

# MINISTRY

*International Journal for Pastors*

*October 2001*



L O O K I N G   B A C K

&

M O V I N G   F O R W A R D

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# MINISTRY

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## CAN A DIALOGUE WITH A SCIENCE BEYOND MODERNISM BE MORE CREATIVE?

### Ellen G. White, theologian?

It may be that Ellen White did not qualify as a theologian as "theologian" was defined by Marvin Moore, in his letter to *Ministry* (February 2001). I am not exactly sure that Augustine, whose recognition as a theologian seems secure, was trained as a theologian. Nor is recognition as a theologian necessarily incompatible with recognition as an inspired prophet or apostle, as demonstrated in the cases of the apostles John and Paul and the prophet Moses. My hope is that readers of my article ("Ellen White, Theologian?" October 2000) who disagree with my characterization of Ellen White as a theologian recognize that she was a "theologian" in the sense of having much to say theologically to her church. It is my conviction (for reasons implied in my article) that, whether Ellen White can or cannot be properly regarded as a theologian, she was way ahead of her church theologically.

—Walter M. Booth, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

### A model for cross-cultural evangelism

I read with great interest the article by Borge Schantz entitled "A Model for Cross-Cultural Evangelism" (April 2001). I was particularly impressed by the fact that the teams used locally-understandable and available "visual aids" instead of traditional Adventist electronic media and communication tools, which could not be sustained

after they had all left. I think this could be applied to many situations in the Middle East also.

Sometimes I think our church overemphasizes the use of technology, so we end up buying sophisticated, expensive pieces of equipment, which work on batteries or generators and then haul them for days into the bush! Then, as Marshal McLuhan said, "the medium becomes the message." The audience is more captivated by the technology than the content. Net '96 and '98 was a perfect example of this overuse of technology as we saw pictures of satellite dishes, receivers, and televisions erected in the middle of nowhere and surrounded by overwhelmed primitive people.

—Alex Elmadjian, communications director, Middle East Union.

### Interfacing faith and reason

Thank you for the excellent article by Clifford Goldstein, "Interfacing Faith and Reason" (April 2001). Many scholars will agree that a mechanistic science, in particular, an empirical positivistic science departs from a reductionist epistemology and it cannot claim a wholistic view of knowledge. It seems that Goldstein is mostly dealing with modern science and its Newtonian mechanism. Quantum physics, to some extent, points in a different and new direction. Can a dialogue with a science beyond modernism be more creative?

On the other hand, theology may

also be reductionistic, because it often hides under a mystical concept of faith and so-called special revelation. In a very subtle way, some theologians construct their own meaning of faith and special revelation, and present them as absolutes. With an irrational rationality "opponents" are bombarded with all sorts of "proof texts" and so-called objective findings. Departing from a narrow view of sola scriptura: believing Scripture to be our only norm and source of knowledge, may confront us with the very same problems a mechanistic science is facing. Answering questions like "What is faith?" and how it presents us with a better or different epistemology is imperative. Without this, our dialogue with a mechanistic empirical science may not progress further than a mere propaganda for our own cause.

—A. Gerhard van Wyk, Greenwood, South Carolina.

Clifford Goldstein waxed eloquent in the April issue. I thoroughly enjoyed all his imagery. . . . What a powerful ending using 1 Corinthians 2:14. What a masterpiece of work!

—Bob Fekete, pastor, Camden, South Carolina.

Thank you for printing Clifford Goldstein's article. Even a lazy cerebral area responds to some gentle massaging. ■

—Orval Driskell, Boonsboro, Maryland.

### Free Subscription

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.

# The essential component of unity: Personal integrity

JULIA W. NORCOTT



When giving his retirement speech, the prophet Samuel asked the people if he had ever oppressed, cheated, stolen from, or even subtly taken a bribe from anyone.

"If I have done any of these things," he declared, "then I will make it right."

"You have not taken anything from anyone's hand" (see 1 Sam. 12:1-4), the people answered.

How rarely this example seems reflected in those around us. Even Christians sometimes say one thing, but live something else. The biblical virtue of integrity points to a consistency between what is inside and what is outside, between belief and behavior, words and ways, attitudes and actions, values and practice. "We must have moral backbone, an integrity that cannot be flattered, bribed, or terrified."<sup>1</sup>

A few years ago a survey showed that the characteristics most desired in a leader are honesty and integrity.<sup>2</sup> As Christians we are fortunate to know that God Himself is our Guide when it comes to true integrity, because His character never changes. We cannot manipulate, bribe, or bargain with God because He will never compromise His perfect righteousness. External circumstances or conditions do not govern His love and goodness. His promises are worthy of our trust and commitment. We can count on God to do what He says He will do. "He who is the Glory of Israel does not lie or change his mind; for he is not a man, that he should change his mind." (1 Sam. 15:29).

It is this true integrity, modeled by God, that forms the basis of confidence and is the secret of unity. Unity requires integrity because true harmony does not depend on total agreement over

opinions, but rather on honesty, integrity, and sincerity.<sup>3</sup> Certainly there will be different notions among genuine Christians (even sincere Christians are, at their core, human beings, nothing more). Peter and Paul, as well as Paul and Barnabas, had strong differences of opinion, but their differences did not damage their unity. Unity does not require an absence of individuality. What it does require is trust and respect.

While the Old Testament presents Samuel's evident virtue as an example of Christian character, the New Testament fills out the meaning even more. Integrity does not imply perfection. When we are connected with Christ, He gives us the mantle of His perfection; we tune in to Him and radiate integrity. Paul resonates this kind of integrity in his instructions to Timothy. He tells Timothy to be diligent in following God's teachings. "Give yourself wholly to them [the ones to whom you minister]."

Many modern examples exist. A private in the armed services on furlough wanted an extension. Unlike other individuals who would filibuster and exaggerate to receive what they want, this man wired his commander and said, "No death. No emergency. Request extension of furlough. I'm having a wonderful time." The commander

was confounded, having never seen a request like this before, one without alibi or excuse. The soldier simply told the truth: he was enjoying his furlough, he was having a good time, and wanted an extension. The commander wired back. "Rewarded for honesty. Extension of five days on present furlough granted."<sup>4</sup>

Samuel, who led Israel from the era of the judges through the beginning of the period of the kings, provides this challenge of personal integrity before every leader. Leadership for Samuel was a stewardship, a responsibility, an honor. He did not demonstrate integrity because it was his intention to demonstrate integrity; he was not honest because his intention was to be known as honest. Samuel was not living to build a reputation. He was thinking about honoring God and serving God's people. Thus, the evidence of his higher calling was undeniable to those about him.<sup>5</sup>

Samuel's personal integrity permeated every area of his life. His commitment to God guided the way he regarded his possessions, his business dealings, and his treatment of those weaker than he was. Samuel held himself accountable to the people whom he led; therefore, he was able to unabashedly open himself up to the scrutiny of everyone with whom he had ever had dealings.

Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "Nothing is at last sacred except the integrity of your own mind." People in the secular world yearn for the security of having people around them who can be trusted. How much more powerful is the potential of such demonstrations of integrity among Christians? Applying

*continued on page 28*

# Looking back and moving forward

Reinder Bruinsma



*Reinder Bruinsma, Ph.D., is secretary of the Trans-European Division, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, England.*

**A**fter reading a book by an American Episcopal priest, who untiringly works for renewal in his church, I contacted him by email. Later, in our growing correspondence, I summarized the main challenges the Seventh-day Adventist Church is facing in Europe. His reply was telling: "Are you sure you are describing the Seventh-day Adventist Church? Have you not accidentally given a description of the Episcopal Church in North America?"

Some time ago I attended a conference organized by the British arm of the American Willow Creek Association. While there, I talked at some length with an Anglican parish priest. Once again I was struck by the similarity between the issues in my church and the problems he faces in his. This became especially evident as we discussed his attempts to make his church relevant for those in his community. These are not the only experiences I have had along these lines. As I meet members of other denominations, clergy or laity, I hear an echo of that common concern: "Things are not well. Something must be done!"

## **A general unhappiness with the status quo**

Many churches in the Western world are unhappy with the status quo. Some churches that used to have a dominant place in a given country or region are now reduced to a small

portion of their former numerical strength and influence. They are now realizing that if they are going to continue to exist with any potency in the long term, they are going to have to become a different kind of church.

The passage from one millennium to the next has reinforced the feeling that the time has arrived for them to become more proactive. There must be change. Somehow more urgently than ever, many are sensing the need for the church to be revived, reborn, reinvented. We know that the time has come to be serious about it.

This sentiment is not confined to just a few denominations. It is found in evangelical churches and also in the Roman Catholic Church. It is also in the "established" Lutheran and Calvinist churches.

Just visit a good Christian bookstore and you will find books, written from all possible denominational perspectives, about the need for renewal and change! The authors may have very different backgrounds and religious affiliations, but their analysis of the malaise in Western Christianity is by and large the same. When dealing more specifically with their own churches, they paint a picture that is uncannily similar.

## **What of Seventh-day Adventists?**

So, if Seventh-day Adventists in the Western world have an uneasy feeling about the future of their church, they are not alone. Other Christians around them have similar concerns. There may be times when Adventists are tempted to find solace in the fact that other denominations seem to be facing more serious problems than those faced in Adventist circles.

Worship attendance in Adventist churches is indeed better than in many other denominations, and the average per capita giving continues to be remarkably high. But looking at these indicators alone, is to overlook some serious trends that give every reason for concern. To take comfort from the fact that the situation for Adventists is less hopeless than for others, is similar to saying someone with asthma or rheumatism is healthy because they do not have a brain tumor!

## **Returning to the past?**

What options do we have when the present situation leaves us disappointed, frustrated, or even afraid?



An option we often exercise is simply to look back. Viewed from the perspective of the present, the past seems idyllic. The past is "the good old days," when life was not as hectic as it is today. It was the time when the nuclear family was the building block of our society and of solid Christian family values. It was the time when a person could leave their back door unlocked without fear of a break-in, and when women did not have to hold on to their handbags as they must today. It was the time when people talked together, when fathers worked and mothers stayed at home to care for their families . . .

All that may have been true in the past. But the past was also something else. It was poverty. For many it meant a work week of 60 hours or more. In the past women were undervalued and underpaid (if paid at all), and when many gifted children never had a chance to get secondary education or to go on to university. It was also a time when vacations were something unknown to most people, and when cancer was nearly always fatal.

For some, the past may seem the golden age to which they wish they could return. However, I believe most people do not feel that way.

### **Back to the beginning?**

As individuals have become nostalgic about the past, so have institutions—churches being foremost among them. When things do not seem to go as they should and a change of direction is needed, it is tempting to simply refer to the past, trying to recreate it. Many reform advocates tell us "We must go back to apostolic Christianity" or "We must be more like the early church," as though this is all that's needed.

Several denominations in the United States owe their origin to this desire to return to a simple, primary sort of Christianity. Others point to the time of the church Reformers—Luther, Calvin, and others, as the era that must be recreated. There are many voices within contemporary

Seventh-day Adventism that call the Church back to the time of "the pioneers." They advocate a "historic Adventism" as the solution for all present spiritual woes.

There are, however, serious problems with this desire of Christians in general, and Adventists in particular, to simply return to the past. In the first place it should be noted, that the past may not have been as good as our selective memory or knowledge of history might suggest. The New Testament indeed pictures a dynamic church where the Spirit moved. But the New Testament epistles also show

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how human weakness (and worse) necessitated constant rebuke, and how the initial unity was always under serious threat. Of the seven churches in Asia Minor, to which John addressed his apocalypse, six were falling seriously short of divine expectations.

Any student of early Christian history knows that during the early centuries the church spread all over the ancient world, as people were propelled by an inner dynamic and were prepared to witness of their faith, whatever the cost. But he would also be aware of the heresies of Docetism and Gnosticism, of Arianism and Donatism. There was also constant, bitter conflict, the lust for power, and the tendency to compromise whenever that seemed politically expedient.

