

# MINISTRY

*International Journal for Pastors*

*July 2002*

# Living the City

NEITHER  
ASSIMILATION  
NOR SEPARATION

IN  
EVERY  
ISSUE

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# MINISTRY

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AS MUCH AS WE WOULD LIKE TO PRETEND IT IS,  
HEALING AND RECONCILIATION (OR RECOVERY)  
IS NOT A ONE-TIME-ONLY PROCESS  
THAT IS COMPLETED AT CONVERSION.

## Recovery and pastoral ministry

I want to applaud Marvin Moore for his willingness to share his journey into the emotional recovery that the Twelve-Step program brings, and for his willingness to discuss an issue that Adventist Christians tend to shy away from. As Dr. Moore stated, recovery is not merely about alcoholism, narcotics abuse, or physical violence. Recovery is what all Christians need to experience, in one degree or another. We speak about grace as Christians, but most of the time we don't want to admit we need it. When one takes the time to read the Twelve Steps, they will see the gospel of grace enveloped within those steps.

At the Seventh-day Adventist World General Conference session, held in Toronto, Canada, in June 2000, we were privileged to have Dr. Archibald Hart as a speaker. I will always remember his admonition to pastors: "If you are going to have healthy churches, you must be healthy yourselves." As pastors, we must come to the place where we acknowledge our powerlessness over the character defects in our lives and seek through Christ to be as healthy as possible so we can minister to our members with compassion, humility, and healing.

—Bonita J. Shields, Brookeville, Maryland.

I appreciated Marvin Moore's article "Recovery and Pastoral Ministry" (January 2002) because I have experienced what he was explaining. I can imagine, however, that those readers who have not faced the brokenness that leads to serious relationship issues at home or work, might not have liked the

suggestion that they attend [Twelve-Step meetings] on an ongoing basis.

There are, however, great benefits for a Christian leader in acknowledging the particular struggles that are a part of our sinfulness, and taking intentional steps toward healing and reconciliation. Even if it is not through "recovery" and the Twelve Steps, it must be open, real, and intentional, daily requesting the Lord to (1) search us (Ps. 139:23, 24), letting us know what He finds; (2) help us not to be stubborn (Ps. 32:9); and (3) cleanse us with His hyssop (Ps. 51:7), along with whatever public or private acknowledgment of our faults that may require. Only then, when we are on a daily path of healing and reconciliation, will we be able to be ministers of healing and reconciliation within our families and our ministries.

As much as we would like to pretend it is, healing and reconciliation (or recovery) is not a one-time-only process that is completed at conversion (or graduation from the seminary).

—Kathleen Beagles, Columbia, Maryland.

**Marvin Moore responds:** I've read many criticisms of the Twelve Steps and the recovery movement, including, most recently, some response to my *Ministry* article "Recovery and Pastoral Ministry" (see April 2002 *Ministry*, "Letters"). Some criticisms are valid, of course. However, all too often those doing the criticizing are standing on the outside looking in. And unfortunately, they are attacking their own misunderstandings of the recovery process rather than what recovery is truly about.

For example, Doug Carlson (April

"Letters") said, "The premise that 'we all have codependent attitudes and behaviors' smacks of the psychological extremism of the 1980s and 1990s that transferred the guilt of sin from an individual to the actions of others."

No one who is involved in a genuine Twelve-Step program thinks that way. The recovery movement recognizes the very biblical concept that "the sins of the fathers are visited on the children to the third and fourth generation." By this they mean that parental abuse produces major character defects in children, which they pass on to their children when they become parents. This is so well documented that I say it without fear of being challenged.

But anyone who is seriously into "recovery" and the Twelve-Step process will absolutely refuse to merely push the blame for their sins and character defects off onto their ancestors. The advice I've heard over and over and over and over is that Yes, your parents and grandparents' parents created some of the problems you're struggling with, but you are responsible for fixing them through your own diligent effort, in your relationship with God, and with the wisdom and support of people who are qualified to help you. *And don't go around whining and blaming.*

There will always be people who disagree with the recovery movement and the Twelve Steps. They have a perfect right to their opinion, and I respect that. We are all struggling humans, and I'm sure they have found solutions to life's problems that work for them. I surely hope so.

*continued on page 28*

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# Pastors and sex

Let's be honest: the behavior behind the latest clergy sex abuse scandals are not limited to just one denomination. Clerical sexual improprieties, moderate or extreme contaminate every Christian community.

Clergy immorality in Christian settings ranges from the inappropriate to the scandalous and on to the criminal. Recently, church leaders called to be at the spiritual, moral and ethical forefront have behaved in the most contradictory, destructive way.

Perhaps above all, it's tragic and unnerving that some of us within the ministerial community—acting in our capacity as servants of God—have exploited the trust placed in us. And yes, we clergy have felt hurt and chagrined by it all, especially at a time when so much in Christian faith and witness is already disdained and when, in many cultures, the credibility of the pastor simply does not have the capital to sustain this kind of internally generated assault.

But I must not appear to rant about the sins of my brothers, because along with the thoughts and feelings I've expressed so far, other thoughts also need to aired.

The most striking and, at the same time, most hidden of these thoughts is perhaps those that have to do with our now heightened sense of personal sexual weakness and imperfection. Why are sexual impulses so notoriously difficult to handle? What is so powerful in "sexual temptation" that makes us willing to risk so much for such fleeting gratification? And, perhaps most importantly, where do we find actual relief from the failures we experience in this area?

In future issues of *Ministry* we will work on these questions. Also, don't miss Dr. Archibald Hart's fine article in this issue of *Ministry* dealing with some of the aspects of this topic (see pages 9-

WILL EVA



11). Meanwhile, here are some insights found in just a couple of pages in the writings of C. S. Lewis:

1. "Before we can be cured we must want to be cured. Those who really wish for help will get it . . . It is easy to think that we want something when we do not really want it."<sup>1</sup>

The question is, What do we actually want more than anything else?

2. Lewis talks also of "our warped natures, and the devils who tempt us and all the contemporary propaganda for lust [that] combine to make us feel that the desires we are resisting are so 'natural' and so reasonable, that it is almost perverse and abnormal to resist them."<sup>2</sup>

Our own personal sexual "wrestling" seems to make these culturally conditioned perceptions all the more believable, but authentic Christian faith takes hold and claims the powerful work of God, which goes deep inside the human soul providing us the power to overcome, yes, even sexual temptations and sin. Do we still actually believe this to be true?

3. "Many people are deterred from seriously attempting Christian chastity because they think (before trying) that it is impossible . . . You must ask for God's help. Even when you have done so, it may seem to you for a long time that no help, or less help than you

need, is being given. Never mind. After each failure, ask forgiveness, pick yourself up, and try again. Very often what God first helps us towards is not the virtue itself but just this power of always trying again."<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, the New Testament shows us that the most obstinate demons sometimes become most desperately active at the moment they are confronted by the presence and power of the living Christ and the will to cast them out.

We are, I think, just beginning to realize the far-reaching negative effects that contemporary sexual, and other more generalized attitudes have had on our formerly sensibly established faith and value systems. We are also, I think, gaining a deeper awareness of how we have in so many ways significantly abandoned the positive power found in the promises, in the pardon, and in the presence of God in our life and in the fabulous potency of the gospel. It's the half-hearted, halting and above all the partial inner knowledge and application of this gospel that sometimes make our efforts seem so fruitless.

With this in mind, here are two magnificent promises:

"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires" (2 Peter 1:3, 4, NIV). "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Rev. 12:11, NIV). ■

1 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: McMillan Pub. Co., 1943), 78.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 79.



# Loving the city

Samir Selmanovic



Samir Selmanovic, Ph.D., is senior pastor of the Church of the Advent Hope in Manhattan, New York.

Since beginning to pastor a downtown church five years ago, I have kept asking, "If our Lord 'so loved the world' (John 3:16), why can't we?" I have also begun to wonder if our fear of secular culture is not so much an outgrowth of our piety as of our lack of love and care for the non-Christian people who live in our cities.

The ministry of the early church was noted for its extravagant love for people. It extended the love of Jesus through humility, inclusion, generosity, and martyrdom. But the picture today is different, and that can be traced to three historic developments.

*First*, back in the fourth century, during the reign of Constantine, a church that had once been a humble, yet potent underground movement was transformed into one of the greatest power brokerages of all time. During this period, the church developed its own culture of pride, exclusion, greed, and persecution. It turned from a strong countercultural influence into the world's definer and enforcer of culture. The serving church became the conquering church.

*Second* came the Enlightenment when the church was toppled from its position of power. It remained in society with a mandate to adapt to, support, and bless the newly enthroned values of reason and progress. It turned from being the broker of the culture to the keeper of culture. The conquering church

was demoted to the role of custodian.

*Third*, postmodernity came in the second half of the twentieth century and completed the process of marginalizing the church, relegating it to just one of many voices in the cacophony of ideas. In this process the church turned from being the custodian of culture to being just one part of the culture. The culture custodial role dissolved into a survivalistic participation in the culture.

With these three leaps the Christian church has become a wandering exile in a hostile, secular, pluralistic, polytheistic, urban world.

How should we love such a world?<sup>1</sup> Or is that still the mandate?<sup>2</sup>

## The blueprint: Neither assimilation nor separation

God's people have been in exile before—in Babylon, for example. Babylon was a hostile, pluralistic, polytheistic culture, divorced from biblical education, arts, and society. The Babylonian emperor had a clear goal for Israel: *assimilation*.

This was attractive to Israelites since it promised them economic prosperity and social acceptance. The false prophet Haniah (Jer. 28) had another goal for them: separation. Staying outside of the city, remaining unpolluted, and praying for God's judgment against the pagan city seemed to be in line with their heritage.

The same two options are still open. A number of denominations have led their congregations into assimilation. Assimilation occurs when the church's theology is desupernaturalized, thus losing its innate identity and authority. It becomes indistinguishable from the host culture, assuming similar value systems and customs.

It can also happen by creating a subculture within the dominant culture. Subcultures are usually set apart by external social markers such as food, dress, social-cultural habits and religious jargon. But such subcultures do not exhibit a truly different value system. In other words, they are different only in ways that are, in and of themselves, not ultimately defining.

Other Christian groups opt to separate themselves by creating Christian ghettos where they can remain separate in their schools, hospitals, and other institutions. The lure of this arrangement is the sense of safety and superiority that one gets from living in an

"unpolluted culture," and feeling vindicated by denigrating the deterioration of that which is outside: the secular culture.

Such groups or persons can live as Christians only if they exercise a cultural control in their groups. While disengaged from secular society, they may launch efforts to increase their numbers, praying that God will com-

Exile was used by God to strip His people of their cultural power in order to give them something far more precious. And the message reveals this blessing by denouncing both assimilation and separation.

God refuses to have His people think of their mission in either of these ways. He urges them not to assimilate and to keep their identity

ians' themselves! And I want you to do it while keeping your identity and values as genuinely spiritual Israelites. I want you to make the host culture better any way you can while living distinctively as My people. That's where My heart is. Don't be assimilated; that is, don't love the city and forget Me. But at the same time, don't separate from the city; that is, don't love Me and hate the city." In short, live in the city as the incarnate Christ lived on this earth among the people.

## **S**TAYING OUTSIDE OF THE CITY, REMAINING UNPOLLUTED, AND PRAYING FOR GOD'S JUDGMENT AGAINST THE PAGAN CITY SEEMED TO BE IN LINE WITH THEIR STATE AND HERITAGE.

pel people to join their separate, parallel culture.

While Israel, in the dramatic days of Jeremiah, was torn between assimilation and separation, God revealed His will for His people in exile. "This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 'Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace [shalom] and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper'" (Jer. 29:4-7, NIV).

This counsel must have been absolutely astounding to Israel. It was counterintuitive to what they (or we) thought God would say. The message clearly conveyed the idea that the Exile was part of God's plan to care for His people ("I have carried you" into exile).

But all God's acts come from His love. Jeremiah described the Exile as a blessing disguised as a curse! The

strong. On the other hand God tells them not to separate from Babylon either, but to settle down in the city. By taking away their power, He planned to lead them into an experience by which they would learn to truly love well, and bless the people of the world. This was the reason for Israel's creation and existence in the first place (Gen. 12:2, 3). God's commitment to this runs deep. Praying for Shalom the city (Jer. 29:7) meant asking God for its complete well-being: spiritual, material, emotional, and social.

