MADONNA OF THE SAWDUST TRAIL

see page 4
No unfavorable comments

At the local ministerial alliance meeting last week, I asked the men present whether they were receiving MINISTRY. All but two were getting it, and the two who were not, asked to be put on the list. One pastor told me he had five professional journals coming to his home, but he always read MINISTRY, for it was the finest. There was not a negative comment from the twenty men present. We are happy to provide a quality magazine to our fellow pastors in the community.

Marwood Hallett
Slidell, Louisiana

The finger of God

How thrilled I am with what MINISTRY is doing for the clergy of other denominations! This is a stroke of genius that has been overdue for many years. I am sure the hand of God is in this. Your recent editorials concerning Christ our Righteousness have been deeply appreciated. Words cannot express what a profound difference my study in this area has made in my own relationship with my Lord. Please be assured of my prayers.

Jay Gallimore
Charlotte, North Carolina

Round-table discussions

I have been having an excellent time with three ministers of other faiths in a community about twenty-five miles north of here. They have been receiving MINISTRY, and as a result we are having round-table Bible discussion once a month. Two of these men have told me they have an entirely different view of Seventh-day Adventists after receiving MINISTRY.

Robert E. Janssen
Zanesville, Ohio

Impressed the most

It was with great interest that I read Ellen G. White’s article “The Danger of False Ideas Regarding Justification” (MINISTRY, October, 1978). Of all the magazine articles and books regarding this subject that I have read, this impresses me the most. It is clear, to the point, Biblical, and well balanced. It leaves all the merits for our salvation on God’s side, but at the same time it does not take away human responsibilities. I would suggest that this article be reprinted and made available to all of our 3 million-plus church members, and to all students in our high schools and higher institutions of learning.

J. T. Knopper
Wahroonga, N.S.W.
Australia

Smartly done

MINISTRY is smartly done and addresses important issues. I appreciate the copies sent my way.

Carl F. H. Henry
Arlington, Virginia

Relational theology

Earl Radmacher’s thoughts on relational theology (November, 1978) were a very timely and much-needed statement. May his tribe increase!

Milton Fish
Ashland, Kentucky

Inspired counsel and guidance

I want to express my sincere appreciation for the preparation of such a precious magazine as MINISTRY. It is a valuable help to me. I am thankful to the Lord for the inspired counsel and guidance it provides in doing His work.

Paul Rambharose
Trinidad

Spiritual discernment

Surely the greatness of God is expressed in His method of providing profoundest truths in simplest form. Such is righteousness by faith, and such eventually will be the theology of perfection, a subject that is probably not yet fully understood by any man, and therefore should be argued only with the greatest care until men are completely Spirit-filled, for such spiritual things are spiritually discerned.

May we write and speak “not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” those spiritual things that are only spiritually discerned.

Raymond S. Moore
Berrien Springs, Michigan

Progress under the Holy Spirit

I have just received a report on the progress of the P.R.E.A.C.H. project. What the Holy Spirit is doing through your efforts to send MINISTRY to thousands of pastors is fantastic.

Frederick Rinker
Redlands, California

Emphasize the Word

I have been a member of the Adventist Church for three years. There are some things that disturb me about the churches I have been in lately and the ministers I have heard. Why can a person frequently sit through a whole sermon or church service and probably have to open his Bible only once? Why are children’s stories usually silent about Jesus Christ or God, but emphasize being good boys and girls? Why am I hearing more sermons on health reform, righteousness by faith, the Ten Commandments, prophecy, the Second Coming, et cetera, and less about Jesus Christ and His love revealed through His Word for practical everyday Christian living?

Name withheld

Well-researched

I would like to thank you for the thought-provoking journal and well-researched articles that come our way each month. They give us much food for thought here in the bush country of Africa.

Elizabeth Nicolacopoulous
Rwanda

Dynamite

MINISTRY has been a real dynamite magazine for the past two years or so. The series of articles “Ask the Editor” should be printed in pamphlet or book form and disseminated far and wide.

Woody Whidden
Wayne, New Jersey
CONTENTS

4 Madonna of the Sawdust Trail. Miriam Wood takes a nostalgic journey into the lives of evangelists' wives of a half century or so ago.

7 Accepted in Christ. Ellen G. White.

8 How to Prepare Effective Biblical Sermons. Joseph J. Battistone. The preaching task is not simply one among the pastor's many duties; it is the very heart of his work.

10 Up and Down—but Seldom Across. Walter R. L. Scrugg contends that communication pipelines in the church are predominantly vertical, and it's getting worse!

12 The Narrowness of Jesus. Charles L. Brooks. The Master exhibited a narrowness in His work, in His field of labor, and in His estimate of men that we would do well to emulate.

14 When Christians Disagree. Tom Hanks. Quarrels in the early Christian church tell us that the aposties were human. They also tell us how we may best handle disagreements in the church today.

17 Suppose No One Is Listening? M. Carol Hetzel.

18 Love Is Not Enough. Robert H. Parr. What happens when John, the Calithumpian, and Sue, the Adventist, decide to marry?

20 What Assurance of Salvation Can a Seventh-day Adventist Have? J. R. Spangler.

23 How Old Is the Earth? Robert H. Brown raises questions concerning the assumptions on which radiometric time scales are based.


29 Your Preaching and Your Larynx. Larry J. Otto.

4 Shepherdess

20 From the Editor

23 Science and Religion

25 Biblical Archeology

27 Health and Religion

30 Word Power

31 Shop Talk

32 Recommended Reading
Dear Shepherdess: Miriam Wood has been researching evangelistic experiences of the Seventh-day Adventist Church during the twenties, thirties, and forties in preparation for a book she is writing and hopes to see published soon. Miriam became so enthusiastic about the fantastic contribution of "evangelistic wives" that we have a series of articles from the overflow of her research to share with you during the year telling of the contributions these wives have made.

Those of you who have served in this era will have many nostalgic thoughts as you recall your own experiences. Those who are younger will enjoy a backward glimpse of our dedicated and hard-working generation and how intensely we believed in the message. In whatever age group you are, may you continue happy in the service of the King. With love, Kay.
attention of a ministerial student was “Can she play the piano?” The reason-
ing behind this question was simple. There would be no money to hire a pi-
anist for future tent or hall efforts. America, and all the Western world, was
in the grip of a severe financial depression during a great deal of this period. In
addition, the membership of the world church was small and tended to be com-
posed of moderate- to low-income fami-
lies. It was a time of “making do.”
Therefore, wives were expected to per-
pose of moderate- to low-income fami-
lies. It was a time of “making do.”
Therefore, wives were expected to per-
formance at the keyboard with the skill, if not
macy. Of course the future wives would never receive any
salary for their musical prowess, but
then, they would never receive a salary for anything they did. On some cam-
puses, a girl who was an outstanding
musician would become understandably
skittish when a ministerial student out of
the clear blue sky indicated a sudden
interest in her, especially if this was his
senior year and the embryonic minister
didn’t “gotten his act together” by hav-
ing made his selection of a companion.
We would not want to leave the im-
pression that other qualifications were
not expected. Certainly whether or not
the girl was a “good Christian” came
into the picture very decidedly, with
“good Christian” usually being equated
with complete conservatism in dress and
deportment. Girls from moneyed fami-
lies were usually thought to be poor risks
for the ministerial student; they would
“naturally” be used to a higher standard
of living than the minister could ever
provide. Interns usually were paid the
princely sum of $18 per week for the first
year or so, with a one- or two-doll-
ner-week increase in subsequent years.
Obviously this deep interest of the
faculty was sometimes helpful, some-
times not. Female students who had had
personality clashes with teachers could
count on being “blacklisted” in the mat-
rimonial sweepstakes as far as the min-
isterial students were concerned. Yet the
wonder is not that a few of these mar-
rriages were unsuccessful. The wonder is
that the great majority of them were
highly successful and that the girls who
married the eager young evangelists ac-
ccepted their thankless role with incredi-
ble grace and skill and humor.
It is probably hopeless to attempt to
portrait the way we were then to the
young people of the late twentieth cen-
tury, nourished as many young women
are on the philosophy that “you have
your career and I have mine” and never
the twain shall meet. The twain never do
meet, in all too many cases. In the time
frame we are discussing, the ministry
was our career. Husband and wife were
a team. There was no joy so exquisite for
a young wife as seeing an evangelistic
tent packed to capacity while her hero
equently and fluently explained the
doctrines of the church. Nor was there
any agony more intense than sitting at
the back and hearing him flounder
through a subject that he hadn’t yet
mastered. They worked and suffered as
one.
Many of the wives wrestled with great
feelings of guilt, since it was the experi-
ence of nearly every one of them to be
told at one time or another, “Be careful
or you’ll be a hindrance to your hus-
band.” This was the most deadly threat
of all, the most dreaded eventuality. The
wives worked tirelessly and endlessly to
ensure that this would not be the case.
They curbed their tongues. They prayed
for help. They withered under criticism
and blossomed under praise—in addition
to all the other activities we have men-
tioned. They never received a cent for
their work. In addition, they were lucky
to have one new dress per year, and
might not have had that were it not for
kind parents.
Remembering it all, Bobbie Jane Van
dolson says, “Why do ministers choose
the wives they do? . . . It seems a little
frivolous—perhaps daring, or even pre-
sumptuous, is a better word—that a
newly graduated theology major would
take the hand of his 18-year-old-just-
turned-sophomore sweetheart and say
simply, ‘Darling, I love you. Please
marry me.’ Just like that . . . though
real, not just like that.” In our case,
both Leo and I came from praying fami-
lies and were familiar with the guidance
gained through prayer ourselves. And
now, after thirty-plus years of happy
living, we know God planned us for each
other. But if ever there was an un-
promising, unsuitable, unthinkable wife
for an aspiring young evangelist, I fit
the description.”
And Bobbie Jane had to run the piano
gamut. “The teachers at college recog-
nized my deficiencies from the start. ‘My
dear fellow,’ the men’s dean said to Leo,
his tone clearly betraying his dismay,
‘does she play the piano?’ Leo blinked
and took a slight tumble from cloud nine.
During the months of our courtship he
had been so preoccupied with love alone
that he really had no idea. ‘I don’t
know,’ he said, and then added vaguely,
‘but she probably does.’”
She adds, with understandable humor,
“And to this day he has never found out
that I actually don’t!”
But in spite of the well-known hazards
of marrying a future evangelist, the girls
who became wives felt themselves enor-
mously lucky and favored of fate—and
they also felt put upon at times.
“I had always wanted to be a Bible
worker and had made such preparations
during my college days,” says Evelyn
Delafeld. “But to be so fortunate as to
be married to a minister was beyond my
happiest dreams!”
She wasn’t alone in that feeling. Ber-
niece Gackenheimer felt the same way.
“As a girl I used to daydream that some
distant relative would find me and share
a fortune with me, I welcomed the op-
portunity to walk the half mile of dusty
or muddy road to the mailbox each day,
so I could think over this exciting dream
many, many times. And God fulfilled my
dream, though not in the form I had
envisioned. Surely when He took one
girl, among eight children, of Scandina-
vian immigrant parents who home-
steaded in the Dakota prairies, and des-
tined her to become a minister’s wife,
that was the beginning of a miracle in
itself! It wasn’t a distant rich relative but
my partner for life that I met while at
Broadview College, and with him I was
destined to share another kind of fort-
une.”
Adding to the list is Nellie Vandeman,
who had come to Emmanuel Missionary
College (now Andrews University)
straight out of a Beloit, Wisconsin, high
school and years of being a lukewarm
Christian. It wasn’t long before she was
very much aware of a young ministerial
student who was already active in evan-
gelism. Even when it became obvious
that her awareness was reciprocated,
and when it became even more obvious
that a pretty serious interest was devel-
opng, Nellie wouldn’t admit it even to
herself. “How could he ever select me?”
she says smilingly today. “Why, I didn’t
even play the piano!”
The simple act of accepting a date with
a ministerial student changed the course
of Kay Dower’s life. When she was a
young nurse at Washington Missionary
College (now Columbia Union College),
young Reggie asked her to attend a stu-
dent effort he and others were holding in
Capitol Heights. Kay really wasn’t that
interested, for she’d heard that the nurses had to give health talks sort of to “pay their way.” Only when Reggie assured her that she would not have to give a talk did she accept his invitation.

“I attended the meeting with him, and I’ve been attending meetings with him now for more than forty years,” states Kay. Looking back, she sums it up with wry humor: “There have been times when I thought his only needs were for a laundress to wash his clothes and a cook to prepare his meals—and I knew he loved me most when I was out raising the Ingathering goal!” But she wouldn’t have traded for a different kind of life. “Even now I enjoy Ingathering,” she says, “and have found service, not self, to be so very satisfying in working beside my husband.”

Lorraine Henri stoutly insists that she didn’t “make” her husband a success, as apparently some wives may feel. “I never doubted that I had married a successful minister-evangelist,” she declares. “He was a successful worker at the time of our marriage. He’d been in the ministry for two years at that time. I see very little change in him today from what he was then—always kind and helpful.” So Lorraine has not had to wrestle with guilt feelings, since C. D. Henri was already launched when they joined their lives. Others have a different story.

Remembering those beginning years, Louise Curchich says, “Immediately after Ted’s graduation from Atlantic Union College we went to the New York Conference office in Union Springs, New York. Preparation for camp meeting was in progress, and we were told to help pitch camp and assist in other ways before Ted went on to his first evangelistic assignment.” Immediately Louise was given the word that the wives were expected to help the cook prepare the meals for the working crew of preachers. They (the wives) must also get the rooms and tents ready for the campers.

“My assignment was to work with a Bible worker, the two of us women carrying heavy mattresses from the storage house to the cabins and rooms. I thought that I could speed things up by carrying some of the mattresses by myself; I was young and strong, after all. And I really did quite well with the first two.”