Reading a short history of the Reformation period should likewise suffice to convince anyone that the Reformers were far from perfect. Likewise, as Seventh-day Adventists

take an honest look at the early years, they find much that encourages and inspires, but also much that was less than perfect. The "pioneers" of Adventism were predominantly young men and women, who had yet to mature in their theological thinking and in the skills of church administration. The story of dedication and self-sacrifice was often marred by incidents of self-serving and competitiveness.

The past has always been a mixed bag.

### **The past has passed**

We must accept the simple truth that the past has gone. Even if we want to we can't, in fact, turn the clock back. Life has changed, along with all its circumstances. We ourselves have changed. Those who want to call us back to the past must realize that in itself such a desire is futile.

And would we actually take the past back, if it were possible? Would we really want to relive the nineteenth century? Would we want to return to a period when many were not clear on such basics of Christianity as the Trinity and the full divinity of Christ? Would we be happy to freeze our theology in the writings of J. N. Andrews, Joseph Bates, and Uriah Smith, or even in Ellen White's *Early Writings*?

Most who defend "historic Adventism" in the way we are exposing it here, are avid readers of the books of Ellen White. In reading Mrs. White we cannot have missed her biting criticisms of early Adventism. Here are just two quite typical examples of her concerns:

"I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of continual backsliding has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us. And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourish-

ing and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders.”<sup>1</sup> “At times, when a small group of men entrusted with the general management of the work have, in the name of the General Conference, sought to carry out unwise plans and to restrict God’s work, I have said that I could no longer regard the voice of the General Conference, represented by these few men, as the voice of God.”<sup>2</sup>

### Remembering the past

Making genuine progress forward is not accomplished by going back to the past. That is not to say, however, that we must discard the past. On the contrary, Seventh-day Adventists must always remember the underlying principle in the frequently quoted words: “In reviewing our past history, having traveled over every step of advance to our present standing, I can say, Praise God! As I see what the Lord has wrought, I am filled with astonishment, and with confidence in Christ as leader. We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history.”<sup>3</sup>

Multiple biblical instances stress the need to remember the past. The past is a source of profound instruction and inspiration. Looking back makes us realize how far we have come, in spite of human frailties. Christianity has spread to practically all corners of the world, and through the centuries billions of men and women have found salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. Adventists can look back in thankful amazement to witness how our movement has been so successful and has grown into a phenomenal worldwide church in just over 150 years.

Looking back is not enough. Traditions may lose their original meaning and cease to be living traditions. The past can become a reservation where people are kept away from contact with the real world; or art galleries where beautiful pictures hang but where those who stand and

admire them are not expected to do any painting themselves.

### One way: Forward

If the Church fails to connect with the present while it only stares back into the past, it has no future. Any church or movement that fails to adapt to a changing environment, ceases to be relevant to the present. Future generations of such an entity will soon be extinct or will at best just survive—like the Amish or the Shakers—in a quaint, museum-mode, operating at the fringes of society.

History provides us with too many examples of this for us to miss that point. A “historic Adventism” that is obsessed with the past, is a dead-end street. Some might say that putting it like this is misrepresenting the kind of “historic Adventism” that simply wants to make sure that the “pillars of truth” are not eroded and the doctrinal heritage is not squandered. There certainly is truth in that concern. But an uncritical embracing of the past—

as is unfortunately all too often the kind of past many are appealing to—which is insufficiently open to the challenges of the present and the future, has major flaws and mortal dangers present within it.

If we are dissatisfied with the present and want to turn things around, there is only one way: Forward. Such a journey will be uncertain. We may have to send out advance parties to reconnoiter the terrain. They may at times have to wait until the next season before the church caravan is ready to move on. But in spite of all the challenges, when we undertake the onward journey of discovery as a pilgrimage of deep and true faith, ever mindful of our past and ever keeping the final destination in mind, we will know that God is verily with us, moving us forward. ■

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 5 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1882), 217.
- 2 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 9 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1909), 261.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1915), 196.

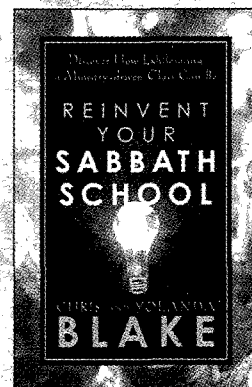
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# Scheherazade

Oliver Jacques



*Oliver Jacques is a retired pastor and lives in Fallbrook, California.*

**I**n a spasm of domestic rectitude, I creep out of bed at 5:30 a.m., thinking that I will surprise my wife and do the weekly ironing. For nearly three score years she has beaten me to the ironing board, but—recovering from medical indignities, she sleeps.

Dressing silently, I tiptoe to the kitchen, plug in the iron, and before I start work on a shirt, my soul aglow with self-esteem, I celebrate my virtue by dialing to the good music radio station. Without warning my piety is pricked by the stunning strains of Rimsky Korsakov's "Scheherazade." The spectacular music reminds me of the story of Scheherazade and her scary affair with the caliph who has the custom of marrying a new bride each evening only to have her decapitated at dawn, ostensibly to guard against the inconvenience of a possible heir that might be a challenge to his throne.

Aware of the great man's birth control measures, Scheherazade, a bright young resident of his harem, conspires to outwit the caliph. When her turn comes, she decides she will tell him an intriguing story.

And so it's story time and the smart girl weaves a plot that both grips and enchants the caliph. There is adventure, excitement, and suspense. And then she yawns . . .

"Time for bed," she murmurs.

"But," protests her lord, "What happens next?"

"Tomorrow night," she sighs, "I'll tell you then."

Nothing the caliph says moves her. The decapitation ceremony is postponed. His highness must hear the rest of her story.

The following night she completes the odyssey and begins another. Her strategy is repeated. Again and again, for a thousand and one nights, the great man is enthralled by the power of a story well told. Before long the caliph finds the resourceful maiden so delightfully captivating that he falls in love and decides to keep her.

## The Gospel story

The old Arabian tale should wake up those of us who preach and teach, who tell the gospel story. The mystery of Deity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; the special work of the angels; the wonders of the universe; the creation of the earth and the astonishingly high-risk proposal to create free-willed beings designed to actually look and act like their Creator. There is also the mysterious, pervasive power of divine love, the fantastic complexity and beauty of the earth with its billions of fascinating life forms—all make superb subject matter for exciting stories.

The mighty Lucifer and the mystery of iniquity, the distrust and rebellion of our parents, and God's wise, just, and loving program for their rehabilitation—each makes for a grand story. Will the plan work? Will Godly love and obedience replace self-willed impudence and rebellion? Will the mind of God, the faith and expectations of His Son ever be infused into the hearts and brains of His wayward children? What will the plan cost? Is it feasible? How does it work in the lives of modern men and women?

And then, the Incarnation, the human nature, the ministry, and the awesome, terrifying crucifixion of God's Son, the Lamb of God who sheds His blood, taking our punishment so that we might live with Him; the powers of darkness in deadly conflict with the powers of light; all are elements for a gripping story. And then, there's a "live time" report on what is going on now.

What happens next? You want big music? How about the "trump of God"? How will the cataclysmic war turn out? God's final, cosmic solution for sin on one



hand, and the eternal destiny of those who choose His kingdom on the other. It's the great drama, the drama of the ages. Talk about power, glory, bright lights, mystery, and suspense!

#### **The story told for all its worth**

A few years ago I was invited to participate in a conference of Adventist editors and writers from around the world. Lots of good talk, but the focus was mainly on the need to adjust to cultural, lifestyle, and psychological changes among the youth. An authority on the subject shook us up. His thinking was carrying the day. Grateful for his insights, but uncomfortable with the emphasis, I repeatedly erupted with the suggestion that realistic, creative presentations depicting the wonder, harmony, cohesion, grandeur, and beauty of God's plan for our salvation really can be made to appeal to young people. Though heard politely, I sensed that I was deemed old fashioned—out of sync.

While listening to the analyses and prognostications of sociologists and psychologists, we would do well to think of Scheherazade and her insightful strategy and winning ways. Unless our ministries actually portray the kingdom of God, with all its mystery and suspense, in all its majesty the sword will fall. It will fall—not the caliph's but the tragic, fateful indifference of our youth and the inexorable judgment of a holy and righteous God who holds us responsible for the blood of those for whose salvation we labor. By a thread the sword hangs over our heads. This time it's like the sword of Damocles.

The story about God and His work is full of high drama, surprise, justice, suspense, incredible love, and happily, harmony and eternal resolution. With the Spirit-guided gift of imagination it can and must be told so it grips the minds and hearts of the young and the old.

Now, back to the ironing. . . . ■

## ***Attention Preachers!***

The Annual H.M.S. Richards Lectureship on Biblical Preaching  
will be held at Andrews University  
on Sunday, Oct 28 and Monday, Oct. 29, 2001!

### ***Featured Speaker: Dr. Henry Wright***



Dr. Wright is currently pastor of the Community Praise SDA Church in Alexandria, Virginia and professor of homiletics at Columbia Union College in Takoma Park, Maryland. He comes to us with rich experience as a pastor, local and union conference administrator, and college professor. Dr. Wright previously taught preaching at Oakwood College and is considered one of Adventism's finest contemporary preachers! Come and be blessed as he shares his expertise and convictions about preaching.

#### **SCHEDULE & TOPICS**

##### **Sunday, Oct. 28, 2001**

11:00 A.M. Lecture #1

*"The Man in the Sermon"*

3:30 P.M. Lecture #2

*"Imagination in the Sermon"*

7:30 P.M. Lecture #3

*"Timing and Emphasis in Preaching"*

##### **Monday, Oct. 29, 2001**

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# Lord, teach us to preach!

Derek J. Morris



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**L**ord, teach us to preach!" We wish the disciples had made such a request. We could have all benefited from some practical pointers on preaching from the Master Preacher. Yet as we examine the life and teaching of Jesus, we discover several pointers that can revolutionize our preaching ministry.

## Preach in the power of the Holy Spirit

Jesus clearly testified that the Spirit of the Lord had anointed Him to preach (Luke 4:18)\* Would it be too bold to assert that we have no place preaching the Word of God until we have first been anointed by the Spirit of God? Jesus told His preaching students to wait in Jerusalem until they received the promise of the Father (Acts 1:8). After the heavenly anointing at Pentecost, the followers of Jesus went out to preach in the power of the Holy Spirit.

A case in point is Stephen the deacon, who is described as "full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5), and also as "full of faith and power" (verse 8). When Stephen preached, his hearers "were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke" (verse 10). Even Stephen's nonverbal communication was an irrefutable witness: "All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel" (verse 15). His life

demonstrated that when a person is filled with the Holy Spirit, they are full of power. You will preach with a holy boldness (Acts 4:29-31; 13:6-12).

If we follow the clear teaching of Jesus found in Luke 11:7-13 and John 14:12-18, we too can declare with confidence that "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He has anointed me to preach."

## Bathe your sermon preparation and delivery in prayer

Jesus, the Master Preacher, devoted large amounts of time to prayer. As He prepared to preach in the synagogues throughout Galilee, Jesus rose early in the morning, departed to a solitary place, and prayed (Mark 1:35-39). Prior to preaching His strategic sermon on the bread of life, Jesus spent hours in prayer (Matt. 14:23-25). For Jesus, preaching and prayer were intricately connected.

The preaching students of Jesus also realized that those who minister the Word must also devote themselves to prayer (Acts 6:4). The intense seasons of prayer by the followers of Jesus prior to Pentecost was not only an essential preparation for the Spirit's anointing; it was also an essential preparation for powerful preaching. The apostle Paul affirmed the importance of prayer in sermon preparation and delivery when he made the special request for intercessory prayer "that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19). He understood that without prayer he could not "speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (verse 20).

