A tribute to Elder Pierson
see page 16
LETTERS

Praying or suffocating!
I would like to compliment you on the recent editorials. What a blessing it would be if much of the time and effort spent debating and/or dialoguing righteousness by faith were spent seeking in prayer the outpouring of the Holy Spirit! Perhaps few will be saved by our declaration of the meaning of righteousness by faith, but more may be spiritually suffocated in the atmosphere of debate and speculation.

A. G. Zytkoskee
Washington, D.C.

Hits the nail on the head
I think you hit the nail on the head regarding some of the current problems surrounding righteousness by faith. Certainly this subject is one of the most important ones that we ought to be concentrating on, but we ought to do so with His Spirit.

Ted Wilson
New York, New York

Potentially dangerous
Your article “Confessions of a Doctor Addict” (June, 1978) contains a potentially dangerous sentence that concerns me. It states, “A heating pad seems made for a tender abdomen.”

An impending acute appendicitis may be converted rapidly toward or into a ruptured appendix by applying local heat. Therefore, heat of any nature should not be applied to the abdomen unless it is known that this pain is not an early or later appendicitis.

Fred B. Moor, Jr., M.D.
Walla Walla, Washington

Particularly impressed
I just had to write you concerning the October Ministry, which was full of excellent articles. I have torn out practically every article for future use. I was particularly impressed with “Ingathering Motivations.” I wish this could be on the desk of every Lay Activities leader in our churches and on the desk of every conference Lay Activities director and evangelist. I also would like to mention your current articles on righteousness by faith. I hope you will continue speaking on this subject for I really believe that the enemy of man and Christ is not willing that righteousness by faith should be clearly presented; for he knows that if the people receive it fully, his power will be broken.

J. David Newman
Mt. Vernon, Ohio

Balanced material for the church
Congratulations on the superb Ministry, which I feel has reached a new high in balanced materials for all sections of the church. There was a splendid range of readable articles. What a pity that some back on to each other, making separate filing a hazard.

Martin L. Anthony
Watford, Herts., England

Fair and objective
I found your treatment of us Mennonites in the September Ministry more fair and objective than is usually the case, although you dealt with only one aspect of our emergence. Thank you for that.

Nick Kassebaum
Ritzville, Washington

Recommends Ministry to the congregation
After reading the October Ministry, I want to say, “We are behind you.” Here at Monterey Bay Academy we have studied the topic of righteousness by faith in some depth, as are many people today. We have reached the same conclusions Ministry seems to be stating. Therefore, as one of the pastors of our school church I am recommending to all the congregation that they order Ministry. We support you with our whole heart.

Dale Ratzlaff
Watsonville, California

Pleased with identification
The Ministry P.R.E.A.C.H. project corrects some of the mistakes we have made in the past in being hesitant to identify our crusades and publications. The climate today in this respect is much better, and P.R.E.A.C.H. will further improve it. Such identification does not arouse opposition, yet clears us of the charge of being dishonest.

J. L. Shuler
National City, California

Tremendous contribution
Ministry is a tremendous inspiration to us here in the Transvaal Conference and makes a great contribution to the soul-winning ministry of our workers.

D. H. Swanepoel, president
Transvaal Conference
South Africa

Ministry makes new friends
I have just returned from our city ministerial meetings, where I mentioned that Ministry was available to new ministers who have recently moved into this area. Several requested it; others remarked that they are receiving it and enjoying it. One minister told me that while he did not agree with all the articles, he found it to be a high-quality magazine. “We have nothing like it in my own church,” he said. Thank you for what you are doing, especially right here where it will count in my own area.

George Green
Lake City, Florida

Cover, No! Editorial, Yes!
Wow! That cover on the August Ministry. Someone really has an imagination. I’m still trying to get its message, but there must be a better way. When I got to the editorial, however, that cheered my heart.

J. N. Morgan
Keene, Texas

Hallelujah!
In the confines of the pastor’s study I shouted a hallelujah (though inaudible to all but God and myself) for the Christ-centeredness of the recent editorial regarding Christ’s righteousness. You certainly followed your own advice to “lift Jesus Christ higher than ever before.”

H. Haskell Williams
Leesburg, Florida
4 Don't Forget the Children! Are you overlooking a rich source of productive ministry? C. Lloyd Wyman gives direct, useful suggestions for reaching this important segment of your congregation.

7 Hiding Behind Words. Don Shafer. The gospel minister must never seek to impress with words, but to convey the themes of God in clear, intelligible speech and writing.

8 Planning a Sermonic Year. J. Reynolds Hoffman.

10 Joseph. Cherry B. Habenicht. The Incarnation takes on a different aspect viewed from the perspective of Mary's husband-to-be.

12 Mealtime Evangelism. J. R. Spangler.

14 Guiding the Ship of Truth. E. Edward Zinke. How shall we determine what course to steer in order to reach the correct harbor?

16 From the Editor. J. R. Spangler.

20 Was There a Population Explosion After the Flood? Edward N. Lugenbeal. Serious problems exist in viewing Genesis 5 and 11 as giving chronological data.

23 What You Need to Know About High Blood Pressure. J. A. Scharffenberg.


27 No Room. Ever since Mary and Joseph were turned away from the inn at Bethlehem, Jesus has been seeking a place in the lives of people.

28 Science and Religion

23 Health and Religion

26 Biblical Archeology

27 Shepherdess

30 Widening Our Word Power

31 Shop Talk

32 Recommended Reading
Don't forget the children

by C. Lloyd Wyman

Want to pastor a growing church filled with members who love Christ? Who practically fall into your arms when you extend an invitation to commit their lives to His service? Who have years of witness before them and who seldom apostatize? The material for such a productive ministry sits before the pastor in practically every church.

The children.

Wrote Dr. Torry: "No other form of Christian effort brings such immediate, such large, such lasting results as work for the conversion of children. It has many advantages over other forms of work. First of all, children are more easily led to Christ than adults. In the second place, they are more likely to stay converted than those apparently converted at a later period of life. They also make better Christians, as they do not have so much to unlearn as those who have grown old in sin. They have more years of service before them." 1

Dr. Spurgeon once said, "I have more confidence in the spiritual life of the children that I have received into the church than I have in the spiritual condition of the adults thus received. I will go even further than that. I have usually found a clearer knowledge of the gospel and a warmer love for Christ in the child convert than in the adult convert." 2

Spurgeon went on to say that "87 percent of adult converts fall away within five years, but not more than 40 percent of child converts, in the same time." 3

The child’s quick acceptance and long usefulness were emphasized by Dr. George W. Baley: "Less time and effort are necessary for the winning of twenty children to Christ than one adult, and a child is worth more in the extension of the kingdom than many adults." 4

Sometimes we fall into the error of thinking that a child must be ready to shave or date before he or she can make a meaningful commitment to Christ. But Matthew Henry gave his heart to Christ at the age of 11; Isaac Watts committed himself at the age of 9; Jonathan Edwards was only 7; and Count Zinzendorf while only 4 is known to have signed his name to "Dear Saviour, do Thou be mine, and I will be Thine."

How early should ministry for the child begin? While he is in his mother’s arms. A woman once asked the famous educator Francis Wayland Parker, "How can I begin the education of my child?"

"Well, when will your child be born?" Parker asked.

"Born!" she gasped. "Why, he is already 5 years old."

"Woman," he cried, "don’t stand there talking to me! Hurry home! Already you have lost the best five years."

Other experts on children support this judgment:

"Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil." 5

"Children should virtually be trained in a home school from the cradle to maturity." 6

"You are to teach your little ones to know Christ. This work you must do before Satan sows his seeds in their hearts." 7

The pastor’s ministry, then, should be only an extension of the parents'.

Our theology of the dignity of man and the church’s being the body of Christ should encourage us to minister to the young as well as the adult. Yet, far too frequently we pass by the younger saints and sinners to concentrate on the older members, not perceiving that the child is often the key to the parents’ heart. My experience as a pastor has taught me five things:

1. If you treat children with respect and concern, you earn the respect and appreciation of their parents. Children should not be "used," but they can be an excellent avenue to the hearts and minds of parents.

2. Love begets love. As you love the children and show them your interest, they will love you in return—and there is no love more genuine than the sweet, unadulterated love of a child.

3. The rapport a pastor establishes with children will remain throughout their mutual lives. When the children reach the difficult teen years, or when things are going rough at home or at school, they will come to the pastor, their established friend, for counsel and understanding.

4. A message understood by children is understood by all. And lessons learned by children may be a blessing to their parents too.

5. The child who respects his pastor will respect the ministry also, and this happy relationship will encourage love for his church and loyalty to it that can last a lifetime.

The pastor’s ministry to the children within his church should begin, I believe, with this understanding: It’s not easy to be a child in church. Lavern G. Franzen emphasizes this point in his book Smile! God Loves You:

"On the one hand is the reality of adult concerns that children be properly quiet, immobile, and attentive. On the other hand is another reality of the adult world. For a child it is a world in which pews are several sizes too large, hymns several stanzas too long, and sermon words several syllables too complex. There is little to claim a child’s interest, little to attract his attention, and even
little to invite participation. The adult church offers a child little to convince him that God’s love is exciting and real or that he is already a significant part of the sharing of that love.

"Yet the church hopes the child is so convinced. After all, children are the church. The Christ of the adult is their Christ now, and if the gospel is God’s good news about man’s bad situation for the grown-ups, so it is for young Christians. God’s people need to share it as that good news.” 7

Here are five suggestions to make it just that:

1. Begin the church service with a three-to-five minute story or lesson. Win your church board’s approval for the service and its frequency. I would encourage you to do it at least every other Sabbath.

   Should you bring the children down front? By all means, Yes. You give them special recognition when you invite them forward. You say by that invitation, “You are important to my ministry and to this church. Your life counts with God and with us here.”

2. One Sabbath a quarter, plan a storytime when one or more children share a witnessing experience. This kind of “sermon” will encourage other children—and adults—to live their faith before neighbors and others.

3. Try a children’s Sabbath. Once a year or a quarter, let the children take as many parts of a worship service as you can prepare them to do. Direct the sermon that day to the children, on their level; drive home the points by repetition. Use visual aids, if you can, and get the children to respond to points of truth, if the message lends itself to such a plan. Children love to respond and remember what they repeat. From time to time a children’s chorus may fit the conclusion of a story or a sermon. A child’s prayer may be very meaningful.

   Seek to have a children’s choir—even if only to sing several choruses. More children can take part in a chorus than in a story or sermon—and what parent does not like to see his “angel” performing? With training, the children can move from simple verse in unison to two- or three-part songs.

4. Have a potluck dinner following a children’s Sabbath, with parents present, of course. Make special mention of the part the children have in the dinner, and highlight their importance to the church.

5. In smaller churches it works well to have an afternoon with the pastor (usually an hour long). The children come to the church (a Sabbath afternoon works well), and the pastor, with the help of his lay people, participates in a program including crafts, short Bible-story plays acted out by children, songs, and perhaps a continued story told by the pastor. Children can be encouraged to invite friends. Many a neighbor has been won to Christ through the influence of a child working with his children.

   Now, let me tell you a story I have told the children of my church. It is a lesson my mother emphasized when I was just a lad. I usually tell it two or three weeks before the nominating committee begins its work.

   Mother taught me that whenever I was asked to do something, I should say, “I’ll be glad to.” She even taught me how to sound enthusiastic about it. “Now, Lloyd,” she would say, “you have not been given an abundance of talents, perhaps, but what God has given you He wants you to use to His glory. Whenever you are asked to participate in a meeting—to sing, to give the mission story, or to hold an office in Sabbath school—don’t make people beg and urge you. Just say, ‘I’ll be glad to!’”

   In telling the story I get the children to sing out several times, “I’ll be glad to!” Parents are not deaf. In every church I pastored, it was only a little while before adults were responding to a request for their services with a resounding “I’ll be glad to!”

Now, what do you say about expanding your ministry to include the children?

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3 Ibid.
6 Ibid., p. 25.

C. Lloyd Wyman is director of the Ministerial Association and continuing education in the Pacific Union Conference.

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"He who cooperates with the divine purpose in imparting to the youth a knowledge of God, and molding the character into harmony with His, does a high and noble work."—Ed., p. 19.

"It is still true that children are the most susceptible to the teachings of the gospel; their hearts are open to divine influences, and strong to retain the lessons received. The little children may be Christians, having an experience in accordance with their years."—The Desire of Ages, p. 515.

"In the closing scenes of this earth’s history, many of these children and youth will astonish people by their witness to the truth, which will be borne in simplicity, yet with spirit and power. They have been taught the fear of the Lord, and their hearts have been softened by a careful and prayerful study of the Bible. In the near future many children will be endowed with the Spirit of God, and will do a work in proclaiming the truth to the world, that at that time cannot well be done by the older members of the church."—Counsels to Parents and Teachers, pp. 166, 167.

"In these last days children’s voices will be raised to give the last message of warning to a perishing world. When heavenly intelligences see that men are no longer permitted to present the truth, the Spirit of God will come upon the children, and they will do a work in the proclamation of the truth which the older workers cannot do, because their way will be hedged up."—Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 203.

I took a piece of plastic clay
And idly fashioned it one day.
And as my fingers pressed it still,
It moved and yielded to my will.
I came again when days were past;
The bit of clay was hard at last.
The form I gave it still it bore,
But I could change that form no more.

I took a piece of living clay
And gently formed it day by day,
And molded with my power and art,
A young child’s soft and yielding heart.
I came again when years were gone;
It was a man I looked upon.
He still that early impress wore,
And I could change him nevermore!

—Arthur Guiterman
by Don Shafer

Two recent experiences cause me to write of a haunting suspicion I have that we humans like to hide behind words. The one experience was reading heavy and heady required theological essays in preparation for writing a dissertation. The other experience was reading an article in Christianity Today on philosophy.

Now I know, and am very much aware, that each profession has its jargon peculiar to its tradition and practice. Theologians use Hebrew and Greek and philosophical terms. Doctors use Latin and a host of medical terms. Lawyers and insurance executives use legal and technical terminology. Has anyone asked why we do this?