Alas for the impetuosity of youth! With the third mattress, Louise got her foot caught in a deep hole and suffered a severely sprained ankle. Not only was she incapacitated, but the Bible worker had to stop her own mattress-carrying and find large pans in which to heat water and with fomentation clothes administer hot and cold packs to the badly swollen and discolored ankle. Louise would never have expected Ted to stop his manual labor to administer any sort of comfort. Quite the opposite.

“All the while I was crying, with such thoughts going through my mind as ‘What a hindrance I am instead of a help. I’m not helping my husband one bit!’” And the more those thoughts crowded into her mind, the more Louise cried.

Another sufferer with “the guilt” was Nellie Vandeman, who felt that though she had had nothing to do with George’s having dropped out of school and marrying her—he had already made his decision to get into the work and not wait for his degree—he would be forever blamed if he didn’t get back into college where he belonged. “I always felt that unless he finished his education I’d be blamed for it, but George was very strong-minded—still is—and until he made his own decision there was nothing I could do about it,” laments Nellie.

But all the worries and the trials faced and triumphed over brought with them in many cases a definite philosophy and a sense of peace. Stronger women emerged, with convictions of their own. They had learned to cope. They could face what had to be faced. And they could still smile.

“Variety is certainly the spice of life to a preacher’s wife, and adaptability must be one of her strongest virtues,” says Berniece Gackenheimer. “Mine was no exception. As happens to many workers’ children, ours had to be hurried through supper and dressed, sometimes in nightclothes, and taken to evangelistic meetings night after night. Baby-sitters were quite out of the question; no funds for such luxuries. Besides meetings, there was the Dorcas work, welfare center, disaster kits, classes in home nursing and nutrition, first aid—and I always cooked for Junior Camp.”

Looking back on this formidable lineup, Berniece is fully content. “Riches come in many ways—in our children, for instance, and our homes.”

The sense of permanent commitment that most of the wives made to their husbands and their lifework is pinpointed by Lorraine Henri as of paramount value. “There were several of us engaged girls at Oakwood College in 1943. We had sought counsel and advice in order to be better prepared for the role of a minister’s wife. There never was entertained a thought that it wouldn’t work out, that it wouldn’t last forever. It just had to! This was it! This was for life!”

Miriam Wood, author of books and numerous magazine articles, is a regular columnist for the Review.

(To be continued.)

Prayers from the parsonage

By Cherry B. Habenicht

Thoughtful gestures, cordial visits, and cheerful notes take little time as separate acts, but I’m forced to set limits as I interact with more people. Where should I draw the line? Within the church or without? With friends or with strangers? Is it better to concentrate on a few close relationships or to maintain many on a surface level?

Dick is studying the Bible with a family he’d like to invite for dinner. The head deaconess wants me to accompany her on a hospital call. My best friend asks whether I’ll visit a lonely widow. And a neighbor suggests I talk with the divorcée down the block. Each request offers potential for new or strengthened associations.

“Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed the working of God’s Holy Spirit.”—Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 385.

May the Spirit who inspires also direct, leading me to people who most need friendly interest. Often least attractive or most insecure, they probably are not individuals whom others flock to help.

Some deeds are nice; others are necessary. Please guide me in the most effective use of my talents. To deliver a loaf of homemade bread to each home or to organize a Story Hour for the neighborhood children? To organize a shower for the new mother or to offer an afternoon of baby-sitting? To join the singing group that visits Sunset Manor or to chat personally with each elderly resident? If only I could reach out to everyone! Since that is impossible, I’ll let You tell me who and where, when and what, that I may reveal Your love most effectively.
F or God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). This message is for the world, for “whosoever” means that any and all who comply with the condition may share the blessing. All who look unto Jesus, believing in Him as their personal Saviour, shall “not perish, but have everlasting life.” Every provision has been made that we may have the everlasting reward. Christ is our sacrifice, our substitute, our surety, our divine intercessor; He is made unto us a sacrifice for sins. “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, but into the heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. The intercession of Christ in our behalf is that of presenting His divine merits in the offering of Himself to the Father as our substitute and surety; for He ascended up on high to make an atonement for our transgressions. “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (chap. 4:10). “He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb. 7:25).

From these scriptures it is evident that it is not God’s will that you should be distrustful, and torture your soul with the fear that God will not accept you because you are sinful and unworthy. “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.” Present your case before him, pleading the merits of the blood shed for you upon Calvary’s cross. Satan will accuse you of being a great sinner, and you must admit this, but you can say: “I know I am a sinner, and that is the reason I need a Saviour. Jesus came into the world to save sinners. The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin’ (1 John 1:7). ‘If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (verse 9). I have no merit or goodness whereby I may claim salvation, but I present before God the all-atoning blood of the spotless Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is my only plea. The name of Jesus gives me access to the Father. His ear, His heart, is open to my faintest pleading, and He supplies my deepest necessities.”

It is the righteousness of Christ that makes the penitent sinner acceptable to God and works his justification. However sinful has been his life, if he believes in Jesus as his personal Saviour, he stands before God in the spotless robes of Christ’s imputed righteousness.

The sinner so recently dead in trespass and sin is quickened by faith in Christ. He sees by faith that Jesus is his substitute and surety for every believing soul. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). The sinner is justified through the merits of Jesus, and this is God’s acknowledgment of the perfection of the ransom paid for man. That Christ was obedient even unto the death of the cross is a pledge of the repenting sinner’s acceptance with the Father. Then shall we permit ourselves to have a vacillating experience of doubting and believing, believing and doubting? Jesus is the pledge of our acceptance with God. We stand in favor before God, not because of any merit in ourselves, but because of our faith in “the Lord our righteousness.”

Jesus stands in the holy of holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself. But because we are thus represented before the Father, we are not to imagine that we are to presume upon His mercy, and become careless, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Christ is not the

(Continued on page 22)
How to Prepare Effective Biblical Sermons
by Joseph J. Battistone

Indispensable to a living, vibrant ministry is the proclamation of God’s Word in the worship service. In worship, the congregation assembles by God’s command in order to hear His Word and be assured of Christ’s presence. Whenever God’s Word is truly proclaimed, the Holy Spirit enlightens, sanctifies, nourishes, and sustains the church. Thus the congregation is able to offer to God with confidence and joy its prayers, its hymns of praise and consecration, and its sacrificial gifts.

The preaching task is therefore not simply one among the pastor’s many duties—it is essential, it is the very heart of the pastor’s work. This does not mean that the minister spends most of his time in the study, researching his books; instead, he must balance his book learning with pastoral visiting and counseling, and with administrative activities. The minister’s field experience is as vital to sermon preparation as is his study.

How, then, does one go about the task of preparing effective Biblical sermons—sermons that meet the needs of the worshipping community?

Definition of Biblical Preaching

Biblical preaching, briefly, is the proclamation of God’s Word to the congregation. To be sure, proclaiming God’s Word means much more than simply reading the Bible and attaching an object lesson to the passage. Biblical preaching involves the careful removal of the text from its original setting and transplanting it into the present situation of the church. To accomplish this, the minister must understand not only the Scriptures but also his congregation—the world of Bible times and the world of his church, the way both worlds are alike and the way both worlds differ.

Since the sermon serves as a bridge between the past and the present, and not merely as a commentary on the text, Biblical preaching must not be confused with grammatical, historical, or theological exegesis. It goes beyond these to proclaim the Biblical passage as normative for Christian faith and practice, in a way that informs, awakens, assures, and sustains the congregation in its life of faith. However, Biblical preaching must be centered upon the Biblical passage and not upon some personal problem or contemporary issue. The Bible alone is the norm for the beliefs and behavior of the church. Textbooks on psychology, sociology, or the like cannot replace the Bible as the basis for Christian faith.

As a teacher and advocate of the faith, the minister derives his authority from the Bible, but only so far as he understands and interprets its message correctly. A superficial approach to the Scriptures—one that gives the minister only a vague idea of what the text is saying—impairs his ability to speak forcefully and forthrightly from the pulpit. It also depreciates the significance of preaching in the eyes of the congregation and robs God of an opportunity to address His people in worship.

Biblical preaching is thus the only kind of preaching that equips the pastor with power to minister effectively to his congregation. It is the only kind of preaching that carries with it the authority of the Holy Scriptures. There can be no substitute for Biblical preaching.

Basic Principles of Preparation

The task of preparing Biblical sermons involves three scientific disciplines: hermeneutics (the principles of Scripture interpretation), exegesis (the methodology of exposition), and homiletics (the techniques of sermon preparation). The day one minister actually proceeds in the preparation of his message may differ from that of another; nevertheless, the minister cannot ignore any of the three disciplines and expect to preach effective Biblical sermons. Let’s discuss the task under four subdivisions: the grammatical principle of interpretation, the historical principle of interpretation, the theological principle of interpretation, and the translation of God’s Word into the contemporary idiom.

The Grammatical Principle of Interpretation

Biblical preaching begins with an exegesis of the text, and exegesis follows grammatical principles. It seeks to understand the verbal meaning of the text by analyzing the function and meaning of the words employed, as well as the grammar and syntax.

Grammatical exegesis involves more than a general knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. It requires information about the various possible meanings of ambiguous terms and grammatically ambiguous constructions. Since the Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek (a few portions were in Aramaic), the minister who has no knowledge of these languages is handicapped. It is not enough simply to find the English equivalent of a Hebrew or Greek word in a lexicon. For example, the Greek equivalent to the English term world conveys a variety of meanings, all of which must be taken into consideration when one prepares a sermon on the church in contemporary life.

The minister who lacks adequate linguistic skills can make use of such lexical aids as commentaries, concordances, and theological dictionaries, provided that he understands their purpose and knows how to incorporate the information into the sermon. Commentaries differ in function and scope, as well as in theological posture. Some are chiefly concerned with text-critical matters (Bruce Metzger’s Commentary on the Greek New Testament) or with literary and source criticism (The International Critical Commentary Series) or with theological exegesis (The Old Testament Library Series, The Anchor Bible) or with homiletical exposition (The Pulpit Commentary). Yet even when the minister possesses and uses lexical tools
correctly, he must still examine words in their grammatical context within the phrase, clause, sentence, paragraph, and finally the whole discourse.

The historical principle of interpretation

Biblical exegesis seeks to understand the grammatical meaning of the text in the light of the historical situation in which it was first written or spoken. This means that one should have a general knowledge of the literary history of the Bible, as well as an understanding of Israelite religion, society, politics, and economics. One must be acquainted with the various literary types of material in the Bible and the specific situations addressed by such types. In the Old Testament we find examples of law (Ex. 20:1-23:19), historiography (Judges), wisdom or philosophy (Proverbs), devotional writings (Psalms), and prohetic literature (Jeremiah). In the narrower sense we note literary genre such as a legal saying (Ex. 21:15), a historical narrative (2 Sam. 2:8-4:12), a riddle (Judges 14:14, 18), a hymn (Psalm 100), or a prophetic oracle (Amos 4:1-3).

It is not enough simply to identify literary types. The minister should recognize, most of all, the relationship between inspired literature and the sacred history of the people to whom the messages were directed. A sermon based on a text must first interpret that text in the light of its own religious history setting. It is helpful to know whether the text that one is citing is a priestly blessing pronounced over the congregation at the close of worship (Num. 6:24-26) or a funeral dirge proclaimed by the prophet in lamentation over the fall of Jerusalem (Lam. 1:1).

Historical exegesis, then, proceeds from the conviction that God's self-disclosure occurred in the arena of human history and that the human witness to the divine revelation was a product of a particular culture. This in no way denies the inspiration of the Bible; rather it affirms the historical character of the Scripture revelation. In fact, this affirmation provides a safeguard against fanciful interpretations of the Bible that arise from the creative imagination of the reader rather than from an intensive and prayerful study of the text.

Because the Bible is a historical document and the church a historical movement, historical exegesis is important both in understanding the Biblical message and in determining its meaning for today. Questions of date, authorship, background, and setting are essential to the task of preparing Biblical sermons.

The more we know about the religiopolitical circumstances and socioeconomic conditions under which a document was written, the better able we will be to grasp the author's message and apply it accordingly.

The theological principle of interpretation

The minister must also understand and explain a text theologically. He should be cognizant not only of what the particular text is saying on the surface but also of the theology that informs the text. A person without theological training could read the book of Amos and grasp the general points expressed. He could read the prophetic denunciations against the wealthy aristocrats, the corrupt judges, and the elaborate system of worship, and would doubtless be able to perceive why doom was pronounced on the nation. And yet the conclusions he would reach would be shallow, because he would have failed to probe deeply into the theology that motivated Amos to prophesy. Unless the minister understands that the preaching of Amos was rooted in the ancient traditions of his people, the sermon he prepares will be superficial or possibly incorrect.

Clearly, the prophet spoke for God in the context of the theological traditions of his people, as well as in the light of the circumstances of his day. An awareness of this fact enables the minister to grasp the text theologically and to preach the message with clarity and force. Effective Biblical preaching does not ignore theological questions but wrestles earnestly with the major themes and concepts of the Bible, offering to the congregation a clear exposition of their relevance in practical terms. It is well to keep in mind that the theology of the Bible is not expressed in abstract, highly speculative language. It is conveyed in concrete and picturesque speech in order to confront men and women in the course of their daily, mundane affairs with inspired counsel on how to live.

The translation of God's Word into the contemporary idiom

Biblical preaching is obviously more than a commentary that explains the grammatical, historical, and theological meaning of a text. The message of the text must be translated into the idiom of the congregation and presented in such a way that it is clearly seen to address the contemporary situation. To accomplish this, the minister must be knowledgeable not only in the Scriptures but also in the social sciences, particularly those having to do with human behavior. He must learn to ask the right questions of the text and of his congregation, and formulate a message based on careful and prayerful research.

It is important that the minister be aware of contemporary issues and their impact on the thinking, the feeling, and the behavior of his church. It is equally important that the church believe that the pastor comprehends what is happening in the world and how this affects them.

A minister may do careful exegesis of a scriptural text and yet detract from the significance of his study by offering superficial observations of contemporary life. The church stands in need of penetrating analyses and critiques of the world today. Should not a congregation be informed about the prophetic significance of the Middle East tensions and unrest? Cannot ministers offer church direction in healthful living? Surely pastors who are alert to the diminishing natural resources, the mounting world population, and the apparent gloom of social commentators can prepare effective Biblical sermons on the second coming of Christ!