The dearth of powerful biblical preaching among us is directly related to the dearth of powerful praying. Peter's denial of Jesus in the high priest's palace courtyard illustrates the troubling truth that we will have no powerful testimony about Jesus to share with others if we have been sleeping when we should have been praying. The lesson is clear. Pray for God's guidance before you begin your sermon preparation. Pray while you prepare your sermon. Pray while you preach. Learn from the example of Jesus that powerful preaching is prayed down, not worked up. Bathe your sermon preparation and delivery in prayer.

## The Word of God, instead of opinions

Jesus proclaimed the Word of God, both in word and in life. He boldly declared that "the

word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me'" (John 14:24). And again, as He prayed for His disciples, Jesus testified to His Father, "I have given them Your Word" (John 17:14). The preaching students of Jesus understood the importance of sharing God's Word, rather than their own opinions: The apostles "spoke the Word of God with boldness" (Acts 4:31) and "the word of God spread" (Acts 6:7). People need to hear God's Word, not our opinions. What God has to say is more important than what we have to say.

We hear far too many sermons today that give only a nod to the Word of God. These days biblical sermons with contemporary illustrations have become contemporary sermons with occasional biblical illustrations. The result is a lack of power in the pulpit and a lack of transformation in the church. These sermons may be entertaining, they may be interesting, but they will affect no lasting change.

### **Communicate God's grace**

When Jesus preached, He did not simply speak about the grace of God. He actually communicated the grace of God. Luke records that in response to the preaching of Jesus at the synagogue in Nazareth, His hearers "marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22). This audience feedback is a testimony not to the finesse of His oral expression, but rather is a response to the essence of His speech. Jesus was "full of grace" (John 1:14) and when He preached, He communicated the grace of God.

One of the most powerful words of grace from the preaching ministry of Jesus is found in a sermon preached at night to an audience of one: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved" (John 3:16, 17).

The preaching students of Jesus understood that they were sent out to communicate the grace of God. The apostle Peter began his message to the pilgrims of the dispersion with the words "Grace to you" (1 Pet. 1:2). The apostle Paul began his messages on numerous occasions with the words "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1:2). He reminds us to "let your speech always be with grace" (Col. 4:6), teach and admonish one another "with grace in your hearts" (Col. 3:16), and "impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29). Every sermon should communicate a clear word of grace. It

suggested a resistant spirit and a lack of faith. Responding to this audience feedback, Jesus said, "You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself!'" (Luke 4:23). He then shifted the focus of His sermon from a proclamation of the acceptable year of the Lord to the importance of faith.

The preaching students of Jesus learned from their Teacher the importance of being aware of the audience. Those present on the day of Pentecost entered into dialogue with Peter as he preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. Having boldly proclaimed that "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts

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is the grace of God that brings hope. It is true that every sermon should also contain a clear word of judgment. But even the word of judgment should be communicated with grace in our hearts.

### **Be aware of your audience**

Jesus demonstrated a remarkable awareness of His audience. He understood that effective communication is dialogue, rather than mere monologue. Jesus addressed issues that were on the minds of His hearers (Matt. 24:3; Luke 10:39). He engaged His audience in interaction through the use of questions (Luke 10:36). On at least one occasion, He actually allowed someone's rude interruption to redirect the course of His sermon (Luke 12:13-21).

Jesus was attentive to both the verbal and nonverbal feedback from His listeners. During His sermon at Nazareth, Jesus discerned the nonverbal messages of those present. The body language that accompanied the comment "Is this not Joseph's son?"

2:36), Peter paused to listen to the feedback of his hearers. Their comment, "What shall we do?" did not mark the end of Peter's sermon. Rather it was an essential part of the sermon. Remember, all effective communication is dialogue.

A preacher cannot be oblivious to the feedback from the audience. Peter continued, "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). And again, Peter showed sensitivity to audience feedback. The final move of his sermon happened in the water, when about 3,000 people were baptized! That baptism was an integral part of the sermon, a visible evidence of a life-changing dialogue with God.

### **Use a simple, memorable statement**

On the day after the miraculous feeding of the five thousand, Jesus preached a powerful sermon. He used a simple, memorable statement to drive home His main idea: "I am the

bread of life” (John 6:35). We can learn several important lessons from the crafting of this main idea. First, it is a simple, rather than a complex, sentence. Second, it is stated in the positive, rather than the negative. Unfortunately, we don’t have an audio or video recording of this watershed sermon of Jesus, but communicators agree that there are several oral interpretation skills that can be used to emphasize the main idea in a sermon. Jesus may have changed His rate of delivery when He said, “I am the bread of life.” He may have added a pause, or thoughtful silence. Doing this highlights the idea as important and provides an opportunity for hearers to reflect upon it. Jesus may also have used a variation of force, or volume, in order to flag this idea, as He did on another occasion (John 7:37).

### **The use of repetition**

Jesus not only crafted a simple, memorable statement in order to drive home His main idea, but He also used repetition for added emphasis. It takes a skilled communicator to state the single dominant thought only once in a sermon and have the hearers recognize it as such and remember it. In the bread of life sermon, Jesus repeated His main idea verbatim at least once (John 6:35, 38). He also restated His main idea by paraphrasing it on several occasions during the sermon, saying, “I am the bread which came down from heaven” (verse 41), and “I am the living bread” (verse 51). If repetition and restatement were important to Jesus in order to drive home the main idea of His sermon, they are even more important in a day when attentive listening is rapidly becoming a lost art. We must make certain that the simple, memorable statement of the sermon is clearly heard.

### **Find practical illustrations**

Jesus was a master illustrator of spiritual truth. He frequently used practical illustrations from everyday life to convey spiritual truth. On one

occasion when Jesus was speaking to His disciples, He called a young child to stand in the midst of them. What a brilliant way to focus their attention! Here was a living illustration of the truth that Jesus was about to convey. Then Jesus said to the disciples, “Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3).

Jesus developed a reputation as a preacher who drew practical illustrations from everyday life. Matthew records that “Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them” (Matt. 13:34). He spoke about casting nets, sowing seed, and losing sheep. Jesus understood that the best illustrations are found where the speaker’s world and the listener’s world intersect. When Jesus spoke about crop yield, His agrarian audience did not have to decode His message. They were well acquainted with the problems of troublesome birds, rocks, thistles, and shallow root systems. If Jesus was teaching a class on preaching in the twenty-first century, He would undoubtedly encourage His students to draw practical illustrations from power tools, portfolios, and 20 gig hard drives.

There is no such thing as a good illustration; only a good illustration of something. So we may use practical illustrations from everyday life which reinforce and shed light on the main idea of the sermon. All other anecdotes, as wonderful as they might sound, are simply extraneous noise which can do more harm than good. We are not called to entertain with a smorgasbord of interesting stories. Rather, we are called to proclaim a life-changing Word. A wise preacher will learn from the example of Jesus and use relevant, practical illustrations from everyday life to help accomplish that sacred task.

### **Call for radical life change**

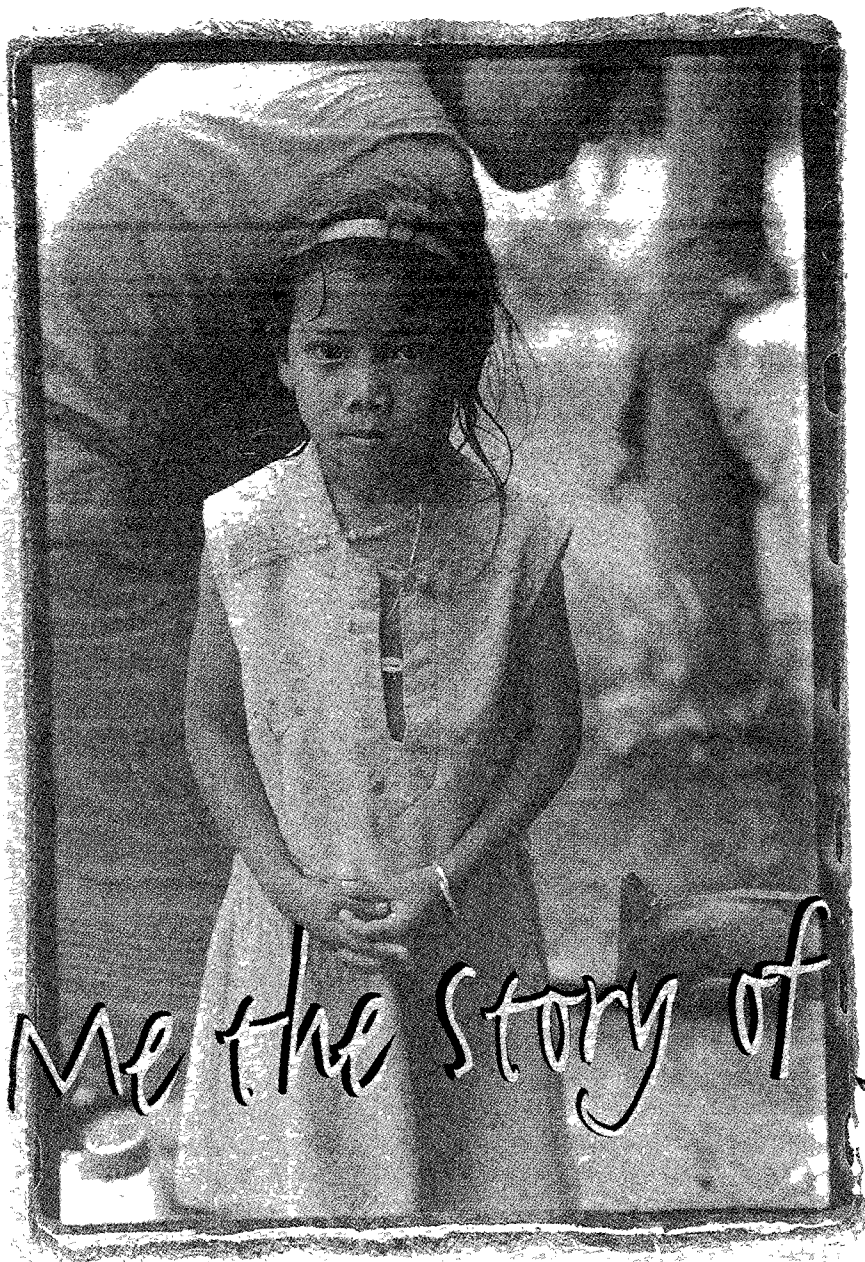
Jesus spoke “as one having authority” (Matt. 7:29). He preached in the

power of the Holy Spirit, sharing the Word of God rather than His own opinions, but He also called for radical life change. At the conclusion of His historic Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenged His hearers to apply the truths that they had heard to their own lives. It was a call to action, a call for radical life change. Jesus said, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matt. 7:24). Conversely, “everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand” (Matt. 7:26). Preachers are commissioned not simply to convey information, but to call for obedience and transformation.

While it is certainly true that transformation is God’s work, not ours, we are called to join God in His work. When the Word of God has been faithfully proclaimed, a call for radical life-change is not only a privilege, it is a responsibility. Peter made no apology when he called for radical life change at the conclusion of his sermon. The call was to repent, be baptized, and be saved from this perverse generation (Acts 2:38-40).

It seems that today some preachers are afraid to call for radical life-change. They are afraid to appear arrogant or authoritarian. But truth, by its very nature, is authoritative. Truth inevitably excludes all that is error. A hearing of the truth of God’s Word necessitates a response. There is no place for manipulation, coercion, or emotional hype. However, we learn from the example of Jesus that when truth has been proclaimed, it is appropriate to call for radical life-change. That call should be simple and clear. The result will be a transforming experience both for us as ministers and for our hearers. ■

\* All Scripture quotations in this article are from the New King James Version.



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# Galatia's gospel perversions

## Are they still with us? (part 1)

Garth H. Bainbridge



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**T**o understand Paul's epistles and to fully grasp his meaning, one needs to become familiar with his terminology and the situation to which he was speaking. Some of the issues he addresses are no longer relevant today, but some are alive and well in today's church. This is especially true of Paul's Galatian letter. The issue is one with which every believer struggles, as does every community of believers: the problem of finding the right balance or perspective when it comes to the great twin principles of Christian faith and obedience.

