more commonly used (and loaded with connotations) to name our era is "pluralistic."

The root, "plural," is a simple term. According to *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, it means "more than one." If anything describes our climate, it's this word, or more specifically its adjective, "pluralistic." We live in a radically pluralistic culture. This fact has numerous implications for all areas of our life. But for the church, one aspect stands out in particular: the confrontational styles of evangelism that many outstanding preachers used in the past are, today, in this pluralistic culture, deemed utterly offensive and in fact are rejected by almost all preachers in all denominations. Thus, we need to ask ourselves this question: in the kind of environment we now face, what is an acceptable approach to evangelization?

New methods for a new age

Enormous disagreements exist among preachers and religious institutions about the most appropri-

Evangelism in pluralistic culture

JOEL SARLI

ate method for evangelizing this pluralistic culture. The Billy Graham School of Evangelism, for instance, disagrees with the World Council of Churches (which holds a very ecumenical view of evangelism). But despite these disagreements, the responsibility of the church of Jesus Christ is to find the right approach to fulfill our commission.

This is possible. Through the centuries the Christian Church has always found more than one way to meet the challenges presented by changing cultures. Church history proves it possible to design more than one evangelistic strategy. Ellen G. White, in her most comprehensive book on evangelism, says: "There must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. . . .

"Some of the methods used in this work will be different from the methods used in the work in the past."¹

The content of the gospel is, always, the same. That should never change. Pluralism doesn't imply a change in the message in order to fit the particular religious taste or mood of the culture. But responsible followers of Jesus Christ today have to present the message in a way that will reach the target audience. It's not the message that needs radical change, but the method of delivery, or the package in which it is presented.

The key

In the Bible we find a paradigm

for dealing with the pluralistic mentality. In Paul's famous evangelistic meeting on Mars Hill (Acts 17:16-34), he provided a model on how to engage people to consider the gospel in a pluralistic environment.

Paul was alone in the city of Athens. While waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him, he went for a walk through and was "greatly distressed" by all the false idols. He simply started talking to the people where he found them, such as in the marketplace (verse 17). One time he engaged in debate with a "group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers" (verse 18). The ideas Paul communicated were new to them; he unsettled these intellectuals with talk about "Jesus and the resurrection" (verse 18). Intrigued, and seeking clarification (verse 19), they invited Paul to join them for a formal session in their chambers. Paul, of course, accepted.

Though Paul looked back at his Mars Hill experience as a failure—and in one sense it was—the crucial point here is this: Paul's attitude of respect toward others freed him to genuinely accept the Athenian philosophers, even though he did not agree with them. In doing so, Paul demonstrated how to open doors in order to effectively evangelize people belonging to a pluralistic society. Accept the people, no matter how wrong their ideas are. As in Paul's case, this doesn't guarantee that they will accept your message; what it does guarantee is that they will be more open to listen to it at least.

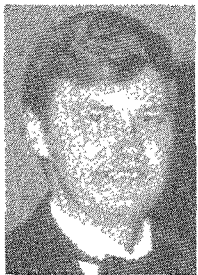
Acceptance, not endorsement

Many Christians today have reservations about accepting people who don't share their spiritual values. "Will my acceptance of this person," they fear, "be misinterpreted as an endorsement of what they believe?" It's an understandable fear, but one we shouldn't have.

Continued on page 30

REFOCUSING THE ADVENTIST HEALTH MESSAGE

Ellen White and other founders of the Adventist Church had an interest in temperance and health from the beginning.



Gary E. Fraser, Ph.D., is a professor of epidemiology and professor of medicine, Loma Linda University, Loma Linda, California.

In fact, Mrs. White had her first vision on health in 1848, in which she was shown that “not only was tobacco harmful, but also that tea and coffee were injurious.” However, not until June 6, 1863, at Otsego, Michigan, did she have her first major “health vision.” This was less than three weeks after the adoption of the first constitution of the General Conference and the election of its first officers. The focus of this vision was personal preventive medicine and health improvement, and the interventions recommended were lifestyle in nature. By 1866 *The Health Reformer* appeared, and the Western Health Reform Institute was opened at Battle Creek, Michigan, the forerunner of the much larger Medical and Surgical Sanitarium, opened in 1878 under the direction of the talented young Dr. John H. Kellogg.

Today, the church has a global network of high-quality hospitals and clinics, and a real emphasis on personal health outreach endeavors, such as

healthful cooking classes, stop-smoking plans, and health-screening vans. In addition, scientific studies of Adventist health beliefs and practices have brought respect for Adventist health in circles where other aspects of Adventism are often considered unattractive. Our research studies have played an important part in demonstrating to the scientific community that a proper diet, particularly a vegetarian diet, and the lifestyle we have always believed is healthy does indeed promote good health. Our views on diet and health are no longer considered mere pronouncements of a nineteenth-century visionary. In fact, logical interfaces between religion and health continue and are increasingly recognized among non-Adventist scholars.¹

Religion and health: the connection

Perhaps the most obvious connection between religion and health follows from the concept of a Creator-God. God’s amazing creative fashioning of

the human organism, with its profound biochemical, physiological, psychological, social, and moral components deserves the most fastidious care. Intellectually embracing the creation concept may also lead to the adoption of a vegetarian diet—not only out of respect for the life of animals, but also in consideration of a more prudent use of earth's resources.

Second, the Biblical concept that God is a God of love leads to an understanding that He cares for the health of His creatures, providing guidance in promoting good health and extended productive life. Such guidance is found in the Bible. But Adventists also affirm additional revelation in the arena of healthful living in the work of Ellen White. These additional insights are particularly well suited to preventing the diseases that are part of an affluent culture. A lifestyle that includes a heavy meat diet and little exercise was perhaps not as great a problem in biblical times, but today the extremity of these practices in wealthy societies calls for greater attention to lifestyle issues and their relationship to faith.

Third, is healthful living a part of the salvation process? Paul's argument that our bodies are temples for the Holy Spirit first of all presupposes healthy moral behavior, but it also implies that the gospel calls for preserving the body temple in good physical condition. Is it possible that the way we eat, the number of hours we sleep, and how we exercise can affect our thinking and our spiritual perception?

Supporting a health ministry

Adventism's emphasis on personal health is going through troubled times. Our original health message was a mix of healing for those already ill and of an emphasis on "right" living to prevent disease in the first place. Today, the emphasis seems to be on medical institutions and modern healing, with little attempt to support personal disease prevention. True, our traditional emphasis on healthful living has not been abandoned altogether, but with reduced corporate emphasis and support, how

long can our health message be sustained? Are we as involved as we could and should be in community health outreach and promotion? How long has it been since you heard or preached a sermon on the importance of personal health? In the North American Division, very few unions or local conferences continue to maintain health secretaries who could provide effective leadership in health education. Are the

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"glory days" of Adventist personal health practice behind us?

Church administrators have many priorities and pressures. For this reason they may not see health ministry as a matter of urgent importance. In some cases, thoughtful Adventist groups emphasizing personal health are looked upon as ultraconservative, with ideas that run contrary to good sense, modern medical knowledge, and even the Spirit of Prophecy.

Our theologians also do not seem to give priority to health as a *bona fide*

part of our belief system. Although most are personally committed to a healthy lifestyle, health as a tenet of the faith often seems to be somewhat of an embarrassment, sometimes passed off as a quirk of our past. Consequently, the theology of health is poorly developed. Along with this, there is the stigma of legalism attached to those Adventists who want to practice and propagate an effective health message.

Contemporary goals for Adventist health emphasis

Has our model of health promotion within and without the church been less successful than we expected? As far as disease prevention is concerned, studies of the positive effects of Adventist health lifestyle indicate striking success.² We have also had impressive results in employing our health message as an "entering wedge" in evangelism. A concerned member can make a significant physical and spiritual impact on needy, interested people through a thoughtful application of health principles. Yet to be most successful, this preventive care needs to be given in the context of love and compassion, without any hidden agenda.

Some evangelists focus on the issues of faith, supplementing their presentations with health materials. Many in the audience attend because of their interest in the religious theme, but the non-threatening health supplement may often be seen as a welcome bonus, even if it means some difficult changes. Such presentations of health topics can enhance the long-term commitment of converts to the church.

One crucial motivation for continuing a strong health ministry is often overlooked: the nurture of existing members. If the health message has value, it must be preserved in the existing church body. This will not happen without a serious commitment of corporate and local church interest and resources. Programs directed toward existing church members should be of high quality so as to benefit both the local church members and through their ministry, the community.

While acknowledging and respecting the Spirit of Prophecy, materials presented to the church and community need to be up-to-date and reflect the current state of health knowledge. Members are less likely to feel that they have "heard it all before" if care is taken to enliven and contemporize the topic with current information. Even so, repetition of basic materials at suitable intervals is valuable as a means of reinforcement. Health education now is a scholarly discipline, and efforts that do not conform to certain standards of both information and presentation will reflect badly on the church.

Without the motivational link between health and faith, most non-Adventists have serious difficulty making a transition to healthful living. This is so despite the profusion of scientific evidence and informative educational materials. This is also a present danger for long-time Adventists. If the Adventist health emphasis loses its connection with the issues of biblical faith

and suffers from a lost or further reduced visibility in the Adventist Church, and if support from church leadership for the health message becomes even less evident, why would Adventists not experience the same difficulties as others in effectively modifying and maintaining their health habits?

Thus there is a critical need for us to continually incorporate healthful living as an integral part of our religious faith and practice. Along with the emphasis of the Spirit of Prophecy, this linkage can be supported from both the Old and New Testaments, and also by the health experience of generations of Adventists. There is also limited but growing evidence that faith in God contributes to better relations with others and with oneself, and it thereby may lead to better health.

Conclusion

The critical concern is that we fully embrace and not lose sight of the fact that the redemptive process of the gos-

pel includes the whole person: body, mind, and soul. Does faith in God contribute to better relations with others and with oneself, therefore increasing the possibility of better health? Of course it does.

On the basis of revealed principles and scientific evidence, Adventism's health emphasis of many decades has been a real force for good in its work in the local and global community. Our "health message" will indeed guide us to better health, so honoring God. But we should not use such "lifestyle works" as a litmus test of spirituality, or as a basis for criticism of our fellow believers (see Romans 14). Beyond good health, healthy living may be valued as one other discipline to help us along the spiritual pathway. ■

¹ See K. Vaux, "Religion and Health," *Preventive Medicine* 5 (1976):522-36.

