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Its Heritage, Character and Quality

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“SHOULD WE BE POSTMODERN TO MINISTER TO POSTMODERNS?” IS AN INTERESTING QUESTION. A SIMILAR QUESTION MIGHT BE ASKED. “SHOULD WE BE MODERN TO MINISTER TO MODERNS?”

Kwabena Donkor’s title question, “Should We Be Postmodern to Minister to Postmoderns?” is an interesting question. A similar question might be asked, “Should we be modern to minister to moderns?” In embracing rationality and objectivism, Western Christianity has apparently answered the latter question with a firm “Yes.” I did not read Selmanovic to be saying that we must wholly embrace postmodern philosophy. Rather, the postmodern critique is held up as a corrective to an overly modern church. Even conservative churches such as the Seventh-day Adventist Church have been unwitting sponsors of a culture not distinctly biblical. At the same time, humanity always lives in the host culture and cannot avoid being shaped by the dominant worldview. Our job is always to articulate the reality of God in the culture in which we live.

Selmanovic’s articles sound an important prophetic note, calling us back to radical, biblical faithfulness. It is not *all* grand narratives that we must oppose. Certainly we cannot. It is the *abuse* of grand narratives to segregate and oppress the minority voice, on the one hand, and their sheer failure to adequately describe reality, on the other hand, that postmodernism rightly opposes. . . .

Similarly, it is the arrogance of objectivism that postmodern philosophy rejects. So, our response as Christians is neither to throw off our “grand narrative,” nor to deny objective reality. Our task is rather to hold out the grand narrative humbly and to let our *selves* speak more loudly than our *words*. Rather than

retreat to the familiar landscape of modernity, let us pick up the pieces left by postmodernism’s project of deconstruction and build again Christ’s vision of a biblical community of love.

—Ryan Bell, Hatboro, Pennsylvania.

The articles by Selmanovic (July and September 2001) and Donkor (May 2002) provide a helpful start in a dialogue that needs our attention. The *language* we use in the world that we seek to win is changing . . . that is the reality of the movement from *modern* to *postmodern*. We have no choice but to carefully understand the changes or the message we proclaim will be changed on its hearing without our being aware of how it is actually heard.

In this needed dialogue, I hope that we do not waste time defending modernity or forcing others to defend postmodernity. The Bible is a document from premodern times, and the Adventist message does not require modernity to be correctly understood or properly proclaimed. If it were true that the Adventist message cannot become postmodern for those who live in postmodernity, then it would have been true that we could not proclaim the Adventist message to the many cultures of the world that were still premodern when our first converts were won among them.

If the Adventist message is a divine, eternal message, as I think we all believe it is, then it can be premodern, modern, and postmodern, just as it can be English, Spanish, Russian, etc. The whole issue of the postmodern mind is no different than the debates about the

King James Version (KJV). I still find individuals who believe that the Adventist message can be taught only (or best) in the KJV, yet the vast majority of Adventist believers never read the KJV.

Jesus died for all, no matter how they think, no matter where in the flow of history they were born. His eternal gospel is for all of them, and my task—our task—is to find out how best to share it with those who do not know it.

—Monte Sahlin, vice president, Columbia Union Conference, Columbia, Maryland.

I commend Kwabena Donkor for his article, in which he wrestles toward a Christian paradigm for reaching postmoderns. As a writer, I would be of all men most miserable (indeed, schizophrenic) were I to accept and practice the culture of each reader group. I take seriously the challenge of understanding them, comprehending their values, and identifying the milestones of their journeys. That’s the challenge postmodernism presents to Christians today.

Jesus Himself never capitulated to the reasoning or lifestyle of either the publicans (the postmoderns of His day) or the Pharisees (His moderns). He understood how to tell stories and pose questions that awoke sensitivities in both. While He ministered to the Pharisees and Sadducees with directness and cut-to-the-chase precision (a style these legal scientists practiced and respected in their lives and careers), Jesus usually waxed mystical and parabolic in His ministry to His postmodern flock (including His own disciples).

In the end, effective gospel commu-
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Free Subscription

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

Of theologians and prophets

The other day I was confronted by a provocative thought. It formed itself into a question: In recent times, has there been a slow but traceable shift in Christian outlook and emphasis, where Christians, especially in Western cultures, have moved from trusting the word and message of the prophet to depending on the interpretations and understandings of the theologian?

During and since biblical times, today's theologians have by all means had their counterparts, but the task and influence of "theology" and "theologians" as we know them today is a relatively recent development belonging to the Christian Church.

Since following this line of thought, I have encountered a host of implications for my personal faith, the Church, and my calling and identity as a minister of Christ. Here is just one: That the prophet primarily receives the content and authority for his message more or less directly from God, while the theologian takes that message and, through an objective process of rational study and dialogue, interprets and processes it to make sense for himself and his audience.

I have always had a genuine and deep respect for the task and role of the theologian, but if the definition or comparison of prophet and theologian outlined above is accurate, it raises some penetrating questions.

For example, has the way we "do theology" in the Church led us to neglect, devalue, downplay, or suspect the prophetic, transcendent voice resident in the message of Christ, the one that comes more supernaturally and depends less upon the rational and

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methodological praxis that modern academic theology demands? In other words, have we come to the place where the theological voice has all but drowned out the prophetic voice, and where our ears are predisposed to hear theological interpretation and note the validity of the theological process while we struggle to hear the prophetic voice?

Let me try to make this crucial line of thought a little more down-to-earth. Everyone who has ever embraced a biblical faith knows that the messages that make up the Bible's content contain more than the mere words that are employed to relay those messages. Most of us gladly confess that the grasping of the biblical message must entail more than just a mental understanding of it. We accept the fact that the Bible is more than a set of instructions which can simply be embraced by the human mind, learned, and then put into practice.

When we hear great poetry, we can hear and palpably sense that the words are filled with an almost magical evocation of meaning that transcends the mere arranging of those words in a particularly clever order. The very same words cannot be used in a mundane or

merely rational way and still possess the capacity to touch us in the way they do through the soul and the pen of the poet. The right word will not only touch us rationally, it will also touch our heart, it will reach us in regions of our conscious and unconscious being that the same line of thought could not, if it were to be expressed in everyday language.

When it comes to the "prophetic" expressions of transcendent "Truth," there is yet a further dimension present—the presence of the Holy Spirit. Hence, of course, our use of the word "inspiration" in its particularly biblical sense.

When we merely "do theology" as we explore the content of the Bible, there is the distinct possibility that we will radically reduce the transcendent content of the biblical message to a study that excitingly exercises the mind while reducing or removing our ability to "hear" beyond the intellect to the recesses of the "heart," where the transformations we long for can actually occur.

To justly join the transcendent and the rational in today's world is the challenge facing every minister. To allow the prophet in us to speak to the theologian and the theologian to inform the prophet, will make a ministry that really has the power we want so much to see in our ministry. Accomplishing this means knowing and meeting our Lord on levels that we have perhaps not yet met Him, and encountering the Holy Spirit in much the way the prophets and the disciples of Jesus did.

Challenging? Yes. But looking about us, we know that it's the crying need of Christian ministers today. ❧

African-American worship:

Its heritage, character, and quality

Clifford Jones

Editorial Note: *While the varied cultures of the Christian world each have their beautiful and distinctive ways of worshiping, there is something uniquely enriching about African-American Christian worship. We believe it embodies underlying patterns of thought and experience that do much to commend it to Christians everywhere.*

Anybody who has observed or participated in an African-American Christian worship service will admit that there is an undeniable difference between the way American Blacks worship and the worship of other racial and ethnic groups. Rooted in their unique social history in America, the difference is more one of function and experience than proof that one style is superior to another.

In this reflection I shall explore contemporary African-American Christian worship, beginning with an examination of the religious heritage African slaves brought with them to the New World. Next, I shall investigate the theology of African-American worship, following with a focus on its characteristics and elements.

I will end with a brief outline of some of the challenges facing Black worship.

The African religious heritage

The Africans who came to America had a myriad of religious beliefs and practices,

including the belief in a transcendent, benevolent God who created the universe and was its ultimate Provider¹ and though Europeans did not introduce the God of the Judeo-Christian ethic to Africans,² seemingly intractable problems have faced those contending that African religious beliefs and practices survived both the “Middle Passage” and the effects of slavery.

One school of thought, championed by E. Franklin Frazier, asserts that slavery in the United States erased all the religious myths the slaves brought with them.³ Conversely, others, among them Melville Herskovits, argue that survivals, residuals, and “Africanisms” are still evident in African-American culture, especially its religious practices.⁴

Striking a balance between these two extremes are scholars like Albert J. Raboteau, who—though admitting that the gods of Africa all but died in America—posit that early African-American religion was a syncretism of the African and the European. This school of thought contends that the African-American religion that remains to this day is a reworked Christianity crafted to meet the unique social context of the African American.⁵

An Africanism, for instance, that survived the “Middle Passage” and had a powerful impact on early African-American spirituality is the African understanding of life. Because Africans tend to view life holistically, the secular and the sacred are not mutually exclusive realities that exist in antagonistic tension but interconnected phenomena. Slaves held on to this understanding of life, and the result was that their worship was restricted to neither time nor place.

A theology of African-American Christian worship

Because people of African descent in North America tend to view life as a single system, their worship is integrative, holistic, and experiential. Traditionally, it has been inextricably woven into the stuff of their life. Born in slavery, weaned under Jim Crow segregation, and reared in discrimination, African-American worship is inseparably linked with Black life.

Community is a grounding principle of Black worship, understood by African-Americans as an encounter involving God, the worshiper, and the broader community.⁶ For them worship is not primarily the expres-



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sion of one's private devotion to God, but is rather a community event. It is the "eschatological invasion of God into the gathered community of victims, empowering them with the divine Spirit from on high to keep on keeping on even though the odds might appear to be against them."⁷

Martin Luther King, Jr. asserted that at its core, and best, Black worship is a social experience in which people from all walks of life affirm their unity and oneness in God.⁸ Always a divine experiment and dynamic happening, it is experienced as a response to the Holy Spirit's call to the believer to cast off his or her coat of cares and enter the divine presence. As God's presence is experienced anew, praise, adoration, thanksgiving, submission, and commitment are offered by the celebrant.

In African-American Christian worship God is known and understood as the One who sides with the weak and oppressed. For Blacks, a God who does not care does not count, and they believe that the sovereign God continues to intervene in history in very concrete ways on their behalf. This God possesses absolute, unlimited power and delights in saving.⁹

God's Son, Jesus Christ, whose incarnational commitment to the poor was evidenced in His suffering, death, and resurrection, holds out hope for the personal and corporate transformation of humankind. There are no metaphysical distinctions between God and Jesus Christ in African-American Christian worship. Through the liberating presence of the Holy Spirit, both God the Father and God the Son are immediately present, and Blacks will fluctuate between calling upon Jesus for strength to help them climb up "the rough side of the mountain" and testifying to an Almighty God about "how they got over."¹⁰

African-American Christian worship is the corporate celebration of what God, through Jesus Christ, has done for the community in diaspora. In worship, celebrants confess their

sins and accept God's forgiveness after they have been confronted by God, made uneasy by His judgments, and consoled by God's grace.¹¹

For African Americans, worship is not as cerebral and rationalistic as it is experiential and dynamic. This is the case because African-American Christian worship focuses not so much on the transmission of abstract ideas and information as it does on the communal sharing of reality.¹²

African Americans, in their worship, do not want only to learn something but to feel something, namely God's Spirit.¹³ They aspire to know God personally rather than to know about God through doctrines and creeds, and they frown on the mere recitation of dogmas as proof that God is known. What matters most is to know God through God's revelational activities in their personal and corporate lives.¹⁴

Yet their emphasis on experience does not mean that their worship is hollow and mere emotion. On the contrary, African-American worship has always held emotion and intellect in creative tension, rejecting the either/or for the both/and paradigm.

Characteristics of African-American Christian worship

Pastoral Care. Few things have provided African Americans with the coping and survival skills so vital to their experience in the United States as has worship. Black worship supplied slaves with effective psychological and emotional medicine to combat slavery's decimation of their sense of being and worth. Today it is still a veritable "Balm in Gilead" that keeps African Americans sane and balanced in their world of traditionalized disenfranchisement and powerlessness. In short, Black worship has always been about pastoral care, providing celebrants with comfort and healing.