Sermons can be addressed to other areas of pressing needs. The minister must help the congregation discern between good and evil and offer counsel on protecting oneself against the cunning ways of the devil. What are the forces that contribute to the collapse of families? How can husbands and wives organize their lives around the Word of God to preserve the purity of their marriage and the security, stability, and solidarity of their homes?

Does the minister understand how a sense of powerlessness drives a youth to drugs, a mother to alcohol, and a father to crime? Is he sensitive to the anxiety that some of his members experience over guilt, or loneliness, or boredom? Does he proclaim from the Scriptures good news to the impoverished, relief to the oppressed, and freedom to the captive? Sermons of this kind are not put together by chance. They are the product of earnest soul searching, keen observation, intensive study, and much prayer. But the results are rewarding. Biblical preaching has creative and redemptive value for the church. Whenever the Word of God is proclaimed, the church is nourished. And when the church is nourished, it grows spiritually and numerically!

Joseph J. Battistone is pastor of the Fletcher Seventh-day Adventist church, Fletcher, North Carolina.
A communications network is essential to the church, yet why must the information flow . . .

Up and down—but seldom across

by Walter R. L. Scragg

It’s a problem as old as the hieroglyph graffiti on Egyptian monuments, yet as new as a videocassette, and it keeps getting worse. The problem is this: How can you inform all those people out there, keep them united on a common goal, reassure them of the motives and purposes of leadership, and generate enthusiasm?

With the kind of structure that a Christian church usually formulates, the flow of information is up and down but seldom across. And it gets worse as an organization grows both in administrative units and membership. Letters go from the Council at Jerusalem to the churches scattered abroad, telling them of the council’s decisions about the Jewish regulations. Paul instructs that his letter to the Colossians be read also by the Laodiceans, and they are to send theirs to Colosse.

The more highly structured the denomination, the more likely it is that the information flow will be of the vertical kind. Right at this point we should state that information is anything that is passed along to another individual with the intent to tell or inform that person. It may be news, doctrine, promotion, revival, evangelism. A look at the Seventh-day Adventist Church, which has copied much of its structure from the Methodists of the past century and still maintains a very cohesive and well-defined structure, quickly reveals the strengths and weaknesses of vertical communication as a source of information.

The normal way of getting to know anything that is happening among Adventists is by information flowing up from administrative units, or people, and then flowing down and out again. For example, a church communication secretary reports to the conference or the union paper; the editor likes what he reads; it is published and flows down again to the wider audience. A conference committee decides to launch an evangelistic campaign and the information flows down.

Adventists do not hesitate to spend large sums of money in providing a strong vertical flow of information. All denominational news journals for church use are heavily subsidized and frequently provided free. The General Conference and its divisions, the unions, and the conferences spend considerable sums in sending their personnel throughout their territory, be it the world or a local itinerary, in order to maintain the information flow.

The importance that the church attaches to a good communication system may be seen in recent actions of the General Conference, which have established communication internships every bit as generous as its ministerial ones. When the Columbia Union Conference decided to insert its union paper into the general church paper, the Review, every two weeks, it was widely heralded as a breakthrough in maintaining the unity of the church and keeping the church informed. In a similar move the Review now publishes international editions in English, Spanish, and Portuguese and is considering further editions.

In other attempts to maintain information flow the church holds councils, conventions, seminars, camp meetings, and numerous other types of gatherings, the chief purpose of which is to inform decisions, to inspire, to promote, or to perform some other informational activity.

The strength of this vertical flow of information within the Adventist Church becomes very apparent in the cohesive doctrinal pattern that may be found throughout the worldwide church in all 193 countries where it operates. Members not only study the same Sabbath school lessons, they will probably know much more about the conference or union or division and its doings than they will about another Adventist church across the city. Adventists tend to be hierarchically informed, rather than congregationally informed.

Sometimes the local pastor or church leader feels the burden of vertical information flow is almost beyond bearing. Conference departmental directors, the president, the union and its departments, and even the General Conference and its departments (if they can get the addresses) will put the pastor, the lay activities leader, or whoever, on the mailing list, and before long the local recipient of all this attention may come to regard denominational communications as little better than the junk mail he receives.
Information flow is not only important, it is lifeblood of the church. Units or people cut off from this flow may well die or become aberrant.

Yet the vertical flow of information isn't the only kind that has validity. Information may, and should, also flow horizontally. By this I mean that members in different churches, their pastors and leaders, should be seeking information flow between themselves. Why shouldn't one Adventist church in a city should know more about the advance of the work in Zaire than it does about the Adventist church across the river? Or for that matter, why should a division president restrict himself to such information about another division as the Review is able or willing to provide?

Information flow is created and distributed at different levels. There is an information flow from the conferences to the church, from the unions to the conferences, and so on. However, vertical information seldom has a direct influence on the situation within a particular unit unless it comes from the level immediately above. What the General Conference provides frequently has more bearing on divisions or unions than it does on conferences, and hardly has any direct bearing on the local church member except as the information may be absorbed and then relayed from another, lower level.

Problems caused by the breakdown of horizontal information flow are numerous and common. All too often we rely, or feel we must rely, on the next higher unit to monitor information needs and keep us supplied. Yet the responsible organization may overlook vital items, or not think them important, and so confusion and inefficiency result.

So often no attempt is made to communicate information about evangelistic ventures that spread more widely than the territory for which they are primarily designed. As a result, a conference may suddenly find itself the recipient of hundreds of requests for literature or scores of requests for visits for which it has made no plan, owing to the work of a neighboring conference. Or a local church may prepare to launch a community-involvement program of some kind only to find that they have been unwittingly upstaged by the church across the town. Or a church member may begin door-to-door work and be dismayed to find that a member from a neighboring church, or perhaps even the same church, has been down that street that very day. We've all come across problems of this kind. One wonders how much duplicated effort is generated in churches, conferences, and other units of organization simply from lack of information.

Think for a moment about the key elements in both horizontal and vertical communication within the church. While I might be inclined to pity him as the recipient of too much vertical communication, the pastor certainly is the key within the local church. He and his helpers, the church officers, must accept the responsibility of being both the source and distribution point of information. They have a responsibility for the upward flow of information. They have to think of themselves continually as part of a world church, which will stay together only as it tells itself what it is doing. As much as anything else, unity is built around good information flow.

The pastor must also provide opportunity for horizontal communication between his own church members. They talk to one another long after the service ends, and this is usually good. They are about the business of horizontal communication. Social gatherings, the church bulletin, testimony meetings, reports of members' experiences, the lay activities service, are all times for horizontal communication for the church members.

The pastor should come from workers' meetings and other organized gatherings prepared to be an information channel for the local church. He should go to such meetings with the same intent.

A good church communication secretary not only will think of the vertical communication she or he must maintain with conference and church paper but also will seek to keep the members informed. This may be done through the local news media or the church bulletin or by word of mouth in reports to individuals or the church as a whole.

It isn't all that easy to keep information flowing within an area or a church. The church offers no natural method for churches to inform one another of local issues or achievements. Some cities or areas where there are several churches have set up interchurch councils that meet from time to time for information exchange and joint action. The conference may help by having meetings of pastors or officers to talk about the things that concern that area, or such meetings may be self-generated.

A lot of the ignorance about what others are doing might be dispelled if we all took advantage of the forms of vertical communication that come our way. Asking good questions at committee meetings, reading other people's bulletins, asking to be placed on mailing lists, listening to reports, and making good ones yourself are all vital. A conference administrator isn't being smart, or saving time, if he shovels off his desk and into the trash basket the bulletins, promotional blurbs, reports, and other informational pieces that come his way, without at least scanning them.

Like other organizations, Adventists want to stay together and grow stronger. One of the secrets is to know and be known. Tell your peers what you are doing for the Lord, what you plan to do, what you dream about. Listen to what they say. If you have the authority to create and encourage horizontal communication between various types of people or units of organization, don't be afraid to stimulate and establish it. The flow and dissemination of information about Christ, about itself, and about its members is still the largest of the church's problems. Any intelligent action that will improve or increase this flow will hasten the work of Christ on the earth and the advent of His kingdom. In doing this let us remember that information needs to flow across, as well as up and down.

Walter R. L. Scragg is president of the Northern Europe-West Africa division of Seventh-day Adventists.
The narrowness of Jesus

The confining limits Jesus imposed upon Himself and His work gave Him power, just as a river gains force through a narrow chasm.

by Charles L. Brooks

The word narrow is used frequently in an uncomplimentary way to damage a person’s reputation. Someone says, “Oh, yes, he is narrow,” meaning that one side of his nature has been blighted, that he is stunted by defective education or squeezed out of shape by a restrictive environment. Yet what word could better describe one of the conspicuous traits of Jesus than the word narrowness?

The Saviour once said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13, 14). It is clear that Jesus set definite boundaries for Himself and shut Himself up within certain limits. In this sense He was narrow.

There is a great principle here—a principle that lies at the basis of all the fine arts. Because of the narrowness of the limitations that they impose, the fine arts subject an individual to a discipline that is severe, and insist upon a bondage that cannot be broken. In music, there is no leeway left to the singer. He cannot sing a little sharp or a little flat and still produce music. Everything must be precise, exact, severe; the tones must take accurately the precise points assigned them by the composer, or else the music does not have in it that indescribable power that lifts and entrances the individual.

The artist cannot dip his brush as he pleases into this color or that, careless as to how much of one or how little of the other he spreads on his canvas. He is held in the grip of laws that he cannot violate, even a little, without marring the picture. It is the narrow way on which artists must forever walk.

Why is it so much more difficult to write poetry than prose? It is because poetry subjects the soul to bondage more severe. The poet must submit to a discipline of which the prose writer knows nothing. The rules of accent, rhythm, and melody are specific, and only genius has strength enough to obey them all.

Poets must walk the narrow way. But the most precise of all the fine arts is the art of living as God would have us to live. Think about the narrowness of Jesus. How narrow the circle was within which He did His work! He lived His life in tiny Palestine, a small, insignificant province of mighty Rome. The lords and ladies of the world’s capital knew little of it and cared even less. Yet Jesus, the Prince of glory, confined Himself to this narrow corner of the earth. He might have traveled across the world as many of the illustrious teachers of His day had done, but He chose to stay at home and give His time to the cities of Galilee—to pour out His strength on the villages of Judea.

If His field was limited, so also was the character of His work, for He was determined to do one thing—the work that He came to earth to accomplish. There were a thousand worthwhile things that a good man in Palestine might have done, but He confined Himself to the one thing that His heavenly Father had given Him to do. Men could not understand such narrowness. They attempted to divert Him into other activities, but He was determined that He would do the work of Him that sent Him—the work of His Father.

Through His life Jesus asserted that no man can do everything. No one man should attempt to do everything. There are thousands of things that need to be done, and yet no man, however industrious he might be, can perform them all. Jesus set limits to His activities, and beyond those limits no man ever persuaded Him to go.

Jesus always spoke like a man whose feet were on a narrow path. “I must work the works of him that sent me” (John 9:4). People all around Him had the enjoyment of large liberty and freedom. They wandered hither and thither, going wherever they wished, but it was not so with Jesus. He could not dissipate His energy. He would not waste a single hour. It was always, “I must, I must, I must.” There were broad roads on His right and left, and along those roads thousands of His countrymen were traveling, but He could not go with them. So when He talks about the two ways, one of them narrow and the other one broad, He is speaking out of His own experi-
ence. And when He urges us to choose the narrow one in preference to the one that is broad, He is saying, “Follow Me.”

In the realm of the intellect, Jesus chose the way that was narrow. There is a feeling prevalent today that it is unwise for a man to confine himself to any one religion or any one particular statement of belief. Some say, “Do not pin your faith to any single idea, but hold yourself in readiness to accept every idea that may come your way. If not, you will narrow yourself and ultimately degenerate into an intellectual bigot.”

Jesus had no sympathy with this sort of philosophy. To Him, certain conceptions of God were true and others were false; certain estimates of man were correct and others were in error; certain standards of duty were uplifting and others were degrading. And with all His mind and soul and strength He clung to the true and warped against the false. He never shrank from holding definite opinions or from expressing them vigorously.

The words of Jesus, unimpeached by verbal embroidery or apologetic tone, penetrated like bullets into the minds and hearts of men. His was not the wily art of speaking out of both sides of the mouth at the same time. In fact, the words of Jesus are among the most dogmatic of all religious writ, giving no quarter to alternatives, leaving no doubt that “He that is not with me is against me” (Matt. 12:30).

To preach and teach the gospel of the three angels’ messages as though it is just another message of the Christian faith, not a distinctive message, is to impute to it an insipid broadness that it never intended us to attempt. It is a shame he ever went in. The ability to give the energy in trying to do things that God never intended us to attempt.

Jesus made an impression because He stayed in one place and hit the same nail on the head until it was driven completely in. If He had wandered over the earth speaking His parables, they would have fallen on more ears, but would have molded fewer hearts. Jesus stayed in Palestine. Keeping His heart close to a few chosen hearts, He became increasingly influential until the authorities were frightened, fearing that He might overturn the nation. Men became so passionately in love with Him that they were ready to die for Him.

By limiting Himself, our Saviour came off more than conqueror. He succeeded! And what is it to succeed? It is to do the thing for which we are created. Jesus attempted to do one thing, and that was to perform the work that His Father had given Him to do. At the end of His life He could look into the face of His Father and say, “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). It is not the quantity but the quality of the life that counts.

Jesus walked the narrow way, and He calls men everywhere to become His followers. Jesus is inexorable in His commands; He is despotic in the limitations He imposes. He says, “Come unto Me.” We ask, “Cannot we go to others?” And He says, “There are no others. Come unto Me.” When He says, “Follow Me,” we hesitate and ask, “Is this really necessary? Can we not choose an easier way?” His reply is, “Follow Me. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” We demur and wonder whether it is necessary to shut ourselves up in what seems to be so narrow and limited a sphere. But He says to us with that strangely compelling accent that stirred the hearts of the people long ago in Galilee, “Verily I say unto you, unless you abide in Me you have no life at all in you.”