From the start, Paul pulls no punches as he addresses the problem in the churches of Galatia. "I am astonished," he says, "that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:6, 7).\*

A different gospel, by which Paul means a perverted gospel, is not the gospel at all, he says. Paul is dealing here with the very heart of "the gospel of Christ" itself—the relationship between faith and obedience in terms of human salvation.

He identifies two perversions of the gospel. First, the legalistic perversion of "trying to attain your goal [of righteousness] by human effort" (3:3). It is in our very nature to want to

prove our basic goodness. Clearly, there is nothing wrong with good works; it is what we make of them that is often wrong. The subtlety of the perverted gospel is that it rests its hopes of salvation on a "Jesus + obedience" concept. Such a focus shifts inevitably away from Jesus to the efforts of the human—to our efforts. This attitude can become quite petty as we decide for ourselves and for others which works have a particular righteousness quotient.

Second, there is the concern of a libertine gospel that makes of the grace of God a disgrace and a license "to indulge the sinful nature" (5:13). Obedience to God has not lost any of its importance in the light of the gospel. Never would Paul call his people, or us, to interpret his enthusiasm for the gospel as mounting some kind of offense against God's law. He was as concerned for right living as he was for salvation by grace.

### Jewish zealot to Christian emissary

So convinced was Paul of the veracity of what he preached that he says, "If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!" (1:9). His twice repeated (verse 8) emphatic assertion is founded on two factors.

First, his understanding of the gospel came from a personal encounter with Christ. "I want you to know, brothers," he claims, "that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (1:11, 12). This encounter precipitated a dramatic turn-about for him. Till then, he had seen the Jesus revival as a threat to established belief. As a traditionalist Jew, he viewed this new theology with horror and despair, as the ultimate danger. With characteristic zeal, Paul, in defense of that faith, "persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it" (1:13).

His encounter with Jesus, however, led him to interpret the Old Testament in a radically new way—in terms of the gospel, that is, in the light of Christ. It became clear to him that "no matter how many promises God has made, they are 'Yes' in Christ" (2 Cor. 1:20). His Judaistic framework was shattered by the new revelation which ripped aside the veil through which he had always read Scripture (2 Cor. 3:14). His earlier securities were dramatically displaced, and his assurance of sal-

vation now rested in Jesus Christ alone (Phil. 3:4-7).

The second basis for his conviction came from the church's confirmation of his message. The revelation that came to him from Christ created a major paradigm shift not only for Paul but also for the church. Some Jewish believers were not prepared to make that shift and were convinced that they should contend for historic Jewish practices as the indispensable contribution to their salvation. These concerned brethren felt it was their duty to follow in Paul's tracks and give his converts "the full message." Paul's view of this reactionary development was that "some false brothers had infiltrated our ranks to spy on the freedom we have in Christ Jesus and to make us slaves" (Gal. 2:4).

This is why he and Barnabas went to Jerusalem to lay before the church leaders the gospel he preached to the Gentiles. He was willing that they examine it and confirm it. The

church, for its part, had to be prepared to expand its understanding and not be held by tradition and established orthodoxy which posed in the garb of unchangeable truth. So the church took the giant step of recognizing that truth is dynamic, not static; that certain Old Testament teachings and practices had, in the light of the gospel, run their course and met their termination point in Christ.

### The Paul-Peter confrontation

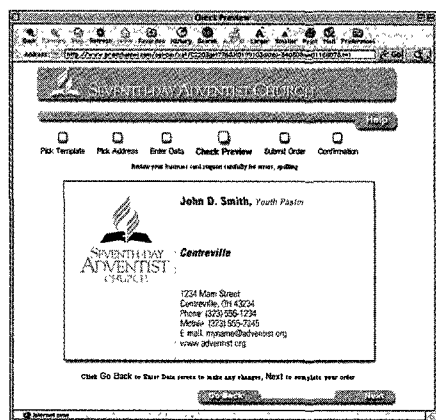
There was a crucial occasion in Antioch when the church's affirmation of Paul's gospel had to be publicly defended against Peter's duplicity (2:11ff). Peter stood accused of being inconsistent and hypocritical, associating with the Gentile believers at one time, then withdrawing to the company of "certain men [who] came from James." These members of "the circumcision group," the "Jesus plus" people, came with a built in hypercritical attitude, looking for opportunities

to criticize those in the church who championed the gospel. In the presence of these people, Peter retreated to the safety of disassociating himself from social contact with the Gentile believers and by implication he compromised the implications of the gospel. He aligned himself thus with the circumcision band. Paul regarded this as sufficient cause for a show-down.

His public protest was in defense of gospel principle and practice. Peter's behavior reflected the divisive ultra-conservatism of the theologically flawed circumcision group. In Jerusalem, he had spoken decisively in support of the gospel going to the Gentiles unhampered by Judaistic trappings (see Acts 15:10). Now in Antioch Peter appeared to stand with those who would "force the Gentiles to follow Jewish customs." Paul felt that such hypocrisy, if unchecked, would encourage the enemies of the gospel.

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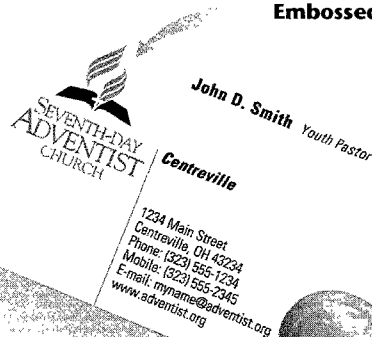
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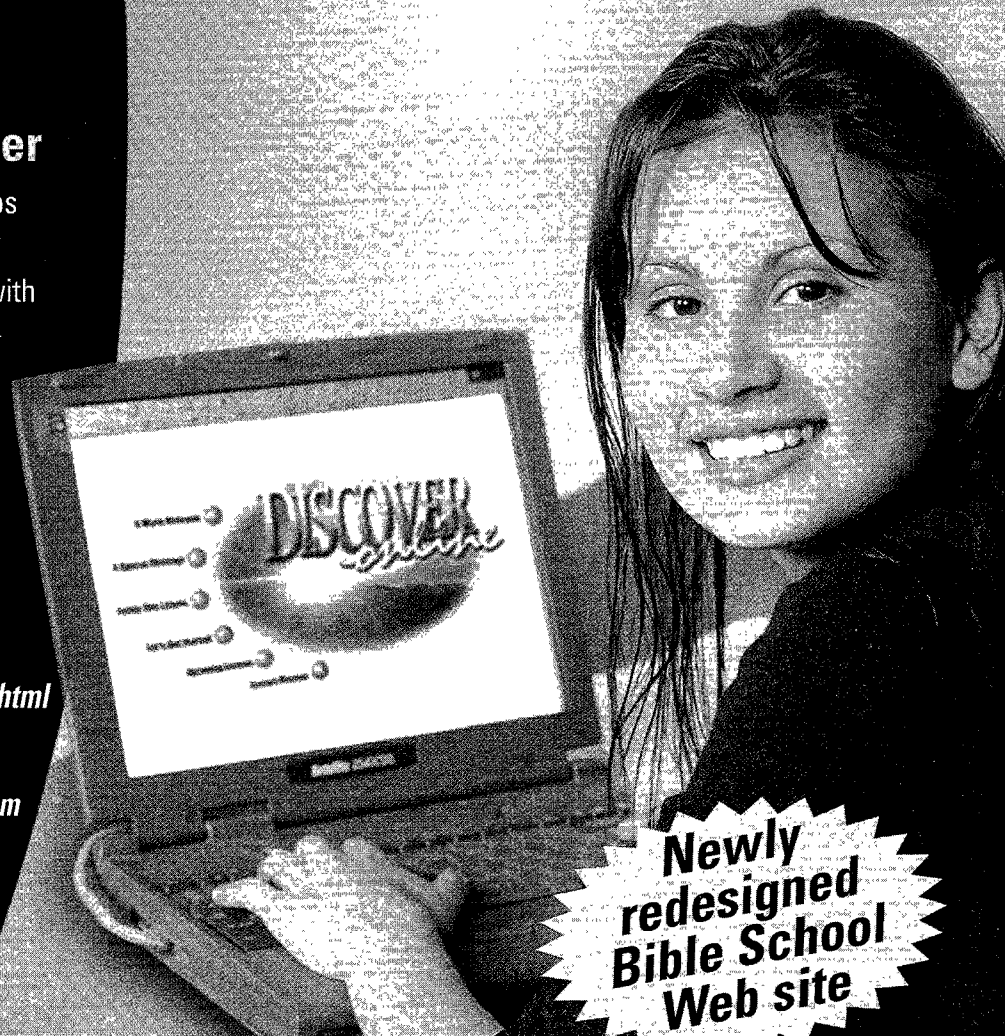
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For Paul, there was no room for compromise or negotiation with those who felt urged to retain some of the vestiges of Judaism, synchronizing them with the radical paradigm of the gospel. "We . . . know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified" (Gal. 2:16).

This verse places faith in Christ and observing the law in contention with each other. The underlying issue is being set right with God through faith in Christ rather than on the basis of obedience to any manifestation of law. The question was and still is, Are we justified by our behavioral attainments, or by accepting the merit of Jesus on our behalf, without any contribution from our obedience? This is not just a question for theological debate or semantic argumentation. It is a question with which we struggle daily as in our actual experience faith and obedience must each find their rightful position and function in our experience.

Three times in this verse (2:16), Paul makes a strong disclaimer against our obedience making any contribution to our justification. We must not think that obedience gives anyone even the slightest advantage in terms of his or her standing with God. That is not the function of obedience. "By observing the law no one will be justified" (verse 17). We struggle to accept this, especially when we regard ourselves as law-keeping Christians. Our justification rests on an entirely different basis—faith in Christ. Faith accepts the essential sinlessness and obedience of Christ, as well as His atoning death, imputed to us, as the sole sufficient ground for our being set right with God.

But now the question arises: "If, while we seek to be justified in Christ, it becomes evident that we ourselves are sinners, does that mean that Christ promotes sin?" (2:17). Is Christ,

by justifying sinners, allowing them to carry on sinning with impunity? Does this not remove any motivation there might be to keep the law? Paul says, Absolutely not! "If I rebuild what I destroyed, I prove that I am a lawbreaker" (2:18).

What is it that is destroyed when we turn to Christ? It is what Paul calls "the body of sin" or "our old self" (see Rom. 6:6). He regarded himself as having been nailed to the cross in Christ, condemned by the law to die; he has in fact died and only lives by virtue of the resurrection life of Christ being lived in him. "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). Sin and Christ in the same life are incompatible with each other. The motivation to obey is not in order to come into a right relationship with God, but because by faith we live in and through Christ. "For through the law I died to the law so that I might live for God" (2:19).

### **How to make a fool of yourself**

Paul is frank and exceptionally stern with the Galatians. "You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the law, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort?" (3:1-3).

The Galatians were not the last fools the church would ever know. Many Christians have the mistaken view that we are justified by faith, but thereafter we are sanctified by some combination of faith and human effort, and that if the latter is lacking we are lost. Having begun with the Spirit (by believing), there have ever been a plethora of those in the church who believe that they must complete the process by perfectly observing the law (by achieving).

Paul advances two arguments, one

in favor of the righteousness that comes through faith in the work of Christ and the other, its logical and inevitable companion, which is against righteousness by any kind of human obedience.

Exhibit A in support of salvation by faith is Abraham, who had righteousness credited to him because he believed God before any work could be done by him (Abraham). This was especially significant in the context of the battle over circumcision. Abraham was declared righteous before and without any reference to circumcision. Furthermore, the promise of blessing made to Abraham and his descendants was a gospel promise, and it pertained to the Gentiles as much as to the Jews: "All nations will be blessed through you." As the blessing came to Abraham through faith, it comes to all others on the same basis.

Against the idea of righteousness by law keeping, he makes the claim: "All who rely on observing the law are under a curse" because, according to Deuteronomy 27:26, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law." Only the self-deceived would claim to fully and continually meet every requirement in the law and remain under such a curse.