I guess it irritates me to hear someone talk about "epistemology" and "ecclesiology" when he can say "meaning" and "church" and most people will understand what he is talking about. Even then, some could not understand. Jesus was not a professional, philosophical academic. He was the Word made flesh!

And those of us in the pastoral ministry need to remember that we have been made to communicate. If we are willing to share with others our own needs, struggles, temptations, hurts, joys, etc., then we will be amazed how many will hear and respond. But if we are fearful and unwilling to be vulnerable, then we may take the option of hiding behind words.

I think it is at least sick, if not sinful, to slip off into a philosophical world and talk about theory instead of reality. To hide behind words is an escape from communication. And to fog communication is to strain or break relationships.

The Bible is written in a language that communicates. Jesus told stories (parables) so people could hear. Even then, some could not understand. Jesus was not a professional, philosophical academic. He was the Word made flesh!

And those of us in the pastoral ministry need to remember that we have been made to communicate. If we are willing to share with others our own needs, struggles, temptations, hurts, joys, etc., then we will be amazed how many will hear and respond. But if we are fearful and unwilling to be vulnerable, then we may take the option of hiding behind words.

I think it is at least sick, if not sinful, to get embroiled in a hassle over the authority of the Scriptures as to whether they are "inerrant" or "infallible" (whatever those words mean) when the Scriptures themselves say "The word of God is living and active... It penetrates... it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Heb. 4:12, N.I.V.).

That is just one example of how we would rather talk about the Word of God than be and do what we already know is truth. I thought it peculiar that a philosophy professor would write at great length to attempt to say the root question on inerrancy is not moral but philosophical. (I refer to the May 20, 1977, issue of Christianity Today, pp. 8-12.)

I am inclined to agree with the apostle Paul, "I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Cor. 14:19, N.I.V.). Speaking in "tongues," I believe, can be both ecstatic and academic. "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches" (Rev. 2:7, N.I.V.). And, "for crying out loud," don't hide behind words!


Bishop Don Shafer originally wrote this article for the newsletter of the Upland, California, Brethren in Christ church. Used by permission.
Planning a sermonic year

by J. Reynolds Hoffman

The sheep of your congregation look primarily to you, their pastor—or shepherd—to feed them (see 1 Peter 5:2). As you review your preaching during 1978, can you say they have received a balanced spiritual diet? Have they suffered from malnutrition? Are you, their shepherd, really sure of what you have been feeding them? The apostle Paul could confidently declare, "I have kept back nothing; I have disclosed to you the whole purpose of God" (Acts 20:27, N.E.B.).* We ought to be able to say the same, yet a careful analysis of our sermon topics for the past year might show, in far too many cases, that our congregations have been getting by on less than a whole-grain gospel diet. Thoughtfully planning a sermonic year is the only way to be sure our sheep have the opportunity to browse in all the gospel pastures and develop well-rounded spiritual health.

Planning your preaching a year—or even two years—in advance will add comprehensiveness and depth to your pulpit ministry. It will give the Holy Spirit room to work on your mind and heart as you meditate and do advance reading on your future themes. It will give direction to your study and help to eliminate repetitious, hobby-horse preaching. And since your sheep will be receiving well-planned, nutritious spiritual food each Sabbath, absenteeism will decline. Your members will come to church assured of a blessing. Ellen White urges us: "It is not flowery discourses that are needed, not a flood of words without meaning. Our ministers are to preach in a way that will help people to grasp vital truth. My brethren, do not soar where the common people cannot follow you, and if they could, would be neither benefited nor blessed. Teach the simple lessons given by Christ. Tell the story of His life of self-denial and sacrifice, His humiliation and death, His resurrection and ascension, His intercession for sinners in the courts above. In every congregation there are souls upon whom the Spirit of the Lord is moving. Help them to understand what is truth; break the bread of life to them; call their attention to vital questions."—Gospel Workers, p. 154.

Begin your planning by setting down the normally reoccurring subjects you will probably want to emphasize each year in your preaching—religious liberty, stewardship, Christian education, personal witnessing, et cetera. Add the four communion services, seasonal topics (the birth of Jesus at Christmas, the resurrection around Easter, gratitude at Thanksgiving), and allow for some guest speakers. The remaining weeks are available for you to shape and plan as God leads you. The following suggestions for sermon series should provide the nucleus for a three- or four-year preaching ministry.

Topical preaching (which is what most of our congregations are accustomed to hearing) can fragment the Scriptures in our thinking. Texts are taken from here and there to illustrate and support certain topics, often without fully relating these isolated texts to the overall situation in which they appear. Preaching through an entire book of the Bible pulls these fragmented pieces back into a cohesive whole.

A sermon series on "The Gospel in Genesis" could explore such subjects as: Creation, Paradise Lost, East of Eden, The Flood, Noah and His Wine, The Family of Man, The Tower of Babel, Abraham—Man of Faith, Sodom and Gomorrah, The Sacrifice of Isaac, Climbing Jacob's Ladder, Esau, and The Providence of God in Joseph's Experience. You will find much helpful information on Genesis in these volumes: Patriarchs and Prophets (Ellen G. White, Pacific Press); In the Beginning (Finegan, Harper & Row); Gleanings in Genesis (Pink, Moody Press); God Sent a Man (Haynes, Review and Herald).

The Ten Commandments, and many more. Two very helpful books on Exodus are *Let My People Go* (Finegan, Harper & Row); and *Layman's Bible Commentary, Exodus* (Napier, John Knox Press).

Why not preach through the Gospel of John or the book of Hebrews? The following books will provide much food for thought: *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (Pink, Zondervan); *The Speaker's Bible* (Hastings, Baker Book House); *The Eternal Legacy From the Upper Room* (Griffith, Harper & Row); *Daily Study Bible, John* (Barclay, Westminster); *John's Wonderful Gospel* (Powell, Zondervan); *Proclaiming the New Testament, vol. 7* (Baker Book House); An Exposition of Hebrews, 3 volumes (Pink, Baker Book House); *The Book of Hebrews* (Andreasen, Review and Herald).

You might want to tackle a selected Scripture passage before taking on an entire book. Numerous passages lend themselves to series of sermons in which you may present fresh food for your flock.

The Sermon on the Mount will repay your study with any number of rich sermons. Check these volumes: *The Plain Man Looks at the Beatitudes* (Barclay, Fontana); *Understanding the Sermon on the Mount* (McArthur, Harper & Row); *Sermon on the Mount* (Boice, Zondervan); *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing* (White, Pacific Press); *Sermon on the Mount* (M. Lloyd Jones, Eerdmans).

Have you ever preached a pre-Easter series based on Jesus' seven words from the cross? Several authors have written on the subject: *Faces About the Cross* (Chappell, Abingdon); *When God Met Men* (Bietz, Pacific Press); *Personalities of the Passion* (Weatherhead, Abingdon); *Men Who Faced the Cross* (Siegel, Augustana); *The Voice From the Cross* (Blackwood, Baker Book House); *His Cross and Mine* (McGuire, Review and Herald); *The Seven Sayings of the Saviour on the Cross* (Pink, Baker Book House).

The Ten Commandments make a natural sermon series. Here are four books dealing with the Ten Commandments: *The Hard Commands of Jesus* (Roy Pearson, Abingdon); *The Ten Commandments* (G. Campbell Morgan, Revell); *The Gospel in the Ten Commandments* (J. C. Masssee, Revell); *Ten Rules for Living* (Chappell, Revell).

Jesus' life is an area broad enough to encompass the preaching of a lifetime. I will simply list suggestions for sermon series and books that will guide you in your study of these areas.

The encounters of Jesus with such individuals as John the Baptist, the sinning woman, the Levite, the publican, the lawyer, the Canaanite woman, the man of wealth, Judas, Nicodemus, Paul, et cetera: *The Quiet Revolution* (James Smart, Westminster).

The parables of Jesus: *Christ's Object Lessons* (White, Pacific Press); *The Waiting Father* (Thielicke, Harper & Row); *Christ and the Meaning of Life* (Thielicke, Harper & Row); *Parables and Metaphors of Our Lord* (Morgan, Revell); *He Spoke to Them in Parables* (Bosley, Harper & Row); *The Parables of Jesus* (Buttrick, Harper & Row); *Rediscovering the Parables* (Jeremias, Scribner); *Lessons From the Parables* (Lightfoot, Baker Book House).

The mind of Jesus: *The Desire of Ages* (White, Pacific Press); *The Mind of Jesus* (Barclay, Harper & Row); *Jesus as They Saw Him* (Barclay, Harper & Row); *Daily Life in the Times of Jesus* (Daniel Rops, Hawthorn); *Daily Study Bible* (Barclay, Westminster); *The Mind of Christ* (Boisey, Abingdon); *Behold the Man* (Bunch, Review and Herald).

The atonement: *The Satisfaction of Christ* (Pink, Zondervan); *The Apostles' Doctrine of the Atonement* (Sneaton, Zondervan); *The Doctrine of the Atonement as Taught by the Lord Himself* (Sneaton, Zondervan); *Why Did Christ Die?* (Marsh, Zondervan); *In Christ* (Gordon, Baker Book House); *The Plain Man Looks at the Cross* (Weatherhead, Abingdon).

Closing scenes in Christ's life: *The Desire of Ages* (White, Pacific Press); *Daily Study Bible* (Barclay, Westminster).


Practical godliness characterizes the theme of these books: *Steps to Christ* (White, Review and Herald); *The Normal Christian Life* (Watchman Nee, Christian Literature Crusade); *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (Hannah Smith, Revell); *The Sanctified Life* (White, Review and Herald); *Forever Triumphant* (Huegel, Zondervan).

Of course, these are merely suggestions. You will want to shape your own sermonic year as the Holy Spirit guides you and as the needs of your congregation require. A planned preaching program does not mean that you cannot break into that plan or change it when the need arises. A sermonic year is simply an orderly way to bring forth the eternal verities of the gospel that unplanned preaching is prone to omit or neglect.

If you plan your preaching year thoroughly, you can be sure your sheep will receive a steady diet of carefully prepared gospel truth. With Paul you may say, "I have kept back nothing; I have disclosed to you the whole purpose of God."
Only after careful consideration had Joseph decided to remarry. He had managed to keep his family together after the death of his wife, but neither he nor well-meaning relatives could take the place of mother to his strapping sons and maturing daughters.

At first adrift, his life shattered, Joseph had longed for the wife of his youth.

It was not that his life was empty. At home the girls tended the fire, ground grain, washed clothes, and prepared the family’s simple food.

He had taught his boys to saw and smooth planks, to cut mortises, to drill with an auger; they could now begin to fill the orders that came to the shop.

Yes, life was full, but not complete. Joseph missed the companionship of a wife and gradually acknowledged that he should look for someone suitable. It would not be an easy task. Nazareth was small and the girls of marriageable age so young.

The woman he sought must be mature, capable of stepping into a crowded house of independent young people. He would be wiser to remain a widower than to choose a maiden unable to cope.

Into his consciousness, like a seed dropped by a bird that flashes by, had come the thought of Mary. He had known her since she’d played with a toy carved in his shop.

Occasionally he passed her in the noisy streets, where she stepped aside, balancing a water jug, while he and his sons maneuvered a large house beam. She sometimes stopped at the shop to order a bushel or a stool.

Joseph knew that Mary was very spiritual, carefully instructed in the law and prophecies. He saw her at every synagogue service. Her head bowed, she listened reverently from the women’s section. Like him, Mary eagerly awaited the coming Messiah, soon to reign on David’s throne.

And so it was that Joseph had decided to speak with Mary’s parents concerning the betrothal.

With pride Joseph remembered how the men had pressed around to congratulate him after the engagement had been announced in the synagogue.

Later, well-wishers had come to Mary’s home where she sat, surrounded
by other young women, her unbound hair a sign of her maidenhood. The wedding might be as much as a year in the future, but the betrothal ceremony that would bind them legally as husband and wife would take place in three weeks.

On the betrothal day Mary’s humble home, freshly whitewashed, was fragrant with the scent of dampened olive leaves and wildflowers. In the lamps burned the finest oil. It delighted Joseph to see Mary’s surprise as practical gifts of cloth, jugs, baskets, and numerous housekeeping tools were laid at her feet. Both laughed at the lavishly compliments paid by each guest.

With love Joseph had presented the marriage fee, also handing Mary his girdle as a token of his covenant. Then he gave presents to Mary’s father, her mother, and to Mary herself.

Before the rabbi Joseph vowed to work for Mary, to honor her as Jewish law required, and to make his property hers. When the children had been called forward for treats of nuts and cakes, Joseph had taken the betrothal veil and draped the face of his bride-to-be. These were simple yet meaningful acts, for they symbolized that Mary belonged to him and had kept herself pure.

And yet, not long after the betrothal, Joseph had a terrible shock.

Pure? Impossible that she who had caused love to warm his life again could now be the source of his deepest torment! Lovely memories seemed to have no relevance to the harsh reality of the present.

“I am with child, Joseph,” she had confided to him, that warm night as they stood in the olive grove.

Her manner had been confident, even joyous, as she repeated the incredible news brought by Gabriel. Before falling into a deep sleep, Joseph reached a decision. He would divorce Mary quietly, privately, stating that she did not please him. There would be no questions asked.

“But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.”

And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins (Matt. 1:20-23).

God with us! Personal involvement in God’s plan may cost man sacrifice and suffering, even as divine involvement in man’s salvation cost God His best.

We are not expected to accept God’s working without questions. But into our limited answers and faulty conclusions He thrusts a further revelation of truth. Then the only acceptable response is quick obedience.

“Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife” (verse 24).

Cherry Habenicht is a freelance writer and teaches French at Broadview Academy, La Fox, Illinois. In addition to the Bible, Mrs. Habenicht researched the following sources before writing this story: Daily Life in the Time of Jesus, Two From Galilee, Everyday Life in Bible Times, The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, The Desire of Ages, and The Lands and Peoples of the Living Bible.