This, then, is the narrowness of Jesus. He is narrow for a purpose. He limited Himself—emptied Himself of His divine glory. He was found in the fashion of a man. He walked in the narrow path that led from the carpenter’s shop to Golgotha because of His great love for us and in order that each of us might have life and have it more abundantly.

Charles L. Brooks is an associate director of the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
Quarrels in the early Christian church tell us that the apostles were human. They also tell us how we may best handle disagreements in the church today.

New Christians are often dismayed at their first encounter with genuine, heated disagreement within the Christians' fellowship. Somehow, they thought, that was part of the "world" they expected to leave behind when they turned to Christ and entered a loving, Christian community.

The tendency, then, is to conclude that somehow the devil must have sneaked in the back door. This leads to precipitous attempts to distinguish the "bad guys" from the "good guys." And once we have everyone properly labeled, attempts at "reconciliation" may be conducted. These efforts—often backed by the imposing authority of special prayer meetings—may consist of well-meaning but usually unsuccessful attempts to get the "bad guys" to repent—of their "pride," "lack of submission," "carnal ambition," etc. It's refreshing to turn to the Scriptures in the midst of such conflicts. How different is the approach and perspective on Christian disagreements in the Word of God! Two portions are outstanding: the fifteenth chapter of Acts and Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Acts 15 is important because it records not one but two sharp disagreements of quite distinct character. The first, of course, was the doctrinal dispute settled by the Council of Jerusalem. As often happens today, the Spirit-led missionary expansion of the church had raised some thorny questions that upset the theological apple carts back in Jerusalem: What about the Gentiles who had been converted? "Some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses'" (Acts 15:5). When such teaching reached the ears of Paul and Barnabas, the result was not sweet harmony, but—as Luke underlines with a brutal honesty we may find comforting—"no small dissension and debate" (verse 2). Evangelistic work ground to a halt (certainly to everyone's great frustration), and hours were consumed listening to reports, learned theological opinions, Biblical exegesis, et cetera. Finally a kind of compromise was hammered out, unity was preserved, the decree of the council was promulgated, and everyone hurried back with relief to his sphere of service and evangelism.

The second disagreement recorded in Acts 15 concerns Paul and Barnabas as they girded themselves for their second missionary journey. A visit to the struggling, persecuted churches founded on their first journey was long overdue. And...
beyond these churches lay countless nations, provinces, cities, and towns with no witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. But alas, Paul and Barnabas, so wonderfully agreed in all theological matters, couldn’t agree about Barnabas’ nephew! And Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul thought best not to take with them one who had withdrawn from them in Paphos, and had not gone with them to the work. And there arose a sharp contention, so that they separated from each other; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus, but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of the Lord” (verses 37-40).

When we compare these two narratives of Christians in disagreement in Acts, several points are instructive. In the first place, Luke scrupulously avoids all tendency toward a kind of superficial moralizing—tagging one side or the other with the epithet “good guys” or “bad guys.” True, in the case of the dispute between Paul and Barnabas it is Paul’s journey he narrates, and Barnabas slips from view. But this may well be a result of his theological concerns and sources (Luke himself became a participant and co-worker with Paul on this second journey—note the “we” sections). Paul himself, however, eventually provides a kind of humble confession that Barnabas’ patience and confidence in Mark was not ill-placed (2 Tim. 4:11). And certainly contemporary New Testament scholars—who exalt Mark as the creator of the literary genre of the gospel and an outstanding theologian of the early church—would agree.

One can only wonder how Mark himself must have felt as he heard (or surely heard about) Uncle Barnabas and the apostle Paul battling over whether to give him a second chance. Paul undoubtedly had a clearer view of the urgency of the work at hand, the need of the churches, and the necessity of a thoroughly dependable team. Barnabas may have seen more clearly the tremendous potential in his talented nephew. Paul at this moment reflected more clearly the stern justice of God, who insists that it is required that His stewards be found faithful. Barnabas probably sensed more deeply the mercy of God, the importance of forgiveness and a second chance.

Often we feel frustrated and even let our ministry grind to a halt because of tension. And yet, may it not be that the tension God permitted in the life of Mark proved to be the turning point in his growth and character? Once he learned about the great confidence his uncle had placed in him, and at what cost, would he not be all the more determined to prove himself trustworthy this time? Had Paul facilely agreed to take him along, thoughtlessly giving him a second chance, perhaps Mark would have failed again! Tension, like any other kind of tribulation, can produce character, if we open ourselves up to all God would say to us and do in us.

Let’s note too the very different conclusions of the two disagreements in Acts 15. In the case of the doctrinal dispute, unity was preserved through a kind of compromise. But in the case of the dispute over John Mark, the end result was division—or perhaps more accurately a multiplication—of ministries, and undoubtedly an acceleration of church growth. Silas was drafted by Paul as a co-worker in place of Barnabas, and soon Timothy was added to the team to take the place of Mark. New leadership was given a chance and developed in a way that could never have happened had Paul and Barnabas not stuck to their convictions.

One wonders how often Christians of lesser boldness allow themselves to stifle the promptings of the Holy Spirit and so short-circuit the work of God in multiplying leadership and outreach. When you hear of Christian groups and organizations that go on for years with no serious disagreements, you should ask yourself, Have they stopped growing or just stopped thinking? By Biblical standards, sharp disagreements are one mark of a vital, growing, thinking, mission-oriented church. Static uniformity is a sign of death, dearth of qualified leaders, and paternalistic domination.

Paul, then, was no stranger to disagreements—he was never to shrink from a sharp debate, paper over his deepest convictions, or soothe his Heaven-sent visions with a facade of unity, sweetness, and light. One suspects that in his prayers the apostle might appropriately have echoed the little boy’s revised version of the Negro spiritual: “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Been”!

All the more surprising, then, in his letter to the Philippians, to see him on the other side, profoundly frustrated by the disagreements of two dear fellow workers: “I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. And I ask you also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they have labored side by side with me in the gospel” (Phil. 4:2, 3).

Like Luke, the apostle refrains from taking sides (he entreats both, not just one or the other) and from all superficial moralizing. At no moment does he suggest that there are good guys and bad guys: he accepts both as fellow workers “whose names are in the book of life” (verse 3), recalling their years of faithful service.

You can but wonder what Paul had in mind when he asked the Philippians to “help these women” to come to the place of agreement. Hadn’t the author of Proverbs made the danger clear? “He who meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a passing dog by the ears” (Prov. 26:17)!

And yet Paul’s letter glows with counsel that, if taken to heart, is exactly what is needed when Christian leaders disagree. When everybody starts taking sides, rushing to identify the good guys and the bad guys, exalting the virtues of the “good guys” and exaggerating the faults of the “bad guys,” Paul says, “Wait a minute.”

“Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in

Ministry, February/1979
Sure, pride is a problem, and a pretty universal one at that. But you're more likely to find its grosser manifestations precisely in the one who goes around accusing everyone else of pride (and implicitly suggesting his own humility). Thus, out of a situation marked by disagreement and tension comes the classic Christian definition of genuine humility: it's not so much thinking yourself worse than others (that, indeed, is introverted, egocentric, and a kind of inverted pride); rather, it's a positive, outgoing, extroverted attitude that "counts others better," concentrates on their virtues, appreciates and praises them.

It's particularly hard to do that with a fellow Christian who disagrees with you. The devil is not slow to insinuate that our brother disagrees with us because he has erred theologically, morally, politically—or simply because he lacks our own keen sensitivity to the Holy Spirit, intellectual integrity, depth of consecration, breadth of vision for the Lord's work, and of course our sweet, humble disposition!

**Swamped by negativity**

When Christians disagree, then more than ever do we need to make every effort to heed the apostle's exhortation to "think about" whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, et cetera (chap. 4:8, 9), because it's precisely when Christians sharply disagree that we all tend to get swamped by negative thinking about one another. But there is clear apostolic justification for a kind of "positive thinking"—it's precisely that kind of thinking that is needed when Christians disagree.

The same may be said for other exhortations that occur in this context: "Rejoice in the Lord always, . . . Have no anxiety about anything, . . . The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (verses 4-7).

Did you ever notice how unhappy most Christians get when there is disagreement in the ranks? Not to mention anxiety! Some even manage to convince themselves that the gates of hell are indeed about to prevail against the church if the "bad guys" get their way—and this may tempt those on all sides and in the middle to resort to tactics and strategies that opponents with some justification label political "manipulation." When some Christians begin to suspect that the "communists" are the "fascists," the "fundamentalists" or the "modernists," the "ecumenicists" or the "separatists," are about to take over the ship, Machiavelli is suddenly baptised and his book treated as canonical Scripture!

In the light of our often petty tactics, the apostle's example looms over us like a great ocean liner overshadowing her little tugs: "I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord." Paul not only refrains from taking sides, he also refuses to dictate the terms of agreement. Neither will he shuttle from one side to another à la Kissinger seeking to elicit acceptable terms. To do so would be paternalistic. He respects the integrity and capacity of these women and fellow workers to work their way through to a satisfactory agreement with the help of the church. And he exhorts them all to adopt the kind of basic attitudes, openness to the Holy Spirit, and trust in one another that will make that agreement possible.

The book of Revelation includes a description of a church closed up and bolted shut with Jesus outside, knocking patiently at the door. It is a picture we evangelicals are exceedingly prone to apply to unbelievers—or, in our more exegetically oriented moments, to our "lukewarm" theological opponents. But recently, when venturing into the book without the help of such preconceptions, I began to get an uneasy feeling that it was a pretty good picture of me! Especially me in the face of disagreement. Doors slam shut, shutters are barred, and I peer suspiciously out at the intruder.

And yet, haven't we learned countless times that God teaches us through those who disagree with us, those who do not share all our convictions? But still, often the last thing we want to do is listen.

**Equal time for "bad guys"**

Perhaps that's why we get a bit impatient as we read Luke's account of the doctrinal dispute in Acts 14—he makes us listen to everybody's own presentation of his point of view, and it threatens our security when the "bad guys" are given equal time. Things get particularly sticky, of course, when the disagreement has to do with things that have happened—who said and did what and why. Especially when the future direction of a Christian organization or institution is at stake we easily become paranoid!

Paul, out of his deep experience—and participation—in Christian disagreements, counsels another course. Love, he says in 1 Corinthians 13:7, "believeth all things" (K.J.V.), is "full of trust" (Weymouth), and is "always eager to believe the best" (Moffatt).†

Inside and outside the church the devil can find people who are eager to believe the worst. When Christians disagree, if by God's grace you can follow the Bible's counsel, "you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to dwell in" (Isa. 58:12). When confidence is painstakingly reestablished, community life is again possible and the church of Christ can get on with its mission.


Tom Hanks lives in San Jose, Costa Rica, and serves with Minamundo, a ministry to the student world affiliated with the Latin America Mission.

Can we resist the temptation of talking only to ourselves?

Suppose no one is listening?

by M. Carol Hertzell

Stop preaching to yourselves."

The broad-shouldered speaker, with a long, straight beard, drove home his admonishment with a wave of the finger, and then charged, "Your literature is primarily for your own people!"

The man was Bill Willoughby, religion editor of the Washington, D.C. Star, and he was talking to the students of Columbia Union College assembled in chapel. He could tell that we had been passing out the same message to the communication people of the church, to the ministers, to the lay activities people, to anyone interested in "telling the old, old story."

His point came home with an even louder ring recently, when the church began to consider the possibility of airing broadcasts into mainland China.

Ponder for a moment how you would proceed to tell the gospel story to someone who had never heard of Christ, of salvation, of heaven, of angels, let alone the peculiar terminology that often enshrouds the vital truths of the Adventist Church. What words would you use to get the message across? How carefully would you choose each word and construct each sentence, so that the gospel could come through in all its purity and simplicity?

Yet when we talk to the unchurched populations of America—whether by pen or voice—we take the pains to talk in terms they will understand, in a vocabulary that will reach those who have no concept of our faith? Or do we casually pour out the Adventist cliches, and expect the uninitiated to comprehend? Do we drive away our audiences with words that make them feel uneasy and out of place?

The paperback edition of a little volume on healthful living came from the presses with a cover that startled some in the church. It was the kind of art that would stand out on a bookstand at the airport or in the drugstore around the corner. It tended to stir one's curiosity and lead into opening the booklet. But because it was different from the usual Adventist publication, it drew criticism from the publishers had focused on a public market rather than the church market. For once they were speaking to more than Adventists, but their attempt to reach beyond the portals of the "family" was misunderstood.

Understanding of the market is vital if one wishes to pierce the curtain of the unknown. The missionary to Peru is most effective when he is able to speak in the language of the people of Peru. One of the most frustrating experiences of many a physician assigned to a foreign country by the church is his inability to speak to his patients in their tongue. Some have returned home from the mission field because they were unable to communicate with their patients and yet never had time enough to learn the language that would unlock that communication barrier.

Said one young physician, "I felt utterly useless so far as mission work was concerned. I was doing only that which any non-Christian doctor could do, because I couldn't speak to my patients of the love of Christ that meant so much to me." She returned home where she could communicate with her patients.

Theology that may be very familiar to us is often alien to those with whom we would communicate. It needs to be made plain and comprehensible. It must not be couched in terminology that is distinctly religious or Adventist.

If we are becoming a radio program to the individual who has no religious background, that program must speak to him much as our Lord spoke to the multitudes when He was here on earth. Christ used illustrations that the people understood, happenings that made up their everyday life. And they flocked to hear Him—by the thousands. Can we do less?

Denominational cliches create a trap easy to fall into. They sound so homey. They say exactly what we mean. But who else knows what we mean when we use them?

Our illustrations, whether by word or art, must appeal to the audience. By this I do not mean that we should cheapen our art or music or communication. But we should know the avenues we must take in order to arrive at good, effective communication with those we would win to Christ.