The gospel declares, however, that Christ has taken the curse of our spiritual inadequacy upon Himself, thus redeeming us from the consequences of our failure to obey. He has already met the requirement of perfect obedience and has already taken to the cross any penalty that was due us because of our disobedience. When we believe this, the blessing of salvation is ours. By faith we are saved, and by faith we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit and every other blessing salvation brings. ■

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**Note:** The final part of this series will appear in the December *Ministry*.

\* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible New International Version.

# Relating to Muslims

## An Adventist view

Jerald Whitehouse



*Jerald Whitehouse, DrPH, is director of the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations, Department of Global Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.*

Recent studies of Adventist Muslim Relations have led to the development of a new paradigm or approach in the effort to reach Muslim people. This becomes clear when we contrast two ways Seventh-day Adventists have used as they have related to the Muslim world: the traditional “evangelistic” method and what I would describe as “faith development in context.”

The traditional approach to evangelism may present the truth “as it is in Jesus.” It may proclaim doctrines in proper perspective. But it carries some baggage that gets in the way of effectively relating to Muslims.

First, traditional approaches begin with the objective of adding to our group. Too much effort is placed on the agenda of numbers rather than showing true love and understanding of the needs of people. Second, while not intentionally stating it, the Muslim is considered as a “heathen” target. While “a target” is necessary and appropriate in project planning, the word carries connotations that are contrary to the spirit of ministry and faith development and are particularly offensive if one is considered a number to reach rather than a person to whom we relate and whom we love. Just as offensive is the word “heathen,” which is a hang-over from the time of the Crusades. This is a word that should not be used at all in our proclamation. Our philosophy of mission would do well to

eliminate such descriptives as “target,” “penetrate,” “evangelistic thrust,” “spearhead sermons,” and “crusade.” These carry significantly negative connotations. For example, the term “crusade” to describe our initiatives among Muslims as we preach the good news is as incongruous as titling a sermon, “the good news of ethnic cleansing.”

Third, traditional evangelism tries to teach truth cognitively from biblical sources. The Muslim is bound to vigorously defend Islam, and any theological argument on our part can only lead to debate and argument. It is impossible to reach the heart of the Muslim when such a climate persists. Also, teaching only from the Bible carries no weight with Muslims because they regard the Qur’an as the only religious authority and the Bible a corrupted source. Therefore, the traditional “key text” approach from Scripture only invites further debate, rather than conviction of truth.

In addition to these concerns, traditional evangelism carries with it other historic and contemporary baggage: the horrors of the Crusades, colonial domination, and at present, the offensiveness of loose western lifestyles. Muslims cannot justify these as belonging to any true religious tradition. Further, our western way of thinking simply doesn’t fit directly into the Muslim setting, particularly when it comes to spiritual matters.

Of course, we still can approach Muslims with confidence because we have clear theological arguments to prove our truth. These arguments are logical, cognitive, and are clear to us and are convincing to people like us with similar background. However, abstract statements of truth or lines of reasoning do not necessarily remain convincing or even understandable in markedly different cultures and religious systems. Also, the battle is never won by the might of theological logic or by the power of human influence. Inevitably, the crucial reality is the work of the Holy Spirit through us as we seek to meet the heart needs of the Muslim.

Even if we succeed in “reaching” Muslims despite the obstacles noted, there is yet another major stumbling block. The traditional evangelistic method asks Muslims to reject their past. It asks them to jettison their heritage, culture, name, and identity and become members of a western-oriented religious system. This is the ultimate insult and shame to the Muslim family, to the community of



Islam. Therefore, our attempted integration of the Muslim "convert" into the SDA subculture has, with few exceptions, not gone well. After all, why should all aspects of the Muslim heritage and culture be rejected?

Insistence on carrying these unwanted items of baggage as part of our traditional evangelistic method, has resulted in the few adherents we have won. Often these faithful people are put out of the family and community and in some cases even face the risk of death. Those who survive depend on the church for sustenance. All this often precipitates an end to any further witness to that family or community.

No wonder traditional evangelism is often ineffective.

However, there is another way.

### Faith development in context

Notice the sequence in this method of evangelism.

10. The Muslim believer seeking assurance of salvation.

9. Local dress, way of thinking, speaking.

8. Tea fellowship, use local social networks.

7. Praying and caring, through a godly person (the Muslim perception of the who or what is godly).

6. Growth in spiritual trust for protection from evil forces, power for living and forgiveness.

5. Move from Qur'an to Torah, Zaboor, Injil.

4. Atonement explained in contextual shame-honor terms.

3. Local prayer house fellowship, "faith of Abraham," "Hanif."

2. Self-reliance—remain in context, continue to witness.

1. Salvation by faith—last day remnant in context.

In this scenario the first focus is not on us, but on the Muslim as a believer in the Creator God, as one who is seeking salvation; the heart cry of the sincere Muslim. Rather than using western references, we encourage local identity and relationship build-

ing approaches. Use local social networks as in point 3. Emphasize building solid relationships around personal interests and spiritual heart concerns. Faith development begins where people are and moves them to an understanding and experience based on a personal relationship with God and the Bible (Torah, Zaboor, Injil). In this we include local, culturally, and Qur'anically familiar ways of explaining biblical truths.

In order for the resultant fellowship group to remain as a continuing witness, we use an identity that is acceptable to the local situation, and that embodies the idea of being God's remnant. This may vary from "SDAs following the faith of Abraham" to "Followers of the faith of Abraham," to "Hanif."

This way of relating to Muslims follows the advice of Paul: "Everyone should remain as he was when he accepted God's call" (1 Cor. 7:20, TEV). Paul's argument is that the gospel, while transforming one's life

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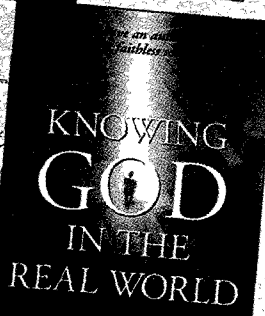
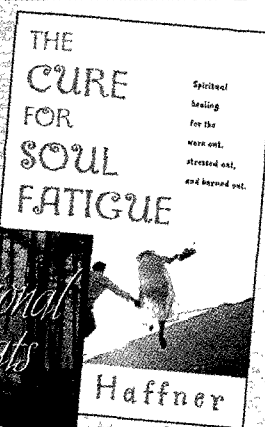
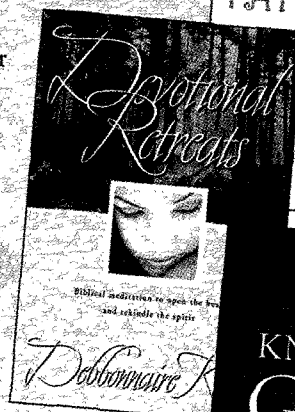
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by infusing a new spirit and purpose, does not disturb cultural identities or relations which are not contradictory to biblical principle. This way of relating to spiritual matters focuses on faith development within the context of the person's life, the theology of the last days, Adventism as God's remnant, and the proclamation of present truth.

This second contextual method of witness presents an alternative way of looking at Adventist-Muslim relations that has far-reaching implications. It also raises many questions. Thus we need to look at the primary assumptions underlying this method.

### **God's footprints in every culture**

God's footprints are to be found in every culture. God is the God who is ever revealing Himself rather than hiding Himself or selectively favoring some people over others. Jesus is the "light that comes into the world and shines on *all* mankind" (John 1:9, TEV, emphasis supplied).

We do not bring God to a people. As the Lord of mission He has already prepared the way for a greater understanding of His truth among that people. Therefore, one of the first activities of mission to any people group is to search for evidence of God's activity in the history and current life of a people. This can be found in legends, dreams, supernatural events, people honored as spokespersons for the Divine, linkages to biblical stories, people, or events.

One needs also to look for redemptive analogies that God has preserved in the culture—unique practices, rituals, and concepts, which serve as windows into the spiritual heart of the people. These will serve as culturally central concepts that can be used to communicate biblical truth. One may also find "holy writings," which contain some moral and spiritual truth, and these can be used as beginning points to encourage faith development.

Don Richardson illustrates this principle from a tradition found among the Sawi people in New Guinea. Once he observed a peace-making ceremony between two warring groups which involved the transferring of a "peace child," an infant from the arms of its mother to a receiving family in the other tribe. Richardson suddenly realized that here was a powerful redemptive analogy through which he could explain Jesus to the people as the child who had been offered to bring peace.<sup>1</sup>

Similar cultural or religious "windows" exist in Islam. Although use of "holy writings" from other cultures has been a controversial issue in Adventism, experience has substantiated that the use of the Qur'an initially, and subsequently to the effective use of the Bible has resulted in a significant increase in effectiveness in both establishing relationships and continuing with faith development. This technique is illustrated by the following examples:

\* Documenting the "line of truth" in the "Eastern people" in Scripture; descendants of the other sons of Abraham, whom God used at various times to either teach the descendants of Isaac or to serve some spiritual function in relation to the line of Isaac, the line of the Messiah. These people were the forefathers of the Arab-Muslim peoples.<sup>2</sup>

\* The concept of the Hanif. An Islamic concept of God's most faithful followers, honors worshipers of the one true God. This honor is applied to Abraham in the Qur'an<sup>3</sup> and to certain respected Christians and Muslims in Islamic histories and reference works.<sup>4</sup>

\* Use of the "shame-honor" cultural paradigm to explain God's activity in restoring honor in His universal family after the shame of the rebellion led by the evil one. This makes much more sense to the Muslim in understanding God's way of solving the sin problem from the great controversy perspective than other traditional "Christian" explanations.

### **A new look at Islam**

Considering these windows leads us to take a new look at Islam. To simply accept the traditional Christian understanding that Islam is the "religion of the sword" and that it is essentially satanic is shoddy scholarship and needless to say it is not helpful in establishing genuinely helpful relationships. In this arena, secular sources are often more helpful in getting a more accurate picture. For example, Islam was consistently more tolerant in victory than were the Christian forces.<sup>5</sup> Despite injustices on both sides, overall, there were more Christians martyred at the hands of the Byzantine and Roman church than at the hands of Islam.<sup>6</sup> It is no wonder that in much of the Middle East, the local Christian inhabitants welcomed Islamic rule.

Further, the Qur'an itself is essentially friendly towards "people of the book" (Christians and Jews) who follow carefully the revelation sent to them.<sup>7</sup> The primary message of Muhammad is (1) worship the one Creator God and Him alone, no others; and (2) there is a day of accountability, a day of judgment.<sup>8</sup> He did not establish Islam as an anti-Christian religion but sought to restore these key truths and to improve the civil order. Muslims were instructed to discern a difference between Christians, respecting those who actually believe in Allah, in the last day, and in the prophets.<sup>9</sup>

### **Recapturing the Advent movement motif**

This approach to Adventist-Muslim relations requires that we take another look at our mission and ourselves. The Advent movement arose as a fulfillment of prophecy, and has seen itself to be, in the best sense, a movement following the Book. Sabbatarian Adventists look back through history and identify with those groups who have held the truths of Scripture including the seventh-day Sabbath. Initially their vision did not include "regions beyond." But God's provi-

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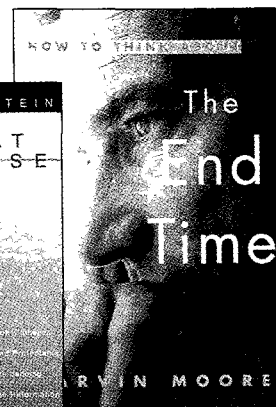
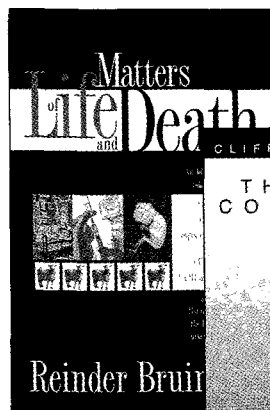
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dence widened that vision and they began to see themselves as a worldwide movement with a specific role in the end of time to call a people to be ready for the coming of Jesus and the day of judgment.

