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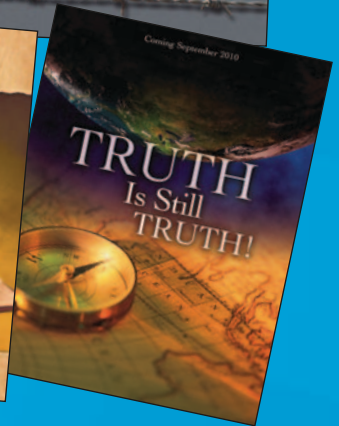
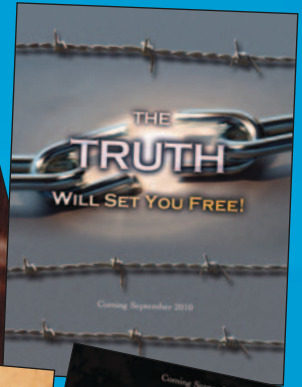
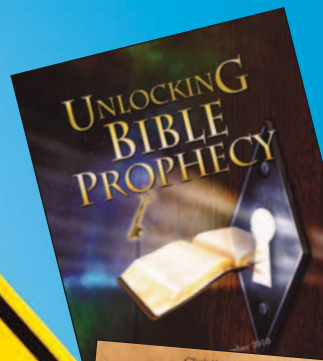
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LEVITICAL FESTIVALS

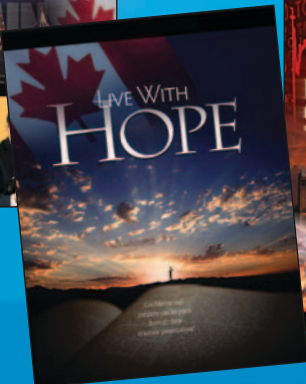
A SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST PERSPECTIVE

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Should we observe the Levitical festivals?: A Seventh-day Adventist perspective (Part 1 of 2)

Maybe by the marking of festivals, Christians could be drawn closer to the Jews? However, in the observance of festivals, serious theological, cultural, ethical, and practical problems invite caution and reservation.

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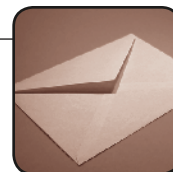
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“THANK YOU. . .FOR REDUCING A COMPREHENSIVE (MANY WOULD SAY, COMPLEX) BIBLICAL TEACHING TO A FASCINATING AND READABLE STORY.”

Assimilating new members

I believe church evangelism and church discipling is as important as getting married and staying happily married.

I wish to commend Jane Thayer for her extremely valuable and timely article (“Pastors’ Perspectives on Assimilating New Members: Part 1—Challenges and Needs”—February 2010). The article is very practical and much needed. Our conference is asking both pastors and head elders to share it with its congregations and study how it can be implemented.

—Mike Ortel, president, Northern New England Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Portland, Maine, United States

As a teacher in our church schools for the past 35 years, it seems to me that discipleship has not been a major topic or goal. It has been felt by some that once you present the idea, then you are done with what you have to do. But if discipleship is another way of saying we are following Christ’s method, then the “years of discipleship” Thayer called for is the work of a lifetime.

Our key responsibility during our lifetime is to develop—and assist others in developing—a personal daily devotional life with Jesus Christ as our best Friend and Savior. Jesus is to be the centerpiece to everything we say and do.

I pray for the Lord’s blessings on part 2 of Thayer’s series—that it will ignite an eternal flame, driven by the Holy Spirit’s final outpouring, the latter rain.

—Stephen Dennis, Ardmore, Oklahoma, United States

Judgment

The article by John Duge (“The Judgment: An Adventist Perspective”—February 2010) provided some great insights and summaries regarding the three phases of the judgment.

There were several statements that need clarification and support, however. The section referring to Zechariah 3 describes the high priest going into the Most Holy Place and states that if there was sin in the camp the high priest dropped dead. This statement references *Patriarchs and Prophets* which says it was the “fear of the people” that if the priest’s time in the Most Holy Place was too long, their sins or his may have caused his death. Is the article interpreting the Ellen G. White statement saying that if even one of the two million people in the camp had unconfessed sin the high priest would die? Is there biblical support for this claim or interpretation?

The section on the millennial phase of the judgment states that the best systems of jurisprudence insist that the accused have the right to trial by a jury of their peers. This statement cannot apply

to the pre-Advent judgment, where destinies are decided; there is no jury of peers involved in the trial. Nor in the millennial judgment since the peers are not a jury that can reverse the decision.

—John Indermuhle, email

Thank you, John Duge, for reducing a comprehensive (many would say, *complex*) biblical teaching to a fascinating and readable story. I was nodding and in the mood for a nap when I reached for the copy of *Ministry* on my desk. The first article I chose was Duge’s—and it literally woke me up.

It is an article I can share with anyone who either fears the judgment or finds it hard to understand.

—Ken Lockwood, email

The Bible and dinosaurs

I appreciate Raul Esperante’s article (“What Does the Bible Say About Dinosaurs?”—December 2009) not only because it was very well-written; but also because it stated facts, not fiction. Much research is still being done on the Flood and the time immediately after it. I believe that as we get closer to Christ’s second coming, we will learn more and more to strengthen the faith of many. This will be one of many mysteries opened to man as knowledge increases.

—Byron Fesler, Mountain Home, Idaho, United States



Some things are worth doing repeatedly

By the time you receive this issue, the 59th General Conference Session will be taking place in less than a few months. Even though these sessions were once held every year, they are now held once every five years. The session has always been a major event for the world church, but in an age of instant communication, why do we consider these events, in a chosen location, so important?

Then and now

The first General Conference Session began on May 20, 1863, in Battle Creek, Michigan, United States—nearly 150 years ago. In 1863, the session opened with 20 delegates, representing a total church membership of approximately 3,000. The 2010 Session, scheduled to open with more than 2,400 delegates, represents a worldwide membership of more than 16 million. I cite the figures, not so that we can boast, but to recognize the work of God—for we know that God grows the church. What started as a *movement* (a term the early pioneers preferred) of a handful of people, has indeed become a *worldwide movement*.

The delegates

In addition to the radical differences between the number of delegates in 1863 and 2010, perhaps we should consider the composition of those delegates as even more significant. The *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia* uses only about 30 words to describe the first delegation: “Twenty delegates were in attendance—four from the state of New York, two from Ohio, 10 from Michigan (eight ministers and two laypersons), one from Wisconsin, two from Iowa, and one from Minnesota.”*

In 2010, more than 2,400 delegates will come from around the world. Until the session actually commences—because of visa and travel issues—it won’t be known from

where exactly, but we can safely say that these selected representatives will come from most parts of the world. The 2010 delegates will not only represent a diverse church, but we will also see a higher ratio of lay members, when compared to the 1863 session. We do know that the 2010 delegates truly represent various people and languages from throughout the world.

Why do it?

Occasionally I hear the question, “Is it really necessary to bring these people together and spend the money for such a gathering?” Logically, that same question could have been asked of the first General Conference Session held in 1863. Though the delegates traveled shorter distances, it probably took longer for them to arrive at the session than some delegates traveling long distances today. While now we have additional ways of transmitting information (telephone, video conferencing, and more), important issues are always best addressed in person.

Aside from the agenda items, we know of another important reason for such gatherings: a time when fellow believers from around the world either meet for the first time or renew their acquaintances. These personal relationships are important for the edification of the church. In the Old Testament, the Israelites came together for worship and fellowship. In the New Testament, Paul, for example, looked forward to meeting with fellow believers.

A request to congregational pastors

Congregational pastors, I have a special request to ask of you. If you have an individual in your congregation or district who has been selected as a delegate to the 2010 Session, please send them with your congregation’s special blessing. Even though delegates do not represent particular congregations

at the General Conference Session, your congregation is their home. Perhaps you can introduce them as a delegate to the congregation and have special prayer for them. I believe that something like that would have been done in the New Testament times—send them to Atlanta with the blessing of their church family.

If you or your congregation are unable to be at the General Conference Session in Atlanta personally, you can visit www.HopeTV.org to view the session live via Web streaming.

One more request

Before the 2010 General Conference Session takes place, another important event should be included in every pastor’s schedule. The *Ministry Professional Growth* satellite broadcast takes place on Tuesday, April 20, 2010 (one day delay for some parts of the world), at the First Congregational Church of Pasadena in California, near Fuller Theological Seminary. Clergy from various denominations, and from various parts of the world, will participate in this event. Please invite other ministers—including those from other denominations—to join you for this special broadcast. Our colleague, Anthony Kent, has put together a quality program that will bless all of us. In addition to inviting other ministers, invite some young people who, you believe, are potential candidates for the ministry, to join you. Let them participate in a program that has quality presentations. This kind of encouragement may help them make the decision about preparing for the ministry. (If you need additional information about this event, visit preach.ministerialassociation.com.)

Fellowship—whether at the General Conference Session or the April 20 broadcast—is one way we strengthen each other. ■

* *Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia*, 1996 ed., s.v. “General Conference Session”; for this quote and other statistics.

Jacques B. Doukhan, ThD, is professor of Hebrew and Old Testament exegesis, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.



Should we observe the Levitical festivals?:

A Seventh-day Adventist perspective

(Part 1 of 2)

What does the significance of feasts and festivals of the Old Testament hold for Christians today? How should Seventh-day Adventist theology, that recognizes the validity of the Seventh-day Sabbath, view the Levitical feasts?

Arguments in support of and against the observance of the feasts have been debated in church circles recently, including Adventist churches. Therefore, this issue must be addressed. This article proposes to take up this task in two parts. The first part will examine five arguments generally employed with respect to observing the feasts: (1) the pedagogical value of the typological interpretation of the feasts; (2) the usefulness of being reminded of the historical connection between Israel's feasts and Christian proclamation; (3) the relationship of the feasts to the Sabbath; (4) the relationship of the Feast of the New Moon to the Sabbath; and (5) the potential for better Jewish-Christian relations. In dealing with each issue, I propose to examine the problems raised by the *Christian observance of the feasts* and then discuss the negative arguments that oppose such practice. The second part of the article will suggest "a proper way," further directions to take, along with

some practical applications for the life of the church.

Jewish festivals as a teaching tool

The biblical festivals were intricately linked to the sacrificial system. Indeed, the sacrifices were not mere rituals or cultural expressions of piety; they were central to the very meaning of the festivals. The Feast of Passover, for example, did not just require the slaughter and eating of a lamb (Exod. 12:3–10); in fact, the lamb gave Passover its fundamental meaning and *raison d'être*. The Passover was specifically designed as a reminder of the sacrifice of the lamb offered in the Exodus event: God's passing over the blood of the slaughtered animal, thereby granting redemption (Exod. 12:13). This connection is so strong that Passover is actually identified with the lamb itself. *Pesah* (Passover) is the lamb (2 Chron. 30:15).

Not only Passover, but also all the other festivals revolved around sacrifices in connection to atonement. The biblical texts dealing with the feasts stipulate the sacrifice of a goat as a sin offering to make atonement for the people (Num. 28:15, 22, 30; 29:5, 11, 28). In the New Testament, the sacrifices point to the coming and function of Christ. Jesus is identified with the Passover

lamb (John 1:36; cf. 1 Cor. 5:7), with the whole sacrificial system seen as the shadow of "things to come" (Heb. 10:1; cf. Col. 2:16, 17). The sacrifices convey a prophetic message concerning the process of salvation: God will come down and offer Himself as a sacrifice in order to atone for sin and redeem humanity.