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Mealtime evangelism

by J. R. Spangler

People who come to the Arthur Weaver home in Northville, Michigan, to share an adventure in eating, soon find “soul food” prominent on the menu. Whether it’s the do-it-yourself salad or the let-Christ-do-it spiritual emphasis, the Weavers can’t say, but a number of their guests have been baptized. “Anyone who can put a meal together can cooperate with Christ to put lives together,” say the Weavers.

For some time Dr. and Mrs. Arthur Weaver had wondered how they could improve their witness in their suburban Detroit community. The answer they came up with is so simple, they say, that any household can duplicate it.

“We found that many people are desperately lonely,” says Natalie, a petite but vivacious brunette in her fifties. “Even our professional associates, busy as they were, needed to feel that someone cared for them on a personal level. So we decided to major in hospitality.”

Dr. Weaver is a graying man in his mid-fifties who is a surgeon on the full-time teaching faculty of Wayne State University in Detroit. “A few years ago,” he says, “Natalie and I determined to turn our lives completely over to the Lord. Believing that our Saviour will return soon, we began to look for ways to be used by Him.”

Two statements from Ellen White particularly impressed the Weavers. One, in Early Writings (page 58), urges Christ’s followers to “live and act wholly in reference to the coming of the Son of man.” The other, familiar to most Adventists, says that there would be “one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one” if we would “humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tender-hearted and pitiful” (Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 189).

“In other words,” explains Dr. Weaver, “the key to successful soul winning is to become interested in, and involved with, people.”

The Weavers began their new witness emphasis with one advantage over some fellow church members. Dr. Weaver had held a number of widely publicized Five-Day Plans in the Detroit area. And Natalie had such a reputation for vegetarian cookery, based on her cooking schools, that Detroit newspapers and radio and television stations would occasionally refer people to her who expressed an interest in healthful living. So the Weavers began by inviting callers to their home for a meal.

Says Mrs. Weaver: “Several times we have introduced ourselves to strangers at the front door and parted friends a few hours later, after sharing a meal. Somehow people anticipate a special relationship when you care enough to invite them—strangers—into your home for a meal. And in this atmosphere one has a very good opportunity not only to get acquainted but to determine interest in cultivating spiritual insights.

“Inviting them to our home instead of going to theirs has other advantages,” Mrs. Weaver continues. “We have no television programs or dietary problems. We are in control of the situation. And inviting people into your home says something right away about their importance to you. In today’s society, with its frantic pace and impersonal relationships, there is nothing more impressive we can share than time—our time.”

The Weavers proceeded with their hospitality format. They invited people—one or more an evening—to their home over a several-week period. Then they called them up and invited them to join an interdenominational Bible study group—to be associated with a buffet-type meal.

“This procedure,” the Weavers emphasize, “allows the people to become familiar with vegetarian cooking—which in some cases was their interest in the first place. It also indicates our continuing interest in them and allows time for relaxed conversation, during which one can learn of their particular needs.

“The meals are never elaborate,” says Natalie. “What people need most is companionship, and a buffet is a good format for mingling. I usually serve a casserole dish, a common vegetable, and perhaps one not so common, to introduce a new flavor. Or I may serve pea soup, stew, or a bowl of chili. The salad is usually a do-it-yourself type, which allows our guests to shape something to their own taste. If one particularly likes garbanzos, he can heap them on; if another likes onions, he can pile them on.

“My dessert is usually simple: a fruit cup, chunks of pineapple, melon, oatmeal cookies. I serve a simple fruit drink. But I try to vary the menu each night—which is why we call the meal ‘Adventures in Eating.’”

The Weavers stress an informal atmosphere. The buffet meal is eaten on trays. With more than a dozen people often present, Mrs. Weaver uses styrofoam plates, thus reducing the time she has to spend in the kitchen after the meal. “Guests don’t feel they are putting you to a lot of effort when you keep it simple,” she says.

The Weavers usually begin the Bible studies with emphasis on the authenticity of the Bible. After this basic preparation they often take up topics suggested by the group. “These have ranged from what the Bible says about women’s lib to speaking in tongues, spiritism, and the new sexual morality. Whatever the subject, our emphasis is on what the Bible says about these modern issues. We do not let the study degenerate into a ‘this is what I think’ type of discussion.”
“The key to successful soul winning is to become interested in, and involved with, people.”

By taking up the subjects their guests suggest, the Weavers avoid any feeling that they are trying to sell a preconceived point of view. And they have found that someone will suggest topics of special Adventist interest, such as the Sabbath. Says Dr. Weaver: “I usually will reply that we should study the law of God first, and then, if the person wants, we can get to the Sabbath issue.”

If questions stray too far from the subject, the Weavers tactfully suggest that they will bring a Bible answer to that issue next week, or include it in a future study. Before a study, Dr. Weaver types out the Bible texts, with the pages on which they can be found in the Bible version being used.

The Weavers begin their meal around six-thirty to seven o’clock. The Bible study begins forty-five minutes to an hour later, and they generally conclude by nine o’clock. Once a Bible study series is begun—usually on Wednesday or Friday evenings—the Weavers seek to avoid postponing any session. If a member misses a study, the Weavers call and, when possible, try to make up the study before the group meets again.

“At the close of each study, we always form a prayer circle,” says Mrs. Weaver. “Early in our series we study prayer. At the close of this subject I invite anyone who wishes to say a short sentence prayer. We have found this procedure permits an easy transition to participation in the prayer circle. We always invite special requests. Frequently someone will share very real problems at this time. God has remarkably rewarded simple prayers for employment, for health and family problems. We also encourage prayer for one another in the group. Members are delighted when they see God working for them and through them, and this experience encourages them to place their trust in Him.”

During the past few years several members of the study group have been baptized. But the Weavers carefully avoid pressuring anyone to take a stand. The result is that those who have not made a decision still feel comfortable in the group. And, since most of the topics have been of their own choosing, they continue to study the Bible and the Lord continues to work on their hearts.

John Schlomon, an automotive engineer who once studied to become a priest, is one of the “graduates” of the Weavers’ “Adventures in Eating” program. John, who was recently baptized, now answers his phone: “John SDA.” John’s wife, Helen, and their four children (two boys and two girls), as well as John’s mother, Aileen, all attend the meals and Bible studies in the Weaver home. Helen, Aileen, and the two girls plan to follow John in baptism soon.

“Our lives have been changed through contact with the Weavers,” says Helen Schlomon, “and our relationship with God has taken on new meaning. John has changed from a man who each day smoked three packs of cigarettes and drank fifteen cups of coffee and four martinis into a vegetarian, jogging, Bible-studying Seventh-day Adventist!”

Such results bring joy to the Weavers’ hearts, although they would be the first to point out that their only role is to plan simple means for the Holy Spirit to use in reaching lives.

And it all started with an adventure in eating!

J. R. Spangler is the editor of Ministry.
What course shall we sail in theology? How can we determine the right heading by which to steer? Method—that little known, often ignored, sometimes despised and almost totally misunderstood discipline—is the compass guiding us to the conclusions we reach in religious truth. The possible starting point for theological method—the authority of the pope, councils, tradition, reason, experience, or Scripture—orientate the compass of method just as the North Pole orientates the navigational compass.

Eve in the Garden of Eden charted her course in life according to a particular method. God had graciously condescended to give His Word to the human race. This Word was to have been the starting point for all thinking about God and the world that surrounded man. But Eve abandoned that Word for what seemed to her to be a superior compass—her own thinking process interacting with her perceptions of the natural world. The essence of Eve’s sin lay in turning from the Word of God to herself as the principle for interpreting her world. So long as Eve interpreted the center tree in the Garden in terms of God’s Word concerning it, she was safe from the delusion of the serpent. However, the moment she made herself the center of her own creation rather than in God and became vulnerable to Satan’s temptations. God had warned that eating of the tree would result in death. Eve, however, observed the facts, the raw data, processed them through her mind, and came to the conclusion that this was not the case. She observed that the serpent, rather than suffering death, had been elevated to a higher plane of existence, in which he was capable of speech and great wisdom. She therefore concluded that the tree was good for food and that it was able to make one wise (Gen. 3:6).

Thus Eve reasoned from an idea or concept of God rather than from the Word of God. The thought that God would withhold such beautiful fruit from His creation was to Eve a contradiction of His love and compassion for man. A God of love would not bring such disastrous results upon one whom He had created and loved. Therefore, God must not have meant what He said regarding the nature of the tree. By choosing a method that did not have its orientation in the Word of God itself, Eve plunged the human race into millenniums of searching for theological methods that take as their point of departure the world of man instead of the Word of God.

The Noachian flood also illustrates the various ways in which the theological compass can be orientated. The antediluvians analyzed the possibility of a forthcoming flood from the standpoint of philosophy and science, so called. Such an occurrence as a flood of water had never taken place before. It was contrary to the laws of nature for water to descend from the sky. Philosophically, it was contrary to the nature of God as a God of love to destroy the creatures He had formed. Therefore, they concluded, such a flood as Noah predicted was an impossibility. Noah, for his part, did not understand how such an event could take place either, but because of his dependence upon the word of God, he recognized that such would be the case. “The wise men of this world talked of science and the fixed laws of nature, and declared that there could be no variation in these laws, and that this message of Noah could not possibly be true. The talented men of Noah’s time set themselves in league against God’s will and purpose, and scorned the message and the messenger that He had sent. When they could not move Noah from his firm and implicit trust in the word of God, they pointed to him as a fanatic, as a ranting old man, full of superstition and madness. Thus they condemned him because he would not be turned from his purpose by reasonings and theories of men. It was true that Noah could not controvert their philosophies, or refute the claims of science so called; but he could proclaim the word of God; for he knew it contained the infinite wisdom of the Creator, and, as he sounded it everywhere, it lost none of its force and reality because men of the world treated him with ridicule and contempt.”—ELLEN G. WHITE, “An Example of Saying Faith.” Signs of the Times, April 18, 1895, pp. 243, 244.

The builders of the Tower of Babel accepted the fact of the Flood, but did not know how to interpret it. Instead of accepting the significance of the rainbow as God had given it, they argued that a God who would so rashly destroy His creation by a flood could not be trusted a second time. Therefore it was necessary, they felt, for man to obtain security independently of God. Man could trust nothing but a tower, a work of his own hands, as a basis for securing his future existence. Thus, they built not only a physical but also a philosophical tower as a means for determining the nature of God, with its ultimate implications as to how man should live.

As on the plains of Shinar, so today man does not live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God but by the work of his own hands. Philosophical towers have led them to place trust for their salvation in physical towers of their own creation rather than in God.

In the life of Christ we find the orientation of the compass reversed. In the wilderness, Christ was also tempted by Satan as Eve had been in the Garden to derive His method of truth-determination from an idea about God. Impelled the tempter: “A God of love surely would not allow His Son to suffer deprivation of food and companionship in the wilderness for forty days.” Thus his doubt-laden insinuation, “If thou be the Son of God...” But the response did not come from man’s initiative. Rather it flowed from what God had given. “It is written” was the only appropriate cri-
Is Adventism in danger of making experience and external criteria its source of authority? Read this article!

...terion by which to set the compass of theological thinking.

Method likewise played a determining role in the direction charted by the Reformation. We often think of the Reformers as men who were battling systems of self-salvation in which man held within his own hands the control of his eternal destiny. In contrast to such systems, the Reformers yielded even their good works, depending upon salvation by faith in Christ alone for the restoration of a right relationship with God. But we must also recognize that alongside this basic principle was another that gave orientation to the compass; namely, the sole authority of Scripture as the Word of God.

The Reformers reacted to the scholastic theology of the Middle Ages, which, by using a method derived partly from the natural world, compromised its intention to derive its self-consciousness from Scripture. The medieval theologian attempted a "scientific" theology. The Scriptures, the traditions of the church, and the pronouncements of the pope were supported, interpreted, and structured in the context of contemporary procedures for human thinking. Thus their "scientific" theology was a theology controlled by human disciplines that had been developed within the natural world. That which gave structure to their theology was the philosophy of the ancients rather than the Word of the Ancient of Days. By placing Scripture within the context of that which was controllable within the human sphere, scholastic theologians were instructing Scripture. They could hear from it only that which their human system would allow.

The Reformers, by contrast, yielded themselves not only to the all-sufficiency of God's grace but also to the authority of Scripture as God's Word. They were willing to allow Scripture to chart the course even for its own study. Zwingli, for example, "submitted himself to the Bible as the word of God, the only sufficient, infallible rule. He saw that it must be its own interpreter. He dared not attempt to explain Scripture to sustain a preconceived theory or doctrine, but held it his duty to learn what is its direct and obvious teaching. He sought to avail himself of every help to obtain a full and correct understanding of its meaning, and he invoked the aid of the Holy Spirit, which would, he declared, reveal it to all who sought it in sincerity and with prayer."—The Great Controversy, p. 173. God Himself, said Zwingli, helps us to recognize that Scripture comes from God. The Word of God cannot fail; it is bright, it discloses itself, and it illumines the soul with grace so that man is willing to humble himself—in fact, forfeit himself—in order to embrace God. Zwingli thus gave himself fully to Scripture. Philosophy and scholastic theology suggested quarrels, but Zwingli came to the place that he was willing to lay aside the intent to be the controller of his theology in order to listen to the Word of God, to learn the meaning of God purely out of His own simple Word. When he began to ask God for light, the meaning of Scripture became clear. (See The Great Controversy, p. 174.)

Luther, likewise, allowed Scripture to set the direction of his compass. He acknowledged no foundation for religious truth but the Holy Scriptures. (See The Story of Redemption, p. 340; The Great Controversy, p. 120.) He saw the danger of exalting human theories above the Word of God. Thus he attacked the theology and philosophy of the schoolmen, denouncing their studies as not only worthless but detrimental. He purposed to turn the minds of the people from the philosophers and theologians to the Word of God. (See The Great Controversy, p. 126.) With the Word of God “he warred against the usurped authority of the pope, and the rationalistic philosophy of the schoolmen, while he stood firm as a rock against the fanaticism that sought to ally itself with the Reformation.” The rationalism of the schoolmen, which idolized reason and made it the criterion for religion, was in its starting point no different from the assumed authority of the pope or the fanaticism of Müntzer. Each in its own way set aside the Holy Scriptures and exalted human reason as the source of religious truth and knowledge. (See The Great Controversy, p. 193.)