² See R. L. Phillips, J. W. Kuzma, W. L. Beeson, and T. Lotz, "Influence of selection versus lifestyle on risk of fatal cancer and cardiovascular disease among Seventh-day Adventists," *American Journal of Epidemiology* 112 (1980):296-313.

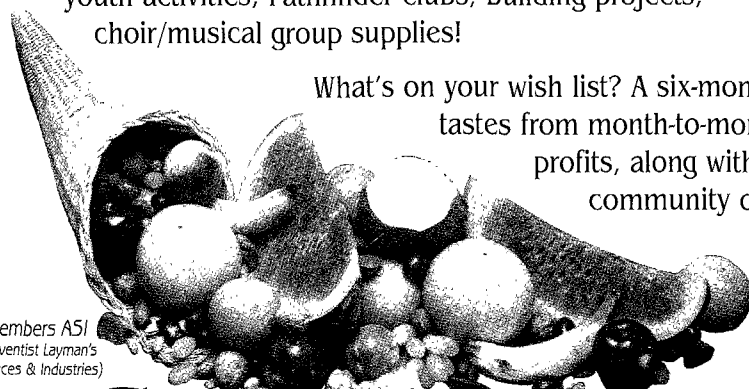
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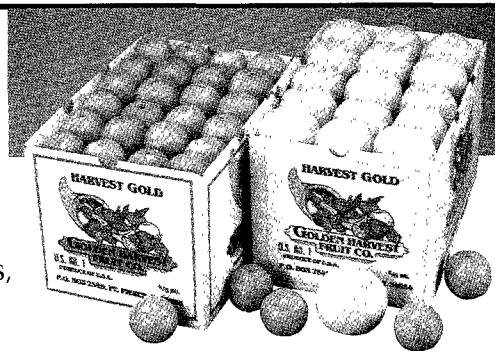
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CAN DISPARATE GENERATIONS COEXIST IN THE CHURCH?

Birds of a feather flock together. We all know that, but what we perhaps may not know is that in the flocking process there are bound to be some ruffled feathers.

W. A. Townend is a Bible teacher at Avondale College, Coorانبong, New South Wales, Australia.

The big flock known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church is no exception.

But why the ruffled feathers?

For one thing, we mortals have not yet “put on immortality”; for another, there’s that thing we’ve all heard of called “the generation gap.”

Some of us think we know what the “generation gap” is; others may know for sure; and others with furrowed brows sigh, “I don’t know what it is.” We do know that the generation gap is a multi-component phenomenon consisting of physical, educational, social, historical, and religious factors, to name a few.

An Adventist spot check

In order to understand the generation gap in the Adventist context, I did a spot check on 100 Adventists 50 years and older in churches located in cities, provinces, and country districts in the six conferences of the Trans-Tasman Union (most of eastern Australia and

New Zealand). Each of the 100 men and women was asked to answer 24 questions (see page 9) about his or her church as each currently saw it.

The same 24 questions were also put randomly to 100 new students attending Avondale College in Australia during 1995. The students were asked to answer the questions in relation to the church from which they had just come to college. Answer options for each question and for each group were the same: *yes, no, not sure*.

Some of the objective results of this spot check show up on the spreadsheet of percentages of answers to each question.

And what did all this add up to? We gained insights into some of the probable characteristics that describe the Adventist religious generation gap. The results revealed both what was to be expected and what was surprising.

When I did the spot check, I had

continued on p. 11

W. A. TOWNEND

Results of Spot Check on Adventists

(Study conducted in 1995; results in percentages)

Survey Questions	Age 50 and Over			New Avondale students		
	Yes	No	Not Sure	Yes	No	Not Sure
1. Do you think that changes are taking place in the Adventist Church?	95	0	5	86	2	12
2. Is the style of worship changing in your church?	95	0	5	68	29	3
3. Are you seeing more people taking part in your public worship?	76	13	11	65	18	17
4. If yes is your answer to questions 2 and 3, do you like the changes?	49	11	40	60	11	12
5. Are you hearing a new style of music in your church?	92	0	8	68	32	0
6. Do you prefer traditional church music?	47	16	37	31	57	12
7. Do you think that children and young people should take part in leading out in public worship in your church?	84	5	11	95	2	3
8. Do you think that the present organization of the Adventist Church should be overhauled?	68	13	19	37	28	35
9. Do you think that our church organization has "too many chiefs and not enough Indians"?	71	16	13	51	28	22
10. Would you personally support change even though you might not approve of all of it?	71	5	24	49	31	20
11. Do you think that in a general way today's Adventists are as keen about Adventism as you were in your early days as an Adventist?	16	63	21	28	46	26
12. Do you think that Adventists should hold to ideas and customs because they were the ideas and customs of our pioneers?	3	84	13	9	78	12
13. Do you consider it is possible to be an Adventist while not being a Christian?	63	29	8	43	49	8
14. Would you prefer to be known as a <i>Christian Adventist</i> rather than being known as an <i>Adventist Christian</i> ?	55	16	29	45	34	22
15. Are you finding joy in being an Adventist?	87	3	10	83	2	15
16. Are the weekly worship services in your church cheerful occasions?	76	8	16	72	15	12
17. Are people finding Christ in your present worship services?	42	8	50	60	15	25
18. Is your church growing?	21	45	34	60	25	15
19. Do you usually leave church services with "a spring in your step" because of what you heard and experienced there?	42	26	32	52	31	17
20. Do you feel that the Adventist Church is losing spiritual fervor?	55	16	29	46	26	28
21. Do you have any ideas for improving your church?	47	21	32	74	9	17
22. Do you prefer sermons on what the Bible says rather than sermons on what people say that the Bible says?	74	3	23	83	3	14
23. Do you think that it is possible to have real fellowship when members have different ideas about church procedures, Bible interpretation, and Christian conduct?	63	8	29	51	25	25
24. Do you think that surveys like this one are in the best interests of good church life?	50	5	45	69	5	26

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been a Bible teacher at Avondale College for 17 years. I have been in the classroom with hundreds of Avondale's beginning students for many hundreds of hours. Naturally, there have been some very frank discussions. Student responses to class assignments on what it means to be an Adventist Christian have likewise, in the main, been quite frank and revealing. They have provided insights into the minds and hearts of students. This interaction has taught me much. What I have learned from students has caused me to develop certain convictions that can help to narrow the generation gap or cut down on the ruffled feathers in our congregations.

Making coexistence possible

I am convinced that our coexistence can be made healthier and happier by adopting the following simple methods.

1. Do not confuse moral and non-moral issues (see Micah 6:8). When we

make nonmoral matters appear as moral issues, we weaken the overall impact of the moral, with serious consequences. Giving nonmoral issues too much emphasis has a way of trivializing matters that are really important.

2. Major in principles rather than standards. Entering into the setting up of standards are factors of culture, time, and geography. These localized standards detract from the innate power of universal principle. Standard-driven people tend to be tense and frustrated; principle-driven people know freedom and joy in their faith (see John 8:36).

3. Teach that a key word in experiencing the gospel is "done," not "do" (see 2 Cor. 5:21).

4. Take the words of Jesus seriously: "Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment" (John 7:24, NIV).

5. Accept the plurality of human temperament and personality, with a corresponding legitimate plurality of

attitudes and responses.¹

6. Provide not only survival space but also ample living space for those whose temperaments, cultures, times, geographies, and personalities may be different from your own (see Rom. 14).

7. Cultivate an attitude of "praise the Lord" rather than "pick at the saints" (see Ps. 150; Gal. 5:15).

Can we all coexist? Of course we can. We are Christians! Christians work at living as Christians. There may be times when this will call for some thinking that we may find threatens our present position on some things. We need to experience the objectivity that produces tolerance and understanding.

And in all this we are not alone. We have the Holy Spirit. He works on our natural self-centeredness and replaces it with Christ-centeredness. ■

¹ See Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1905), 483.

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Sumatau, Thomita (Binona), dept. dir., North East Papua Mission, SPD

Taki, Peter (Ellen), pastor, Western Highlands Mission, SPD

Talipuan, Joseph (Fiona), pastor, New Britain New Ireland Mission, SPD

Teel, James (Marsha), pastor, Georgia-Cumberland Conf., NAD

Tello-Ayala, Benjamin (Holga Tirado Gonzalez), evangelist/comm. dir., Northeast Mexican Conf., IAD

Torres, Luis O. (Sicta Garcia), pastor, East Puerto Rico Conf., IAD

Tzekov, Rayko, pastor, Bulgarian Union, EUD

Uale, Monini (Wovele), pastor, North East Papua Mission, SPD

Ubani, Daniel Adindu (Ebere), district leader, East Nigeria Conf., AID

Uka, Thankgod A. (Memiten), district leader, Rivers Conf., Nigeria, AID

Utz, Edelmiro (Mirtha), pastor, Austral Union, SAD

Valentine, Maurice (Sharon), pastor, Central States Conf., NAD

VanSchai, Vic (Angela), pastor, Iowa-Missouri Conf., NAD

Villegas, Mariano (Maria Teresa), pastor, Central Argentine Conf., SAD

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Winn, Ted (Patricia), academy principal, Arizona Conf., NAD

Witas, Mark (Wendy), academy chaplain, Carolina Conf., NAD

Wright, Wayne (Laura), pastor, Mountain View Conf., NAD

Yanari, Steven (Jennifer), pastor, Western Highlands Mission, Papua, New Guinea, SPD

Yoko, Hosea (Karim), pastor, Western Highlands Mission, SPD

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UNDERSTANDING INSPIRATION

The symphonic and wholistic nature of Scripture

As the earth moves toward its end, God has, among other things, called the Seventh-day Adventist Church to reinstate and magnify the ascendant authority of His Word.¹



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Unfortunately, the fulfillment of this mission has been impeded as certain conciliatory approaches and attitudes to Scripture have been embraced. Aspects of our denominational identity are being challenged by both external and internal voices.

Although Seventh-day Adventists have written extensively during the last 150 years on the question of inspiration, the task is not complete. We have not only to state clearly our confidence in the Bible as the Word of God but also to respond effectively and fairly to challenges that tend to undermine faith.² While dealing with many issues related to this subject, we should never forget (1) the symphonic nature of inspiration, (2) the wholistic scope of inspiration, and (3) the respectful approach essential as we approach the inspired writings. These three components should function as guidelines to any study related to the nature and authority of the Bible.

