Conquering the Clock
Morris Venden's series on What Jesus Said receives both criticism and praise—one reader seeing in his March article seeds of "specious heresy." Computers in the church continue to generate comments.

More on computers in church
I would like to comment on the purchasing of computer services, suggested as an alternative to purchasing hardware in Dr. Moon's article "Computers Come to Church" (March, 1982). All of the cautions given there concerning the acquisition of software for your own hardware are equally applicable when considering the use of a computer service organization. The packages offered seldom fit the uses you have in mind. Most successful data servicers cannot afford to alter their programs to fit each user. If they are willing to provide tailored programs, it is of course expensive. Frequently, the programming language for the large systems typically used by a service vendor is not compatible with a smaller system such as you might later decide to purchase for your church.

An outstretched hand
If you are receiving MINISTRY bimonthly without having paid for a subscription, it is not a mistake. We believe the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. Since 1928 MINISTRY has been designed to meet the needs of Seventh-day Adventist ministers. However, we believe that we have much in common with the entire religious community and want to share with you our aspirations and faith in a way that we trust will provide inspiration and help for you too.

We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulders, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you cannot use.

Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Each request should be on your church letterhead (if possible) and include name, address, denominational affiliation and position. Clergy outside the U.S. and Canada please remit $2.00 postage. You may receive MINISTRY every month (the alternate issues as well as the bimonthly ones) for only $16.95 per year. Therefore, money spent for programs or modifications is usually lost if you decide to buy your own system later. Also, most users of data services use telephone communications to achieve reasonable turnaround times, and phone-line costs can exceed the costs of in-house equipment.

The chances of realizing a good return on an investment in computing for churches are best if a local member has the time and aptitude to develop or modify programs as needed. I can't imagine a situation in which the minister himself should invest the time to program or operate a computer.—Rod Leiske, Goldendale, Washington.

As a controller of a firm specializing in the financial needs of churches and clergy, I was delighted with your article on computers. Dr. Moon is quite right that "a system that almost does what you need could end up costing thousands of dollars of additional expense." That is why we offer computerized bookkeeping and accounting services designed especially for large and small churches. We also provide tax preparation, financial counseling, and insurance and investment counseling for church professionals.—Eugene E. Poteat, Downey, California.

Readers wishing more information on the services provided by Mr. Poteat's company can contact him by writing to Clergy Tax and Financial Services, 9625 Lakewood Blvd., Downey, California 90240.—Editors.

Specious heresy?
I found Morris Venden's article "What Jesus Said About Faith and Relationship" (March, 1982) interesting, as the author always is. I have somewhat against the article, however. I would be the first to insist upon the importance of a Christian's relationship with the Saviour, defined by Venden as "Bible study, prayer, and Christian witness." Surely nothing is more enabling to the struggling Christian and more necessary to his advance in holiness than these three works. I call them "works," for I believe that Venden does not see them as such. These are practices that we do; they take effort and initiative and continue through our lives. We are assisted by the power of the Holy Spirit to do these things, but the Holy Spirit never does it all. We have a part in this holy living. These actions are the fruitage of faith. The seed (justification) or basis of our salvation bears fruit (holiness) that includes Bible study, witnessing, and prayer.

I could not say what the author says: "When a person has lost his relationship with God he has lost his righteousness, as well, as far as God is concerned." A Christian's righteousness before the heavenly Father is much more sure than the fluctuating state of his commitment to Bible study, witnessing, and prayer. I fear that Venden's emphasis on the relationship the Christian is to sustain with Christ has overshadowed the cardinal doctrine of Christianity—justification by faith. Communication is certainly important. It is not a substitute for the cross, nor can it ever compare with that act. Any emphasis that upholds my wormy works of righteousness at the expense of Christ's incomparable, soaring works of righteousness is specious heresy, no matter how subtle it is.—Larry Bunnell, Portland, Oregon.

People too
I have particularly enjoyed Morris Venden's series "What Jesus Said . . ." His article "What Jesus Said About Faith and Relationship" (March, 1982) did a fine job of illustrating how sin is best represented as separation between man and God. But nowhere did he speak of the equally important Biblical revelation regarding sin between persons.

According to our Lord, sin is most fully described as separation not only between God and persons but also between persons and other persons. To be out of relationship with God is to be out of relationship with one's fellow man, and likewise to be out of relationship with other people is to be out of relationship with God.—W. Jay Best, American Baptist Church, Minersville, Pennsylvania.

Related correction
The article "How Old Is the World?" (March, 1981) contains two unfortunate errors in column 3, page 25, that require correction. 1. The basic Septuagint text specifies the number of Hebrew males who moved with Jacob into Egypt as seventy-five in both Genesis 46:27 and Exodus 1:5. 2. The oldest manuscript of the Samaritan Pentateuch is in Hebrew, so it is incorrect to describe this text source as Aramaic.—R. H. Brown, Loma Linda, California.
Conquering the Clock/4. You don’t have to be a slave to the tyranny of the clock. Thomas L. Are is fighting back and regaining control of his life. It isn’t easy, but he is making progress.

Struggling With Stress/6. Rebecca E. Hight. Stress is probably the pastor’s number one internal enemy. But it can be held at bay and even be made to work for you!

What Jesus Said About Perfection/8. Morris L. Venden. Was Jesus serious when He said, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48)? What did He mean, and how can we?

Feeding the Sheep or Guarding the Goats?/10. Kevin J. Howse. The youth pastor has a difficult balancing act to accomplish. He is expected to spiritually nurture the religiously inclined young people while at the same time running a program that will appeal to the restive youth who are on their way out of the church. And he must do both without alienating the adult members!

Where Did Jesus Place the Seventieth Week?/12. Hans K. LaRondelle.

Spiritual Gifts in the Church Today/15. Richard Hammill. The topic of spiritual gifts has been receiving increased attention by many churches as they seek to help members in Christian service. Yet we tend to be selective in the gifts we recognize. The Scriptures seem to indicate that we can expect all the gifts to remain in the church until the need for them is swallowed up in eternity.

Passion: The Indispensable Ingredient/18. Morris Chalfant. If the world is to be won for Christ, there is no substitute for a passion for souls.

Reach Out and Touch Someone/20. James Coffin.


The Greatest of These/28. Ruthie Self. A loving and lovable wife can do more than anyone else to make the parsonage a secure haven.

MINISTRY (ISSN 0026-5314), the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association © 1982, is published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and printed monthly by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, 6856 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012, U.S.A. Subscription price, US$16.95 a year; single copy price, US$1.50. For each subscription going to a foreign country or Canada, add US$3.45. Prices subject to change without notice. MINISTRY is a member of the Associated Church Press and is indexed in the Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C. Editorial Office: 6940 Eastern Avenue NW., Washington, D.C. 20012. Unsolicited manuscripts are welcomed and will be returned only if accompanied by a stamped self-addressed envelope.
Fighting against the tyranny of time, this revved-up pastor still averages six days and five nights a week at the church. “But I’m doing better,” he says! Could you use more control over your life too?

Thomas L. Are

Conquering the clock

We had just finished supper, and I was heading for a meeting when my wife grabbed me. “Do you realize that it’s been thirty-two nights since you were home when the children went to bed?” she shouted. “Where do we fit into your ministry?”

I didn’t know. “There’s only one of me, you know!” I exploded, already frustrated by the never-ending demand on my time. “All I get is pressure from home and criticism from the church. I just don’t have enough time!”

“You have twenty-four hours a day,” she shot back, “just like everybody else. It’s a matter of priorities.”

She was right, of course. I knew it then, and I know it now. If I were not careful, I could spend all my time at the church. I guess I feel more competent as a pastor than I do as a husband or father. At any rate, I manage to average six days and five nights a week at the church. But even that’s better than it used to be!

I am the resident theologian, the father of all church happenings, the local expert in evangelism, stewardship, church management, and worship. I lead small groups, teach classes, and make calls. Some days I feel as though I direct as much activity as the control tower of the Atlanta airport, and the eleven o’clock sermon comes every week, ready or not.

My second year in the ministry, I went to see the doctor, complaining of being tired. “I even wake up tired,” I told him.

“Tom,” he said as he wrote out an unusual prescription, “take this and you’ll feel as though I direct as much activity as the control tower of the Atlanta airport, and the eleven o’clock sermon comes every week, ready or not.”

“Old man,” he asks, “do you know why I stopped you?”

“Sure,” says the old man as cars whiz by, “I’m the only one you could catch.”

“I’m afraid that if I slow up, I, like that old man, will get caught. So I use long weekends and daylight saving time to squeeze in more work. Some call it the “BMB” syndrome—Behold Me Busy.”

Yet it’s foolish to think God finds joy in our exhaustion. When I’m tired, I don’t think clearly or relate well either to God or other people, including my family. I tell myself that I work best under pressure. But that’s not true. I may work harder when I am pushing toward a deadline, but that doesn’t mean I work better. The truth is, I don’t work as well as I would have if I had managed my time better, or, more accurately, if I had managed myself better in the time I have. Unlike money or talents, God gives each of us an equal amount of time. We are responsible to Him for our use of it. We never “make time” or “save time.” We simply fit ourselves into the time we have.

Today’s pastor is in trouble. One study shows that the average workweek for a parish pastor is 66.7 hours. I believe it. Every pastor I know struggles with this matter of time. He is expected to respond to every request for his services, day or night. “I hate to bother you on your day off, but…” constantly invades his private time. He seldom escapes the frustration and anxieties of his working day, and more ministers than ever are joining that growing alumni group of ministerial dropouts. Others who stick it out find their marriages falling apart. A friend of mine said, “Honestly, Tom, if I don’t get a break soon, I’m going to hurt somebody. I get so angry at times, it frightens me.”

I do too, but I’m doing better. I have made some changes that have put me more in charge of my life. I never planned before. Every good manager knows that to fail to plan is to plan to fail. Yet most mornings I arrived in the office and picked up the first thing that caught my attention. Often before finishing it, I would switch to something else that needed doing. All day long, I leaped from one chore to another until time ran out. Then I complained about how time flies and what a busy person I was!

Of course I kept appointments, usually five or ten minutes late. I spent half my traveling time rushing somewhere to be late. It was hard to learn, but I finally had to admit that even when I planned a time to leave, I seldom left on time. I had programmed myself to be late.

Today, I keep a legal pad on which I write out a daily schedule. I make it into a desk calendar with a page for each day, a new pad for each month. I write down what I need to do on future days, such as preparing for a committee meeting, pick up shoes at the shop, or write a letter to Mr. Brown. Some things I schedule months ahead.

Each morning I check my list for the day and add to it the current things I carry in my mind. I write them down, no matter how impossible they might be to forget. This simple procedure eases the continual rush-hour pace at which I am prone to live.

With a list visibly before me, it’s easy to put things in order of importance. I used to tackle the easiest things first, setting no priorities. Now, I concentrate first on the things that really count. If some nonessentials are left undone, it’s OK. I’ve still had a productive day.
I even school myself to do the most
dreaded task first. Whether it’s making a
phone call or working on some project I’d
rather not do, I get it out of the way first.
That makes the going easier for the rest of
the day. Otherwise, I postpone
the unpleasant chores and live all day with
them hanging over my head.

“A clean desk is a sign of a sick mind,” I
once jokingly said. I bragged about having
a pile of work on my desktop for all to see.
But a messy desk clutters. Some of the
busiest executives I know keep everything
out of sight except the one project on
which they are currently working. I strive
for that goal. But I’m not trying to become
an order nut. I am working for efficiency,
not neatness. A cluttered desk causes
confusion and wastes precious time.

I try to answer or discard all correspond-
ence as it’s received. This keeps me from
having to reread it. If I need more
information before it can be answered, I
begin to research it or schedule in my
legal-pad calendar when I will deal with it.

Two other mistakes I sometimes still
make have nothing to do with the calen-
dar.

First, I often eat too much lunch. Then
for an hour or two, I’m dying to take a nap.
Though I stick it out at the office, I’m
sluggish. I feel better if I have a light lunch.
My waist does too, but that’s another
chapter.