There is a fine line at which we must arrive where dwells true communication. The dignity of sacred things must never be destroyed or tarnished. Yet the simplicity of person-to-person communicating can be achieved by an understanding on our part of the vocabulary of our audience—in speech, in art, in music, in broadcasting, in telecasting, in programming, and then in selective use of the best in their vocabulary.

In order to arrive at understanding, we must open our eyes, open our ears, and discover where our audience lives. Then we must reach out with the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus, to bring them home to the Lifegiver.

Until her recent death from cancer, M. Carol Hertzell was director of the Communication Department, General Conference Department. General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Washington, D.C.
Love is not enough

A marriage cannot succeed on optimism and romance alone. There must be basic agreement in a hundred areas—especially religion.

It happens every so often. A young lady comes with her fiancé and asks to be married. In this age of decaying standards, when so many scorn “the bit of paper” (alias the marriage certificate), that in itself is good. So many today merely “shack up” together—if you will pardon the modern parlance that so starkly describes those who are living together “without benefit of clergy,” as the Victorians used to put it.

So, as they sit talking to you, you ask them, as casually as you can (if you do not know them all that well—or even if you do), “And are you both members of the church?” The heart of a minister (especially if he has a doubt) beats a little more regularly if they answer in concert, “Yes,” or even if they both chime in with a united negative. At least he knows then that there is no ecclesiastical barrier to the church wedding with himself as the celebrant.

But occasionally—just occasionally—one will say, “Yes, I am, but John [or Sue] isn’t,” and usually, as a kind of pathetic attempt to cover an embarrassment, add, “yet.”

Well, sometimes John or Sue becomes a church member before the date of the nuptials. But often the matter is in abeyance . . . indefinitely. What then? The plain fact is that an Adventist minister cannot then perform the marriage; it is as simple and as definite as that. Denominational policy states merely, “Thou shalt not,” and it is soundly based upon the solid text “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14).

What then? Sometimes the happy couple, the stars in their eyes preventing them from seeing as clearly as they otherwise might, go off and have the ceremony performed by a minister of another persuasion, or even at the registry office. They are convinced in their hearts that what has turned out to be disaster for almost everyone else who has tried it will be peaches and cream for them. Why? Well, they are young, they communicate, they discuss their problems, they come to amicable solutions, they understand each other, they are the new breed of young people, they are elastic enough to give a little and take a little, they can adjust to changing circumstances, they can find a way through even in the darkness, and they have the answers even where there apparently aren’t any. In other words, they are the complete optimists.

Now it is right for a young couple to be optimistic. It would be tragic if two people, launching their frail bark upon the seas of matrimony, felt pessimistic about their prospects. If one said to the other, “I don’t think we have an atom of a chance of making this work,” it would hardly be grounds for hope that the marriage would succeed. But optimistic they are. The future is rosy, and they walk hand in hand into the sunset of their wedding day, knowing that there is the promise of a thousand glorious tomorrows. They are in love, they are close to each other, and that is all that matters. They can beat the system. But inevitably they don’t. Why?

Well, frankly, love is not enough. There must be basic agreement in a hundred areas if a marriage is to succeed. That does not mean that if John is an avid stamp collector, Sue has to be a philatelist also; it does not mean that if Emily gets starry-eyed about astronomy and spends hours gazing up at the stars through the telescope that she has scraped and saved to buy. Ken must be able to talk learnedly about the Milky Way, the rings of Saturn, and the orbits of the planets. It is not necessary, but it helps if there is an interest there; at least the conversation will not be one-sided or boring when the deeps and cadences of the hobby are explored.

But where there is a difference of religion, what of that? Well, even that may not be the world’s greatest obstacle to
happiness. We could point to many a successful marriage between, say, Methodists and Presbyterians, Anglicans and Lutherans, Baptists and Church of Christ members. Between Catholics and Protestants? Well, not very many here, simply because there is such a deep cleavage between the two religious ideologies. You see, there is a more basic difference between Catholic and Protestant than between two similar Protestant denominations. The important phrase is “deep cleavage between two religious ideologies.” And that is where we come in.

Whatever your philosophy of Seventh-day Adventism, you must surely recognize that it is more than a religion; it is a way of life. It reaches into every corner of your life and touches every aspect of your thinking, in ways that the non-Adventist can never hope to understand. The bride who puts her bridegroom into an incomprehensible situation is doing herself and her husband a terrible disservice, and vice versa. Adventism extends its influence to the very food you eat, and the non-Adventist partner cannot be expected to understand why you cannot say grace over a couple of rashers of bacon. It reaches down into the entertainment you permit yourself in your leisure moments, and the non-Adventist spouse cannot understand why on earth you will not come with him to the theater where some bawdy comedy is laying them in the aisles, nor can he understand why you snap off the TV because the overt sexuality of the box is offensive to your principles, just when he is becoming absorbed in the story. The non-Adventist husband or wife cannot understand why you cannot go to the office dance, or be expected to appreciate your reasons for declining to go to the firm’s annual Christmas party (“just once a year”) because it is held on Friday night. The non-Adventist partner cannot appreciate why, when finances are tight and there are bills crowding in and creditors demanding payment, you carefully put aside one tenth of his money, plus some for stewardship, offerings, and whatnot, and “give it to the church” (as he sees it). And you can multiply these situations almost to infinity.

If there is any sympathy to be handed out when a mixed marriage gets into the “Slough of Despond,” that sympathy should go to the non-Adventist party. He should not have been allowed to get into the morass that he cannot be expected to understand; he is battling with a many-headed opponent that, when he thinks he has one head under control, always has another one ready to bite him in some unprotected spot. He finds that he has not married someone who merely has a religion, but he has married her and the religion! Is it any wonder that so many non-Adventist spouses feel that it is just too much?

Of course, there is an alternative. Suppose John is the Calithumpian and Sue the Adventist. Suppose John (as is likely) admires Sue for her high principles that she has learned through childhood and youth because her parents and church have diligently taught her what standards are and how important they are. Then, in order to keep their fragile matrimonial ship afloat, Sue throws overboard those standards and principles just to accommodate her husband. What would any decent man think of his partner who would think so little of what she believed to be right and proper? What respect would he have for her from that moment on?

Which means, therefore, that what seemed a solution by compromise is no solution at all. And two bewildered people plus a possible addition or two by this time reluctantly come to the conclusion that their marriage is a mistake. Sad, isn’t it?

Robert H. Parr is senior editor, Signs Publishing Company, Warburton, Victoria, Australia.

Reprinted by permission from the Australasian Record, November 22, 1976.
What Assurance of Salvation Can a Seventh-day Adventist Christian Have? Should he depend on self? on Christ? or a combination?

Articles in this section often deal with complex, sensitive issues, and we would be the first to emphasize that by no means do we consider the thoughts and opinions expressed in these areas to be the final voice of authority. Rather, we are searching, under God, to learn what truth, what our duty is, and how to do it. We seek unity, not division. We encourage our readers, therefore, to share the results of their study with us. Comments, ideas, and additional light are not only welcome but coveted.—The Editors.

He had been a worker in the church for many years. Now retired, and seriously ill, he had requested prayer and anointing. As we gathered around the hospital bed, he told us the inner longing of his heart. His natural concern for healing was overridden by a deep concern for salvation. He urged that our prayers be not so much for physical restoration but for an increased ability to make fuller and deeper commitment to Jesus Christ. As he looked over his past life, the shortcomings and numerous failures brought an uncertainty into his mind as to whether the Lord had accepted him. His voice cracked and tears began to flow as he continued expressing hidden fears about the assurance of salvation.

Of course only God has a correct and intimate knowledge of this dear soul’s heart. He alone knows the true record of his life. Those of us who knew him could only speak words of highest praise. His life style, personality, and service record recommended him as one of God’s true saints. The fruits of his life were unmistakable. Those of us who knew him could only speak words of highest praise. His intimate knowledge of this dear soul’s life, the shortcomings and numerous failures brought an uncertainty into his mind as to whether the Lord had accepted him. His voice cracked and tears began to flow as he continued expressing hidden fears about the assurance of salvation.

The central point in an assurance of salvation is to be found in an understanding of the basis on which God accepts sinners. Looking back on my own personal experience, I have always understood that as a sinner I came to Christ without any merit of my own, totally in need of salvation. There was no question in my mind on that point. Ephesians 2:8 and 9 said it plainly: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast.” My sinful self deserves the death penalty. I have nothing by which to recommend myself to God. How often I have preached that point to thousands who have attended my evangelistic meetings! How often I have quoted during college weeks of prayer the statement from Steps to Christ, “How many there are who think they are not good enough to come to Christ.”—Page 31. I have urged my listeners, “Come to Jesus just as you are.” Remember the song “Just as I Am”? Beautiful, isn’t it? So the basis of my acceptance with God, as I have always understood it, was solely the merits of Christ—not my merits. I believe all those within our church see eye to eye on this tremendous truth.

But what takes place after a person comes to Christ? Here is where I wish us to center our thoughts. I knew and believed that a sinner, coming initially to Christ, must depend entirely upon the merits of the Saviour for acceptance. But now note the subtle switch. After coming to Christ, and after starting on the road of sanctification, I based God’s acceptance of me—consciously or unconsciously—partially or even wholly on my performance. I did not consider such an attitude as salvation by works. I still held that salvation is by faith alone. But recently I have begun to examine this subject carefully, and frankly I am convinced that my former opinion actually tied my acceptance by God and my assurance of salvation to my works—my performance.

I am aware that at this point the subject becomes quite slippery, easily leading to antinomianism and the idea that a man once saved is always saved. But such a perversion of the assurance of salvation need not be and will not be the case for those who are truly converted. It will be the case for those who love to cavil and argue. It will be the case for those who know nothing of the new-birth experience. It will be the case for those who can talk only about the cross and justification to the exclusion of sanctification—God’s work of grace on the heart. It will be the case for those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. But we cannot and must not minimize or hold back this precious truth simply because there are those who will misinterpret and misuse God’s plan of salvation to replace liberty with license. Correctly understood, this concept actually leads to fuller commitment to Christ.

Back to our point. Does the basis of my acceptance and assurance change after I come to Christ? Never! The basis of my acceptance and assurance is and forever will be the merits of Jesus Christ and never mine.

The description of John Wesley’s experience in this matter is helpful. Ellen White, in The Great Controversy, pages 255 and 256, summarizes Wesley’s experience in the assurance of salvation. She describes how his encounter with some German Moravians aboard ship during a violent storm while crossing the Atlantic deeply impressed Wesley’s mind. He admired the Christlike spirit of these people who gave continual proof of their humility in performing servant
duties that the English would not undertake. They helped others with no thought of remuneration, "'Saying it was good for their proud hearts, and their loving Saviour had done more for them'" (p. 255). As Wesley observed their sweet spirit even when pushed, struck, or thrown down, he came to the conclusion that they had an experience with God that he knew nothing about. During the terrible storm, when most of the passengers were screaming and crying in terrible fear, the "'Germans calmly sung on.'" Mystified, Wesley later asked whether they were afraid. The simple reply was, "'No; our women and children are not afraid to die.'"

On Wesley's return to England, he came to a clearer understanding of Bible faith under the instruction of a Moravian preacher. It was at this point that Wesley was convinced that he must renounce all dependence upon his own works for salvation and must trust wholly to 'the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'"

Following this experience, he attended a Moravian meeting in London, where a statement was read from Luther, describing the change that the Spirit of God works in the heart of the believer. As Wesley listened, faith was kindled in his soul. "'I felt my heart strangely warmed,' he says. 'I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.'"

After reciting this thrilling episode, Ellen White describes Wesley's experience prior to his full conversion. As you read the next paragraph, perhaps you will see elements in his experience that have been repeated in your own or in that of some of your sheep. I fear that many of our precious people have gone, or are going, through a struggle similar to Wesley's.

"Through long years of wearisome and comfortless striving—years of rigorous self-denial, of reproach and humiliation—Wesley had steadfastly adhered to his one purpose of seeking God." Does this sound familiar? Here is a man who scrupulously obeyed every ray of light that came to him. But note that these were "long years of wearisome and comfortless striving."

Finally, Wesley had a profound conversion experience. "'Now he had found Him [God]; and he found that the grace which he had toiled to win by prayers and fasts, by almsdeeds and self-abnegation, was a gift, 'without money and without price.'"

This comment says to me that although I live the most rigid Christian life possible, including endless praying and fasting, plus the humbling of myself every minute of every day—none of it in any way merits salvation. In no way will such strivings influence my Lord to accept me as His child. I am His child through the merits of His Son alone, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God'' (1 John 3:1). Are we called sons of God because we merit it by our own good works? Never, never, never! Do we start the Christian life by becoming the sons of God through the merits of Jesus Christ and then switch to remaining sons of God because of our meritorious sanctified works? Never, never, never! Salvation begins with Christ and ends with Christ. Salvation is through grace by faith alone in Jesus Christ at the beginning, the middle, and the end of our Christian life span.

Ellen White, in continuing the account of Wesley's experience, makes the point unmistakably clear. "'He continued his strict and self-denying life,'" as the "'result of faith,'" the "'fruit of holiness.'" Note the balance in the one sentence: "'The grace of God in Christ is the foundation of the Christian's hope [justification], and that grace will be manifested in obedience [sanctification].'"

"By their fruits ye shall know them," the Saviour warned (Matt. 7:20), and certainly the test holds true in this matter before us. What is the fruit of depending on Christ's righteousness for our assurance of salvation? Is it more devotion, greater spirituality, more faithful obedience? If so, we may be sure that we have correctly understood and appropriated the righteousness that comes solely by faith. Is the fruit carelessness in spiritual things, self-confidence, laxness in obeying God's will? Then we may be equally sure that we have not at all understood the righteousness that is by faith. Such an attitude is not righteousness by faith, but unrighteousness by presumption.

The apostle John cautions in blunt, unmistakable terms. "Let no man de-
Accepted in Christ

(Continued from page 7)

ister of sin. We are complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith.