There is need today that our theological compasses be set by the “Bible, and the Bible only, as the rule of faith and duty.” (See The Great Controversy, p. 205.) God will have a people upon the earth who will maintain the Bible as the only standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. They will exclude any and all voices arising from the natural world as the basis for setting theological compasses, whether these voices be ecclesiastical councils, the deductions of science, the opinions of learned men, or the dictates of the rational world. A plain “Thus said the Lord” will be the only evidence that will be accepted for or against any statement of religious truth. (See The Great Controversy, p. 595.) When we turn away from Scripture as the guide and source of theological thinking, we build our own tower as the way to climb up to heaven. We enthrone a philosophical idol in the place of Jehovah. (See The Great Controversy, p. 583; Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 124.)

A theological compass heading that is based upon external criteria in the natural world allows the hearing of only that which the method will allow. By contrast, theological thinking that receives its orientation from Scripture is open to the possibility of hearing its message as a means of understanding the natural world. By laying aside our desire to be master of our own theological system and by submitting ourselves to Scripture, we may adequately know God as He is, for He has revealed Himself in His Word.

E. Edward Zinke is assistant director of the Biblical Research Institute.
FROM THE EDITOR

A Final Appeal. General Conference president, R. H. Pierson, announces his retirement and voices a closing challenge.

[At the close of the devotional message presented by J. R. Spangler to Annual Council delegates, General Conference staff, and Review and Herald employees. Monday morning, October 16, Robert H. Pierson announced that after prayerful consideration he had decided to accept the advice of physicians to give up his work as president of the General Conference. As might be expected, the audience was shocked. Few had known that during that past year Elder Pierson had been subject to transient ischemic attacks (TIA) when under extraordinary pressure. During the attacks numbness developed on his left side. Doctors warned that unless he was relieved of his responsibilities, the risk of a stroke would be high.

After announcing his decision to retire, Elder Pierson made a solemn appeal to church leaders and members, urging that they do all in their power to maintain the distinctiveness of the Advent Movement and resist the trend toward worldliness in the church.

Elder Pierson’s statement, setting forth his plans to leave office, appears below.

In 1975 a constitutional provision was adopted at Vienna for electing a president in case the incumbent was unable to continue, but some aspects of the current situation were somewhat different from those set forth in the constitution. Following a vote by the Annual Council delegates to provide an additional provision to the 1975 action in order to bring the policy into line with the actual situation, a special nominating committee recommended Pastor Neal Wilson as Pastor Pierson’s successor in the presidency of the General Conference. This nomination was passed unanimously October 17.—Forers.]

There come times in our experience when we have to make decisions that we would prefer not to make—decisions that cut deep into one’s heart and that have far-reaching effects. Sabbath morning, October 14, before we went to Sabbath school, after much prayer and agonizing, Mrs. Pierson and I made such a decision.

Eight years of service in emerging, exploding Africa with all of its pressures and perplexities and 12-and-one-half happy, but problem- and stress-filled, years in Washington have taken their toll. Our physicians tell us we must shift our burdens to younger shoulders. We had hoped we could complete our term of service in 1980 at Dallas, but apparently the Lord has other plans for us and for the church. In harmony with medical counsel we plan to leave Washington for a few weeks’ rest and then retire January 3, 1979. We are sorry not to be able to fill some appointments we had looked forward to filling, but arrangements will be made to care for these.

As soon as we understood what the future held I spoke with Pastors Franz and Emmerson. Last evening I had the vice-president of the General Conference and the division presidents with me, and I conveyed to them the counsel of the doctors. This morning I spoke with our General Conference officers and conveyed to them our decision. I have asked Elders Nigri, Franz, and Emmerson to work out the constitutional issues involved in the election of a new president before this Annual Council ends. For a few weeks there will be a president and a president-elect, but my brethren see no problem in this. Today PREXAD and the division presidents will meet to work out final details in this transfer of office, and all of you will be kept informed. We know the Lord’s hand will be over His work and the events of the next few days as plans are laid for a great surge forward in God’s work during 1979.

It’s harvest time, brethren, and it’s 1,000-baptisms-a-day time.

This has not been an easy decision for Mrs. Pierson and me to make. We love our work. We love the Advent workers and members around the world. Every one of you is precious to us. I want to express my deepest appreciation to all of you—world leaders and workers in every land, and General Conference office staff alike—for all that you have done to make 12-and-a-half wonderful years for Mrs. Pierson and me here in Washington and around the world where we have traveled. You have been an inspiration and an encouragement to both of us.

This is not goodbye this morning—not hasta mañana, au revoir, dosvadona, nor sayonara. We will be with you for a few more weeks. In the meantime, let us go right ahead with our work as usual. There is yet much to be done at this Annual Council. We have no time to lose. We have a work to finish, a work of preparation to be effected in every life in preparation for the return of our Lord—in our day! Yes, brethren and sisters, it must be in our day!

My pen, my voice, as long as God gives me strength, will be dedicated to this one all-consuming passion! We solicit an interest in your prayers, and may God bless and keep every one of you.

A final appeal

This will be the last time that in my present role I shall stand before the world leaders of my church, our church, and I have a few words to leave with you.

I take some of my thoughts from material that Pastor and Mrs. Ralph Neall have written describing how typically a sect evolves into a church. They say a sect is often begun by a charismatic leader with tremendous drive and commitment and that it arises as a protest against worldliness and formalism in a church. It is generally embraced by the poor. The rich would lose too much by joining it, since it is unpopular, despised, and persecuted by society in general. It has definite beliefs firmly held by zealous members. Each member makes a personal decision to join it and knows what he believes. There is little organization or property, and there are few buildings. The group has strict standards and controls on behavior. Preachers, often without education, arise by inner compulsion. There is little concern about public relations.

And then it passes on to the second generation. With growth there comes a need for organization and buildings. As a result of industry and frugality, members become prosperous. As prosperity increases, persecution begins to wane. Children born into the movement do not have to make personal decisions to join it. They do not necessarily know what
they believe. They do not need to hammer out their own positions. These have been worked out for them. Preachers arise more by selection and by apprenticeship to older workers than by direct inner compulsion.

In the third generation, organization develops and institutions are established. The need is seen for schools to pass on the faith of the fathers. Colleges are established. Members have to be exhorted to live up to the standards, while at the same time the standards of membership are being lowered. The group becomes lax about disfellowshipping nonpracticing members. Missionary zeal cools off. There is more concern over public relations. Leaders study methods of propagating their faith, sometimes employing extrinsic rewards as motivation for service by the members. Youth question why they are different from others, and intermarry with those not of their faith.

In the fourth generation there is much machinery; the number of administrators increases while the number of workers at the grass-roots level becomes proportionately less. Great church councils are held to define doctrine. More schools, universities, and seminaries are established. These go to the world for accreditation and tend to become secularized. There is a reexamination of positions and modernizing of methods. Attention is given to contemporary culture, with an interest in the arts: music, architecture, literature. The movement seeks to become “relevant” to contemporary society by becoming involved with popular causes. Services become formal. The group enjoys complete acceptance by the world. The sect has become a church!

Brethren and sisters, this must never happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church! This will not happen to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. This is not just another church—it is God’s church!

But you are the men and women sitting in this sanctuary this morning on whom God is counting to assure that it does not happen.

Already, brethren and sisters, there are subtle forces that are beginning to stir. Regrettably there are a few in the church who belittle the inspiration of the total Bible, who question the first 11 chapters of Genesis, who challenge the Spirit of Prophecy’s short chronology of the Bible and who subtly and not so subtly attack the Spirit of Prophecy. There are some who point to the reformers and contemporary theologians as a source and a norm for Seventh-day Adventist doctrine. There are those who allegedly are tired of the hackneyed phrases of Adventism. There are those who wish to forget the standards of the church we love. There are those who covet and would court the favor of Christian bodies around them; those who would throw off the mantle of a peculiar people; and those who would go the way of the secular, materialistic world.

Fellow leaders, beloved brethren and sisters—don’t let it happen! I appeal to you as earnestly as I know how this morning—don’t let it happen! I appeal to Andrews University, to the Seminary, to know Linda University—don’t let it happen! We are Seventh-day Adventists! Let us remain Seventh-day Adventists! This is God’s last church with God’s last message!

You are the men and women, the leaders, whom God is counting on to keep the Seventh-day Adventist Church God’s remnant church, the church God has destined to triumph!

The servant of the Lord says, “Fearful perils are before those who bear responsibilities in the Lord’s work—perils the thought of which makes me tremble.”—Selected Messages, book 2, p. 391. And in Ezekiel 22:30 we read, “I looked for a man among them who could build up a barricade, who could stand before me in the breach to defend the land from ruin” (N.E.B.).

I believe this morning, fellow leaders, that God is looking for men and women, intrepid leaders, men and women who love God’s church and God’s truth more than they love their lives, to see that this church under God goes through to the kingdom. The task ahead of us is not going to be easy. If I understand the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy aright this morning, ahead lies a time of trouble, a time of challenge such as this church and this world have never before known. Linda University—don’t let it happen! We are Seventh-day Adventists! Let us remain Seventh-day Adventists! This is God’s last church with God’s last message!

The Seventh-day Adventist Church had its alpha years ago. You and I are the leaders who may well face the omega that will be of the same subtle, devilish origin. Its effect will be more devastating than the alpha. Brethren, I beg of you, study, pray, be aware of what is ahead, then with God’s help prepare yourselves and your people to meet it!

“God calls for men who are prepared to meet emergencies, men who in a crisis will not be found standing on the wrong side.”—Ellen G. White, in Review and Herald, Nov. 5, 1903.

“We are pressing on to the final conflict, and this is no time to compromise. It is no time to hide your colors. When the battle wages sore, let no one turn traitor. It is no time to lay down or conceal our weapons, and give Satan the advantage in the warfare.”—Ibid., Dec. 6, 1892.

And then I call attention to a vision the Lord’s servant had, in which she saw a ship heading toward an iceberg. She said, “There, towering high above the ship, was a gigantic iceberg. An authoritative voice cried out, ‘Meet it!’ There was not a moment’s hesitation. It was a time for instant action. The engineer put on full steam, and the man at the wheel steered the ship straight into the iceberg. The Seventh-day Adventist Church had its alpha years ago. You and I are the leaders who may well face the omega that will be of the same subtle, devilish origin. Its effect will be more devastating than the alpha. Brethren, I beg of you, study, pray, be aware of what is ahead, then with God’s help prepare yourselves and your people to meet it!”

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“God calls for men who are prepared to meet emergencies, men who in a crisis will not be found standing on the wrong side.”—Ellen G. White, in Review and Herald, Nov. 5, 1903.

“We are pressing on to the final conflict, and this is no time to compromise. It is no time to hide your colors. When the battle wages sore, let no one turn traitor. It is no time to lay down or conceal our weapons, and give Satan the advantage in the warfare.”—Ibid., Dec. 6, 1892.

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A tribute to Elder Pierson

Tuesday morning, October 17, I spent about 30 minutes with Pastor Robert H. Pierson, president of the General Conference, discussing plans for MINISTRY’S President’s Page. The president’s announcement of retirement in January, 1979, had come as a shock to everyone the day before. Well do I remember when the heavy mantle of responsibility for leading God’s people was laid on his shoulders twelve years ago. Through the years we have been together on numerous occasions, including travels overseas.

But something was different about our meeting on this beautiful October day. The knowledge that in a few weeks this man, who had given his life to the church, would be retiring, created an atmosphere of sadness. I don’t know how many times I have sat in the same office and had the encouraging experience of hearing him pray for me and my work. Rarely, if ever, have I left his office without him asking me to kneel with him as we turned our hearts toward God. As I write these words I can still feel him reaching over to put his hand on mine or slip his arm around my shoulders as he earnestly asked God to lead me in my responsibilities.

I could say many things about Pastor Pierson’s leadership, but he has left one inescapable, all-pervading impression, not only on my mind but on a host of others around the world. He is a man of deep spiritual commitment. He senses perhaps as no one else that “except the Lord build a house they labor in vain to that build it” (Ps. 127:1). He firmly believes that God expects a revival and reformation to sweep through our ranks before His Son Jesus returns again. Coupled with this conviction is a strong and constant concern for evangelism on a worldwide basis.

As we sat together for those few precious moments, I tried to think of something encouraging to share with him. “Brother Pierson,” I stated, “the Lord has greatly blessed your leadership. The advance of the work during your tenure of service has been nothing short of remarkable.” I sincerely meant what I said, for since 1966 church membership has doubled, until by the end of 1978 it stands at well over 3 million. There was a pause of silence. He looked at me, not with a smile, nor with the expected pleased expression of one who has just received a great compliment, but rather with a look of perplexity. His lips quivered, his eyes filled with tears, and his voice broke as he said, “But the Lord isn’t here yet, Bob, and anything short of that is not success.”

I must admit that I find it quite difficult to write these words, for I do not know how to verbalize my feelings at that moment. His words shocked me. May I repeat that. His words shocked me. I realized that I was sitting in the presence of one who firmly believed and expected the Lord to return during his administration. I too believe the Lord is returning soon. But the question pierced my mind, “Am I thinking about the Lord’s return in such tangible, realistic terms as the president is?” I thought of my work as editor of MINISTRY, and as one of the secretaries of the Ministerial Association. With the greater portion of my work behind me, I am even beginning to think about a place to live after retirement. Consciously or unconsciously, many things that I am doing are influenced by the thought of retirement. But here the president of the General Conference indicated he fervently hoped the coming of the Lord would have taken place during his tenure of office. He is greatly disappointed that his health does not permit him to continue in his office until his term of service is completed in 1980 or until he should see his Lord in the clouds of heaven. He wants to be part of the redeemed throng who greet their Lord on the day of His second advent.