The most lasting mistake I make and the
most difficult for me to overcome is feeling
guilty about the things I don’t get done. I
come home at night carrying a burden for
people I did not see and things I did not do.
If guilt were a positive influence and
motivated me to do better, it might be
worth the destructive agony I carry inside.
But guilt never helps. It blocks. Perfection-
ism grows out of my insecurity, not my
faith. It’s the result of my fear that God
won’t accept me unless I earn it.

The good news of Jesus Christ is that we
are valuable to God because He loves us,
not because we perform. He does not load
us down; He sets us free.

Contrary to the impulse to make every
minute count, I now think it’s important
to waste a little time. It keeps me from
taking myself too seriously, and it gives me
an opportunity to think and reorganize.

A pastor’s emotional life is like a roller
coaster. In one afternoon I move from the
low of conducting a friend’s funeral, to
hearing a parishioner’s verbal attack, to
celebrating marriage with a young couple.
Sometimes I need to get off the track, and
it’s not fair to me to have to get someone
else’s OK before I can stop for a while.

Another friend in ministry takes the first
seven days of each quarter as vacation. His
contract allows a month each year, so he
claims the first week every quarter. No
matter on which day it starts, he comes
back on the eighth day. “It’s great,” he told
me. “I’m always either just getting home
from a vacation or getting ready to go on
one.”

I don’t need, nor can I manage, that
time. But I have discovered this: If I
do my job, if I lead exciting worship
services, if I communicate to the members
of the congregation that I care for them, if
I plan programs they can look forward to, if
I see that we have good Christian educa-
tion and manage to keep a balanced
budget, then I can do anything else I need
to do without criticism. However, let me fail
in any of these “rent-paying” responsibilities,
and I can’t seem to do anything without
someone’s reaction. My time off relates
directly to the quality of ministry I offer.

These changes I’ve made in life style
make me a better pastor than I was when
working thirty-two nights in a row. And
it’s better at home, too!
Do you find yourself snapping at your spouse or secretary?
Do you feel under constant pressure to do more, try harder, go faster? Does everyone, including yourself, expect too much of you?

Rebecca E. Hight

Struggling with stress

Does this seem familiar? You’re sitting at your desk preparing next week’s sermon. But the thoughts swirling through your mind won’t let you concentrate: “I promised to speak at the nursing home this afternoon. And I haven’t visited those two new couples who were in church. Oh! I almost forgot. The church board is having an important meeting tonight. And this sermon isn’t falling into place! I wish there were more hours in the day.”

Too much to do, too little time to do it in. This complaint is not unique to the pastoral ministry. Members of other helping professions—nurses, social workers, counselors, workers in suicide-prevention and drug-abuse centers—recognize the phenomenon as “burnout.” Demands on their time and energy, combined with their dedication to helping others in need, are causing these talented and committed persons to experience stress and burnout at an alarming rate.

Stress is a part of every life. In fact, most of us would be bored if no stressful situations ever enlivened the everyday routine. Psychologists T. H. Holmes and R. H. Rahe list some of the more stressful events of life on their social readjustment rating scale: death of a spouse, divorce, a jail term. But marriage, marital reconciliation, and retirement also appear on the list, indicating that events that are usually perceived as happy occasions can produce as much stress as unhappy incidents.

So stress in itself is neither good nor bad. It is our reaction to it that makes stress either a positive or a negative influence. If recognized and dealt with in a positive fashion, stress can become a significant growth experience. But if stress is prolonged and unreleased, if the energy used in dealing with it is turned inward in a nonproductive way, the results can be harmful. The individual may become burned out, disillusioned and discouraged, indifferent to the work he formerly enjoyed.

Some years ago, Drs. Meyer Friedman and R. H. Rosenman established that a certain personality (which they called “Type A” behavior) was directly related to a higher-than-average rate of heart disease. (See Type A Behavior and Your Heart, [Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1975].) Characteristics of the Type A personality include a compulsion to accomplish several tasks at the same time (such as signing letters while talking on the phone), impatience, competitiveness, and a constant feeling of time pressure. The Type A person is always in a hurry. He shows tension through posture (sitting on the edge of the chair) and behavior (tapping a foot or a pencil, clenching fist or jaw muscles). His conversation is accented by tense, energetic gestures.

Many ministers see some of these characteristics in themselves. With these built-in personality traits, plus the pervasive stress of their profession, such ministers may be prime candidates not only for heart disease but for other health problems that physicians have linked directly to stress: colitis, ulcers, asthma and other allergies, fatigue, back strain, headache, and depression. Placed in a stress-produc-
ing situation, the minister may respond with hasty and frustrated behavior that affects not only himself and his family but the very persons whom he most wishes to serve.

What can the busy clergyman do about the stress involved in the job? How can he lower his risk factor for physical and emotional problems?

It is important, first of all, to recognize the sources of stress, to know exactly what gives you a headache or that feeling of tightness in your chest, or causes you to snap impatiently at your secretary or your spouse.

Three major stress areas may affect the minister: (1) attempts to meet the needs of many individuals; (2) tensions within groups such as boards, committees, or the congregation; (3) unrealistic self-expectations.

The pastor's work is primarily that of a healer, reconciler, and restorer. However, not every person who comes for help is cured. This “failure” to work miracles may cause the pastor/caregiver to feel uneasy, personally responsible, or even subconsciously angry toward the one who “refuses” to take good advice and be made well. Being constantly available to others, being concerned for their well-being, offering spiritual advice, all take their emotional toll. Small wonder that some pastors become burned out by excessive demands (either their own or others') on energy, strength, and resources. Clergy and lay persons need to join together in mutual support as they minister, having kindness and compassion for one another, looking out for one another’s interests, not just each for his own (see Phil. 2:1-4).

It is difficult to join individual personalities, viewpoints, and methods into one cohesive church board, staff, or committee that as a skilled team can work effectively toward common goals. Yet this is exactly what a pastor is often expected to do. When group members react to situations based on their own emotional needs or personal bias, the result may be stress-producing—intolerant actions, defensive behavior, and arguments. The group as a whole can support the pastor-leader in such cases by attempting to defuse the situation in the spirit of Galatians 6:1-4: "My brothers, if someone is caught in any kind of wrongdoing, those of you who are spiritual should set him right; but you must do it in a gentle way. And keep an eye on yourselves, so that you will not be tempted, too... Each one should judge his own conduct" (T.E.V.).

But the most demanding form of stress occurs when the pastor expects too much of himself, setting up a standard of behavior and effectiveness that is humanly impossible to achieve. "I must try harder. I could help more people if only I cared enough [were more spiritual, worked longer hours, studied harder]. I must not fail!" No one can meet all the needs of everyone who comes to him. Yet the dedicated Christian minister may attempt to do just that, with little regard for his own or his family's needs. It may be necessary, though painful, to view disappointments and "failures" through the question: "Did I expect too much from myself in this situation?"

If you suspect that you have a Type A personality, if the stresses and frustrations of life are weighing heavily on you, if you see yourself as a prime candidate for burnout—consider some important revisions in your daily schedule. There is no simple or easy way to change the habits you have built up over a lifetime. But a recognition of the problem, whether incipient or full-blown, is an important first step. A desire to react to stress in different, more positive and creative ways can lead to a more productive life of Christian service.

Consider awakening a half-hour or so earlier in the morning. Use the extra time to eat a leisurely breakfast, read the morning paper, or chat with your spouse before leaving for work. Drive more slowly; break the habit of trying to beat red lights and pass slow drivers. If your busy schedule has caused you to eliminate personal Bible study and prayer, try giving top priority again to a short devotional time each day. The feeling of peace and relaxation you gain may affect your reaction to stressful situations that come up during the day.

Another important practice is a daily exercise period. Walk, jog, do calisthenics, take up tennis or bicycling. Do whatever you enjoy, but exercise your body! You'll clear cobwebs from your mind as you do. Relaxation is also important. Allow time for reading, listening to music, learning new interests or hobbies. Many pastors have no strong or keen interest in anything besides the work of the church.

Accept criticism without reacting defensively. At the same time, try to be objective. Some criticism deserves your careful study and may motivate you to make helpful changes. Not all criticism, however, is lovingly motivated or well considered. Learn to recognize which kind you are dealing with, and respond accordingly. If you can make positive changes, do so; otherwise, put harmful remarks out of your head and go on about your business.

Practice expressing your own feelings clearly and directly, in a nondefensive, nonthreatening way. Recognize your talents and use them well. Invest in meaningful relationships. Ministers need personal friends; you may find new contentment in cultivating a few close and deep friendships.

If you spend your lunch hours and morning breaks on church business, change this habit. At least two or three times a week schedule a quiet luncheon (invite your spouse at least once a week) in a spot far removed from the church-office atmosphere. Ban family and church problems from the conversation. Consciously relax and enjoy this "time out." If you don't protect your time and energy, no one else will do it for you.

A session of goal-setting may also be helpful. Review your reasons for entering the pastoral ministry. What aspects of your work do you believe are most important? Are you giving a large part of your time and talent to those things? If not, what is preventing you from doing this?

You will relieve much frustration and resentment if you can reorder your time so that the things that count are getting your best efforts. Three questions might put your work in perspective: "Is this the most important thing I can do right now?" "Will this be important five or ten years from now?" "Have I carefully considered the best way to do this?"

Share with other ministers your thoughts about what is helpful in managing the stress of a busy life. They may offer new insights, and you may be able to help them as well.

If God has called you to your task as a pastor, then time is important and should be used wisely. But the wisest use of time and energy may be to establish priorities, building in time for your own well-being, for your family, and for reflection and communion with God. Reevaluate your perspective on a regular basis. If you approach your work calmly and at a measured pace, knowing at the outset what you can realistically expect to accomplish, you will be a more effective worker in God's kingdom and will enjoy a new appreciation of the life He has given you.


The most demanding form of stress occurs when the pastor expects too much of himself, setting up a standard of behavior and effectiveness that is humanly impossible to achieve. No one can meet all the needs of everyone.
As beautiful and important as is the idea of forgiveness, the religion of Jesus encompasses something more—a setting free from sin. And this victory is not relegated only to some future life among God and holy angels; Jesus makes it clear that perfection is to be ours here and now in a world given over to evil. But even this, we must remember, is Christ’s victory, not ours. The righteousness He works out in us is still His righteousness and comes to us by faith. The moment we lose sight of that fact, perfection becomes perfectionism based on self.

Morris L. Venden

What Jesus said about perfection

Perfection can be a dangerous subject. Dwelling on the topic can itself be a discouraging and defeating work. The reason is that when we talk about perfection, our attention is almost invariably focused inward on ourselves, and that’s not where the power is. The power is always outside of us. So, to deal safely with the question of perfection, it must be handled lightly, once over, and be done with it.

To begin with, we need a clear understanding of the difference between perfection and perfectionism. Here is where we need a glossary. I will hazard a definition: The person who is involved in perfectionism is the one who focuses his attention and everybody else’s attention primarily on perfection. The one who believes in perfectionism is often the one who insists that the sinful nature is eradicated before Jesus comes again and that we can not only overcome but become sinless as well. I would like to disclaim any identity with perfectionism. But the doctrine of perfection is a good Bible doctrine, a solid Bible teaching, and Jesus Himself had something to say about it.

We could begin with the statement that Jesus made on more than one occasion, “Sin no more” (John 5:14; 8:11). That comes close to perfection, doesn’t it? Jesus said, in Matthew 28:20, to teach them “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” That also is pretty complete. But Jesus made three major comments in this connection. The first is Matthew 5:48, the second is Matthew 22:11, and the third is Matthew 19:21.

Matthew 5:48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” It has been said that the word perfect in Scripture means nothing more than “mature.” And it’s true that the Greek word carries with it the idea of maturity. So some say that Jesus doesn’t really mean “perfect”; instead He means “mature.” But the word mature is actually a stronger word than perfect, because mature carries with it the idea of ultimate perfection. You can have a newborn baby, and it can be a perfect baby that gurgles and coos. You can have a perfect 2-year-old, who sits on the curb and goes “blither, blither” to his friends. And he can be a perfect 2-year-old. But if he were still doing that at age 20, we don’t like it!