The effect of Christ's sacrifice is definitive and perpetual. In that sense, we have to understand the phrase " 'statute forever throughout your generations' " (Lev. 23:14, NKJV). The phrase "statute forever" does not mean a perpetual stipulation; otherwise this would mean that we still have to do all the sacrifices. Indeed, the same phrase "statute forever" is also used for the sacrifices (Lev. 3:17) and all the other rituals associated with the tabernacle: the ablutions (Exod. 30:21), the priestly garments (Exod. 28:43), the lamps (Exod. 27:20, 21), etc. In other words, the use of the expression "forever" does not mean a perpetual obligation but should be understood within the context of the temple—that is, as long as the temple was standing. Now that the sacrifices are no longer possible because of the absence of the temple, and because prophecy contained within the sacrifices has been fulfilled in Christ, it follows that sacrifices and related rituals, such as Levitical festivals, are no longer mandatory.

The type has met the Antitype. To engage in festivals with the idea that they are compulsory for our own salvation makes the Antitype, the Messiah, altogether irrelevant.

Also noted, the same expression “forever” is used for the covenant of the circumcision (Gen.17:13). Does this mean that circumcision continues as still valid today? If

It is indeed significant that Jesus died and was resurrected during the time of Passover, which He not only celebrated, commemorating the Exodus, but also invested with fresh meaning, applying it to Himself (Matt. 26:17–30). Also meaningful is the event of the gift of the Spirit, associated with the proclamation of the gospel to the nations, taking

salvation, has then been used as an argument in favor of the adoption of these festivals as a part of our religious life. But the pedagogical function of the feasts does not imply that these feasts are divine laws to be perpetually observed.

The main problem remains, however, as to whether those feasts should be observed by Christians today.



NOW THAT THE SACRIFICES ARE NO LONGER POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF THE ABSENCE OF THE TEMPLE, AND BECAUSE PROPHECY CONTAINED WITHIN THE SACRIFICES HAS BEEN FULFILLED IN CHRIST, IT FOLLOWS THAT SACRIFICES AND RELATED RITUALS, SUCH AS LEVITICAL FESTIVALS, ARE NO LONGER MANDATORY.

that were the case, this would then contradict the recommendation of the apostles in Acts 15. All these observations help us understand why the expression “forever” with respect to feasts does not support an everlasting requirement.

That argument aside, it is precisely this typological/prophetic function of the feasts that inspires those who support the keeping of the feasts. They argue that the observance of the feasts will help Christians gain a better and richer understanding of the plan of salvation. The profound meaning of the feasts was already attested to in the New Testament; they not only commemorated past events of salvation, especially the going out of Egypt and the miracles of Exodus, they also pointed to the cosmic and eschatological salvation.

place during Pentecost, the time of harvest. Basically, the spring festivals pointed to the first step of salvation: the first coming of Christ, His death, His resurrection, His enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the universal broadening of the covenant through the global proclamation of the gospel. The fall festivals pointed to the second step of salvation: the judgment in heaven and the proclamation of the three angels’ messages on earth, preparing for the cosmic salvation and the second coming of Christ (Rev. 14:6–13). As Richard Davidson notes, “[T]he first and last feasts of Israel’s cultic calendar seem tied to the inauguration and consummation of Israel’s salvation history respectively.”¹ The progression of the feasts in the yearly calendar, following the progression of the historical plan of

The historical connection

One function of the feasts was its application to the historical life of Israel in Canaan. When the temple was destroyed and the Jews were exiled from the land, they were obliged to create and develop new traditions for the observance of the feasts adapted to the situation of the exile, that is, without the temple and the sacrifices.² Also, the fact that Jesus and His disciples observed the festivals and, later, early Christians (Jewish Christians) as well, even without sacrifices, suggests that it is not inconceivable for Christians to celebrate the festivals.

Yet, this example cannot be used as an argument to justify the Christian celebration of the feasts since Jesus and the early Christians kept not only the Jewish festivals but also other cultural and ceremonial practices, such

as circumcision, the wearing of the *tallith* (prayer shawl), etc., practices that were not adopted by Gentile Christians on the basis of Acts 15. Furthermore, Christians, especially Seventh-day Adventists, do not have a historical festival tradition showing *how* to celebrate those festivals. How, then, will they celebrate the festivals? On what grounds will they justify one practice over another? Their claim to observe the festivals the biblical way stumbles on the fact that the biblical way requires the offering of sacrifices in the temple (Deut. 16:5). Without the support of a historical and cultural tradition, the keeping of the feasts is bound to generate tensions and dissensions in the church. Moreover, since no specific biblical law exists indicating how these laws should be observed outside of the temple, they will have to produce laws and traditions of their own. Ángel Rodríguez is right when he warns, “Those who promote the observance of the festivals have to create their own personal way of celebrating the feasts and in the process create human traditions that are not based on an explicit expression of God’s will.”³

The Sabbath and the festivals

The practice of festivals may even affect our theology of the Sabbath. The Bible clearly explains the essential difference between the feasts and the Sabbath. Festivals are not like the weekly Sabbath. Unlike the festivals, the Sabbath, as a sign, reminds us of the creation of the universe and is therefore eternal in its relevance. God gave the Sabbath at the end of the Creation week when there was no sin on earth and hence no sacrifice and no feasts. The Sabbath, unlike the festivals, was a part of the Ten Commandments and given to all of humanity. In fact, its origin predates the gift of the Torah to Israel on Sinai (Exod. 16:23–28). Furthermore, Leviticus 23:3, 4, which lists the festivals along with the Sabbath, clearly suggests that an essential difference exists between the two categories of holy days. In Leviticus

23, the Sabbath is mentioned at the beginning of the list (v. 3). Then the other holy days are listed under the designation “ ‘ ‘ ‘ these are the feasts of the Lord” ‘ ‘ ‘ (v. 4, NKJV), suggesting thereby that the Sabbath belongs to another category than the feasts. Although the Sabbath also implies sacrifices (Num. 28:9, 10), it is significant that the regular phrase “sin offering for atonement,” which always appears in relation to the festivals, is absent in reference to the Sabbath. This clear distinction suggests that the function of sacrifices in the context of the Sabbath is essentially different from their function in the context of the festivals. The Sabbath differs, not only from any other day of the week, but also from any feast day. It is noteworthy that this difference and even the superiority of the Sabbath over the festivals is systematically indicated in the liturgic reading of the Torah: we have more *‘al’ot* (ascents to the platform to read the Torah) on the day of Sabbath (seven) than on any festival day. To equate the Sabbath with the festivals is fundamentally wrong and affects the true meaning of Sabbath, ultimately compromising its mandatory character.

Realizing that the Sabbath differs from the festivals, and is even more important than them, will help us understand the nature of the connection between the two holy appointments. The fact that Leviticus 23 brings them together while marking the difference between them suggests, indeed, that the Sabbath is the crown, the climax of all festivals. Paradoxically, this special connection between the Sabbath and the Levitical festivals brings out, in fact, a lesson about the relative value of the festivals versus the absolute value of the Sabbath. Instead of leading to the promotion of the observance of festivals, the study of the festivals should lead to a better understanding, appreciation, and experience of the Sabbath. For the Sabbath “is the foundation of all sacred time,”⁴ and thus contains and fulfills all the values and truths intimated by the festivals.

The Sabbath and the New Moon Festival

Within the festivals, the New Moon Festival occupies only a secondary place. Unlike other biblical holy days, the new moon never qualifies as a sacred day on which all labor is prohibited.⁵ During the period of the first temple, it was relegated to a “semi-festival” status, and its observance disappeared totally during the second temple period; thus, by the middle of the fourth century when the sages had established a permanent calendar, the proclamation of the new moon day was discontinued.⁶ Jewish tradition generally assigns a “minor” role to the New Moon Festival.⁷

Therefore, it is surprising that the New Moon Festival has received renewed attention, especially among Messianic Jews and even some Adventists. One justification for such observance is Isaiah 66:23 (NKJV), “ ‘It shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all flesh shall come to worship before Me,’ says the Lord.” This text is used to suggest that the New Moon Festival will be observed in heaven along with the Sabbath. But the text does not speak so much about the observance of those two days, *per se*; rather, it emphasizes the continuity of worship, a characteristic of the new earth. For that purpose, the biblical author refers to the two extremities of time: “from . . . to.” What this verse actually says is that the worship continues as an activity of eternity—“from New Moon to New Moon” and “from Sabbath to Sabbath”; as if to say, from month to month, from week to week.

A second reason offered for the observance of the new moon feast is that the moon determines the Sabbath day. On the basis of biblical texts, such as Genesis 1:14 and Psalm 104:19, it is argued that the weekly Sabbath was originally tied to the lunar cycle. Indeed, both texts relate the moon to the seasons (*mo’adim*). Since Leviticus 23 includes the Sabbath in the category of *mo’adim* (“seasons,” “convocations”; see v. 2),

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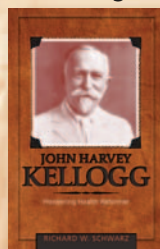
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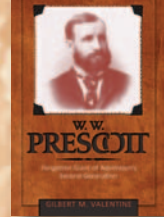
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and since the moon rules the seasons (Gen. 1:14), some conclude that the moon also rules the Sabbath. This argument raises a number of problems, including the following:

1. The meaning of the Hebrew word *mo'adim*. This word relates to the verb *y'd* with which it is also associated (Exod. 30:36; 2 Sam. 20:5). This verb means "to appoint" a time or a place (2 Sam. 20:5; Jer. 47:7). The word *mo'adim* refers to "appointments," "meetings," or "convocations" in time or space. Now, not all the appointments (*mo'adim*) are ruled by the moon. When Jeremiah 8:7 uses the word *mo'adim* to refer to the migration times of the stork and other migratory birds, it does not imply that the migrations of the stork are governed by the moon, since the stork returns to Palestine regularly every spring. The word *mo'adim* simply refers to a specific time or place appointed, either by humans (1 Sam. 20:35) or by God (Gen. 18:14), and could be weekly (1 Sam. 13:8), monthly, yearly (Gen. 17:21), or even prophetic (Dan. 12:7); and is not necessarily always dependent on the moon.

2. The idea that the Sabbath is dependent on the moon was in fact originally borrowed from the historical-critical presupposition of the Babylonian influence on the Bible. According to that view, the Sabbath was originally taken either from the Babylonian custom of the lunar days, evil/taboo days associated with lunar phases falling on days 7, 14, 19, 21, and 28 of the month, or from the monthly, full-moon day (*shab/pattu*). But this claim has no biblical support whatsoever and is no longer taken seriously by biblical scholars.⁸

3. The idea of the dependence of the Sabbath on the moon—placing the Sabbath on any day of the week, depending on the movements of the moon—goes against the testimony of history. First, it goes against the testimony of the Jews. Indeed, millions of Jews have kept the seventh-day Sabbath on

Saturday for thousands of years, and this practice was never changed or lost by either the Julian or Gregorian calendar; the change only affected the number of the days and never the days of the week.⁹ The Jews still keep the same seventh-day Sabbath that was given at Creation, the same day that was commanded at Sinai and kept by Jesus and the apostles; that is, our Saturday. The claim that connects Sabbath to the moon and makes it fall on Tuesday, or any other moon-dependent day, is, indeed, a way of replacing the true Sabbath with another day, based on human speculation, just as human tradition replaced Sabbath with Sunday.