How are comfort and healing engendered during worship? Comfort is experienced as worshipers sing songs grounded in struggles that

speak of a better tomorrow and hear testimonies from those who have "come over a way that with tears has been watered." Comfort comes as prayer is offered that reminds celebrants of the power of God to right wrongs, and preachers who know how to speak to aching hearts and confused minds expound the Word.¹⁵

Yet it is in drawing people into God's never-ending story of love that African-American worship functions best as pastoral care. As African Americans become aware of the fact that they have been integrated into God's story, their sense of being and wholeness is validated, and they respond by giving praise to God.

Liberation. Another characteristic of African-American Christian worship is liberation. African-American worship is a celebration of freedom in which people enter and experience the liberating presence of the Holy Spirit. It has been called a "black happening, the time when the people gather together in the name of the One who promised that he would not leave the little ones alone in trouble."¹⁶

A critical aspect of the liberation themes characteristic of Black worship is its refusal to be victimized by the tyranny of the clock. Liberation in African-American Christian worship is also evident in the ways in which music is performed, with Black singers and instrumentalists seldom being content to render a piece as it appears in print. Not uncommonly, they elect to search for notes and chords that strike a responsive strain in the African-American soul and experience.

Empowerment. African-American worship not only comforts and liberates, but empowers for current and future struggles. Historically, the Black church has functioned as an agent of social cohesion, an agency of economic cooperation, a forum for political activity, and, generally, as a haven in a hostile world.¹⁷

Today, Black religious leaders continue to responsibly sensitize African Americans about the social, political,

and religious structures that seek to rob not only them but all of God's people of their God-given rights as persons. Worship leaders make sure that in worship people receive equipment and empowerment to confront these structures and forces.

"We truly worship as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to embody Christ present in and through us," asserts Wilson Costen, who adds that in true and authentic worship there is a "dialectical relationship rather than a dichotomy between faith and practice, justice and ritual action (liturgy and justice), theological talk and doxological living, and sanctification and human liberation."¹⁸

Celebration. A fourth characteristic of African-American worship is celebration. Simply put, Black worship is a celebration of who God is, what God has done, is doing, and will do for His people. Such worship is celebratory because it is rooted in a "theology of thanksgiving honed on the peripheral jagged edges of life."¹⁹

For a people still facing daunting challenges, waking up "clothed in your right mind and experiencing a measure of health and strength" is reason enough to praise God that things are as good as they are. In African-American worship people have a good time in the Lord, and it is not uncommon as they leave a service to hear them ask: "Didn't we have church today?!" Yet to *have church* is not simply to engage in hand clapping, but to experience anew the liberating presence and power of Jesus Christ.

Elements of African-American Christian worship

Among the many elements of Black worship are prayer, music, and preaching. Together, they form a formidable combination for praise and thanksgiving.

Prayer. In the African-American worship service, prayer is an irreplaceable that consists of three critical factors: the individual praying, the

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Dr. Lowry served for several decades as Professor of Preaching at Saint Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Missouri, and also as preacher, teacher, author, and musician – traveling the U.S. and beyond. An ordained United Methodist minister, Dr. Lowry has also earned four academic degrees, including a doctorate in the philosophy of education from the Univ. of Kansas.

His writings include six books on narrative preaching and numerous journal articles ranging from preaching and Biblical study to educational philosophy. Considered one of today's most effective preachers in the English-speaking world, Dr. Lowry has preached in hundreds of churches and conferences in over twenty denominations – and lectured in forty theological seminaries. Come and be blessed by this dedicated man of God!

SCHEDULE & TOPICS

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"The Current Shape of Preaching"

1:30 P.M. Lecture #2

"Options for Biblical Preaching in the Narrative Mode"

5:30 P.M. Lecture #3

"Preparing the Narrative Sermon"

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prayer itself, and the participation of the congregation.²⁰

The Spirit of God takes possession of the person who prays as much as He does the preacher, with the result that the person approaches "the throne of grace" humbly, an empty vessel waiting to be filled. Black prayer is not an escape mechanism, but "having a little talk with Jesus" and "taking your burdens to the Lord."

It is "approaching the throne of grace" on behalf of the community which continues to feel "like a motherless child" and is sure it is still "a long ways from home." More than

in the music, saying that Blacks will forgive poor preaching if the worship service can be salvaged with good music.²²

During slavery music was used to beckon the faithful to a predetermined spot for worship. Slaves understood that music helped to create a feeling of freedom, facilitated an awareness of God's presence, and engendered an atmosphere in which God's grace could be experienced.²³

Unlike the ancient Jews who refused to sing in a strange land (Psalm 137:1-4), slaves sang, bequeathing to Western culture a

cal hermeneutic. LaRue lists as characteristics of African-American preaching strong biblical content, creative use of language, appeal to emotions, and ministerial authority.²⁵

In a similar vein, Calvin B. Rock states that Black preaching is more a function of content than a form or rhetorical style, adding that it is the substance of Black preaching that informs and shapes its style.²⁶

The primary objective of African-American preaching is to enable the listener to experience the grace and love of Jesus Christ, the response to which is usually one of celebration and praise.²⁷ The cross of Christ is ever the substance and sum of Black preaching.

For Black Seventh-day Adventist preachers, the challenge to keep Christ as the core and center of their preaching is even more acute, given the premium Adventists place on content. Yet Rock admonishes Black Adventist preachers to be true to both their cultural heritage and their remnant heritage, believing that Black preaching and Seventh-day Adventist preaching are not mutually exclusive but complementary.²⁸

African-American preaching is at its best when it is undergirded by two important hermeneutical principles. The first is that the gospel must be declared in the language of the people. The second is that the gospel must scratch where the people itch.

Historically, African-American preachers have had no qualms about utilizing these two principles, especially the second. Which is not to say that the Black sermon does not feed the mind as much as it satisfies the soul. Indeed, it is in this regard that the genius of Black preaching is most evident.

An African-American sermon is an experience of truth, not just a notion of truth. It must be felt and not just heard. To be sure, its cognitive elements must be present, but it must be so also when it comes to the emotive realities.

Black preaching is dialogical. It

BLACK PREACHING IS DIALOGICAL. IT TRAVELS BOTH VERTICALLY AND HORIZONTALLY.

poetic posturing, this kind of prayer is "rattlin' the gates of heaven" in the name of Jesus, who "sits high but bows low" and is "always on the main line" where He is ever "a-listenin' to hear somebody pray."

African Americans place a premium on the moment of prayer, which (for many of them) is the high point of the worship service. They will flock to the altar for prayer, firmly believing that there is additional power and efficacy in the extra steps of faith.

Whether at the altar or in the pew, many will participate in the prayer moment with utterances of "Yes, Lord," "Please, God," and "Come, Holy Spirit." Whatever their responses, African Americans are almost always involved in the prayer moment, designed to create a sense that the burdens of life will be made lighter, if they will not be removed altogether, and to offer strength for the journey ahead.

Music. The most tangible transmitter of African-American spirituality, music plays second fiddle only to preaching in Black worship, with the two combining to create the minimum conditions for a fulfilling, elevating worship service.²¹

Wendell Mapson asserts that the power of African-American worship is

genre of music that is uniquely and authentically American—the Negro Spiritual. In the context of slavery the meaning of the Spiritual was at once ambiguous and profound, transcendent and immanent, otherworldly and pertaining to this world.

Thus, Spirituals protested the social conditions in which Blacks were locked even as they pointed to a better day of freedom and justice. Almost always, they communicated on several levels at once.

Preaching. There is little doubt that the African-American preacher occupies a prominent place in Black history. Dating back to slavery, the African-American preacher has been one with the capacity to "tell the story," an ability grounded not so much in book knowledge as in an experience with Jesus Christ and an undeniable call to ministry.²⁴

Today, Black preaching continues to pique, fascinate, and inspire people of all races and walks of life.

What is Black preaching? Cleophus LaRue posits that it is not so much a matter of style or technique as it is a function of the historical and contemporary experiences people of color have had in the United States, out of which they forged a distinctive bibli-

travels both vertically and horizontally. African-American preachers seldom, if ever, mount the pulpit if they have no word from the Lord, and this word is honed and sharpened by the preacher in his or her prayer chamber as well as in the preacher's study.

Black preachers know that each sermon they preach must originate with God, who will not bless the preaching moment if the preacher has not spent ample time with Him. In the pulpit, they carry on an unending dialogue with God and the congregation.

"I feel the Spirit moving" is an utterance the African-American preacher will emit to let the people know that the preacher has established a connection with heaven and is hearing from God. "Help me, Holy Ghost" is a plea for divine help with the delivery of the sermon, to which the congregation may respond, "Help him, Lord."

"Do I have a witness?" is a statement designed to bring the congregation into the preaching moment, while "Tell it, preacher!" or "Preach!" testify that the preacher is onto something substantive.

Because Black preachers take evangelism seriously, they seldom just wind down, wrap up, and take their seats without appealing for people to accept and confess Jesus as Lord. Failure to "open the doors of the church" is an unforgivable sin in the Black church, and the African-American preacher has been known to invite people to accept Christ at funeral services.

The invitation for people to accept Jesus is usually preceded and/or accompanied by a song.

Tasks of African-American worship

With no pretensions to being exhaustive, the following are some contemporary tasks of African-American worship. It must continue:

1. To reflect the communal experience of African Americans without

minimizing the ultimate focus of worship—adoration of and for God!

2. To hold in creative tension its unambiguous emphasis on correcting the injustices and inequities in this world with an eschatological focus on the life to come.

3. To strike a balance between spontaneity and order.

4. To be celebratory without succumbing to emotionalism.

5. To liven up worship and celebrate Christ.

African-American worship has played a vital role in the African-American community. Slaves who did not abandon their African religious heritage came to accept the God of their masters, worshiping God first in the "Invisible Institution" and later in their free churches.

Theirs was a reworked Christianity uniquely suited to meet the needs of their existential situation. A celebration of God's redemptive acts in history and on their behalf, their worship provided them with pastoral care, liberation, and empowerment. Prayer, music, and the preached Word are among the elements of their worship, destined to continue to be a "Balm in Gilead" for the journey ahead. ■

- 1 Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion. The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 11.
- 2 See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1911), 577, 578.
- 3 E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 6.
- 4 Melville J. Herskovits, *The Myth of the Negro Past* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1941), 207-260.
- 5 Raboteau, 58, 59, 86. See also Eugène Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll. The World the Slaves Built* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974).
- 6 Pedroto Maynard-Reid, *Diverse Worship: African-American, Caribbean and Hispanic Perspectives* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 61, 63.
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- 8 Martin Luther King, Jr., *Strength to Love* (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), 48.
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- 16 James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1975), 144.
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- 18 Costen, 126.
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- 20 Harold A. Carter, *The Prayer Tradition of Black People* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1976), 53.
- 21 C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African-American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 346.
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- 25 Cleophus LaRue, *The Heart of Black Preaching* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 1, 6-12.
- 26 Calvin B. Rock, "Black SDA Preaching: Balanced and Binding or Betwixt and Between?" *Ministry*, September 2000, 5-10. For another important perspective on Black preaching, see Leslie N. Pollard, "African-American Preaching: Saga and Song," *Ministry*, May 1995, 5-9.
- 27 Frank A. Thomas, *They Like to Never Quit Praisin' God: The Role of Celebration in Preaching* (Cleveland: United Church Press, 1997), 19.
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Pastoral counseling: The art of referral

Larry Yeagley

Editorial note: *In the January 2002 issue of Ministry, we published an article by Marvin Moore entitled "Recovery and Pastoral Ministry." Letters of disagreement with the article vied with letters of praise. As a result of this difference of opinion, we have asked Larry Yeagley, one of those who questioned the article on co-dependency and who is a premier pastoral counselor in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, to write an article articulating some of the principles a pastor might consider as he or she seeks to find effective referral sources for those who might need counseling beyond the arenas of the pastor's expertise.*

I understand that Gus Anderson is your parishioner. Is that right, Pastor?" asked the cardiologist. "Yes," I responded. "I just began my ministry here, so I am not well acquainted with him."