The symphonic nature of inspiration

Many controversies over inspira-

tion occur because of a tendency to regard inspired writings as the product of a specific "monophonic" theory of inspiration that disregards the contributions of all other inspiration theories. This approach has fostered a classical polarization under the labels of verbal inspiration on one side and thought inspiration on the other.³

To overcome the limitations of such an approach, some have proposed a more "symphonic," multiperspective view of inspiration.⁴ One of the earliest such proposals was the controversial theory of "degrees" of inspiration, promoted in the 1880s by Uriah Smith and George I. Butler.⁵ Assuming that divine inspiration varies according to the original sources of the information to be transmitted, Smith argued in a letter to D. M. Canright that the writings of Ellen White comprise both the truly-inspired "visions" and the noninspired "testimonies."⁶ The following year Butler, in a ten-part series in the *Adventist Review*, argued that the whole content of the Bible could be classified under five different "degrees" of inspiration

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and authority, ranging from that which was inspired in the highest degree down to that which he "could hardly call inspired."⁷ In spite of being accepted by many church members, these notions were strongly rejected by Ellen White (1889)⁸ and by others such as the author of an 1893 senior Sabbath School lesson.⁹

Uriah Smith attempted to harmonize the theories of verbal and thought inspiration by suggesting that, if the words of Scripture were "spoken directly by the Lord," then "the words are inspired." If the words did not come directly from the Lord, then "the words may not be inspired" but only "the ideas, the facts, the truth, which those words convey."¹⁰ I have not been able to locate any specific reaction to this proposal.

New attempts to break away from a "monophonic" view of inspiration were not made until the 1980s and 90s, when George Rice, Alden Thompson, and Juan Carlos Viera projected different "models" of inspiration. Focusing more on the gathering of prophetic information than on its transmission process, Rice suggested two models of inspiration: (1) the prophetic model of divine revelation (visions and dreams) and (2) the Lukan model of human research (reading and interviews) that accounts for the nonprophetic sections.¹¹

Alden Thompson proposed a more innovative model. Departing from some of what was traditional to Adventist thinking, Thompson suggested a more person-oriented inspiration or "incarnational model" that could reconcile a broader spectrum of the human and cultural influences he detects in Scripture.¹²

In 1996, Juan Carlos Viera, director of the Ellen G. White Estate, suggested six models of inspiration: (1) the *visionary* model, in which God speaks "through prophetic visions and dreams"; (2) the *witness* model, in which God inspires "the prophet to give his or her own account of things seen and heard"; (3) the *historian* model, in which the message does "not come

through visions and dreams, but through research"; (4) the *counselor* model, in which "the prophet acts as an adviser to God's people"; (5) the *epistolary* model, in which "the prophet writes greetings, names, circumstances or even common things that do not require a special revelation"; and (6) the *literary* model, in which "the Holy Spirit inspires the prophet to express his or

While the wording of some portions of the inspired writings was divinely provided, the words of other parts were chosen by the prophets themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But this concept should never be used as an endorsement for the theory of "degrees" of inspiration or as an excuse to disregard some portions of Scripture as less important than others.

her intimate feelings and emotions through the means of poetry and prose, as in the psalms."¹³

These "models" reflect the increasing Adventist tendency to define inspiration as a multiperspective process that argues for divine assistance not only in the transmission of the prophetic truths but also in the gathering of the information. From the gathering-of-accurate-information perspective, one can talk genuinely about the existence of distinctive "models" of revelation-inspiration. But within the information-trustwor-

thy-transmission realm, the discussion is restricted to the divine-human interaction in the actual wording of the Scriptures. Ellen White explains this interaction: "Although I am as dependent upon the Spirit of the Lord in writing my views as I am in receiving them, yet the words I employ in describing what I have seen are my own, unless they be those spoken to me by an angel, which I always enclose in marks of quotation."¹⁴

From this we might infer that although God spoke through the prophets "in many and various ways" (Heb. 1:1, RSV), the Holy Spirit guided the whole process of both gathering and transmitting information. Furthermore, while the wording of some portions of the inspired writings was divinely provided, the words of other parts were chosen by the prophets themselves under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. But this concept should never be used as an endorsement for the theory of "degrees" of inspiration or as an excuse to disregard some portions of Scripture as less important than others (see Matt. 4:4; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The wholistic scope of inspiration

Although Adventists have traditionally emphasized the trustworthiness of different areas of knowledge covered in the inspired writings, attempts have been made to limit this trustworthiness to matters of salvation. In 1884, George Butler suggested different levels of trustworthiness within Scripture, depending on its various "degrees" of inspiration. For him Scriptures "are authoritative in proportion to the degrees of inspiration"¹⁵ and are perfect only as they are necessary for achieving the purpose for which they were given—"to make [us] wise unto salvation" (2 Tim. 3:15).¹⁶

The most influential statement toward a trustworthiness-limited-to-salvation concept has been W. C. White's 1911 assertion that Ellen White "never claimed to be authority on history."¹⁷ The following year he explained more clearly that "mother never wished our brethren to treat them [her writings] as an authority regarding the details of

history or historical dates.”¹⁸

The concept that the inspired writings cannot be regarded as authoritative in matters other than salvation has been echoed by several other Adventist authors. For instance, at the 1919 Bible conference in Washington, D.C., General Conference President Arthur G. Daniells stated that Ellen White “never claimed to be an authority on history” or “a dogmatic teacher on theology” and that she never regarded her “historical quotations” as infallible.¹⁹

Despite the strong reactions against these words at that time,²⁰ and the fact that this view was not exposed in the Adventist literature at least for the next three decades,²¹ the controversy was not over. Disagreements on the range of trustworthiness of the inspired writings have actually increased since the early seventies.²²

Crucial in this discussion is the interrelationship between the content of the inspired writings and their ultimate purpose. There is no doubt that salvation is the major purpose of Scripture (John 5:39). But the real question is: Can we isolate some chronological, historical, and scientific portions of Scripture from its overall salvific purpose? If we were to develop a soteriological-inspiration canon within the general biblical canon, would such an approach not break the unity of God’s Word?

The Bible claims for itself that it is wholistic in nature, forming an indivisible unity (Matt. 4:4; Rev. 22:18, 19) and pointing to salvation as its objective (John 20:31; 1 Cor. 10:11). Furthermore, Scripture portrays “salvation” as a broad historical reality, related to all other biblical themes. And it is precisely this overall thematic interrelationship that makes it almost impossible for someone to speak of the Bible in dichotomous terms as being reliable in some topics and not in others.

Because the primary purpose of the Bible is to build up faith for salvation (John 20:31), its historical, biographical, and scientific sections often provide only the specific information needed to achieve this goal (John 20:30; 21:25). In spite of its selectiveness in

some areas of human knowledge, it does not mean that the Scriptures are untrustworthy in those areas. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16) and our understanding of inspiration should always uphold this wholistic, all-encompassing scope. According to Ellen White, it is only in the inspired Word we find “an authentic account of the origin of nations,” “a history of our race unsullied by human pride or prejudice,”²³ and an “unerring standard” by which “men’s ideas of science” should be tested.²⁴

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A respectful approach to the inspired writings

Closely related to the discussions about theories of inspiration and the thematic range of trustworthiness is the controversial issue of the existence or nonexistence of factual errors in inspired writings. In other words, did the Holy Spirit allow factual errors to creep into the inspired writings or not? If He did, to what extent?

Adventists have been historically reluctant to speak about the existence of factual errors in the inspired writings. When the General Conference ap-

pointed a committee in 1883 to make a grammatical revision of Ellen White’s *Testimonies for the Church*, the motion did not mention any factual error in its content. Only grammatical “imperfections” were to be corrected, without changing the thought “in any measure.”²⁵ But later, in the context of the 1911 revision of *The Great Controversy*, minor errors were recognized.²⁶ So, at the 1919 Bible conference, Daniells expressed publicly that both the Bible and Ellen White’s writings contained several factual discrepancies.²⁷

However, during the next three decades (1920–1950), Adventist authors continued to deny the existence of factual errors in inspired writings. Although some discussions took place in the sixties, around 1970 the issue was again debated. As a result, Adventist theologians today are divided between (1) those who believe that the Holy Spirit did not allow any factual error to creep into inspired writings; (2) those who argue that the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit permitted only minor, insignificant discrepancies to slip into those writings, and (3) those who speak freely about factual errors in the inspired writings, without ever mentioning any controlling influence of the Holy Spirit.

Without a Holy-Spirit-intervention theory, the last view fails to grasp what the prophets, who personally experienced such intervention, have to say about this matter. For instance, Nathan’s advice to King David about the building of the temple does not only mention that Nathan gave wrong advice to the king but also that the Lord corrected that mistake (see 2 Sam. 7:1–16). Ellen White recognized the Holy Spirit’s controlling influence when she declared that He “guided the mind” of the prophets “in the selection of what to speak and what to write.”²⁸ Speaking of her own experience, she added that “in giving the message, with my pen and in speaking before large congregations,” “it is not I who controls my words and actions” but “the Spirit of God.”²⁹ This being the case, we cannot regard any “nonintervention” theory as a valid hy-

pothesis to be considered within an Adventist discussion of inspiration.

But even accepting God's overall controlling intervention in the prophet's transmission of truth, to what extent does that intervention prevent error? Some authors believe that the alleged factual errors are mere copyist problems; others argue that there is no other way to solve some difficulties other than admitting that they are actually mistakes. For example, in a 1966 lecture, Arthur L. White, then secretary of the White Estate, declared that "the prophet's inspired message could embody an inaccuracy in a minor detail not consequential to the *basic* concept or on a minor point in the field of common knowledge, the accuracy or inaccuracy, of which human research suffices to inform men."³⁰

In 1981 and 1982, Roger W. Coon, then associate secretary of the Ellen G. White Estate, proposed an "intervention" theory that provided room for "inconsequential errors of minor, insignificant detail" in the inspired writings. He explained that "if in his humanity a prophet of God errs, *and* the nature of that error is sufficiently serious to materially affect (a) the direction of God's church, (b) the eternal destiny of one person, or (c) the purity of doctrine, *then* (and only then) the Holy Spirit immediately moves the prophet to correct the error, so that no permanent damage is done."³¹

More recently (1996), Juan Carlos Viera, director of the White Estate, added that "the prophet can make orthographical mistakes, as well as other kinds of language imperfections such as *lapsus linguae* (a slip of the tongue) or *lapsus memoriae* (a slip of the memory)," but the Holy Spirit "is in control of the inspired message" and "always corrected His messengers in matters important to the church."³²

Yet the discussion between the no-factual-errors-at-all concept and the only-a-few-insignificant-mistakes view is not now, nor in all probability will it ever be, fully solved. We feel very uneasy if we cannot understand and explain everything, including the

mysterious nature of the Scriptures. Ellen White says, "Some passages of Scripture will never be perfectly comprehended until in the future life Christ shall explain them. There are mysteries to be unraveled, statements that human minds cannot harmonize. And the enemy will seek to arouse argument upon these points, which might better remain undiscussed."³³

Further, if we accept the *sola Scriptura* principle, we should also take into more serious consideration the respectful way in which all true prophets dealt with the writings of other prophets. None of the New Testament prophets pointed out factual errors in the Old Testament, nor did Ellen White in regard to the Bible.