4. The argument that the day of the crucifixion of Jesus was Passover—that is, the 14th day from the new moon (Exod. 12:6; and, at the same time, the Sabbath day)—cannot be used to support the idea that the Sabbath depends on the moon. According to the testimony of the Gospels, Jesus was crucified on the preparation day (Friday) and not on Sabbath.

5. The fact that the function of the moon begins on the fourth day of Creation week (Gen. 1:14–19) makes it impossible to identify the Sabbath, coming three days later, as a moon day.

The Jewish-Christian relation

The Christian practice of the festivals may be counterproductive in regard to Jewish-Christian relations. Christians who engage in those festivals, adopting traditions that belong to another culture, will appear artificial and fake. They will also be offensive to Jews who will perceive in this endeavor a usurping intention in the line of supercessionism,¹⁰ or a deceitful means to trap them into conversion. Christians, who imitate the Jews in the practice of the festivals, tend to do it in the context of a church liturgy, involving a whole community, as a public event. No need to say that this Christian adaptation of the Jewish

custom totally misses the point and is shocking for the Jews, as traditionally those feasts were designed to be celebrated only at home, in the intimate circle of the family, and not in public. The Christian reproduction may, therefore, often become a caricature or a misrepresentation—at best, a pale imitation of the Jewish original. Instead of being a means of reaching out to the Jews, the Christian adaptations of the Jewish festivals may turn them away.

The marking of festivals may, on the other hand, draw Christians closer to the Jews, whom their tradition has taught them to despise. Indeed, anti-Semitism was the main motivation for the repudiation, not only of the Sabbath, but also of the feasts. It appears, then, that by marking the festivals, Christians could make a statement not only against the anti-Semitic voice of various groups but also, at the same time, produce a way of contextualization for reaching out to the Jews.

Yet, the situation is not this simple. As I have indicated earlier, the observance of festivals encounters serious theological, cultural, ethical, and practical problems that invite caution and serious reservations. ❧

(Part 2 will appear in the June 2010 issue.)

1 Richard M. Davidson, "Sanctuary Typology," in *Symposium on Revelation—Book I*, Daniel and Revelation Committee Series, vol. 6, ed. Frank B. Holbrook (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1992), 120.

2 See the Babylonian Talmud, Ber. 4:1, 7; 26b; 32b.

3 Ángel Rodríguez, *Israelite Festivals and the Christian Church* (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2005), 9.

4 Roy E. Gane, "Sabbath and Israelite Festivals," *Shabbat Shalom* 50, no. 1 (2003): 28.

5 *Ibid.*, 414.

6 *The Oxford Dictionary of Jewish Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 591; *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, corrected ed. (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1994), 12:1039.

7 Irving Greenberg, *The Jewish Way* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), 411.

8 Gerhard Hasel, "The Sabbath and the Pentateuch," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, ed. Kenneth A. Strand (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1982), 21; and *id.*, "The Sabbath in the Prophetic and Historical Literature of the Old Testament," in *The Sabbath in Scripture and History*, 45.

9 Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, s.v. "Gregorian calendar," http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregorian_calendar (accessed March 30, 2009).

10 On the meaning and dangers of supercessionism, the idea that the church has replaced, "superceded," Israel, see *ibid.*, 55–70; cf. *id.*, *The Mystery of Israel* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2004), 11–47.

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Pastors' perspectives on assimilating new members

Part 2—Discipling strategies

Review of previous article

In the summer and fall of 2008, four focus groups composed of pastors were held in three locations across the United States in order to find out pastors' perspectives on assimilating new members into the Adventist Church and discipling them to Jesus. Part 1 of this two-part article focused on the challenges and needs of new members as reported by pastors. Part 2 deals with some of their specific strategies for assimilating them into the church.

Making the transition to membership

When a person is baptized, their relationship to the church changes. To handle the critical transition from nonmember to member, pastors in the focus groups reported three types of initiatives: connecting new members to spiritual guardians, getting them involved in ministry, and taking them through a process of orientation. Some use combinations of these initiatives.

Although the terminology may vary from spiritual guardian, to mentor, spiritual coach, big brother/big sister, small group leader, to elder, deacon, and deaconess, the intent remains basically the same: to make sure that at least one longtime member takes responsibility for nurturing and teaching the new believer. One pastor said that he

makes the assignment of a spiritual guardian a public ceremony in the church service and gives to both the mentor and mentee a certificate that lists each one's responsibilities.

Getting new members into ministry as soon as possible is the goal of many of the pastors. "Involvement, involvement, involvement," said one pastor. "Even before they are baptized, we enlist them in some ministry of the church."

Some pastors have set up an entire process for transitioning people into church membership and their new walk with Jesus. One church has an hour and a half program the first Sabbath of every quarter to explain spiritual gifts and then uses an online assessment tool to help identify people's spiritual gifts and get them involved in ministry.

Right after the evangelistic series is completed, some churches begin a seminar series of some kind. The pastors told of using Mark Finley's Coming Events series, the CHIP program (Coronary Health Improvement Project), discipleship seminar materials, *Bible Readings for the Home* study, or a series they themselves developed. One pastor has put together studies that deal with the history of the Adventist Church and denominational terminology. Instead of focusing on denominational uniqueness, another pastor emphasizes basic discipleship.

Maintaining and strengthening relationships

Relationship building continues long after new members are brought into the church. Explaining the importance of relationships, a pastor said, "People come into the church primarily on the doctrine level, but leave primarily on the social level. You need to supplement the doctrines with social life. And that can be a whole list of things." And, indeed, the list of possibilities is long. A primary means for these pastors to develop relationships with new members seems to be through the teaching of a class or leading a small group.

"My most successful piece," one said, "is when I do a Friday evening meeting with all the new members and tie them to me. . . . They stay with me for two years and, in the cases where I have been consistent with those relationships, those members stay in the church."

Another pastor thinks the task begins before baptism and requires the work of others. He spends time with the people during the evangelistic series and finds out their interests. Then he connects the new person with a member who will spend time on similar interests. "It takes work on the pastor's part to make a correct match," he says. "I have to know what my members will do and won't do. I have to oversee it, and I have to

keep watching to encourage them to keep at it.”

Commenting on the need for keeping current members motivated to stay in touch with new members, another pastor said, “The operative word is *friendships*. People don’t get rid of friends. We get burnout because it is a task instead of a friendship.”

Dramatic differences exist between congregations in how they

“People don’t hang out. There’s no fellowship. We preach the sermon, and twenty minutes later, everyone is gone. Five hundred people just disappear—like into thin air.”

Using small groups

For anyone who knows the literature on small group ministry, the answer to relationship building (and every other discipleship matter) is a small group. The pastors, however, explained the reality of getting their members to become excited and involved in that model.

“You’re talking about a kind of culture,” one said. “There’s something about Adventism [in my location] that doesn’t like the small group.”

On the other hand, some pastors use small groups successfully. In one church, every new believer coming into the church is placed in a small group with an elder serving as the leader.

One pastor gave his personal testimony on the power of small groups. “I had been out of the church,” he said, “but I came back because of small groups. And the people in that small group developed

me in my sense of calling, and I’m a pastor now because of that small group. But it is hard to get people interested in small groups. I’m afraid there is something drastic that is going to have to happen to get people to look at that paradigm.”

Teaching new members

“A new members’ class,” one pastor said, “is probably one of the most enjoyable classes to teach. The people are really hungry for Jesus. They are asking the real life questions.”

Although typical, for a pastor to have a new believers’ class, the

time, location, and type of class vary among the churches. The most common class seems to be the pastor’s Sabbath School class. One reason for choosing this time slot is to develop in new members the habit of coming to Sabbath School.

One pastor, whose church has a potluck meal every Sabbath, said, “I found that new believers want to be part of the general Sabbath School family. So I do two things: The hour before Power Hour or prayer meeting is the new believers’ class. And every Sabbath afternoon, I do Pastor’s Hour. New believers are encouraged to come. And there they can ask any question, biblical or organizational.”

Others meet only on a week night, particularly Friday night. One pastor explained why he changed to meeting on Friday nights: “They aren’t as open on Sabbath morning. More shy . . . I find that Friday night by far is the best. Hard to get them involved in a Sabbath School class.” One pastor solves his multichurch assignment by holding the class on Friday nights.

After baptizing about 20 people, a pastor said that he held a special class for about 10 months, telling those newly baptized that this class was part of becoming a member of the Adventist Church. He said, “I totaled up the hours. We spent seventy hours together, and I want to tell you the fellowship, the things that were learned, the experience, will last forever.” When one focus group had a discussion on how long a new members’ class should continue, there was a consensus that one year was not too long.

One sensitive issue that the pastors agreed they all had to deal with is whether or not to let long time members join the new believers’ class. “You can’t just open it up,” said one.

“I recruit,” said another. “I pick people geared around those families that I think will connect with new believers.” Another said, “I have key people who are nurturers. I like them to be in there.”



use Sabbath for fellowship. Where practiced, this weekly fellowship also helps new members with Sabbath observance. “We’ve had a fellowship meal at every church [where I have pastored]. . . . [New members] are not connected with an Adventist family, so after church, they have nowhere to go. Come home to a TV blaring. [Sabbath fellowship is] a haven for people.” In some congregations, the church building is in use all day Sabbath.

But some churches do not have such fellowship on Sabbath. “In my church,” a young pastor said,

Resources pastors use

Because there is a real need to teach new believers how to study their Bibles, the Bible is a primary resource that pastors use in teaching. Referring to evangelistic series and Bible studies, a pastor said, "So far, it's all been prepackaged for them. If they have a question and there is the Bible, how can they find an answer?" Another pastor said that the most successful teaching strategy he has used is buying new members a Bible, "a nice one." "I asked thirty people to get a version they understand. I didn't care which they got. Twenty-seven of thirty got the New Living Translation. I now preach from it." He continued, "I challenged [all the] people to read through the Bible. Last year thirty-five people, who had never done it before, read through the Bible."

Steps to Christ is another widely used resource. "By the time they have been baptized," a pastor related, "most of them possess the book. In many cases, they would have it, but they wouldn't have read it."

Conclusions and reflections

In the four focus groups, we explored in depth the assimilating and discipling of new members. As I listened to the pastors and went over their words in great detail, I have concluded that there are three basic issues that need to be dealt with before our congregations will be fully prepared to welcome and disciple new members: (1) longtime members themselves need to be disciplined to Jesus; (2) quality discipling materials need to be produced for both longtime members and new members; and (3) pastors need a clearer understanding of the processes of discipling.

As one pastor said, "My challenge is, I have never been trained on how to disciple. There was nothing in the curriculum coming through the training. There has been no follow-up, and I've been a pastor for 37 years."

One pastor, talking about the lack of accountability for discipleship, said that it "doesn't have a culture around it. I can't speak for the others, but I am so busy that the kind of nurture you are talking about consistently means I have to pull away from the main things the church members want me to do."