"I don't think that matters. Right now Gus needs your help. Our cardiology team is doing everything we can, but Gus is discouraged and has spiritual issues that we are not trained to handle. Medicine is our expertise, not religion. I think you can make a difference."

The doctor's phone call during the first month of my pastoral internship taught me a valuable lesson in referral and collaboration. Our results were gratifying. After that experience, whenever Gus introduced me to his friends he'd say, "I want you to meet the pastor who helped save my life."

Years later I was a hospital chaplain. An oncologist stopped at my office. "I'm Dr. Frank. I'm new here and will be admitting cancer patients to the cancer unit. Quite often I have to deliver bad news to a patient. I consider myself a good clinician, but I'm not good at picking up the pieces after I bear bad news. I'm taking you with me to do spiritual follow-up after I visit with families in tough circumstances."

Dr. Frank knew he couldn't do it all. His ability to refer and collaborate made his medical practice more effective.

Pastors who minister within the limits of their competency and use the skills of referral and collaboration when parishioners are in emotional crises are a valuable asset to any congregation. They will realize more healing and spiritual growth in their churches.

Willa D. Meylink and Richard L. Gorsuch reported that while 40 percent of all people seeking help approach a clergy person first, less than two percent of them are referred to mental health professionals.¹ This and similar studies indicate a need for pastors to develop their referral and collaboration skills.

What can a pastor do?

Seminary training prepares clergy to counsel people in spiritual matters, to apply biblical concepts to daily life, and to lead congregations in family-friendly worship. Spiritual care-giving is definitely the pastor's area of competency.

Preventive counseling can also be the unique role of pastors, provided they take time to develop what Henri J. M. Nouwen referred to as therapeutic personhood. This requires ongoing study of how Jesus treated people and the prayerful practice in following His methods.

Preventive counseling includes giving hope and encouragement with compassion and a gentle, pleasant voice. Loud oratory that judges sin with scowls and angry voice tones does not produce hope and healing. Proclaiming God's grace to meet the trials of life breeds positive attitudes and the belief that problems can be surmounted by God's ample, intervening power.

Some time ago I spoke to a large congregation on the west coast of the United States about Jesus' desire to enter into our brokenness and loneliness. More than ten years later I met a family in the east coast of the United



Larry Yeagley is a retired pastor and lives in Charlotte, Michigan.

States who had attended church that day. They told me that they had just gone through a shattering tragedy. They knew that God had led them to *that* church on *that* day. They returned home with confidence that God would walk with them through the shadows of sorrow and depression. This is what I call preventive counseling from the pulpit.

Samuel Chadwick once said that pastors should always speak as broken to the broken, as dying to the dying. I heard Henry Nouwen say that the pastor should never come as strong to the weak, as healthy to the sick, as triumphant to the defeated. The pastor must identify with the infirmity of the infirm and compassionately walk alongside the weary traveler.

Ernest E. Bruder wrote, "Deeply troubled people need a pastor with more than just the requisite skills to detect the depth and extent of their difficulties. They need one who can communicate meaningfully to them that, come what may, they can never be separated from God's compassion and concern."² An emotional crisis can actually be a time of greater openness to the healing grace of God.

Mental health professionals with whom I have worked considered my role to be advantageous and even enviable. In many cases I already knew family histories, including emotional crises. Sometimes I was part of a person's support system during and long after the counseling process. I was a likely person to collaborate with the mental health professional, should that be advisable and agreeable to all parties.

Triage

As hospital chaplain, I took part in many disaster drills. When the "victims" arrived at the emergency room, several physicians with various specialties served as a triage (treatment assignment) team. They diagnosed those involved and sent them to the appropriate treatment areas. I was a member of the comfort and consolation team. I was never part of the

triage team because making medical decisions is not my expertise.

Pastors should become acquainted with the observable symptoms of emotional disorders so they can recognize the need for specialized help, but they are not usually equipped to do psychological triage and diagnosis. Ideally they should have access to a triage professional with the necessary skills.

Some churches contract with a mental health professional to do triage. A few of the pastors in my area have professionals in their churches who volunteer their services to the pastor. The triage professional may or may not end up doing the treatment. Ideally, any referral will be done with

able about making an appointment with a professional whom the pastor knows.

The following ways of developing a referral base were gleaned from interviews with pastors, social workers, and psychologists who are practicing and teaching doctoral students.

Word of mouth. Listen to parishioners who have had counseling. They'll tell you who to see and who to avoid.

Your predecessor. You'll save time if your predecessor shares his or her referral list with you and indicates the outcomes of referrals he or she has made to particular mental health professionals.

COUNSELORS WHO REFUSE THE SERVICES OF MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS MAY RISK THE MENTAL HEALTH AND EVEN THE LIFE OF THE COUNSELEE.

the consent of the parishioner and the collaboration of the pastor and the triage professional.

Recently I asked a licensed psychologist when a pastor should refer. His response: almost always. He and other professionals I interviewed emphasized that this answer is not meant to devalue the role of the pastor. It simply is a recognition that the training of most pastors and the training of mental health professionals are different. Both play a major role in the care of church members and others who are in an emotional crisis.

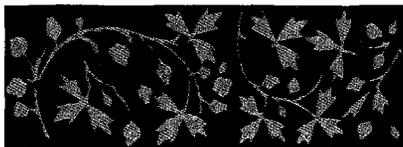
Developing a referral base

Just because the pastor is not an expert at triage, doesn't mean there is no need for him to build a referral base. Ideally the triage person should work with the pastor and the parishioner in making the referral. Many church members are more comfort-

Other pastors. Attend your local ministerial alliance and become acquainted with ministers who have had a fairly long tenure in your community. Once you feel confident of their judgment, ask them to recommend competent mental health professionals.

Physicians. Physicians in your congregation and your family physician may be aware of successful counselors and psychiatrists.

Interview. Mental health professionals are usually willing to be interviewed by phone or preferably in person. They see this as a way of expanding their practice. Ask about their education, licensure, fee scales, average length of treatment, personal religious affiliation or philosophy, approach or approaches used, willingness to consider a person's spirituality and faith values in the treatment process, willingness to collaborate



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with a person's pastor when appropriate and agreeable with the counselee, willingness to learn about the counselee's belief system.

Seminars. Attend seminars that address mental health topics. Listen to the professionals and ask questions about their methods of treatment.

Mental health agencies. Visit agencies that provide mental health services and ask the director about the therapists and their areas of competency.

Funeral directors. Many funeral directors are aware of counselors who are competent to treat complicated mourning situations.

Ministerial alliance. If you are involved in alliance programming, invite various counselors to share their areas of counseling. One psychologist told me such an appointment resulted in several clergy coming to her for counseling.

Chaplaincy. Volunteer your services as an on-call chaplain at your local hospital. This puts you in touch with medical and para-medical professionals who often know reliable mental health professionals.

Keep notes. When parishioners report favorably or unfavorably about their counseling experience, make notes for future reference.

What to avoid

Counselors who refuse the services of mental health professionals may risk the mental health and even the life of the counselee. I have met patients in psychiatric units who attempted suicide and suffered from severe depression for years because "counselors" discouraged them from consulting professionals who would have successfully treated them.

Avoid counselors who have little regard for the sanctity of marriage commitment. A nationally known marriage counselor conducted a conference in my city. He told couples who came for counseling, "You need to know that I believe in saving marriages. If you are here to save your marriage, I'm your counselor. I'm not

in the business of helping people to justify divorce." I admired his approach.

Beware of a counselor who is fixated on one method, some "proven" formula or trendy technique that has supposedly worked for most people. A widely read pop-psych author claims that his "biblical" method heals 60 percent of depressed clients without the use of antidepressants. He relates no research data to back up his claim.

Repressed memory therapy is suspect in the eyes of the mental health professionals with whom I have worked. This approach often creates false memories that complicate the healing process.

Treatment that involves extremely long periods of time and consists mainly of introspection and looking to the past is seldom productive.

"A clinician who regards all religious belief to be pathogenic is not only disregarding the weight of empirical evidence but also is likely to manifest this prejudice in practice."³

Counselors who subscribe to the co-dependency/recovery grassroots movement should be avoided on the basis of the analysis of competent professionals, some of whom have authored well-received pastoral counseling texts. Advocates of the co-dependency disease theory make bold and sometimes contradictory claims.

Sharon Wegscheider-Cruse believes that 96 percent of the population have the primary disease of co-dependency. Anne Wilson Shaef states that trying to generate definitions of co-dependency from a rational, logical premise is a manifestation of this disease process. She estimates that 80 percent of all helping professionals are co-dependent and perpetuating the disease.

There are few who are not affected by the "disease." In Melody Beattie's book *Co-dependent No More* I counted 234 characteristics of this "disease" which she claims is not an all-inclusive list. She sees this "disease" as a process that must be treated by

attending recovery groups for the rest of one's life. John Bradshaw claims that 100 percent of people today are co-dependent.

On the other hand, according to Stan J. Katz and Aimee E. Liu most of the feelings and behaviors listed as co-dependence traits are perfectly normal. They do not indicate that we came from dysfunctional families or are in one now. They do not seek to prove that we are addicts or that we have a dread disease. All they maintain is that the authors of these lists have contrived a theory so broad, so multifaceted that it is virtually meaningless. "According to co-dependence leaders such as Bradshaw, Shaef, and Melody Beattie, everyone is sick until proven healthy. This rule particularly applies to anyone who works in a medical or mental health profession."⁴

Avoiding rejection

Feelings of rejection can be avoided

if pastoral referral is prefaced by a statement similar to the following. "I do not feel competent to guide you in this matter. I would do you a disservice by trying. I value you too much. I'd like to help you find a competent counselor who can help you move through your situation as quickly as possible. With your written permission I will work with you to find the best referral. This doesn't mean I will not be available to encourage you spiritually; in fact, I will meet with you a week or two after your first two appointments to make sure you are satisfied with the referral. Throughout and after your counseling I will be a part of your support system."

It is appropriate to tell your parishioner that you are willing to collaborate with the counselor, not as a second professional counselor, but as a spiritual guide. This, of course, would be with written consent.

An occasional phone call, informal query, or personal visit can be a source

of encouragement to your parishioner.

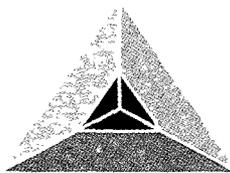
Progress

When I began chaplaincy in psychiatric units, I was viewed with skepticism by some mental health professionals. It took two years of persistent effort to gain permission to attend treatment team meetings.

Progress has been made since then. Empirical research into the effects of integrating spirituality into treatment has been encouraging. More and more, pastors are valued by mental health professionals. Both disciplines are communicating to the benefit of people in emotional and spiritual crises. ■

- 1 See *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 7 (1988): 56-72.
- 2 Ernest E. Bruder, *Ministering to Deeply Troubled People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), 50.
- 3 William R. Miller, ed., *Integrating Spirituality Into Treatment* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1999), 12.
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The perils of pursuing success

We all want to be successful. Every patient I have ever worked with, every friend I have ever known, and every colleague I have ever been associated with wanted to be successful. Deeply spiritual pastors want to be successful. They want to feel that the hours spent preaching and pastoring will bring abundant rewards for the kingdom of God.

No one wants to feel that his or her life has been wasted. But just how far should we go in our pursuit of success? When does our need to be a success work against God's purposes? What is the difference between my motive in seeking achievement and God's wanting me effective in accomplishing His purposes?

Let's face it; success isn't all it's cracked up to be. For one thing it can be extremely hazardous, as we will see. For another it is elusive. There is also the risk that you may build a gigantic church or accomplish some great mission, but lose your family in the process! Is this what God desires in our being successful?

How do we measure success?

When we examine our preoccupation with being successful, two questions arise, and both bother me. First, how does one achieve success in accordance with God's plans and purposes? Second, what is "success" anyway? One hundred church members? A thousand? When has one "arrived" at one's goal?