But this prophetic example of respectfulness to the whole body of inspired writings should not be used to foster any theory of Calvinistic inerrancy. Neither should we ever make our own faith or the faith of others dependent on such ultimately inconsequential matters. While not closing our eyes to the real difficulties within the prophetic writings, we should develop a more respectful approach to those writings that allows us to emphasize (1) more of the content of the divine messages than their human containers and (2) more the core of those messages than their side issues,³⁴ in such a way that "the foundational elements remain foundational, and the peripheric ones remain as peripheric."³⁵

The center of our faith should rest in that which is core to the inspired revelation, rather than needing reinforcement from explanations of that which is in itself indeed peripheral. ■

³⁰ See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1950), 593-602.

³¹ See Alberto R. Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Seventh-day Adventist Church (1844-1994)." Unpublished paper; —, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 5 (hereafter *JATS*) (Spring 1994): 180-195; —, "Verbal Inspiration Versus Mental Inspiration: A Historical Review of Adventist Trends from 1919 to 1997." Unpublished paper, Ellen G. White Estate, 1997.

³² See Timm, "Verbal Inspiration Versus Mental Inspiration."

³³ See Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1987).

³⁴ Timm, "History of Inspiration in the Adventist Church (1844-1915)," *JATS* 5 (Spring 1994): 184-186.

⁶ Uriah Smith to D. M. Canright, March 22, 1883, Advent Source Collection, Adventist Heritage Center, Andrews University.

⁷ George I. Butler, "Inspiration," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* (hereafter *RH*), January 8, 1884, 24; January 15, 1884, 41; January 22, 1884, 57, 58; January 29, 1884, 73, 74; February 5, 1884, 89, 90; April 15, 1884, 249, 250; April 22, 1884, 265-267; May 6, 1884, 296, 297; May 27, 1884, 344-346; June 3, 1884, 361, 362.

⁸ E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958), 1:23.

⁹ *Sabbath School Lessons for Senior Classes*, no. 98 (First Quarter, 1893): 9.

¹⁰ Smith, "Which Are Revealed, Words or Ideas?" *Advent Review* (March 13, 1888): 168, 169.

¹¹ George E. Rice, *Luke, A Plagiarist?* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1983).

¹² Alden Thompson, *Inspiration: Hard Questions, Honest Answers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1991).

¹³ Juan Carlos Viera, "The Dynamics of Inspiration," *Advent Review* (May 30, 1996): 22-28.

¹⁴ E. G. White, *Selected Messages*, 1:37.

¹⁵ Butler, "Inspiration," *Advent Review* (January 8, 1884): 24.

¹⁶ —, "Inspiration," *Advent Review* (May 27, 1884): 344.

¹⁷ W. C. White, "Great Controversy—New Edition. A statement by Elder W. C. White, made before the General Conference Council, October 30, 1911," Ellen G. White Estate; published in Appendix A of E. G. White's *Selected Messages*, 3:437.

¹⁸ W. C. White to W. W. Eastman, November 4, 1912, Ellen G. White Estate; published without the indefinite article "an" in the Appendix B of E. G. White's *Selected Messages*, 3:446.

¹⁹ A. G. Daniells, "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History," *Spectrum* 10 (May 1979): 34, 38.

²⁰ See F. M. Wilcox, C. L. Taylor, and C. L. Benson in "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible," *Spectrum* 10 (May 1979): 44-57.

²¹ See Timm, "History of Inspiration," 30-47.

²² See *ibid.*, 57-97; —, "Verbal Inspiration Versus Mental Inspiration," 8-14; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, *Receiving the Word: How New Approaches to the Bible Impact Our Biblical Faith and Lifestyle* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Berean Books, 1996); George R. Knight, *Reading Ellen White: How to Understand and Apply Her Writings* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1997), 105-118; Charles Scriven, "Embracing the Spirit," *Spectrum* 26 (September 1997): 28-37; Samuel Koranteng-Pipim, "In the Spirit of Truth: Pipim Responds," *Spectrum* 26 (September 1997): 38-44; George R. Knight's and George W. Reid's book reviews of Pipim's *Receiving the Word*, in *Ministry* (December 1997): 30, 31; Steve Dailey, David Larson, Kenneth Noel, and Alden Thompson, in "Responding to Pipim and Scriven," *Spectrum* 26 (January 1998): 50-54.

²³ White, *Education* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1952), 173.

²⁴ —, *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1904), 8:325; *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, 52; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, 596; *Signs of the Times*, March 13, 1884.

²⁵ "General Conference Proceedings," *Advent Review* (November 27, 1883): 741, 742. See also Jerry A. Moon, W. C. White and Ellen G. White: *The Relationship Between the Prophet and Her Son*, Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1993) 19:122-129.

²⁶ See Arthur L. White, *Ellen G. White* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1982), 6:302-337.

²⁷ See the statements of A. G. Daniells in "Use of the Spirit of Prophecy in Our Teaching of Bible and History" and "Inspiration of the Spirit of Prophecy as Related to the Inspiration of the Bible."

²⁸ White, *Selected Messages*, 1:26.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 39.

³⁰ See Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Writings* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1973), 47, 48.

³¹ Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works—Part II," *Journal of Adventist Education* 44 (December 1981-January 1982): 18, 19.

³² Viera, 27, 28.

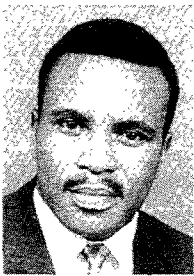
³³ White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 312.

³⁴ Timm, "Ellen G. White: Side Issues or Central Message?" *JATS* 7 (Autumn 1996): 168-179.

³⁵ —, "A Síndrome da Gangorra," *Revista Adventista* (Brazil) (March 1998), 38.

ADVENTIST YOUTH IN NON-SDA HIGH SCHOOLS

Seventh-day Adventist membership worldwide is now well over the ten-million mark. Of this, the Eastern Africa Division claims more than a million members, the majority of whom are young people.



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But where are the youth? A quick survey would show that most of the young people in our Division are in non-SDA school systems. The Tanzania Union, for example, has a membership of 150,000, and its eight high schools care for only 2,500 youth. One mission field in the union does not have a single high school. Thus, not less than 58,000 Adventist young people are getting their secondary education in non-Adventist schools. Similar situations, I surmise, may prevail in other parts of the world.

The reasons for this are many. The church cannot afford to build the needed schools and provide the needed teachers to make Adventist education accessible to all young people; parents may be too poor to send their children to Adventist schools where education is normally expensive as compared to tuition assisted (in most cases) education provided by governments; or schools may be too distant.

Yet it is the call and responsibility of the church to provide spiritual nur-

ture and training in Adventist essentials to its youth. As go the young of the church, so goes the church. The future of the church is in danger when the education and nurture of the youth are neglected.

What then can we do?

In part the church has already provided answers to college and university students on non-Adventist campuses. Campus ministry, sponsored jointly by the education, youth, and chaplaincy departments at General Conference, division, and union levels, has kept Adventist college young people in close contact with the church—its programs, mission, current issues, and service opportunities. As a result, many university youth feel nurtured by the church and empowered to face the intellectual and spiritual challenges they encounter on secular campuses.

In view of the success campus ministry has had in some universities, perhaps the time has come for the church at large and the local church to organize a proactive ministry for the

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thousands of young people who attend public high schools. Such a ministry will not only provide needed nurture, but will encourage young people to stay faithful to their calling and to witness to what they believe. Here are some suggestions:

Organize youth fellowships

Fellowship keeps faith warm and active. When you have something special organized for youth in public schools—it may be in your church, home, or perhaps in a school room—the fellowship brings a variety of young people together. Many Adventists who would otherwise never meet one another find new friends. But these fellowships are not just for making acquaintances and building friendships. They are for spiritual nurture also. Provide spiritual mentoring. Bring in guest speakers who can present the Word powerfully. From one such fellowship in our union, in four years' time, ten young people committed themselves to Jesus and sensed their call to the ministry.

Provide youth freedom

In organizing and conducting youth fellowships, cultivate freedom and unity among the young people. Don't make all the decisions for them. Be a mentor, and let the students discuss what they want to do and arrive at their own decisions. Let them elect their own officers, plan their programs, and direct their energy not only for their own social and spiritual development, but also for outreach among their schoolmates. Make sure the association fosters a social and spiritual bonding. An annual camp is an attractive activity for many young people.

Direct youth toward outreach

A few years ago, I was the mentor and coordinator for a group of Adventist young people studying in public schools in the district where I was pastoring. Our association started as a small venture to foster togetherness and promote spiritual bonding. After

some weeks, I challenged the students to get involved in evangelism. They did. They planned everything. I was only a guide. At the end of their campaign, 68 people were baptized. Nothing would stop them trying the same thing again the next year. This time 83 were baptized. Outreach is contagious. Within three years of outreach by this group 300 people have been baptized. The best asset of the church is its youth, rightly trained, guided, motivated, and challenged.

Involve youth in a variety of experience

Monotony can kill campus ministry more easily than anything else. Youth need variety. They need fresh valleys to cross and new mountains to climb. Young people are gifted in many ways: speaking, writing, singing, and friendship are only a few of their gifts.

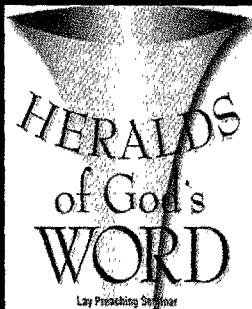
We need to provide opportunities for them to develop these gifts for the glory of God.