Help appears to be on the way. From lay-led efforts to independent ministries' offerings, to the Growing Disciples initiative of the Ministries Coordinating Committee (including the Sabbath School Department's new member lessons under development), to the North American Division's current development of discipling helps, to new curriculum in the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, an interest in discipleship is springing up all over this denomination.

In the fall of 2008, the Andrews University Theological Seminary introduced a new curriculum for the Master of Divinity program based on eight areas of competencies. One of those areas is discipling. The seminary also offers a Christian Formation and Discipleship concentration for the PhD in Religious Education. In 2010, the seminary will launch a new concentration in Discipleship and Spiritual Formation for the Doctor of Ministry program.


Many resources currently exist. For example, for assimilating new members, the book *You Can Keep Them If You Care*, by James A. Cress, offers a perceptive understanding of the unique challenges that Adventists face and gives specific methodologies. The

Trans-European Division has created *Life Development*, a discipleship pathway that begins with small group evangelism.

Remember, though, that not everything labeled "discipleship" is discipleship. Too often people will create a course or program in equipping the laity for evangelism and call it discipling. When we focus only on teaching people "how to witness," such teaching is needed,

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but it is not a complete discipling. Discipling must also include helping people become more and more like Jesus.

Our congregations need to assess the ways we are attempting to make followers of Jesus. Discipling cannot be contained in and taught only through sermons and seminar series. Everything a congregation does should be approached as partnering with the Holy Spirit to disciple because making disciples is at the heart of the church's mission. 

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Preserving a vibrant family life in a multichurch district

Pastoring in a multichurch district—which is what most pastors do—has its challenges. Pastors struggle to meet the needs of their churches and, at the same time, those of their own family. Pastors will, at times, be torn between what, when, and how to choose between church and family.

As the pastor in a district that has three churches (and we are planting two more), and a husband and father of four—I know firsthand the struggles pastors in a multichurch district face when it comes to the tension between work and family.

Family life alone presents its challenges, but it just gets that much harder when the pastor has more than one church. However, I have found that, if I have the right attitude and approach to ministry, family life can more than just survive. Over the last ten years, I have picked up a few simple principles that have given me rewarding success as a family man and a district pastor.

Your first church

As a multichurch district pastor, you must perform ministry from the principle that your family is your first church. A person that puts family first will not only receive the honor of God but will better gain the support of their spouse, children, and the churches themselves. When one outwardly places their priorities in the right order, that person will gain the respect and support of those around them.

Every call I have been offered in ministry started with an interview; first with administration, then with

the church body. During these interviews I have made clear the priority I place on family. I am the right man for the call, I have said, if they are seeking a pastor whose family stays as a priority in his ministry.

I have found that churches and administrations who accept a pastor who places family as a priority will support that pastor wherever they can. Also, churches seeking a pastor whose family comes first are working churches, open to sharing ministry with the pastor. Lastly, these types of churches will respect and protect the pastor's time. If you are feeling the tension between family and church, then sit with your family, church, and administrators respectively. Tell them your desire to put family first, and I can almost guarantee that you will get the support you need.

Use technology

We live in an age of computers, mobile devices, cell phones, messaging services, etc. All these can save us time. Maximize the use of these gadgets to your family's advantage.

For starters, when working on your schedule, why not schedule time with your family on a daily and weekly basis before you plan anything else? I have a BlackBerry that I use to schedule all my appointments. It is very helpful.

Here's how it works for me. As part of my planning, I schedule time and events with my family first, and do this with my BlackBerry. I have daily, weekly, as well as monthly "sacred" times and dates set for

each one of my four children, as well as my wife.

This works most beneficially in four ways. First of all, my family becomes part of the planning process, as we sit down together to accomplish the task of completing my schedule. This way they feel like they are part of my ministry as they see how much I value them. Secondly, they take part in assisting me in planning the right time, event, and place for spending time with them. Thus, they anticipate (with joy) the time we will be spending together. Thirdly, when someone calls asking for an appointment with me that cannot be classed as an emergency (and believe me, I make sure it is an emergency), I simply look at my BlackBerry and schedule them around my prescheduled time set aside for another commitment. Lastly, it will give your family deeper appreciation and respect for your work as they see how you are attempting to balance your ministry in a respectable manner.

Time management

When it comes to my family, a practice that works for me is that I set aside one hour a day for my wife. We spend this time together, alone, where she and I just sit down, relax, and talk about God, life together, the children, and our future. Pastors, who can't even begin to express how crucial a good marriage is for their ministry, need the support of their spouse, and spending time with them is essential.

Secondly, we have daily set times for family worship. I say that

"a family that enjoyably worships together grows together."

Thirdly, I have set times throughout the day and week for each child where we come together and connect.

Finally, we have a family day once a week. We, as a family, spend time alone together. Lastly, we set dates and times to do ministry together for as we work in ministering together, God has a way of bonding our hearts as one.

and encourage others to do ministry. Not only will this give you more time with your family, it will give them the opportunity to enjoy the blessing of serving others.

Over the years, I have learned that my responsibility was not to take care of everything in the church, which I was

ministry, we will experience, as well as manifest, a powerful witness of His grace. As we utilize today's

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With all that in place, I then can do the work of the church, but I do it around my family. That's what priorities are all about.

Learn to say "No"

In ministry, we are tempted to say "Yes" to everything. This approach to ministry can ruin your family life. We must realize that we are just one person, and we cannot do everything.

Learn to suggest alternatives for ministry to your congregations. Learn to delegate responsibility. Take the time to train, teach, empower,

prone to do, but to allow the Lord to lead. I needed to get out of the way and allow God to work through the body of Christ. I did not need to micromanage the ministry of the church. As a result, life has been better for me, my family, and for the church itself.

Conclusion

Because of the importance of family life, God desires that a minister's family life reflect His abundant power. As a result, we must seek His way in our family life. As we place family on top of the list of

technology to help manage our time, we will experience the refreshing balance that tends towards positive relationships. As we delegate responsibility, which in reality helps others grow and experience God's power in their lives, we will see individuals, as well as our churches, mature and grow. ☑

A screenshot of the Ministry Magazine website. The header features the word "MINISTRY" in large, stylized letters. Below the header, there are several articles and images. The main article is titled "A word about our great Saviour".

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Finishing well

Leadership, as a trust, inevitably comes to an end. It is given for a time, and then removed. As Solomon wrote, “To every thing there is a season, and a time for every purpose under the heaven” (Eccles. 3:1, KJV). Thus, the time for leading comes and goes. We measure most everything in terms of time—either time as *chronos*, involving duration, or time as *kairos*, identifying a significant moment. Wise leaders and their effective leadership careers seem to fit better with *kairos*—the opportunity to do something of moral and spiritual value.

Unfortunately, knowing what to do when a leadership career approaches the end is an act of wisdom that not all leaders perform well. Bringing a leadership career to a formal conclusion has become more an art than a science. Particularly when serving as an Adventist denominational leader, one could be dealing with unforeseen and disrupting changes when faced with an unexpected career change or a career conclusion. Before such challenging times come, the leader needs to give careful attention to finishing well.

Grand finale

When Paul wrote, “I have finished the race” (2 Tim. 4:7, NIV), he was wrapping up his journey at the finish, and his final affirmation indicates that finishing well had made the entire journey worthwhile. Finishing well is, indeed, the challenge of a lifetime.

Leaders are neither offered guarantees of success nor assurances of a grand finale. Within the Adventist Church, denominational leaders

often finish their careers silently and are soon forgotten. They face obstacles and adversities along the way, and live their journey moment by moment until one day it is over. According to J. Robert Clinton, there are several reasons why leaders may not finish their careers well:

1. Finances—their use and abuse
2. Power—its abuse
3. Pride—leads to downfall
4. Sex—illicit relationships
5. Family issues
6. Plateauing¹

These six reasons represent potential issues quietly lodged in the leader’s life and are able to obscure or destroy a lifetime of accomplishments and successes, preventing the leader from enjoying a respectable departure and the enjoyment of his or her legacy. In this regard, the pertinent questions to leaders are, “How can spiritual leaders leave honorably? When is it time to leave? When does a leader come to the end of the trail, take the saddle off the horse, and hang up the ol’ hat and spurs? Leaving in dignity seems to be a lost art.”² That may be the intent behind the words of Samuel (1 Sam. 12:3–5) as he addressed the people of Israel when Saul was crowned as their king: “Here I am; Bear witness against me before the LORD and His anointed. Whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I defrauded? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I taken a bribe to blind my eyes with it? I will restore it” (NASB). The time had come for the prophet to leave, and he sought to leave with dignity, honor, and an unblemished integrity.

This topic goes to the core of my personal experience, the fact that one day we will come to the end of our formal leadership, and we will no longer be consulted, sought after, or perhaps even remembered. I write this from the perspective of an Adventist Christian denominational leader fully aware that these matters are not addressed officially and that my lifetime commitment includes my professional career and submission to the electoral process and the committee system of the Adventist Church. By subjecting ourselves, we also subject the futures of our families to an evaluation process that comes at the end of each service period, and to a governing or a nominating committee that can alter our most perfectly laid out plans.

Leaving honorably

Jan Paulsen, Seventh-day Adventist Church world president, wrote, “All who serve as elected leaders in the church serve at the pleasure of that community and the Spirit. And that service is an honor and a privilege which should not be presumed or taken for granted. Therefore, bitterness and anger do not belong if one’s elected mandate is not renewed but passed on to someone else. In the words of one elected leader, ‘If you cannot accept being elected out, you should not accept being elected in!’”³

When does the time come to leave a job, redirect yourself, and/or end a career? Leaders leave for many different reasons and point themselves in different directions. These changes happen when a better offer comes along, they do a crash and burn, reach retirement age, they become bored, and/or do

not have a vision for the organization anymore.⁴

The list is not intended to be exhaustive; there could be multiple reasons for leaving. However, a differentiation must be made when a leader leaves under a forced or unforced departure, and when the departure is justified or just comes as an unwelcome or untimely detour. When faced with these circumstances, A. E. Nelson recommends,

1. Resign with grace
2. Make your apologies if needed
3. Be humble
4. Repent if necessary
5. Walk away with honor
6. Put adverse memories in neutral or constructive terms.⁵

Most likely the worst part of leaving prematurely might be keeping emotions, voice, words, thoughts, and manners under control because most leaders would prefer to leave when a suitable infrastructure is

in place, managerial systems are functioning properly, and potential leaders have been identified that would provide continuity to our work.⁶ Leaders should avoid “leaving messes behind” and should stay on during tumultuous and tempestuous times. Plus, any major career choice should be avoided when the person is depressed or overly tired.⁷

Some leaders enjoy the gift of longevity, and the entities they lead benefit from the fullness of their abilities and continuity of their service. Other leaders are better suited for a shorter time of service in an assignment, as lengthening their stay seems to affect their effectiveness negatively. The dangers of staying too long include an unchanging leadership style, lacking innovation, harming the organization, not having an honest look at productivity statistics, and showing lack of judgment about uncompleted projects. Prayerfully reflecting on whether

the organization benefits more from their departure than from their staying, and keeping in step with the Spirit (Gal. 5:25) is important, not just to lead but also to know when to leave.⁸