The president’s reply tells me (and the rest of us) something else. In simple faith the church’s world leader believes the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. He literally takes the Lord at His word. While courteously listening to the voices of counselors he has steadfastly tried to depend upon a “Thus saith the Lord.” He has sought to follow not his own nor anyone else’s judgment but the Lord’s will. As an example, some years ago he made a presentation at a Spring Council when the denominational wage scale was under discussion. He confessed that he hadn’t slept much the night before, but had earnestly sought the Lord’s counsel through study and prayer. Some of our institutions were appealing for a different wage scale than the rest of the church. When Brother Pierson stood up he appealed to our men to hold the wage scale in line regardless of the influence of other institutions. He earnestly pleaded for wage unity in our medical, educational, and ministerial areas of church service. It took courage for him to stand up and make this appeal. The scene of that experience still lives in my memory. Tragically, the church has faced the wage-scale problem again at the recent Annual Council. There seems to be little hope of maintaining a unified and equitable plan of remuneration.

As we talked in his office that October morning, we discussed a number of other problems the church faces. I quickly jotted down several statements that are worth thinking about. He mentioned that no person could fully appreciate the pressures, burdens, and perplexities that he has faced as president unless that person would sit where he sat. Then he added, “When you come to an almost insoluble problem it is so easy to rationalize and vote a plan or policy that does not truly harmonize with what
the Lord has told us to do. I am afraid that I have been guilty of this myself on some occasions, but for twelve years I have tried to follow what I believe the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy would have the church do in these difficult closing days of this earth’s history.”

Somehow a new appreciation for our world leader was created in my heart as I listened to him give his testimony. It doesn’t take much intelligence or courage to sit back and criticize, condemn, and question some of the decisions and statements our leaders make. If we all spent the same amount of time praying for one another as we do criticizing one another, perhaps the work would be finished!

I was impressed with Brother Pierson’s attitude in seeking God’s counsel. It is so easy to rely upon the experts, the philosophers, the intellectually great, rather than upon the Lord. In operating our churches, do we make decisions and take actions in the light of popular opinion and pressure, or do we seek to know the will of the Lord in directing church affairs? A daily renewal of our commitment to our heavenly Father and His directives through prayer and study is an absolute necessity in order to keep a church, district, conference, union, or world movement on track. When we begin to place more confidence in our wisdom and the wisdom of others on our boards and committees than in the revealed will of God, we are headed for disaster. What caused Israel to suffer terribly time and time again? Or why was Solomon’s early reign so fantastically successful? Because of his vast knowledge, ability, and wisdom? Absolutely not! If the Lord can find a man who has brilliant intellectual qualities plus a spirit of submission to His will, all the better! But if the Lord has to choose between a brilliant, well-trained person who is dependent on his own judgment and one who has limited abilities and training, constantly depends on Him, the latter person will always be chosen. He chose Moses, but put him through a forty-year retraining program. I have met precious few well-trained individuals with abundant abilities and tremendous intellectual capacities who trust God with simple faith and take Him at His word. I thank God for a man like R. H. Pierson, who has large abilities but depends on God’s revealed will.

I urge you to read thoughtfully Brother Pierson’s final appeal after he announced his resignation (see page 16). In our conversation he petitioned me in an urgent manner, “Bob, I appeal to you to uphold the truths that God has given this movement, and in no way to permit any philosophies or concepts to be expressed through the pages of MINISTRY that will undermine our special message.” Then he read again the statement quoted in his resignation message from Selected Messages, volume 1, pages 204, 205. He punctuated this statement with comments indicating his concern over certain current trends in the church. This statement comes from an article first published by Ellen White in 1904. The opening sentence is, “The Lord will put new, vital force into His work as human agencies obey the command to go forth and proclaim the truth.” Then follows an appeal to stand firm on the platform of eternal truth. She clearly points out that the enemy will constantly try to substitute spurious theories for the truth, but time will in no way lessen its value.

“The enemy will try to substitute spurious theories for the truth, but time will in no way lessen its value.”

Thank God for the promise that “the Lord will raise up men of keen perception, who will give these truths their proper place in the plan of God” (page 201).

As I think back over my experience, I have seen articles and books that have puzzled me. Why did the author say what he did? Some things are so cleverly written it is difficult to give reasons why they are wrong. Yet the concepts are insidious and erroneous. The best answer I have found to some of these things is the one Ellen White gave to those who asked her about Kellogg’s book, The Living Temple. When asked to explain the positions taken therein, she replied, “They are unexplainable.” She further stated, “We need not the mysticism that is in this book.”

In the midst of this 1904 article comes the statement Brother Pierson discussed with me. It is so important that I feel it would be beneficial to all of us to quote it again. It is a statement that needs to be read repeatedly, so that we may be aware of Satan’s designs to destroy this movement. “The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in giving up the doctrines which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of reorganization. Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be discarded. Our religion would be changed. The fundamental principles that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted for error. A new organization would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The Sabbath of course, would be lightly regarded, as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the new movement. The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure.”—Selected Messages, vol. 1, pp. 204, 205.

After a short discussion of this statement, Pastor Pierson asked me to pray for him! What a switch! I felt I needed his prayers more than he needed mine. As I left his office, I knew that God surely had given us a leader who is not only deeply concerned for the future of the church but well aware of those distracting elements that would try to bring in compromise and confusion. I thank God that for the past twelve years we have had a president who has done everything humanly possible to hold us together as a people. He has held high standards for the church. He has supported evangelism not only by talk but by action. During his term of office he has personally conducted four evangelistic campaigns. His long hours, his constant attention to the Lord’s work, has taken its toll on him physically. With Paul, he has every right to say with confidence, “I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).  

J. R. S.

Ministry, December/1978
Was There a Population Explosion After the Flood? Eight people could produce 100 million by Abraham’s day, but with difficulty.

From the pyramids of Egypt to the ziggurats of Mesopotamia, the ancient ruins of “antique” civilizations speak silently of the great Pharaohs and kings of the past who rose to power on the aching shoulders of millions of ordinary people. It is these lived, it is meaningful people that inspire the question: Could these ancient civilizations—already in full flower in Abraham’s day—bloom in just a few centuries after the Noachian flood? Was there enough time to produce the necessary people?

To answer this question, we need to know: (1) How many years after the Flood Abraham lived and (2) world population at the time of Abraham.

A precise reckoning of the time between the Flood and Abraham is possible only if the chronological data in Genesis 11 is complete and can be used legitimately to construct a chronology of the ancient world. But here lies a serious complication. Most Old Testament scholars believe the textual tradition of the Hebrew Old Testament as the best. But does this mean that in Genesis 11 the numbers given by the Masoretic text accurately preserve the numbers recorded originally by Moses?

The best we can do with respect to world population in antiquity is to suggest a general order of magnitude. Archeological surveys can sometimes discern population trends by recording the number and size of archeological sites in successive time periods, but these trends can seldom be turned into accurate population figures apart from information derived from written records.

Population levels in the ancient world can best be estimated for the Near East, where the archeological record is relatively complete and written records occur very early. But the story of world population only begins in the Near East. Archeological evidence shows clearly that virtually the entire habitable world was occupied by the time of Abraham. Indeed, major civilizations comparable to those of the Near East existed in the Indus Valley of India and in Iran and the Persian Gulf areas between Mesopotamia and India. China was on the brink of developing its own civilization (the Shang civilization), and Mexico and Peru were already on cultural roads that were to lead to full-fledged civilizations by the end of the second millennium B.C.

Taking into account the pertinent archeological data, Dr. Ansley Coale, a well-known student of world population, has drawn a graph presenting his interpretation of the history of world population. (See Scientific American, Sept., 1974, p. 42.) According to Dr. Coale, approximately 100 million people were alive in Abraham’s day. That seems a reasonable guess. But that’s all it is—a guess.

The Hebrew Masoretic text tells us that Abraham’s father, Terah, born only 220 years after the Flood, lived in Ur, a city that can be identified historically and archeologically as an important center of Mesopotamian civilization. Therefore, we will conservatively take Terah as the termination point of our post-Flood “prehistoric” time interval and ask whether 100 million people could have issued from only eight ancestors in a minimum of 220 years. The Septuagint text, on the other hand, gives us 1,002 years from the Flood to the birth of Terah.

How quickly could eight people increase to 100 million? Let’s examine historically known growth rates. From the dawn of recorded history until about A.D. 1750, growth was extremely slow according to Dr. Ansley Coale. The recent surge (the celebrated “population explosion”) seems to be caused primarily by reduced death rates, not increased birth rates. At today’s 2 percent rate of annual increase, world population will double each thirty-five years!

Applying this rate to the period between the Flood and Terah demonstrates how important it is to know whether that period consists of the 220 years of the Masoretic text or the 1,002 years of the Septuagint. If population doubles each thirty-five years, in 220 years there will be only 1,024 people—far short of the needed 100 million. But in 1,002 years (believe it or not), the population will exceed 3 billion!

Although world population may be growing faster now than at any time since Abraham, we can speculate that immediately after the Flood it may have grown even faster. Perhaps the post-Flood patriarchs’ greater physical vitality more than made up for the advantages conferred on us by modern medicine and an energy-intensive industrial society. We can theorize that the longer lives of the patriarchs implied high birth rates and low infant and childhood death rates. If the patriarchs...
sired more children than modern man, and few of their children died young, perhaps the current population explosion is not unique after all. If long lives were typical of all people living before Abraham, it is tempting to conclude that the population must have grown much more rapidly than it is growing today. Surprisingly, such a result may not necessarily have been the case. Once the average life span reaches about 65 to 70 years (as it has in much of the modern world), additional longevity affects growth rates very little. The Biblical evidence is that the fertile period in the patriarchs’ lives was not directly correlated with their longevity. Although Abraham and Sarah lived nearly three times as long as we do today, they were not fertile three times as long as we are. Remember, they scoffed when the angel told them Sarah would have a son at the age of 90 (see Gen. 17:17). Thus longevity does not seem to be a critical factor.

The truly critical factor is fertility. Population growth is most sensitive to the average number of children born per female and to the spacing of the children over the fertile period of a female’s life. Because information concerning post-Flood fertility is lacking, our best plan is to calculate the assumptions we must make about fertility rates in order to achieve a population of 100 million in a minimum of about 220 years from an original eight persons. A variety of assumptions concerning fertility rates has been tested using established methods of population projection.

The results show that world population could have reached 100 million in 220 years if each female (1) gave birth to fifteen children, (2) began having them at age 15, and (3) had one every two years. Fifteen is a rather low average age for a first pregnancy. If we take 17 as the average age of the first pregnancy, then 100 million people could be produced in 220 years if each female gave birth to twenty-five children.

Much larger families are possible if the spacing is only one year per child, but a one-year average interval between birth for all females is a bit unrealistic. (One suspects that under such conditions the feminist movement might have started some 4,000 years earlier than it did!)

What can we conclude? Certainly the necessary fertility rates far exceed anything recorded for modern populations. One of the highest fertility rates in modern times for a population (as opposed to individual women) is that of the Hutterites, a religious sect that lives in closed communities in North Dakota and Canada. Hutterite women are now averaging approximately ten children apiece—one half to two thirds the fertility rate required to produce 100 million people from eight ancestors in 220 years. Thus the required post-Flood rates seem a bit less mindboggling, granted longer life spans and greater physical vitality immediately after the Flood. Clearly it is not biologically impossible to go from eight to 100 million people in 220 years if women who lived before Abraham were fertile twice as long as modern women.

In theory, population growth can be extremely rapid. A mathematician has calculated that if present rates of increase continued for 1,200 years, our planet earth would weigh less than the people on it! Moreover, if modern rates of increase were to last 6,000 years, babies would be spilling forth in such quantities that they would form a sphere of bodies expanding at the speed of light!

Needless to say, population growth never reaches its mathematical or biological potential. The growth of any living species is always severely curtailed by checks that produce the ecological
balance of life forms. Therefore, establishing the chronological credibility (as opposed to the mathematical possibility) of the genealogy of Genesis 11 can never be accomplished by these kinds of calculation. Rather, the archeological and historical evidence that indicates how fast population did in fact grow after the Flood must provide the ultimate focus of any serious analysis.

The above calculations were based on the simple assumption that population grew steadily and at the same breakneck rate from Shem to Abraham’s time. Implied is the further assumption that the heavily populated civilizations of the ancient world did not significantly ante-date Terah and Abraham. Current interpretations of scientific and historical evidence cast doubt on both of these assumptions, posing a real challenge to the scientific credibility of a chronology based on Genesis 11. Some of the current interpretations of historical and scientific evidence need careful study:

1. The date of the earliest Near Eastern civilizations. Egyptologists feel they have a particularly compelling case for dating the first dynasty in Egypt no later than 2800 B.C. Abundant predynastic remains predate the first dynasty.

2. The pattern of population growth prior to Abraham. The available evidence suggests that population levels were low and growth was relatively slow for most of the period between the Flood and Abraham. If the relative dating methods of geology and archeology (used with such impressive success in Biblical archeology) are correct, the archeological record seems to show man living primarily as a hunter and gatherer for most of this period—sites are small, few in number, and lack evidence of domesticated plants or animals. Modern nonagricultural “primitive” peoples invariably attain extremely low population densities—a maximum of one person per square mile and an average of one to twenty-five people per 100 square miles. The pace of population growth presumably picked up only after the wide-scale introduction of agriculture near the close of this time period. The Biblical record, on the other hand, treats both Noah and his immediate descendants in Mesopotamia as agriculturalists.

3. The pattern of population growth subsequent to Abraham. According to Dr. Ansley Coale, population levels were fairly stable between the time of Abraham and the time of Christ, increasing slowly at an overall annual rate of .045 percent. If true, then the transition from fantastically rapid growth to extremely slow growth must have occurred prior to the time of Terah and Abraham. Yet rapid population growth has a powerful momentum. For example, even if all nations in the world today succeeded within the next twenty years in limiting births to two per female, world population would still increase from four billion to more than eight billion in seventy years. The brakes can be applied, but it takes time to stop a runaway vehicle.