Let's look at the second question first. If you were to ask an average group of pastors "What does achieving success mean to you?" you will get a wide variety of answers. There is no universal agreement on what it means to be successful, whether you are a businessperson, a lawyer, teacher, or pastor.

My younger brother left school early and started a business. We were rather

ARCHIBALD D. HART



competitive growing up and in our early adulthood joked about who would become successful the soonest.

I asked him to define what success would mean for him. "To be a millionaire before I'm 45" was his reply. I asked him if he would then be content? "Yes," he replied, "I would."

I clearly remember the day he turned 45. I reminded him of his earlier statement and asked whether he now felt that he had achieved his success goal. "No," he replied, "I won't be happy until I make my second million." This is the problem with success: *it is a relative term*. It can be like a mirage that recedes the nearer you get to it. And this is as true for ministry as it is for any other enterprise.

The "gospel of success"

Now let's look at the first question: What does it mean to be successful in terms of the kingdom?

Most evangelicals that I know are success-oriented; their motives for seeking success are generally good ones. They want to achieve the most they can for God's kingdom. If they are in business and want to become rich, it's so they can help the kingdom better.

I must say that I feel that way about a lot of what I do. However, when I write a book, I don't write it without thinking about whether people will buy it or not. Obviously, I want it to sell, and

this drives me to do the best job I can. But is this all there is to my motivation? No. But I'd be naïve to deny any interest in the financial benefits of being an author. It happens to be a part of how I make a living!

This, then, points us to the all-important issue of motive in determining whether God blesses our drive for success. If I feel, and I hope I do, that what I have to offer in my writing can be helpful to others then my pursuit of success is healthy. If my sole motive is to build my fortune, build my ego, or repair my damaged self-esteem, my "theology of success" is in serious need of an overhaul.

Keeping our motives pure is not easy. Our struggle is compounded by our culture that worships success and those who achieve it, and our Christian subculture that has, over the past 50 years, developed its own "gospel of success."

On a recent edition of *60 Minutes* (an American television show), Morley Safer examined the phenomenon of "motivational seminars" that can be found all over North America. Noting that we are obsessed with self-improvement (meaning, of course, how we can become more successful than anyone else), speakers at self-improvement and motivational seminars all across the country have hit the jackpot (their own form of success). Businesses and industries send workers in droves to these seminars to learn how to become more driven and successful in their professions.

Anyone on the seminar circuit with a measure of fame can claim fees of between \$20,000 (ex-athletes) to \$200,000 (ex-presidents) for a good, old-fashioned, homespun speech. Morley cynically interviewed several of these highly-paid motivational speakers, and they all admitted, on camera, that the advice they gave to stadiums full of people was just simple, common sense.

There was no "secret" to success. Like it or not, success has only one essential ingredient: hard work. Unfortunately, this is beyond the price that many are willing to pay!

The three types of success

But motive is only one piece of the puzzle. The Christian world also has its "success stars," those who rise from ashes and become idealized and idolized as successful. Musicians, preachers, and evangelists, to name but a few, are worshiped by us in much the same way as secular people worship movie stars and business entrepreneurs.

"Secrets to building bigger churches," with advice given by successful pastors, is as much a drawing card to our equivalent of motivational seminars as you see in the business world. Next to fixing your motive, you need also to correct your understanding of success. As I have thought about it, I believe there are three types of success:

First: there is the success that is achieved through *good fortune*. You are at the right place, at the right time, with the right idea, and bingo, you become a success. It can be a small book about some prayer in the Bible, or some other new gimmick that attracts people. This type of success doesn't take a genius, just a fortunate coincidence of circumstances. Such success is rare and nearly always unpredictable.

Second: some success is built upon sheer, *extraordinary human effort*. This is the type of success I've already referred to that motivational speakers point to when they say that there is no *secret* to success except three ingredients: *hard work, hard work, and hard work*.

This form of success is consistently achievable to all who do work hard. In fact, I would say that most motivational speakers are correct in asserting that it is your "stinkin' thinkin'" that gets in the way. If your attitude is right and you work hard, you can almost certainly achieve a measure of success no matter what it is you do.

Many big churches are built this way—through sheer superhuman skill and effort, though the leaders don't like

to think that's the case. I am not suggesting that there is anything wrong with this, but *be very careful not to attribute God's blessing to every success story*.

Not everything "big" is necessarily God-given. Or, to put it another way, not everyone who has achieved success in the realm of Christian ministry has done so with God's power and blessing. The kingdom may benefit, but they did it without God's help!

Third, there is *God-driven and -given success*. It has nothing to do with our superior powers, personality, or intellect. God gave the increase, and all you can do is marvel that He chose to use you as His vehicle. This success comes about not because of human sweat and blood, but because the motivation and passion of God's servant so resonated with the heart of God that it was blessed at every turn by His Spirit.

I don't want to sound cynical here, but not all success stories fall into this third category. When pastors fall from their pedestal (as many do from sexual sin perpetrated during times of great success), it becomes very obvious that what they achieved was not brought about by God's power but more likely by human charisma and effort.

The risks of success

This, then, raises the issue I raised at the beginning, namely of how perilous success can be.

Harvard Medical School psychologist Steven Berglas has made a study of success and its perils and has warned of the dangers of too much success. He's talking about the secular world, but I believe his warnings are equally applicable to Christians who succeed.

In an interview with Richard Behar of *Time* magazine entitled "The Bigger They Are, The Harder They Fall," he warns that just when certain people seem to have it all, their kingdoms come crashing down. They are, he believes, victims of a syndrome that a bigger bank account won't be able to cure.

Individuals who are very successful are at risk for what Behar calls the *four A's*. They are the downward steps from whatever pinnacle they achieve. *First*

What every leader ought to know, but seldom asks



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they become *Arrogant*. ("I'm the one who is successful, so you can't teach me anything.") This moves to a state of *Aloneness* (he pulls away from old friends and support systems). From there things shift on to the need for persistent *Adventure*. (I call it an *Addiction* because they are always starting new ventures; the old rapidly becomes dull and boring.) Finally there may be *Adultery*. (No other gratification is pleasurable anymore.)

MOST OF US DON'T EVEN CONFRONT OUR LACK [OF A HEALTHY THEOLOGY] UNTIL WE ENCOUNTER OUR FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT IN THE SCURRY TO OUTDO OUR FELLOW PASTORS.

While Behar is talking about the secular world, *this pattern is precisely the same for highly successful leaders in our Christian world who fall from their pedestals*. I don't think it is necessary to cite any examples as they are pretty well known.

However, it does lead me to suggest this warning: Take careful stock of your motives and vulnerabilities before you ask God to help you become super successful! You may just not be made of the stuff that can survive such an encumbrance!

Can success be orchestrated?

Can one intentionally set about achieving success in God's kingdom? Can one so motivate oneself as to essentially guarantee that God will give you success? I have serious doubts here. I believe that God gives His form of success ("blessing" seems a better word for it) only to those who are able to bear it without their egos deriving all the benefits and risks.

I say this because I believe that God wants our obedience and faithfulness, *before* our service. He is more interested in what we are *becoming* than in what we are *achieving* for Him. In the final analysis, God is not in the success business, but in the refining business (see Job 23:10).

Furthermore, success, in human terms, tends to get in the way of His sanctifying process. At best, we should see success as a "bonus" that God chooses to give or not give. It is *not* a right that we can claim or pursue directly.

Our sole focus and passion must be to serve God to the utmost of our ability, without regard to the benefits that might come to our reputation or to fulfill some deep, unconscious need to achieve. Our satisfaction is in doing His

success than someone who easily raises big crowds.

2. It must avoid all forms of *competitiveness*. While the business world may thrive by creating a competitive environment between its workers and you may enjoy being competitive on the golf course, God never blesses it when we indulge in it in His service. Competition means someone else loses.

Any form of ministry that, for example, pits one church against another is not God-given. Unfortunately, some church growth strategies harm the kingdom by fostering a transfer of believers between competing ministries!

3. Just as you cannot have a Theology of Healing without a Theology of Suffering, you cannot have a Theology of Success without a Theology of Failure. God is as much at work in our failures and disappointments as He is in our successes and accomplishments.

God's purposes are served just as much, if not more, by our failures as by our successes. Failures and disappointments promote character building far more than successes. This is such an important topic that it requires another article to do it justice.

For the Christian pastor and leader the pursuit for success can be hazardous. The pitfalls are many and the temptations subtle. So much emphasis in our cultures is placed on material things and the need for personal success to define who you are that it is easy to think that success only encompasses money, possessions, power, or prestige.

Should one not also seek to be successful in those qualities of human existence that have greater value—honesty, charity, patience, spirituality, and the formation of desirable personality characteristics? We can only satisfy our deepest needs when we have such a balanced definition of success. And success defined this way can never be overdone. ■

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

1 Richard Behar, "The Bigger They Are, the Harder They Fall," in *Time*, November 4, 1991.

Spiritual leadership or baptized secularism?

Rex D. Edwards

The task of a leader," said Henry Kissinger, "is to get his people from where they are to where they have not been." Could this happen in the spiritual organism of the local church, however, if a pastor's leadership style reflects a secular model, even though his or her objectives are spiritual? Could this happen if a pastor treats people as things rather than as persons? Could it happen if the focus is on the growth of the organization rather than on the spiritual growth of persons? I don't think so.

Types of leadership

Church leaders have varying concepts of their status and authority. Many borrow their ideas of leadership from the military, from business, or from some former pastor who has become their ideal and example.

We are conscious of the vast differences existing among the people who guide our activities. Much depends on the pattern of leadership a leader follows. Even more depends upon the kind of person he or she is.

Shawchuck and Heuser argue that "if the leader is broken, duplicitous, angry, then the congregation will reflect these qualities. If the leader is collected, complete, at peace, then the congregation will (eventually) reflect these qualities." They also suggest that "our interior world creates our contextual reality."¹

In this particular context, let's look at three

well-known general patterns of leadership in the church: autocratic, laissez-faire, and democratic.

1. *Autocratic leadership.* James Lundy describes such a leader as one who "makes decisions on his or her own, directs others to implement them, criticizes quickly and perhaps harshly, and influences by intimidation."² Such a leader takes few people into his confidence, and generally keeps authority and responsibility highly centralized in himself.

Frequently this type of leader confesses faith in democracy but insists that he or she is the democrat who will run it. Such a leader is willing to delegate responsibility, but refuses to share authority. Subordinates are given little or no part in formulating the policies which they are expected to carry out.

Weldon Crossland describes the autocratic leader as "a kind of one-man army of the Lord. He is commander in chief, master sergeant, corporal, and private. . . . He is 'the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral.'"³ Usually such a leader lacks faith in people and in himself. Leaders who feel insecure usually tend to be autocratic. They avoid sharing responsibility and developing others as leaders, fearing it might raise up rivals.

2. *Laissez-faire leadership.* Michael J. Anthony describes this type of leader as one who "likes to maintain the status quo and prefers not to make a scene about anything. It may not be the best way of doing something, but as long as it works, why try to change it? This person's motto is, 'If it isn't broken, don't fix it.' They prefer to work alone in their office, far removed from the action. . . . [They] are non-confrontive and 'go with the flow.' . . . These people are seen more as kindhearted chaplains than commanders of the troops."⁴

Ted W. Engstrom concludes that "this style is practically no leadership at all and allows everything to run its own course."⁵ Such a leader develops an immunity to most administrative of the organizational work of the church. He or she is likely to say this kind of thing: "I always leave everything to my laymen." That the work of his church suffers doesn't seem to trouble such a leader, nor does he or she sense that denying encouragement, experience, and inspiration to those who work with him is crippling to the congregation. Such a leader may be described as a democratic leader in neutral.



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3. *Democratic leadership.* This leader sees herself as a guide and counselor. She helps the group define and achieve its (not her own) objectives, helps the group plan its program, and develop its method. She seeks to get her followers to work with her, not for her. She believes that democracy is

democrats believe that the end justifies the means. Such a leader “uses people and rides their aspirations to increase his authority. He often gets their consent for decisions, but this is done by manipulation, hiding the true facts, and through the means of control and threat.”⁸

rather than positional basis. Distinctions dictated by the gifts of the Spirit highlight various spheres of service, not authoritarian position.