Facing a constituency, board, or committee

Most leaders prefer to leave when they have accomplished what they had set out to achieve, and consider that others might be able to move the organization further. In the Adventist organizational system, leaders are elected for a varied but defined period of time by action of a group of assembled representatives. Others may be appointed by boards or committees. The actions of these bodies express approval, disapproval, as well as affirm or end the leadership tenure of elected leaders. Having been exposed to a few of them at different levels of church work—as elector, candidate, observer, and advisor—I offer these

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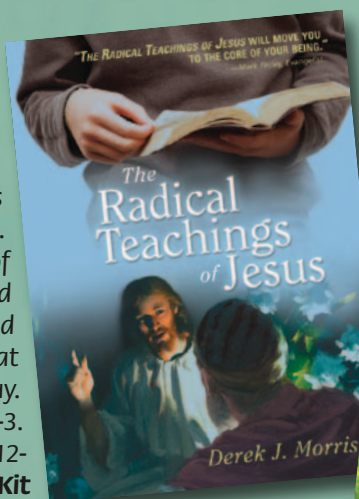
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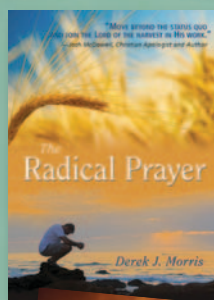


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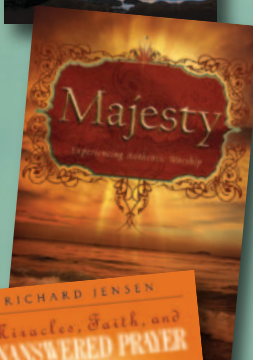
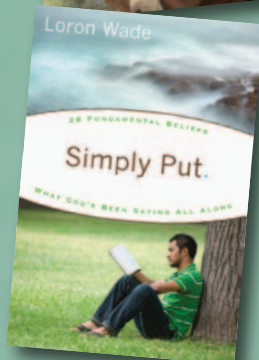


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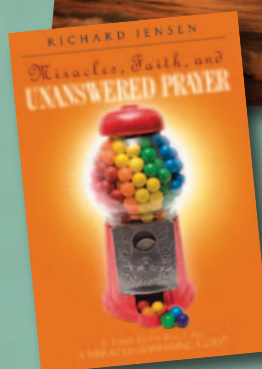


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ideas that may have value to those who may see their formal leadership career in the church coming to an end at an unexpected time.⁹

In anticipation of election time I remove all personal belongings from

Hans Finzel identified the characteristics of those who finish well. These characteristics provide valuable counsel to anyone facing the conclusion of their career: maintain a personal vibrant relationship with

conclusion with dignity and honor? Finzel says, "I used to want to be a man known for great accomplishments—a person of notable deeds and ideas that rocked the planet. But now I would settle for this epitaph,

I VIEW THE PROCESS OF ELECTION WITH
HUMILITY AND ENTRUST IT TO THE LORD'S
HANDS THAT HE WORK HIS WILL THROUGH THE
PROCESS FOR WHAT IS BEST FOR MY LIFE.

my office, return the office keys to my assistant, and thank the Lord for the time He allowed me to serve. This ritual has served as a reminder that my leadership is a trust that will one day be removed from me, and that perhaps *kairos* (the right time) has come for my formal leadership career to end or go in a different direction. I view the process of election with humility and entrust it to the Lord's hands that He work His will through the process for what is best for my life. In anticipation of any upcoming election, I offer this additional sincere advice:

1. Organize your work.
2. Document all you can. List pending items for your successor and higher organizations, keeping a copy for yourself.
3. Delegate what you can.
4. Brief your associates.
5. Inform your board chair.
6. Clear your office of personal belongings before the election.
7. Leave your keys, and plan what to do with other assets (for example, cell phone, laptop) you have.
8. Resist the temptation to look back.


God and a learning posture, evidence Christlikeness in character, leave behind one or more ultimate contributions, and walk with a growing sense of destiny.¹⁰

Conclusion

When the time has come for you to depart,

1. Applaud those who have helped you.
2. Thank everyone for the opportunity to serve them.
3. Do not review those things that irritated you.
4. Do not make apologies and try to "set the record straight."
5. Do not linger in regrets.
6. Celebrate and smile.
7. Accept compliments—but don't let those compliments inflate your ego.
8. Encourage people left behind.
9. Leave with dignity, which is the final touch of leaving a legacy.
10. Thank God for His guidance and power.

The original question still remains valid today. What elements should a leader consider prior to bringing their formal leadership to a

'He was a good and godly man, loved his family deeply, and finished well.'"¹¹ 

1 J. Robert Clinton, "Finishing Well: The Challenge of a Lifetime," a plenary address given to the 1994 leadership forum in Estes Park, CO (Altadena, CA: Barnabas Publishers, 1994), 8, 9.

2 A. E. Nelson, *Spirituality and Leadership: Harnessing the Wisdom, Guidance, and Power of the Soul* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2002), 166.

3 Jan Paulsen, *Profiling Adventist Leadership* (Saint Louis, MO: General Conference Session, July 3–7, 2005), 36.

4 Nelson, 166.

5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., 167.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid., 168.

9 Juan R. Prestol, "Things I Have Learned About Constituency Elections," *Adventist Review*, September 20, 2007, 30.

10 H. Finzel, *Empowered Leaders: The Ten Principles of Christian Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing Group, 1998), 179.

11 Ibid., 175.



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Members who smoke and church discipline: A view from the writings of Ellen G. White

The course pursued toward Doctor Osborn has been all wrong. Had this man been handled judiciously he would have been a blessing to the church. He has used tobacco to a greater or less degree, but this habit was not as offensive in the sight of God as the defects in the character of those who might judge him, for God weighs the motives."¹

So wrote Ellen White to the leadership of the church in Ligonier, Indiana, to forbear and be more patient with "Dr. Osborn," a member who had not yet quit the use of tobacco. The statement led me to research the writings of Ellen White on the issue of church discipline as it relates to members who may not be living up to the health message as a part of our gospel proclamation. This research makes no pretension of being comprehensive or thorough, but it represents, fairly, Ellen White's views on how the church should deal with members who are victims of tobacco use and smoking. My approach reviews significant portions of selected extant texts (unpublished manuscripts, articles, and published writings), paying close attention to the chronology of the writings.

Between 1848 and 1865, Ellen White had four major visions on health reform. As early as autumn 1848, she was shown the devastating effects of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs such as tea and coffee.² Six years later, in February 1854, she received

more light on temperance, especially on the use of refined and rich foods. A vision that occurred in June 1863 helped her elaborate on previous revelations and go beyond the simple warning against tobacco and alcohol to stress the importance of a more wholistic lifestyle. The vision of Christmas 1865 gave her more impetus in helping the church understand the importance (and application) of principles given in previous visions, and further stress the importance of building sanitariums and other health-care institutions. Thus, Ellen White's precise counsel on tobacco was, at least, as early as autumn 1848.

Tobacco is not for Christians

On March 24, 1868, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald* published a statement dealing with tobacco, hop, and swine farmers, signed by both James and Ellen White. While the Whites strongly encouraged tobacco, hop, and swine farmers to align themselves with the principles of health reform and eventually get rid of such businesses, they did not deem that this "business" had to be taken as a test of Christian fellowship.³

A few years later, according to reports at camp meetings occurring in 1875 and 1876, some Adventists still used tobacco after their acceptance into the church but felt compelled to confess, give it up, and completely take the burden to the

Lord in prayer. One, Dr. Pottinger, testified, "My brethren may have thought they were meeting with only half a brother, when they saw me using tobacco . . . I shall take hold in earnest to rid myself of tobacco."⁴

Ellen White noted that Christians⁵ and even "certain Christian ministers"⁶ used tobacco, even though it is not clear if she refers to non-Adventists or Adventists. Interestingly enough, Millerites would not necessarily be against tobacco, but on December 5, 1884, during a meeting in Chicago, a son of William Miller "felt that his service would not be acceptable to God until he should overcome the tobacco habit. He here determined to be a free man, cleansed from everything that can defile."⁷

In any case, Ellen White considered the use of tobacco harmful, immoral, and contrary to the will of God for humans.⁸ She clearly viewed abstinence from tobacco (and other harmful substances and foods) as a habit in "harmony with the instruction of the Bible."⁹ She also believed that the message of Christian temperance should be used to lead people enslaved by harmful habits to the cross of Christ: "Persons who have not entered a church for nearly a score of years have come to such gatherings and have been converted. The result was, they discarded tea and coffee, tobacco, beer, and liquor."¹⁰ An important part of this message provides valid alternatives to these

harmful habits, especially when teaching the youth.¹¹

Working closely with James and Ellen White, J. N. Loughborough published an article in the *Review and Herald*, on November 5, 1861, that had far-reaching consequences. He stated, “We do not take in any who use tobacco, and reject the gifts of the Spirit of God, if we know it. One of the very objects to be accomplished by church organization is to lop off these things, and only have those come together who stand in the light. To take in those

While Ellen White was very passionate in her appeal to quit the use of tobacco and other harmful substances, she also recognized that “If we come to persons who have not been enlightened in regard to health reform, and present our strongest positions at first, there is danger of their becoming discouraged as they see how much they have to give up, so that they will make no effort to reform. We must lead the people along patiently and gradually, remembering the hole of the pit whence we were digged.”¹⁴

She had little patience for those who felt a particular zeal (and pleasure) in accusing and abusing the brethren,¹⁶ and advised that overly critical members “should not be retained as members.”¹⁷ Instead, she encouraged compassion, “patience and forbearance with individuals,” and acknowledged that “if these individuals were disfellowshipped, they would be brought more closely in connection with an unholy influence and the possibility of saving them [would be] lost.”¹⁸ She urged the necessity of seeking “wisdom

WHILE ELLEN WHITE WAS VERY PASSIONATE IN HER APPEAL TO QUIT THE USE OF TOBACCO AND OTHER HARMFUL SUBSTANCES, SHE ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT “IF WE COME TO PERSONS WHO HAVE NOT BEEN ENLIGHTENED IN REGARD TO HEALTH REFORM, AND PRESENT OUR STRONGEST POSITIONS AT FIRST, THERE IS DANGER OF THEIR BECOMING DISCOURAGED AS THEY SEE HOW MUCH THEY HAVE TO GIVE UP, SO THAT THEY WILL MAKE NO EFFORT TO REFORM. WE MUST LEAD THE PEOPLE ALONG PATIENTLY AND GRADUALLY, REMEMBERING THE HOLE OF THE PIT WHENCE WE WERE DIGGED.”

who are holding on to their sins and wrongs would be to encourage the things we are seeking to remedy.”¹²

The same standard remained untouched for years, as evidenced by Ellen White’s counsel some forty years later to Brother and Sister Haskell in Nashville: Tobacco and alcohol users “should not be received into the church until they give evidence that they are truly converted, that they feel the need of the faith that works by love and purifies the soul. The truth of God will purify the true believer. He who is thoroughly converted will abandon every defiling habit and appetite. By total abstinence, he will overcome his desire for health-destroying indulgences.”¹³

Ellen White’s attitude to church discipline

But what if a smoker was found among church members? What if the member had given up tobacco and then fallen back into the old habit? Or what would happen if a person had been accepted into the church before giving up the harmful habit, and then failed to quit? In order to answer such questions, it is necessary to take a brief look at Ellen White’s understanding of, and attitude toward, church discipline, and then present a case in point.