You can involve nearby Adventist churches or institutions, asking them to invite your youth associations to be involved in their services and activities. Invite mission or conference officers to conduct seminars meaningful to the situation of your young people—health seminars, lifestyle programs, Daniel and Revelation study, etc. Who knows—you may be tapping a future leader for the church in these seminars.

Campus ministry for secondary students is not easy. Unfortunately, it does not get all the support it needs from the organized structure of the church. This ministry needs reading material, financial support, transportation, leadership, and cooperation. Work at it, and God will open doors that have never been dreamed of. ■

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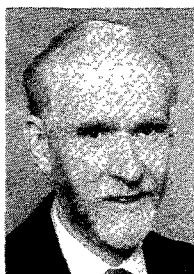
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SPIRITS IN PRISON

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:18-20).*



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This is one of the difficult passages in the New Testament. What did Peter mean when he wrote that Jesus "being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison"? The phrase, "in the spirit," may also be translated "by the spirit." The Revised Standard Version choice of "in the Spirit" is justified by its contrast to "in the flesh." We see this obvious contrast also in 1 Peter 4:6. Yet, however we translate it, this text is not as clear as we might wish. It does plainly say that Christ was put to death "in the flesh" and raised to life "in the spirit" and that, in this "spirit" condition (or through the Holy Spirit) He preached to those who disobeyed before the Flood.

To understand what the passage says or doesn't say about the status of the unrepentant dead, we need to clarify whether Christ's preaching was before the Flood (at the time of the disobedience) or while His body was in the tomb. By itself, the passage may be read either way. If the preaching was before the Flood, we could see that our Lord simply slept in death while in the tomb. If He preached while His body was in

the tomb, we could conclude that people who died in the Flood were, in some way, still living in hell to hear the message. To answer, we will:

1. Look at the meaning of being in the flesh and in the spirit.
2. From Genesis, learn about Christ's ministry before the Flood.
3. Consider the situation of the "spirits" for the time Christ's body was in the tomb.

Jesus in the flesh or in the spirit

Our Lord was put to death "in the flesh." This was the nature He had taken when He came as a babe in Bethlehem (Heb. 10:5). Thus from that time until His resurrection He was "in the flesh." Our passage says He preached in the spirit just as He was raised in the spirit. Does His preaching while "in the spirit" mean He did not have a tangible body? Let's consider His body after the Resurrection:

"As they [the disciples and others] were saying this, Jesus himself stood among them. But they were startled and frightened, and supposed that they saw a spirit. And he said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do questionings

rise in your hearts? See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate before them" (Luke 24:36-43; compare John 20:19-28).

So although "in the spirit," He was not "a spirit" separate from a material body (compare Mark 6:47-50). This means that He did not leave His body lying in the tomb to go elsewhere to preach as a spirit. In fact, just before dying on the cross He had said, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!" (Luke 23:46).

So what *does* being "in the spirit" mean? *Pneuma*, the Greek word for "spirit," has a variety of meanings. The correct one, in each case, must be determined from the context. We know that after the time of Christ's ministry on earth, He sent the Holy Spirit (John 16:7) who worked with Him in a special way. "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you" (John 16:13, 14).

As I see it, "in the spirit" here is Christ's way of working with the Holy Spirit as the agency of direct influence on humans. Before Jesus returned to heaven, He promised to send the Holy Spirit as "another Counselor" or helper-companion (John 14:16). The adjective, "another," indicates that, while on earth, He Himself had been the Counselor. His time of the flesh began when He was born to Mary. According to Peter's statement, it continued to the time of His resurrection "in the spirit."

A time of preaching in Noah's time?

Does the Genesis account of the Flood show a time of preaching which Peter may have been writing about?

"Then the Lord said, 'My spirit shall not abide in man for ever, for he is

flesh, but his days shall be a hundred and twenty years.' . . . And the Lord was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart" (Gen. 6:3, 6).

Was this "spirit of the Lord," Christ in the spirit? We need to be careful not to go beyond what God has revealed (Deut. 29:29) especially in speculating about the nature of Christ. We do know that He existed before His incarnation. He was the I AM of the Exodus (Ex. 3:14; cf. John 8:58). Also He was with

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the Father at the time of Creation (John 1:1). We know that the Holy Spirit speaks only the words which Christ gives Him (John 16:13-15), so the Spirit striving before the Flood would likely have involved both the Son and the Holy Spirit. When Peter said that Christ preached in the spirit before the Flood, he may well have had in mind the text we just read, about the Lord's spirit striving with man, giving His appeal through Noah (2 Pet. 2:3).

Another element of our passage indicates that Christ's preaching could not have been while He was in the tomb. The text says "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison." He died one way and was raised another—two events, two conditions. If He had already been "in the spirit" during His death, Peter would not have described Him as having been raised that way in contrast to how He died. In other words, seeing Christ "in the spirit" on the day before His resurrection violates the natural reading of the text.

Incidentally, the Greek word for "preach" is *kerusso*, which is commonly used for Christ's preaching to people on earth as He appealed to their hearts (for example, Luke 24:46, 47).

The spirits to whom Christ preached

Let's consider the "spirits" to whom Christ preached. Does their situation while He was in the tomb help us understand when the preaching may have occurred?

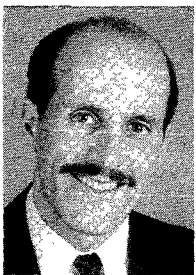
First of all, let's find out who the "spirits" are. Then we will see whether their condition would fit the picture of being preached to. Christians usually think of them as disembodied individuals or angels. (Heb. 1:13, 14) but we have a better option. The Greek word is the plural of *pneuma* which has many meanings, as does the English word "spirit." One meaning of "spirit" is the spiritual, caring or deciding aspect of a person, which we often describe as their "heart." Thus we have such usages of the word as "Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41; cf. 7:21; 16:17; 1 Cor. 16:17, 18).

Look at both definitions of "spirit" in our passage. Christ, "in the spirit" (before His sojourn on earth, in the flesh) pleaded through Noah with the hearts of the people (their "spirits").

continued on p. 27

YEAR 2000: MILLENNIAL MAYHEM OR MINISTRY?

Millions are apprehensive regarding Y2K, also known as the “Millennial Bug,” when because of a serious computer programming problem many computers worldwide will malfunction.



Douglas E. Batchelor is president and speaker, Amazing Facts Ministries, Rocklin, California, and senior pastor of the Sacramento Central Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Much of the angst comes because no one, even the experts, knows exactly what will happen and how it will impact our lives. Some predict a global chain reaction that will shut down critical computerized systems of power, water, and communications, which will lead to an accelerating vortex of panic. In anticipation, some people are selling books and tapes that recommend stockpiling dried foods, water, gas, generators, even guns and ammunition. Expecting a run on the banks, others suggest that before September 9, 1999 (the date 9/9/99 may trigger a shutdown code for some older computers), people withdraw enough cash for a couple of months (U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Alan Greenspan has ordered the Federal Reserve to print an additional 50 billion dollars in cash—as a precaution for this possible bank run).

The approaching new millennium is also bringing in fears about the volatility of our age. Numerous natural disasters, along with financial, political, and religious instability, are compounded by a culture that appears to be drifting like a lost ship without sail, rudder, or anchor. Because of the confluence of all these dynamics, interest in Bible prophecy has reached an unprecedented apex. Indeed, one of the most fertile evangelistic opportunities could be in the last months of 1999, as people fearfully await the year 2000 and the impending mayhem that many anticipate the turn of the clock will bring.

Balance

Christians, of course, should not be fanning the flames of millennial frenzy, even though many, unfortunately, are. Everything from Y2K survival igloos to

DOUGLAS E. BATCHELOR

weapons are being hawked by professed Christian groups, which see in the Y2K all sorts of apocalyptic significance. Whatever their motives, one thing is certain: some folks are going to get rich because of Y2K, whatever ultimately happens when the computers go on the blink.

Although we should not feed this millennial madness, Christian leaders have always encouraged seizing every opportunity to preach Christ. Paul demonstrated this principle while in Athens, when he used one of the Athenian idols as a springboard to proclaim the true God. "For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: *To the unknown God*. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you" (Acts 17:23). Paul also said, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (1 Cor. 9:22).

Evangelism is something like farming—timing and weather are crucial. Often the seasons and weather will dictate the schedule of a farmer. Likewise a minister must be prepared to seize fertile opportunities for winning souls. 2 Timothy 4:2 says, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season." Jesus said, "When it is evening you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red'; and in the morning, 'It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.' Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times" (Matt. 16:2, 3). Indeed, it does not take a spiritual meteorologist to see that this window before 2000 will be a prime time for sowing the gospel seed and harvesting souls. Jesus said, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Luke 10:2).

An illusion of peace

As in the story of Joseph, times of plenty are often followed by times of famine. Enthusiasm on the mountain is often followed by monotony in the

valley. There will probably be an element of panic and varying degrees of millennial mayhem as we approach the end of this year. But what should be of more concern is the paralyzing apathy that may come after the year 2000, when the crisis evaporates and everyone joins in chanting the mantra of "Peace, peace." First Thessalonians 5:3 states, "For when they say, 'Peace and safety!' then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape."

In the parable of the ten virgins, all the virgins were sleeping when the bridegroom came (Matt. 25:1-13); the day before the flood of Noah and the fire of Sodom, the sun was shining upon the people who were engaged in eating, drinking, and marrying. What we fail to do now, during these times of great opportunity, we will have to struggle to accomplish in a time of paralyzing apathy and indifference. John 9:4 says, "I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work." That's why we

should do everything possible to use this millennial window of opportunity in order to reach souls for Christ.

NET New York 1999

One practical way for pastors and churches to capitalize on this wonderful evangelistic window is to participate in the "Millennium of Prophecy" seminar, which will be broadcast via satellite from New York City between October 15 and November 13. At that time, many evangelistic teams will be in New York City to conduct an organized, epic, evangelistic spectacular that will be broadcast across North America and the world!

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PREPARE TO DIE

Standing in a sea of bodies, I faced six soldiers with rifles pointed at me. "FIRE!" the young commander ordered. Read "Prepare to Die" in this quarter's *Mission* to learn what happened.