Perfection through our own good works we can never attain. The soul who sees Jesus by faith, repudiates his own righteousness. He sees himself as incomplete, his repentance insufficient, his strongest faith but feebleness, his most costly sacrifice as meager, and he sinks in humility at the foot of the cross. But a voice speaks to him from the oracles of God’s word. In amazement he hears the message, “Ye are complete in him.”

Now all is at rest in his soul. No longer must he strive to find some worthiness in himself, some meritorious deed by which to gain the favor of God.

Beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, he finds the peace of Christ; for pardon is written against his name, and he accepts the word of God, “Ye are complete in him.” How hard it is for humanity, long accustomed to cherish doubt, to grasp this great truth! But what peace it brings to the soul, what vital life! In looking to ourselves for righteousness, by which to find acceptance with God, we look to the wrong place, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (chap. 3:23). We are to look to Jesus; “for we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Cor. 3:18). You are to find your completeness by beholding the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Standing before the broken law of God, the sinner cannot cleanse himself; but, believing in Christ, he is the object of God’s love, clothed in His spotless righteousness. For those who believe in Christ, Jesus prayed: “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. . . . That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. He whose eyes are fixed on Jesus will leave all. He will die to selfishness. He will believe in all the Word of God, which is so gloriously and wonderfully exalted in Christ.

“As the sinner sees Jesus as He is, an all-compassionate Saviour, hope and assurance take possession of his soul. The helpless soul is cast without any reservation upon Jesus. None can bear away from the vision of Christ Jesus crucified a lingering doubt. Unbelief is gone.”—The SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, on Gal. 6:14, p. 1113.

“Not the labors of my hands Can fulfill Thy law’s demands; Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone; Thou must save, and Thou alone.

“Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress, Helpless, look to Thee for grace; Foul, I to the fountain fly; Wash me, Saviour, or I die.”

J. R. S.
How Old Is the Earth? Radiometric dating suggests an age of 4.5 billion years, but how reliable are the underlying assumptions?

Marginal entries in most of the older English Bibles allow less than 6,000 years since the Creation, described in the first chapters of Genesis. Outside the Hebrew-Christian tradition our world generally has been considered to be of vast antiquity.

The Babylonian scholar Berossus (third century B.C.) placed Creation at 2,148,323 B.C., the first of the "10 ancient kings" (Adam) at 468,323 B.C., and the Flood at 36,323 B.C. The Greek philosopher Plato (fourth century B.C.) considered that the Flood occurred about 200 million years ago. Apollonius of Egypt (second century B.C.) proposed a mere 155,625 years for the age of the world, while the Hindu classics, written in the middle of the first millennium after Christ, describe the history of the world in terms of endlessly repeating grand cycles of 4.32 billion years' duration, each containing one thousand subcycles of 4.32 million years in length.

Within the last century the "scientific" view that Planet Earth has been in existence for about 4.56 billion years and has supported complex forms of life over the past 600 million years has replaced the traditional Hebrew-Christian viewpoint concerning the age of our world. The scientific view generally is presumed to be firmly based on unquestionable radiometric data.

Actually, the scientific view of the earth's age was developed in preliminary form many decades before the discovery of radioactivity. In 1778 Comte de Buffon cautiously broke with Hebrew-Christian tradition in proposing that Planet Earth had been in existence more than 75,000 years. In a lecture delivered to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1785, and in a book published ten years later, James Hutton placed the origin of the earth at a vastly remote and indefinite time with the classic expression "No vestige of a beginning. . . . no prospect of an end." Immanuel Kant placed the original creation "a series of millions of years and centuries" into the past, and Erasmus Darwin, whose grandson wrote Origin of Species, actively promoted the concept of evolutionary development of organisms over "millions of ages." Jean Baptiste de Lamarck, who has been referred to as the father of modern evolution theory, at the beginning of the nineteenth century spoke of "millions of years."

Developing geological science in the early nineteenth century placed the span of geological time in the 3-million-to-1.6-billion-year range, basing these early speculations on estimates of sedimentation rates and the total sediment presumed to have accumulated during each of the various divisions of geologic time. The demands of evolution theory were strongly coercive toward estimates that supported the longest time span that could be reasonably contrived. Even so, evolution theorists such as Charles Darwin and Thomas H. Huxley were uncomfortable with the limited amount of time provided by these early estimates.

The twentieth-century development of radiometric biological time scale that apparently was firmly founded on sound principles of physical science and precise measurements. By extending geologic time to more than 4 billion years, radiometric dating initially appeared to provide adequate time for a dust-to-man evolutionary development. But within the past quarter century an increased understanding of biochemistry, molecular biology, and genetics has brought a realization that any phase of the presumed process of organic evolution (formation of the necessary biochemicals, development of primitive living cells, evolution of primitive cells into modern organisms, et cetera, is unreasonable within the entire span of the radiometric time scale. Thus, even if one considers the current interpretations of radiometric data to be correct, he still must have faith that organic evolution has progressed somehow from cell to man despite the insufficient time provided by radiometric dating of the earth's age.

Individuals who are not acquainted with the research reports in the scientific literature are seldom aware that a high degree of interpretation and selection among available data has been necessary in the development of a radiometrically calibrated geological time scale. Only data that fit into generally accepted paleontological and geological theory have been utilized in this development.

The construction of a radiometric geological time scale is based on the assumption that mineral samples may be obtained that contain only results of radioactive transformations that have occurred since the mineral was placed in its present surroundings. Or, to state this assumption another way, radioactive "clocks" were "set to zero" (the accumulated results of all previous radioactive transformation were removed) when the mineral was either formed or deposited at its present location. According to this assumption, the remains of an organism are at least as old as the radiometric age of the mineral that has replaced them, or of a geologic formation that contains them, or of a geologic formation that overlies or penetrates the formation that contains them. Because this assumption readily led to age interpretations that were consistent with the popular philosophical framework, it has not been analyzed critically.

Contrary to this assumption, it does not seem reasonable to expect that naturally occurring physical and chemical processes would isolate radioactive elements and compounds or their stable end products in absolute chemical purity. Igneous, erosion, or solution processes should be expected to transport at least a portion of the daughter products that were initially associated with parent radioactive material at the site of origin. The various radiometric-age characteristics at the relocated site should then be expected to reflect to some degree the original radiometric-age characteristics, the nature of the transfer process, exposure to heat and fluid circulation since the transfer, and the time since transfer. Only in situations that provide radiometric data for several diverse minerals and radioactive systems can one expect to separate any of these factors from the others.

The professional literature frequently
refers to significant disagreement between radiometric-age data and conventional geological-age classification. A recent paper that has received widespread attention lists twenty-four examples of Tertiary age (65 million years or less on the conventional geologic time scale) that have lead-206/strontium (Rb-Sr) ages ranging between 70 and 3,340 million years. Representing six continental areas, these examples can be best explained on the basis that they have inherited degrees of source-area radiometric-age characteristics from material that has been transported by plutonic or volcanic processes.

Recently deposited sediments on the floor of Ross Sea, Antarctica, have been found to have a 250-million-year Rb-Sr age. The two major sources for this sediment are the Transantarctic Mountains, with a radiometric age between 450 and 475 million years, and West Antarctica, with a radiometric age in the 75-175-million-year range. Thus, one can easily follow that the Ross Sea sediments have radiometric-age characteristics that reflect a blend of the radiometric-age characteristics of the source areas. The validity of the geologic time scale is also brought into question by radiohalos, or regions of radiation damage surrounding a microscopic inclusion of radioactive material. Radiohalos have been found in coalified wood from Triassic and Jurassic sediments (225-135 million years conventional geologic age). The inclusion centers of these halos have lead-206/uranium-238 ratios that may be expressed in terms of uranium-lead ages ranging between 236,000 and 2.9 million years. No presently available experimental evidence can exclude the possibility that essentially all the lead-206 in these halo centers was introduced together with the uranium (either directly or as parent polonium-210 or lead-210) during or following the Flood, rather than accumulating from uranium since the inclusion was formed. There is evidence that the lead-isotope ratios in these inclusions are related to the source area(s) from which the uranium was transported during the production of uranium-rich sediments in which coalified-wood radiohalos are found.

The original radiometric-age characteristics of source material can reflect the primordial characteristics of this material, the radioactive transformation since primordial creation, and also exposure to heat, chemical activity, and nuclear radiation prior to relocation. A 4.56-billion-year solidification age has been established for the solar system on the basis of confidence that for many available mineral samples the radioactive transformation effects can be isolated from these other factors. Individuals whose interpretation of inspired testimony does not allow so great an age for inorganic material may classify the radiometric features from which this conclusion is derived as primordial characteristics that were introduced in a relatively recent Creation.

The popular concept that radiometric ages of geologic formations relate directly to their real-time age obtains much support from the observation that volcanic sequences, and volcanic-derived sedimentary sequences, usually exhibit a pattern of increasing radiometric age the deeper one goes. Obviously the upper material in a given undisturbed sequence was emplaced later than the underlying material. But the radiometric-age difference between them does not necessarily represent the real-time emplacement interval. It has been established that rather than indicating the times of eruption, the radiometric-age profile of a volcanic sequence may be the consequence of several factors, such as (1) chemical and isotope zonation in the magma chamber that furnished the volcanic material, (2) circumstances that were progressively more favorable to resetting a particular radiometric clock (degassing of radiogenic argon, etcetera) as eruptions proceeded, and (3) crustal material incorporated by the magma as it moved upward.

The book of Genesis refers to two episodes of crustal deformation and reorganization on Planet Earth that are outside the range of prediction or explanation based on the normal day-by-day and year-by-year operation of geophysical processes—the original appearance of continents on the third day of Creation week, and the global destruction and reformation described in chapters 6 to 8. The radiometric-age characteristics of many rock and mineral specimens that are now accessible would be expected to have been altered in each of these episodes. Such an alteration naturally compounds the difficulties of making historically correct interpretations of radiometric-age data.

Robert H. Brown, Ph.D., is director of the Geoscience Research Institute at Berrien Springs, Michigan.
Life in an Old Testament Town. How did the average person live? What kind of house did he have? How did he work?

Within the past few years archeologists have uncovered so much material from towns and cities of Old Testament times that they can now offer a good picture of urban life in those days. Moreover, implications can be drawn from these finds to illuminate the general life style of the average village dweller.

In order to present a single, unified picture, we will restrict our time frame in this article primarily to the seventh century B.C., a period roughly paralleling the reign of King Josiah of Judah, and one of the most prominent, affluent eras in Biblical history.

Some very important excavations have been taking place during the past six years on the edge of the Negev, or southern, desert, at the site of Biblical Beersheba. Since it has been more thoroughly excavated than most other Judean towns, a study of its city plan is perhaps the best way of entering into daily Israelite life.

The site occupies a man-made mound thrown up prior to the building of the city (to provide better defense) next to a large wadi, or dry riverbed, from which the occupants obtained their water supply. A traveler to the town in the seventh century B.C. would first have been able to distinguish a solid mud-brick city wall built atop stone foundations which in turn rested on a sloping rampart paved with stones from the base of the wall to the bottom of the mound. No enemy's battering ram would find purchase on this fortification.

On top of the wall he would see such evidences of habitation as stored piles of straw or grains waiting to be winnowed (Rahab hid the two spies under similar piles at Jericho), stacks of dried dung for oven fires, or even growing grass. (At several sites large, cylindrical stones have been found for rolling and smoothing the mud and sod.) A dog might be seen sitting on the wall, barking at passers-by, or perhaps children would even be playing, guarded by a mud-brick railing.

If our traveler were to have taken a walking tour of the town, he would not find it too large, being able to circumnavigate its walls in about ten minutes, or less if he hurried. From the plaza it would be easy to tour the center of the town via the circular street that followed the general contours of the city wall, but one house width inside. For access to the very middle of the city, parallel cross streets connected with the outer circular...
street. Between these streets the people built their houses, and the everyday life of the Israelites had its crowded, noisy focus. In general most Israelite cities seem to have had similar layouts.

Not surprisingly, wealthier families tended to build their houses upwind, far from the industrial areas where the poorer people were forced to live. Conditions for these poorer classes must have been quite unsanitary and crowded, judging from the floors and streets archeologists have uncovered.

At the beginning of the outer circular street, the first building on the left, with its door opening on the square, would appear at first glance to be a typical Israelite house. But a closer inspection would reveal a small L-shaped stairway in the first room. As mentioned in "Ancient Temples and Altars" (MINISTRY, August, 1978, pp. 21, 22), this could have been a stairway to the top of an original altar (now missing) in the courtyard of a sanctuary. If this building were Beersheba's infamous sanctuary that the prophet Amos denounced, its location abutting the public square by the gate would have been ideal, adding an interesting religious aspect, unorthodox as it was, to public life in the square.

Continuing his tour of Beersheba along the circular street, the traveler would find himself surrounded by the walls of private dwellings and shops, two building types that archeologists find difficult to separate. In the northwest corner of the town the ample remains of three typical Israelite houses lie between the city wall and the street. Richer families had homes with four basic rooms on the ground floor (the so-called "four-room house") that could be subdivided into several smaller rooms, while homes of poorer families (the majority) lacked one of the side rooms.

A series of columns often characterized the Israelite house, helping to support the second floor, where the family slept out of reach and smell of the chickens, sheep, goats, and donkeys that populated the lower section. In those homes with four basic rooms, the central one of the three long rooms was almost always an open-air court where much of the daily chores of domestic life took place. Here the women baked the bread in clay ovens fired with straw and dung; storage bins contained items of domestic use and food in sealed ceramic jars; pits kept other items cool and fresh.

The floor of the house was dirt rendered hard by traffic and moisture; the foundations of the walls were stone, but the walls themselves were constructed with mud bricks; the second floor was supported by wooden beams (frequently found in excavations) held up by the first-floor walls and a row of columns. The flat roof was probably just as lively a place as the rest of the house, especially during the cooler parts of the day.