Ellen White always advocated the example of Jesus’ instructions, given in Matthew 18:15–17, for dealing with sin in the church.¹⁵

and know[ing] how to treat each individual case. Not all must be treated alike . . . if one is living in disobedience to the commandments of God, the church must act and must separate them from them. And for other sins it will often be necessary to disfellowship souls if they continue in their sins; yet great care should be used and great patience and forbearance exercised.”¹⁹

For example, W. O. Palmer worked closely with Edson White in the southern states in the early 1900s, especially among African-Americans, preaching, writing, and establishing schools and churches and the publishing house in Nashville.²⁰ “Neither Edson White nor W. O. Palmer . . . was

known for his financial acumen,”²¹ but Ellen White knew that “the Lord used Edson White and W. O. Palmer to do missionary work in the South. . . . The Lord accepted these two souls, brought from darkness to light, and put it into their hearts to do a work in the Southern field.”²²

Unfortunately, in 1904, Ellen White had to write to George Butler a letter in which she acknowledged that W. O. Palmer wronged somebody (perhaps while doing business). While affirming that justice should be done to the person wronged by Palmer, she also asked Butler to “save him [Palmer] if you can” and to “help him for Christ’s sake.”²³ Palmer did not seem to behave as expected and hoped, and on January 25, 1905, Ellen White had to write a letter from Mountain View, California, to Brother and Sister Haskell, in which she stated, “Brother W. O. Palmer is not to be separated from the sympathy of the church. Brother Palmer is not perfect. Over and over again he has shown himself to be defective. I am to be as a mother to him, and as such I have spoken to him faithfully. I shall still continue to correct his wrongs, but I wish to present to him the hopeful side, that he may not fall into utter discouragement. I shall reprove his errors and encourage him in every way possible.”²⁴

Apparently, her appeal to let “the sympathy and love of Christ come in” to melt the “still, cold heart”²⁵ was received, and the grace of God was effective, as Palmer died on May 1930, as a member in good standing.²⁶

Case in point: Dr. Osborn and Sister Graham

On October 9, 1878, Ellen White had a vision during the Michigan camp meeting held in Battle Creek. Based on that vision, she wrote a letter the same day to the ministers and church members in Indiana, especially the Ligonier church.²⁷ She speaks of that church being animated by a “strong, self-willed . . . self-righteous . . . fierce, self-sufficient, vindictive spirit.”²⁸ Under the influence of Sister Graham, many

of the church members at Ligonier passed “censure and harsh judgment upon others, while their own course appears right in their own eyes.”²⁹

Ellen White recognized that Dr. Osborn did not have a meek spirit, “but those who have condemned him have pursued a course far more objectionable in the sight of God than that pursued by him, and they are answerable for their influence upon the doctor.”³⁰ She reproached the “narrow minds” and “self-righteous” leaders for not paying Dr. Osborn the respect “for his years and for his position . . . character.”³¹

- *Years*—because he was not only presumably aged, but also because his “character molded and habits confirmed, and to take the truth at his age and be transformed is a great work. This may not to be expected in a day.”³²
- *Position*—because he “is . . . a man of influence,” and has a great potential to bring the light to his large extended family and promote the Adventist publications.³³
- *Character*—because he “loves the truth, . . . is a man who, if converted soul and body to God, would do good.”³⁴

Ellen White offered another approach to the issue, with more general implications. She stated that “God loves the soul of Dr. Osborn,”³⁵ and that he needed to fully surrender to Christ. However, she was not in favor of the fact that some “have taken a position that those who use tobacco should be dealt with and turned out of the church.”³⁶ Her position is readily explained, “In all of our experience for many years not a case of this kind has thus been treated by us. We have borne with them and labored with and prayed with them for years, . . . if after a time they did not reform, they [would] become lax in other things.”³⁷

Conclusion


How, then, should we deal with erring members (e.g., smokers) without immediately affecting their

membership? Time and again, Ellen White stressed the need to apply Matthew 18:15–18 to deal with members who err, and do our best not to deprive them of the Christian gathering and church support blessings. Time, forbearance, compassion, and “motherly” and “fatherly” love are required to the extent that we should not feel jeopardized by the struggles of our fellow brother or sister. We should encourage them to fight and overcome. If they stop holding on to Christ, other sins will prevail, and at that point the church will have to take action. While the fight is on, we should not quench the little flame.

I found Ellen White’s approach in dealing with erring members extremely balanced and biblical. She masterfully expressed and clearly conveyed what the Gospel of Matthew teaches, though perhaps in a different way less visible to modern readers. Matthew surrounds his disciplinary instructions (Matt. 18:15–18) with the parable of the lost sheep (Matt. 18:12–14), an injunction about unlimited forgiveness (Matt. 18:21, 22), and the parable of the unmerciful steward (Matt. 18:23–35). In doing so, Matthew strongly lessens the community’s hysterical attempt to purge itself. The same chapter also contains an appeal to the disciples to become like children and humble themselves (vv. 3, 4), and receive others in the name of Jesus (v. 5). At the same time, they were exhorted to avoid despising or causing a “little one” to stumble (vv. 6, 10), even though he or she might be considered lost (v. 11).

As Ellen White puts it: If “there are wrongs in the church, they should receive immediate attention. Some may have to be sharply rebuked. This is not doing the erring one any wrong.”³⁸

While reproof is to be given, it must be given in accordance with Christ’s direction. . . . Do not become impatient with your brother’s faults and weaknesses. . . . We see individuals committing errors, and we are pained because

their lives are not in accordance with the Bible standard of righteousness. But we are not to become impatient. If we have the mind of Christ, we shall feel a burden for the welfare of him who has forgotten to be a doer of the Word. Do not speak of his errors to others. Follow the rule Jesus has given. Go to the wrongdoer alone first, and see if by words of wisdom you cannot save him.³⁹ 

- 1 Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 12:285.
- 2 See E. G. White, Letter 8, 1851.
- 3 E. G. White and James White, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, March 24, 1868.
- 4 E. G. White, "The Camp-Meetings: Illinois Camp-Meeting," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 22, 1875. Cf. E. G. White, "Minnesota Camp-Meeting," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 27, 1876; E. G. White, "Camp-Meeting at Eagle Lake," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 4, 1876; E. G. White, "The Sparta Camp-Meeting," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 18, 1876.
- 5 E. G. White, *Temperance* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Pub. Assn., 1949), 5; E. G. White, *Testimonies for the Church* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press, 1948), 3:569.
- 6 E. G. White, "Home Duties of the Father," *Health Reformer*, September 1877.
- 7 E. G. White, "Notes of Travel: Meetings in Chicago," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 10, 1885.
- 8 See E. G. White, "The Path of Progress," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, February 21, 1888; E. G. White, *Fundamentals*

- of Christian Education* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assn., 1923), 428; E. G. White, Manuscript 130, 1899; *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:569. According to Ellen White, the use of tobacco is dangerous and harmful for a number of interrelated reasons such as it creates a self-accusing conscience that pushes a person to withdraw from the church; leads to poor stewardship; benumbs the brain, intoxicates the body, and weakens intellectual powers; and makes children living in the house sick. For a more thorough discussion on the harmful effects of tobacco see *Testimonies for the Church*, 1:225, 548; 3:569; 7:75; E. G. White, "The Temptations of Christ," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 8, 1874; E. G. White, "Sanctification: The Life of Daniel an Illustration of True Sanctification," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 25, 1881; E. G. White, "Christian Perfection," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, May 1, 1900; E. G. White, "The Temple of God," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 6, 1900; E. G. White, "Lessons from the Second Chapter of Philippians," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, June 15, 1905, 8, 9; E. G. White, "Early Counsels on Medical Work-No. 1," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 2, 1914, 3, 4; "Home Duties of the Father," *Health Reformer*; E. G. White, *Selected Messages* (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1958, 1980), vol. 2, 420, 467; *Temperance*, 45, 278; Manuscript 130; Letter 49, 1902.
- 9 "The Path of Progress," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*; *Testimonies for the Church*, 7:75.
 - 10 E. G. White, Manuscript 52, 1900; see also "An Open Letter, from Mrs. E. G. White to All Who Love the Blessed Hope," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, January 27, 1903, 14.
 - 11 E. G. White, *The Adventist Home* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1952, 1980), 499; cf. MS 054, 1905.
 - 12 Quoted in Arthur L. White, *The Ellen G. White Biography*, (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 1981–1986), 1:457.
 - 13 E. G. White, *Evangelism* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1946), 264. See also "Lessons from the Second Chapter of Philippians," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*.
 - 14 *Testimonies for the Church*, 3:21.

- 15 E.g., E. G. White, Manuscript 66 quoted in D. A. Delafield, *Ellen G. White in Europe* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1975), 202; E. G. White, Manuscript 8a, 1888; E. G. White, Letter 31, 1905.
- 16 Cf. E. G. White, *Manuscript Releases* (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1990), 9:196; E. G. White, Manuscript 57, 1886; Delafield, 202; "Labors in Christiana," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, October 19, 1886; Letter 31.
- 17 Manuscript 66 quoted in Delafield, 202.
- 18 *Manuscript Releases*, 9:197; cf. E. G. White, Letter 19, 1886; Manuscript 8a; E. G. White, Letter 6a, 1894; E. G. White, Letter 68, 1894.
- 19 *Manuscript Releases*, 9:196, 197; cf. Letter 6a; Letter 68.
- 20 Arthur L. White, 5:168, 169, 340.
- 21 Ibid., 169.
- 22 E. G. White, Manuscript 124, 1902 quoted in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials* (Washington, DC: Ellen G. White Estate, 1987), 1772.
- 23 E. G. White, Letter 15, 1904, quoted in *Manuscript Releases* 17:298.
- 24 Letter 31, quoted in *Manuscript Releases*, 15:200.
- 25 Ibid., 202.
- 26 See G. A. Thompson, "Obituary of Will Otis Palmer," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, July 24, 1930, 27.
- 27 Manuscript 1, 1878.
- 28 *Manuscript Releases*, 12:281.
- 29 *Manuscript Releases*, 15:134.
- 30 E. G. White, Manuscript 1, 1880.
- 31 *Manuscript Releases*, 12:285, 286.
- 32 *Manuscript Releases*, 12:285.
- 33 Ibid.
- 34 *Manuscript Releases*, 12:285, 286.
- 35 *Manuscript Releases* 12:286.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 E. G. White, "Lessons for Christians," *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, December 11, 1900.
- 39 Manuscript 8a quoted in *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, 136, 137.