Christ’s own teaching on the subject is unmistakable, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, . . . whoever wants to be first must be your slave” (Matt. 20:25-27, NIV). John R. W. Stott remarks, “Autocratic clericalism is destructive of the Church, defiant to the Holy Spirit and disobedient to Christ.”¹⁰

What is required of spiritual leaders? Certainly those selected as spiritual leaders in biblical times did possess qualities similar to those who function in business and civic organizations. The distinct difference, then, was the presence and enabling power of the Holy Spirit, which is why secular leadership styles are inadequate models for the body of Christ.

When a leader is filled with the Holy Spirit he or she possesses character qualities that reflect this reality. Such leaders engender respect, care, and concern for others. Christian servants will demonstrate leadership in a flexible manner and according to the direction that God provides.

The objectives of leadership

Yale sociologist Vance Packard describes the objective of leadership as “the art of getting others to want to do something you are convinced should be done.”¹¹ If this is true, then a church leader needs to address the questions, “What am I trying to do in and through these people?” “How can I help them to develop their full potential?” “What am I trying to accomplish in and through this church?”

Andrew W. Blackwood lists eight of the major goals a pastor may reach for. These are: (1) “New Testament evangelism,” (2) “Christian nurture,” (3) “Household religion,” (4) “Church friendliness,” (5) “Community betterment,” (6) “National missions,”

THE DISTINCT DIFFERENCE, THEN, WAS THE PRESENCE AND ENABLING POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, WHICH IS WHY SECULAR LEADERSHIP STYLES ARE INADEQUATE MODELS FOR THE BODY OF CHRIST.

dynamic, developmental, and creative, in that it calls for the participation of the many, and places great importance on people and how they fare.

“Democracy,” says Ordway Tead, “has high in its constituent elements the aim of conserving and enhancing the personality of all individuals—the idea of respect for the integrity of the person and of the primary value of developing persons as worthy and worthwhile ends in themselves. . . . This includes,” says Tead, “the discovery and use of unique talents, the fullest possible expression of creative powers, the responsible assumption of a share in shaping the conditions which are found to make growth in the quality of personal living possible.”⁶

T. V. Smith distinguishes between authoritarianism and democracy when he says that the autocratic leader is strong in proportion to the ignorance of his followers, whereas the democratic leader is strong in proportion to the intelligence of the followers.⁷

We all have worked with church leaders, who, while giving lip service to the democratic process, deny it in practice. Such leaders frequently staff their team or elect subordinates who will “go along” with their ideas and programs. Dictators disguised as

Thus, leadership style is a moral choice: A leader chooses whether to respect human personality (as Jesus respected it) or whether to treat persons as things.

Leadership for a spiritual community

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is a spiritual democracy; each member holds equal standing with every other member.

E. Y. Mullins argues, “Democracy in church government is an inevitable corollary of the general doctrine of the soul’s competency in religion. Man’s capacity for self-government in religion is nothing more than the authority of Christ exerted in and through the inner life of believers, with the understanding always, of course, that He regulates that inner life in accordance with His revealed Word. . . . The priesthood of all believers, again is but the expression of the soul’s competency on the Godward, as democracy is its expression on the ecclesiastical side of its religious life.”⁹

The members of New Testament churches were equal in rank and privilege. Those who led local “congregations” were ordained for service, not for rule; for leadership, not lordship. The leadership roles identified in Ephesians 4:11, 12 reveal a functional

(7) "Universal brotherhood," and (8) "World missions."¹² If the church is deeply concerned with persons, could not all these goals be comprehended in one all-embracing objective of building Christian character?

A pastor's objectives ought to be set in the framework of persons who have been redeemed, reborn, and grouped together voluntarily in a "beloved community." An interest in persons should lead to an interest in the growth of persons.

The pastor's chief role is to facilitate the development of Christian character and in building a spiritual climate conducive to the growth of a true spiritual community. He is a leader motivated by love, with vision and compassion, who has faith in people and believes that people grow through voluntary cooperation—not coercion.

One way people grow is by becoming involved in developing and maintaining the policies and programs of the church. Detailing for people what to do and how to do it stifles individual creativity and produces spiritual dependency. Like canaries, they become content in captivity and will always want to stay in the cage, even when the door is wide open.

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner argue: "Leaders build teams with spirit and cohesion, teams that feel like family. They actively involve others in planning and give them discretion to make their own decisions. Leaders make others feel like owners, not hired hands."¹³

Why are some pastors unable to share responsibilities with congregants? Is it a quest for power and popularity? Or is it the desire to be an executive who directs others and has them answer to his or her every beck and call? Is it vanity and self-glory?

Bert Haloviak, director of Archives and Statistics at the General Conference, reports that James White, a church leader of the "patriarchal pattern . . . cast in the heroic mold," apparently had difficulty delegating

responsibility. A month after his death, his wife Ellen was on her knees "pleading with the Lord for light in regard to [her] duty." While praying she fell asleep and dreamed of riding in her horse-drawn carriage with her husband driving and seated next to her. Later she wrote out the conversation that took place between them in her dream, in which James confessed, "I have made mistakes, the greatest of which was in allowing my sympathies for the people of God to lead me to take work upon me which others should have borne."¹⁴

Spiritual leadership involves viewing the church as a school, of which the pastor is the supervisor, with various correlated activities of worship, teaching, training, service, recruitment, care of membership, public relations, officer and teacher training, organization, and administration. The pastor is the dean and all the members are his colleagues in ministry.

The spiritual leader

Techniques of administration alone do not make a successful leader. What a leader is as a person is of greater importance than the leadership role assumed. A Christian leader is first of all a Christian. With a God-directed life empowered by the Holy Spirit, a servant-leader lives what he or she professes.

In their most recent book, Kouzes and Posner identify "credibility" as the key. They advise, "Leaders will have to nurture their relationships with constituents. They will have to show people that they care, every day. They will have to take the time to act consciously and consistently. Their actions must speak louder than their words. Leadership, after all, exists only in the eyes of the constituents."¹⁵ The pastor is God's leader living out the life of Christ in the midst of the people. He or she is first and foremost a witness of God's grace, serving not to benefit him or herself but the congregation.

The leader must believe in himself before he can accept, believe in, and

serve others. "The insecure and deprived personality has not the basic requisites for full and free belief in others and for identification with their problems and needs.' Psychologists have discovered again and again that people who are too 'wrapped up' in their own problems are simply incapable of being much concerned with the problems of others."¹⁶

The Christian leader would say to his people, "The love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one has died for all; that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who for their sake both died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:14, 15, RSV).

The Christian leader will choose "service over self-interest"¹⁷ and will follow the admonition of Peter to "tend the flock of God that is your charge, not by constraint but willingly, not for shameful gain but eagerly, not as domineering over those in your charge but being examples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2, 3, RSV). ■

- 1 Norman Shawchuck and Roger Heuser, *Leading the Congregation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993), 111, 56.
- 2 James Lundy, *Lead, Follow, or Get Out of the Way* (San Diego: Pfeiffer and Co. 1993), 92.
- 3 Weldon Crossland, *Better Leaders For Your Church* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), 14.
- 4 Michael J. Anthony, *The Effective Church Board* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1993), 135.
- 5 Ted W. Engstrom, *The Making of a Christian Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 71.
- 6 Ordway Tead, *Democratic Administration* (New York: Association Press, 1945), 58, 59.
- 7 See T. V. Smith, *The Democratic Way of Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), chapter 6.
- 8 Engstrom, *op.cit.*, 174.
- 9 E. Y. Mullins, *The Axioms of Religion* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1997), 66.
- 10 John R.W. Stott, *One People* (Downer's Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1971), 33.
- 11 Vance Packard, *The Pyramid Climbers* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962), 170.
- 12 Andrew W. Blackwood, *Pastoral Leadership* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1949), 16-19.
- 13 James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Pub., 1987), 131.
- 14 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, 10:38-40 (September 12, 1881). Ellen G. White Estate, Silver Spring, Maryland.
- 15 Kouzes and Posner, *Credibility* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Pub., 1993), 56.
- 16 Franklyn S. Haiman, Ph.D., *Group Leadership and Democratic Action* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1950), 115.
- 17 Peter Block, *Stewardship* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1993), 49.

In the name of God?

Pastoral responses to religious terrorism

Jonathan Gallagher



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In the name of God, the most merciful, the most compassionate. . . . In the name of God, of myself, and of my family . . . I pray to You, God, to forgive me from all my sins, to allow me to glorify You in every possible way.

“Oh God, open all doors for me. Oh God who answers prayers and answers those who ask You, I am asking You for Your help. I am asking You for forgiveness. I am asking You to lighten my way. I am asking You to lift the burden I feel.

“God, I trust in You. God, I lay myself in Your hands. I ask with the light of Your faith that has lit the whole world and lightened all darkness on this earth, to guide me until You approve of me. And once You do, that’s my ultimate goal.”

Amen! Amen! Right?

Wrong! However pious they sound, these are the words of Mohammed Atta, the terrorist leader who flew the first plane into the World Trade Center on September 11.

As ministers, how do we relate to these huge issues of religious extremism, the hijacking of faith and religion to serve terrorist ends, and the violation and exploitation of all manner of legitimate liberties, both civil and religious in the name of God?

Our inhumanity

“Man’s inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn,” wrote Scottish poet

Robert Burns. What’s worse is that this inhumanity is often done with religion as the pretext.

“How could anyone do this?” is the question asked so often in the light of the work of terrorists. Often this question is soon followed by, “How could God allow such a thing?” Tragedies and disasters bring out the fundamental questions of faith, and in pastoral settings its important to be ready—not with pat and easy answers, but to share in the agony of grappling with such questions.

In the name of God?

Of all the aspects of terrorism, the most disturbing is the appeal to religious faith to vindicate and support it. “Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from a religious conviction,” wrote Pascal—hundreds of years ago.

First, and most importantly, such claims, at least as Christians understand them are a *terrible blasphemy of an authentic faith in God*. The belief that God would approve of terrorist carnage is similar to the belief that pagan human sacrifice placates the wrath of the gods, as in the case of those who burned their children to satisfy Molech.

To claim such acts are committed with divine authority and approval, “in the name of God,” is the greatest perversion of religious belief. That God should sanction such evil acts is to clothe divinity with the attributes of the demonic. To counter such misrepresentation is the responsibility of all those who speak for the truth of God—to be His witnesses, a spectacle to angels and to men, as to the real nature and character of the God we trust.

So the best antidote is—as always—the clear exposition of the truth about our loving and trustworthy God. When confronted by the devil himself, Jesus answered with reference to the Word of God. That is the source, more now than ever. As the controversy rages, we need the Bible as our foundation to stand for the right against evil.

Case studies

The daily news throws up case studies of religious extremism and intolerance. Take, for example, Indonesia. For many years, Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus—in fact, believers of just about every faith under the sun—lived together in relative tranquility.

Then came the bombshell of inter-religious conflict, set off by a dispute over a taxi cab fare! The issue boiled over, and in spasms of violence thousands have been killed, and hundreds of thousands displaced. Holy wars, forced conversions, rape, and mutilation—all because of new-found hatred between the believers of various religions.

This example provides clues as to what is really going on. It is not in the actual religions themselves that the hatred arises. Rather the intolerance and violence comes from the exploitation of religion, the extremism that hijacks religion and makes it a tool with which to attack “the enemy.” Religion becomes the identifier, the labeler, which is conveniently used first to identify some politically charged cause and then to justify any evil that might be deemed necessary to eradicate the opposition.

Because faith or religion help a society define itself, those seeking political power and partisan goals will readily use religion as a potent weapon. This kind of exploitation of religious belief is not new. Witness the jihads and crusades from history, where both Muslims and Christians were involved. That which frightens us is the projection that this use of religion will increase in intensity, impact, and extent, becoming the dominant destructive wave in the foreseeable future.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban used religion as a powerful, political tool. Claiming a mandate from their interpretation of the Koran, the Taliban barred women from participating in education and many aspects of society, decreed death to anyone leaving the Islamic faith or encouraging another to do so, banned access to the Internet, destroyed religious heritage of other faiths (for example, the Buddhist statues), and required religious minorities to wear a distinguishing label (reminiscent of Hitler’s yellow-star requirement for Jews). Religion was hijacked in the service of a dominating political power.