The man of the house no doubt did very little actual work in the home, leaving most of that to the women and children. Although obtaining water was the most vital element of any town's existence, archeologists are not quite certain how or where it was done at Beersheba—possibly in the eastern corner of the village, or even outside the city walls. Great waterworks are known from several other Israelite cities in which large shafts were dug down into the bedrock until the water table or a spring was reached. Then it became simply a matter of descending the steps and bringing the water up in a jar, probably carried on the head. Much of the female communication must have been carried on at the water shaft. Meanwhile the men spent their time in the fields or in the square, discussing issues of the day.

In view of the close quarters in which everyone lived, the social aspects of life in an Israelite town must have been lively and animated. It would have been difficult not to have known everyone at least passively in a town of perhaps 2,000 inhabitants at the most. Most Israelite cities were similar in size to Beersheba.

Having followed the circular street almost all the way around the town, including the industrial and poorer regions in the east, our traveler would have passed a series of buildings on the left containing long, narrow rooms divided by columns. Solid walls divided these rooms into three groups of three long halls each. Conveniently close to the city gate and filled with hundreds of storage jars that originally contained wine, oil, and other products, these rooms must have been the official municipal storehouses. Thus we naturally wonder about this aspect of Israelite life. Just how did the public economy and interchange of goods operate?

Most Israelite cities had storehouses (with long rooms similar to those at Beersheba) where items brought in by the local farmers and inter-city caravans were deposited awaiting distribution to the shops of the city for retail sale or shipment to other parts of the country. Private citizens may have made most of their purchases at the storehouse as well, since with money not yet in use it would have been easier for the central storehouse to coordinate exchange in kind.

Public scribes kept track of the goods received on broken pieces of pottery they could pick up anywhere in the streets. Hundreds of these ostraca have been found, recording the name of the person involved in the transfer along with the amount of his goods. Some of the receipts may even have served as legal tender to use in exchange for other goods, thus providing a primitive monetary system.

The central government in Jerusalem stretched its fingers throughout the country in the economic area. To prevent farmers or officials from cheating by altering the size of jars their goods came in, storage jars were made in a single authorized size with a stamp on the handle, certifying it to be in harmony with the official royal measure. Hundreds of these stamps have been found, all made in four Judean cities—Hebron, Ziph, Mamshit, and Socoh.

Some cities, possibly these four, were known as "royal cities" and seem to have been dedicated more strongly to the centralized control of the distribution of goods. These royal cities were centers for donkey and camel caravans, and more of the town was dedicated to the storehouses. Fruits from the north might arrive in one of these cities, such as Hebron, where the produce would be transferred to a small caravan heading toward Beersheba. There it would be deposited in the storehouse and later distributed to local merchants or families. The opposite process brought grains and ores back to the north.

What did the ancient Israelites eat? Recent excavations have been concerned with recovering seeds from the soil (if the ancient dirt is placed in water and stirred, the seeds will float to the top; one need only scoop them off). By far the most frequent seed found is barley, a grain that grows easily in the semiarid conditions of the Holy Land. Various forms of wheat, emmer, rye, olives, dates, apricots, apples, chickpeas, and lentils have been found as well. No doubt such a diet would seem severely limited to many of us today.

Thus, in general, archeological finds have tended to amplify in tangible ways the information already available from Biblical allusions to daily life.
HEALTH AND RELIGION

The Healing Mission of the Church. Sickness has its origin in man's broken relationship with God. This we must restore.

by Gottfried Oosterwal

A third relationship seen in the term “image of God” is that of man's dominion over the earth (see Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15). As God's image, man was made a steward over all that God had made. Healing, therefore, implies that the wholesome relationship between man and nature must be restored.

What caused the disruption of the glorious program that God had planned for man? This question touches the very essence of the disease that plagues humanity, and no true healing is possible without facing up to it. The uniqueness of the Adventist medical mission is that it deals with the real cause of the disease, rather than with its effects.

According to Genesis 3, the trouble began when the evil one raised the question, “'Is it true that God has forbidden you—? ’” (verse 1, N.E.B.). Distrust arose in the human mind—a distrust that turned to doubt when the devil contradicted God by asserting, “'Of course you will not die’” (verse 4, N.E.B.). Through doubt and disobedience the relationship between man and God, which had been built on faith and trust, was broken. Pride and desire filled the vacuum caused by unbelief and led the first humans to the horrendous decision to make themselves independent from God (verses 4-6). Instead of obeying the law of God, man tried to become a law unto himself. But when a man breaks his relationship with God, he also inevitably breaks other relationships that are part of God's image. An implication of this insight for the healing ministry of the church is that a person is not completely healed until this relationship with God has been restored! All sickness is a state of being that has its origin in man's broken relationship with God. The first sin of distrust, which is being repeated in every person's life (Rom. 3:9-18), is the real cause of his fears and frustrations, his anxieties and alienation and defective social relationships.

The church has been called into existence to help restore these broken relationships through family-life clinics, marriage counseling, parent and child care, and other avenues. By presenting to the world models of husband-wife relationships, the equality of male and female, black and white, employer and employee, the whole church can participate in the healing mission to which it has been called.

Man's broken relationship with God was also the cause of his conflict with his environment. Early in man's existence, nature became his enemy. He has long been largely a slave to the powers of nature, over which God had once put him in control. With the development of science and technology man has reclaimed partial control only to find that his control through technology has brought fresh threats. Those who combat environmental diseases, improve the land, and correct unsanitary conditions are indeed doing a work of restoration. But these acts can be considered part of the Adventist medical mission only when they become illustrations and signs of man's restored relationship with God.

When man broke his relationship with his Maker, he was seriously affected as an individual, as well. As Isaiah puts it, "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores" (chap. 1:5, 6). It is not just the human body that is affected, but our mind and will, thoughts and emotions, are affected as well. True healing, therefore, must seek to strengthen a person's will, change his heart and mind, and direct his thoughts and emotions to God. He must find his true and only point of orientation in his Maker. The church leader Augustine expressed the concept in these familiar words, "Thou hast made us for Thyself. Restless is our heart until it has found rest in Thee, O Lord."

Could not God have warned man of the consequences of sin, either to help him avoid it in the first place or to recover from it after his troubles had begun? The answer is Yes. God spoke face to face with Adam and Eve in the garden, and when that became impossible He found many other ways (see Heb. 1:1; Amos 3:4-8). Because He loved us, God sent His Word, written by inspired men, so that we might read it, obey it, and find healing and restoration today. The essence of all Adventist medical mission lies in the communication of the Word of God.

To remind man of his high calling, the
Creator gave him the Sabbath as a perpetual sign of his special relationship with God (see Gen. 2:1-3). The Sabbath was to be the divine seal upon His image (see Ex. 20:12). With the breaking of that seal, the image of God becomes broken. The work of restoring the image of God in man, the true ministry of healing, is therefore closely tied to the restoration of the Sabbath as God's holy day. This is evident from Jesus' own mission, from His discussion with the Pharisees over the proper way to keep the Sabbath, and from His acts of healing on the Sabbath.

We can evaluate the church's healing mission only by comparing it to the pattern found in the life and work of Jesus Christ. He is not only the model of all medical mission, He is its very source and goal, as well as the means by which the "complete restoration" can be accomplished. What strikes us first about Him is that He was wholly oriented toward God. "I have glorified thee" are the words written over His life and work (John 17:4). He lived in total dependence upon God: "I can of mine own self do nothing," Jesus said (chap. 5:30). "My food is to do the will of him who sent me" (chap. 4:34, R.S.V.). It was Jesus' mission to restore an intimate relationship with God in all men, by revealing God the Father to them, by giving them an example of what God wants all humans to be, and by granting them faith and hope as He shared His love with them. That restoration is the foundation of all healing.

It is here that the uniqueness of Adventist health care, as compared with the work of government agencies or the World Health Organization, lies. The purpose of all healing and the specific methods of achieving it are not accomplished by merely a spiritual or theological dimension to the physical and medical-technical aspects, but by the serious attempt to treat persons as whole units in their relationship to God. Only Christ can help us locate and treat the real cause of man's disease and remedy its effects in all dimensions of life.

The second striking quality about Jesus' mission is that He was wholly devoted to His fellow men. The cross is evidence of Christ's absolute surrender to the will of God, and at the same time of His love for His fellow men. Everything in His life and work showed that He lived for others. Though He sought to relieve physical distress, His chief goal was to bring us forgiveness for our sins, freedom from our fear and frustration, peace with all men, power over temptation, and newness of character. He sought to restore in individuals the image of God. Health care that aims at the same goal will be medical mission indeed.

Jesus' control over nature stands as the third characteristic of His life. No matter how wild the waters, Jesus walks over them. He rebukes the storm. He gives His disappointed fishermen-disciples a netful of fish, feeds the five thousand, and changes water into wine. These miracles suggest that feeding the hungry, by whatever necessary means, is an essential part of Adventist health care. They also suggest that miracles are not the essential sign of Christ's divinity. Jesus exercised no powers that God would not also grant us, Ellen White assures us. The Saviour promised His followers that they would do greater miracles than He had done (see John 14:12).

The implication of these events is that all Adventist health care should be a work of faith. Medical missionaries should be men and women of faith, in whom the image of God has been restored, not people who themselves need restoration. If Adventist health care were carried out by only ten persons of faith, it could do much more than with a hundred who did not believe. (How would this insight affect the operation of Adventist institutions, in many of which the vast majority of physicians, staff, and nurses are not knowledgeable of nor committed to the principles of Adventist health care?) Lack of faith is the reason why church members are spiritually weak and sickly; it is also a major reason for the often slow and problematic advance of the Adventist health-care mission.

Since the goal of the church's ministry of healing is to restore men completely to the image of God, we can draw no line between healing and redemption, liberation and salvation. Medical mission is not an independent branch, but an integral aspect, of the gospel commission and of the church's whole ministry of healing. It should aim at helping the whole man, in all his relationships, including restoring his faith in God and his obedience to God's Word. Since it is God's will that all men should be saved and know His truth, those who plan for medical mission should develop strategies to reach out to the masses of people now living in such isolation, poverty, or misery that they have little or no contact with God's instruments of mission. Furthermore, all members of the church should be enlisted in some form of participation in the healing ministry.

We should give greater attention not only to health education and the prevention of disease but also to the change of habits and customs, or social and religious traditions, which either create serious health hazards or interfere with the goals of Adventist medical mission. We should put more emphasis on teamwork between physicians and evangelists, social workers and other church members, to accomplish the objectives of our mission. We should feed the hungry and help the poor by improving their living conditions and environment. This should be an integral part of Adventist medical mission.

Yet healing does not constitute an end in itself; our aim is to prepare people for service to God and their neighbors, as ambassadors of reconciliation, to hasten the coming of Christ.

Teaching Healthful Living by Personal Work.—No teacher of truth should feel that his education is completed till he has studied the laws of health and knows the bearing of right practices on the spiritual life. He should be qualified to speak to the people intelligently in regard to these things, and to set them an example that will give force to his words. The teaching of correct habits is a part of the work of the gospel minister, and the minister will find many opportunities of instructing those with whom he comes in contact.

As he visits from house to house he should seek to understand the needs of the people, presenting right principles and giving instruction as to what is for their best good. To those who have a meager diet he should suggest additions, and to those who live extravagantly, who load their tables with unnecessary and hurtful dishes, rich cakes, pastry, and condiments, he should present the diet that is essential for health and conducive to spirituality.—Evangelism, p. 439.


Gottfried Oosterwal, Ph.D., Litt.D., is professor of world mission at Andrews University Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.
Your Preaching and Your Larynx. You can’t be a powerful preacher with strained, raspy speech. Here’s how to strengthen your voice.

In 1880 Ellen White wrote, “Some of our most talented ministers are doing themselves great injury by their defective manner of speaking. . . . Ministers should stand erect and speak slowly, firmly, and distinctly, taking a full inspiration of air at every sentence and throwing out the words by exercising the abdominal muscles. If they will observe this simple rule, giving attention to the laws of health in other respects, they may preserve their life and usefulness much longer than men in any other profession.”—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 404.

Nearly one hundred years later this counsel is still going unheeded by a number of ministers. And going with it is their ability to speak! I have heard men, standing before our teen-agers, try to impress their minds with truth spoken in a raspy tone of voice that made the hearers want to clear their own throats all through the message!

Other men are hardly in such poor condition. They sound quite good (to themselves, at least) but develop significant laryngeal irritation if they conduct any business or to enable you to help someone else.

Notice the first point Ellen White makes in the statement above: “Ministers should stand erect.” Good posture is vital to good speech. Pretend that there is a hook at the crown of your head and that you are being pulled up by a rope from the ceiling. Or if you prefer, stand against a wall and be sure your heels, buttocks, back of shoulders, and back of head touch the wall. Remember to keep the shoulders as relaxed as possible. In time good posture will become habitual.

Her next advice is to take a full inspiration of air at every sentence. Here is one of the most important steps in using the voice correctly. Many vocal problems come from improper respiration. To feel a “full inspiration” of air, put a drinking straw in the mouth (or purse the lips), then with a finger partially cover the bottom end of the straw. After exhaling, draw your full breath through the half-stopped straw. If that is too difficult, use the straw without covering the end and work up to the other process.

Throw out the words “by exercising the abdominal muscles,” Ellen White continues. This is where things get technical and most people give up. The natural thing to do after taking a full breath, such as the one just described, is to let it all come right back out without any resistance. Many get in a hurry to breathe, and let the words and breath come out any way possible without allowing the vocal folds to engage efficiently. The easiest way to feel the abdominal muscles at work is to do either two or three sit-ups or the following: Sit erect on a straight chair with your feet flat on the floor. Grasp the bottom of the chair with your hands, arms straight down. Take a deep breath, then holding on to the chair with the hands, pull your knees upward without any help from the toes.

Once you learn to feel the abdominal muscles in action try phonating a short, accented pa. Be sure to take a deep breath and make the abdominal muscles contract sharply on the p. (It should not hurt!) With this sound successfully accomplished, try ha, then ha. Then say a word, keeping the abdominal muscles contracted throughout the entire word. Try one-syllable words first, such as past, then two-syllable words such as pasture. Next try words without plosive beginnings. Always maintain good breath and keep the abdominal muscles working throughout each sentence.