Moving from the experience of Israel to our times, consider how God may address us here and now: "I have taken away your cultural power and want you to live as exiles. I don't want you to live in separate, culturally controlled enclaves from which you bemoan the state of the culture. And I don't want you to go into secular cities just to build your churches there. I want you to go into the belly of the city, see how broken it is, and get involved. I want you to work there, pray there, and sacrifice to make it a great place, a safe place, a prosperous place, a better place. I want you to build, and love, and serve 'Babylon' better than the 'Babylon-

### **Christians and the city**

Judging by his life and outlook, the prophet Daniel knew about Jeremiah's controversial message to the Israelite exiles. While holding a leading position in the Babylonian government, he mastered the liberal arts of the day as practiced in Babylon. He swam skillfully in the pagan culture, and acted positively while in it. He was integrated, flexible, and proactive, but all the while he uncompromisingly retained his monotheism and was unswervingly loyal to the God of his fathers. He lived a life in which he was neither separate from Babylonian culture nor assimilated into it.

Looking only at the well-known instance of the lions' den (Dan. 6), it is clear that while Daniel obviously respected and honored Babylonian culture and had attained to high office, he still maintained the life of his distinctive Israelite faith, to the point of actually being willing to die for it.

If Daniel did that, why can't we? It's because we choose either assimilation or separation or see-saw between the two. How do you raise successful Christian actors, lawyers, businesspeople, and musicians when you live in Babylon? What roles should the actors choose? What cases should the lawyers take? What does Christian integrity mean in the business world? What music should these musicians play? How does Creation, the Cross, and the Resurrection impact a Christian's daily life in the secular

city? And what of the imminent return of Jesus?

The answers don't come easily. The Bible contains no book of rules on how to do it. We have to struggle our way through, helping each other discover how to be urban disciples. If we don't struggle with these questions, in one way or another, we've become assimilated. If we're in despair about the lack of rules and shrink back from entering these vocations, we're separating.

We've forgotten that separation from the world is as fatal as assimilation. It's good to live in places where Christians are out of power, where our friends are not Christians. The city is the place where your faith is seriously challenged. You are forced to confront the fact that many of your Christian answers are shallow. The city humbles you. And thus forces you to grow and refine your faith.

After living in the city, you realize there are many smart, virtuous, non-Christian people there. You meet wonderful Buddhists, Muslims, and atheists. If your faith is disturbed by this, and you start to question the reasons why you're a Christian, it means you never really understood the essence of the gospel in the first place. If you can't find joy in the goodness of nonbelievers, it shows you've always thought you were saved through your own goodness.

The city does need us to come in and mend its brokenness, but we also need the city. The city challenges our understanding of the gospel and deepens our Christian experience.

### Equipped to challenge the culture

Metropolitan cultures are like Borg spaceships from the science fiction series *Star Trek*. Borg is a civilization traveling through the universe in large black cubes assimilating other civilizations. They project the message: "Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated." Borg offers only two options: run away from Borg or become Borg.

But Christians must neither run away from such a culture, nor melt into it. We must be the people that enter Borg and set its people free. We were meant to be a counterculture—to be "communities of resistance" as Dietrich Bonhoeffer once noted.

The apostle Peter reminded first-century Christians that when they received grace, they became "aliens and strangers" in the world (1 Peter 2:11, NIV). The world will be both attracted to and repelled by Christians at the same time. Jesus was that kind of enigma. He was very attractive, but even His family had a hard time believing Him. They didn't quite know how to relate to Him and treated Him with disrespect.

To the degree that we're like Jesus, we'll be an enigma too. People should scratch their heads about us. We can't be anything else but an enigma if we believe stuff like "serving is better than being served" and "dying is better than killing," or if we pray for the well-being of our enemies, or if we fight the battle of life with the weapons of forgiveness, humility, and sacrifice, then in the average urban culture, we *are* indeed strange. So let's get on with it!

And here is the heart of the bias against Christians in the secular city. Secular people see something they don't understand. When you say, "I know God!" you think of His grace extended to you. But to them, it sounds extremely arrogant. "You know God? Why would God come to you? You must be thinking you have a better moral record, or a better character than the rest of us."

What is for us a statement of the greatest humility, sounds like a statement of arrogance. The world has a hard time accepting grace and thus feels that all that Christian stuff is some kind of scam. And it is! It is a heavenly scandal, the scandal of grace. God schemed for our salvation so we could have life abundant.

Christianity is absent from the life webs of the cities. After decades of work, one of the greatest urban missi-

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ologists, Ray Bakke, reported on what he has learned: "I thought the barriers to mission were the big, bad cities. But 90 percent of the barriers to reaching cities are not in the city at all." The barriers are in our theology, structures, and attitudes.<sup>3</sup> So here are three ways our church can equip urban congregations to live the biblical blueprint and get back into the downtowns of our nations.

## Living the blueprint: three ways

1. *Radicalize our theology.* Over the decades our theology has been growing like a tax code. It is detailed, massive, and convoluted. If we are going to challenge the culture we live in, we must forge a theology that is not simply an argument with a left or a right. We must abandon our conservationist posture and see the "third way" of genuine Christian, Adventist spiritual-ity emerge.

This theology must be germinated in the urban mission field itself, and offer a guidance to real life in the secular world. It must redirect its focus

and energies away from both preserving the cultural markers of Christianity and Adventism on one hand, and on the other, from the burden to adjust our thinking to the thought and values of surrounding culture. Formulating such theology will inspire us not to be less radical, but to be far more radical than what we see today in our conservative or liberal churches.

2. *Recognize the beauty of the city.* Can we learn to see the grace and beauty of God on the city streets? We must be converted from our cynicism about the city and follow Jeremiah's counsel and bless the city.

When the New Jerusalem descends, we will all be urbanites. Our hearts may dance when we see a mountain, waterfall, or tree. But our hearts must learn also to dance when we see an overcrowded subway car, because it is full of people—the sight that moves God's heart to dance. Cities have much evil, suffering, and injustice, but God is attracted to sinners, because where sin abounds grace can abound even more (Rom. 5:20).

3. *Restructure the institution.* Local urban churches desperately need resources to enter and challenge the culture, affect the neighborhoods, and build the congregations as places of respite in the cities. In order to deserve a hearing among secular people, we must embody Christian servanthood in our denominational structures themselves.

Generally speaking, educated urban dwellers simply refuse to join or support a church structure that takes away the resources from local churches and neighborhoods. Except for some notable exceptions<sup>4</sup> this issue is still a taboo.

Organizational change is the most difficult act for any long-established organization. But it is not impossible if the church listens to its edges, and has strong visionary leaders who can navigate the church through the "coming crisis of the tree that realizes it is dying from its roots."<sup>5</sup>

If we put mission and ministry ahead of maintenance and self-preservation, we will surely incur some short-term losses. But God would greatly reward our sacrifice. With our own eyes we would witness the most dynamic and effective evangelistic action one can imagine: "authentic local communities of believers empowered to worship and serve in the presence of the world." Our churches would finally become those "[cities] on a hill" (Matt. 5:14, NIV) that Jesus wanted the world to see. ■

## BICYCLES FOR AFRICAN PASTORS

When Jim Cress explained the Ministerial Association's project to provide bicycles for African pastors with dozens of churches but inadequate transportation, the students and faculty of Pacific Union College's Theology Department joined together to provide funding for a dozen bicycles for this project.



1 For many ideas in this article I am indebted to Daniel Augsburg, Ryan Bell, George Knight, and Jon Paulien (from SDA Theological Seminary), Tim Keller in New York, and writings of Leslie Newbigin.

2 George Knight, "Another Look at City Mission," *Adventist Review*, December 2001.

3 Ray Bakke, "Loving an Urbanized World," *Regeneration Web site*.

4 See George Knight, *The Fat Lady and the Kingdom* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1995); Robert K. McIver, "Strategic Use of Tithe," *Ministry*, October 2001; and Greg Taylor, "Stop Strangling the Goose," *Adventist Today*, May/June 2001. For an extensive discussion from the historical perspective, see: George Knight, *Organizing to Beat the Devil* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2001).

5 Statement made by John McVay, Dean of the SDA Theological Seminary, at the Church of the Advent Hope, February 2002.



# The Christian man's battle with his sexuality

ARCHIBALD D. HART



## A distorted gift

Sex is a joyous gift from God. But of all of the gifts of creation it is probably the most perplexing. There is more potential for sin in the realm of sexuality than in almost any other area of our lives. Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians is as needed today as it was in New Testament times. This Thessalonian text gives indication of the power sex had in Paul's day and that it has indeed always had.

In more than 30 years of clinical practice, working with many Christian men and pastors, I have not encountered a topic more bewildering to them. Despite the sexual revolution, or perhaps because of it, men seem to be more confused about their sexuality than ever before. They struggle to understand its power, how to control it, and above all how to "sanctify" it according to the admonition of Paul.

Why is it that so many struggle to balance their strong hormonally-driven urges with their desire to be good, devout, and faithful partners and pastors? One reason is that the tensions we feel in our sexual drive seem to fit "the lusts of the flesh" Paul talks about. Another is that we live in an era of sexually supercharged stimuli.

That men engage in such a struggle is indisputable, as every counselor of men knows. Good men have difficulty differentiating between ordinary,

healthy sexuality and what is abnormal. Many men fear that just because they have a strong sex drive they are in some way deviant. "I must be something of a freak" a pretty normal pastor told me once. Some even fear that they may be "perverted" or addicted to some sexual aberration.

The bottom line is that *all* men struggle to keep their heads above the turbulent waves of their testosterone. The sex drive is a powerful force in healthy men and clearly some have a harder battle with the fight than others. Men with strong sex drives can easily develop a pervasive sense of shame and self-rejection, even though a strong drive, in and of itself, is *not* abnormal.

That we must learn to control our sexual urges and channel them into appropriate outlets is the challenge we all face. But how do we accomplish this and what is the real problem? It can't be sexuality in and of itself, since this is part of God's creation.

I believe it is that the beautiful gift God has given us has become distorted, and men in particular, have lost their way! What was intended by God to be a joyous, transcendent experience that unites a man and a woman, has become a bewildering, bothersome, and, for most, baffling challenge.

## Major sources of distortion

Several obvious sources for the distortions can be identified. I discuss these in detail in my book *The Sexual Man*, but here we will take up only three major sources.

1. The "veil of silence." "Men are known by the silence they keep" someone has said. This sums up a major distorting influence in male sexuality. The shrouding of male sexuality is not difficult to discern. While average men think about sex a lot, it's too personal and intimate to discuss openly. They

It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality" (1 Thess. 4:3, NIV).

The greatest challenge facing the Christian church in this century lies in the area of sexuality. And it is men, especially "good" Christian men, who face the greatest challenge. Almost every letter I have received from men since publishing my book *The Sexual Man*<sup>1</sup> eight years ago confirms this assertion, which for me is a conviction.

## The war within

In the hearts of all good men there is a battle raging, a battle as real as any literal war we might wage. It is a battle for integrity, decency, and purity. It is a struggle to overcome forces that seem uncontrollable—in human terms. And many good men are losing this battle, including pastors.

While recent revelations of sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests has rocked the confidence and trust of Catholic parishioners in North America, we have known for many years that the Protestant house isn't exactly in order.

I first started researching the incidence of pastoral sexual failures 18 years ago, as did several others. We went public with these findings and soon noticed a gradual decline of reported violations. Raising the consciousness of pastors by reminding them of how vulnerable they were in the sexual arena, coupled with clearer ethical statements from denominational leaders, did much to stem the tide. Now I see a gradual but steady increase in pastoral sexual failures.

My focus here is not on the sexual indiscretions of pastors. Rather, I want to examine the broader issue of male sexuality that, to some extent, underlies pastoral failures. "Pastoral indiscretions" are, in my opinion, the outworking of a distorted male sexuality—a reality all men must face up to.

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won't even admit how often they think about it!

Some men may joke about sex, but they hardly ever talk about it seriously. The result? Most boys grow up struggling to distinguish between what is "normal" and "healthy" from what is "sick, sinful and dysfunctional." They have no sense of where "normal" lies because they don't know what others are thinking or feeling deep down.

This "veil of silence" can have devastating consequences. For one thing boys don't get healthy or even accurate information about sex from their fathers as they grow up. What they learn from friends is full of distortions and embellished with the shame we so easily associate with sex if you grow up in a Christian home.

There is, however, a much more serious penalty for men's silence: It fails to help fathers *model* a healthy sexuality. Most sons do not see their fathers as sexual beings and this can, for example, keep them from learning how to behave in a healthy way toward women. Without adequate models, boys develop a sexuality that is misguided, and in many cases immoral or even dangerous.