Even in the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan, where Buddhism is the state religion, this normally open and accepting religion of peace and love has been exploited. The idea of “militant Buddhism,” which might seem

which is complex, having religious, political and ethical roots, . . . has diverse objectives (purely political and/or religious), respects no religion. It has hijacked Islam (as in Afghanistan, Egypt, India, Indonesia,

IN ALL THIS, THE CASUALTIES ARE THE RELIGIONS THEMSELVES AND THE AUTHENTICITY OF RELIGIOUS FAITH ITSELF, ALONG WITH THE FREEDOM TO BELIEVE, PRACTICE, AND WORSHIP THAT GO ALONG WITH RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE.

like a contradiction in terms, is now a real possibility. In Buddhist Bhutan, conversion to other religions is illegal. Attacks on minority religious groups are increasing. Christians have been arrested and beaten. Some have been forced to leave the country.

Preaching religious freedom

The principles of religious liberty that are part of traditionally Christian nations are all too often taken for granted. They are increasingly under threat. While nations nominally subscribe to such international instruments as the *UN Charter*, the *Universal Declaration on Human Rights*, and the *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*, such documents no longer seem to be as well respected as they once were.

Consequently, it is surely imperative to preach these fundamental principles of religious liberty, speaking out for the God of responsible freedom. For coerced religion is no religion at all. The very nature of authentic faith calls for the heart and life of the believer, as the Bible makes so abundantly clear.

Professor Abdelfattah Amor, United Nations *Special Rapporteur* on Religious Intolerance, writes in his latest annual report of “the ever-worsening scourge of extremism. This phenomenon,

Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, the Philippines and Turkey), Judaism (in Israel), Christianity (in the country of Georgia) and Hinduism (in India).¹

In all this, the casualties are the religions themselves and the authenticity of religious faith itself, along with the freedom to believe, practice, and worship that go along with religious tolerance and freedom of conscience.

The result of religious terrorism is the fracturing and destruction of society, and the degrading and debasing of humanity. For as any individual’s religious freedom is violated, we are all violated. For there can be no actual truth in force and imposition, in hatred and violence. In the words of Thomas Clarke, “All violence in religion is irreligious, and that whoever is wrong, the persecutor cannot be right.”

“The slayers of the heretics are the worst heretics of all,” said Balthasar Huebmaier, an Anabaptist leader.

“Religious conflict can be the bloodiest and cruelest conflicts that turn people into fanatics,” said William J. Brennan, U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

We have learned, haven’t we, how right they are. ■

1 E/CN.4/2001/63, 46 available at: <[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/\(Symbol\)/E.CN.4.2001.63.En](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridocda/huridoca.nsf/(Symbol)/E.CN.4.2001.63.En)>

Conflict can be healthy for a church

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In a 1996 survey published in *Christianity Today*, the following were revealed as the reasons ministers leave ministry or are pressured to resign: 46 percent left the ministry due to a conflict in vision between themselves and their church; 38 percent due to personality conflict with board members; 32 percent due to unrealistic expectations being placed on them; 24 percent due to lack of clear expectations; 22 percent due to personality conflict with nonboard members, and 21 percent due to theological differences.¹

Statistics like these remind us of one of the hazards of doing ministry. They also point out the potential destruction behind such conflict leading to hostility, usually without reconciliation. Fortunately, Christians dislike conflict. We expect our churches to be communities of reconciliation and wholeness.

At the same time, we need to discover the power of the negative. We feel that all conflict is unchristian, and that we can promote peace simply by avoiding it or never talking about it. But, regardless of our fears of conflict and our desire not to confront it, the truth is that conflict is here to stay.

Generally speaking it is difficult for us to cope with church conflict, particularly conflict between individual Christians and between groups within the congregation. Controversy seems to be the negation of much for which we stand. It seems to be a force which separates rather than one that

has the potential of bringing people together.

We expect conflict to stay outside the church. We can accept tensions between the church and the world, but the existence of strife inside the church is very disturbing. For many conflict implies weakness and failure to live up to the expectation of the light given to us and our calling to share this light with the world.

The constructive side of conflict

I used to think of all church conflicts as being diabolically motivated by the adversary. Like fires set by a sinister arsonist they were started to destroy the church from within, and any member or pastor who engaged in any form of church conflict was an instrument of the devil and needed to be watched.

Experience, however, has taught me otherwise. My study of conflict in the Bible has caused me to look at it in a more positive light. If approached from a spiritual context, conflicting issues can strengthen the church and unify the body.

When we understand the nature of conflict, it helps us to get a handle on it before we are overwhelmed. Conflict has to do with the recognition, communication, and resolution of difficulties. Conflict, when seen through the eyes of the Scriptures, need not ultimately lead toward upheaval and destruction, and can be directed toward constructive ends.

It is a process which in itself is neutral, moving from chaos to reconciliation. It becomes valuable or threatening only as people experience its peculiar and redemptive way of joining the old established way to the new. Well-directed conflict can keep our churches vibrant and growing. James D. Berkley believes that "where there is absolute-ly no dissatisfaction, no vision of anything better, and no pain, there is little chance of action. A church with a healthy amount of tension and conflict is a church alive."

New Testament models of conflict resolution

The New Testament gives us several models of conflict resolution that lead to reconciliation and healing, empowerment of the church and to the united proclamation of the gospel by those initially involved in the conflict.

Acts 15 relates a chapter in the lives of Paul and Barnabas who returned from an extensive missionary journey after carrying the gospel to

the Gentiles. Their success among the Gentiles was discounted by Jewish Christians who insisted that no one could be saved unless he was first circumcised. All the conversions claimed by Paul and Barnabas were being ignored. Significant dissension was created in the Antioch congregation.

This social and theological conflict definitely had the potential to split the young Christian church. However, a wise decision-maker took control of the situation and appointed Paul and Barnabas and some unidentified persons to go to Jerusalem to consult with the apostles and elders.

The apostles listened as both sides set forth their respective arguments. Then Peter arose to speak in support of the position now referred to as "the gentile inclusion." James proposed that a letter be drafted by the apostles and elders which would, in essence, offer the Gentiles "the right hand of fellowship" on the condition "that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood" (Acts 15:20).

This amounted to a reasonable compromise which produced a win/win resolution of the conflict. The apostles and elders in Jerusalem, who were the acknowledged leaders of the church, chose to operate an open rather than closed membership; that is, they provided for input from Paul and Barnabas. The emotions of the conflict were abated. The narrow mentality of destructive conflict was avoided. Trust was generated. The result was resolution.

What brought this conflict to a healthy and unified conclusion was not simply a recommendation by the apostles that pleased the contenders. While we should not minimize the important part played by the apostles in Jerusalem or the prudence of the group's recommendation, still, the credit must go to the magnanimity of the church which along with Barnabas and Paul took the important steps necessary to lead to a peaceful resolution.

Conflict management principles in Acts 15

First, they made a genuine effort to seek further clarification as to their theological understanding of the issue that caused the conflict. By taking this step, they diffused the problem and limited its potential for escalation.

McSwain and Treadwell call this action "problem-solving analysis," the phase whereby "the group is moved to a decision." At this stage, we can consider all the gathered facts, feelings, and opinions about the conflict, then we consider options for solving the problem. By taking this action, the church in Jerusalem successfully avoided making a substantive conflict into an interpersonal conflict. They kept the priority of resolution in constant focus during the conflict. Its mission and purpose took precedence over personal feelings as to who was right or wrong.

Second, the local church, along with Paul and Barnabas, respected the highest authority of their body. Without respect for the higher authority, especially when in conflict, it is difficult to accept the recommendation coming from that authority and, much more to seek its help to bring the conflict to a healthy conclusion.

The model of Acts 6

Another biblical model of conflict resolution is recorded in Acts 6. Greek Christians were complaining that their widows were neglected in the welfare distribution. They claimed that favoritism was shown to the Jewish widows.

Again, Peter played a major role in arbitrating the conflict. He set forth the divinely inspired idea of appointing laypersons to manage the welfare system, thereby freeing the apostles to devote full attention to the ministry. This proposal "pleased the whole multitude" (verse 5).

This was a principle-centered conflict with strong ethnic overtones. It was creatively resolved because Peter and the apostles were not defensive.

They listened to the complaints and came up with an acceptable decision. As a result, the church was strengthened and focused more on its mission.

Regrettably not all conflicts in Scripture end with an outcome that kept all parties together. For instance, in Acts 15:36-41, Paul and Barnabas "sharply contended" over whether or not to include John Mark on their second missionary journey. Mark had deserted them during the first journey. Paul therefore considered him unfit for the task. Barnabas saw it differently. Neither of them would budge from his position. The result was a resolution of a different kind. Paul chose Silas as his partner, Barnabas took John Mark.

Although the apostles went their separate ways, the resolution proved beneficial to the church. Paul and Barnabas promoted the expansion of the gospel, and eventually the rift between them was healed. This means that some conflict settlements can end up with each party going their separate ways. This is not necessarily bad or unspiritual. Instead, it can be a blessing to the church by expanding the gospel and it can promote the well-being of those involved.

In the case of such a separation, however, we should always keep in mind that splitting a church through conflict has the potential of being devastating for the church and the parties involved. Such divergence should be carefully considered.

We should study whether or not separation will ultimately bring success to the work of the Lord and the degree of healing that will take place. For if the conflict escalates to the level where individuals become bitter, are severely injured, or are maligned, they will feel personally humiliated.

These negative emotional experiences can scar the minds of the affected individuals and foster a spirit of hostility and revenge. When this occurs it creates an environment in which people may lose respect for organizational authority and weaken

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A perfect leader does not exist

V. Neil Wyrick



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My first pastorate consisted of one small-town church and three country churches. In my entire ministry, I never again worked with such a cooperative group of people. They shared my belief that nothing ventured is nothing gained. My managerial skills were scarcely tested. I would learn, however, that negotiation abilities were a must. In my next big city church, agreement was not always so easily managed.

"If only the seminary had better prepared me in the art of leading." I have heard this constant echo from fellow pastors through the years.

All negotiation takes place in the midst of conflicting interests and potential gains and losses. If there were no differences of opinion there would be no need for give and take. Therefore, we pastors must first be sure an agenda deserves the passion we are giving it, and then we must be able to duplicate that passion in those we are trying to convince. Basically we need to say to our members, "Come stretch with me."

The days when a pastor could command are largely gone. Perhaps they never really existed. The managerial language of the past—words such as "blunt," "compel," "rigid"—must be replaced by "evoke," "counsel," "stimulate." A leader who is constantly geared for battle and on the defensive only

builds walls. As far as possible we need to allow people to love us. We need to give them the gift of feeling good about themselves because we have let them help us. Whether a church staff is paid or voluntary, selling rather than just telling is more than important, it is a must!

A good leader is vitally attentive

Part of any successful leadership guidance is allowing our ears to grow twice as large and our mouths twice as small. Good listeners learn people's hot buttons. Poor listeners create cold shoulders. The ability to really listen is a crystal ball. It allows pastoral leaders to foretell the future. It bequeaths advance knowledge of whether people are preparing roadblocks or laying out stepping stones.

I now realize that often in my early years I was so overwhelmed by my enthusiasms that I failed to hear conflict rumbling as it approached in the background. Today I don't try to sell an idea on the telephone. Listening is more than being aware of words and a tone of voice. Listening with the eyes is equally as important. When we are physically present with people, we can see if we are boring them to death or if their eyes have lighted up! When we are with them, we can watch when their fidgeting fingers send us signals.

We cannot afford to just talk. We must listen with all our senses. I still remember a church officer telling me *yes* on the phone and voting *no* at a meeting. I obviously missed clues he might have given had we talked face to face.

Our emotions play a great part in decision making, so attentiveness to others finds and defines their feelings as we observe them carefully. Are the facts they are receiving the ones we are giving, or are they being interpreted to fit preconceived ideas? Is the individual being stubborn, or just slow to understand?