The unique truths of the Sabbath, sanctuary, great controversy, the special emphasis of the three angels of Revelation 14, and of the calling-out message of Revelation 18, defined them and their mission. It is only right that Seventh-day Adventists should focus our ongoing search for truth around these truths so that we can continue to have a consistent identity and basic unity in an increasingly diverse movement. A religious movement, if it stays in one cultural context, develops traditions around which it produces a sense of identity and unity. However, as it moves out into new cultures under the mandate of its very mission, the unifying factors must shift away from too constricting a devotion to poli-

cies, organizational structures, and worship forms while it affirms its core beliefs and concepts of truth and the original mission through which it came into being.

The early church of the New Testament faced a choice: to remain only as a Jewish sect or to become a wider movement, encompassing a diversity of expression among all people. Seventh-day Adventists face a similar challenge today: To consider ourselves only a Protestant denomination truncates our worldwide Advent movement role. Such a view of ourselves may work well enough in a culture which is steeped in Christian influences, but it is not helpful as we face the major world religions, and particularly as we address the "10/40 window."

Historically, Islam had no quarrel with those "people of the Book" who held onto a true faith. In fact some Islamic scholars refer to such Christian people as Hanif; those who,

along with faithful Muslims were defenders of a pure monotheistic faith from Abraham.<sup>10</sup> Thus our appeal to faith development with Muslims today should recapture an emphasis on our role as God's last day people, calling persons from all persuasions to join with us around the central truths that make us unique, yet allowing for a breadth of diversity in how those truths are manifested in the specific cultural contexts of the world.

## God's remnant in context

How do we define God's remnant in such cultural contexts? The issue can be summarized as follows:

♦ God's truth meets people where they are.

♦ The new heart experience requires a soul transformation but not an abandoning of one's culture.

♦ Christ's disciples build on local traditional beliefs, practices, and values consistent with biblical truth.

*continued on page 29*

# Evolving Adventist theological education (part 2)

## In-field supervision, mentoring, and InMinistry

Walt Williams

**Editorial note:** *This second of a two part series outlines well-developed plans for radically improving in-field ministerial training in the North American Division.*

**I**n recent years the Seventh-day Adventist Church has felt the need for a more professionalized ministry. Consequently education and training in the Church has become more comprehensive and formal. However, as such trends emerge, it is possible for pastoral preparation for ministry to become more compartmentalized and disconnected.

There is a natural distance between the ministry that is taught in the classroom and that which is experienced in the field. This distance may become alarmingly large when almost all the formal pastoral training in the Church is left to college and seminary faculties. Even the best education frequently leaves college and seminary graduates unprepared for the challenges they face.

Often when young pastors arrive in their first ministry assignment, they find themselves isolated with poor personal and professional support. Such a scenario leaves a new minister discouraged, disillusioned and ready to quit pastoral ministry within a few years of entry.

### **Supervision, background, and theory**

Since the 1930s, Seventh-day Adventists

have sought to smooth the transition from classroom academia to church practicum by the use of intern supervision. Yet ministerial supervision came into being rather begrudgingly with field training tending to be intermittent and spotty. This disconnectedness was similar to supervision's reputation in industrial America, where production tended to overshadow more humane and holistic concerns. Therefore the history of Adventist ministerial supervision of interns, has been gathering suspicious looks from members, leaders, researchers, and authors.

Much of the framework for supervision in industry was built on what Douglas McGregor called Theory X. This theory holds that the average human being avoids responsibility, has little ambition and possesses an inherent dislike of work, avoiding it if possible. For this reason, Theory X contends, most people must be controlled, directed and threatened in order to get optimum performance from them.<sup>1</sup> Much of the traditional supervision of employees in business, and sometimes that of young pastors in early ministry (including that of the Seventh-day Adventist Church), has operated under the assumptions of Theory X.

In contrast to this theory, McGregor proposed a different set of assumptions, which he called Theory Y. These assumptions assert that the expenditure of physical and mental effort in work is as natural as play or rest, and thus external control and the threat of punishment are not the only means for bringing about effort in behalf of the objectives of an organization. Theory Y maintains that an employee will exercise self-direction and self-control in the service of the objectives to which he or she is actually committed. This self-direction is itself a strong motivational factor for an employee, causing the average person not only to accept but to seek responsibility, while at the same time encouraging them to exercise their full potential.

A supervisory experience based on Theory Y, rather than Theory X, will produce a more healthy, reliable employee or minister.

### **Challenges to supervision**

Supervision—secular or ecclesiastical—has frequently placed supervisors and supervisees in contradictory roles. On one hand, management may have insisted that production and performance be the priority. On the other



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hand supervisees have expected supervisors to understand their problems and treat them with fairness and thoughtfulness in representing them to leadership.

The inevitable tension arising from supervisors attempting to represent both interests illustrates the less than ideal results that have unfortunately developed in many Adventist supervisory relationships in the past.

The heart of ministerial development occurs when it is understood that pastors develop a ministerial identity by more than simply acquiring certain skills and producing expected quotas. Pastoral ministry is "more than doing the ministerial thing; it is identifying oneself in a particular way as minister. 'Minister' becomes part of who we are, not [merely] of what we do."<sup>2</sup>

The Theory X-oriented supervision of the past is flawed when applied to twenty-first-century ministerial train-

ing in the Adventist Church. Highly educated, trained pastors still abandon their calling. Increasingly, religious employers realize that they have equipped professional ministers with powerful skills without developing these men or women of God as a complete persons. Thus, after the Seventh-day Adventist Master of Divinity Steering Committee reviewed theological education, they sought a better implementation of Theory Y. They realized that a critical part of such a Theory Y application to ministerial field training is found in the mentoring model.

### Mentoring

Originating from ancient Greek mythology,<sup>3</sup> mentoring has experienced a pinnacle of expansion and research attention during the last decade.<sup>4</sup> Not only business and education, but also various departments of the U.S. Government are now

prominent advocates of mentoring.<sup>5</sup> It is estimated that one-third of America's major corporations have mentoring programs in which executives guide and counsel younger employees who show promise.<sup>6</sup>

Mentoring's recent ascension in popularity in nearly every employment milieu is simply astounding. In just twenty years mentoring has gone from virtual obscurity to becoming the prevailing method of training young entrants in business, education, and industry.

During the same twenty years a change has occurred in the pastoral environment as well as in the expectations churches have of their clergy. Far-reaching, ongoing change in the pastoral workplace demands some form of ongoing ministry learning. Not only do opinion leaders endorse the need for constant training but influential scholars are advocating such a workplace transformation.



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The "learning organization," now only an emerging pattern, may well become the standard practice in the twenty-first century.<sup>7</sup> Instead of functioning primarily as an employer, focused merely on ministry production, churches of the future will increasingly provide their pastors with components for creating such a permanent learning environment.

### **"InMinistry"**

After extensively reviewing the Adventist ministerial training provided by the SDA Theological Seminary at Andrews University, the North American Division (NAD) Master of Divinity Steering Committee elected to employ formal mentoring as an integral part of a new M.Div. degree option, being called—InMinistry.

The basic object of the new option is to provide focus and intentionality to pastoral training throughout the educational experience of seminary students. Critical to this focus is the inclusion of a formal mentoring component. A qualified and trained mentor will be able to engage ministerial students in intentional reflection on their ministerial activity and hold them accountable to their own growth objectives in ministry.

Both the existing on-campus program and the new InMinistry option share common ground, including a basic curriculum which leads to a 96-hour Master of Divinity degree. Conferences and students considering the InMinistry option should note the following prerequisites and qualifications.

The student should (1) have employment with an NAD entity having completed a B.A. degree in religion or theology; and (2) be completely committed to the new option of M.Div. education.

Conferences should (1) be willing to participate completely in mentor training in connection with the NAD; (2) be discrete in selecting, placing and matching mentors and interns; (3) be willing to adjust job expectations in the case of InMinistry

participants; and (4) be willing to provide some financial support in conjunction with NAD policy and in the light of mentor and intern increased travel.

The InMinistry program consists of: (1) a two-week orientation at Andrews University, including one extension class; (2) a year or two of actual field experience (prior to on-campus study) during which 12 semester hours of credit are completed each year; (3) participation in a mentorship program developed by the local conference; (4) fifteen months of on-campus study at Andrews; and (5) completion of remaining years (totaling 4 years) of InMinistry, field-based education.

InMinistry is also different from the normal on-campus M.Div. program in that it concentrates on competency-based contextualized learning that the student demonstrates by portfolios rather than examinations. Such competency-based contextualized learning, though new to Adventist theological education, targets specific pastoral competencies that are demonstrated in actual ministry practice. Students are allowed some level of latitude in choosing from three levels of proficiency. These are called the emerging, developed, and distinguished proficiency levels.

### **Internet course work**

Another area of InMinistry distinction will be in Internet course work. Annually, InMinistry will include one class chosen for its adaptability to Internet learning. Instead of similarity to the solo environment of correspondence classwork, InMinistry Internet course work will utilize the collaborative cohort atmosphere developed during Orientation. This will keep students working together while scattered across North America. "Chat times" will dialogue over ministry issues, sponsor online interaction with the professors, and present online exams to round out Internet learning.

### **A ministry development theme**

A vital ingredient of InMinistry M.Div. delivery is the annual accentuation of a ministry development theme.

As an example, the first year's theme is "The Pastor as Person." During this year, while each class emphasizes that theme, the contextualized course work (six semester hours) will intentionally concentrate on the pastor as person. Here the intern/seminarian's focus will be on him/herself as a spiritual person in relationship with others. Following years will concentrate on; "The Pastor as Leader," "The Pastor as Evangelist," and "The Pastor as Specialist."

InMinistry is different from traditional programs and may not fit you or your organization. But, should you, your college, or your conference desire more information regarding particulars for enrolling in the InMinistry option, contact the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary.<sup>8</sup> ■

1 Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1960).

2 Ibid., 18.

3 Mentor, in Homer's *Odyssey*, circa 800 B.C., had been the faithful companion of Odysseus, King of Ithaca. Before setting off for the Trojan War, Odysseus instructed Mentor to stay in Ithaca and take full charge of the royal household with particular duty to raise the king's young son, Telemachus, to be a fit person to ascend the throne.

4 Georgia T. Chao, Pat M. Walz, and Philip D. Gardner, "Formal and Informal Mentorships: A Comparison on Mentoring Functions and Contrast with Non-Mentored Counterparts," *Personnel Psychology* 45, no. 3 (Autumn 1992): 619-36. Marie A. Wensch, ed. "New Directions for Teaching and Learning," found in *Mentoring Revisited: Making an Impact on Individuals and Institutions*, from no. 57, Spring 1994, 1, says, "In the past decade few strategies for personal and professional advancement have received as much public attention as mentoring."

5 Stephen F. Hamilton and Mary Agnes Hamilton, "Mentoring Programs: Promise and Paradox," *Phi Delta Kappan* 73, no. 7 (March 1992): 546-50.

6 Jess Gibson, *Coaching Champions: The Privilege of Mentoring* (Green Forest, Ar.: New Leaf Press, 1994), 13. Others have called mentoring an American management innovation.

7 Ibid., 2, 3.

8 To reach the seminary, call 616-471-3536. To contact Walt Williams, the InMinistry director, call 865-397-5116 or email [wwilliams@gccsda.com](mailto:wwilliams@gccsda.com). Or visit our Web site: <http://www.andrews.edu/SEM/InMinistry/>.

# Strategic use of tithe

## How does the Seventh-day Adventist Church fare?

Robert K. McIver

*Note: This is the final part of a two-part study covering the returning patterns, distribution, and use of tithe in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.*

Few decisions the Adventist Church has made have had a larger impact on the growth of the Church than the decision to gather tithe in a central location. In some ways, when the decision was made, it was surprising. After all, almost all the Seventh-day Adventist pioneers were ex-Millerites, and had experienced bitter partings from their previous denominations. This left them with a profound suspicion of church organizations of any kind, and the early movement was advanced entirely by volunteers largely working on their own initiative. Yet by the mid-1850s it was clear that there were very practical reasons for church organization, not the least of which was the ownership of communal property and the support of full-time ministers.