Jesus allowed for stages of growth in the Christian life. This is very clear in Mark 4:28: “First the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” A blade can be a perfect blade, and an ear can be a perfect ear. And the full corn in the ear can be not only perfect but mature as well. It can be perfect at every stage of development, just as we can be perfect at every stage. But maturity indicates an ultimate perfection. So, in a sense, when one tries to explain Matthew 5:48 by exchanging the word perfect for the word mature, he has made Jesus’ words even stronger. It could be easier to be a perfect baby than to be a perfect adult. And I’m thankful for this teaching of Jesus that there is perfection for each stage of growth, because it just may be that some of us are still in one of these stages!

One of the questions that usually come up when we talk about the idea of perfection is “Who’s achieved it?” But that is a foolish question. We never measure truth by our experience of it or by anybody else’s experience of it. That is a form of existentialism. It is a very naive approach to truth—especially the truth of God—to go around saying that a thing is impossible simply because I’ve never done it myself or known personally of anyone who has. There are many people, in the generations of this world, who have reached God’s ideal. But the nature of perfection is such that they would probably be the last ones to know it, and we probably don’t know about them, either. But let’s not decide it’s impossible just because of this.

In Christ “dwelleth all the fulness of the
Godhead, and the life of Jesus is "made manifest in our mortal flesh" (Col. 2:9; 2 Cor. 4:11). Through connection with Christ, "the righteousness of the law" will "be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4). Jesus' life in us will produce the same kind of obedience that we see manifested in His life.

The religion of Christ includes more than forgiveness, as beautiful as that is. It includes setting us free from sin, not just in some future heavenly life but here and now. This doesn't mean that we will no longer be sinners. Even the apostle Paul said that he was the chief of sinners. But he didn't mean that he was sinning all the time. When Paul said in Romans 7:18, "How to perform that which is good, I find not," he wasn't talking about external works and performance, because in Philippians 3 we find recorded a pretty good track record of his success on the externals. He did not come short there. What Paul was saying was that apart from God, inherently in himself, he was still a sinner. And all of us will have to join him in that acknowledgment.

Some of the confusion on the subject of perfection comes from a misunderstanding of the purpose of perfection. Perfection is not in any way the basis of our salvation. The purpose of perfection is to bring glory and honor to God. Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Psalm 23:3: "He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." The last group of people, just before Jesus comes again, fear God and bring glory to Him (see Rev. 14:6). One of the dangers of studying this subject has been the tendency to get the impression that our perfection is what saves us. That's not so. Jesus and the cross is what saves us. Obedience and Christian perfection are to bring glory and honor to Him, and if it is Christ dwelling within that makes it possible, then it is God's work through us. We're not doing any of it ourselves (see Gal. 2:20).

The Christian remains sinful by nature until Jesus comes (see 1 John 1:8). This should not be a discouragement to the Christian, because his standing in Christ rests on God's continuing justifying grace. However, the last message of the Bible, in the book of Revelation, speaks much about the overcomer. Obviously, it is the sinner who overcomes. What does he overcome? Primarily, he overcomes his practice of depending upon his own power, depending upon himself, and learns to depend upon God's power instead. This does not happen overnight, but results from the growing experience of the saved sinner as he continues his daily relationship with God. It is God's work, not ours.

If you want to understand the subject of perfection and the need for perfection, study carefully Matthew 22. You may very well find more answers in that chapter, in Jesus' parable about the wedding garment, than anywhere else. The man who came to the wedding without the wedding garment had received the invitation. He had responded to the invitation and was accepted at the feast on the basis of that response. His subsequent dismissal from the feast was because of his dishonoring the king, and the king's son, by refusing to put on the garment that had been provided for him free of charge.

We are all invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb, and all we have to do is accept the invitation. Jesus paid it all, and the friendly arms of the cross still point the way to the heavenly country. When Jesus bowed His head and died on Calvary, He purchased the right to forgive everyone ever born in this world who will accept His forgiveness. We are all invited to the wedding. There is nothing that we can add to what Jesus has already done. "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" (Eph. 2:8, 9).

But what about the wedding garment? In Revelation 19:6-8, we find the description of the marriage supper of the Lamb: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage supper of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

What are the righteous deeds of the saints? What is the righteousness of the saints? Jeremiah 23:6 reminds us that it is "the Lord our righteousness." So any kind of righteousness that is seen in the saints is still the Lord's work, isn't it? Therefore, it isn't our righteousness; it's His righteousness. But He offers to us both His righteousness for us, in providing the invitation, and His righteousness worked out in us, which is represented by the wedding garment. Both are of faith, and both come from Him.

Finally, in Matthew 19 we have the story of the young man who came to Jesus, wanting to know what he could do to enter into life. Jesus told him to keep the commandments. And the young man said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (verses 20, 21).

I had real problems with that text for a long time, because I said, "How can a person be perfect, and then come and follow Jesus?" It seemed to me that one would have to get with Jesus first or he could never hope to be perfect. But as I took a deeper look at that text I began to see that Jesus was telling him—telling us—how to be perfect. Jesus is talking about much more than just money. Get rid of whatever you have. You may be rich in talent. Stop depending upon your talent. You may be rich in good looks and are overcome every time you look in the mirror! Get rid of your good looks. I mean, of course, get rid of your dependence upon them. Don't depend on your brains, or your education, or your social status, or anything else. Sell all that you have, in terms of depending upon it. Get rid of all the things that you depend on in any way as a substitute for depending upon Jesus. And come to Him, having given up on yourself.

And then follow Him. What was that added for? Jesus said it in another place, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matt. 4:19). He is talking about following Him in service. No one can follow Christ in service until he comes to the place of having given up on himself and his self-dependence.

We will never become perfect by dwelling upon being perfect. Whatever perfection God has in mind for us will come only when we dwell upon Jesus and look to Him. And the one who is the most involved in trying to help someone else know Jesus is the one who will be dwelling most upon Jesus himself. As we keep our eyes upon Jesus, the work He has begun in our lives He will complete (see Phil. 1:6).

* From the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
Kevin J. Howse

Upon the youthful and inexperienced shoulders of the youth pastor rests a heavy load of responsibility. He is expected to have a formidable array of virtues and gifts, and a wisdom matching Solomon's. He is to wear the hats of evangelist, pastor, counselor, teacher, administrator, sports coach, and “all-around nice guy.” All of these expectations can cause an identity crisis. Is he supposed to be . . .

Feeding the sheep or guarding the goats?

Each year nominating committees in churches around the world spend a cumulative millennium of time discussing how to fill the youth leadership positions in the church and with whom. The poor “volunteer” (whose arm is in a cast from being twisted) normally flounders around for twelve months and hopes for the best. In larger churches, meanwhile, nominating committees clap their hands in joy, singing, “Let the youth pastor do it.”

When this youth pastor (often a young man just beginning his ministry) arrives at his church, he is frequently confused by the enormity of the congregation, its programs, its possibilities, and its problems. Upon these youthful and inexperienced shoulders also rests a heavy load of expectations, the likes of which would bring both Atlas and Hercules to their knees. From church members, both adult and youth, from the senior pastor, from his denominational superiors, and from various church officers comes a bewildering blend of voices demanding that he: (1) run a contemporary and fast-moving youth program that will at the same time meet the scrutinizing tastes and standards of the adult leadership and membership; (2) relate with the youth no one else can relate to—those who are socially and religiously alienated—while also identifying with and supporting the church institution, its committee actions, and its ways of doing things (the very items these alienated young people reject); (3) feed the sheep who are good at heart and dedicated to the Lord and church and at the same time guard the goats who are resistive under orthodoxy and camping on fools’ hill awhile; (4) speak to contemporary concerns and yet at the same time preach the “old, old story”; (5) wear the hats of evangelist, pastor, counselor, teacher, administrator, sports coach, and “all-around nice guy,” with dignity and humility; and (6) be both peer and parent, friend and preacher.

The youth pastor is expected to have a formidable array of virtues and gifts, and a wisdom matching Solomon's. Such pressure wears away at the very identity of the youth pastor himself. All too often he falls into the youth pastor syndrome, a state of confusion that leads to apathy and finally to a disruption in his family, life, and work.

Some years ago I found myself caught in this youth pastor no-man’s land between these conflicting expectations and pressures. For the first month I was besieged by young and old, right and left, about what was expected of me as the new youth pastor. I was delighted with the input but was skeptical that it was representative. Consequently, I developed a simple questionnaire that I hoped would give me a clear picture of the expectations both youth and adults had of my role. The instrument was not born in a moment of genius, but seemed adequate to the task. Four broad categories of a youth pastor's work were selected by classifying the verbally expressed expectations I had received during that first month:

1. Evangelist: coordinate and lead out in personal and public youth outreach to the Christian and non-Christian community.
2. Administrator: coordinate and facilitate youth programs, helping the youth to do for themselves.
4. Religious educator: teach and pastor, preparing and training youth in principles.

Kevin J. Howse is a doctoral student at Andrews University, on assignment to Newbold College, England.
of Christian living through seminars, small groups, lectures, et cetera.

The congregation was asked to rank these four categories according to the importance they placed on each of these functions for the youth pastor. The survey was completed by 118 young people and 112 adults. I should make it clear at this point that the sampling methodology was not as controlled as I would have desired, but it was controlled as much as practicable. When the results were tallied, the two groups gave the following priorities to the four activities:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Adult</th>
<th>Youth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Evangelist</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counselor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious educator</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first and most obvious observation that can be made regarding this survey is that the adult church community thinks that youth have more problems that require therapeutic assistance than do the youth themselves. Both in this situation and in my subsequent ministry I have detected a definite feeling among adults that youth for the main part have serious problems. As time went by, it became more and more obvious that this impression came, not from firsthand contact with youth, but rather from hearing about sensational situations in which a small number of youth got into difficulty. In other words, youth at large are often judged by the minority of youth who get into trouble. Youth are also often judged by criteria of Christian maturity that few adults can attain. A later and more exhaustive study of the entire youth population of my church revealed that problem youth in that church represented only 8 to 12 percent of the youth population. The majority of the youth, I am convinced, are sincere Christians; fun-loving, immature, and sometimes wayward, yes, but sincere Christians nonetheless.

For me, the lessons were obvious. We do our youth a great disservice when we allow the glaring mistakes of a few to shadow our opinions of the whole. Worse still, we do a great disservice to the majority of sincere Christian youth when we target our time and ministry primarily toward the minority of youth whose presence is so obvious by their misbehavior: Both the “sheep” and the “goats” must be attended to in their own way and with their special diets. Youth ministry, which is always trying to reach fringe groups, is generally reaching only minority groups and may be neglecting the solid core of youth who comprise the silent majority.

Second, as I moved around the church I felt the need to protect and shield this majority group from undeserved harsh judgment and to help those standing on the sidelines to get involved with youth so they could see their positive strengths and virtues and thus help this majority grow.

A second observation regarding the survey is that there was considerable agreement between the youth and the adults. More than 80 percent of both the adults and youths surveyed ranked the counselor/religious educator roles as being either their first or second priority. To me this meant that my function was to be a teacher/healer to the youth of the church, and by so doing the expectations of both youth and adults would be met.

Third, although administration ranked a poor fourth by both adults and youth, I found myself actually becoming more and more bogged down in paper work, committees, fund raising, et cetera. There is often a strong expectation that the youth pastor will sit on all church committees so that he knows what is going on. He is invited to attend many functions that detract from his central purpose to minister to youth.

One solution is to train young people who have the gift of leadership, but this takes the confidence of the church and time to develop. These individuals are selected to represent the youth council on the various church committees so that when the youth council meets, the activity of the entire church is also taken into consideration. As the elders function to carry some of the administrative load for the pastor, so youth leadership can be trained to do likewise for the youth pastor.

Counseling rated high on both youth and adult lists. But the work of counseling and educating youth brings no quick results. This fact causes disappointment to many. Church leadership especially seems to expect drastic, fast, and demonstrative change to take place. Many are tempted to judge the effectiveness of a youth pastor on short-term results. Results do take place under a competent youth pastor, but often they are not obvious, nor do they happen in the way expected. The development of a sound Christian perspective on life takes time to develop and nurture. The quality of one’s ministry in preparing youth for life can be evaluated only when those youth move out from home and school and move into the stream of life.