2. *Pornography and cybersex.* There is no greater threat to a healthy, let alone sanctified, male sexuality than pornography. It is devastating our Christian sons and creating an epidemic of addiction to sexually stimulating images.

Through pornography and the related means of communication that it exploits, many men have developed or exacerbated what can only be described as "an obsessive/compulsive sexuality." That is, men are engrossed in the physical aspects of human sexuality and they have come to obsessively act these out compulsively.

The average male growing up in today's world is so bombarded by sexual stimulation (mainly through the sex-crazed media who have discovered that everything sexual sells better than anything else), that few men escape its influence.

Pornography also feeds unrealistic expectations for gratification, changes

how men view women in that they are only seen as sexual objects, and fosters a nonrelational sexuality. This means that many men who have used pornography for a long time do not know how to relate to real women, and have great difficulty breaking the way they do it.

Pornography is only the tip of the iceberg. Cybersex is rapidly becoming the primary source of pornography. There are now literally thousands of Web sites that offer extremely explicit pornography that can be indulged in total privacy without anyone else knowing about it.

This has already become a significant temptation for Christian men—including pastors. Besides this, just around the corner there is an even more frightening prospect that will turn the current level of pornography into "virtual sex," where computers connected to high-speed Internet sites will be able to offer sex-hungry men a variety of sexual experiences in real time with "virtual" partners. This promises to be so addicting that it is bound to put substance abuse down on the list of social concerns.

3. *Puberty, adolescence, and the long "waiting period."* The detrimental influence of pornography is particularly severe when it captures young boys. In this context we need to be aware of one significant biological effect that is not going to go away. It is this: *The age of puberty is now lower than it has ever been, and it continues to drop.*

This reality always comes as a surprise whenever I lecture on the topic of male sexuality. For both boys and girls, the more developed a culture, the lower is the age of puberty. Many factors, including healthier living conditions and better nutrition are considered to be the cause.

Two hundred years ago puberty only arrived at 17 or 18, when a young person was almost certainly going to be married by age 20—a very short "waiting-for-sex" period. When I was a teenager, the average age of puberty was around 13. My grandchildren now are all going through puberty at about 11 years of age. Who knows when this

phenomenon will level out!

Think for a moment about the difference in maturity between 11 and 18. It is frightening to realize that 11-year-old boys, and for some it is younger than this, are physically mature enough to "make babies," but not mature enough to feed or raise them. But that is the reality of our world today. The ramifications are mind boggling.

At the other end, the age of adolescence has gone up. No longer can we think about it ending, say, when a boy leaves high school. Many social commentators are saying that today adolescence doesn't really end until age 28 or 30 because men are not financially able to support a family until they are done with graduate school and begin to work and live independently.

The point is this: The period of "waiting" between puberty (say 11) and when a young man can legitimately experience sex in marriage (say 28), is already too long and getting longer. And it is this long "waiting" period that is highly influential in providing the opportunity for sexual distortion to develop in young men.

The common, secular-based alternatives facing our young people today are either free sex without any commitment (risking pregnancy and a host of spiritual, psychological, cultural, and social distortions) or masturbation to pornography. Often it is a combination of both. Certainly, a heavy dependence on pornography by men in these early years must inevitably create serious addictive tendencies that will be difficult to break.

### Creating a healthier sexuality

Given what I have said so far it is not surprising that I cannot stress strongly enough how important it is that we address these issues in our churches. There is no other social structure that holds out hope!

Whatever else we do, we must give the highest priority to shaping a healthier sexuality in our young people, especially boys. We also need to provide opportunities to bring healing to our men. Judging them because they seem out of control won't help. It only breeds

more shame, remorse, and crippling silence. The battle can only be won by helping them to develop a healthier sexuality.

How does one create a healthy sexuality, given the problems mentioned? And what can men do to heal an already distorted sexuality?

The challenges are enormous and I don't want to give the impression that there are quick and easy solutions. However, here are some practical ways we can begin to rebuild the beautiful gift that God has given us through our sexuality:

## PASTORAL INDISCRETIONS" ARE . . . THE OUTWORKING OF A DISTORTED MALE SEXUALITY—A REALITY ALL MEN MUST FACE UP TO.

1. *We need to acknowledge our need for divine intervention.* While there is a lot of therapeutic help we can offer, only the power of God can get a man out of the mess of a distorted sexuality with any degree of permanency.

2. *We must help the church at large to break the veil of silence* that shrouds sexuality. Men's support groups have already begun to spring up around the country. The time has come for frank, open discussions in our churches about the dangers of such practices as sexual fantasies, the damage of the early exposure of boys to pornography, and the importance of building healthy, balanced lives. Believe it or not, when one's life is rich with meaning, sexual temptations lose their power even in men with serious distortion.

3. *Couples need help in addressing sexual problems as early as possible in their marriages.* Churches which maintain a

distance from these matters or which do not offer programs that can help couples in their struggles at reconciling the sexual differences between the spouses are only perpetuating the problem.

4. *Parents need help in educating their children, especially boys, into developing a healthy sexuality.* This has to be done without shaming them or creating severe guilt, which is quite inadvertently the most common form of control that Christian parents resort to. Parents themselves need training in how to educate their children!

Since it takes healthy parents to raise healthy children, parents, *especially fathers*, should be encouraged to confront their own sexual distortions and get help in undoing them.

### Conclusion

The problems facing men as they seek to develop a sanctified sexuality aren't going to go away. Instead, the challenges are greater. For our Christian subculture at least, the church is the system that must commit itself to restoring a sanctified sexuality.

The apostle Paul's advice to men has never been more needed than now: "That each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God" (1 Thess. 4:4, 5, NIV).

In one sense we need to learn how to control our bodies because the temptation to sin is greater in the realm of sex than in anything else. But we also need to learn control because we have lost our way on the sexual road.

God help us as a society if we don't find the way back to His road before it is too late! ■

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**Editor's note:** *Ministry* is proud to recommend Dr. Hart's book, *The Sexual Man* (Dallas: Word Books, 1994).

*Archibald Hart, Ph.D., is senior professor of psychology and dean emeritus, Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller Theological Seminary.*

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1 Archibald D. Hart, *The Sexual Man* (Dallas: Word Books, 1994).

# Patrons and patronage in the early Christian church

Greg Brothers



Greg Brothers, Ph.D.,  
pastors the Lincoln  
City Seventh-day  
Adventist Church in  
Lincoln City, Oregon.

**Y**our name is Cornelius, and you are a freed man. Once a slave, you purchased your freedom and went into business on your own. Like all freed persons, however, you still belong to the household of your old master whom we'll call Flavius. As such, you still owe Flavius honor. What's more, you promised your master that you would continue to serve him on a regular basis—in fact, this was a part of the price you'd paid for your freedom.

That's why every morning finds you at the door of Flavius's house. Several freed persons are there with you, as well as a dozen or so free ones, all lined up in order of rank. When Flavius appears, the salutation begins. One by one, each of you greet him, and then make your request—a loan, perhaps, or help with a lawsuit. One by one, Flavius decides each case in his role as “father of the household.” Then he gives each of you a basket with food and gifts that is worth a day's wage or so. If you are fortunate, you may then go home; if not, Flavius may require your services for the rest of the day. He may need to appear in the Senate, after all, or serve as host at a banquet, and no Roman citizen of any importance would dare appear in public without a large retinue of clients and slaves.

Today Flavius announces that he has abandoned the gods of Rome to worship the one, true God—a God whose name is Jesus.

Fair enough. What does this mean to you?

## Patrons and clients in Roman society

Roman society was sharply divided between those who ruled, and those who followed. Only 5 percent of the people belonged to one of the three governing classes: senatorial, equestrian, and decurion. Perhaps another 5 percent made up what Tacitus called the *populus integer*—the merchants, artisans, and small landowners who constituted “the respectable populace.” Most of the rest picked up whatever work they could from day to day; they were the “shabby people.”<sup>1</sup>

Roman law saw to it that each group remained in its own proper place. For example, no Roman could sue someone on a level above their own; neither could they marry outside their class. And if a senator and a commoner were both charged with exactly the same crime, each would be tried in a separate court—one that was class-appropriate.

Not surprisingly, many Romans sought protection from those who were better off. Anyone who planned a career in government, for instance, sought the protection of a wealthy and powerful patron. Poets and philosophers did the same—the better to avoid actually working for a living! And even if they were not related by blood, commoners might join the household of wealthy persons in the hope of being included in their will.<sup>2</sup>

As already described, many “clients” were freed persons who had once served their masters as slaves. Having earned their purchase price, many now worked for themselves as merchants or artisans—but they still belonged to the family of their old master. They still owed him compliance. They still owed him service as part of their liberty. As such, they were required to attend the morning greeting.

Though time consuming, this system of patronage offered real benefits to its clients. Loans, food, and legal advice were theirs for the asking—in fact, patrons were required to feed their clients in times of want. What's more, clients shared in the status of their patrons; the higher the rank of the patron, the higher the rank of his or her client.

For their part, patrons gathered clients to gain prestige. In a sense, charity was a form of conspicuous consumption. Wealthy Romans helped their clients for the same reason that they endowed libraries and supplied fuel to warm the public baths: They did so because they expected the public to recognize them as “benefactors.”

Even death did not end the relationship between patrons and their clients. The freed persons of Roman citizens had the right to be buried in the family tomb of their patron since they were a part of their family. They and their descendants were expected to maintain the regular commemorative rites at the tomb.<sup>3</sup>

### Patronage and Christianity

This system of patronage soon left its mark on the church. Given the presence of freed persons in the church, some of its members were undoubtedly clients. Then too, some members undoubtedly served as patrons. The "Erastus" mentioned in Romans 16:23, for instance, seems to have served as the city manager of Corinth; in fact, a pavement that bears the name Erastus, known as a benefactor, has been found in that city. As such, he probably had his own retinue of "clients."

Thus, no one in Roman society would have been surprised by Lydia's actions, as recorded in Acts 16:14, 15. "A certain woman named Lydia, a worshiper of God, was listening to us; she was from the city of Thyatira and a dealer in purple cloth. The Lord opened her heart to listen eagerly to what was said by Paul. When she and her household were baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come and stay.' And she prevailed upon us."

As "a seller of purple," Lydia had the wealth needed to be a patron—and the reference to her "household" suggests that she already had her circle of clients. Lydia's offer was more than just an act of hospitality; it was apparently a patron's admission of a valuable new member to her family.

Other believers also served as patrons. In Romans 16:2, Paul refers to the deacon Phoebe as a *prostatis*—a "patron" or "benefactor." Other patrons may have included Jason (Acts 16), Artistobulus (Rom. 16:10), Narcissus (verse 11), Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16), Onesiphorus (2 Tim. 4:19), Philemon (Phil. 2), and Gaius

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(3 John 1). These patrons provided valuable support to the church. As we've seen with Lydia, patrons often encouraged members of their households to be baptized. They were helpful in other ways; for example, when Paul was arrested in Thessalonica, Jason posted the bond that secured his release (Acts 17:9). Patrons probably furnished places for the church to meet. In fact for the first 200 years of the Christian church, believers met almost exclusively in "house churches"; probably most of which were the homes of Christian patrons.

Given these benefits, it's no surprise that some churches did everything they could to encourage the membership of potential benefactors. James speaks to this situation carried to an extreme: "My brothers and sisters, do you with your acts of favoritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ? For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, 'Have a seat here, please,' while to the one who is poor you say, 'Stand there,' or, 'Sit at my feet,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thought?" (James 2:1-4).

### Problems with patrons

As James indicated, patrons could be a mixed blessing to the church. Few patrons included the poor as clients; they wanted clients "of the better sort"—clients whose status would enhance their own. This attitude could lead church members into the kind of behavior that James condemned; snubbing the poor, after all, would rid the church of "undesirables" and improve its chances of gaining status and benefactors!

Patrons could be contentious. "Is it not the rich who oppress you?" James asked. "Is it not they who drag you into court?" (James 2:5-7).

This was not a theoretical concern. The church in Corinth was troubled

by just such lawsuits. It is clear that enmity had developed in the Corinthian church because of personal loyalty to teachers. This "strife and jealousy" arising out of the issue of Christian leadership expressed itself in litigation with one member taking another to court. If in 1 Corinthians 3:1-4 "strife" and "jealousy" were signs of an "immature person" and that they were "walking in a secular fashion," then the litigation of 1 Corinthians 6 was a manifestation of the same problem, but manifested this time in secular courts rather than the Christian congregation.