The period 1858 to 1863 saw the adoption of "systematic benevolence" to support full-time ministers, the organization of conferences or groups of churches, and the organization of the General Conference. Under the influence of the plan of systematic benevolence, as tithing became more widespread, it was decided to have the Conference be the organizational entity to which tithe should be returned.

Centralizing tithe in this way, enabled it to

be used strategically. Church administrators used the tithe to support evangelists in establishing new churches. What followed was a period of remarkable growth. The statistical report given on May 14, 1867, at the fifth annual session of the General Conference<sup>1</sup> showed that in that year there were 4,320 members worshipping in 160 churches (an average of 27 members each). They supported 28 ministers and 10 licentiates. \$18,661.39 had been pledged in systematic benevolence. By 1900, the Church had grown to 66,547 members, worshiped in 1,892 churches and 437 companies, and supported 1500 ministers, licentiates, and missionaries by giving \$510,258.97 in tithe.<sup>2</sup>

One stands in awe of the vision of the early pioneers. In 1868, when Church membership stood at 4,475, J. N. Loughborough and D. T. Bourdeau were sent to establish the church in California. In 1874 when the membership of the Church was less than 8,022, J. N. Andrews was sent as the first official missionary to Europe.<sup>3</sup> In 1885 (total membership: 20,547), four missionary families arrived in Australia.

These nineteenth-century Adventists had a worldwide vision. They understood that their purpose was to take the urgent news of the soon return of Jesus to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. They used their resources in the way best suited to achieve this extraordinary goal. What began in the early 1860s as a small denomination in Michigan,<sup>4</sup> was by 1900, spread around the globe with established churches and companies in Europe, Australia, Africa, and South America. This growth and geographical expansion would not have been possible but for a centralized tithing system.

### Disadvantages of centralizing tithe

The advantages of centralizing tithe are still evident today. It enables the Church to distribute its local ministers most effectively amongst the local churches, and to support missionaries and evangelists taking its message to those parts of the globe which have yet to hear it. Furthermore, it enables the Church to establish and run important institutions such as hospitals, schools, and universities. On the other hand, there are several negative consequences of the decision to centralize tithe.

The first consequence is that local churches are more vulnerable to being left relatively



Robert K. McIver, Ph.D., is senior lecturer in Biblical studies at Avondale College, New South Wales, Australia.

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underfunded. Seventh-day Adventists are generous givers. In the United States, for example, they rank third behind Mormons and the Assemblies of God in per capita giving.<sup>5</sup> Yet for most Adventists, the bulk of their giving is tithe, and this tithe is taken out of the local church for centralized distribution. A good part of it, of course, returns to the local church in the form of the wages used to support the local minister. In the case of smaller

churches these wages are significantly more than the tithe contributed. Yet for most churches, of the total amount of money contributed, only a percentage stays in the church, and the local church is relatively underfunded. In a number of countries there is a growing dissatisfaction with this state of affairs. This may be one of the reasons why many members are choosing to direct their tithe into local offerings or other designated

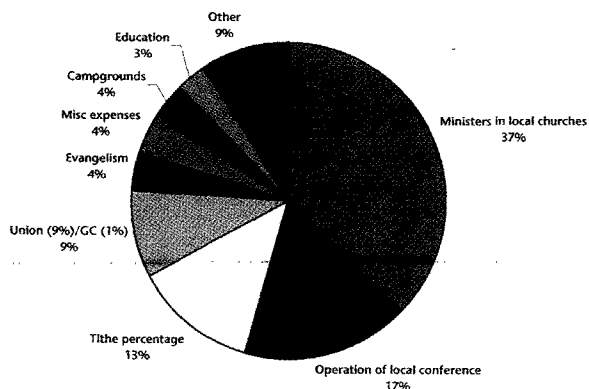
projects. The most visible consequence of this trend to keep more money in the local congregations has been that, compared to tithe, funds given for overseas missions have been steadily decreasing for the last 50 years.<sup>6</sup> Another negative consequence of centralizing tithe is that the process of decision making tends to meet the needs of administration and institutions before it meets the needs of local churches. After all, it is administrators and administrative committees that are making the final distribution. These committees are made up of those who know well the administrative and financial needs of the conferences, unions, divisions, and General Conference, and the institutions associated with each level. These needs are continuous and urgent. It is always easier to get local pastors to care for more than one church than to shut down an institution.

Two case studies follow that illustrate how tithe is currently used in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, with a view to asking the somewhat urgent question, "Is tithe still being used strategically in the Seventh-day Adventist Church?"

### Case study 1: Australia

Presently, there are nine conferences in Australia. No two are exactly

Figure 1 **NNSW Conference Expenditure in 2000**



alike in how they use their income, most of which is tithe. North New South Wales (NNSW) Conference might be used as an example of one of the larger relatively prosperous conferences. Figure 1 represents how this conference distributed its financial resources in the year 2000.<sup>7</sup>

The largest percentage of tithe went to support ministers in local churches (37 percent). The next largest amount was used in the local conference for administration and for the departmental staff of the Conference (20 percent). The 23 percent that went to the Union and Division was used for a variety of purposes: expatriate wages in the island Missions scattered across the South Pacific, support for the General Conference,<sup>8</sup> Avondale College and Pacific Adventist University, support of weaker conferences through tithe equalization, the Bible School attached to the Media Center, evangelism, ministerial interns, work among the Australian Aboriginals and Torres Straight Islanders, overseas study programs and subsidies for literature evangelists, etc.

Looking over this distribution of money gives a small glimpse into the complex organization that is the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is encouraging to note that the funds are used for worthwhile purposes. Yet are these purposes the most effective way for the Church to use its financial resources to accomplish its mission? It has been estimated, for example, that for every 1.3 ministers and evangelists working in the field, there is one per-

son in a support role. In a mature church such as Australia the most effective way yet found of increasing membership is either in church planting, or in strong leadership in a local church which is located in an area in which it might grow. Many of those chosen for corporate church support roles are the most talented pastors, and it is often not an optimal use of total resources to take them out of front-line ministry in the local churches. Australia has an urgent need to reduce church "overheads."

This has not been lost on Church administration, and several attempts have been made through the 1990s to reduce the number of ministers in support roles by combining several conferences. This makes considerable sense in the light of increased ease of travel and communication and the fact that several smaller conferences are only surviving because of the subsidies they receive from tithe equalization or from trusts.

The concept of "overhead" is a business concept. Nothing shows more clearly that the Church is not a business than the consistent rejection of these merger plans by the individual conferences. The one success that has been possible to administration in Australia is the elimination of one Union Conference, which was voted through in the year 2000.

## Case study 2: Papua New Guinea Union Mission

There are few better examples of the strategic use of tithe than Papua New Guinea. The first real attempt by

the Seventh-day Adventist Church to establish a work in Papua New Guinea was made in 1908. Yet it was 1924 before any real conversions were discernible.<sup>9</sup> In other words, the Papua New Guinea Mission was supported over a long period without many apparent results. Today, though, the remarkable fruits of this long-term strategic use of tithe funds can be seen. In 2000 the Papua New Guinea Mission reported 207,480 members, worshipping in 749 churches and 1,982 companies.

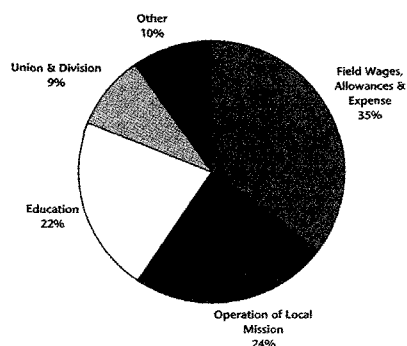
This growth has been accomplished with considerable human and financial cost and has not been without its problems, particularly in the area of the nurture of the new members. Nevertheless, in Papua New Guinea the Adventist style of administration and way of distributing financial resources is seen at its most effective. Such circumstances need strong missions to support the local ministers, who are often working with several dramatically growing churches, in an environment of rapid and often traumatic social change.

## Opportunities and challenges

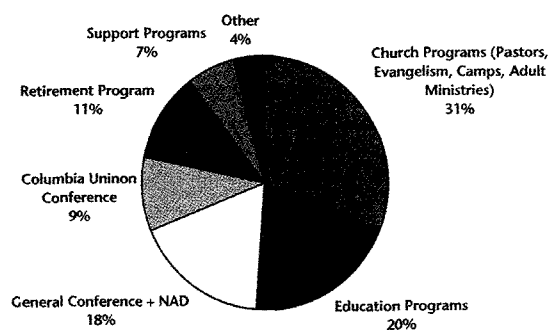
The two graphs in Figure 2 represent the use of funds in the Madang Manus Mission in Papua New Guinea, and the Potomac Conference in North America.<sup>10</sup>

These might be compared to the graph of the use of funds by the NNSW Conference given earlier in this article. Each conference and mission of the world Church is different, and shows a different use of funds.

Figure 2  
**Madang Manus Mission Expenditure in 1998**



**Potomac Conference Budget 2001**



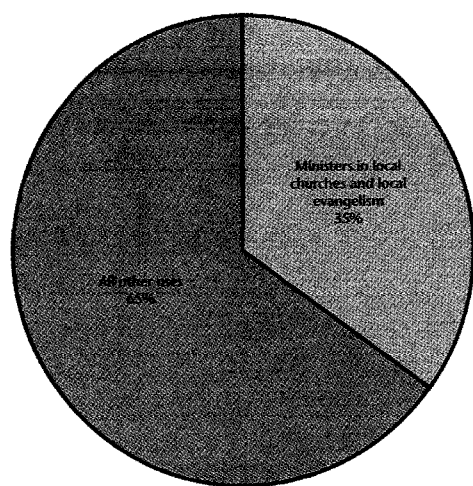
Figures 1 and 2 are from three widely different parts of the world Church, but they have one crucial feature in common: between 30 percent and 40 percent of Church funds only are used for supporting pastors and evangelists in the local churches.

### What do these case studies mean?

The two case studies given above show that this observation may well have a different significance in different parts of the world Church. Some parts of the world field may need stronger conferences and missions than they have at present. Yet, for many of the world divisions, particularly in the more prosperous regions,

Figure 3

#### Ministers in Local Churches/ All Other Uses



there is a real need to shift a number of budgets from support roles to front-line roles.

This matter is all the more urgent in the light of the financial pressure that the Church is experiencing as tithe receipts fall behind wages in many parts of the world Church. This was documented in Part I of this two-part study (see *Ministry*, August 2001). The net effect of this fall will be that the Church will not be able to employ as many people in the future as it does now. Here is the danger: budgets will be cut from field workers

(e.g., pastors) and not from support workers (e.g., conference, union, division, and General Conference staffs).

A very strong contrast exists between the uses made of the Church's financial resources between the time of its first founding and today. Many of the changes have been for the good. In places where all of the resources of the Church are used for outreach, there is a serious need for the nurture of existing members, and it has been necessary to direct significant resources to fulfill this need. Even when it comes to evangelistic outreach, however, often the local pastor is expected to accomplish major feats of evangelistic success without the kinds of resources that would make such expectations realistic and successful.

Further, the Church has developed a number of very significant institutions which contribute, even if only indirectly, to its overall mission. Although this is questionable, it adds up to the fact that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is an impressive force for good in the world.

When one contemplates the fact that today most of the resources of the Church are used for the maintenance of existing institutions and local churches, it is clear that there is need for a serious re-evaluation of how the Church uses its resources. This will be a politically difficult process, but one that is essential to the future viability of the Church as it seeks to accomplish its mission.