Popularity, too, is a poor criterion of youth-pastor effectiveness, although for many, including the youth pastor, this is one of the most important standards. While it is true that the work of youth ministry is made easier if one’s personality is such that friendship and trust are readily developed, it is also sadly true that many youth pastors never move past the point of merely developing their own popularity. The youth pastor is called upon to minister, to serve, to instruct, to counsel, and even to take firm stands for matters of principle where his popularity may be jeopardized. He is not to draw upon affirmation and group acceptance as the motives for his service, but rather he must draw upon his own spiritual commitment and his dedication to the philosophy of youth ministry. Youth ministry, like any other ministry, can be lonely at times; thus the job requires a strong sense of inner security, a positive self-concept, and a daily walk with God.

Although evangelism rated low in the expectation charts, I found that over the long haul evangelistic results were achieved. This was especially apparent in the small group fellowship ministry. These groups met with the purpose of providing interpersonal affirmation and support as well as spiritual guidance through Bible study. When needs were expressed and met in a young person’s life, an enthusiastic response often led to that person’s bringing friends.

Some have suggested that there is no need for a special pastor to take care of the youth population of the church. I agree that ideally the nurture of youth would best be done in the home or in some intergenerational setting. But we must also recognize that few churches or pastoral teams would be ready for such a program. My survey, limited though it was, confirms what we all know—youth are undergoing a once-in-a-lifetime experience that requires all of our best concentrated efforts in nurturing them to full Christian maturity. Education and counseling combine in a unique way to give guidance to youth who are in a period of transition from family- and peer-oriented religion and values to a personal and independent life in Christ.

Youth ministry, correctly implemented, should combine with the agencies of the home, church, and school to build the character of the church of the next generation.

---

We do a great disservice to the majority of sincere Christian youth when we target our time and ministry primarily toward the minority of youth whose presence is so obvious by their misbehavior.
The Saviour urged His disciples to understand the words of the prophet Daniel. But did He place the fulfillment of Daniel’s warning in the first century or at the end of time? Some interpreters believe that His same words mean one thing in Matthew and another thing in Luke!

Hans K. LaRondelle

Where did Jesus place the seventieth week?

Do the words of Christ in Matthew 24:15-30 predict a religious persecution of Jews in the modern state of Israel within seven years after the church has been raptured from earth to heaven? Yes, say dispensationalists, pointing to the Saviour’s references to the “abomination of desolation,” and “great tribulation.”

Commenting on a future fulfillment of the seventieth week of Daniel 9, which dispensationalists dissect from the preceding sixty-nine and transfer to the end of time (see MINISTRY, May, 1982, pp. 14-17), A. J. McClain states, “Our Lord’s great prophetical discourse recorded in Matthew and Mark fixes the time of Israel’s final and greatest trouble definitely within the days of the seventieth week of Daniel’s prophecy (Dan. 9:27; Matt. 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20).” According to McClain, Christ placed the “abomination of desolation” (see Dan. 9:27) in the future, at the end of time, “just before His second coming in glory” (see Matt. 24:29, 30).

J. F. Walvoord agrees that in Matthew 24:15-22 Jesus “had in mind the prediction of the climax of Israel’s seventy week or seventy sevens of years predicted in Daniel 9:27.” And a note at Matthew 24:15-20 in The New Scofield Reference Bible speaks of “a future crisis in Jerusalem after the manifestation of the ‘abomination.’”

Do the words of Jesus in Matthew 24 refer to a future, post-rapture tribulation for Jews? Can such a position be sustained by careful exegesis of the passage? In my opinion, the dispensational exegesis of Matthew 24 is an amazing example of futurism that denies the clearly recognized complementary function of the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus’ prophetic discourse is recorded by all three Synoptic Gospels and therefore should be studied in the light of all three records. However, dispensationalists exclude Luke from their interpretation of Christ’s Olivet discourse because Luke’s account does not favor their exegesis of the “abomination of desolation.” Yet many New Testament students consider Luke’s narrative to be historically more full and complete than either of the first two Gospels. Luke stands first in length and completeness.

The New Scofield Reference Bible even goes so far as to declare that Jesus’ words in Luke 21:20-24—the undeniable parallel of Matthew 24:15-22—predict the very opposite of what He says in Matthew’s account! “The passage in Luke refers in express terms to a destruction of Jerusalem which was fulfilled by Titus in A.D. 70; the passage in Matthew alludes to a future crisis in Jerusalem after the manifestation of the ‘abomination.’” See Beast (Dan. 7:8; Rev. 19:20, note); and Armageddon (Rev. 16:13-16; 19:17, note). In the former case Jerusalem was destroyed: in the latter it

---

Hans K. LaRondelle, Th.D., is a professor of theology, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

---
will be delivered by divine interposition." "

Such a contradiction is the result of a doctrinal assurance that will not submit it to the complementary, yet harmonious, points of view of the three Synoptic Gospels on the "abomination of desolation." Here the dispensationalist position can maintain itself only at the cost of breaking up the organic unity of the Synoptic Gospels.

R. H. Gundry, himself a dispensationalist theologian, acknowledges that it is irresponsible to impose a Jewish application on Matthew's Gospel (rather than applying it to the church) and thus relate chapter 24 to another, future, dispensation after the church has been raptured from earth. His major argument: "The Olivet discourse appears in substantially the same form in Mark and in a somewhat altered form in Luke. Consequently, it may still relate to the church from the latter gospels." Furthermore, Christ addressed the discourse to His apostles who represented, of course, the church, not the Jewish nation.

All three Synoptic evangelists record Christ's warning prediction that before the desolating abomination would appear in Jerusalem, the Palestinian Christians must experience the trials of false christs, of wars and rumors of wars, of famines and earthquakes (see Matt. 24:4-8; Mark 13:5-8; Luke 21:8-11). These predictions became historical reality between A.D. 50 and 64. Yet Christ had emphasized, "All these are the beginning of birth pains" (Matt. 24:8; cf. Mark 13:8).

Christ then mentioned a second kind of trial: Jewish and Gentile persecutions in the face of which the Holy Spirit would give His disciples an irresistible testimony; betrayals by relatives and hatred by all for the sake of His name (see Matt. 24:9-14; Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19). Bo Reicke gives a detailed report of the fulfillment of all these trials before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and states, "The situation presupposed by Matthew corresponds to what is known about Christianity in Palestine between A.D. 50 and 64." And in all these upheavals Paul affirmed that the gospel had "been proclaimed to every creature under heaven" (Col. 1:23). These facts allow us to conclude that Matthew 24:1-14 and its parallels in Mark 13:1-13 and Luke 21:5-19 have found a literal fulfillment in the years between Christ's death and the destruction of Jerusalem. 11

What, then, was Christ's purpose in giving all these signs that would lead up to the "abomination of desolation" in Jerusalem (see Matt. 24:15; K.J.V.)?

He wanted to alert His own disciples to the truth that His second advent would not occur at the impending destruction of Jerusalem as they initially had taken for granted (see verse 3; Luke 21:6, 7). When Roman legions besieged Jerusalem, the Jewish Zealots, inflamed by predictions of miraculous success, maintained their resistance in the false expectation that God would supernaturally deliver the city as He had done in the time of King Hezekiah (701 B.C.). 12

Against these false prophets Christ urged His disciples not to expect His return in glory at the coming desolation of Jerusalem. When they saw the desolating abomination in the holy place, they were to know this was the signal to flee immediately from the city and Judea. They should not expect God to deliver Jerusalem as the prophets Joel (chapter 3) and Zechariah (chapiters 12 and 14) had envisioned. And the reason should be clear. These apocalyptic prophecies presuppose a faithful remnant of Israel on Mount Zion. But this time the faithful remnant was the Messianic flock that was called out of the doomed city. Jerusalem would be destroyed according to the prophecy of Daniel 9:26, 27 because the city had rejected the Messiah as her covenant God. In Matthew 24, Jesus points specifically to Daniel's prophecy of doom for Jerusalem: "So when you see standing in the holy place "the abomination that causes desolation," spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the sabbath. For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again" (verses 15-21).

There is no perspective here for Jerusalem's deliverance "by divine interposition" as the Scofield Bible claims, but rather the opposite: the faithful remnant must flee out of Jerusalem and Judea when they would see the abominable invader coming within the land of Israel. Why flee away? Because the Roman desolator functions as God's decreed vengeance or punishment on the city and the Temple for her rejection of the Messiah and His apostles (see Dan. 9:26, 27 and Luke 21:22).

A close comparison of the parallel context in the Synoptic Gospels confirms this conclusion beyond any doubt. Mark's record of Jesus' warning states: "When you see "the abomination that causes desolation" standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. . . Pray that this will not take place in winter, because those will be days of distress unequaled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again" (Mark 13:14-19).

Luke's Gospel explains Mark's version of Christ's prophecy more elaborately for the Roman Theophilus (see chap. 1:3): "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is

"Seventy Weeks Are Determined Upon Thy People"

"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate" (Dan. 9:24-27).
near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written.

Then will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled (chap. 21:20-24).

It seems impossible to interpret Luke's explicit description as referring to anything other than the destruction of Jerusalem, which soon became historical reality in A.D. 70. Even The New Scofield Reference Bible admits this, as we have seen. Yet, the undeniably parallel passages in Matthew 24:15 ff. and Mark 13:14 ff. (all three Synoptic passages begin with "When you see . . .") are explained as referring to a different, future dispensation when the church is no longer on earth!

Indeed, the Scofield Bible finds two future sieges of Jerusalem in the same words of Christ's Olivet discourse! "Two sieges of Jerusalem are in view in the Olivet discourse, the one fulfilled in A.D. 70, and the other yet to be fulfilled at the end of the age. . . . The references in Matthew 24:15-28 and Mark 13:14-26 are to the final siege, when the city will be taken by enemies but delivered by the return of the Lord to the earth (Rev. 19:11-21; Zech. 14:2-4)."

It seems apparent that such an interpretation of Christ's words is guided not by an exegetical proposition that takes into account the context of the Synoptic Gospels, but by a preconceived futurism that forces on Christ's application of Daniel 9:26, 27 for His own generation an eschatological system of dispensationalism for Israel. Such an interpretation is saying that Mark and Matthew wrote nothing about the impending desolation of Jerusalem that took place in A.D. 70, while Luke wrote nothing about the "final" abomination and tribulation antichrist has in store for the "finally regathered" Jews. Why, then, does Luke, who largely follows Mark's account, completely ignore such a horrible tribulation for future Jews and focus exclusively on the imminent desolation of Jerusalem by Titus and the resulting worldwide scattering of Jews as the complete fulfillment of God's punishment for Jerusalem (see Luke 21:22; cf. Deut. 28:44-59; Dan. 9:26, 27)? Why does Christ in His Olivet discourse give identical instructions about the desolating abomination to His apostles for the church?

Not an idol image in the inner sanctuary but the invading armies of Rome in the "holy land" could be seen by all in Judea (see Matt. 24:13, 16; Mark 13:14). Both Matthew and Mark speak not merely of a coming "abomination" but of a desolating abomination. This horrible desolation, explains Luke to his largely Gentile readers, would come to Jerusalem with the destroying heathen armies (see Luke 21:20).

If the three Synoptic Gospels describe one and the same event regarding Jerusalem—the approaching desolation of the city and the sanctuary—then Christ placed the fulfillment of Daniel 9:26, 27 in A.D. 70, within His own generation (cf. Matt. 24:34, 33-36; Luke 21:32, 22).

Luke's emphatic declaration that the destruction of Jerusalem (by Titus in A.D. 70) was "the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written" (Luke 21:22) is the sealing confirmation that Daniel's "seventieth week" has been completely fulfilled in Christ's mission to Israel and in Jerusalem's horrible destruction by the Romans. 14

G. G. Cohen has argued that the predicted "abomination of desolation" was not fulfilled in A.D. 70, because "history reveals no action by the Roman general, Titus, which can be identified as the abomination of desolation of Matthew 24:15 or 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4." 15

Although Christ's disciples were to flee from the city and Judea prior to its destruction when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by the heathen armies, F. F. Bruce reports that "when the Temple area was taken by the Romans, and the sanctuary itself was still burning, the soldiers brought their legionary standards into the sacred precincts, set them up opposite the eastern gate, and offered sacrifice to them there, acclaiming Titus as imperator (victorious commander) as they did so . . . . The offering of such sacrifice in the Temple court was the supreme insult to the God of Israel." 16

Paul's apocalyptic outline in 2 Thessalonians 2 is based on the antichrist prophesies of Daniel, primarily found in chapter 7, where the antichrist ("the little horn") is explicitly located as arising among ten "horns" after the demise of the fourth kingdom (the Roman Empire) has made room for the ten smaller nations, that is, after A.D. 476 (see Dan. 7:23, 24).