Finally, some patrons acted as though they were the "father" of the church family. Wealthy believers entertained their family at agape feasts, just as secular patrons might entertain their clients at a banquet.

"Unlike the opposing missionaries who have sought to replace him, Paul has never asked the Corinthians for money for *himself*, and this has offended upper-class members of the congregation who believed that the community should pay their teachers, who should not be self-supported artisans (the well-to-do despised artisans)."<sup>4</sup>

In all fairness, clients could create just as many problems as patrons. For instance, issues addressed in Romans and 1 Peter indicate that some Christians thought the "new birth" freed them from all obligations; they no longer owed their patrons compliance after freedom.

Then too, Paul's letters to the church in Thessalonica indicate that some believers took literally the idea that they belonged to "the household of God." As such, they expected to be fed by the church—or more likely by the patrons of the church—just as secular patrons would give the clients of their families their daily gifts.

### Principles for patrons

The New Testament does not deal exhaustively or exclusively with the duties of patrons to the church. There are no obvious lists of qualifications;

no explicit limitations placed on their authority. In fact, the role of a patron is almost absent in most discussions of the early church.

If one looks at the role of *authority* in the church, however, it seems clear that the New Testament hoped to limit the patron's role in the church. While the New Testament spoke of the church as a household, it made it clear that it was not led by an earthly father, but by God and His appointed leaders. Says Paul: "[You are] . . . members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God" (Eph. 2:19-21).

What's more, church leaders emphasized that every member had something to offer God's church, since every member had been "gifted" by the Holy Spirit. To be sure, the ability to grant financial assistance *could* be one of these gifts, but it remained only *one* of the gifts. "For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; the exhorter, in exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness" (Rom. 12:4-8, emphasis supplied).

In short, every member could be a "benefactor" in some way; every believer could be a "patron" in his or her church. In theory, at least, this meant that churches had no reason to favor the rich over the poor. Not only were members of the two groups equal in God's sight, but each could benefit the church in some way, regardless of their standing in Roman society.

Deprived of any special status in

the church, patrons should use their “gifts” in the same way as every other believer: they should glorify God, and not themselves. This meant the end of lawsuits as a means of attaining status or power; litigants were now to abide by the church’s decision (1 Cor. 6:1-11). Agape feasts were no longer to be treated as banquets; communicants were now to eat at home if they wanted something more than the church’s regular fare (11:33, 34). And patrons were not to look down on members who refused their support; in working with his own hands, after all, Paul had only meant to help the church in Corinth (2 Cor. 11:7-11; 3:13-17).

The case of Philemon and Onesimus is a good example of how the patron-client relationship should work out in practice. Though their relationship was one of master and slave, the bonds of status and power that connected them were similar to those of Roman patrons and their clients. As a slave-owner, Philemon had a right to the service of Onesimus. But as a Christian, Philemon should treat Onesimus as a “beloved brother” (Phil. 16). Likewise, as a runaway slave, Onesimus had every reason to fear Philemon and seek to avoid any contact with him. Yet as a Christian, Onesimus was to go back to Philemon, and continue his service.

Despite their disparate status in Roman society, Paul urged Philemon and Onesimus to love and serve each other as brothers in Christ. In the same way, *all* relationships in the church should be marked by this kind of mutual regard. “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:27, 28).

And to this might well have been added the fact that in Christ “there is no more patron or client.”

### The enduring role of patron

In theory, it would seem that

patrons and clients could worship as equals in the early church. Going back to our earlier example, we might expect the freed Cornelius to follow the example of his patron Flavius and become a Christian; as with Lydia, patrons would try to lead their families into the church. Cornelius would probably continue to serve Flavius as a client, and Flavius would continue to serve Cornelius as patron. As church members, however, Cornelius and Flavius would meet in the condition of equals. Flavius might own the building in which the church met, but Cornelius could become its bishop!

In reality, however, patrons did not give up power that easily—indeed, as time went on, their struggle for power became even more intense. Peter Brown comments: What “is clearly demonstrated [in the fourth-century church] is the tension caused by the way in which the demands of a new elite of well-to-do Christian laywomen and laymen were met by the determination of an equally new elite of bishops, who often came from the same class, that they and they alone should be the *patroni* of the publicly established Christian communities.”<sup>5</sup>

One way to defuse this struggle was to combine the role of patron and bishop. For instance, by the fourth century many believers assumed that civic benefactors would make good church leaders—even if these patrons had not been baptized! Ambrose of Milan, for example, was baptized *after* he had been made bishop; his fame as an orator and his office as imperial governor was enough to secure his election by popular acclaim.

As Robin Fox explains: “In civic life, electors paid great attention to the candidate’s willingness to promise gifts and perform civic services at their own expense. The laity could not be expected to abandon this familiar pattern whenever they met. The Church, too, needed money and service, and if Christians saw a rich candidate, they would anticipate charity for themselves and their community. By the later fourth century,

the preferment of upper-class candidates was attracting widespread polemic.”<sup>6</sup>

One of the most enduring legacies of the patronage system, however, was the cult of the saints. As a part of his family, clients were supposed to meet on a regular basis at the tomb of the “father” of the family for the appropriate commemorative rites. Christians quickly transferred this practice to the tombs of martyrs and other saints. As Brown notes, by the fourth century, the figure of the saint “. . . had taken on all the features of a late-Roman *patronus*. The saint was the good *patronus*: he was the *patronus* whose intercessions were successful, whose wealth was at the disposal of all, whose *potentia* was exercised without violence and to whom loyalty could be shown without restraint.”<sup>7</sup>

Today churches still struggle with the problems caused by inequities of wealth within the community of faith. In theory, every church should be governed by the rule of the gospel—that all are one in Christ.

This New Testament study is offered with the hope that it will be discerned to be strikingly parallel to and suggestive of principles and applications which may be helpful in pastoring the congregations and church structures of the contemporary scene. ■

\* All Scripture passages in this article are from the New Revised Standard Version.

- 1 James Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament: Exploring the Background of Christianity* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 180-188.
- 2 Paul Veyne, “The Household and Its Freed Slaves,” in *A History of Private Life: From Pagan Rome to Byzantium*, ed. Phillippe Aries and Georges Duby, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 90.
- 3 Jeffers, 45.
- 4 Craig Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, Ill.: 1993), 492.
- 5 Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), 32, 33.
- 6 Robin Fox, *Pagans and Christians* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), 509, 510.
- 7 Brown, 41.

# The use of imagination in preaching

An interview with Thomas H. Troeger



Thomas H. Troeger,<sup>1</sup> S.T.D., is professor of preaching and communications at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, Colorado.



Derek J. Morris, D.Min., is senior pastor of the Calimesa Seventh-day Adventist Church in Calimesa, California.

**Derek Morris:** In your book *Imagining a Sermon*, you state that “the imaginative process can be compared to the art of sailing a boat.”<sup>2</sup> How is that metaphor helpful in thinking about the use of imagination in preaching?

**Thomas Troeger:** When you sail a boat, there are two different realities. You don’t have control over one reality: the wind. You can’t make the wind blow. But, with the other reality, your eyes, you can survey the water and see where the wind is blowing. Then you can set your sails to take maximum advantage of the wind.

As a preacher, you can take stock of your situation and set your sails so they are prepared for the blowing of the wind, but it is not your prerogative to command the Spirit to blow. For me, the process of imagination is preparing for the wind of the Spirit to blow.

**DM:** You have spoken about three kinds of imagination: conventional, empathetic, and visionary. Could you define them?

**TT:** By *conventional imagination*, I mean the imagination that we have inherited from listening to other preachers and from being part of a particular church tradition. There are certain hymns, like *Silent Night*, *Holy Night* at Christmas and *Christ the Lord is Risen Today* at Easter—they are part of the way that we ima-

gine the faith. These are very precious things that have been given to us and they make it possible for us to worship together as a religious community.

*Empathetic imagination* is the ability to imagine ourselves in someone else’s shoes. One of the hallmarks of effective preachers is that they have the ability not just to know their own experience but also to ask “What is the experience of my people?” If a minister has no empathetic imagination, he or she is not going to be able to connect with a congregation.

*Visionary imagination* involves the capacity to see and to respond to new things that God is doing in the world. I love that passage in Isaiah: “Behold, I am doing a new thing, . . . do you not perceive it?” (Isa. 43:19, RSV). Visionary imagination helps the preacher to see that the church could be so much more than it is. There are so many possibilities for witness that we haven’t even begun to claim.

**DM:** You suggest that a primary principle for developing the imagination is to be attentive to what is. Perhaps we could consider two aspects of being attentive to what is: being attentive with our eyes and being attentive with our ears. You have observed that “the untrained eye is not adept at seeing things accurately.”<sup>3</sup> How do we train our eyes to see things accurately?

**TT:** Margaret Miles suggests that we should take a picture that is particularly engaging and use it to meditate upon. What are the colors? How does one shape relate to another? What is the sweep of the lines? What is cast in shadow? How is light used? Thus we actually take time to analyze the picture.

There is a wonderful new book of poetry called *In Quiet Light: Poems on Vermeer’s Women* by Marilyn Chandler McEntyre.<sup>4</sup> The author has taken a collection of paintings of women by the artist Jan Vermeer and then imagined what those women were thinking. She calls her imaginings “the details of the pictures.” It would be an excellent idea for a preacher to take one of her poems each day, look at the picture, and then see how the author imagines by looking at the picture with extreme care. That would be one way to train our eyes to see things accurately. It actually takes self-conscious work. Otherwise, we see but do not see.

**DM:** You also suggest that when we are being “attentive to what is,” we need to be attentive with our ears. We need to listen to the music of speech. In your book, *Imagining a Sermon* you emphasize that “we need to discipline the ear as well so that we may become aware of the aural effect of speech. A preacher whose ear is alert to the sound of spoken language may produce a manuscript that ‘preaches well,’ that breathes and pulses with the rhythms of the best conversational speech.”<sup>5</sup> Apparently, effective preachers need to be attentive to the music of speech as well as the content of speech.

**TT:** Definitely! The physical properties of speech—its rhythm, pitch, volume, and inflection—are a kind of music that makes the imagination dance. What often happens to preachers is this: The anxiety level about the delivery of the sermon becomes so great that the music that is usually in their voices is lost. Rather than learning how to add music to our speech, we need to unlearn how not to do it! Music comes naturally!

If you started to drown and called for help, no one would have to give you elocution lessons about how to shout for help. It would come naturally! If you are falling in love, and you say to that special person “I love you,” no one would have to teach you how to say that. If the thought is genuinely there, it will be expressed with a particular music to it. We can do it in regular everyday life, so when we are preaching we need to get in touch with that living reality. Then the music of our speech will make our sermons genuine and engaging.

**DM:** When reading a biblical story, you encourage preachers to use their imagination and to “assume there is more to the story.”<sup>6</sup> Can you unpack that for us?

**TT:** I share that concept in the context of Midrash, a form of preaching where the preacher expands upon the

biblical story. Midrash developed particularly at the time of Jesus and shortly thereafter. There were certain rules which the rabbis suggested for Midrashim. You could add details, you could imagine it in any way, provided that you did not violate the basic integrity of the biblical story. In other words, your elaboration of the story must honor the spirit and truth of the story.

## THE PHYSICAL PROPERTIES OF SPEECH—ITS RHYTHM, PITCH, VOLUME, AND INFLECTION—ARE A KIND OF MUSIC THAT MAKES THE IMAGINATION DANCE.

So, for example, in *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture*, I have a sermon on the wedding at Cana and I imagine the couple when they are coming near the end of their life together.<sup>7</sup> The sermon is a series of flashbacks, all related to the marriage at Cana. I don’t think that I have in any way violated what that biblical story is about. I’ve just tried to look into what the meaning of that story might have been for the couple for the rest of their lives.

**DM:** You have done some creative work with modern parables. I’m thinking particularly of your book *The Parable of Ten Preachers*<sup>8</sup> and more recently in strategy #2 of your book *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture*.<sup>9</sup> Why do you think that modern parables are such an effective means of communicating the truth of God’s Word?

**TT:** For the same reason that parables were effective with Jesus. He is my greatest inspiration when it comes to drawing parables from life. His stories reveal Someone who is attentive to what is, who closely observes common human experi-

ence. Parables invite the listeners to become engaged with the truth of God. We use our imagination to draw parables from life, from plain human stories that are marked by ambiguity, resolution, and further ambiguity.