Too much managing and negotiating is like an opera being played out on the stage of life. "*Me, me, me*" sing out both players while neither pays enough attention to the pros and cons. Change the "*me, me, me*" to "*you, you, you*" and it's amazing how much more attention the other person will pay to what we have to say.

"I've always thought that was a good idea," a lay leader said to me. Not thirty minutes earlier he had been firmly against what I was suggesting. I had just practiced "*you, you, you*"

with him and though my ego cried out for credit, my common sense was willing to settle for success without it.

Can a pastoral leader be too nice? Well, it certainly is possible to give organizational subordinates so many opportunities to make decisions that nothing gets decided. We have to have goals, and leadership should submit them: financial, spiritual, educational. If we do not have goals and objectives, without even realizing it, a church may be racing full steam ahead—in the wrong direction.

Skills indispensable to leadership

Like everyone else, I have always preferred yes to no, but I have tried to let time teach me what good leadership skills really are. My conclusions are that certain basic questions must always be asked: (1) Am I unpredictable? (2) Am I a nagger? (3) Do I wear a chip on my shoulder more often than I give a pat on the back? (4) Am I a negative or a positive motivator? (5) Do I allow church employees or volunteers any say in decisions that affect both their work at church and their daily lives? and (6) Do people feel that pleasing me is more important than doing what they feel is best? Are they afraid to suggest what they think is best or better?

Who are good leaders? They are those whom we would follow even if they had no authority. They are environmental experts who keep the atmosphere cool and content while at the same time warm and caring.

"I'm a youth expector, not a youth director," said my youth leader with a grin, but we both knew it was the secret of our youth director's success. A boy or girl, man or woman is "dis-respected" when not given the dignity of great expectations. No one seeks insignificance.

Good leadership learns early that delegating is as important as doing. It is amazing how many ministers believe this but don't practice it. It's a common feeling if it is not actually expressed verbally: "If I want it done

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right I have to do it myself." It's difficult to remember the number of times we've heard this litany or others very much like it.

Why delegate? Even Jesus delegated when He gathered together His special twelve. There are only 24 hours in a day, and being exhausted because a ministry has become an ego trip certainly doesn't deserve commendation.

Some may be happy when you "burn the midnight oil" but no course in managerial efficiency would recommend this, providing you have staff (paid or volunteer) who could be doing what you have chosen to do. In short, are you a perfectionist who

wants to rewrite every letter, redesign every bulletin, and re-work every detail of every project?

A parishioner can certainly be counseled more effectively if the pastor isn't exhausted from trying to do everything. A sermon can receive the time needed to make it better if a minister can accept the fact that other styles of accomplishment may be as good, just different. Ministerial mentors who have accomplished miracles of leadership are those willing to trust other people's abilities.

Good leadership should also sometimes be physical—a hand of encouragement on the shoulder, and

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Pastoral care: The Holy Spirit and the human spirit

Neville A. Kirkwood



Neville A. Kirkwood, D.Min., is a retired Baptist minister living in Queensland, Australia.

Pastoral care is ministry to people. It is a ministry that delivers the will and love of God in hours of need and opportunity. It encourages those who battle the trials of life and celebrates with those who rejoice in the blessings they receive. It is a cooperative ministry with those who are experiencing the exultations and injuries of life.

A young couple revels in joy over the birth of their first child. A parent is ecstatic over a son or daughter selected for a national sporting team or a university research award. Standing alongside those joyous parents is as much pastoral care as being with parents who have received news that their ten-year-old has been diagnosed with leukemia. The emotions present may differ widely yet the pastoral touch in each case is designed to put the high and the low in proper perspective.

The pastor's relationship with the person he or she is encountering is an integral part of counseling. A pastoral care professional enters into a spiritual, pastoral relationship with the one to whom he or she ministers. To enter into such a relationship requires the ability to earn the respect, confidence, and trust of the other person. This entry is much easier when the person is on an emotional high. On the other hand, when tragedy or other seriously negative experience requires pastoral care, often suspicion of the pastor is strong and has to be overcome.

In encounters with people in pain, pastors need to show that they identify with and are fully aware of the anxiety of the sufferers. There are times when those we are ministering to may not be fully alert to the ramifications of their situation.

The genuine care and sensitivity a pastor demonstrates at such times enables him or her to get alongside the hurting ones. The listening ear, the supportive presence, and the caring relationship of the pastor help to ease the suffering and begin the path to recovery.

A family rushes scared and overwhelmed into the hospital emergency room. Their loved one has been involved in a serious accident, has suffered brain damage, and is in the operating room. The news is shocking. The family feels a sense of total helplessness.

Each family member's emotional reaction is different from the others. The pastor or the chaplain, perhaps a total stranger to the family, arrives on the scene. Just as he or she begins to discern the devastation the family has experienced comes the shattering news: The injured family member has died in surgery.

The pastor is in the center of the situation, and needs to develop a sense of family relationship. This is the relationship that Jesus showed as the most needed way: "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt. 25:40, NKJV). Pastoral care is not just preaching the gospel; it is living the gospel.

A Spirit-dependent ministry

How is a pastor trained in pastoral care? No theological degree, no supervised training, no counseling diploma, no knowledge of psychology—however important they may be—can equip a pastor with the skills of a caring ministry. The basic qualification lies elsewhere: in the Holy Spirit.

Years ago when client-centered counseling was in vogue, social workers often used certain phrases from Carl Rogers, such as, "I hear you saying" or "It seems to me you are . . ."

Once the mother of a seriously ill child pleaded with me not to let a certain social worker near her. This mother felt as if the social worker was psychoanalyzing her. Patients have made similar requests concerning their pastors.

Pastoral care, like all church ministries, must be directed by the Holy Spirit. Knowledge is important. Training is essential.

But unless we pastors come under the scrutiny and warm influence of the Holy Spirit we will be of minimal help when we are most needed. Those who are technically and professionally self-assured, but do not have the presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, will not be able to fully perceive and identify with the depth and extent of the underlying needs of the struggling person.

Discerning the need for pastoral care

While church members do call upon the pastor for counseling, my experience indicates that for the most part, the request for pastoral care often comes from those who have little or no church affiliation. How do we reach such people? It is impossible to help everyone. However, a trained, committed pastoral caregiver, living in the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, will find strength to help as many as possible.

From the early days of my ministry, I began my day with a prayer that would include the request, "Lead me to the person with whom You would have me speak today." We need to keep our pastoral ear open and attentive. This will happen as we are in tune with the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Every day we can look for and even anticipate the arrival of opportunities whereby we can be of authentic help to all kinds of people in pain. If we realize a person or family is weighing upon our mind, it is good to contact that person or family immediately. Their church affiliation does not matter. What matters is that they are in need. When the inner voice of the Spirit is persistent, it's time to suspend all other matters. It is then we may contact the person in our thoughts by telephone or personal visit.

There have been many times when I have phoned under these circumstances and the person has said something like this: "It's strange. I had my hand on the phone to ring you, but I didn't want to bother you."

Timed to perfection

For over two years, I was involved with a family in the children's hospital in my town. Their adolescent son experienced a massive brain tumor. The surgery was successful. After some months of recuperation he returned to school for the last semester of the year. In mid-January he came to the surgeon for a check-up. The doctor gave a good report, and asked him to come back in six months.

Three weeks later I was at a conference 3,000 miles away. At a breakfast Communion Service, I was overcome with a tremendous sense of urgency for this family. Not knowing their need I prayed for them.

As others made their way to breakfast I sat in the chapel and wrote them a letter telling of my prayers for the family and assuring them, that whatever their state, the presence, strength, and comfort of the Lord would be with them, constantly sustaining them.

When I arrived home from the conference, I contacted the family to learn that Michael had died at 5:00 a.m. that conference morning. The time of my prayer coincided with the removal of the body from the house. The letter arrived as they were leaving the house for the funeral. The letter gave them the needed strength for the funeral service.

Ten years later, in the foyer in the hospital where I was then working, I happened to run into Michael's mother. She was amazed at this timing also. The previous week she had been leaving her church when my letter had dropped out of her Bible at her minister's feet. Now she was encountering me and noting how much the letter, now well worn, had meant to her as it assured her of her Lord's loving care in difficult times.

This experience assures us that the timing of the Holy Spirit is perfect when it comes to pastoral ministry. Ours is the responsibility to depend on the Spirit for guidance and direction, for timing and wisdom for each

and every ministry in which we become involved. All our training, personality, and skills must be attuned to what the Spirit leads us to do.

The care person's prayer

Often, I have been confronted with a situation where utter devastation stares us in the face. In ministering in such situations, I could only turn to prayer for help. Even as I approach the hurting one, under my breath I have prayed, "Lord, help me. Give me, the words to say."

Being on trauma call, I have often been in the emergency room when the ambulance arrives. The relatives or friends may have come about the same time or soon after.

One day, the ambulance brought a 35-year-old man with a gunshot wound. As I sat with the heartbroken mother, she told me her story. She had three sons. Five years earlier, her 23-year-old son had died from natural causes. The next year, another son had been killed in a car accident. Now her eldest and last son lay in a critical condition in the emergency room.

When the doctor came in with the news that this son had now also died, I silently asked the question, "Where is God in all of this?" Then I prayed, "Lord, help me. What do I say? Give me the words."

In her time of indescribable grief, she needed no textbook support but rather a Spirit-imparted sensitivity and wisdom. After the silent prayer of my heart, appropriate words poured out of my mouth. They were words that I would not have normally used. Such experiences never cease to amaze me. The Holy Spirit has a way of using His committed human instruments in the right way and at the right time.



An elderly couple had been visiting their daughter. As they walked up the garden path to their car to return home, the wife experienced cardiac arrest. She died on the way to the hospital. When I met the husband he was heartbroken, numb, and in shock.

I inquired as to how long they had been married. Forty-nine years, I was told, and they were looking forward to their golden anniversary in six weeks' time. Again I was constrained to plead for the presence of the Spirit and for the ability to reach this man's sorrow and shatteredness. Classic counseling training might have suggested that such a man should have been encouraged to express the depths of his confusion, anger, and sorrow. One counseling technique might have suggested that the person's sorrow should have been recognized by saying something like this: "You must feel disappointed that you will never reach your golden anniversary."

But out of my mouth came different words, "How did you come to meet?" I asked. This was a sidetrack—almost unforgivable in the light of grief-counseling manuals or in the wisdom of the pastoral supervisor.

The man's face lit up as his mind traveled back more than 50 years. He told me they had casually met in the area in which they both worked in London, and their ensuing meetings had simply developed into deep love.

She had come from a family of society solicitors (attorneys). He had come from a lower socio-economic background. Since her young days, her family had planned that she would marry a wealthy lawyer cousin.

News of their romance had created a furor. The marriage had been forbidden. Marriage plans were insisted upon to block their wedding. But their love was so strong that they eloped, married, and journeyed to Australia. This had enabled their love to bloom in rich colors until the day I met this man—the day of his wife's cardiac arrest.

By this time, all of us, including

the relatives present, were in tears as there and then they heard him tell the story of their 50-year romance. In that awful setting there was a surpassing beauty in his story, and without realizing it he had told it with a kind of ethereal radiance. Healthy grief resolution was set on the right path, not by a self-assured chaplain, but by the simple question the Holy Spirit had given the chaplain to ask this grief-stricken man.

Pastoral care is a divinely appointed ministry to people in need. It is not merely gratuitous for us to resoundingly confirm that the use of ministry skills and training can only be fruitfully carried out with the wisdom, knowledge, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, who calls us to do the surpassingly significant ministry of pastoral care. ■

A perfect leader does not exist

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joining the labor force on work days. And of course, mental—caringly laying out logical reasons why. And certainly spiritual—a deep and meaningful praying time for both parties together when their thinking is worlds apart.

Knowing how to deal with faults

No matter how hard we try to be good ministers, or how hard our staff, either voluntary or paid, tries to earn an A, there will still be times when some fault needs to be corrected before it gets out of hand. This is when D.D. should stand for Doctoral Diplomacy. "That was a great idea, but have you thought about . . . ?" "Things are going well, but there is one area I wonder if we should look at more closely." And above all else, when I am really upset about something not done or poorly done I wait until another time to criticize.