September 25, 1999

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the best evangelistic window of this millennium (For more specific information, call Amazing Facts at (916) 434-3880 [Monday-Thursday] or log on to www.netny99.org; click on Coordinator access; user name—metro; password—prophecy).

Spiritual supplies

Meanwhile, hundreds of people have asked me, "What should I do to prepare for Y2K and the coming millennium?" Usually this question is framed in the context of, Should they sell their homes, move to the country and begin stockpiling food, gasoline, and other necessities? My first reaction is to warn against the temptation of thinking we can save ourselves by packing the pantry with provisions. All false

religion is based on trusting our own works for salvation; we must not fall into that trap. We must believe in the unseen as well as the seen. If we make spiritual preparation the priority, God can supply all our temporal needs, even if it necessitates a miracle.

There's no sin in making practical provision for potential lean times. God told Noah to store away sufficient resources for his judgment cruise. And Solomon wrote: "A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished" (Prov. 22:3). Intelligent, practical balance is the key. If Christians hoard food for this event, we could be viewed as stingy and lacking in faith. However, we should have an ample supply of resources so that we are not presumptuous fools. But our ultimate trust must be in God; otherwise we are prone to repeat the mistake of the stingy fool who put his trust in his well-stocked barns. "But God said unto him, thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" (Luke 12:20).

Preparing for the potential crisis

What preparation for Y2K can you, as a pastor, suggest for those who ask?

Weapons and ammo? Yes! "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Eph. 6:13).

Gold, clothing, and medical supplies? Yes! "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see" (Rev. 3:18).

Food and water? Yes! "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance" (Isa. 55:1, 2).

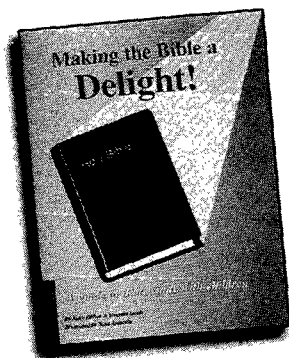
Should we withdraw cash in case ATMs fail? Maybe, but all earthly currency is subject to devaluation and theft anyway. Ultimately we must be sure we have that pearl of great price in the safety deposit box of our souls. "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:19-21).

While you respond to questions about material preparation, be sure to offer God's gift that will help in any difficulty. Offer hope! Some people feel hopeless when faced with the possibility of crises on top of the personal challenges with which they already struggle. Whatever theories or scenarios they may encounter, the Bible's timeless truths are a loving letter from the only one who knows the end from the beginning. We can trust Him to help us with any perplexities that may appear. Daniel and the Revelation contain the needed message for our time. Knowledge is power and can give courage, no matter what's ahead.

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The modern tools of technology—the Internet, satellite TV, radio, high speed printing, and audio and video tapes—have made the global broadcast of the gospel an attainable goal. This in itself is a thrilling fact, for Jesus promised, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14). ■

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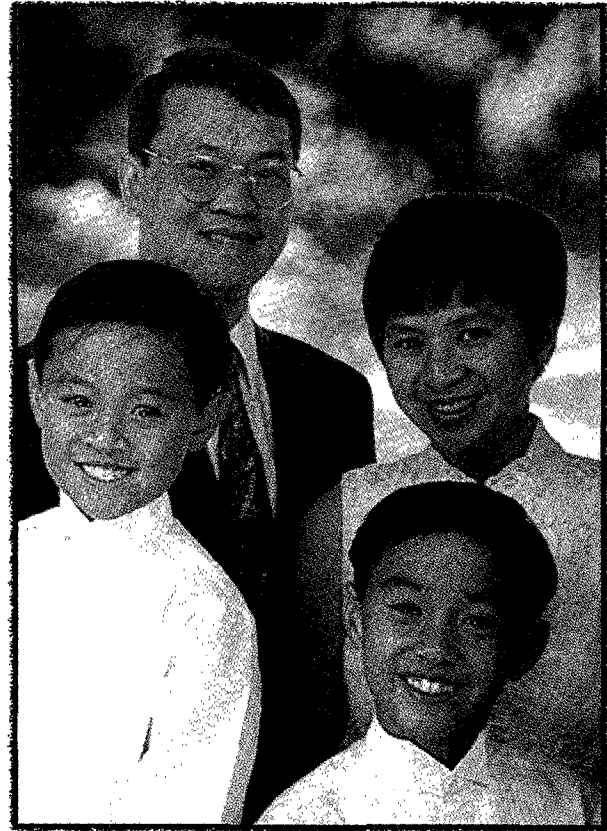
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First Kings 13:1-32 is a good example of the complexity of the function of the prophetic gift. This passage and others

challenge our neatly arranged conceptions of how the gift operates. Here we have a "man of God" who prophesied before the altar a message of punishment from God upon the apostate King Jeroboam. What he prophesied did come to pass. The altar was split apart and its ashes poured out. The king's hand extended against the prophet was shriveled. At the request of the king, the prophet prayed, and the hand was restored.

The prophet showed courage. There was no doubt that God was with him. However, on the way home, he was met by an "old prophet" who told him that God had given him a message. This message was for the prophet to come to the old prophet's house for a meal. Now, God had specifically told the first prophet not to go to anyone's home for a meal. However, he followed the advice of the "old prophet" and went to his house.

While he was there, the "old prophet" received a message from God to tell his guest that because he had disobeyed God's command not to eat at anyone's home, he would lose his life. This was exactly what happened. The "old prophet" was filled with remorse that his fellow prophet lost his life because he had "disobeyed the command of the Lord."*

The puzzling thing is that the "old prophet" carried messages that were contradictory. As a prophet he both urged disobedience and spoke the true word of God. The Scripture repeatedly calls him a prophet, yet he led another prophet astray by giving wrong advice. Later he gave every

The prophets are human too!

GRAEME S. BRADFORD

evidence of being genuinely sorry for his behavior, for the first prophet lost his life while following the older man's prophetic advice.

Scripture does not identify either prophet as false. Both are seen to have received messages from God and to deliver them. One thing seems clear in this passage: that prophets are human with all the strengths and weaknesses that go with humanity.

Prophets can also misjudge a situation as did Nathan when he advised David to go ahead and build the temple. "Do all that is in your heart, for God is with you," counseled the prophet. But later he had to confess to David that he had given him wrong advice. God had instead chosen Solomon to build the temple (1 Chron. 17:1-14).

Consider Peter. God had revealed to him at Joppa (Acts 10:17-48) that Gentiles should be accepted on an equal basis with Jews. He was living in harmony with this vision until some Judaizers exerted pressure on him. Peter yielded, and withdrew from the fellowship of the Gentiles. Paul rebuked Peter for this (Gal. 2:11-14), and also pointed out how Barnabas joined in this hypocrisy. In this act at Antioch, Paul says, Peter and Barnabas were not "acting in line with the truth of the gospel" (verse 14). Peter and Barnabas were also human.

These experiences show us that God uses humans, imperfect though they may be, as prophets to give counsel and reproof to His people. As such, the message should be heeded. The testimony of Scripture is that when we follow the messages of God's

prophets we prosper; when we ignore them, we don't.

There are also times when God gives prophets revelations which they faithfully pass on to His people even though they do not fully comprehend the original message. Consider Daniel. Did he understand the meaning of the 2,300-day prophecy of Daniel 8:14? Indeed, he was "astounded at the vision, and there was none to explain it" (verse 27).

Did the Old Testament prophets clearly understand all they prophesied about the ministry of the Messiah? Read 1 Peter 1:10, 12.

Did John the Baptist (called by Jesus the "greatest of prophets") clearly understand the ministry of Christ? No, he sent his disciples to ask Jesus if He was the Messiah or if another should be sought (Matt. 11:2).

A prophet is human

Obviously the gift of prophecy does not include the gift of omniscience. Jesus seemed to imply that God only imparts knowledge as we need it and are able to grasp it (John 16:12). What God has revealed to prophets they know. What God has not revealed, they do not know, at least any more than anyone else knows. Prophets are able to fulfill their role because the Spirit of God rests upon them enabling them to speak or write His messages for His people in a reliable manner. The thrust of such a message is often preserved for future generations in such a way that these generations may be sure it is the Word of God they are encountering. However, while delivering that message, there are times when we see the humanity of the prophets or their writings coming through.

Such an example is found in 1 Corinthians 1:14-16. Paul states that he is thankful that he baptized only two people while in Corinth. Then, thinking about it further, he remem-

bers that he also baptized "the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else."

Ellen White throws significant light on this point when she says, "The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. It is that of humanity. God as a writer is not represented. Men will often say such an expression is not like God. But God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible."¹

There can be no question regarding the authority of the Word of God. It is sure and certain. Peter tells us that the "prophecy of Scripture" is not merely the prophet's own ideas and interpretations; rather, it is a message from God. Humans spoke as they were "carried along" by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20, 21). Paul agrees with this in 2 Timothy 3:15-17 where he declares the Word of God reliable and able to make us wise for salvation, equipped for good works, through faith in Jesus Christ. He states further that the Word of God is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction, and training in righteousness.

Paul also says, however, that when God communicates a "treasure" is imparted, but this treasure is "in jars of clay" (2 Cor. 4:7). God has to work with the best material He can find. There is never anything faulty or imperfect in the message God gives; however, the prophet is human, and as such has limitations.

Judging between the true and the false

How, then, shall we judge between true and false prophets?

1. *Not by fulfilled prophecy alone.* Often we quote Jeremiah 28:9: "The prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the Lord only if his prediction comes true." The context, however, reveals a prophetic contention between Hananiah and Jeremiah. Hananiah says

that there will be peace for Jerusalem and Judah; while Jeremiah says that Babylonians will come and destroy Jerusalem and the Kingdom of Judah will not fall. Jeremiah is saying people will know which of the two prophets speaks truth by the way their respective prophecies come to pass. Here a specific situation is being addressed.

Deuteronomy 13:1-5 gives us a fuller picture regarding the use of fulfillment of prophecy as a means of testing a prophet. It warns that miraculous signs or wonders take place through a prophet. That by itself is not sufficient evidence to show that the prophet is of God. The prophet must also teach the people to follow and obey the one true God. Jesus speaks along the same lines when He states that true prophets are judged not only by the fulfillment of their predictions but also by their life of obedience to God (Matt. 7:15-23).

2. *Not on a basis of prophecy coming to pass alone, because some prophecies are given with conditions attached to their fulfillment.* Surely no one considers Jonah to be a false prophet because Nineveh was not destroyed as he predicted. Jonah's predictions regarding Nineveh's destruction were conditional. When the people repented, the prophecy of destruction was not fulfilled.