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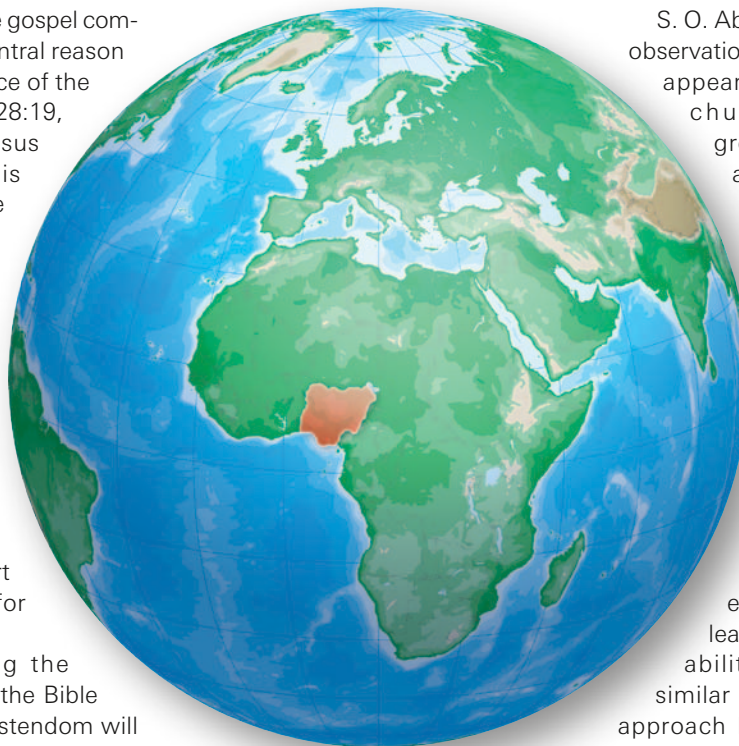
Fulfillment of the gospel commission is a central reason for the existence of the church (Matt. 28:19, 20). As a backing, Jesus gave the surety of His presence everywhere the disciples went—hence, the rapid growth of the early church. Along with this church growth was the manifestation of God's power in miracles and wonders, as it was in Christ's ministry and those of the apostles. It is also listed as part of the spiritual gifts for believers.

While recognizing the blessings of miracles, the Bible also declares that Christendom will be beset by false workers performing miracles. These, among others, are presented as a sign of the end in Matthew 24:24, 25.

This article will look at some aspects of the religious scene in Nigeria and see what lessons we can learn for the church as a whole.

Miracles and church growth

Some scholars have argued that the effects of miracles, church growth, and planting cannot be over-emphasized, and they cite numerous examples, such as the claim that groups "which claim to be able to stimulate and effect faith healing in people's physical, financial and social health are most popular . . .



[such] have a throng of followers who are hoping for 'faith healing.' "

Two points can be derived from this account: the first supports the fact that miracles can attract an audience; second, instead of a means to an end, they become the end in themselves. Commenting on the latter, Ellen G. White states that the people "did not seek Him [Christ] from any worthy motive; but as they had been fed with the loaves, they hoped still to receive temporal benefit by attaching themselves to Him. . . . Seek not merely for material benefit. Let it not be the chief effort to provide for the life that now is, but seek for spiritual food."¹

S. O. Abogunrin makes a similar observation by stating that "people appear in their thousands in churches and crusade grounds (both Christians and non-Christians), not seriously seeking after Christ or spiritual food, but for miracles . . . healing miracles have actually become the 'real thing' or the most current issue in African Christianity today."²

Signs and wonders?

In Nigeria, we have examples of church leaders who "claim similar abilities and soliciting for similar large followings"³ This approach has led to syncretism, which is "the fusion of different religious doctrines or a reconciliation of conflicting religious beliefs."⁴ In this case, for example, there comes to play the mixture of magical power with Christian "faith and practices." John Ogu asserts that many of the so-called miracles today "are fabrications intended to attract crowds and make money."⁵ According to the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the majority of the so-called miracles are used as baits to "lure people to the various churches."⁶

Bidemi Oyelade explains that the establishment of churches in Nigeria today is considered to be one of the quickest ways to amass wealth. As a result of this, questionable churches

and prophets are springing up. As “many of these prophets . . . want to make names, they want their voice to be heard, and they want to create awareness and recognition at all cost so they abandoned the real purpose of evangelization which is preaching to prophesy.”⁷

At some Christian gatherings, strange events have been witnessed. It is reported that self-proclaimed prophet T. B. Joshua wiggles his hand toward the congregation, and immediately a corresponding reaction follows. There are also instances of healing in which the healer touches the same part of his body to effect healing in the corresponding part of the sufferer. A source explains the incidence thus, “In one healing for a mouth severely damaged, he pounds and rubs over and over his own mouth pointing the other hand toward the afflicted woman’s mouth. Ectoplasm with blood comes from her mouth as she is supposedly healed. This is not Bible healing but sorcery.”⁸

Another relevant aspect of magical power is associated with the use of ritual symbols. Here, power is associated with individuals, objects, and postures that are represented by the rituals. To onlookers, such ritual symbols may appear ordinary but are essential parts of the recipes for effective magical results. If the ritual conditions are met, people believe that “power” would be released for the desired objectives.

Apart from magic, other forms, such as syncretism, are also evident in the Nigerian churches. For example, in T. B. Joshua’s church in Ikotun-Egbe, Lagos, there supposedly was a picture having an inscription in English and Arabic of the Islamic belief that “there is no God but Allah.” This declaration implies the denial of God having come in the flesh. The Bible expressly condemns such an assertion (1 John 2:22, 23; 4:1).

Biblical admonitions

The Scriptures are not silent on this matter. The Bible gives helpful insights.

- Leviticus 19:31; 20:6—reckoning with such powers set people against the living God.
- Deuteronomy 18:9–12—the Israelites warned not to practice these abominations, as did the people of the land they inherited.
- 1 Samuel 28—consultation with a similar power spelled Saul’s final doom.
- Isaiah 8:19—God’s people should seek their God instead of the power of the devil.
- Acts 13:4–12—Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, called Elymas the sorcerer (v. 8), a child of the devil, enemy of all righteousness, one who perverts the right ways of God (v. 10), and went blind by the power of God (v. 11).

God, in His foreknowledge, warned the church of individuals who would gain people’s attention through false miracles and wonders. Such Bible prophecies and their warning messages include

- Matthew 7:15—such are wolves in sheep’s clothing.

- Matthew 24:24, 25; Mark 13:22, 23—Christ’s warnings against false christs and prophets who would work wonders so much that the elect would possibly be deceived.
- 2 Peter 2:1–3—false teachers that would attract many people with falsehood at the expense of the truth. Such would exploit the innocent ones through made-up stories.
- Revelation 16:13, 14—the unity of the dragon, beast, and false prophets working miracles through the spirits of devils.
- Revelation 19:20; 20:10—the final doom for both the beast and false prophets.

In connection with these prophecies, Ellen White says, “Satan and his angels will come down with power and signs and lying wonders to deceive those who dwell on the earth and, if possible the very elect. The crisis is right upon us.”⁹ This warning is clear and it carries a sense of urgency.

The possible roots

What is the source of these false manifestations? Among the evangelistic strategies employed by



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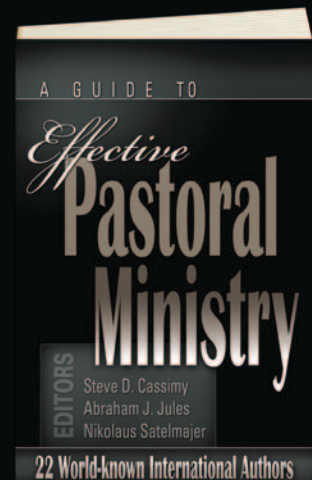
A GUIDE TO

Effective Pastoral Ministry



EDITORS | Steve D. Cassimy • Abraham J. Jules • Nikolaus Satelmajer

IN AN AGE OF INSTANT WORLDWIDE MESSAGING, it seems appropriate that pastors encourage one another, share ideas, and learn from one another. This book brings together distinguished pastors and denominational leaders from around the world to share their experiences, wisdom, and encouragement with their fellow members of the Seventh-day Adventist clergy. This timely how-to manual is filled with practical suggestions to pastors for a more efficient, productive, and joy-filled ministry. From the first chapter of this book to the last, you will find much to think about and much to emulate.



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22 World-known International Authors

the missionaries in colonial Africa, healing and the eradication of the roots of suffering, diseases, and illnesses ranked most successful. In essence, missionaries and African evangelists who succeeded in offering healing and protection for the people won more converts.¹⁰ This is not unconnected with the physical, spiritual, economic, and psychological conditions of a typical African. For instance, the people believe that every misfortune comes from magical attack, witches, wizards, or other demonic powers in their environments.

Nigeria, there is hardly a well-known denomination or ministry that is not linked with the performance of miracles.¹² Akosah-Sarpong, who monitored this trend in Nigeria, observes that West Africa has the highest concentration of spiritual churches focusing on miraculous manifestations on the continent. Here, according to him, people can spend a whole day in churches seeking for miracles and visions for their insurmountable problems. He puts it this way, "Most miracles can just be a street-side entertainment scene, drawing the unemployed,

satanic in origin and works by coercion through manipulation and tends to boost the ego of the magician. Some of these "miracles" tend to follow magical principles and rituals. However, since mystical powers, such as magic, are condemned in the Bible, it comes to the church in the garb of miracles and wonders. The waves of these "miracles" are reaching every nook and cranny of the country through the media.

However overtly manifested here in Nigeria, the world church must be careful about the issue of miracles, signs, and wonders. So-called miracles can be performed anywhere, for the great controversy wages everywhere. We have been warned about false teachings, false christs, false prophets, and false miracles. We must take those warnings seriously. Our safety centers in the Word of God: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa. 8:20, KJV). ■

TODAY IN NIGERIA, THERE
IS HARDLY A WELL-KNOWN
DENOMINATION OR MINISTRY
THAT IS NOT LINKED WITH THE
PERFORMANCE OF MIRACLES.

This religio-cultural setting encourages the desire for miracles to cure diseases and resolve other distressing situations. The fear of these malevolent agents is, therefore, so deeply rooted that both modern education and religions cannot totally eradicate them. "In fact, it seems to be gaining further momentum in the society, with the recent emergence of secret cults in Nigerian Universities."¹¹ There is no doubt that any religion or individual that does not only claim, but also demonstrates, the power to deliver from those oppressive forces will not only win such person's attention but also their affection. Today in

busybodies or the plain curious . . . [and] ignorant that are too weak to think and explain their daily problems in clear terms. As West Africa shows, the boom in spiritual churches and the juju-marabou mediums have seen the commercialization of miracles, making it unsacred and undermining its divine nature."¹³

What can we learn from this?

We are in the midst of the great controversy between Christ and Satan. Genuine miracles come from God in response to the prayer of His people and for His own glory. Magic or sorcery, on the other hand, is

- 1 Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Boise, ID: Pacific Press, 1940), 384, 385.
- 2 S. O. Abogunrin, preface to *Biblical Healing in African Context*, Bible Study Series, eds., S. O. Abogunrin et al., (Ibadan, Nigeria: A Publication of the Nigerian Association for Biblical Studies, 2004), ix.
- 3 Don. O. Akhilomoh, "Faith Healing and the Spirit of Beelzebub: A Critical Appraisal of Pentecostal Practices in Nigeria," in S. O. Abogunrin et al., eds., *Biblical Healing in African Context*, 175.
- 4 Joseph Kenny, Paul Oye, and Segun Taiwo, "Church Contextualization in Nigeria, 1970–1990." Paper given at AECWA Seminar, Ikeja, Lagos, from www.diafrica.org.
- 5 Adeola Balogun, "Being a Traditional Ruler Does Not Conflict With My Duties as a Clergyman—Rev. John Ogu," <http://www.punchng.com/Article.aspx?theartic=Art200808300294423> (accessed Feb. 23, 2010).
- 6 Geoffrey Ekenna, "Miracle and Magic," *Newswatch*, April 19, 2004, 15.
- 7 Bidemi Oyelade, "Failed Predictions '08: These Men of God Goofed," *Sunday Sun*, January 18, 2009, 4, 8.
- 8 "Clueless in Nigeria?," Let Us Reason Ministries, <http://www.letusreason.org/Poptea8.htm> (accessed Feb. 23, 2010).
- 9 Ellen G. White, *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1980), 7:982.
- 10 L. Lugwanya, "Medicine, Spiritual Healing and African Response: Concerns of Christianity in Africa in Twenty-First Century," *African Theological Journal* 23, no. 1, (2000): 30, quoted in A. M. Okorie, "The Healing Miracles of Jesus in the African Context," *Biblical Healing in African Context*, 193.
- 11 Kenny, Oye, and Taiwo.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Akosah-Sarpong, "The Trouble with African Miracles," www.ghanaweb.com.