If we assume world population reached 100 million in the 220 years between the Flood and Terah because each female had fifteen children with two years between births, and then propose that at the time of Abraham fertility suddenly dropped to slightly more than two births per female (zero-growth fertility), population would nevertheless continue to grow rapidly for 200 years, reaching more than 600 million people. In just the first 100 years after Abraham, population would more than triple in size (from nearly 134 million to over 407 million).

4. The post-Flood dispersal of man. How long did it take the descendants of Noah to repopulate the entire earth? Major population expansion in South America, for example, could gather momentum only after a few pioneers had arrived from the Near East. Evidence for transoceanic voyages between the Near East and the New World has not yet been found for the time period when man first reached the New World. Moreover, man probably did not reach lands far from Ararat by riding the drifting continents provided by plate-tectonic theory in geology. Geological evidence indicates that continental drift had taken the earth’s land masses to their present locations prior to the dispersal of man. Yet, this dispersal was essentially complete by the time of Abraham.

5. The physical differentiation of man into geographic races. Whatever time, if any, was necessary for the development of the modern physical varieties of man must be found in the pre-Abrahamic time period. Skeletal remains and artistic reproductions from the ancient world show that the major physical types of modern man were already in existence in the time of Abraham.

6. Skeletal evidence concerning life span. Bone specialists, studying the age-sensitive features of the skeletons of individuals who died before the time of Abraham, have given the following interpretation of average age at death: approximately 18 years for the oldest pre-Abrahamic group of skeletons studied, 19 to 25 years for a group of skeletons of intermediate age, and 20 to 27 years for the latest group. Average life spans of less than 30 years and the high mortality rates they imply are difficult to reconcile with rapid population growth. The pressure of some of these lines of historical and scientific evidence would be at least partially alleviated if the Septuagint’s version of Genesis 11 should prove to be closer to the original than the Masoretic version.

Conclusions

Could world population grow from eight to the millions of Abraham’s day in the short time period derived from Genesis 11? The answer to this question is yes. There certainly could have been a population explosion after the Flood. Although problems exist, one should not reject the chronological information found in Genesis 11 by arguing that population could not grow fast enough to reach the levels seen in Abraham’s time in a period as short as 220 years. Instead, attention should be directed toward two questions: (1) What is the internal Biblical evidence concerning the intent and meaning of the genealogies found in Genesis 5 and 11, and does that intent include chronology? (2) What does the available historical and scientific evidence have to say about actual rates of growth before Abraham—was there in fact a population explosion after the Flood?

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More than one out of each ten Americans has high arterial blood pressure. Many people do not know that they have a problem, because it can frequently exist for years without symptoms. High blood pressure is, however, a problem that needs to be taken seriously because it can, without warning, cause serious disease and even death. Those who do experience symptoms will frequently notice dizziness, headaches, insomnia, weakness, fatigue, and similar problems.

Unless treated, high blood pressure can result in stroke, heart disease, kidney disease, and even blindness caused by hemorrhage of the retina of the eye. Persons with high blood pressure have five times the risk of stroke and twice the risk of heart attack compared to those with normal blood pressure.

Arterial blood pressure is measured against a column of mercury and is recorded in millimeters. It reaches its maximum following the emptying of the left ventricle into the aorta immediately after it contracts. This is identified as the “systolic” pressure. It drops during the time the heart is filling with blood and reaches its minimum just before a succeeding ventricular contraction. This is identified as the “diastolic” pressure. For these reasons, usually the pressure is recorded as two figures, such as 120 (systolic) and 80 (diastolic)—120/80.

In general, the lower the blood pressure, the better. People with lower pressures usually live longer than those with higher levels. The incidence of heart attacks and strokes increases as the blood pressure increases. There is no point where suddenly the risk increases greatly. Therefore, the figures we term normal or abnormal are arbitrary divisions. A reading of 120/80 is considered to be normal. Lower blood pressures such as 100/60 may result in longer life, however, than 120/80. Normal is considered in adults to be up to 140/90. As mentioned, this is an arbitrary cutoff point. Between 140 and 160 systolic and between 90 and 95 diastolic is termed by physicians as borderline. Anything above 160 systolic and 95 diastolic is considered to be indicative of hypertension.

Since blood pressures fluctuate quite widely, a diagnosis of hypertension is not made unless several readings are taken at various intervals. Slight emo-

**What You Need to Know About High Blood Pressure.** Several fairly simple practices can actually help lower your blood pressure.

by J. A. Scharffenberg

**Arterial Blood Pressure**

The diastolic pressure is not elevated to as great an extent under such circumstances. For this reason, a physician finding an elevated diastolic pressure considers it to be more serious than an elevated systolic pressure if it is the first time he has taken the blood pressure. If the systolic pressure is consistently elevated, however, it is as dangerous as an elevated diastolic pressure.

In about 85 percent of the cases a physician makes a diagnosis of “primary” or “essential” hypertension. This means the cause of the high blood pressure is not known. If the cause is known, the condition is termed “secondary” hypertension. That means the high blood pressure is secondary to some specific condition such as adrenal tumor, renal artery constriction, or some such thing. Some of these causes are correctable. Certain specialists in hypertension believe that the cause may be found in an additional 20 percent of the cases if adequate tests are done. These tests may cost as much as $500, but may well be worth the time and money. University hospitals usually have someone who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of hypertension.

Many controllable factors or conditions contribute to high blood pressure. Should you have any of these problems, be sure to take the proper measures to control them.

1. **Obesity**

   If you are overweight, that factor alone may elevate your blood pressure; you should reduce your weight immediately. The proper way to do this is very simple: exercise more and eat less. If you find reducing to be difficult, here are some hints that may help you.

   **Do not snack.** By stopping your between-meal snacks you can reduce your daily intake by several hundred calories.

   **Reduce the use of “empty” and refined calories.** There are four basic food types that contain calories of this kind: (1) **Visible fats.** These are fats such as cooking oil, margarines, and similar fats, which are visible in or on your food. (2) **Sugar.** Eliminate foods that are high in sugar, such as desserts, soft drinks, ice cream, and nuts, and other between-meal sweets. (3) **Refined cereals.** Use whole-grain cereals without added sugar. Cooked cereals are probably better than commercial dry cereals. If you like dry cereals, use products such as shredded wheat, which are whole grain and which do not have added sugar. (4) **Alcohol** can result in a surprisingly high intake of empty calories. It has another side effect—for those on a diet, alcohol can weaken willpower and result in the breakdown of a dietary program.

   **Reduce the use of saturated fats such as the fat in meat or in whole milk, hard shortenings, hard margarines, and eggs.** Butter, of course, is saturated fat.

   **Eat a good breakfast.** If it is necessary to skip a meal in order to lose weight, skip supper rather than breakfast. Breakfast calories are usually burned up in useful work. Calories taken in the evening tend to enlarge the proportions of the eater.

   Use foods high in fiber and water content such as greens, carrots, string beans, and so forth, which will fill you up without putting on much weight.

   **If all else fails, fast one or two days a week.** We recommend that if you do this, you do so under a doctor’s supervision.

2. **Exercise**

   Exercise helps some individuals lower their blood pressure. This is true even of people who are not overweight or under stress. The type of exercise is important, however, since not all exercise is useful for lowering blood pressure. Calisthenics and muscle-building exercises, for example, may be good for flexibility, but they do not really help with the problem of hypertension. To lower blood pressure, one needs continued exercise of at least twenty minutes’ unbroken duration. Probably the best such exercise is walking. Work up to the twenty minutes gradually and, as you become used to it, increase the speed and the distance you cover in that twenty to thirty minutes each day. If you are quite overweight, increase your exercise very gradually. Before doing any vigorous exercise have your physician do an electrocardiogram stress test to be sure your heart can take it.

3. **Stress and tension**

   Stress and tension may also elevate blood pressure. A good exercise program helps relieve stress. Also take regular vacations, stop bringing home your...
work in the evenings, consciously try to relax several times a day. Noise of any type may increase tension and stress. Keep the TV and radio off except for the few good, nontension-producing programs. Trusting in God’s care for you should help you not to worry over the many problems of the day.

4. Salt
It may be necessary to reduce sodium in your diet in order to get your blood pressure under control. Salt is the source of most of our sodium. The average American uses about fifteen grams (more than three teaspoons) a day. Approximately two and one-half grams come from the processed and packaged foods he purchases at the store. But the largest amount comes from the salt he puts into his food when he cooks it at home or when he uses the salt shaker at the table. In northern Honshu in Japan the average salt use is twenty-eight grams or seven teaspoons a day, and 40 percent of the adult population have high blood pressure. The body needs only about one eighth of a teaspoon of salt a day. It may be well to avoid salty foods such as salted peanuts, olives, soy sauce, and salt from the saltshaker at the table.

Some physicians do not tell you to decrease your use of salt, because they feel the medicine they are prescribing for you will help to handle this problem without your having to lower your use of salt. But certainly it would be well for most of us to decrease our use of salt as a possible preventive measure.

5. Diet
Recent studies have shown that high blood pressure may be related to meat in the diet. Vegetarians have been shown to have a tendency to less high blood pressure. Some researchers now suggest that reducing or eliminating the use of meat in the diet may be the best therapeutic approach to high blood pressure. Although atherosclerosis (arteriosclerosis) is not the cause of high blood pressure, it may be associated with it. High blood pressure accentuates the atherosclerotic process and so, as a rule, one who has had hypertension consistently over an extended period of time probably has developed some atherosclerosis.

For several reasons, then, it is well to be on a diet that tends to prevent atherosclerosis—in other words, a diet that is low in saturated fats and cholesterol. Since meats, particularly beef, contain high amounts of saturated fats and cholesterol, a vegetarian diet can help overcome several problems related to heart disease and high blood pressure.

The total amount of fat in the diet should be lowered for most Americans. We should switch to nonfat milk, for example, instead of using whole milk or lowfat milk. Other things that can be done to reduce fat in the diet are to reduce the use of egg yolks to no more than three a week and to avoid bakery goods that may have these substances in them.

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“"To lower blood pressure by exercise, one needs twenty minutes of unbroken, continued exertion. Walking is one of the best forms of exercise.""

6. Tobacco
Smokers are more apt to have hypertension. Those who smoke and have high blood pressure certainly need to kick the habit. The Seventh-day Adventist Five-Day Plan to Stop Smoking has been effective for many.

7. Estrogens
Commonly used by women in the menopause and by those taking birth-control pills, estrogens do cause high blood pressure in some individuals. If the high blood pressure came on after you started using these pills, it may be advisable to discontinue them. You'll need to consult your doctor about this.

8. Tyramine
Some people are sensitive to tyramine, a substance commonly found in cheese. This may result in high blood pressure. But since there are so many possible causative factors for high blood pressure, it is important to see a physician and attempt to determine the cause of the hypertension. The physician will order a number of tests to evaluate your condition.

It would be well to purchase a sphygmomanometer and stethoscope and learn how to take blood pressures. If a family member has the problem, a continual monitoring of the pressure each day can be done without going to the doctor’s office. This would help your doctor determine just what medication and how much of the medicine to prescribe for you.

The treatment for primary hypertension is regular taking of specific medications. The doctor may prescribe only a diuretic to help you eliminate the fluid that your body is retaining, in an attempt to lower your blood pressure. Frequently he will give you this with another medication also. It is very important to take the prescribed medicines. Lowering the blood pressure will help to prevent stroke, heart attack, blindness from retinal hemorrhage, and kidney disease. If you have adverse side effects from the medications, see your physician, and he will attempt to find the right medication, one that works for you without any serious side reactions.

Summary
1. Have your blood pressure checked regularly. If it is high, follow your doctor’s instructions carefully. 2. Develop a regular exercise program. 3. Substitute good health habits for bad ones. Stop using tobacco, tea, coffee, and alcohol. 4. Get your weight down to normal. 5. Learn how to handle stress and tension. 6. Take your prescribed medicines regularly. 7. Eat a good diet, avoiding salt and saturated-fat foods.

J. A. Scharffenberg, M.D., M.P.H., has been in the practice of medicine for thirty years. He served for a time as clinician on the secretariat of the Inter-departmental Committee on Nutrition for National Defense and later became director of the International Nutrition Research Foundation. Still later, while professor of applied nutrition at Loma Linda University, he developed a coronary-risk-evaluation program called Heartbeat, which has had thousands of participants throughout the world. Dr. Scharffenberg is currently associate director of the Health Services Department of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Published simultaneously in Life & Health.
What would happen if the medical and dental staff of a major, acute-care mission hospital in one of the world’s most sophisticated cities decided to talk directly to their patients about Adventist medicine and religion? Hongkong Adventist Hospital is the working site for a top-flight team of physicians and dentists offering special care in internal medicine, pediatrics, dentistry and several surgery disciplines.

I was invited by the administrator and medical staff to join in a two-week evangelistic program, designed for non-Christian patients, ex-patients, and families of the Hongkong Adventist Hospital in the month of November, 1977. The invitation was a frightening one for me because I had never been in the Far East before nor had I had opportunity to deal significantly with those from strictly non-Christian backgrounds. In talking with the medical staff and the administration of the hospital, it was agreed that it would be best to explain why Adventist medicine was in the Far East and specifically at the Hongkong Adventist Hospital and what Christianity had to say for the needs of people living in Hong Kong.

This report is not just another account of an evangelistic series somewhere. It is a serious attempt to deal with two or three basic concepts that all of us on the team learned in Hong Kong.

Initially, it was thought best to have the medical staff deliver the customary medical lectures dealing with heart disease, cancer, lung disease, diet, et cetera, after which I would come in as the evangelist and deal with some of the basic issues of Christianity such as conversion, the meaning of Christ, the Bible and its inspiration, the Sabbath, the Christian home, and prophecy. This neat dichotomy identified the doctors and dentists as the health talkers; there would be a slight shuffling of people on the platform, and then the evangelist would come on with the real meat of the evening. This concept of how health education and evangelism should be united is rather typical, and with variations is occurring over and over again around the world.