Dispensationalism's unwarranted projection of this apocalyptic antichrist back into Daniel's seventy-week prophecy is one reason for the separation of the final week of that prophecy from the former sixty-nine and its being placed at the end-time. As given in Daniel 9, the seventy weeks reach only until the Messiah's coming to be "cut off" and the consequent destruction of Jerusalem as God's ordained punishment. But the antichrist of Daniel 7 is predicted to come after the Roman Empire has expired in the fifth century A.D. Thus, to fit antichrist into the seventh-week prophecy, a portion must be carried forward to the end-time. All such necessities vanish when Jesus' words are understood in their obvious context and meaning.

Undoubtedly in this way, the Saviour summarizes the fact that Daniel's seventy-weeks end, not in a post-church persecution of Jews in Israel, but with Messiah's coming and the consequences to Jerusalem of His rejection.

---

1 J. F. Walvoord, The Return of the Lord (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971, fifth printing), Chapter V.
3 Ibid., p. 40.
6 Ibid.
7 R. H. Gundry, The Church and the Tribulation (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), chapter 9, "The Olivet Discourse."
8 Ibid., p. 130.
10 Ibid., p. 133.
11 See also The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, on Matt. 24:2-14, pp. 497, 498.
12 Josephus, Wars VI. 5. 2, reports that "a large number of false prophets . . . announced to them [the people] that they should wait for deliverance from God."
14 Josephus writes that 1.1 million Jews perished and 97,000 were sold into slavery. He concludes: "Accordingly the multitude of those that perished therein exceeded all the destructions that either men or God ever brought upon the world."— Wars, VI. 9. 4.

It seems impossible to interpret Luke's explicit description as referring to anything other than the destruction of Jerusalem, which became historical reality in A.D. 70. Even "The New Scofield Reference Bible" admits this.
The catholic or universal Church . . . is the spouse, the body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. . . . Unto this catholic visible Church Christ hath given the ministry, oracles, and ordinances of God, for the gathering and perfecting of the saints, in this life, to the end of the world: and doth by his own presence and Spirit, according to his promise, make them effectual thereunto.—The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647), Chapter XXV.

This We Believe/9
Richard Hammill

Spiritual gifts in the church today

The desire of our heavenly Father to give good gifts to His earthly children is emphasized in the New Testament (see Luke 11:11-13; James 1:17). Jesus Christ Himself is called God's gift to mankind. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16, K.J.V.) is one of the best known and most cherished passages of the Bible. The Holy Spirit is also called a gift from God to everyone who repents and is baptized (see Acts 2:38). In sending Jesus and the Holy Spirit from heaven to this world, our heavenly Father gave the best spiritual gifts in all the universe.

In turn, these two divine beings began immediately to give their own gifts to the human family. For example, the apostle Paul insisted that the believers in Corinth not "be uninformed" concerning the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit gives (1 Cor. 12:1). This negatively worded phrase is a typical Pauline expression that the apostle often used when he wished to emphasize something. If the subject of spiritual gifts was important to the believers in Corinth, it is also a vital teaching for the church today.

The apostle stressed the wide variety of the Spirit's gifts: "Now there are varieties of gifts [charismatôn], but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service [diaskonion], but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working [energematon], but it is the same God who inspires them all" (verses 4-6).

Two observations are in order: First, although we often stress that the charismatic gifts are bestowed by the Holy Spirit, here the Lord (Jesus) and God (the Father) are also mentioned in connection with the gifts. In Ephesians 4:7, 8, and 11, Jesus is mentioned as the giver of some of the gifts. It seems that all persons of the Trinity are thought of as the source of the "grace-gifts" (charismatôn), but the Holy Spirit distributes them to various believers for the best good of all (see 1 Cor. 12:7, 11).

Second, the threefold categorization of the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, although used somewhat as synonyms, do hint of Paul's conviction clearly expressed later that the variety of gifts denotes difference not only in function but also in degree of usefulness for the upbuilding of the church. Paul seems to say that all are charismatic gifts but that some are more service- and action-oriented than are others.

The apostle's first list of the gifts includes: utterance of wisdom and knowledge, faith, healing, working of miracles, prophecy, ability to distinguish between spirits, various kinds of tongues, and interpretation of tongues (see verses 8-10). He then cites the cooperative and complementary functioning of the various organs of the human body to illustrate the necessity for persons possessing any Spirit-given grace gift to work in harmony with those possessing gifts different from their own (see verses 12-26). There must be unity, he says, in the exercise of the diverse gifts of the Spirit.

Next, the apostle lists again the Spirit's gifts. It is significant that in this second listing in the same chapter Paul definitely ranks the gifts in terms of their usefulness to the church: "And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers, administrators, speakers in various kinds of tongues" (verse 28). The apostle includes some gifts not mentioned in his first list and omits others. No one has all the gifts, says Paul, but believers are to "earnestly desire the higher gifts" (verses 29-31). Thus he highlights his emphasis on the usefulness of the gifts to the church. The purpose of the gifts is to produce spirituality, he says in 1 Corinthians 13. The gifts will pass away at the eschaton, but their fruit in the lives of believers will last forever. His point is that the church must value highly those gifts that contribute most to the spiritual growth of believers and to the upbuilding of

Richard Hammill, Ph.D., served as a vice-president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists prior to his retirement. He now writes from Olympia, Washington.
of the church by the proclamation of the gospel.

Paul elaborates on the principle of usefulness in chapter 14, where he points out that the gift of prophecy, which instructs believers and nonbelievers alike in the knowledge and love of God (see verses 1-3, 24), is much more useful than the gift of tongues: the latter does not significantly edify or strengthen the congregation of believers, although it may be helpful to the individual (note especially verses 4, 28). He did not explicitly forbid speaking in tongues (verses 39, 40), for he believed that gift was operative in some way in his own experience; “nevertheless,” he wrote, “in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue” (verse 19).

Then, repeating his contention that believers should desire those gifts that were most useful to all the believers and to the fulfillment of the gospel commission, the apostle made this appeal: “Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature” (verse 20).

On this basis Seventh-day Adventists do not participate in what is commonly called “the charismatic movement,” for we believe that other gifts of the Spirit are far more essential for fulfilling Christ's command to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). And yet, since all of the gifts of the Spirit are charismata, in a sense we are indeed part of the charismatic moving of the Holy Spirit in these end-times.

In his letter to the Ephesians, written seven or eight years after his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul gives another list of what he calls gifts (dóces) of Christ (see chap. 4:7 ff.). This list concentrates on the service-oriented ministries to which Paul had previously referred in 1 Corinthians 12-14. “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (verses 11-13).

Here Paul omits such gifts as healing, faith, tongues, helpers, and wisdom, which were mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12, and adds two new ones, “evangelists and pastors,” which evidently are a further subdivision of “apostles” and “teachers” listed in 1 Corinthians 12:28. The passing of time has apparently led Paul, under the Spirit’s guidance, to emphasize ministries that were proving most productive in building spiritual life and promoting unity by helping believers to avoid various “winds of doctrine” that were being promoted by certain persons (see verses 14-16).

Among those ministries proving to be most useful to the church was prophecy, which Paul had twice mentioned as second in rank (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) and once as first (Rom. 12:6). He had, in fact, urged, “So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy” (1 Cor. 14:39).

Most Christians are familiar with the phenomena of the Biblical prophets, who were persons called of God to bear special messages from Him to His people. The Holy Spirit spoke to the minds of the prophets, revealing to them ideas and instructions God wanted them to give to the people. They did not speak or write on their own initiative, for, as the apostle Peter put it, “No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God” (2 Peter 1:21).

Only a few prophets of New Testament times are mentioned by name (see Luke 2:36; Acts 11:27, 28; 13:1, 15:32; 21:9-11), but general reference is made to others who were prominent in the early church (see Eph. 3:5). The fact that the apostle Paul usually mentioned prophecy second, or even first, in his list of charismatic gifts is evidence of its importance in the apostolic church.

Genuine manifestations of the prophetic gift occurred also in the post-apostolic period. The prestigious and scholarly Theological Dictionary of the New Testament states that “the prophets did not vanish at a stroke,” and maintains that prophets were held in high regard in the church “right up to 300 A.D.” (Vol. VI, pp. 859, 860). The proliferation of false prophets led to loss of esteem for prophecy, and properly so (see 1 John 4:1). This was especially the case when the church, after much agitation, repudiated Montanus' claim to be a prophet.

Most Protestant denominations now hold that prophecy ceased at the end of New Testament times, but this claim is without Biblical foundation. The necessity for God to communicate directly with His people did not end when the New Testament canon was closed. In the crises of the last days, the church of Christ especially needs particular divine guidance.

The apostle Paul asserted that the charismatic gifts Christ gave would continue in His church until it comes to full unity of faith and to mature spiritual development in Christ. The church still needs all the gifts of the Spirit.
Revelation 19:10 and 22:9 attest that the phrase was intended in this setting to refer to the prophetic gift, which was to be active among God's last-generation people (see chap. 12:17).

Through the "spirit of prophecy" Jesus is bearing a witness to His "remnant." The voice of the prophets is the voice of Jesus. And this prophetic activity greatly augments the testimony the "remnant" bears about Jesus during the time portrayed by the revelator when the great dragon intensifies his attacks against Christ and His followers (chapter 12).

When Jerusalem had been captured by the Babylonian army, Jeremiah wrote: "The law is no more, and her prophets obtain no vision from the Lord" (Lam. 2:9). It is significant that the revelator saw the prophetic gift being renewed when the "remnant" keeps the commandments of God.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the gift of prophecy was active in the ministry of Ellen Gould Harmon (later White), who first received revelations from God in 1844. From that time till the close of her life in 1915, she received special instruction from God for His followers in the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The spiritual guidance Ellen White set forth orally and in writing helped the Seventh-day Adventist people avoid numerous spiritual pitfalls and doctrinal errors. It led them to become a missionary church, assisting in carrying the good news of Christ to all the world. An active leader in the temperance movement, Ellen White stressed lifelong health education. Her counsel led to the establishment of a worldwide system of health care for the sick. She helped form the Seventh-day Adventist system of Christian education, which presently enrolls more than 475,000 youth from kindergarten to university levels.

Although she never held an official position, was not an ordained minister, and never received a salary from the church until after the death of her husband, her influence shaped the Seventh-day Adventist Church more than any other factor except the Holy Bible.

Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit Ellen White produced an extensive amount of literary work from which eighty-eight books and more than 4,500 articles have been published, all of them exalting Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and upholding the high moral and ethical values of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Her writings emphasize both the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. They contain a scriptural balance between soteriology and theodicy.

Though written primarily for Seventh-day Adventists, the Ellen G. White writings have been read with great appreciation by a much wider audience. One of her small books, entitled Steps to Christ, has been published in more than one hundred languages, with some 15 million copies sold to date. Her magnum opus is the five-volume Conflict of the Ages Series, which develops the Biblical theme of the cosmic struggle between God and Satan from the latter's rebellion in heaven, down to the eschaton, the inception of God's kingdom of glory, and the restoration of Paradise following the final destruction of rebellion from the universe. Though certainly not a theologian, Ellen White did set forth many creative insights regarding the nature of God's kingdom and His purposes for the human race.

It is necessary to emphasize two concepts that Seventh-day Adventists do not hold concerning the Ellen G. White writings. First, her writings do not take the place of the Bible for us. An authoritative Adventist work clearly states: "In accord with the historic Protestant position, SDA's accept the Bible and the Bible only as the Christian's rule of faith and practice. . . . The canon of Scripture is God's message to all men of all ages; extracanonical revelation belongs to those to whom it is originally addressed."—SDA Encyclopedia, p. 1413.