When you tell a parable like the story of the prodigal son, people start projecting themselves into that story. It engages their own family dynamics. It engages their sense of human

worthlessness. Once you’ve got people hooked like that, then God can really work with them. Preachers need to trust that God will work with people when they tell the parables, especially if they do so in the context of genuine worship and faith. I like parables for that reason.

**DM:** You have observed that “it is striking how secular most of Jesus’ parables are. There is almost nothing explicitly religious about them.”<sup>10</sup> I suppose that some hearers might listen to a preacher sharing a modern parable and discount it as not being a “real sermon” because it seems to have less of the actual word or text of the Bible.

**TT:** I think that’s true. However, if you look at the parables that I have written, I deliberately designed them so people get hooked in terms of the theological dimension. And when we read them in worship, the context often helps people hear the theological message itself.

**DM:** You have observed that “imagination is not always a welcome guest in the household of faith.”<sup>11</sup>

How would you respond to the critic who contends that the use of imagination is inappropriate in preaching?

**TT:** First of all, we need to realize that imagination can be abused. There's no question about it. But reason can also be abused. For example, there were people who used reason to very carefully justify slavery. But the very fact that we have imaginations, and we know that we have them, means that God built us with imaginations.

The question, as with every other gift God has given us, is this: How will we use it? There is no one with a more active imagination than God. Look at what God imagined—billions of galaxies, each filled with billions of stars. And God imagined that there could be creatures like you and me! I think we are more Godlike when we use our imaginations for healthy, creative purposes.

**DM:** So you would agree with Henry Ward Beecher that imagination is "the most important prerequisite for effective preaching."<sup>12</sup>

**TT:** Yes! Beecher, in his famous *Yale Lectures on Preaching* (1872-1874), noted that many people have misunderstood imagination and have been told to suppress it. However, he suggests that they have not understood its glorious function. Many Protestant preachers have been influenced by Calvin who once called imagination "a perpetual factory of idolatry." Imagination can also be a factory of beauty, grace, and vivid faith.

**DM:** I was fascinated by your comment that, when preaching a sermon, you do not want to "cheat the congregation by handing them a souvenir from my trip on the river when I can take them along on the voyage and let

them feel the current and the water for themselves."<sup>13</sup> It seems that sometimes, when a preacher is preparing a sermon, he or she will study a passage, enter into it, and then step out of that imaginative process when the sermon is actually preached. I hear you saying that you want to actually bring your hearers into that imaginative process with you.

**TT:** Exactly. Too often we get excited in our study and then when we come to the moment of sermon delivery we only give people a sampling of the full experience. It would be much better to take our hearers with us on the journey.

For example, many preachers start out studying a passage and they say "Oh, I don't believe this!" or "How can the Bible possibly say such a thing?" However, that is in itself a wonderful place to begin! When you enact this process of discovery in your sermon, you are modeling to your people how to use the Scriptures—not just to read them and say, "Oh yes, that's what's in the Bible," but to actually wrestle with it and struggle to find its meaning.

Shaping a sermon is a highly disciplined art. When I create a sermon, I probably get rid of about 90 percent of what I've gone through to come down to what really matters. Do I leave this in? Do I take it out? Do I leave it for another sermon? Those are hard decisions to make. That's the part of sailing the boat that takes real skill.

**DM:** You encourage preachers to use their imaginations and experiment with fresh, creative approaches to preaching. At the same time you caution that "new strategies for presenting the word of God could result in manipulative preaching, by reducing proclamation to what is attractive and entertaining."<sup>14</sup> How does the preacher avoid that trap while still using imagination to be fresh and creative?

**TT:** That is a profound question.

Allowing people their choices is very important. If you take certain assumptions and proclaim them strongly, you can intimidate people. Preaching is not about manipulation or intimidation. I'm very taken with the story of the rich young ruler. Jesus is sad that the rich young ruler doesn't respond to His invitation, but Jesus doesn't go after him and say, "You must do this."

Having said that, let me address the issue of entertainment. I do not think of myself as trying to entertain people. I do think of myself as trying to engage every gift that God has given. When that happens, when people get engaged at multiple levels with the multiple gifts that God has given, then people will be captured by the wonder of God. That's what I'm really interested in. If you're doing that, if you are trying to use every gift that God has given you to engage every gift that God has given your people, all kinds of things will happen.

I often say to people, "If you get people to God, sit down." I would like to be a vessel of the Spirit, through whom people feel the Spirit and the risen Christ, and come into the presence of the living God. If that happens, I must stand back so God can take it from there. ■

- 1 Thomas Troeger is also an accomplished musician, poet, and hymn writer. His most recent books of poetry are *Above the Moon Earth Rises* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), and *Borrowed Light* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). He has also published numerous Christian hymns.
- 2 Troeger, *Imagining a Sermon* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1990), 14.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 33.
- 4 Marilyn Chandler McEntyre, *In Quiet Light: Poems on Vermeer's Women* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).
- 5 *Imagining a Sermon*, 69.
- 6 Troeger, *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 22.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 24-29.
- 8 Troeger, *The Parable of Ten Preachers* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992).
- 9 *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture*, 30-38.
- 10 *Imagining a Sermon*, 92.
- 11 *Ibid.*, 99.
- 12 *Ibid.*, 114.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 26.
- 14 *Ten Strategies for Preaching in a Multi Media Culture*, 19.





# My call to ministry

EDGAR J. HULBERT



Not all calls to ministry are dramatic, such as Paul's on the Damascus Road. My call came when I was very young—only seven years old! I was born into a Seventh-day Adventist family. My father was a literature evangelist and my mother a former Bible instructor.

When I was four years old we moved to the village of Auchtermuchty in Scotland. I started school at five, as is required in Britain, and soon acquired a broad Scottish accent.

Having missionary relatives influenced my thinking, and on my seventh birthday—I can picture the scene now—as I sat in the wooden arm chair in the stone-flagged kitchen by the old-fashioned kitchen stove, I said to my mother, "When I grow up, I am going to be a medical missionary."

An event that took place about that time strengthened my belief that God had something special for me to do. To get to school from our humble home in Auchtermuchty, I had to cross a bridge over a stream, then walk through the main road of the village, and up a hill. Coming home one day, I saw my mother standing at our front door talking to our landlady.

I must have had something exciting I wanted to tell her, because I forgot to pause at the foot of the hill and look around a blind corner at the crossroads to see if any traffic was coming. As I ran across the road, I felt someone pull me back just as a truck swept by directly in front of me. Looking around, I could see no one! Who pulled me back? It could have been none other than an angel. Mother, too, was convinced that God had something special in mind for me.

A similar thing occurred many years later. One hot summer evening, I was returning to my lodging after colporteur all day. A cyclist stopped me and asked for directions. Immediately

afterward, a horse and cart passing over a crossroad, was hit by a car that catapulted over the cart and landed upside down, injuring driver and passengers.

If the cyclist hadn't stopped me, I would have been right beside that cart, and could have been killed or seriously injured. Was that cyclist another angel? These two events convinced me that God really had called me to ministry.

Many years went by. We moved to Watford, near London, where my brother, sister, and I were able to go to the Stanborough Primary School. There I deeply appreciated the godly teachers who by their example taught me to value gospel truth.

When I was ten, my family moved to Hastings, Sussex, on the South Coast of England. Here there was no church school, and only a small church group meeting in the "Friends Meeting House." There my Sabbath School teacher—a truly Christian lady—taught us to love the Word of God, and exemplified her teaching by the life she lived.

At 14, I left school (as many did at that age in those days), and started to work with my father in an Adventist building firm. After several months, however, due to financial problems in the firm, father and I were laid off.

From then until I was 16, I sold magazines and small books to raise money to help with family finances. I enjoyed

this work, though I must confess I was not always very diligent.

My ambition to be a medical missionary stayed with me. Never had any other career attracted me. I had an evening scholarship in an art school, and was studying commercial art, and it was even suggested I train as an architect. But my sight was set on being a missionary.

As my sixteenth birthday drew near, I sent applications to four Adventist institutions, seeking employment in three of them, and education in the fourth. The family made this a matter of prayer for the Lord's leading. One by one refusals came from the three institutions at Stanborough Park, but to my delight I was invited to Newbold College, which was then near Rugby in the Midlands, and became my home for the next seven years.

I still had dreams of getting some medical training, but God had other plans. So not too long after starting in ministry, I laid that plan aside as something that was not for me. After two years assisting in public evangelism, I received a call to Nigeria. This led to hurried plans with my then-fiancée, Ruth Dorland, for our wedding, which took place on August 14, 1945, the very day, as it happened, when Japan had asked for surrender terms. What a wonderful wedding present!

We spent 12 happy years, mostly in Nigeria, apart from 15 months in Ghana. Our last tour was spent in Calabar, where we had the joy of establishing a new witness center, which has since blossomed into two missions. The rest of our years of service were spent in Scotland, Ireland, and South England.

I do not regret for one moment responding to the call of ministry. ▀

*Edgar Hulbert is a retired pastor who lives in Watford, Hertfordshire, England.*

# When clergy couples come for counseling

## Observations of a therapist

William E. Rabior



William E. Rabior is chaplain at St. Mary's Hospital in Saginaw, Michigan.

Nearly ten years ago, I attended a seminar conducted by a therapist nationally known for his expertise as a practitioner of marital therapy for clergy and their spouses. I still have my notes from that seminar, and I find myself reflecting upon his remarks whenever a clergy couple approaches me for counseling.

"Clergy couples seeking help will be very much like other married couples," he said. "Many of the issues will be identical to those you typically see in nonclergy marriages. However, generally there will be two important differences. First, confidentiality will be absolutely paramount. They don't want their congregations knowing they are seeking marriage counseling, because while it makes for a delicious piece of gossip back home, it only makes their personal situation worse. Second, most of the time they will be open to spiritual interventions like prayer, so use them."

He added, "Most clergy couples really want to make their marriages work. They are usually willing to do whatever it takes to transform their hurts into healing, and get their marriages back on track. Give them a sense of hope and help them strengthen their interpersonal skills and you'll be surprised at how well they do."

At the time, I remember thinking that he seemed overly optimistic about the effectiveness of marital therapy for clergy and their

spouses. Yet, based on my own experience as a marriage counselor working with clergy couples, for the most part he was correct on all counts. Not all troubled clergy marriages survive, of course, but of the ones that I have personally been involved with professionally, nearly 90 percent are still married. So when it comes to working with clergy and their spouses, I've become an optimist as well. I enjoy working with them, because I have seen so many of them not just survive as couples, but go on to thrive. They are good clients, well-motivated, and willing to work hard to revitalize their marriages.

### Particular needs of clergy couples

The therapist was certainly right about confidentiality. It is, indeed, a very big concern. Some clergy couples drive 500 miles round trip to seek marriage counseling in an area where they are not known.

And they are usually open to spiritual interventions such as prayer. In fact, at times I have been the only person who regularly prayed with them during their time of crisis.

Pastors and their spouses often pray for and with others, but frequently, no one realizes they are in need of prayer themselves. Usually, they yearn for it, but they may not feel free to bring their own personal issues to prayer with members of their congregations. Many times they simply do without it—to their detriment.

In most respects, clergy couples are just like other couples who come for therapy. The difference is that the clerical lifestyle can give rise to certain dynamics which may overstress the marriage, for example, by putting excessive demands on the pastor's time or giving rise to the feeling of living in a fish bowl. The lifestyle itself can negatively affect a marriage.

With these remarks as a kind of preface, what follows are eight common issues which clergy couples have brought to my office over the years.

### Eight common issues among clergy couples

1. *Anger issues.* For many of us anger is the single most difficult emotion to deal with, and clergy and their spouses are no exception. Often, they simply do not know what to do with their anger. For example, I have seen clergy virtually unable to express any anger at all because of a conviction that a man or woman of God must be peaceful at all times,

or that the expression of anger is sinful and must be tightly suppressed or denied.

The trouble with this is that in every marriage there are times when spouses become angry with one another, whether they admit to it or not. Unless anger can be successfully processed in a marriage, it can become toxic and poisonous to the marital relationship.

Therapy dealing with this issue focuses on helping the couple develop and practice anger management skills and giving them permission to express their anger in safe ways, which in turn enables them to reduce and more rapidly resolve angry feelings.

2. *Marital gridlock.* Marital gridlock is the couple's inability to successfully discuss and iron out differences, solve problems together, and in general to resolve at least some of their issues. Nagging conflicts and fights over the same old things keep recurring.