Tell us what you think about this article. Email MinistryMagazine@gc.adventist.org or write to 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Adventists to build first church in the Arabian Gulf region

United Arab Emirates (UAE) – A groundbreaking ceremony was held January 8, 2010, for the first ever Seventh-day Adventist church to be built in the Arabian Gulf region, in Ras Al Khaimah, one of the seven emirates in the UAE.

About 250 Adventists from all over the UAE gathered at the site where **Victor Harewood**, senior pastor of the UAE and Oman area, and **Rogelio Taer**, Middle East Union (MEU) associate treasurer, unveiled the cornerstone for the building to officially mark the groundbreaking of this construction project.

The building, which is expected to be finished by September 2010, will house a worship hall seating up to 500 people, an all-purpose hall with a kitchen, and the headquarters for the Gulf Section of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, comprising Saudi Arabia, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, and Yemen.

"This is the first time an Arab ruler has given us land which will give Adventists the official registration, recognition, immigration profile, and ability to have our own church building," said **Rajee Mathew**, project manager for the building. Previously, Adventists have been meeting in church members' homes and rented rooms.

Adventists in Ras Al Khaimah decided to approach the government for a piece of land. Arrangements were made for the Adventist delegation, headed by the MEU president **Kjell Aune**, to visit His Highness **Sheikh Saud Bin Saqr Al Qasimi**, crown prince and deputy ruler of Ras Al Khaimah.

Aune commented, "The Middle East Union is thrilled to see this

project come true. It is a miraculous story and will mark a new era for the Adventist Church in the Gulf. It will be the first church-owned property in the Gulf area and because through it we will get legal registration, we will finally be able to organize the work in the seven Gulf countries in a separate field with a local administrative office. We are indebted to the world church for making this financially possible, to the local members for their dream, initiative, drive, and very hard work to succeed with the project, and to God for working out miracles along the way." *[Gureni Lukwaro/TED News Staff/TED News]*

Training writers

Ministry has embarked on a worldwide effort to increase the number of individuals who write for the journal. Inasmuch as the journal has readers in more than 180 countries, the editors have conducted a series of workshops

in various parts of the world during which individuals are given training in selecting topics, organizing material, and writing articles. Recently two such workshops were held.

Nikolaus Satelmajer conducted such a workshop at Spicer College in Pune, Maharashtra, India, in January in which more than 50 ministerial students, faculty, and pastors participated in the event. **Willie E. Hucks II** also conducted a workshop at Babcock University near Lagos, Nigeria, in February where more than 40 individuals participated. As a result of those workshops, the journal has already received submissions for articles from the participants.

If a group of ministers, professors, or students wish to participate in such a workshop, we invite such groups to contact the editors to determine if such a workshop can be scheduled for their area. Please contact us at ministrymagazine@gc.adventist.org or +1 301-680-6518. *[Nikolaus Satelmajer]*

Participants in writer's workshop at Babcock University in Nigeria

Photo: R. Danforth Francis





Share the Hope again

Silver Spring, Maryland, United States—Plans were announced at the year-end meetings of the North American Division for all pastors, leaders, and church members to become involved in the goals of the Share the Hope Again program outlined by Adventist Communication Network.

In 2009, the goal of reaching 100,000 individuals for Christ was reached, and the same objective now exists for 2010. Preparing for

Share the Hope Again includes reaching the members of North America's more than 6,000 churches to inspire and shape the ministries of each congregation to share a lifestyle of evangelism across the nation.

The objectives for Share the Hope Again involve prioritizing the need for spiritual renewal at every level of the church, the full and direct engagement of every church member, the discipling of new believers, and the reclaiming of inactive and former members.

Share the Hope Again has goals for each church to focus on:

1. Spiritual renewal;
2. Holding fasting and prayer weekends;
3. Every pastor, conference, union, division officer, and departmental leader to participate in evangelism;
4. New believers being trained for outreach;
5. Increased Sabbath School attendance;
6. Preparing lay members for leading in evangelistic campaigns

The goal for this lifestyle of evangelism program? Another 100,000 baptisms. *[Bernadine Delafield]*

RESOURCES



Toward a Theology of the Remnant: An Adventist Ecclesiastical Perspective by Ángel M. Rodríguez, editor, Silver Spring, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Association, 2009.



This volume is scheduled as the first in a series on Studies in Adventist Ecclesiology by the Biblical Research Institute (BRI) of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The director of the BRI, Ángel M. Rodríguez, writes in the preface: "It addresses the very identity of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, an identity that occasionally needs to be examined and reaffirmed." While some essays deal exegetically with the remnant idea in the Old and the New Testaments

(chapters 1–4), the focus narrows to the remnant concept in the book of Revelation (chapters 5–8). Then the book concentrates on the Adventist interpretation of the end-time remnant, particularly as found in the writings of Ellen G. White (chapters 9, 10). The final chapter deals with "God's End-Time Remnant and the Christian Church." An appendix, "The 'Testimony of Jesus' in the Writings of Ellen G. White" (by the editor) concludes this valuable volume. The book has a scriptural and a thematic index for easy access to its use of Scripture and themes. Of the nine contributors, three are part of the BRI staff, while six others were chosen from Adventist Bible scholars in various countries, a feature that gives the presentations

an international flavor and representation. Adventists will find the careful and thoughtful treatment of Revelation 12:17 in the writings of Ellen White by Rodríguez (appendix, 227–243) of special interest.

In his "General Introduction" to this new project of Adventist ecclesiology, the editor states that the time has come for a "serious theological reflection" and "a clearer expression of the identity of the Adventist movement" as "a community of spiritual pilgrims" (17, 18). By doing this, "the church may be revitalized toward the fulfillment of its mission" (18). Another lofty goal the editor hopes to achieve is to be "helpful in properly interacting with other Christian communities and with non-Christian religions" (19). This outreach requires "clear theological and biblical thinking" (19).

Continued on page 30 ►



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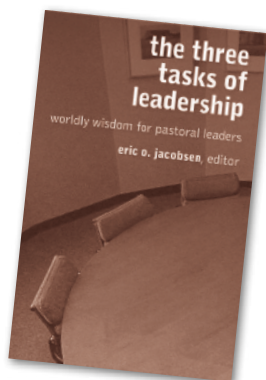
It may be regarded as a fortunate decision of the BRI to undertake this timely enterprise as a *team* of qualified Adventist Bible scholars, so that various approaches in the worldwide church can be represented, discussed, and integrated in this Adventist theological journey. Wisdom resides in the counsel of many advisers (Prov. 15:22). The editor

hopes, with this volume, to counteract the trend toward diversification in the worldwide Adventist movement by stressing “the biblical elements that constitute our bond of unity in Christ” (18). He proposes that “the key elements are located in our ecclesiology” (18). There can be no doubt that this first volume in the planned series on the biblical view of the remnant

church and how the Advent movement relates to the larger Christian community, will contribute to a new appreciation of our high calling to act as the “*members of His body*” (Eph. 5:30, NKJV; emphasis added).

—Reviewed by Hans K. LaRondelle, ThD, professor emeritus of theology, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States.

The Three Tasks of Leadership: Worldly Wisdom for Pastoral Leaders, by Eric O. Jacobsen, Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009.



Defining “leadership” is a daunting challenge. Max DePree approached it via the responsibilities of a leader: “*The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality. The last is to say thank you. In between the two, the leader must become a servant and a debtor.*”¹ Upon this definition, Jacobsen structures this volume. Most of the contributors come from the faculty of Fuller Theological Seminary. The essays in the first section address the function of the leader in defining reality; the essays in the second focus on the servant as leader. The final segment is dedicated to the leader who says, “Thank you,” thereby recognizing the interdependent nature of leadership as a process.

Jacobsen introduces the volume by establishing the role of the pastor as leader. All of the functions of the pastor—preaching, administering, developing, and praying—serve the leadership contribution of the pastor to congregation, church, community, and beyond. He characterizes

DePree as one who bridges the distance between leadership in the business context and leadership in the unique environment of the church.

The emphasis of the modern period has been on the *leader*, whereas the postmodern emphasis resides

upon the *relationship* between leader and follower. Issues of integrity, modeling, recognizing the leadership contribution of each member of the community, the responsibility of mentoring to develop followers into leaders—all contribute to a refreshing view of the leaders as stewards of those entrusted to them.

Defining the reality of the world of the church requires we recognize that leadership in the business context cannot simply be transferred to the freely associated context of the church. This book provides a healthy distinction between the business concept of a leader and the realities that a spiritual leader must face in the church where control structures that govern behavior in the former context are absent.

The emphasis is placed upon the *servant* as leader rather than emphasizing the more familiar *servant leadership* model introduced by Robert Greenleaf² where the

author treats *leadership* as a noun. The servant leads from a generative platform where the growth and development of those led becomes the primary goal of the leadership process. The leader then becomes debtor to all who participate in the process of leadership and contribute to subsequent accomplishment.

Gratitude (saying thanks) is a natural outgrowth of the conscious recognition that goal accomplishment does not result in what the leader does but rather the result of the collective contribution of the community being led.

The framework of DePree’s definition restricts the book to some degree. The author moved toward the concept of a leadership model wherein every member leads in the context of their spiritual giftedness, but they never fully abandoned the positional distinction of leader-follower introduced in John 15:15. Nevertheless, this book makes an outstanding contribution to our understanding of leadership in the body of Christ.

—Reviewed by Stanley E. Patterson, PhD, associate professor of Christian ministry, Andrews University Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan, United States. ✉

1 Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Currency, 2004), 11.

2 Robert Greenleaf, *Servant Leadership: A Journey Into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness* (Indianapolis, IN: The Robert K. Greenleaf Center, 1991).

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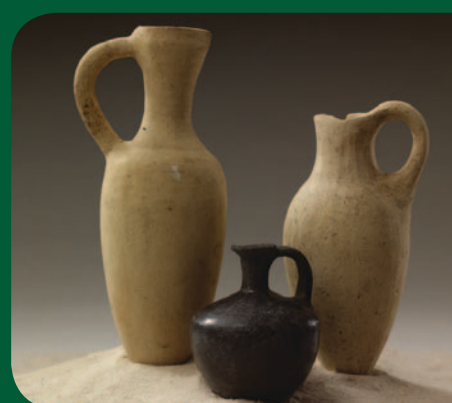
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