It would be well for every speaker to take a few brush-up lessons from a competent speech or voice teacher each year just to keep in shape. If you have noticeable speaking difficulty, find help right away. It could be a matter of life or death. Ellen White declared, “I would say to my ministering brethren: Unless you educate yourselves to speak according to physical law, you will sacrifice life, and many will mourn the loss of those martyrs to the cause of truth, when the facts in the case are that by indulging in wrong habits you did injustice to yourselves and to the truth which you represented, and robbed God and the world of the service you might have rendered. God would have been pleased to have you live, but you slowly committed suicide.”—Ibid.

Larry J. Otto is assistant professor of fine arts at Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.
Sacred Words

The Expanded Standard

In connection with His sermon on the mount, Jesus went beyond the strict interpretation of the law to give an expanded standard.

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. 5:21, 22).

Here Jesus sets forth an expanded standard. As William Barclay points out in his Daily Study Bible, it is not enough to refrain from killing a man; the only standard that will do is not even to wish to kill him or even to be angry with him. "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother ... shall be in danger of the judgment" (verse 22). The word Matthew uses here is orgizesthai, one of two Greek words for anger. The other is thumos, the anger that blazes up like a flame in twigs and dies just as suddenly. The word Matthew puts in Jesus' mouth, orgizesthai, is the anger that is cherished and fed, the anger that festers and grows with the passing of time.

Thus Jesus expands the standard to include the anger that thrives on grudges and that will not be forgotten.

"And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council" (verse 22). Raca is a difficult word to translate, as a glance at any number of modern Bible versions will illustrate. It is really more a tone of the voice than anything else. The man who called his brother Raca displayed the most disdainful contempt, looking down on him as a bumbling idiot.

Finally, Jesus says, "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (verse 22). The word used here is moros. Moros is correctly translated "fool," but it means much more. The man who was a moros was not necessarily lacking in intelligence; the epithet implied a lack of moral sensibilities.

Jesus declares that to ruin a brother's good name and slander his reputation is a yet greater sin than the previous two.

In setting forth His expanded standard, the Master would teach us that the Father judges not only our outward deeds but the inward thoughts and intentions as well. Nurtured anger is bad; contempt is worse; the ruthless destruction of another's character is the worst of all.

Secular Words

The carpenter has some tools he uses almost constantly and others that seldom leave the toolbox. The doctor prescribes some medicines daily and others only rarely. The preacher relies heavily on certain books in his study while others are covered with dust. So it is with words. We overwork a few and allow many more to remain idle.

Words are the preacher's tools, and he uses some more than others for the same reason the carpenter (or the doctor) uses some tools (or medicines) more than others—not every tool (or medicine) is useful for every task. Some words are more necessary than others; we use them a great deal. Others are for specialized tasks. However, the problem comes when the carpenter needs a reverse widget puller and it isn't in the box.

What do we do when we need to convey a particular meaning and the correct word is not forthcoming? We may not use a certain word any more often than the carpenter uses his reverse widget puller, but when the widget puller is the only tool that will do the job, it must be handy. We need a selection of words that is adequate for every occasion. We need some synonyms for those tired, overworked words. Such replacements need not (indeed, should not) be used to impress or to sound stilted, but to express more precisely what we want to say and to do so with more personality.

Even some letters of the alphabet are neglected, perhaps because they don't occur as often as others. For example, Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, second edition, has 261 pages of words beginning with the letter s, while it has only thirty-seven pages devoted to words beginning with the letter v. Thus we probably use the latter words less than the former and are likely to be less familiar with their meanings. Actually, seven letters (the predictable x, y, and z, as well as u, q, k, and j) have even fewer pages for words that they start than does v.

To get us out of a rut and help us dust off some of those seldom-used words, here is a selection that begins with the letter v. Test your knowledge by selecting the definition closest in meaning to each word. Answers are found on page 32.

1. vapid: (a) lethargic; (b) swiftly reoccurring; (c) uninteresting and dull; (d) flirtatious.
2. vagary: (a) unpredictable and eccentric behavior; (b) coarse and unbecoming conduct; (c) one without obvious means of support; (d) the overlapping of astrological signs.
3. vacuous: (a) thick and syruplike; (b) given to bursts of uncontrollable anger; (c) a nonpolarized electrical condition; (d) empty or dull-witted.
4. vestal: (a) the last remaining; (b) pure, chaste; (c) entrenched and unmovable; (d) a type of liturgical, church music.
5. verdant: (a) covered with growing plants; (b) an unexpected or changing factor; (c) lifegiving; (d) luxuriant opulence.
6. venal: (a) minor sin; (b) pertaining to Venus or love; (c) easily bribed or corrupted; (d) infatuated with oneself.
7. viands: (a) laurel wreaths given to the victors of ancient games; (b) intertwined designs sculpted into the columns of ancient temples; (c) expensive and rich foods; (d) the spoils of war.
8. vitiate: (a) to expose to danger; (b) to absolve guilt by penance; (c) to undergo a probationary period; (d) to weaken or destroy.
9. vitreous: (a) hardened or solidified; (b) glasslike; (c) surly and mean-spirited; (d) related to the internal organs.
10. vituperative: (a) revengeful; (b) abusive; (c) poisonous; (d) stealthy.
11. vixen: (a) an ill-tempered woman; (b) one who is involved in the occult; (c) an archaic term for the bell ringer of a church; (d) one who is decrepit.
12. vortex: (a) an angle greater than 180 degrees; (b) the highest point; (c) a whirlpool; (d) a force pulling against another force.
New program

How do you tell your non-Adventist friends about your church—in twelve minutes?

Show them the new slide and cassette program, *It's a Good Family,* recently produced by the General Conference Communication Department. The story line for the 72-slide presentation is based on the experience of Dane Toffler, a former drug peddler, who tells of his new-found faith and introduces the viewer to a wide scope of Adventist beliefs and activities, featuring Adventists from around the world. An 80-slide carrousel will provide room for you to add your own individualized slides giving information about your local church book center, hospital, school, or broadcast. The program is ideal for evangelistic meetings, fairs, choirs' waiting rooms, Bible studies—wherever people are ready to absorb information about the church.

Order through your conference communication director or direct from the Communication Department, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 6840 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012. Cost for the slides, cassette, and script package is only $27.50.

Alternative

Some pastors have found it an advantage occasionally to change the format of prayer meeting and turn the Wednesday-night activities of the church into an evening school taught by the pastor and other qualified church personnel.

After a five-minute recess, have all class members meet in the chapel for a devotional period of twenty minutes. If sufficient interest and demand exists, a second class period can be conducted dealing with various how-to-do-it courses, such as nutrition, public speaking, Sabbath School teachers' training, duties of church officers, child evangelism, sight-reading instruction for prospective members of the church choir, Red Cross first-aid, and how to give Bible readings. The twenty-minute devotional period can become a high point of the evening, when church elders and other members have an opportunity to give a devotional message based on personal experience or a favorite passage of Scripture. Such a program should be planned for a season of the year when a three- or four-month period can be followed without interruption. Remember to give some recognition to those who complete the course of study.

Friendship form

Many pastors are finding their work enhanced by a church registration form now in wide use. Called "The Friendship Folder," it is designed to record the attendance of the worship service, plus pastoral needs, such as prayer for the sick, desire for the pastor to call, need for Bible studies, and requests to join the church. The registration form comes in an attractive black vinyl folder. These folders are placed at the end of each pew, and passed along for each person to sign at the suggestion of the pastor during the announcement section of the church service. Pastors using the folder report a more accurate accounting of the membership, as well as many requests for pastoral assistance, which would go unnoticed if special provisions were not made for them. The "Friendship Folders" cost $1.10 each, and the replaceable pads with about 50 sheets are 30 cents. Order from the Ministerial Department, Oregon Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 605 SE. 39th, Portland, OR 97214.

Needed

Miriam Wood urgently needs handbills and pictures from evangelistic efforts of the 1920's, '30's, and '40's to include in a book on this subject that she is writing. Please send these materials to her at the General Conference. No matter how small the effort, the materials will be welcome. Please identify the personnel in the effort, the dates, and the location.

Code of professional ethics for ministers

Paul H. Olm, writing in a recent issue of *The Christian Ministry,* suggests that just as attorneys (and other professionals) have a clearly defined code of ethics that governs their responsibilities, so ministers of the gospel could profit from similar standards of professional conduct. Ministry has taken the liberty to adapt and revise Mr. Olm's list of fifteen rules for the benefit of our readers.

Responding to God's sacred call, and recognizing His claims upon me and my work as a gospel minister, I pledge that:

1. I shall spend sufficient time in personal study of the Scriptures and in personal prayer and meditation to maintain a continually growing relationship with my God.
2. I shall avoid anything that will weaken me mentally, physically, or spiritually.
3. I shall not abuse the authority given me by the Word of God, but will ever remember the apostle Peter's warning against lording it over the flock.
4. I shall not cheapen my calling by seeking special privileges, gratuities, or ministerial discounts.
5. I shall keep in the strictest integrity all confidences that come to me as a minister.
6. I shall refuse to prostitute myself by using information about or from members for personal advantage.
7. I shall not go into the pulpit unprepared, nor shall I use it as a platform to expound my personal views on society, politics, or matters unrelated to the gospel.
8. I shall not play favorites nor ally myself with factions within the church.
9. I shall give prompt aid to members or ministerial colleagues in time of distress or need.
10. I shall consider seriously the counsel of colleagues.
11. I shall spurn to speak disparagingly of my predecessor and shall not advise members of former congregations regarding their relationship with their present minister.
12. I shall not encourage nor perform professional services in a former parish except upon invitation of the present minister.
13. I shall be alert to the physical and/or spiritual needs of a retired colleague who may be a member of my church or who may live in the community.

These two small books from the pen of veteran evangelist and worker J. L. Shuler have been written with the view of providing pastors and evangelists with inexpensive materials to aid them in their work. Are You Saved? can be placed in the hands of those who attend evangelistic meetings (or given to those taking Bible studies) as a means of helping them to make a decision to accept Christ as their Saviour. The book not only explains how a person may be saved, it also goes on to set forth what is actually involved in accepting Christ. Power for a Finished Work takes the view that God’s dynamic is ready for the completion of the gospel commission, but are His people prepared for the essential thrust that will culminate in the Saviour’s appearance? This book will be of value to the pastor in reaffirming God’s eternal purpose and the part God would have each one take in finishing His work.


Those who own the six-volume set of Ellen White’s Review and Herald Articles will find the usefulness of these writings greatly expanded by this Scripture index. Martha Montgomery Odom, wife of R. L. Odom, who compiled the three-volume Index to the Writings of Ellen G. White, has pulled together in this book approximately 35,000 references to Scripture quotations, comments, and allusions found through the 2,000 articles. Each Bible text is listed by reference to the volume, page, and column in which it appears.

The index is set in typescript and bound to match the six volumes of the articles. It should prove valuable to Bible students, ministers, researchers, and those looking for Spirit of Prophecy commentary on specific texts of Scripture.

Russell Holt


We live in a time of self-searching and self-discovery. Christians, above all people, should be acquainted with their own potential and liabilities. Only as we know ourselves can we relate to a successful ministry for others. Seeing the Real Me is a completely Bible-centered book that gives guidance in the search for direction in living. The author, a long-time worker in the administrative work of the church, begins each chapter with the prayer, “Lord, open my eyes that I may see” and leads into the various aspects of self-discovery. The high point of the book is that which looks to an appreciation of the perfection found in Jesus Christ. Without this, all search, from the Christian viewpoint, is in vain.

The author draws on many years of service both in the United States and overseas for apt illustrations. The clear, simple style provides for easy and enjoyable reading that is suitable for any age group.

Bobbie Jane Van Dolson


Jerry Kirk, pastor of the College Hill Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, writes with clarity and conviction about an issue that has threatened in recent months to split some denominations. In answering the question How must the church respond to the issue of homosexuality and ordination of practicing homosexuals? Kirk calls with unflinching candor for the church to stand firm in its commitment to genuine and constant repentance as it confronts practicing homosexuals in the church. Kirk declares that the real issue is not gay rights but God’s rights.

The Homosexual Crisis grew out of two convictions: (1) Biblical teaching is that homosexual acts are sinful and that ordination without repentance would be wrong; (2) God is calling all His people to face their sins more deeply than ever before and to repent of them. Thus Kirk not only unhesitatingly identifies homosexuality as sin, but he also urges Christians everywhere to recognize their own sinfulness and therefore to show compassion for the homosexual while at the same time calling him to repentance. Kirk practices what he preaches by including the gay community in the ministering outreach of his church.

Pastors will find much benefit in this well-written, Bible-based treatment of an explosive issue.

Answers to Word Power (see page 30).

1. vapid: (c) uninteresting and dull. From the Latin vapidus, “stale and insipid.”
2. vagary: (a) unpredictable and eccentric behavior. From the Latin word vagari, “to wander.”
3. vacuum: (d) empty or dull-witted. From the Latin vacuus, “empty.”
4. vestal: (b) pure, chaste. Derived from the virgins consecrated to Vesta, goddess of the hearth.
5. verdant: (a) covered with growing plants. From viridis, Latin for “green.”
6. venal: (c) easily bribed or corrupted. From the Latin venalis, “for sale.”
7. viands: (c) expensive, rich foods. From an Old French word, viande, “meat.”
8. vitiate: (d) to weaken or spoil. From the Latin word vitiatius, “to injure.”
9. vitreous: (b) glasslike. From vitrum, Latin for “glass.”
10. vituperative: (b) abusive.
11. vixen: (a) an ill-tempered woman.
12. vortex: (c) whirlpool. From the Latin word “to whirl.”

MINISTRY
Change of Address
If you’re moving, please let us know six weeks before changing your address. Print your new address at right, clip out this entire corner, including the label, and send it to us. If you have a question about your subscription, please clip this form to your letter.