On the one hand, a certain amount of gridlock is normal in a marriage, because spouses bring to their union different personalities, attitudes, and outlooks. It is inevitable that at some point a husband and wife will disagree on some issue and perhaps even clash over its resolution.

Gridlock becomes a serious problem when spouses are unwilling or unable to compromise, thereby creating a power struggle. This in turn gives rise to a win-lose situation, where one has to be the victor, the other the defeated. Gridlock in this form keeps a couple infuriated and stuck in the cage of their issues. Bickering becomes endless and positive energy is drained from the relationship.

A pastor who is experiencing gridlock with his or her congregation as well as in a marriage will be highly frustrated, indeed, and will be seriously overstressed.

When gridlock surfaces as an issue, therapy typically focuses on showing the clergy couple how to create win-win situations through compromis-

ing. Compromising enables both to come away reasonably satisfied and helps break the power struggle-victimization cycle. It also allows the couple to engage in genuine problem solving together, so that gridlock takes place less frequently, and the marriage can gain some positive momentum.

3. *Communication problems.* Good communication fuels a marriage, so when a clergy couple complains that their marriage is "running out of gas," it is often because they have virtually stopped talking and listening to each other, and as a result have steadily grown apart.

Talking and listening strengthen the bonds of friendship, help with problem solving and conflict resolution, and enable the couple to affirm and validate each other. When this does not happen, individual spouses may turn to someone else to whom they can vent and find a sympathetic ear. Often, this only widens the gap in the marriage.

Therapy here helps the clergy couple realize how crucial dialogue is with each other—that communica-

tion is one of the basic "super glues" which holds a marriage together. The spouses need to take and make time just to talk and listen. Two-way communication must become a priority or it will not happen.

As a therapist addressing this issue, I try to show clergy couples how to use basic communication skills such as deep listening while the other speaks, and then mirroring back to their spouse what she or he has said as a form of validation. I usually stress to the couple that talking and listening to one another can be seen as a form of making love, which strengthens the bonds of marriage. I try to help them discover all over again the joy of talking and being listened to.

4. *Loss of closeness.* The need to feel close to one's spouse is essential to the well-being of any marriage. When it starts to fade, so can the love.

Typically, when a clergy couple tells me they no longer feel close, they also describe a constellation of other things that have been adversely affected by this feeling. There has been a reduction in talking and

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## **NAD'S NEW APPROACH TO NET CASTING**

### **Halifax, Nova Scotia to host NET 2002, "Revelation Speaks Peace"**

"We're suggesting a whole new approach to NET evangelism in 2002," says Kermit Netteburg, assistant to the president of the North American Division. "It will allow congregations the freedom to create the evangelistic meeting and follow-up that best fits them."

Shawn Boonstra and Henry Feyerabend, of *It Is Written Canada*, have conducted several successful evangelistic efforts that have spanned generational and cultural diversity, and they will be the featured speakers for "Revelation Speaks Peace."

Don Schneider, president of the North American Division, urges churches to begin planning. "The Lord wants to bless your efforts," he says. "Since 'Revelation Speaks Peace' begins just after the first anniversary of September 11, people will still be thinking seriously about their spiritual relationship with God. It's a perfect opportunity to meet people's needs. Let's be prepared."

Registration is free. Call 800.ACN.1119 or visit [www.acn.info](http://www.acn.info) to receive your NET Evangelism Handbook. For planning suggestions, visit [www.revelationspeakspeace.info](http://www.revelationspeakspeace.info); to see and hear Boonstra and Feyerabend preach, visit [www.acn.info](http://www.acn.info).

—Bernadine Delafield, Project Coordinator  
Adventist Communication Network  
North American Division

touching, a waning of affection and sexual problems have usually developed. In fact, physical intimacy may have virtually disappeared from their relationship. All of this can create a downward spiral in the marital relationship which is damaging and dangerous.

Therapy for an issue such as this one involves training spouses to turn toward each other instead of away. It teaches them how to reconnect beginning with the smallest efforts such as holding hands and learning how to touch each other again.

It emphasizes what is right about

legitimate concerns about financial pressures in the present but also deep concerns about having sufficient financial resources on which to retire in the future.

Like other married couples, clergy couples often have real difficulty handling money and frequently fall into the trap of overspending. Interventions for this issue may include sending the couple to a financial counselor who can help with budgeting and debt consolidation.

Instead of turning their finances into a battleground, I encourage the couple to talk openly about their

serious problem. And infidelity can prove so damaging, that I have seen even strong marriages collapse like a house of cards from the overwhelming sense of betrayal and emotional devastation.

Dysfunctional behaviors like the ones mentioned above may warrant a variety of interventions. Severe substance abuse problems might require in-patient rehabilitation services and follow-up which includes regular attendance at support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous.

I have sent clergy to Gamblers Anonymous for compulsive gambling problems and even to Overeaters Anonymous for eating disorders. They often do well in support groups such as these, provided confidentiality is maintained.

For sexual dysfunctions I have utilized everything from evaluations by medical specialists, teaching one or both spouses how to set strong boundaries, intimacy work, and significant spiritual interventions such as seeking and finding forgiveness from God for sexual sins.

*7. Family issues.* Like everything else mentioned above, family issues can take many forms in the lives of clergy couples. For example, if a husband or wife has not successfully emancipated from his or her parents, it may be difficult for the couple to create a strong bond of their own. Interfering parents or in-laws can prevent a couple from creating a solid relationship together.

Children, too, can sometimes destabilize a marriage. An out-of-control child can severely stress a marriage and be a source of embarrassment to a clergy couple.

If there have been previous marriages, the process of blending several different families can prove formidable. Sometimes the illness or death of a child can introduce grieving issues into the marriage.

I have learned to be creative when helping a clergy couple cope with family problems. If parents or in-laws have been a problem, I have some-

## ABOVE ALL, MY WORK AS A THERAPIST IS TO HELP THE COUPLE VIEW THEIR MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP AS A MAJOR PRIORITY.

the marriage instead of what is wrong. If couples can identify a single area where they still function well together, I encourage them to do more of that.

Dating each other again can help restore romance and excitement to the relationship. Spouses who have distanced from each other can rediscover how to be close to each other once again, but it needs to become a priority, and they need to do the sometimes demanding work which is necessary for this to happen.

*5. Finances.* For many clergy couples, financial issues generate tremendous stress which in turn usually takes a toll on the marriage. Too often, clergy are underpaid and overworked. An inadequate salary may seem to necessitate the pastor having to take another job or even several jobs. The other spouse may have to work, too, to make ends meet.

All of this can mean less quality time spent together, more fatigue, and in general, constantly living with a sense of being overwhelmed. The clergy couple may not only have

finances with each other and plan carefully, until they begin to get some sense that they are managing their money and not having their money manage them.

*6. Dysfunctional behaviors.* Across the country, therapists are reporting that more clergy persons and spouses are seeking help for compulsive behaviors such as uncontrolled gambling. Often, the pastor has become a workaholic, giving all his or her energies to pastoral work and leaving little or nothing for the marriage. It is also not unusual for addictions to alcohol or drugs to put severe strain on a marital relationship.

Sexual dysfunction is also common among clergy and spouses. Not infrequently, one or sometimes both mates may have been sexually abused as a child and consequently as adults be having difficulty trusting or being truly intimate. A clergy person and a spouse in a seemingly heterosexual marriage even after years of marriage may still be experiencing confusion about sexual orientation.

Pornography may have become a

times recommended that the couple accept an assignment as far away from them as possible. Parenting classes have often proved helpful, especially to new parents.

Above all, my work as a therapist is to help the couple view their marriage relationship as a major priority. I try to help them make each other the primary focus, so that not all their energy is directed toward children or family (or the church). As spouses strengthen the bonds of their marriage and become more united, they are in a better position to face family issues together, which in turn can make these issues more manageable.

8. *Marital "ghosts."* Some clergy couples live in a marriage haunted by a ghost or ghosts from the past that seem never to go away because the couple lacks the desire or the ability to "exorcize" them. Marital ghosts come in many different shapes and sizes, and some are more malevolent than others.

A common one is the unwillingness on the part of one spouse to forgive and permanently bury some hurt inflicted by the other spouse, for example, adultery. A ghost such as this starts to acquire a life and power of its own, keeping the couple at loggerheads and making healing virtually impossible.

The best way I know of to drive a ghost from a marriage is through simple, straightforward forgiveness.

Forgiveness is much more than just a feeling, it is a choice and a decision. One spouse can choose to forgive the other even without feeling very forgiving. Of course, he or she may have to make that decision many times, but it is the only way a marital ghost can be permanently driven away and the slate wiped clean. Forgiveness allows a couple to love again, trust again, and move forward together down the road of life as friends and lovers.

It has been my pleasure and privi-

lege to work with many clergy couples over the years. Often they come for counseling not because the marriage is shaky, but because they are at the point where they want to change patterns of behavior which no longer work well and substitute healthier behaviors so that the marriage can be happier and more fulfilling. They view their marriage as a work in progress and are willing to do whatever it takes to renew and revitalize it.

My challenge as a therapist is to help these couples make wise and responsible choices which enrich and expand their love and friendship, so that their remaining years together are sweet and joyous.

As clergy couples become more mutually supportive of one another and more willing to nurture one another, many times I also see their ministry start to flourish and become even more effective. Helping a clergy couple's marriage inevitably helps their ministry. ■

## WHO'S STEALING

The man,  
His message,  
His mission.



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# "It ain't necessarily so"

## A review of the validity of Charles Darwin's thinking

Warren L. Johns



Warren L. Johns, Esq., a retired lawyer and editor of *Creation Digest*, lives in Brookeville, Maryland.

The propagandized postulates of Charles Robert Darwin call to mind the lyrics of a song from the twentieth-century Broadway hit musical *Porgy and Bess*: "It Ain't Necessarily So." A growing number of academics assess evolution's science with similar skepticism.

Darwin's wish list of unsubstantiated propositions starts with his primitive perception of the "simple" cell with sequences allegedly leading to fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, and ultimately *Homo sapiens*.

Evolution's essence envisions life without a guiding conscious intelligence; without a creator. Proposed instead is a haphazard jungle menagerie of random-chance forces, competing for survival, yet still having the capacity of producing the amazing natural, productive orderliness that surrounds us.

In this dismal scenario, we face a forever death, with no prospect of further life. Our present toil and pain is unexplained, unless, perhaps as they are seen to be the consequence of an ill-defined, undirected struggle. They certainly are not seen to be the consequence of sin, for under this worldview, moral and spiritual realities are essentially ignored. Darwinism proposes a gradual "progress to perfection" over deep time, and it intentionally dismisses a Creation week put in place by the verbal command of Infinite God.

### Darwin's man

Rather than fashioned in God's image, Darwin's man "is descended from a hairy quadruped, furnished with a tail and pointed ears . . ."<sup>1</sup> Reduced to its core, evolutionism contends that human life and intelligence sprang spontaneously (and certainly inexplicably) from a nonliving, nonconscious, nonintelligent source.

This view was initially articulated by a wealthy, Victorian elitist, whose credentials include three Cambridge years studying for the Anglican ministry. Some say he was a man disillusioned by the heartbreak of his ten-year-old daughter's death; a distraught philosopher who railed against a contemporary religion that caricatured God as a tyrant, intent on torturing the wayward with the pangs of their present existence and the horror of an everlasting fiery torment.

Rejecting the prospect of eternal life, Darwin sentenced *Homo sapiens* to a bleak future, predicting that "we may safely infer that not one living species will transmit its unaltered likeness to a distant futurity."<sup>2</sup>

One of Darwin's more outrageous suppositions never made it past his 1859 first edition of *The Origin of Species*. The naturalist imagined he could "see no difficulty in a race of bears being rendered, by natural selection, more and more aquatic in their structure and habits . . . till a creature was produced as monstrous as a whale."

His assertions wandered into the realm of today's politically incorrect. He ranked the male gender as the one decidedly superior over the female. He asserted that "the chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shewn [shown] by man attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than woman can attain—whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and hands."<sup>3</sup>

With a nod to eugenics (alleged "improvement of the human race by controlled selective breeding"<sup>4</sup>), he fretted that the practice of vaccination spared the lives of small-pox victims. "Vaccination has preserved thousands, who from a weak constitution would formerly have succumbed to small-pox. Thus the weak members of civilised [civilized] societies propagate their kind . . . this must be highly injurious to the race of man."<sup>5</sup> In the face of this supposed dire result, he said that society should maintain a stiff upper lip: "We

must bear without complaining the undoubtedly bad effects of the weak surviving and propagating their kind.”<sup>6</sup>

Thus, not surprisingly, the predictions of evolution’s guru echoes as racist. “At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilised [civilized] races of man will almost certainly exterminate and replace throughout the world the savage races.”<sup>7</sup>

Very significantly, Darwin made two crucial and far-reaching concessions: (1) That his ideas about origins were “‘a mere rag of an hypothesis with as many flaw[s] and holes as sound parts . . .’” and (2) “‘I am quite conscious that my speculations run beyond the bounds of true science.’” These admissions, by their nature possess a constitutional weight. At their heart they still stand despite the long, powerful and now establishment-driven attempts to reduce their shattering truth.