Jeremiah 18:7-10 seems to imply that both the blessings and curses God promises a nation involve conditions which await the human response and which can change the outcome of what God has predicted or promised.

3. *Not on a basis of prophecy coming to pass alone, because sometimes there is an apparent delay in the fulfillment and a given generation may not be alive to see the event predicted.* An example is the prediction in Ezekiel 26 regarding the fate of Tyre. It was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. However, many centuries passed before Alexander the Great cast the

city into the sea. The generations that lived and died between Nebuchadnezzar and Alexander could well have wondered if it would ever happen as Ezekiel predicted.

4. *Not on a basis of prophecy coming to pass alone, because the fulfillment may exceed the original prediction and the existing generation may not realize it.*

As an example, consider the birth and ministry of Jesus. Who, reading the Old Testament, would have understood that God's Messiah would be exactly as Jesus turned out to be? The Jews claimed that no prophet was predicted to come out of Galilee. They were right in this. However, when the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies took place, the Messiah was born in Bethlehem as predicted, but lived the rest of His life in Galilee.

Would a person reading the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament have foreseen the major events in the life of Christ, such as the Incarnation as it occurred through a peasant woman, death by crucifixion, and the Resurrection? Acts 1:6 and the surrounding story are illustrations of how even those closest to Jesus, hanging on His every word right up to the moment of His ascension, did not fully understand vital elements of His messiahship and His ultimate plan. The fulfillment of prophecy can involve a strong element of surprise. God is always moving forward, expanding the scope of His purposes, responding to situations in unprecedented ways, giving more than He has promised, because He is an all-loving Father. The pattern of "fulfillment exceeding prediction" arises out of the creative character of God.

The reactions of the Jews in the first century to the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies in Jesus shows that prophets can have their predictions come to pass, while that very fulfillment is not recognized by large numbers of people in the

relevant generation.

5. *Not by errancy of lifestyle.*

Although we should expect that godliness is the consistent direction of the lifestyle of a true prophet, we also see that the best prophets stumbled and fell on many crucial occasions:

- Abraham, the first to be called a prophet, denied that Sarah was his wife. He told a half-truth: that she was his sister (Gen. 12:11-13, 18).

- David deceived the High Priest in order to get the shewbread to eat. More pointedly, he was also guilty of abusing his power as he murdered a trusted man in order to commit adultery with the man's wife and

finally possess her as his wife (1 Sam. 21:1-6; 2 Sam. 11).

- Moses lost his temper (Num. 20:9-11).

- At the king's suggestion, Jeremiah lied to the people regarding a conversation between himself and the king (Jer. 38:24-29).

- Elijah fled in despair and wished to die (1 Kings 19:3-5).

Like everyone else, prophets are only strong when they are faithful to God; but when they let go the hand of God, they fall. It is important that, crucial and trustworthy as the messages of the prophets are, we must still recognize their humanity, taking

note of how God uses them in spite of their failings.

As we accept this insight into the humanity of the prophets, a clearer and more realistic understanding of the nature of their work and relationship to God and His people will develop among us. ■

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

¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), 1:21.

Spirits in prison

continued from p. 19

Tragically all except eight refused to accept the message.

In what sense were the disobedient spirits "in prison" before the flood? By personal choice, the people refused the appeal of heaven. Thus their hearts or "spirits" were set against the invitation which would have freed them from the bondage of sin (Isa. 42:7; 61:1).

We asked, Does their situation while Christ was in the tomb help us understand when the preaching may have occurred? We have seen how living people heard the preaching of Christ before the Flood. Nearly all rejected the call of salvation. Next we ask, would they—their spirits—have been in a position to accept it when Christ was in the tomb? No, for several reasons.

What do people face after they die? "And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). The Bible does not teach a time of purgatory or limbo between death and the judgment. Reading our passage to say that Christ preached to conscious spirits implies that they could have made a decision to respond. Other Christians who read it this way fail to realize this implication.

Giving the spirits of the flood victims an opportunity to turn to God

between the times of the crucifixion and the resurrection would be unfair. All who died in sin before and after the call of Noah would have been excluded from this opportunity. Peter knew that God has no favorites (Acts 10:34).

Also, could the dead ones make a decision to accept the gospel? Note the following Scriptures:

"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol [hell], to which you are going" (Eccl. 9:10).

"Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of thy steadfast love. For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in Sheol who can give thee praise?" (Ps. 6:4, 5).

"For Sheol cannot thank thee, death cannot praise thee; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for thy faithfulness" (Isa. 38:18; see also Eccl. 9:5, 6; Isa. 38:18; Job 14:21; Acts 2:29-34).

Conclusion

In view of the above, the only conclusion is: Peter's passage must describe Christ's appeal to people in the days of Noah and not a trip to hell to preach to spirits separated from their bodies. The reasons may be summarized:

- During His time on earth, Christ was "in the flesh" until His resurrection.

Thus while in the tomb He was not yet "in the spirit," the status our text specifies for His preaching to the "spirits."

- Even after the resurrection, when Christ was in the Spirit, He was not a spirit separated from a body for preaching.

- We know Christ was active before He took on human flesh. He was an agent in Creation and the I AM in the deliverance from Egypt. We may expect Him to have also been involved in the appeal at the time of the Flood.

- Preaching only to the flood generation after they were dead would have violated God's principle of impartiality.

- The unrepentant dead could not have heard or responded to an appeal because they cannot think, remember God, or hope for truth.

Read the passage again in its context, with the verses before and after it. Its message is a simple one: We have hope in spite of suffering because Christ also suffered for our salvation, overcoming flesh with spirit in the resurrection. This spirit was active in the appeals made during the time of Noah. Like the eight saved alive through the flood waters, we may respond to the call of Christ. ■

*Except as otherwise stated, all Scripture passages in this article are from the Revised Standard Version.



Are you ready for the gray wave? In a world preoccupied with youth and a church in which many of our divisions can boast

an average membership age under thirty, it may seem incongruous to speak of a gray wave.

Nevertheless, the approaching retirement of the baby boom generation (those born between 1945 and 1964) means that local congregations must prepare to minister to increasingly larger groups of older members even as we seek better methods for reaching their children and grandchildren.

Referencing their sacrifices and accomplishments, Tom Brokaw calls today's retirees (those born in the 1920s and 30s) "The Greatest Generation." Brokaw applauds their success in moving beyond years of economic depression and World War II and declares that their offspring, the baby boomers, are beginning only now to fully appreciate the depth of thought and wealth of experience available from their parents.

Recently, Sharon and I were privileged to worship and share with some of today's retirees in the South-eastern California Conference where we asked them to share insights as to how the local church could more effectively prepare for the upcoming influx of retirees and how these graying boomers could best function in the church of the future.

While these retirees readily admitted that they are better at offering advice than following their own counsel, their candor and insights will prove a real blessing to any pastor or church wise enough to listen and act. Their suggestions for both the corporate body and individual believers include:

You lose what you do not use. If

The gray wave

JAMES A. CRESS

today's boomers are not fully utilized in the church upon their retirement, likely they will not remain as just spectators. If meaningful ministries remain static in number while retirees grow in numbers, many might drop out for lack of involvement. Pastors and church boards should strategize ways to utilize the effectiveness and energy that newly retired boomers will bring with their suddenly-available "free time."

Divide assignments into smaller pieces. Rather than expecting one or two local church elders to carry the whole load, distribute the ministry of the congregation among many smaller job descriptions. Recruit those who find themselves with increased time in retirement to accept a specific responsibility and release them to accomplish their assignment. Recognize skills of management and strategic planning that will enhance the effectiveness of the church's impact and be certain to empower those who accept such assignments to accomplish the task.

Encourage cross-generational socializing. Gray wavers will appreciate the potential of the next generations only if they socialize together. Likewise, younger members and children will recognize the wisdom of older members only as they learn to know them. Plan church functions which integrate different age groups.

Emphasize cross-cultural networking. Remember that many of your coming retiree group have already successfully interacted with today's secular society. Utilize their expertise to expand the base of potential new members and utilize

their contacts to awaken interest in others who may not even realize they are seeking spiritual answers.

Devise ministry activities in which your members can include their friends and associates even prior to proclaiming the Word. For example, a church-sponsored pet-visitation to nursing homes, a volunteer group at a local hospital, or support for community charities or counseling centers can function effectively as an "inclusive" entry event to the church. Thus the gospel can be "caught" before it is "taught."

Redefine mission. The faithfulness of today's retirees has often been exhibited by a "pray and pay" response to the global needs of the church. Boomers approaching retirement will expect to be more personally involved in mission and will expect increased accountability as to how their contributions (monetary or otherwise) are utilized. Pray, of course. But be prepared to match your prayers with actions. Emphasize short-term mission assignments and encourage retirees both to participate and to mentor youngsters by sponsoring and hosting them on mission ventures. The most progressive congregations pair local projects with mission activities and find the church flourishes when both local and global missions are held in focus.

Avoid pining for the good old days. Many go to church each week and pray that tomorrow will be 1959. Remember, the good old days weren't! Today's world is not the milieu of 1959 and neither the problems nor the solutions which the church met in the previous generation are the same as those it faces today. Motivate the coming gray wave by talking success, vision, mission, and doing God's will. Believe in the future with confidence and believe in those who will take your place in leadership.

Refuse to abandon hope for the next generation. Many are tempted to

decry the challenges of boomers and to exacerbate the even greater problems of their grandchildren, but it is essential to recognize the continuing and returning faithfulness of succeeding generations. For example, the North American Division recently reported its greatest tithe gain, which was the eleventh consecutive year in which annual gains exceeded the rate of inflation. The coming gray wave will fulfill their responsibilities and, in fact, have already begun to do so even as the numbers of today's retirees decrease as the result of death or infirmity. God never asks His people to accomplish something for which he does not raise up leaders and provide resources to accomplish His will. Remember all God's biddings are enablings!

Today's retirees can also prepare their boomer children for greater responsibilities by recalling the blessings of faithfulness. Rather than focusing on the church's problems (local or global), recount how you have personally experienced God's leading in His people. Rather than allowing a root of bitterness to fester as you dwell on the past, talk about the future, about the assurance of victory in Jesus, about the certainty of His coming.