I will not forget what a senior pastor once told me jokingly, "You may

sometimes be mad enough at someone to kill them, but remember murder is not only forbidden by the Ten Commandments, but it is also not good for morale!"

Simple as it seems to be, the best definition of what leadership or management really is came from a 49-year-old seminary graduate who had been in business before deciding on the ministry. He actually had it framed on his desk: "Good management is getting things done through other people."

John D. Batten in his book, *Tough Minded Leadership*, says that a good leader is like leather. Not easily dented—flexible, durable, supple, tough.

One thing is for sure, leaders in their leading must deal with people. Some of them will be nice and some will be nasty. Some will react with intelligence and others respond with stupidity. Whether it is dealing with the choir director who wants more or less praise music, or the business manager or church treasurer who has become tyrannical, or a lay teacher who is becoming increasingly radical, the fact remains—people are people.

Successful ministers are good managers. It is that simple. Certainly Martin Luther was a good manager. He didn't get the Protestant Reformation started all by himself. Yes, he nailed 95 theses to a church door in Wittenberg, but then motivated by the Holy Spirit, 95 plus other ministerial managers kept it going. And any pastor or evangelist who does not admit he or she cannot do everything hasn't just missed the boat, they've sunk their ship.

A good leader is committed to the development of everyone, not just self.

A good leader does not major in wasted motion and effort.

A good leader is open to initiatives from others, and prays to be saved from the blindness of conceit.

A good leader never forgets that if promotion isn't possible, then ratchet up the praise level.

A perfect leader does not exist. ■

Conflict can be healthy *continued from page 23*

their faith in the spiritual forces that keep the church together. When the dynamics of the conflict move in this direction the leaders must know how to map out the course of conflict resolution that leads to unity and respect for differences of opinions.

Dynamics behind resolution

To avoid the danger of escalating a conflict, Paul urges us to "let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:31, 32, RSV). If the church leaders and members would sustain this spiritual counsel, the church would be kept free of conflict.

Paul also adopted an exhortative role when he strongly urged the Corinthian congregation to seek unity and to avoid dissensions. "I appeal to you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree and that there be no dissensions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10, RSV).

While we understand that conflict is a time for plain talk, the talk must be plain without being punitive. Anytime we begin to assail another, we have moved from the plain to the punitive. To respect opponents is to avoid assaulting them verbally or physically. It is vital that each side keep in mind Paul's counsel and respect for others, to have healthy conflict resolution. This ideal can be very difficult to achieve at times, but as Christians, that goal should be the glue that holds the spiritual life of the church together during every conflict.

Consider Paul and Barnabas once more as models for healthy conflict resolution. Although they broke rank and went their separate ways, they did not lose sight of their purpose, their mission, and their love for the

body of Christ. Instead of permitting their personal differences to keep them from working, they fervently pressed forward, enjoying even greater success in the work of God.

The clear message here is that when conflict resolution leads to separation and the recognition of a new group growing out of the existing group, it should not lead to independent ministry or to hostility. The work of God should no wise suffer because of conflict. On the contrary it should experience expansion and growth because we share a common cause that supercedes personal interest.

Conflict resolution that leads individuals away from the body of Christ, still maintaining a hostile spirit, flies in the face of what God expects of us in any conflict. The example of Paul and Barnabas reconciling is a model for each of us to adopt. The wounds between them were healed, and they maintained a healthy relationship throughout the remainder of their ministries. Paul's estimate of Mark also changed as Mark later demonstrated his usefulness for service. And again, the church prospered.

Conflict does not have to end in hostility with a fist-in-your-face confrontation. The Christian context does not allow for revenge, disrespect, and character assassination. Paul's counsel is pertinent: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Col. 3:12-14, RSV).

If we remember the following three points, it will help us toward a healthy conflict resolution:

(1) Disagreement can lead individuals and organizations to change that ultimately produces genuine improvement (see Prov. 27:17).

(2) Disagreement can reveal a need for change. Mature leaders welcome

disagreement because it forces them to evaluate their own beliefs and to make positive changes where needed (see Prov. 18:15).

(3) Disagreement can help people to become more tolerant of opposing views. Learning to accept differing points of view without developing hostile reactions is an important mark of a mature leader (see Prov. 21; 23).

The effective pastor learns the truth in the adage that there are times when it is good to "agree to disagree." In doing so, a pastor also learns to avoid developing a critical attitude even when others are critical and exhibiting hostility toward him or her. ■

1 John C. Racue, "Force Exits: A Too-Common Ministry. Church Buyers Guide," *Christianity Today*, March/April 1996, 72.

Letters *continued from page 3*

icators are neither modern nor post-modern; liberal nor conservative; Boomers nor Xers. But they do understand the values, prejudices, and pathways to each set of minds. Like Jesus, true Christians are affected, but not dominated, by their peculiar cultures. And by His grace, we need not succumb to any of them.

—Edwin A. Schwisow, Sandy, Oregon.

I believe John Ashton ("The Resurrection of Creationism," September 2001) may have missed one of the primary tenets of science. True scientific inquiry requires an objective search for the answer to a question, requiring the searchers to set aside their own personal biases. Failure to do so has cost many true scientists their standing in the community as they secretly omit findings that do not agree with their opinions.

My impression is that Ashton already had his answer defined and spent his time gathering together whatever factoids that, when pieced together along with a few very weak dismissals of huge volumes of scientific research, and slanted just so, would provide the correct question to fit his answer. ■

—Bud Adams, Syracuse, New York.

Organizational misconduct

Sexual misconduct by clergy has dominated the headlines in recent months. Predatory violation of children is particularly reprehensible and demands for punishment and reform have come from laity as well as fellow clergy who realize their own reputations are besmirched by the sinful behavior of a few miscreants.

As the media reports on individual clergy criminals, another level of wickedness—organizational misconduct—should be carefully evaluated by every denomination. When a clergy person is transferred from one location to another with judicatory administrators aware of sexual misconduct by, accusations against, or even suspicion surrounding the transferred pastor, then the wider group contributes to the sin of the minister and should be held accountable.

And this is not just a challenge for one religious organization. These evils cross denominational boundaries. Sexual misconduct by clergy is everyone's problem, but the particular responsibility of administrators who should faithfully serve the congregations and parishioners under their jurisdiction. Church members expect more than well-meaning empathy for perpetrators of abuse. They are increasingly unwilling to merely accept reassurances from leaders who are either cluelessly unaware or negligent in their duty.

Various factors motivate administrators who avoid dealing with guilty clergy and, subsequently, transfer them to new locations. Perhaps the greatest contributing factor is the misconception that the church's reputation must be protected at all costs, even by keeping secret the sins of the clergy. Like the proverbial ostrich head in the sand, some leaders choose to believe that if we ignore a problem, the tragic consequences cannot possibly be factual and

JAMES A. CRESS



the church's image will be preserved.

Another factor misinterprets the gospel mandate to forgive sinners. Thus, pastoral sexual misconduct is viewed more as a moral lapse than as a betrayal of professional trust. Of course, this ignores the Savior's directive that those who harm little ones should be severely, even irretrievably, punished. Remember, sexual misconduct is seldom a need for a sexual relationship as much as it is an abuse of power and position.

Denominational policies are also violated by well-intentioned leaders who believe that selective enforcement is more merciful than zero tolerance, particularly for a first offense (typically the situation which is reported is not the first offense, but only the first of which the administrator has become aware).

When organizational behavior does not match organizational policy, pastors conclude they will be disciplined on the basis of *who they know* more than on the basis of *what they did*. Consequently, if administrators set up themselves rather than policy as the final arbiters of justice, they must hide their actions or disguise their motives when their own variance with policy becomes known.

Likewise, for those denominations, my own included, whose official policies offer no rehabilitation process and anticipate that every moral fall means dismissal from ministry, leaders believe they must selectively ignore policy for

some offenses while punishing others. Again, the individual administrator, not the body, becomes the judge. Such policy and procedural variances need serious evaluation and either amendment or enforcement.

Furthermore, when an organizational culture refuses to deal with reality, training in sexual ethics and professional responsibility may be woefully lacking.

Too often organizations express more concern for their employee than for the victims. Misguided empathy for the needs of the clergy often takes precedence over the needs of a victim to see justice. A rush to forgive errant clergy and to absolve them professionally from employment consequences often ignores the severe trauma experienced by the victims' unheeded need to express their pain. Victims, already violated, feel violated again by leaders who refuse to hear their cries. In fact, victims are often blamed by the organization for seducing the clergy. One victim said, "I was made to feel that a man's job was more important than a woman's virtue" (clergy sexual misconduct is almost exclusively a male problem). Because the church must not only do right, but also "appear right," laity should serve on all committees that deal with issues of misconduct and violation.

Another group of victims often are blamed for clergy sexual misconduct. Pastoral wives are viewed as contributing to their husband's sin by the assumption that they did not "meet their spouse's needs." Do not underestimate the consequential victimization of pastoral wives and families when justice does not consider their situation.

Absolute integrity in disclosure of misconduct and even unproven accusations should inform every transfer of employees. Otherwise, the organization participates in and perpetuates the very misconduct it purports to abhor. ■

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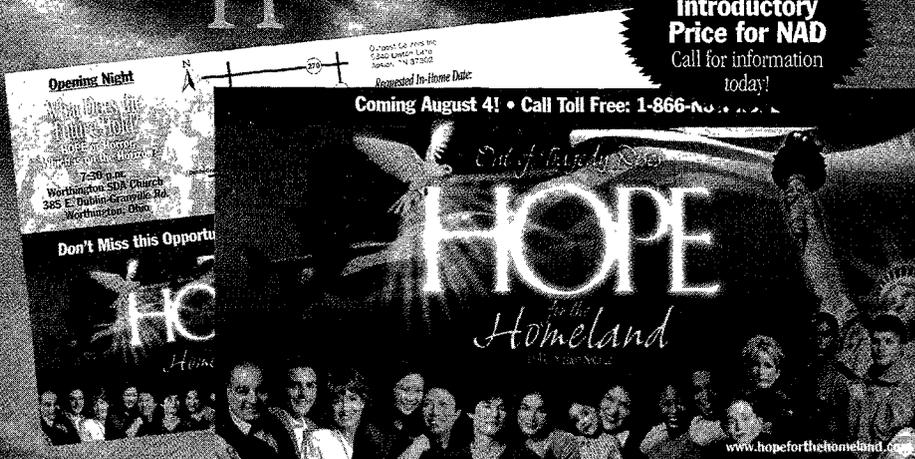
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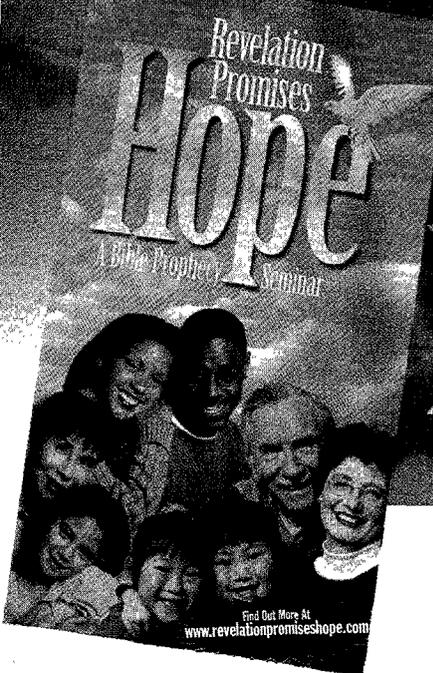
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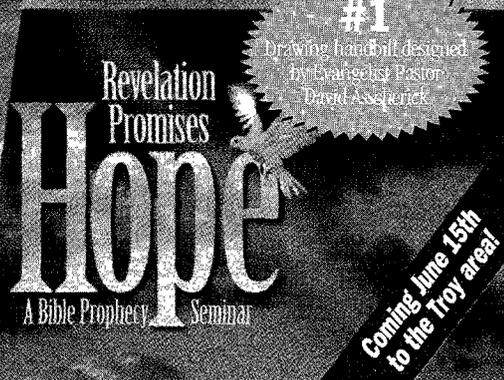
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