Though believing that the Holy Spirit had genuinely spoken through her own writings, Ellen White wrote the following, which is typical of many similar statements: "The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested."—The Great Controversy, p. vii. She was convinced that the genuineness of her own writings must be tested by conformity to the Bible.

Seventh-day Adventist doctrines are based upon the teachings of the Bible, as we understand it. Using the soundest hermeneutical principles that we can find, we attempt to interpret passages of the Bible in harmony with their context, bringing to our study of the Holy Scriptures rigorous analysis and careful investigation of the meanings of words, sentences, and the total message of a given book, and indeed, of the entire Bible. The writings of Ellen White are, as she herself described them, "a lesser light" that aids in understanding the "greater light" God has sent us in the Holy Scriptures (Review and Herald, Jan. 20, 1903; see also Evangelism, p. 257); but they do not supersede the Bible for us.

That Ellen White played an important part in the development of Seventh-day Adventist doctrines is clearly evident, but that role was formative, not normative. Her distinctive contributions lay in the secondary stage of theological insight, not in the preliminary stage of exegetical interpretation of the Bible. Her insights were those of the evangelist, the preacher, and helped form the distinctive thrust of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. But the Bible has always held the normative role in Adventist doctrines.

Second, the writings of Ellen White are not an addition to the Bible. Of an individual who once advanced that view, she wrote, "In this he presents the matter in a false light." Her writings, she added, were intended by God "to bring the minds of His people to His Word" (Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 246).

In Old and New Testament times, as well as since, the prophetic gift was given to many persons besides those who wrote the Bible. But it was not God's purpose that their messages become a part of the canon of Scripture, which was intended for all men in every age. These other prophetic messages were intended only for the people to whom they were addressed. This is the conception Seventh-day Adventists have of the ministry of Ellen White. The phenomenon of revelation and inspiration in her ministry was the same as that of the Bible-writing prophets, but the purpose or function was different.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that except for certain objective revelations such as the giving of the Ten Commandments, the revelation and inspiration of Biblical prophets was subjective; that is, the revelation was given to the prophet, who then wrote out the God-given ideas in his own words. The writings vary widely in style, vocabulary, and logical arrangement of their messages. The Holy Spirit led the prophets so that God's ideas, not their own, were written down; yet different levels of literary training and ability are evident in their writings, whether in the simple prose of the evangelist John or the involved literary style of Hebrews.

This same phenomenon was operative in the writings of Ellen White. Having had

The necessity for God to communicate directly with His people did not end when the New Testament canon was closed. In the crisis of the last days the church of Christ especially needs particular divine guidance.
little formal education, her early style of writing was simple, though clear. Over seventy years of ministry, her literary style and vocabulary improved. The process of the Holy Spirit speaking through her resulted as the years went by in an increased breadth of understanding and ability to express it.

Seventh-day Adventists believe that only God is infallible. Though they think that, like the Bible, the writings of Ellen White are the result of Spirit-given revelation, they do not make an issue over questions of inerrancy concerning details but stress that the message of the Bible as a whole and of the Ellen G. White writings as a whole are heaven-sent, true, and authoritative. We believe the writings of Ellen White are in harmony with the teachings of the Bible, are indeed the result of the genuine charismatic gift of prophecy, and meet the Bible test of upholding Jesus Christ as Saviour and Messiah, God's Son who became one of us for our salvation (see 1 John 4:2, 3). We approve of the admonition "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are of God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world" (verse 1).

In regard to the gift of prophecy, the apostle Paul set forth the test of experience: "Do not quench the Spirit, do not despise prophesying, but test everything; hold fast that which is good, abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:19-22). Concerning this counsel, Ellen White wrote: "There is an evidence that is open to all—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His Word, the truth of His promises. He bids us 'taste and see that the Lord is good.'... 'Do you ask why I believe in Jesus? Because He is to me a divine Saviour. Why do I believe the Bible? Because I have found it to be the voice of God to my soul.'"—Steps to Christ, pp. 111, 112. We believe, as the apostle Paul said to the church at Corinth, that it is God's will that His followers be "enriched in him" and that they not be "lacking in any spiritual gift" as they "wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:5, 7).

In view of the predicament of human beings in all ages, and especially in these days of the end-time, every genuine communication from God must be highly esteemed as an aid for believers in God to live for His glory and to help accomplish His will on earth as it is in heaven.

*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations in this article are from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyrighted 1952, 1971 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.

Passion: the indispensable ingredient

How long has it been since you wept over the spiritual needs of your church? How long has it been since you were disturbed so much you were unable to sleep and spent entire nights in prayer? It is Jesus' deep, yearning, compassionate love for men that draws them to Him. And to the extent that this same love and compassion motivate us, men and women will be drawn to Him by our ministry.

Morris Chalfant

John Wesley tells in his Journal for May 20, 1742, of overtaking a man on the road and engaging him in conversation concerning religious themes. After realizing the man's views were very different from his, Wesley suggested that they keep to practical things lest they grow angry with each other. "And so we did for two miles," he continues, "till he caught me unawares, and dragged me into the dispute before I knew where I was. He then grew warmer and warmer; told me that I was rotten at heart, and supposed I was one of John Wesley's followers. I told him, 'No, I am John Wesley himself.' Upon which... he would gladly have run away outright. But, being the better mounted of the two, I kept close to his side, and endeavored to show him his heart, till we came into the street of Northampton.'

It is such confidence and sheer persistence—such passion—that explain much

Morris Chalfant is the pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene, Norwood, Ohio.
of the power of Wesley's movement. And it is the lack of these same qualities that explains much of the weakness of present Christianity.

It is good for us to compare our compassion and concern for others with that of Jesus. How long has it been since you wept over the community in which you live? How long since you wept over the spiritual needs of your church? How long has it been since you were disturbed so much you were unable to sleep and spent entire nights in prayer?

It was Jesus' deep, yearning, compassionate love for men that drew them to Him. And to the extent that this same love and compassion motivate us, men and women will be drawn to Him by our ministry. Every man understands the language of love on fire. I am a great believer in using the most up-to-date evangelistic methods in the most aggressive way possible; yet I strongly believe there is one indispensable ingredient that, when missing, does more to hinder our work than anything else—a passion for Christ, for spiritual realities, and for eternal realities. The attitude of complacency does more to hinder us than everything else combined.

The early church was born in an age of corruption when every moral law was violated without conscience. Its members had little wealth, no social prestige, and no help from Christian institutions. They were without most of the privileges and advantages we have today. But they were possessed with a passion to save men.

As we study the Acts of the Apostles, we become aware of a deep, driving passion in the lives of these early followers of Christ. The fervor with which they delivered the message entrusted to them is inspiring to behold. They had a passion that made their preaching and witnessing positive, persistent, and persuasive. Nothing could deter them. Threatenings and severe punishment only served to fan the flame of their passion for Christ. Would that we in this day might have that same passion!

The word passion is often in bad company today. It has almost taken on an exclusively negative connotation. But passion, of course, refers to any strong feeling or emotion by which a person is swayed. And when we look at Christ, we see passion at its highest. The Bible says of Jesus: “When he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd” (Matt. 9:36). Without passion we become static, and our service for the Lord becomes commonplace.

Over the centuries the church has seen the flame of evangelistic passion rise and fall. There have been days of triumph when it swept over entire continents, fanned by the Holy Spirit and fed in the hearts of Christians by the words of Jesus: “Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring” (John 10:16). And there have been times—tragic times—when the flame flickered and nearly went out. This may be such a time. It is certainly true that evangelism is given scant notice by much of contemporary religion. If evangelism is indeed the heartbeat of the church, the heartbeat is barely detectable in vast segments of the church today.

When evangelism is a passion, it is concerned primarily with souls. When evangelism is promotion, it is concerned chiefly with statistics.

When evangelism is a passion, it is used of God to advance His kingdom. When evangelism is promotion, it is used by men to enlarge an institution.

When evangelism is a passion, there are spontaneity and urgency in witnessing. When evangelism is a promotion, witnessing must be coaxed and coached.

When evangelism is a passion, it is a spiritual exercise of the caring heart. When evangelism is promotion, it is religious “gimmickry” to achieve ecclesiastical success.

It was a passion for souls that led David Livingstone into the jungles of Africa. Years later when his countrymen sought his return in order to lavish comforts and honors upon him in his declining days, this unearnethly passion led him to choose rather to pour out the last dregs of life in darkest Africa.

It was this holy passion that caused Wesley to leave the marble cathedrals of the state church and go out into the fields where he could pour out his burdened soul to a spiritually starving populace. It was this spiritual passion, utterly

unknown by the natural man, that sent Whitefield through England and America preaching and weeping as he preached. And so we might continue. But let this suffice: There has never been a man or a movement that had power with God and with men that did not share this heavenly vision and this impelling passion.

Long ago God declared in His Word: “Where there is no vision, the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). One of the primary elements of vision is a passion for souls. Unless we have a genuine burden and passion for souls, we will never have a vision of our field and the task to be done.

In the midst of the wail of jet engines, the crash of old orders, the mesmerism of materialism, the savage competition of modern life, and the great pull of worldly pleasure and programs, have we lost an ear for the cry of millions dying, “having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12)?

How is the world to be won for Christ and His kingdom? Jesus said, “Go ye into all the world” (Mark 16:15). That may mean next door, the next block, or the next row of seats as well as some unfamiliar land on the other side of the globe. It may mean to speak to the person working at the next machine or bench or desk.

General Booth is reported to have said to King Edward VII: “Your Majesty, some men’s passion is gold, and some men’s passion is fame; but my passion is souls.”

Passion! That is the need. We need holy passion. We need a heavenly vision with all its accompanying passion. Such passion was characteristic of the early church. We read in Acts 8:1-4, “They that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” If we twentieth-century Christians were called upon to face such a scattering as this, what would the record be? Would it be, “They went everywhere, and—backslid!” Not so with those early New Testament Christians. They had the spirit of their Master. Paul caught the same spirit and shared it with the young pastor Timothy: “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ... preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. . . Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

“We are I to let any soul to drop into the pit whom I might have saved from everlasting burnings, I am not satisfied God would accept my plea, ‘Lord, he was not in my parish.’” —John Wesley.
When the Bell Telephone system coined this catchy phrase, they probably didn’t have pastors in mind. But you will discover, as did this pastor, that the telephone can be an indispensable aid to ministry.

James Coffin

Reach out and touch someone

A catchy commercial for the Bell Telephone system has been admonishing radio listeners and TV viewers throughout North America to “reach out and touch someone.” The idea is to pick up the nearest telephone and call someone long neglected—preferably long distance. Bell’s prime motivation is obviously the generation of greater revenues. But the suggestion has tremendous possibilities for pastoral ministry.

Some time ago a disgruntled parishioner (not of my parish, I am relieved to say) complained that it took all the faith he could muster to believe that his pastor actually cared about him as an individual. Certainly, the pastor gave him a cheery smile and a firm handshake each week. He likewise always asked a rhetorical, “How are things going?” But in the many months since the pastor had arrived at that church, he had never paid a personal visit to this member. For that matter, neither had his predecessor. Nor the pastor before him! In fact, aside from the handshake and greeting after church, the only pastoral interest seemed to be an occasional appeal for greater giving or a request for some type of help at the church.

This very disgruntled parishioner was concerned. While he tried to be appreciative of the pastor’s heavy load and the congregational high expectations with which he had to contend, he could not ignore his own need to be treated as a person and not as a mere pawn.

“If the minister would just phone occasionally, just show a little personal interest, I wouldn’t feel so taken for granted and used,” he lamented. “Why can’t he arrange his schedule so that he can phone two or three families each evening? In four to six months he would be able to phone the entire church.” As I was then in transit to a new parish, I decided at least to attempt to implement his suggestion.

Without doubt, it has proved one of the choicest bits of advice I’ve received in some time.

As a pastor I’ve always placed personal visitation as second only to preaching in my list of priorities. (My performance, unfortunately, has not always reflected my priorities.) But for the busy pastor, particularly in a fairly large church, it is nearly impossible to visit the parishioners with the kind of regularity one would prefer. Even visiting very diligently, it may well take a year to eighteen months or longer to make an initial visit to every member’s home. Here is where the telephone comes into its own.