He worried that he may “. . . have devoted my life to a phantasy.”<sup>8</sup>

### Beyond the bounds of science

Valid scientific reasons exist for Darwin’s intellectual hand wringing! Evolution suffers from a terminal case of ambivalent viability. Despite the secular media’s repetitious rhetoric parading evolution as “fact,” an impressive roster of contemporary scientists discount Darwinism.

A prominent evolutionist writer flatly asserts the conviction that “over millions of years, tree-living reptiles evolved into birds.” But simultaneously, in the same book, he acknowledges “it is impossible to know for certain whether one species is the ancestor of another.”<sup>9</sup>

In a further burst of admirable candor, the same writer describes evolution’s “chain of ancestry” as “a completely human invention created after the fact, shaped to accord with human prejudices. . . . Each fossil rep-

resents an isolated point, with no knowable connection to any other given fossil, and all float around in an overwhelming sea of gaps.”<sup>10</sup>

Another avowed evolutionist pulls no punches. Dr. Michael Denton portrays “the Darwinian theory of evolution [as] no more or less than the great cosmogenic myth of the twentieth century.” He further elaborates “that nowhere was Darwin able to point to one *bona fide* case of natural selection having actually generated evolutionary change in nature . . .”<sup>11</sup>

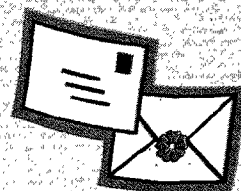
Scientific evidence abounds, corroborating Darwin’s admission that his philosophy of origins is “beyond the bounds of true science.” Three obvious shortfalls in his suppositions stand out in bold relief, edging evolution’s hype toward history’s dustbin.

\* Evolution cannot explain the first-ever appearance of a living cell;

\* The sudden appearance, simultaneously and worldwide, of more than 7,000 complex species of life, without

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a trace of ancestry; and

\* The demonstrated incompetence of mutations to transform one kind of life into an entirely new kind, even given vast periods of deep time.

### Simple cells?

The technology of Charles Robert Darwin's day deprived investigators of the faintest clue that a "simple" cell was anything more than a blob of protoplasm. Astutely, Darwin skipped any serious attempt to explain the spontaneous generation of original life. Instead, the canny philosopher surrendered to the ultimate mystery, admitting "science as yet throws no light on the far higher problem of the essence or origin of life."<sup>12</sup>

Laboratory replication of a single cell from scratch, life from nonlife, complete with a full code of genes exponentially more complex than any mechanism humans have yet devised, continues to elude Darwin's heirs. No scientist has yet duplicated or explained what spontaneous gener-

ation allegedly accomplished, or how it actually might have happened, except to in effect attribute it to some accident or chance, taking place in the dim recesses of prebiotic time and "soup" and continuing through the eons to what is presently extant. The recipe for first life and its complete genome baffles the scientific elect and elite!

The odds of random chance generating a friendly environment essential to produce and sustain organic life, is mathematically less likely than six billion blindfolded humans simultaneously solving the riddle of a Rubik's Cube—in less than a minute.

### The gradual and the sudden

In discarding the possibility of a conscious, intelligent, creative life-source, Darwin came to alternatively envision a simple-to-complex gradualism somehow taking place within the recesses of deep time zones. Verification of this grandiose scheme demanded fossil cemeteries filled

with transitional or intermediate life forms, bridging the gaping gulfs between single-celled ancestors and multi-celled descendants.

Instead, the evidence reveals a plethora of complex animal and plant life species that appeared suddenly, simultaneously and worldwide—without evidence of fossil ancestry. The Pre-Cambrian fossil record offers a virtual paleontological desert. This reality astounded Darwin.

"Nothing is more extraordinary in the history of the Vegetable Kingdom . . . than the apparently very sudden or abrupt development of the higher plants."<sup>13</sup>

Late in the twentieth century, a Cambridge University Botany Department scientist concluded, "to the unprejudiced, the fossil record of plants favours [favors] special creation."<sup>14</sup>

This universal appearance of a pervasive diversity of complex life kinds, is diametrically opposed to speculations requiring the gradual emergence

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of “innumerable transitional forms.” It is this that troubled Darwin.

“Geological research . . . does not yield the infinitely many fine gradations between past and present species required on the theory . . . why do we not find beneath this system great piles of strata stored with the remains of the progenitors of the Cambrian fossils?”<sup>15</sup>

Equally stunning and subversive to Darwin’s fondest theories is the reality that many of these original fossil kinds of life failed to subsequently “evolve.” Instead they continue to be stable, in a state of stasis, virtually unchanged today from any fossil ancestors. A classic example of this is the fact that the oldest known water lily fossils appear identical to their twenty-first-century descendants.<sup>16</sup>

### Genomes and mutations

Beyond neo-Darwinism’s inability to explain the “how” and “when” of first life arising from inorganic matter and the abrupt appearance of complex life without evidence of prior ancestry, is the discovery of the genome which underscores the intelligent design, irreducible complexity, and unique information code inherent in each prototypical life.

The genetic code packed in the DNA of each genome is vested with an inherent capacity for variation designed to accommodate environment. The degree of flexibility facilitated by this adaptation to the environment does not in the least assume the radical shifts of evolution envisioned by Darwinists.

Genome engendered flexibility does not accommodate, for example, the reptile-to-bird scenario. Evolutionists allege or assume, essentially on the basis of extrapolation, that because the genome enables an organism to adapt to its environment, it also enables that organism, over great periods of time, to leap over into an entirely new kind of critter! This assumption is, on the face of what may actually be observed, unmerited.

Alaska’s state bird, the ptarmigan,

sheds its dull camouflage colors of summer, each year, in exchange for a winter mantle of white feathers to match the snow. Come summer again, there’s a consistent reversion back to the subdued shades of rock. The ptarmigan’s genes carry the camouflage information that triggers sea-

within a prototype genome have yet to bridge the biological gap leading to an entirely new and different kind. Clearly there are colossal problems here!

Mutations never add new information to the genetic code essential for an entirely new life form; and, muta-

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sonal change, generation after generation. No matter how many seasonal cycles come and go with color-coded transformations, the ptarmigan remains a ptarmigan—forever.

Devout Darwinian theoreticians cannot, with intellectual integrity, extrapolate the reality of each genome’s adaptability so that it assures dazzling variety within kinds, and thus authenticates what is essential to evolutionary theory.

Lock-step misinterpretation of a genome’s capacity for variety, as well as the development of hybrids, touts apples to “prove” oranges, thus misleading a gullible public in a lemminglike march to nowhere!

Neo-Darwinists rely on mutations as the elixir that drives evolutionary change to feed the natural selection process, ultimately blazing the trail to an entirely new and different descendant organism—thanks to an assumed time scale counted in millions of years.

Regardless, random mutations

are notoriously deleterious to the genome. Despite laboratory mutations induced repeatedly in the lowly fruit fly, descendant fruit flies continue to be fruit flies, often with weird deformities but always fruit flies, never dragonflies or butterflies—and this goes on ad infinitum for thousands of generations.

And it’s the same with bacteria!

Alleged by evolutionists to have been around for something like 3.6 billion years, bacteria, under this assumption, have produced millions of generations. Despite mutations, however, descendant bacteria remain bacteria, now and forever.

Even the amazing ptarmigan is alleged to have descended from a reptile ancestor who insisted on trying to fly until it successfully sprouted feathers rather than scales, hollow bones, warm blood, and a host of other necessities that make birds birds!

Yawning, genetic chasms separating distinct kinds of organic formats have never been bridged by the muta-

tion/natural selection combo concocted by neo-Darwinists. This is true even when we allow for all the supposed millions of years these changes are supposed to have taken place.

Random chance transitions from one kind of critter to another, proposed as "fact" by neo-Darwinism, never happened and never will happen! Forget the knee-jerk mantra asserting life's emergence from primordial slime followed by a mindless march from the sea. A single cell fish to a man or woman? It never happened.

### The Christian view

Articles of faith embraced by Christians anchor in an unequivocal belief in the biblical account of Creation week and the worldwide deluge of Noah's day.

Christ Himself confirmed God's miracle of Creation and the planet-wide destruction wreaked by a cataclysmic deluge. Theological rejection or compromise with these biblical accounts, conflicts head-on with the articulated testimony of Jesus Christ.

"Theistic Evolution" appeals to some who sport Christian trappings despite discounting the words of Christ's ministry. Trying to merge the unmergable in this field of thought diminishes God, contending He relied on evolution's random chance sequences over eons of deep time. This incompatible theology-pseudo-science mixes, glosses over, or ignores the rich meaning of a weekly celebration saluting God's power to create life by His command and to spare sinners from their inevitable fate.

Darwinian thought has been repeatedly patched, reprogrammed, and revised, in futile attempts to create a worldview that does not clash with belief in an Infinite Creator God. But evolutionism's thin soup recipe for life offers a starvation diet of unsubstantiated myth laced with fancy phraseology.

Darwin's own characterization of his "mere rag of a hypothesis," speaks

eloquently: "My speculations run beyond the bounds of true science."

Faith in the mystical convergence of inorganic matter by "natural" forces, in an attempt to explain the genesis of the first ever cell of organic life, worships or at least plays at the feet of primitive superstition, which is the very antithesis of science!

Michael Ruse, atheist and devoted disciple of Darwinian faith, describes evolution as "a full-fledged alternative to Christianity. . . . Evolution is a religion. This was true of evolution in the beginning, and it is true of evolution still today."<sup>17</sup>

Rational faith, on the other hand, envisions an Intelligent Designer who created life as well as the science that focuses on life's origin; a Supreme Intelligence beyond mortal comprehension.

Here's a terse paraphrase of the timeless testament of a recently deceased scholar, whose life was committed to faith in a Creator:

"God created all things, a long time ago!"

Two distinct worldviews offer an either/or choice. Both options envision faith-based religions. Faith in the religion of evolutionism leads to darkness and to mere death. The other, the biblical faith, worships a Supreme Being who created humanity in His own image and personally blazed the trail of victory over death.

Charles Darwin boasted of "progress toward perfection," a siren song that leads inevitably, by its own implied nature, merely to the abyss of death. Christ predicted a time of "great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world,"<sup>18</sup> coupled with the promise of His return and life eternal to all who believe.

Choose this day whom you will serve. ■

1 Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981, photo reproduction of the 1871 version published by J. Murray, London), 2:389.

2 ———, *The Origin of Species* (New York: Random House, 1993), 647.

3 ———, *The Descent of Man*, 2:327.

4 See *American Heritage Dictionary of the English*

*Language* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1992), third edition, 632.

5 Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 1:168.

6 *Ibid.*, 169.

7 *Ibid.*, 201.

8 Charles Darwin letter to Asa Gray, cited by Adrian Desmond and James Moore, *Darwin* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1991), 456, 475.

9 Henry Gee, *In Search of Deep Time* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), 177, 155.

10 *Ibid.*, 32.

11 Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis* (Bethesda, Md.: Adler & Adler, 1986), 62, 358.

12 Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 637.

13 Charles Darwin, (1881) in F. Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin* (London: John Murray, 1888) 3:248; cited by Michael Denton, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*, 163.

14 Oliver & Boyd, *Contemporary Botanical Thought*, 1971, 97.

15 Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 617, 618.

16 Peter Crane, et. al. "New Scientist," April, 2001, 1.

17 Michael Ruse, "Saving Darwinism from the Darwinians," *National Post* (May 13, 2000), B-3; quoted by Henry B. Morris, "Evolution is Religion—Not Science," *Impact*, February 2001.

18 *The Thompson Chain Reference Bible* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: ———, 1983), Matthew 24:21.

## Letters *continued from page 3*

But in criticizing the recovery movement and the Twelve Steps, they are undercutting a process that has provided freedom from cherished sin (also known as addiction) for millions—and by now surely billions—of people all over the world. The results speak for themselves.