The challenge facing the Church is to use its impressive financial and human resources in the most effective way to further its mission to take the good news of Jesus' soon return to every human being on the planet. ■

- 4 According to the 1867 statistical report, 1,308 (or 30 percent of the total of 4,320) members belonged to the Michigan Conference.
- 5 Dean Hoge, Patrick McNamara and Charles Zech, *Plain Talk about Churches and Money* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute, 1997), 20.
- 6 See, for example, E. L. Becker, "Trends in Adventist Giving," *Adventist Review*, August 28, 1980, 4-7. He notes that while tithe has remained relatively stable since 1950, by 1980 there had been a dramatic shift from giving for missions to giving for local church needs.
- 7 All conferences report their budgets at their triennial sessions. For many years NNSW has followed the practice of publishing its annual budget in the *NNSW Conference News*, often in the form of a pie chart. For example, an abbreviated 2001 budget was reported to the conference in the *NNSW Conference News*, No. 198, May 2001, 9. Actual expenditure may vary from the announced budget. For example, while the conference usually uses about 37 percent of its income for supporting pastors in local churches, resignations and calls out of the conference meant that the number of pastors was lower than that anticipated in the budget for 2000.
- 8 In the past, 1 percent of the tithe from the South Pacific Division was forwarded to the General Conference. This is changing to 2 percent.
- 9 The first baptism occurred in 1914 and the next in 1920. Eleven were baptized in 1924. The start of the Seventh-day Adventist mission in Papua New Guinea is put in the context of the wider mission to the South Pacific in Robert Dixon, "The Pacific Islands," in Noel Clapham, ed., *Seventh-day Adventists in the South Pacific 1885-1985* (Warburton, Victoria: Signs, [1985]), 199-232; esp. 211-212, 227-232.
- 10 The figures for the Madang Manus Mission are for 1998. The chart represents expenditure from that year. The conference sends 10 percent of tithe to the Union and 10 percent to the Division, but gets back 12 percent of this as appropriations. The mission ran a deficit in 1998. The chart for Potomac Conference is derived from information provided to delegates on the use of tithe in 2001 at the second quadrennial session held May 21, 2001.

## Personal integrity

continued from page 4

this profound concept within the context of the spirit of God, one of His servants has made this observation: "Let it be written upon the conscience as with a pen of iron upon the rock, that real success, whether for this life or for the life to come, can be secured only by faithful adherence to the eternal principles of right."<sup>6</sup>

No matter our particular leadership responsibility, let us challenge ourselves to hold to the spirit of the standard of Samuel's integrity. Let our personal commitment to a life of integrity in Christ be evident to those around us every day. ■

- 1 *Review and Herald*, Vol. 29, No. 24, 1867, 283.
- 2 The 1900 statistics may be found in the 1901 *General Conference Bulletin* of the 34th session, Vol. 4, No. 1, 1st Quarter, April 2, 1901, 161-164.
- 3 The figures for 1874 are not available. The statistics given are those of 1875.

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1889), 297.
- 2 James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1993), 14.
- 3 Taylor G. Bunch, "Integrity," in *The Ministry*, July 1959, 23.
- 4 R. R. Bietz, "A Life of Integrity," in *The Ministry*, June 1968, 48.
- 5 Commentary on Samuel, *The Leadership Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1998), 319.
- 6 Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7 (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1902), 164.

# Relating to Muslims

continued from page 21

Such an approach utilizes cultural redemptive analogies to make the gospel understandable.

♦ The expression of faith is most meaningful when it utilizes local forms and ways of demonstrating faith.<sup>11</sup> A group formed on such a basis is sustainable and will self-propagate as they take ownership of their faith and share it with others.

God's remnant in context will require new thinking. It will also require a reformulation of fundamental beliefs in a manner that does not compromise biblical truth, but in fact ensures that the understanding of truth in the host culture is more clearly and accurately understood as the principles of truth are framed in culturally meaningful ways.

## Practical implications

What does all this mean in practical terms? In the past ten years, we have gone from only one or two initiatives focused on Muslim relations, to thirty or more such ministries. All of them utilize to a greater or lesser degree the principles we have discussed in this article. Recently fourteen of these ministries presented detailed reports of their strategies. A few general impressions can be mentioned here:

\* There was no "crusade" mentality, but a focused intention to identify truth as it was manifested within Islam. This became a base upon which to build. This approach signals an increasingly widespread change of attitude within the church at large.

\* The methods that have been used may be diverse, but all have utilized the basic principles outlined in this article.

\* There is evidence of God's Spirit empowering people to develop so many ministries in such a variety of geographic areas and to begin developing materials for use in their ministries.

\* The increasing number of testi-

monies coming from Muslim-background believers emphasize that their search for truth began in Islam, was informed by the Qur'an and then led to the scriptures and biblical beliefs.

From the collective experience that we have been able to share over the past few years, a suggested framework for faith development for the Muslim has been developed. It serves as a general guide for those wondering how to proceed in spiritual ministry with Muslims and is available on request from the Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations. There is also available a set of study guides.<sup>12</sup> They include both Qur'an and Bible references.

## The resulting fellowship of faith

When these new approaches are followed, a fellowship of faith develops. Such a fellowship ideally will continue to develop in context in a way that: (1) provides effective spiritual nurture to believers; (2) allows them to remain within their cultural context and be sustainable, given a relatively undisturbed economic, social, and religious tolerance in the setting; and (3) they will effectively continue to witness to their people. A few will choose to join the existing Adventist Church if they are in a position which allows that.

Most of those who become favorable to Christianity and Adventism will fall into one of three possible configurations: (1) "Muslim Adventist," which provides for Muslim forms of worship and uses some redemptive analogies but maintains a basic Adventist identity in the context of being a follower of the faith of Abraham; (2) "Adventist Muslim," which maintains a basic Muslim cultural and spiritual (vs. "religious") identity such as "Hanif," while espousing Adventist beliefs—truly God's people in context; (3) Remain a secret believer.

Do we see these options as the end point, particularly in reference to options two and three? When will

they unite fully with the worldwide Adventist fellowship? Will they need to remain secret? If we focus on faith development in context, the fellowship of faith will happen in a way appropriate to the context. The form it takes will be shaped by the local context and by the best way to spiritually nurture the members and allow them to be an effective witness back in their communities. Their unity with the Adventist worldwide movement will always be based on shared faith and mission. This is a work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer, and the Holy Spirit will dictate the timing and nature of further unity, perhaps to the point of open unity.

At this time, in many situations it is simply not possible or advisable to be open. The believer must remain secret. I personally feel that as the final movements of God's work take place and as God's Spirit works to prepare His people for His coming, His people within the Muslim world will find ways of stepping out less secretly and more boldly for God. ■

- 1 Don Richardson, *Peace Child* (Glendale, Calif.: G/L Publications, 1974).
- 2 Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations, *Heritage of Islam: the two lines from Abraham* (Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations, unpublished material).
- 3 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Beltsville, Md.: Amana Publications, 1989), Surah 4:125; 30:30,31; 2:135.
- 4 See Ismail al Faruqi, Ismail R, and Lois Lamy al Faruqi, *The Cultural Atlas of Islam* (New York: Macmillan, 1986), 61, 62; A. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Pakistan: Oxford University Press, 1955), 98-107.
- 5 Sigve Tonstad, *Defining Moments in Muslim Christian Relations, a Summary* (Oslo: unpublished paper, available from GCAMR, 2000).
- 6 "Eastern Christianity, Independent churches of, the Coptic church, developments after the Arab conquest," *Encyclopedia Britannica* (London: William Benton Publisher, 1980), 6:140.
- 7 See Fouad Elias Accad, *Building Bridges, Christianity and Islam* (Colorado Springs, Colo.: Navpress, 1997), 12-24, 34-46; Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *Ibid*, Surah 3:55; 3:113-115; 5:66; 10:94; 29:46.
- 8 George Braswell, Jr., *Islam, Its Prophet, Peoples, Politics, and Power* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Pub., 1996), 19, 53.
- 9 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Surah 9:29.
- 10 Faruqi & Faruqi, loc cit.
- 11 Mission Issues Committee, *Guidelines on Contextualization* (Silver Spring, Md.: unpublished guidelines available from the Global Mission Office, 1998).
- 12 Abdul Nur, *Barakat Allah* (Blessings of Allah), *Study Guides in the Holy Books* (Loma Linda, Calif.: Global Center for Adventist Muslim Relations, 1997). 5 booklets including a teacher's guide.



## Rumors and half truths

JAMES A. CRESS



A falsehood can run around the world before truth can even get its shoes on. Some people perpetuate prevarication just for the joy of saying something sensational. Others strategically plan to deceive. Untruth need not even be new as long as it is scandalous and misleads gullible people who will mindlessly repeat the error.

Rumors, half-truths, and calculated lies are often used by those who wish to attack the church. Such tactics, however, are not new. Satan, the father of lies, has used deception from the very beginning of his challenge to God's kingdom. Notice the sequence of events immediately following Jesus' resurrection as recorded in Matthew 28:11-15 (NLT).

*Some of the men who had been guarding the tomb went to the leading priests and told them what had happened.*

These guards knew the facts. They were clearly aware of what had happened and of the factual truth of Jesus' resurrection. There was no mistaking their first testimony—they accurately told the priests what had happened.

*A meeting of all the religious leaders was called, and they decided to bribe the soldiers.*

The reported facts, however, did not fit the story which the priests wanted to disseminate. Realizing that their prestige, reputation, and economic prosperity were at stake, they proposed a cover up and purposed to bribe the soldiers. So they concocted a tale they wanted the soldiers to repeat.

*They told the soldiers, "You must say, 'Jesus' disciples came during the night while we were sleeping, and they stole his body.'"*

How preposterous. The soldiers were being asked to declare themselves military incompetents. Falling asleep on guard duty has always been a very serious offense and these men were being

asked to incriminate themselves by admitting to such misconduct. The very expressions on their faces must have spoken the soldiers' unwillingness to cooperate.

*"If the governor hears about it, we'll stand up for you and everything will be all right."*

But assurances were given. The bribe was increased. The priests had already shown their power over the weak governor, Pilate. Now they led the military to believe that any trouble could be smoothed over with the politicians and that they would protect those who did their bidding.

*So the guards accepted the bribe and said what they were told to say. Their story spread widely among the Jews, and they still tell it today.*

This perfidy's most tragic result is that years later when writing this Gospel account, Matthew could report that the story was still being repeated as if it were fact despite many eyewitness accounts of Jesus' resurrection.

### Old lies resurfacing

In recent months some old lies have resurfaced. One of the most ludicrous is that Adventist leaders conspired to commission a special medallion which was presented to the pope in an attempt to unify Protestant Adventists and Roman Catholics into one organization. Despite

the fact that such a meeting never occurred, variations of this story have been repeated for over twenty years.

Like many falsehoods, this story has a grain of factual information. In this case, a medallion—actually a commemorative coin—does exist. In fact, I keep one in the drawer where I store my socks. Back in the early 1970s a coin minting company marketed a series of extra-large coins which featured various denominations—Baptist, Catholic, Presbyterian, Adventist, Lutheran, Methodist, etc.

These commemorative coins, produced for collectors and sold as a commercial venture, were designed from information solicited from various denominations. The "Adventist coin" depicts the fourth commandment highlighted on the tables of the Decalogue and, on the reverse, it features the return of Jesus (i.e., Seventh-day Adventists).

Naturally the mint hoped to attract customers to buy the entire series, and a parishioner purchased one and presented it to me as a gift. On some subsequent occasion, the attendees at an interfaith meeting each received one of these commemorative coins as a souvenir of the occasion and as an accurate depiction of major Adventist teachings. Whether one of these coins ended up in the possession of the pope is irrelevant since it was not commissioned for him as has been purported. But if he did receive one, I hope he has studied it carefully, for great truth is presented in the clarity of its artwork.

The question more germane to the issue is why we are so fascinated by rumors and eager to believe the worst about any situation.

Perhaps we need to spend less time with gossip and more time with God's Word. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth and it will set you free!" ■

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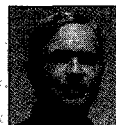
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