Within a week or two of arriving in my new parish, I sat down and began phoning every member on the roll. I introduced myself as the new pastor and told him or her that I was looking forward to getting acquainted. I learned the correct pronunciation of names, a bit of general information such as type of work, and fairly comprehensive information about children: birthday, year in school, et cetera. I told each to feel free to call upon me if I could ever be of service. And, finally, I encouraged each one to be sure to introduce himself to me at church on Sabbath.

It took me about fifteen evenings, working from five to nine o’clock, to make the three hundred calls necessary to contact all of the families. But the good will that it generated was phenomenal! Many people hadn’t had any personalized attention from a pastor for years. To think that they had been contacted when the minister had been in the area less than six weeks was almost overwhelming! Since first impressions are usually lasting ones, the speedy contact generated a glow of good will that could only work to my advantage. The telephone introduction definitely made for a warmer reception when I visited the home later.

Having kept careful notes of our conversations, I had a wealth of information jotted down about each family. Many had been very forthright in letting me know that, due to a particular grievance, they had not attended church in weeks, months, or years. The feeling of anonymity provided by the phone seemed to make some feel less inhibited about lancing their boils of grievance. And the result was very therapeutic. With the problem at least verbalized, we could work toward a resolution more quickly when I visited personally.

Of course, those calls had taken almost sixty hours. But during that time I had become fairly conversant with the church roll. I had memorized a significant proportion of the church members’ names before ever meeting them. Putting names with faces was then relatively simple. A further benefit was that I could immediately begin sending birthday cards and other special-occasion cards to the church’s young folks—cradle through college—even including little personal details gleaned from my initial phone contact. Many youth were amazed. “How can a minister, whom I have seen only once or twice, know that it is my birthday, let alone that I play the trumpet and love snow-skiing?”

I have begun to realize how starved people are for someone to care about them—not necessarily to do things for them, just care about them. So I have begun to jot down bits and pieces of information that I happen upon. If Mrs. Brown is going to have a wisdom tooth pulled in a week, I make a little note of the details and phone at the appropriate time just to see how she’s getting along. If the Smiths are taking a trip somewhere, I note their date of return and phone to see how the trip went. If the Arnolds are going to be grandparents in three months, I check to see if the big event has transpired.

Of course, I don’t keep up on all the comings and goings of my members. By far, the bulk of events goes by unnoticed. Yet almost every working day I spend at least an hour on the phone making five-minute

(Continued on page 29.)
The Sabbath in Scripture and History

First comprehensive treatment of the weekly rest day since Andrews and Conradi in the early 1900s. Eighteen scholars have contributed to this 448-page reference work. Chapters include:

**Biblical**
- The Sabbath in the Pentateuch
- The Sabbath in the Intertestamental Period
- The Sabbath in the New Testament
- Sunday in the New Testament

**Theological**
- The Sabbath in Modern Jewish Theology
- Contemporary Theories of the Sabbath
- Reflections on a Theology of the Sabbath

**Historical**
- The Rise of Sunday Observance in Early Christianity
- The Sabbath in Asia
- The Sabbath and Lord's Day During the Middle Ages
- Sabbath and Sunday in the Reformation Era
- The Sabbath in Puritanism

Regular price is $19.95, but until August 31, 1982, you can take advantage of a special introductory offer for MINISTRY readers. You pay only **$14.95** — a savings of $5! (Please add $1.50 postage and handling per volume. I understand this is a savings of $5 off the regular price.)

MINISTRY Services
P.O. Box 217, Burtonsville
Maryland 20866.

Please send me ___ copies of The Sabbath in Scripture and History at the special introductory rate of US$14.95 plus $1.50 postage and handling per volume. I understand this is a savings of $5 off the regular price.

Name ________________________________
Address ______________________________
City _________________________________
State or Province _________________________ Zip __________

Offer expires August 31, 1982.
Good only in the United States and Canada.
Payment must accompany order.
Come spend five stimulating days with these specialists in church growth and leadership!

Carl F. George, director of the Fuller Institute of Evangelism and Church Growth, a joint ministry of Fuller Evangelistic Association and Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California. He is active in leading professional training courses in church growth, conducting on-site parish analysis and consultation, and serves as senior editor of the Church Growth Training Program, a modular system for pastoral in-service education.

Carl Dudley, professor of church and community at McCormick Theological Seminary, Chicago, Illinois. An ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church, he is author of *Making the Small Church Effective* (Abingdon, 1978) and *Where Have All Our People Gone?* (Pilgrim Press, 1979). His special studies include the dynamics of small churches and strategies for churches in changing communities.

Douglas W. Johnson, executive director of the Institute for Church Development, Inc., Ridgewood, New Jersey. He serves as a consultant for church planning, research, management, and organizational development and has taught in the area of sociol-

August 29 to September 2, 1982

Sunday, August 29
Registration: 5:00-7:00 p.m.
Evening keynote address: Carl George, “Releasing Motivation Through Gift Discovery.”

Monday, August 30
Motivating and Training the Laity

Tuesday, August 31
Revitalizing the Stagnant Church
Wednesday, September 1
Care and Feeding of Volunteers
Featured speaker: Douglas Johnson, "Creative Possibilities for Using Volunteers" and "Overall Trends in Effective Volunteer Activities." Plus Oscar Heinrich and T. A. McNealy
Workshops: Douglas Johnson, "Recruiting, Training, and Rewarding"; Skip Bell, "Volunteer Management," T. A. McNealy, "Volunteer Training."

Thursday, September 2
Leadership in Mission

Designed to meet the church growth needs of every pastor who longs to see a resurgence of power-filled ministry in his church, this seminar will be a tremendous opportunity for fellowship and learning in a beautiful campus setting. Take a few days' vacation; bring your spouse and share this unique enrichment!

Tuition:
One hour transferable undergraduate or graduate credit: $110; two hours, $208.
Noncredit participation: $80.
Per-day charge for those who cannot attend the entire seminar: $25. No tuition charge for spouses who do not desire academic credit.

Meals and Lodging:
Meal charge per day (3 meals): $9.50.
Residence hall lodging, two people to a room, per person, per night: $8.50.
Residence hall lodging, one person to a room (when available): $12.00. Nearby motels are also available.

Each day's program features presentations by well-known church growth specialists. In addition, the afternoon workshops will provide opportunities for individualized attention and hands-on skill building in areas relating to each day's topic. For more information call toll-free (800) 253-2874.
In Michigan call (800) 632-2248.
Should we have a loose-leaf Bible?

Some feel strongly that the greatest question facing conservative Christianity is the issue of the authority of Scripture. Can we find authority in the Bible if we decide what is truth and what is error?

I went to the San Diego Congress on the Bible in March very uneasy about the word "inerrancy." The congress had been billed as a gathering of those who want to "understand and experience the transforming power of God's inerrant, authoritative Word." It was sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy. I had no quarrel with the authoritative nature of the Bible; I believed implicitly it was God's Word. But the term "inerrancy" made me a little nervous.

As Seventh-day Adventists, we hold a decidedly high view of the inspiration of Scripture. We believe it is God's Word to man, not man's word about God. We feel quite comfortable with the word "infallible" and apply it freely to the Bible. The Statement of Fundamental Beliefs voted at the 1980 General Conference session in Dallas declares, "The Holy Scriptures are the infallible revelation of His [God's] will."

One seminar leader at San Diego pointed out that for centuries the church used the two words—infallibility and inerrancy—interchangeably. And in some ways, he said, "infallible" is actually a stronger word than "inerrant." The former means "cannot fail or err"; the latter means "does not err."

Why, then, do we shy away from the word "inerrancy"?

If I am at all representative of Seventh-day Adventist thinking, I believe we do so because we feel that describing the Bible as "inerrant" demands accepting verbal inspiration—a mechanical dictation idea in which each word was whispered by God in the writer's ear. Since San Diego I'm not so sure of that. I know I didn't find anyone there among the speakers or seminar leaders who would accept such a concept of inspiration.

Having rejected verbal inspiration, we have often called ourselves "thought inspirationists." By this we usually mean that God gave concepts, ideas, and information to His prophets in dreams and visions and then allowed them to express these divinely inspired messages in their own language, style, vocabulary, and personality.

I still believe this is basically the way inspiration works. And from my observations, most of those leading out in the San Diego Congress would agree. However, it seemed that the Congress placed a somewhat greater emphasis than I had usually allowed on God's role in superintending the writing of His message. Although God did not override the human writer's personality or cultural and linguistic limitations, He did actively guide the prophet in the writing as well as in the receiving of the vision. The result? A Word of God, strained through men, that in its original form (the autographs) said just what God wanted said free from error.

It's a position that is difficult to refute logically if we are to take God's Word seriously, especially such texts as 2 Peter 1:21, "No prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (R.S.V.). "If we believe that the God of the universe designed and sustains it by His infinite wisdom and power; if we believe that He is the One who works all things according to His will so that even evil ultimately is made to serve His beneficent purposes, why should it be difficult to believe that such a God can also ensure, by the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit, that frail, fallible man will transmit His divine message to other frail, fallible men in the exact form He designs and without error?"

The alternative for one who wants to take God's Word seriously and yet leave room for human distortions of a minor nature was well illustrated by another seminar leader at the San Diego Congress. Many Christians think of Scripture, he said, as a sort of divine road map useful for telling one how to travel from earth to heaven. It is, in fact, very much like the Rand McNally atlas we use to find our way from New York to Chicago, for example. It is accurate, authoritative, and above all pragmatically useful. It is infallible in the sense that if we trust it and follow it, it will get us where we want to go. But minor errors of fact may very well occur here and there. The map may show the road running south of a little town in Ohio when it actually goes around on the north side. A secondary road may connect with the interstate highway at the interchange beyond the one shown on the map; a recent rerouting of a highway may not be indicated. But with the exception of these few discrepancies, it is accurate and infallible.

As he developed this illustration, I thought, This is almost exactly how I have been viewing Scripture. I'm not so sure since San Diego that such a position takes God's Word seriously enough.

On the other hand, there are some apparent problems in Scripture that inerrantists sometimes seem to minimize. I occasionally detected in the congress what looked to me like circular reasoning. "The Bible does not contain errors. Therefore anything that appears to be an error in Scripture really is not an error. Thus the Bible does not contain errors." Such reasoning leads to some rather ingenious and convoluted scenarios for such things as how often the rooster crowed during Jesus' trial or the comings and goings of the Master at Jericho. Would it not be better simply to affirm faith in Scripture as God's inspired, authoritative Word and leave such apparent contradictions and difficulties in abeyance until eternity? For some at San Diego, such a solution would definitely be considered a compromise with error.

The difficulty with comparing Scripture to a reliable, but imperfect, road map is this: Who decides (and on what basis) where the discrepancies and errors lie? Does not such a view allow each person to determine for himself what is true in Scripture and what is not, and to do so on the basis of his or her own human reason? A certain piece of information in the Bible becomes error if it does not correspond to his experience or knowledge of the world or if it seems contradictory to his mind. Thus human reason presumes to judge the Word of God. I may be content under such a view to confine scriptural "errors" to what I feel are a very few, minor incidents. But what is to prevent me tomorrow from deciding on the basis of my experience and reason that another area of Scripture is fallible?

Ironically, the same month that the Congress on the Bible was meeting in San Diego, an article appeared in The Church...
man by Weston A. Stevens (March, 1982, pp. 8, 9) illustrating one possible result of allowing human reason to judge the Bible. Stevens suggests that Christians would do well to have a loose-leaf Bible. Not in the sense of a three-ring binder with punched pages, but a "Bible" that would be significant for modern man. (The old one isn't, the author believes.)

This loose-leaf Bible would be constantly changing because it would be built on the concept that "truth changes." Neither would any two people require the same "Bible." Each would compile his own composed of selections from some of the better portions of the current Bible. Stevens suggests "the inspired words of Moses and Amos and Isaiah, parts of the Psalms, some of the Sermon on the Mount, Paul's 'Hymn of Love'" along with selected writings from such individuals as Shakespeare, Seneca, Socrates, Thomas Merton, Goethe, Lewis Carroll, Ogden Nash, Emily Dickinson, and perhaps Annie Dillard.