After I arrived, we agreed on a different basic idea. Our approach would be more effective, we decided, if the medical people demonstrated a clear conviction of the reality and need of the religious aspects of the series and if the evangelist participated in the presentation of the health material. This would assure a high quality of medical, as well as spiritual, benefit, in which the physicians and the evangelist would be a team operating together, rather than separately, throughout the entire presentation. The Adventist physicians would be speaking directly to their patients in a public manner with regard to their faith, convictions, and beliefs.

The estimated 20,000 patients who had gone through the hospital since its opening five years earlier each received a handbill announcing the meetings and a card on which to indicate their interest in having a seat reserved in the hospital’s sixth-floor chapel. These 20,000 patients and their families created a large pool of friendly contacts who would be responsive, we anticipated, to an invitation from their physician to attend such a meeting. Indeed, we were right. From this totally non-Adventist population, more than 100 people returned cards showing an interest in attending the New Life Seminar.

Of the more than 100 non-Adventists who attended during the two weeks, all were patients or ex-patients of the medical staff. The meetings did not appeal to the community. We used no newspaper, radio, or television advertising—nothing but a mailing to the patient list of the hospital. Thus the local Seventh-day Adventist hospital, not a local church or a civic auditorium, became an evangelistic center for two weeks. What did we learn?

In North America, a Pacific Union study on membership growth and a newly released evangelistic study by the Lake Union clearly indicate that there is no significant correlation between SDA health institutions and church growth in the area the institution serves. There is transfer growth from people moving in to get jobs in the institution and biological growth of baptisms of young people in the nearby schools, but the impact on the area in the terms of new members attributable to the ministry of the medical institution is meager indeed. These data, though not applying to the Far East, we expected would be fairly typical of an Adventist institution in Hong Kong, as well. Yet we found that when an Adventist medical institution self-consciously analyzes the reason for its existence and looks upon itself as an evangelistic center, with the medical staff themselves speaking publicly and directly of their faith, many will listen. Our experience in Hong Kong clearly demonstrated that when a physician and a minister join together in a completely unified way, talking sense about health and religion, it is possible to get results.

Such a program calls for a new breed of physician and a new breed of minister. It calls for a minister who knows and is conversant with the concepts of a basic healthful life style. And it calls for a physician who is conversant with the spiritual implications of what he does for a living.

And what of the results of the Hong Kong effort in medical evangelism? When the series concluded, the medical staff continued with a weekly Bible-marking program. The latest reports are that a large class meets every Friday night in the chapel of Hongkong Adventist Hospital—Bibles in hand, many for the first time—marking The New English Bible in a class taught entirely by the medical staff themselves. Physicians in Hong Kong feel that it is not inappropriate for a physician to preach and teach from the Bible lessons of doctrinal and practical living.

The presence of a medical institution can have and should have a major effect in the spiritual growth of the churches served by that hospital. When the ministry, the physicians, the dentists, and other medical staff (including dietitians) join together as a team to talk publicly about their faith and their life style God will bless in a way He has promised us.

William Loveless, Ph.D., is president of Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.
**BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGY**

"You Shall Not Go Empty.
An understanding of ancient customs sheds light on a puzzling text.

by Leonard McMillan

"And I will give this people favor in the sight of the Egyptians; and when you go, you shall not go empty, but each woman shall ask of her neighbor, and of her who sojourns in her house, jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; thus you shall despise the Egyptians" (Ex. 3:21, 22).

Was it ethical for the slave nation of Israel to ask their Egyptian masters for gold and other valuables, knowing they would never return them? Were they simply using the unique situation to take advantage of their now-frightened oppressors? Certain accepted customs of the ancient world regarding the treatment of slaves help us to understand better this somewhat puzzling suggestion of God to Israel.

For example, in antiquity the release of slaves at specified intervals was a widespread practice considered especially pleasing to the gods. Also the custom of a relative (go'el) acting in behalf of a slave to redeem the individual from slavery was an established practice and well understood long before the Exodus. The imagery Moses used of God requesting Pharaoh to release His first-born son, Israel, attempted to remind the monarch of this time-honored custom (see Ex. 4:22, 23). But how shall we understand the Israelites asking silver and gold of the Egyptians?

We should consider another normal usage concerning the release of slaves before condemning the Hebrews as dishonest. Although we may think it somewhat strange for God to counsel His people not to go empty from Egypt, actually such a statement reflected the thinking of the time. We find the same expression in the Code of Hammurabi (c. 1690 B.C.); as well as in other references of Scripture besides Exodus 3:21, 22. Deuteronomy 15:13 later counseled the Hebrews concerning the release of their own slaves, "You shall not let him go empty-handed." Such formulations did not necessarily indicate a natural impulse on the part of the master to do good; more likely it reflected the fear of what might happen if the slave were sent away empty-handed. The ancient world considered a slave who departed "empty" as badly disposed and thus an omen of evil. God's command recognized this attitude. "As the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him [the slave]" (Deut. 15:14). In other words, one who freed his slave willingly and generously at the end of his service would place himself in such a position that God could in turn bless him. The implications of disobedience are also clear.

Pharaoh showed his familiarity with these accepted customs when during his final confrontation with Moses he proclaimed, "Take your flocks and herds, as you have said, and be gone; and bless me also" (Ex. 12:32). According to the prevailing ideas of the day he could expect Moses to bless him since he had finally fulfilled (although reluctantly) the practice of giving gifts to departing slaves. Thus we see in Exodus Pharaoh's dilemma as he is torn between the wish to maintain his wealth and the desire to prevent the curses that would fall on him if he sent the Israelites away empty.

By the social standards of the time, the Israelites were entitled to ask their masters for silver and gold, flocks and herds. In addition, God used these well-known requirements to teach His people a valuable lesson regarding their relationship to Him. He would have them recognize that He had acted as the go'el, kinsman, to redeem what was His. He would have them understand, also, that He had claimed them from the Egyptians as His bride (a metaphor used throughout Scripture). It was customary for a slave-wife to be granted a dowry from her master. Interestingly enough, it was the Israelite women who asked their mistresses for silver and gold, in accordance with current marriage practices (see Ex. 3:22).

The Jewish rabbis later saw the experience of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) and Laban as illustrative of the national experience in Egypt. In fact, traditional rabbinic interpretation viewed Laban as an earlier Pharaoh, incorporating into the Passover-eve recital the claim that Laban anticipated Pharaoh's attempt to kill the infant sons of Israel. In effect, what happened to the individual Jacob (or Israel) foreshadowed what would happen to the nation. Both resided as welcome guests in a foreign land until "enslaved" by an arbitrary decision of their host (cf. Gen. 29 and Ex. 1:9). Both increased in wealth despite harsh treatment; both were released from bondage. Neither Jacob nor the Israelites went away empty-handed, although God's special intervention was necessary in both cases to ensure the liberality of their captors upon their release (cf. Gen. 31:1, 42, and Exodus 3:19, 20). Both Laban and Pharaoh attempted to recapture the slaves after their release, with the result that they and their gods were soundly defeated (cf. Gen 31:31-33 and Ex. 15:19-21). Thus in archeological witness and in God's Word we note the antiquity of the "release motif."

The Israelites were neither deceptive nor dishonest in their dealings with the Egyptians. They were simply receiving the gifts normally given to departing slaves. When the Egyptians chose to ignore the social requirements of the day, the Israelites were well within their rights to make a request as a reminder to their former masters.

3 Pritchard, op. cit., p. 175 (Hammurabi's Code, par. 191). See also the discussion by Daube, op. cit., pp. 55-61, 86-88.
4 Ibid., p. 58.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid., pp. 71, 72.

Leonard McMillan is youth director of the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

Leonard McMillan is youth director of the Washington Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
No Room. People today often have as little room in their lives for Jesus as did the innkeeper at Bethlehem.

Dear Shepherdess: Christmas is a time for reflecting on the special happinesses of the year. For me, happiness has been meeting so many of you this past summer. Happiness has been seeing you meeting so many of you this past summer. For me, happiness has been and in sharing your musical talents in public meetings, besides the multitude of miracles blossom in all their glory, I met with the ladies twice a day while the husbands were involved in their meeting. What a joy it was to join in prayer for the Holy Spirit to be poured out on that metropolitan conference!

Now the holidays are here again. Elder and Mrs. A. A. Esteb are making their home in Virginia, where he writes a weekly feature, “The Poet’s Corner,” for the local newspaper. This month I want to share with you a poem of his, “The Christmas Friend,” and also a story titled “No Room,” from the Arizona Shepherdess News.

May God keep and bless you, dear friends, and may you have a wonderful Christmas. With love, Kay.

The Christmas Friend
by Adlai Albert Esteb

A week before Christmas the noisy street
Was crowded with shoppers on fleeting feet.
The money flowed freely—an endless stream—
And much of it spent to fulfill some dream.
A store clerk observed one poor little girl
Admiring a doll with its golden curl.
The mother stood by, in her faded dress,
Her face was a picture of deep distress.
The daughter, of course, could not understand,
But trustingly held mother’s work-worn hand.
She looked at the clerk with childish charms,
Said, “Please, may I hold it just once in my arms?”
The saleslady reached for the doll and smiled
At the wide-eyed wonder of that little child,
Who pressed the doll to her happy heart
In a moving moment of matchless art.
The mother then turned to the girl and said,
“Let’s put the doll back in its beautiful bed.”
They did not observe the saleslady’s glance
At a man who stood in a casual stance
At the end of the counter, who gave a nod.
And, then, to the mother it seemed so odd;
The clerk wrapped the gift with a pretty bow,
To the girl she gave it with her face aglow!
They hardly would trust their eyes and ears,
And gratefully said so, with thankful tears.
When they had departed, the man then smiled,
And paid for the gift for the little child.
When he disappeared, the clerk told a friend,
“We really don’t know him, but each year’s end,
He comes here quite often and does the same,
And yet he has never revealed his name.”
In the crowded course of earth’s stress and strife,
An unseen Friend by the counter of life,
Has paid for the greatest gifts that we own;
Our Greatest Giver—is He still unknown?
Ah! Daily He stands and He smiles His nod—
This unknown Friend and Great Giver is GOD!

Ministry, December/1978
ple. I always try to remember faces, for it gives my guests a warm, good feeling to return to my inn and be remembered. What was it about this Mary that was so familiar? What was it about this Man that caught my attention?

I turned to one at my side and said, "Tell me something about this Man on the cross."

The bystander said that His name was Jesus and that He was from Nazareth but had been born in Bethlehem.

"Bethlehem?" I said. "Bethlehem?"

"Yes, Bethlehem," came the reply.

"And when was He born there?" I asked.

"Let me see," said the bystander. "It was during the enrollment of Caesar Augustus. That would make Him about 32 or 33."

And then, my friends, suddenly I remembered why the mother of this Man looked familiar to me. For this woman, His mother, came to my inn one night many years ago. She was heavy with child, and she and her husband looked so tired and weary of traveling. But I had no room; my inn was filled with people who had come to Bethlehem for the enrollment. I did the best I could. I told them they could have the stable. So there they went, and there the Baby was born. I was busy with my guests and did not have much time for them, but I remember that they were not alone. I remember that some shepherds came whom I thought must be relatives. Some of the guests at the inn said the shepherds sang songs and "carried on" about something. And, of course, I thought they were just happy about the Child and were singing with joy. I didn't know.

He may come and knock on your door, just as He did on mine. Pray you do not make the same mistake I did. It was the biggest mistake of my life, and it has affected my entire existence. I must tell you something else. I did not let Him in when He came because I did not know He was coming. I wasn't looking for Him and so I just passed Him by and gave Him the stable with the feeding trough of the animals for a bed. I didn't know He was coming. If only someone had told me that Joseph and Mary were coming to Bethlehem, that the Christ Child would be born here, that angels would announce His coming! But I did not know! I had not been studying. I was not prepared.

Prayers from the parsonage

by Cherry B. Habenicht

What I thought was a birth announcement turned out to be, instead, a printed death notice.

Kurt and Cindy waited years to have a child. Proudly they proclaimed the news of Cindy's pregnancy, each successive letter reporting that all was well. But something (the brief note gives no details) caused the baby to die three days before his birth.

Birth—without the ecstasy of life after all those months of anticipation! The words "It's a boy"—without the thrill of hearing that first plaintive cry. A name—only for the records.

They write, "Only our Father in heaven knows the reasons, and we trust completely His love and guidance in our lives." Bless them! May that faith sustain them in the hard months that will follow when they must pack away sweet baby things and adjust to what may seem to be empty routines.

Don't let this couple become despondent or bitter. May they express their grief freely and be comforted by Your Spirit. If doubt undermines their confidence, remind them of Your care.

They will notice smiling, healthy babies everywhere, each a painful reminder of "our little Andy, had he lived." Please give them the courage to plan for another child, if they so choose. May they find the emotional strength to enjoy others' children without resentment.

You planned that a new life would be the result of love between man and woman. You designed the intricate system that controls and supports a developing fetus. Certainly You rejoice at the birth of a healthy child.

Are there answers for this tragedy? I don't know. Long ago You sent Your only Son to be born as a babe. Innocent, He suffered an outwardly meaningless death. I know You grieve with us and wait to welcome us to a new earth where "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying" (Rev. 21:4).
A Christmas letter

by Donna Lehman

Dear Struggling Christian,

You have asked me, "What can I give Christ for Christmas?" You say, "I have so little to give."

My friend, God has given each person certain gifts to share. May I suggest some presents you can give?

You say, "I feel naked and ugly, for Christ has seen my sin." Be thankful that you have recognized your sin and your need for cleansing. You have begun a new life with Christ, thus you are beautiful in Him. God knows your beauty because He created you. Allow Him to clothe you with His righteousness, and accept yourself as you are. That is your gift to yourself this Christmas.

"I'm trying to forgive certain people in my past, but I cannot forget their actions," you cry. Do not stumble on your past, my friend. God buried those hurts in the deepest parts of the sea when you asked Christ to forgive you.

Why are you trying to keep old memories alive? I can help you only with today's problems, for the path we are following leads us to future days. Do not hold resentment in you. That is your gift to your family this Christmas.