Care for each other. Perhaps no greater lesson needs to be learned by today's church, regardless of which generation we consider, than the need to nurture one another. Plans for new structures should include thoughtful accommodation for older and disabled members. Ministry assignments should consider both the potential and the limitations of older members. For example, rather than asking just one person to prepare the whole mailing list, enlist several to accomplish the job that one person might do alone. The fellowship of sharing the load will encourage all the participants.

Pastors provide better ministry by

training leaders for prayer and fellowship groups or by encouraging the proliferation of task-oriented ministry groups than they could ever accomplish if they devoted all their own time to praying or working. Retirees who are enlisted in ministry can maintain a level of contact with others who have experienced loss or those who might become discouraged which pastors could not possibly provide alone. Teach members to care for each other, to visit their contemporaries, to include widows and singles in small group functions, to disciple new believers, and to welcome and coach a new generation of church leadership.

And speaking of coaching. The California retirees said it plainly. Offer your opinions and advice and then stop talking! Pray that the Lord who closed the mouths of lions will perform the same miracle on you rather than allow you to criticize and tear down new leaders because they do things differently. Likewise, avoid bad-mouthing your successors. People might conclude you are no different than those you decry.

Don't trample new believers like an elephant stampeding through a strawberry patch unaware of his destruction of tender fruit. Disciple and encourage those who are new to the faith. Remind yourself and your contemporaries that sanctification is God's work throughout a person's lifetime. Expect newborn believers to face greater spiritual challenges than those who have walked longer with their Saviour. Share your personal story, your own real-life struggles and victories. Demonstrate care by inviting new members into your home and fellowship circle. Resist complaining and compliment them even for small steps of faith. Hug them and display real joy in their association. Greet and seek newcomers rather than gossip about their shortcomings.

Lift your pastor's work load. Gray wavers have the luxury of time to share with those for whom time flies far too quickly. You could make your pastor's day by offering your own services for routine tasks or by recruiting other volunteers. Persist if your offer is not readily accepted. Many pastors, who have become accustomed to slogging through their work alone, might not readily believe initial offers of assistance. Perhaps you could invite your pastoral family to lunch or volunteer to baby-sit one evening per month to give parents a night out without child care expense.

Whether at home or in the church, clear out the "stuff" rather than forcing a coming generation to clean up and discard items which clutter. Many items can be converted (sold to finance a mission project) or recycled (picture rolls, felts, or children's materials can still impact another part of the globe). Plan your future today and how your estate will benefit your family, God's cause, and those projects in which you believe. Downsizing at home could include reducing your possessions as well as your maintenance responsibilities in order to release time and energy for more important activities.

Retirees should wear out rather than rust out. Get a life beyond repeating your trials and tribulations. Investing yourself in meaningful activities will bring new meaning to your life. Sharon and I recently visited the pastoral couple with whom we interned. Even though they are aged 90, they are vital, interesting, and interested in the work of the church and the society around them. In extended conversation neither descended into self-pity or a rehearsal of their aches and pains. Rather than recounting their trials, they described their activities and encouraged us with their faith and confidence for the future.

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Value small churches. Don't seek escape in church centers which may provide more sophisticated activities but which might hamper your ministry. Your contribution can be much more valuable to a smaller church than your attendance in a large congregation. Remain active and involved and use your talents to their greatest potential.

Learn your limitations and recognize that your greatest contribution may be mentoring others rather than personally continuing in leadership. Seek transferability by which you teach your own life skills to Pathfinders, Adventurers, youth groups, or students. Your contribution as a tutor or mentor will be more significant than seeking to retain a position on the church board. Release leadership to the next generation. Believe, trust, and affirm their capabilities to lead God's church into the future. Remember, each of us are "sermons in shoes," and our examples will speak much louder than our platitudes.

Plan now to effectively utilize the growing groups of retirees in your church and, if you are a gray waver, plan to increase your influence by maintaining your confidence in the future as you recall God's providence in your past. ■

Evangelism in pluralistic culture

continued from p. 4

On the contrary, consider the consequences of closing ourselves off from those who don't believe as we do. We would be committing evangelistic suicide. Below are some suggestions that, I believe, would help those who want to minister in a pluralistic society and alleviate some of the fears.

1. *Acceptance is not approval.* Just as Jesus loves the sinner but detests the sin, so we are called to accept the unbeliever, whatever their beliefs. We

can love the person, not what the person believes. Christians, of all people, should be able to make that distinction.

2. *Acceptance does not necessarily compromise spiritual convictions.* Christians need to live with guarded wisdom, but accepting and loving the unspiritual has nothing inherently in common with spiritual compromise.

3. *Acceptance sets up a reciprocal law of life.* In any interpersonal relationship, if you don't give it, you don't get it. If you do not accept people, they do not accept you. If you do not listen seriously to people, they do not listen seriously to you, and if they don't listen, they will never hear what you have to say about Christ.

4. *Show respect.* Not accepting what a person believes doesn't mean that you can't show respect for those beliefs. Respect breeds respect. Many people sincerely believe in what they do. By respecting them, and even the beliefs you reject, you will break down barriers that otherwise will greatly hinder your attempt to win souls.

Conclusion

The failure of Christian believers to accept nonbelievers has shut down the door of good relationships; even worse, it has destroyed the very ground of effective evangelism right from the start. We live in society where very few accept our values. Get used to it. The sooner you do, the sooner you will learn to accept others as they are; then, and only then, will you be in a position to help bring these people the good news of a crucified and risen Saviour who died to save everyone, even self-satisfied Christians who deem themselves too good to accept those whose taste in toys (and everything else) radically differs from their own. ■

Joel Sarli, D. Min., is an associate secretary of the Ministerial Association, General Conference.

¹ Ellen G. White, *Evangelism* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), 105.

Letters

continued from p. 3

It is our focus on church *doings* that is masking the critical issue, church *being*—does our church fully project true Biblical saving truth? How many on the membership roll are certain to stand acquitted by Christ's blood before God's throne in the judgment? Theology counts for eternity. Victims of bad theology may end up lost. . . .

What's needed? A truly Christ-centered journal with lay-oriented theology, coming regularly to every home. A revitalization of Sabbath School—a whole hour in small classes. A library of topics for small groups. A full library of Sabbath School study guides selected by each congregation to fit its current needs. Field schools for pastors and elders—taught by seminary, Bible Research Institute, and college professors, by retired theologians and others—getting all of us reading from the same page.

Every pastor and layman should know from Scripture that their church's doctrines are the most Scripturally sound of any denomination, enabling them to defend and teach it to others. The unconvinced should then have the integrity to cease accepting a paycheck from a church whose beliefs they reject.—Norman L. Meager, Sonora, California.

● Unfortunately, "Wrestling with Theological Differences," by Angel Rodriguez, presents theological problems within itself.

The statement is made that "the church, in its official documents, knows nothing about a biblically based legal universal justification on the cross."

Beginning with Genesis 3:15, there are at least two dozen Bible texts that explicitly proclaim that by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification, that Christ is the Savior of the world, that He gave Himself a ransom for all that the world might be saved and all this while we were yet sinners and had

nothing to do with God so loving that he gave and that He was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself! Added to this glorious acquittal and life for all men which the Bible proclaims there is the elaborate further description in the Spirit of Prophecy.

Ellen White makes clear that "salvation is like sunshine, it belongs to the whole world," it is for every sinner and saint and "nothing but his own choice can prevent anyone from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel." "He restored the whole human race to favor with God," "believers or unbelievers, all men are the Lord's property" and "no sin can be committed for which satisfaction has not been met on Calvary." A perishing world is waiting to hear this truth and when our young people grasp this promise, they will never again fear they are not good enough to be saved and they will know they have been given the gift of salvation.—Donald K. Short, Hendersonville, North Carolina.

Editorial note: True, but certainly a significantly incomplete articulation of the biblical and Spirit of Prophecy position.

● In reading "Wrestling with Theological Differences," I have the impression that the writer was trying to be fair, and I felt that he largely succeeded. There is one point, however, that I would like to clarify.

The writer indicated that a significant part of the problem is the

desire of the "historics" to push "their own ideas" on the church. This is a grievous misunderstanding.

As one who has been associated with the historic movement from its very beginning, I can testify that this has never been any part of our intention. Our purpose is to maintain and defend the principles of truth that we were taught when we joined the church, that we were taught again in our college Bible classes, and that we read in the Spirit of Prophecy, our statements of faith and other publications until the 1950s. To describe this as "our own ideas" is very misleading.

We are not theological innovators. We are not into either the "New Theology" or "Progressive Theology." We are trying to be true to "the faith once delivered unto the saints." Our own theological ideas have no relevance, we are not trying to push them on anyone, much less the church.—Ralph Larson (retired minister), Silver Spring, Maryland.

● I am not a theologian, but in my 75-year lifetime, I have been involved in church leadership at the local level and have had to deal with many controversial issues. My upbringing and educational past exalted the Scriptures, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Holy Spirit's leading of a united body of believers into a unity of faith. Unfortunately, I've seen the liberalization of too many issues in forums where none of the divinely appointed procedures were permitted to survive in the miasma of human wisdom. . . . I

searched through most of the April issue of *Ministry* for some glimmer of the "Divinely appointed agencies" rising above the theology of "human wisdom;" I failed to find it. The pioneers who wrestled with theological differences were not encumbered with theological degrees and human wisdom based on years of experience. They were spiritual babes of faith wholly committed to unity in Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. They knew what it was to pray: the results of their "effectual fervent prayer" gave us a core of beliefs that a subsequently greater knowledge of the scriptures has failed to alter. If we have theological differences that need wrestling with, we can do little to improve upon their procedure, but we need to start with the caliber of men that do the wrestling, and that is a matter of prayer. All too often we feel that an introductory prayer is all that is needed to insure a Spirit-led decision. A Spirit-led decision can come only from Spirit-led individuals, but Spirit-led individuals are those only who have individually sought His leading. It was encouraging to read the editor's remarks on the prayer preceding the selection of the then-new General Conference president. It helps strengthen my faith in the leadership of the church.

I pray that my strong feelings in this matter have not blinded me to seeing what I failed to see and prompted me to express myself in an unnecessarily critical way.—Robert H. Allen, Ontario, New York. ■

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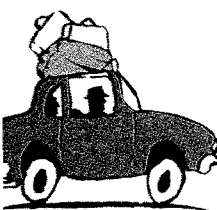
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