The best thing I can say is that my life is far more in harmony with biblical principles because of what I have learned and applied from the recovery movement and the Twelve Steps. ■

—Marvin Moore, Caldwell, Idaho.

### September 2001 issue

I have been receiving *Ministry* since being ordained over 12 years ago. Each issue contains something relevant to my personal and professional life as a pastor and teacher.

I especially enjoyed the articles "Dealing With Criticism" by Victor Parachin and "The Lonely Pastor" by Larry Yeagley in the September 2001 issue. As I read through the articles, I knew they were speaking to me. This issue was one of your best ever. ■

—Rev. L. F. Hofmann, Edmondton, Alberta, Canada.



# More good ideas

**A**s I've said before, one of my big blessings comes from seeing and sharing practical ideas.

**Baby Bonds.** When parents bring infants for dedication, Sligo school principal Ruth Satelmajer (Takoma Park, Maryland) presents a "Baby Bond" good for three months' free tuition, to be used when the child enters school. This gift firmly cements the importance of planning for Christian education years before formal schooling begins.

**Sabbath morning breakfast.** Hoping to increase attendance at Sabbath School and recognizing that most adults cannot concentrate when they are hungry (even more so children), the Palm Springs Church schedules fellowship breakfast prior to the scheduled time for Bible study.

**Christmas in July.** Albert and Elaine Ellis enjoy holiday greetings twice: first when cards and letters arrive, and then when they review them throughout the year. They select one or two cards a week as part of their daily devotions, review the greeting, reflect on special friends, and lift up that family in prayer. They say, "It's almost like a face-to-face visit as well as a second time to enjoy these holiday remembrances!"

**Three years to prepare a sermon.** In the latest issue of *Preaching*, Lloyd John Ogilvie describes his three-year cycle for preparing to preach a sermon series. After selecting a portion of scripture, he spends a year with that section as a devotional exercise. The next year, he does an in-depth expositional study coupled with reading great expositors. In the actual year of preaching he outlines the presentations and prepares a folder for each week of the series—one folder for each sermon ready to receive

JAMES A. CRESS



the illustrative material that will go into them as he reads, interacts with people, and experiences daily life.<sup>1</sup>

**Photo business card.** Recently a contribution arrived for a ministry project which included a short note on the back of Tom and Brooke Stafford's business card. The check was appreciated, the note was encouraging, but the business card came to life because it included their photo. Realtors and other entrepreneurs long ago learned the value of connecting their name and face. You may want to try a new design for your personal business card.



**Cafe church.** Determined to reach secular society people who might, otherwise, bypass church, Adventists in Helsinki have planted a cafe church where attendees gather casually around tables and refreshments to study Bible topics, fellowship, and interact. Before you dismiss such ventures as "not church," reflect on the way most New Testament house churches functioned. Cafe church may be more closely aligned with Scripture than fifty pews lined up in rows.

**Pass on the bonus!** When a struggling, small congregation in New Hampshire received a \$1000 contribu-

tion for their building fund from another local congregation almost three thousand miles away, they wondered what prompted such generosity. Then they learned that they are among several churches each year which receive a boost from the donor congregation's "Brotherhood Fund" to boost big projects in small places. I will not reveal the donor congregation; you cannot apply for their generosity. But when they discover a need, they generously share. Try following their example and lead your church to assist some project somewhere else.

## Picture worth a thousand words.

Try illustrating your confidence in Bible themes through art placed in your lobby or office. At the Ministerial Association we display two original oil paintings by Elfred Lee, *The Truth as It Is in Jesus*, which highlights seven significant doctrinal themes (salvation by grace, sola scriptura, sabbath, second coming, state of man, sanctuary, and spiritual gifts) and *The Way of the Cross Leads Home*, which portrays the joyous return of Jesus to His Father following His second advent. See ad on page 31 to obtain posters or limited-edition, artist-signed prints of these remarkable paintings.

**Simply Speaking.** Former U.S. presidential speech writer, Peggy Noonan, relates insight she learned from novelist Edith Wharton who said, "No matter what the gift of the writer, whether genius or dunce, the language of love is always the same: 'I love you, I love you, my darling, you are so wonderful . . .'" Noonan says, "The language of love is simple because love is big. And big things are best said, almost always said, in small words."<sup>2</sup> ■

1 Lloyd Ogilvie, "Preaching to Power," in *Preaching*, May-June 2002, 4-6

2 Peggy Noonan, *Simply Speaking* (DIANE Pub Co., 1999).

## SHOP TALK

### Freedom with black slides

For several years, I have been using a computer to generate slides to complement my preaching, but only in the past two years have I found it practical and relatively easy to prepare slides for nearly every sermon I preach. Using slides dramatically increases audience attention, and in the past year we have experienced an average attendance increase of more than 10 percent. Most of the increase has been due to guests and friends of members coming more regularly.

One idea that has been instrumental in making my presentations work more effectively has been my use of black slides.

I use three black slides to begin a presentation, with the second being a test slide with the word "test" in small type at the top left of the screen. This is an inconspicuous way to check to make sure things are running smoothly *before* I get up to preach. The first graphic image will then fade or zoom in at the appropriate time.

Before discovering black slides, I felt I had to have something on the screen during all of my sermon. Often I found it difficult to find appropriate texts or photos to accompany an entire message, so I would give up.

By freely inserting black slides throughout a presentation, the screen can be used *only* when you want to draw attention to something important, but it isn't critical to always have something for people to see or read on the screen. In fact, fading to a black slide and making a point *without* something on the screen can be pow-

erful. Gradually, over time, I have found it easier to use helpful slides during most of my sermon, but inserting black slides provided the key to getting started with computer graphics on a regular basis.

—Glenn Holland, pastor, Norfolk, Virginia.

## BOOK REVIEW

***When the Spirit Descends: Understanding the Role of the Holy Spirit***, by Jan Paulsen, (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 2001), \$7.65, 142 pages.

This is a significant book, and its reissue in a slightly edited form with an additional chapter, "The Community of Spirit," is to be welcomed.

The author is surely correct in recognizing that there is confusion and uncertainty as to the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual believer, the church, and the world. Does this book make a contribution to clearing away this confusion and uncertainty and has it relevance for the church today?

I compared my original copy with the present edition to refresh my memory and to attempt to find an answer to the question.

Paulsen has an academic inclination and it is reflected in his writing. This gives depth to what he writes. His intention is to be genuinely biblical in his approach. He has the scholar's instinc-

tive suspicion of the noncerebral, merely emotional approach. This understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit is well illustrated in the Appendix. There he evaluates some of the problems associated with "charismatic renewal movements." His approach is balanced and biblical.

The value and relevance of this book, in my view, is threefold:

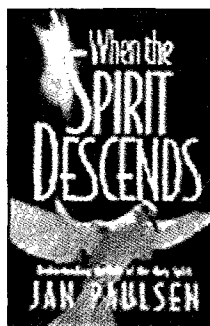
First, Paulsen shows that the existence of the Christian church and all spiritual life in the believer is the work of the Holy Spirit. It is here and now, not at some later stage or in a special experience that the Holy Spirit is present in our daily lives. But He is present not only for salvation, but for service. In this respect, Paulsen asks some searching questions and makes trenchant observations, for example, "Spiritfilledness is the opposite of weakness, lethargy, and confusion. It has to do with power to be and act, and it lifts us to a level where we otherwise would not be" (page 126).

Second, it is a biblically-based approach by which we can evaluate and relate to contemporary teachings and claims regarding the Holy Spirit's presence and work.

Third, the book will be most helpful to pastors, teachers, and administrators. It has value for the church member, but it will be of greatest benefit to the church as a whole if its message comes in a teaching form from ministers in the pulpit and power in our lives. It is a book which transcends sectarian and denominational biases and can with profit be used by any Christian whatever their tradition.

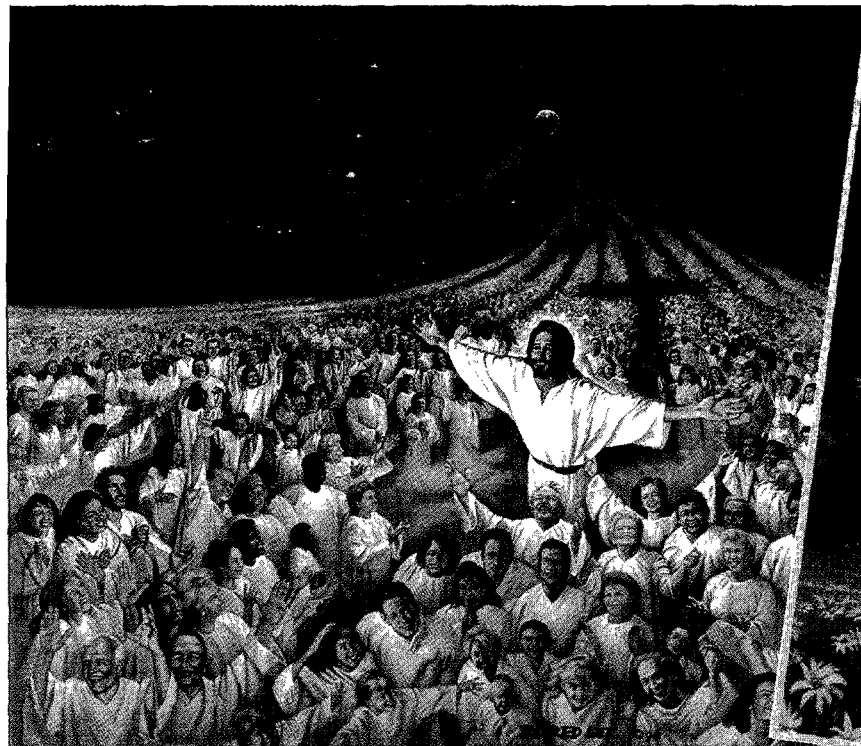
This book is one to be read and re-read with rich spiritual benefits. It is more relevant today than when it was first published. ■

—Patrick J. Boyle.



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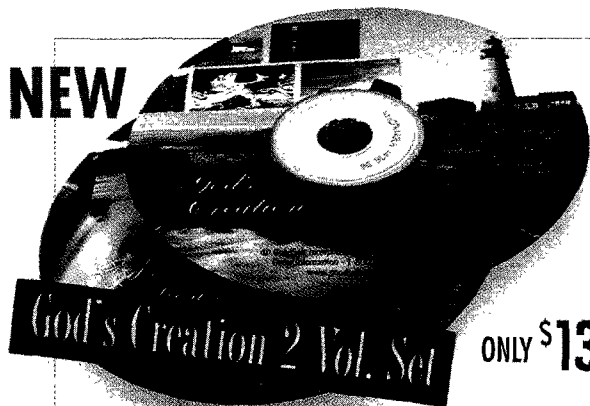
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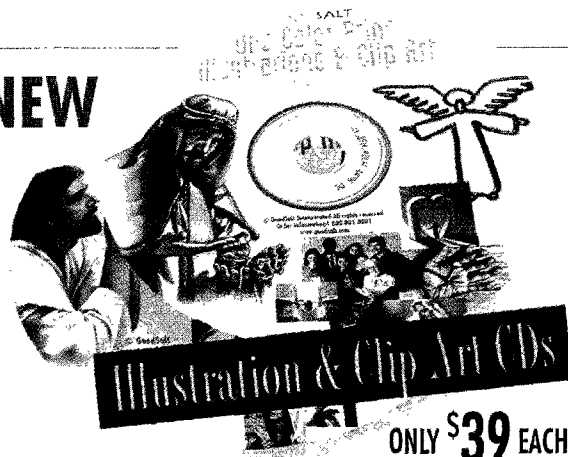
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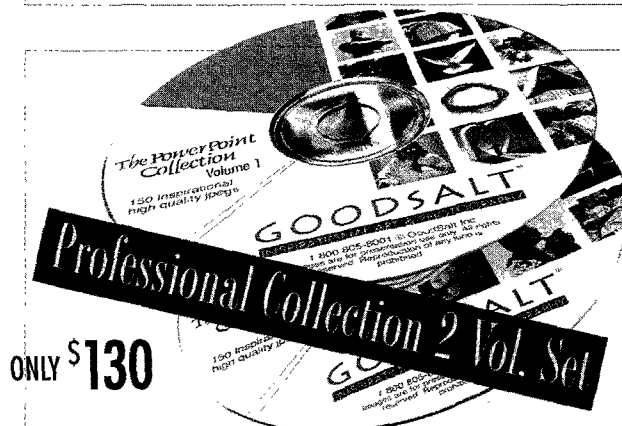
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