You think, "I have made so many mistakes in my life. I thought I was making right decisions and helping people, but now I see my actions were wrong and hurt others." Because you were not a Christian then, my friend, you could not know right answers. Just think, when you have been a Christian for as many years as you were not a Christian, then you will be able to count as many right decisions as wrong ones. You wish for those numbers to be equal today, but that is not possible. Begin to balance those numbers today by serving fellow Christians. That is your gift to your church this Christmas.

You tell me, "Other persons have more ability to help people than I." My friend, believe me when I say that I feel this same ability within you. I see this powerful light in your face. You cannot see the light, although it is helping all who walk with you to see the narrow path their feet are following. Trust God, that He is supplying you power. That is your gift to the world this Christmas.

You say, "You have more gifts to share than I." My friend, Christmas is the time for all Christians to give what they have in honor of Christ. Do not expect your gifts to be the same as my gifts. Your unique life will be built according to Christ's gifts and plan for you. The greatest gift we can give one another is love. That is your gift to me this Christmas.

My friend, if you are really eager to give, it is not important how much you give. God expects you to give what you have, not what you have not (see 2 Cor. 8:12).

Merry Christmas!

Your friend, a fellow Christian

Donna Lehman is a free-lance writer living in Fort Wayne, Indiana.
Sacred Words

Wot Ye Not?

For more than 360 years the King James Version of the Bible has been widely read and accepted in English-speaking countries as "God’s word in man’s tongue." Although it was not the first version to be translated into English, its predecessors have been largely forgotten, as have many of the hundreds of other English versions published since 1611.

Meanwhile the King James Version maintains its unique position as "the Bible" for thousands of English-speaking people. Contrary to what some have thought, James I of England did not write the version; he selected forty-seven remarkable men to do so and gave them the time and encouragement to produce a work of art. As a result of taking the best phrasing from previous renditions, studying hard themselves, and discussing their work freely in committees, the Bible they produced met with instant approval and soon became part of the linguistic heritage of a people.

Spoken English has changed significantly through the centuries, but the wording of the King James Bible continues as a kind of sacred dialect.

For all its majestic utterances and poetic turns, this version is not easy for new converts to Christianity or for immigrants from non-English-speaking lands. Even those whose mother tongue is English sometimes regard its archaic passages as the language of another world. Where else but in the Bible (or Shakespeare) would one find the expression "Wot ye not what the scripture saith?" (Rom. 11:2).

Most people who attempt to use the linguistic forms of the King James Version in public prayer find it difficult to go beyond familiar Bible quotations. Yet there is a structure in this Old English. The first thing one notices is the difference in pronouns, especially those for the second person. Where in modern English we use only two forms, "you" and "your," seventeenth-century English-speaking people used several, making distinctions between singular and plural and also between subject and object. Thus the Bible uses the pronoun "thou" when addressing a single person—"Thou art the man" (2 Sam. 12:7)—but when several individuals are spoken to, the form is "ye"—"Ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20).

Likewise, when the second-person pronoun is the object of a verb or preposition, different words are used—"thee," as in "God is with thee in all that thou doest" (Gen. 21:22), if singular, and "you," as in "Behold, I have told you before" (Matt. 24:25), if plural. To show possession, "th" is used for the singular: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Rom. 13:9). (When the word "th" is followed by a word beginning with a vowel, it changes to "thine," which further complicates things.) The plural possessive uses "your," as in "Great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12). When the pronoun stands alone as a noun, "thine" is used for the singular, and "yours" for the plural: "Thine is the kingdom, and the power" (Matt. 6:13). "Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20).

The singular and plural forms of the second-person pronouns also affect the ending of some verbs. Thus when "thou" is the subject, a verb might end in "-est," as "Thou very well knowest" (Acts 25:10) and "Thou shaltest know": (Luke 1:4). When "ye" is the subject, however, the ending drops off, as in "Ye know not the truth" (1 John 2:21). Some irregular verbs take the -st or -t form with "thou," as "Thou didst not sow" (Luke 19:21) and "Thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil" (John 8:48).

The verb endings are also affected by the third person singular ("he," "she," "it," or nouns) used as a subject. The common form is "-eth," as "He that reapeth receiveth wages" (John 4:36). Some irregular forms shorten this further, as the frequent "thus saith the Lord." To the modern reader, another grammatical peculiarity of the King James Version is the use of such forms of "be" as "is," "are," and "were," as auxiliaries for the perfect tenses of intransitive verbs of motion; nowadays we use forms of "have." Thus in Job 16:22 we read, "When a few years are come," and in Genesis 47:5 Joseph was told, "Thy father and thy brethren are come.

In a few cases, archaic verb forms are intelligible only through the context in which they appear. Thus in Old English the verb "wit" meant to know or find out, as in Exodus 2:4, where Moses’ sister "stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him." The present tense of wit is "wot": "Wot ye not what the scripture saith?" (Rom. 11:2). The past tense is "wist": "He that was healed wist not who it was" (John 5:13).

Other outdated features in the King James Version are somewhat more difficult to pinpoint, though pervasive. The order of subject and predicate is frequently inverted; as in the passage, "This parable spake Jesus unto them" (John 10:6). The word "that" is used where we now use "what," and "which" is used as a pronoun for persons where we now use "who."

The King James Version we buy at the bookstore today is not the same as that issued in 1611; printers have corrected spellings and taken various small liberties with the text, sometimes inadvertently. Thus where the translators intended for Matthew 23:24 to accuse the Pharisees of being "blind guides, which strain out a gnat, and swallow a camel," a typographical error crept into the first edition, making it read "strain at a gnat," and somehow the mistake has been retained ever since. Some errors were not so acceptable, however. In a 1631 printing, the word "not" was omitted from the seventh commandment, so it read "Thou shalt commit adultery." The printers were fined 300 pounds by the archbishop for that mistake, and the offending edition was commonly known as the "Wicked Bible." The "Murderer’s Bible" was so called because in a 1795 edition Mark 7:27 was made to read, "Let the children first be killed" (instead of "filled").

It is a testimony to the skill of the translators of the King James Version that it still retains its popularity. Versions such as the Revised Standard Version and The New English Bible have been prepared with the goal of retaining the best of the King James Version while bringing it up to date in language and Biblical knowledge. Yet it appears that for many, the King James Version will continue to be the "real" Bible, as long as they "wot . . . what the scripture saith."
Index

Because of limited space, there will be no printed index to the past year's issues of Ministry such as usually appears in the December copy. Those who desire to have such an index may obtain a copy in mimeographed form by sending 25 cents and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Ministry, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.

Reminder to clergymen not presently covered by Social Security

Clergymen who previously exercised their option of not being covered by United States Social Security now have the opportunity under the Social Security Financing Amendments of 1977 to revoke their exemption and obtain Social Security protection beginning with 1977 or 1978.

This revocation can become effective for the calendar year 1977 by the filing of Form 4361-A (Application for Revocation of Exemption from Self-Employment Tax) with Form 1040X (Amended U.S. Individual Income Tax Return) and Schedule SE, and by paying the amount of tax involved plus interest of six percent per annum from April 15, 1978 to the date of payment. The revocation can become effective for the calendar year 1978 by attaching Form 4361-A and Schedule SE to the new 1978 tax return (Form 1040) and by paying the final tax installment by April 15, 1979. Those revoking the previous election out of Social Security to become effective with 1978 should review their estimated tax liability and increase the installment due January 15, 1979. Form 4361-A is available from local I.R.S. offices or from union treasurers or the undersigned at the General Conference. Older clergymen who may not be able to get in enough quarters of active service to qualify should check with the local Social Security office.

Exemption of clergymen from Social Security coverage may only be for conscientious or religious reasons, and not for economic considerations. The Seventh-day Adventist Church does not have an established tenet or teaching in opposition to plans such as Social Security, and we urge all to give serious consideration to obtaining this protection.

Those who are not in the Social Security program likewise lose the benefits of Medicare, and this latter protection is of great importance to all in their retirement years. Under the provisions of the proposed revised North American Division Retirement Plan persons who have opted out of Social Security will be eligible only for assistance on health care expenses that would not have been covered by Medicare.

ROBERT E. OSBORN
Assistant Treasurer
General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Military chaplains

The General Conference National Service Organization has need of ordained ministers who are qualified to serve with the U.S. military forces. This is a highly demanding, very important work for the denomination. Those wishing to be considered should send their names and addresses to: National Service Organization, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012.

In addition to ordination, those applying must be U.S. citizens, have a 135-quarter-hour graduate degree from the Seminary, be commissioned before their thirty-third birthday, be able to pass a rigid physical examination and a National Agency security check.

Applicants should know that they will need to supply names of those who can evaluate their ministry. Those accepted by the General Conference NSO Committee will then be processed for commissioning by the particular branch of the Armed Forces to which they are assigned, a process that will take at least three months. If commissioned, they must serve a minimum of three years. By current law, after twenty years' service for the military, they would qualify for retirement pay.

CLARK SMITH, Director
National Service Organization

Seventh-day Adventist Theoological Seminary Church Music Endowment Fund

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has consistently emphasized music as a vital part of worship. Many of the early church leaders were gifted musically; their music, both compositions and performance, inspired congregations and the growing nineteenth-century Adventist Church.

Because of the need for a renewed emphasis on sacred music in theological education, Andrews University established a Church Music Endowment Fund in 1975. Dr. Oliver S. Beltz and his wife, Dorothy, are the moving force in raising these funds.

The goal for the Church Music Endowment Fund is $125,000; more than 150 contributors have already given $60,000 to this fund.

Some ministers have inquired how they might help in this work of love. One way is to insert the following announcement in the church bulletin:

A Church Music Endowment Fund has been established at Andrews University to assist in providing instruction in church music to ministers in training at the Theological Seminary. If you should have an interest in helping to establish this fund, please contact Dr. Oliver S. Beltz, Box 325, Loma Linda, California 92354.

SHOP TALK

Historic 1978 Annual Council on Tape!

Four Cassettes You Will Treasure:

* Robert H. Pierson's resignation and final appeal to world leaders.
* Neal C. Wilson's speech accepting world leadership role.
* 7 devotional sermons on the three angels' messages of Revelation.
* Closing appeal by Theodore Carcich.

Subscribers to Aspire Tape of the Month Club will receive these messages as the December, 1978, and January, 1979, releases. Others may order them separately at the usual cost of $1.86 per cassette. Subscribe now for 1979!

Subscriptions to the Aspire Tape Club are still only $45.00 a year. You receive two C-90 cassettes each month, for a total of three hours' listening at a cost of only $1.86 per cassette. Subscribe now for 1979!

Jay Adams has come up with one of the most practical books for the pastor to be published in recent years. In Competent to Counsel he maintains that the Bible has much to say about people's personal problems and how to approach them in counseling. Adams believes that failure to meet life's problems often stems from unforgiven and unaltered sinful behavior.

The author's involvement with inmates at two mental institutions convinced him that most of them were there not because they were sick, but because they were sinful. Adams' book relates the dramatic recoveries that took place when spiritual matters received attention. Since his experience with these mental patients, Adams has been proclaiming his conviction that many mentally ill people can be helped by the ministry of God's Word.

This book will give the counseling pastor many insights into how the Bible can assist those he seeks to help.

Ernie Voyles

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION AND OTHER DANGEROUS THERAPIES, John de Romanett, M.D., Audiotronics, Route 1, Box 245A, Wenatchee, Washington, 1977, more than 90 pages, $2.00.

Someone has said that the capacity of the human intellect to practice self-deception seems limitless. Today, as never before, we see the truth of this statement in the unbounded popularity of hypnotism, transcendental meditation, acupuncture, and other highly questionable therapies.

John de Romanett, M.D., presents well-documented material exposing the procedures as false sciences. The book presents historical aspects as well as safeguards available to the Christian against these pseudosciences, and climaxes in a chapter defining the true Biblical principles that in application assure good mental health. It presents practical and accurate answers to many questions a pastor may receive concerning the occult.

Bobbie Jane Van Dolson


In the avalanche of all kinds of books on obesity, diet, overweight, and weight control this new book, written by the author of the best seller Letters to Karen, is a real delight to read.

Some twenty years and one hundred twenty pounds ago Charlie Shedd asked for God's help in moving his "mountain of flesh." Now he calls his personal weight history "The odyssey of a fat man who lost a ton." The good news is that he discovered a lifestyle to keep it off—and so can you!

The Fat Is in Your Head presents a very practical and spiritual approach to the problem of obesity. Shedd says, "Most of us heavies know that pounds are not our only problem. Something is bugging us besides our avoidiposism. What goes on in our minds can be every bit as important as what we eat."

This delightful, practical, and yet probing little book is 142 pages of good common sense. The four main divisions are divided into forty-nine mini-chapters.

Charlie Shedd approaches weight problems with very sound medical advice from a panel of medical doctors representing specialties of orthopedics, urology, industrial medicine, psychiatry, and clinical psychology.

The numerous thought-provoking check questions interspersed throughout the book are well worth the price in themselves. For example, "Question for today: Are there forces in my history still pushing me beyond what is natural for me? Do I face personal shortcomings realistically or take self-anger out in my eating? Are my goals based upon good sense or fantasy?"—Page 66.

It is hoped that many along with this reviewer will accept the personal challenges of this delightful volume and develop a new lifestyle in 1979 to not only take it off but keep it off!

E. W. Voyles


Dr. John F. Knight, a medical doctor, has prepared two excellent books that ministers should share with their young people. I personally appreciate his balanced view of a delicate subject. These volumes in a very practical way cover a much broader range of subjects than just those dealing with sex. Excellent recommendations on the care of the body, such as diet, hair, and fingernail care, are included. Guidance for young people in successful boy-girl relationships, methods of academic achievement, and appealing warnings against health-destroying habits, which are today judged acceptable in some circles, are included. It would be nice if every congregation would present a copy of these books to their teen-age young people, as a gift from the church organization.

This could be done in a special service, or perhaps a class could be started for young people on prayer-meeting nights, using this book as a textbook. In these days when many forms of vice and health-destroying practices are acceptable, we need to do all that we can to help educate our young people to follow after purity and honesty.

J. R. Spangler