Asks Stevens, "What about those traditionalists who would argue that such a loose-leaf Bible would no longer be the Word of God?" His reply: "Anyone who calls the Bible the Word of God certainly hasn't read it very carefully or discerningly." After citing several Old Testament examples of deception and cruelty, he concludes: "The point is, God isn't to be blamed for these holy words. We can blame the old men who made this book and put their own imperfect voices into the mouth of God. They took their prejudices and their own private revenges and hatreds and trumped them up and called them 'God's Word.' It can be safely said that a fourth of the Old Testament ascribed to God is none other than the imperfect, unworthy, irreverent word of men (maybe some women, too). Who knows how much of the teaching and the person of Jesus in the New Testament has been tragically warped and misrepresented by albeit well-meaning persons?"

Such an extreme example simply serves to illustrate the possibilities when one begins to use his or her own human reason to judge what is or is not true in Scripture. It also illustrates why those sponsoring the congress feel the matter of inerrancy is such a vital issue within evangelical Christianity today. They see a trend among conservative Christians to compromise on the inspiration and authority of God's Word. They feel the only bulwark against reducing the Bible to "good advice" is to stand firm on an inerrant Word from God to man.

I came to San Diego uneasy about the word "inerrancy." I'm still somewhat nervous about some of its connotations—illogically so, perhaps, since I don't mind the word "infallible." But I am a lot less uneasy about inerrancy since San Diego. And I'm infinitely less uneasy about the implications of inerrancy than I am about any view of Scripture that could lead to the understanding of God's Word held by Mr. Stevens. Compared to that, inerrancy looks positively captivating!—B.R.H.

Continuing education is for you!

Noncredit continuing education has been the fastest growing segment of education since the close of World War II.

Why this upsurge in noncredit education offerings? The need can be traced directly to the rapid expansion of knowledge, and the obsolescence of its long-term utility. These two factors have contributed substantially to the demand for noncredit continuing education directed toward the rehabilitation and retraining of the existing worker force. Those in professional occupations find it increasingly necessary to update and upgrade their knowledge through continuing education. This effort begins shortly after the completion of their formal education and continues throughout their working years. Increasingly, more and more education for specific careers and job functions has to be obtained after graduation and continues throughout an individual's productive life.

The church is not unaffected or untouched by societal trends. Presently thousands of clergy participate each year in evening classes, short courses, workshops, seminars, conferences, institutes, and other forms of noncredit continuing education. Professional societies and organizations develop programs and award certificates to encourage members to update their knowledge and skills. In many churches evidence of continuing education is required for maintenance of credentials, for occupational advancement, and for recognition of personal and professional development.

During the past few years, Ministry has conducted 185 Professional Growth Seminars in North America to furnish advanced study opportunities to those engaged in ministry. The program is built upon the premise that unique theological and practical issues and needs arise in the practice of ministry. The faculty we choose for these seminars are people of faith, scholars who have mastered their academic disciplines and teachers who are committed to Christ and His church. The subjects range from church growth to counseling in times of crisis to preaching from the Psalms. This intrachurch ministry is especially designed for men and women who are presently in a pastoral role. At the end of each seminar the participants are presented with a certificate, and a permanent record of the CEUs earned is registered with Andrews University in Berrien Springs, Michigan, a transcript of which is available on request.

Since many of you have requested information about the content and location of the Professional Growth Seminars, the September Ministry will carry a complete listing of the autumn seminar programs scheduled to date.

In addition, our planning could be more effective if we knew where the concentration of interest resides and what topics you who are in direct ministry feel would be most beneficial. Please help us plan by filling out the attached coupon.
Esther and history—1

Jewish rabbis and early Church Fathers debated whether the book of Esther should be included in the canon of Scripture. Today we are faced with a historical question: Did the events described in Esther really occur?

A number of debates have swirled around the book of Esther in the centuries since it was written.

Both Jewish rabbis and the fathers of the early Christian Church debated whether it should even belong in the canon of Scripture. (One reason that the Christians questioned its canonicity was that New Testament writers neither quoted nor alluded to it.) The Essenes of Qumran apparently had a rather negative view of Esther as well; it is the only book of the Hebrew Bible that is not attested among the Dead Sea Scrolls—the fragments that have survived from their library.

The striking absence of the name of God from its pages, in spite of the fact that it mentions the King of Persia 190 times, raised questions in the minds of some. Certain early Christian writers found Esther nationalistic and anti-Gentile in tone, as well as describing the origin of a Jewish festival that had no relevance for the Christian calendar and that may even have had connection with a pagan prototype. Esther herself has not escaped unscathed. Although she finally emerges as the heroine of the book, her status as wife and queen of a pagan king and the way she obtained that position have come in for occasional criticism.

Finally is the modern historical question: Did the events described in Esther really occur? It is this question that I want to examine.

The nature of extra-Biblical sources for Persian history in the fifth century B.C. provides only an indirect answer at best. Yet I suggest that a reasonable context for some of the events Esther describes can be derived from such sources.

One of the arguments against the historicity of Esther is that its details do not fit what we know of the career of Xerxes from extra-Biblical sources. The book dates Esther's arrival at court in the seventh year of Xerxes (see 2:16) when, according to Herodotus, the king was on the western battlefront fighting the Greeks. Esther is identified in the book as Xerxes' queen from his seventh year until at least his twelfth year (see 3:7), but according to one interpretation of Herodotus, Amestris is supposed to have been his queen through that five-year interval. "If Esther is this inaccurate on points in which the book purports to provide considerable detail," say the critics, "then its historicity can reasonably be called into question."

Before taking up some of these detailed historical matters, we should ask: Have the events of Esther been connected with the right king? Is the Ahasuerus of Esther really the Persian king more commonly known as Xerxes?

Linguistic relations between these two names leave no doubt about their equivalence. Besides the Hebrew Bible, Xerxes' name is attested in texts written in five ancient Near Eastern languages: Old Persian, Elamite, Aramaic, Egyptian, and the Babylonia dialect of Akkadian. All of these written forms of Xerxes' name can be equated through a few well-known phonetic shifts, and they can also be related directly to the Biblical Ahasuerus. For example, the transliterated form of the name in Hebrew, 'Achashweroosh, compares favorably with the Old Persian form, Khashayarshu, and the Babylonian, Aksheyaarshu. (See SDA Bible Dictionary, p. 205.)

fit, therefore, it is evident that by using this king's name, the author of Esther clearly intended to locate its events during Xerxes' reign.

While cuneiform sources do help somewhat in determining events during Xerxes' reign, they are not nearly so helpful as the Greek sources, especially the account of Herodotus, who traveled through the Near East less than a quarter century after Xerxes' death. These Greek sources have been the subject of recent major studies by A. R. Burn, C. Hignett, and P. Green. Combined with sources from the ancient Near East, these authors provide us with a rather full picture of important events during the reign of Xerxes.

The first known event of significance in Xerxes' reign is his suppression of the Egyptian revolt. Darius, his predecessor, died late in 486 B.C. before he was able to attend to the matter, leaving it for Xerxes to deal with. Since inscriptions dated to Xerxes' reign appear in Egypt early in 484 B.C., his suppression of that revolt can be safely assigned to 485 B.C.

With Egypt under control again, Xerxes was free to direct his attention to the campaign against Greece. On this basis, it has been suggested that the 180-day "banquet" in Xerxes' third year (see Esther 1:1-4) be put within the setting of the planning session for his Greek campaign. The presence of the "army" (1:3, Masoretic Text) or the "officers of the army" (Septuagint) in Susa at that time lends some support to this suggestion.

The capital, Susa or Shushan, was located just east of the Mesopotamian plain, and the heat was so intense during the summer months that the Persian kings resided at higher altitudes on the Iranian plateau during that time. Thus it seems reasonable to estimate that these six months referred to in Esther probably began in the fall and ended in the spring. If so, the seven-day celebration immediately following (see verse 5) could coincide with the spring New Year's festival which signaled the start of Xerxes' fourth regnal year. Such a celebration would have been a likely occasion for the participation of the entire populace of Susa as described in Esther 1:3: "And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days." Xerxes should have started on his campaign to Greece shortly thereafter, but he was delayed for another year by a revolt in Babylonia. The reason for this revolt is not known, but possibly it was connected with a refusal by the Babylonians to contribute troops to Xerxes' army.

With both Egypt and Babylonia now well in hand, Xerxes departed from Persia with his army in the spring or summer of his fifth year, 481 B.C. He arrived at Sardis in western Anatolia in the fall and spent the winter there. His first campaign carried him into Greece in his sixth year, or 480 B.C. The major land battle of that campaign was fought at Thermopylae in August, and the major sea battle was fought at Salamis in September. Xerxes then left Athens for Anatolia by the first of October, crossed the Hellespont by mid-November, and reached his winter quarters at Sardis by the end of that same month.

These chronological data bear some relation to the references regarding Xerxes' search for a new queen as related in Esther if we work backwards from the time that Esther went in to Xerxes (his seventh year). Esther 2:12 states that the preparation period prior to that time was twelve months. The text does not say what day of the month Esther went in to the king, but according to the table on Babylonian chronology prepared by R. A. Parker and W. H. Dubberstein, it could not have been later than the last day of the month which corresponded to January 20, 478 B.C. Esther should have commenced her preparation, then, twelve lunar months earlier at the end of January, 479 B.C. Minor chronological variables could alter this date by a month or so.

The chronology reconstructed here indicates that Xerxes sent out his edict ordering the beauties of the kingdom to be collected at Susa in preparation for his return while he was still at his headquarters in Sardis during the winter of 480/479 B.C. Does this conflict with any information from the book of Esther?

Involved here are two questions, one geographical, the other chronological. As far as geography is concerned, the text of Esther does not indicate that Xerxes was away from Susa when he issued his order, but neither does it state that he was in Susa. Thus it permits either reconstruction. The chronological references in Esther allow sufficient time for Xerxes' edict to have reached Susa before Esther commenced her period of preparation, especially in view of the speed with which the Persian courier service is credited. Herodotus' familiar tribute to the Persian courier is inscribed today on the New York City Post Office building: "Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat, nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds.

While Esther does not necessarily require Xerxes to be in Susa when he issued his order for candidates to be prepared in anticipation of selecting a new queen, it obviously does require that he had to be back in Persia by the time those candidates appeared before him a year later (see Esther 2:8-20). Did he make it back in time? Xerxes did not return to Greece with his troops when he sent his army off on the even more disastrous campaign of 479 B.C., but neither did he leave Sardis for Persia until a few days after some of the Persian survivors from the battle of Mycale on the coast of Asia Minor arrived there late in August of that year. We may thus estimate that Xerxes left for Susa around the first of September, which was the beginning of the seventh Babylonian-Persian month of his seventh year.

Because Xerxes probably returned to Persia from his Greek debacle in the autumn of the year, he must have gone to his winter residence at Susa, as Herodotus indicates. This also accords remarkably well with the Biblical narrative, since Esther was in Susa/Shushan when she went in to him (see 2:8, 16). From the chronological factors involved, Xerxes must have had at least three months (or five months. if one adopts the Septuagint's figures) to return to Susa from Sardis before Esther went in to him sometime in the tenth month (or twelfth month according to the Septuagint) of that seventh year.

This comparison of the geographical and chronological data given in Esther with information from extra-Biblical sources does not prove that the events described in Esther are historical, but it does demonstrate that they can be placed in a framework of space and time that is compatible with what we know from secular historians. We can conclude that Esther does not contradict Herodotus on these matters by putting Xerxes at some place on a particular date that is incompatible with that historian.

The identity of the queen who preceded Esther and some other points of contention will be examined in a concluding article.3

The comparison of data given in Esther with information from extra-Biblical sources demonstrates that the events described can be placed in a framework that is compatible with what we know from historians.
Shepherdess/Ruthie Self

The greatest of these

With 105,823 tasks demanding daily attention, how is a wife to keep herself loving and lovable? There is one thing that takes first place above all else and will cement the hearts of husbands and wives.

My husband, Bob, was frustrated. Despite his most winsome invitations, he couldn’t get the husband of a church member even to visit our services. One day Bob visited him while his wife was shopping. After they shared a prayer, the husband opened his heart. He wanted no part of his wife’s religion, he said, because the church had made no change in her. She was unloving, uncaring of his needs, and unresponsive to him.

How would your husband describe you? How would you describe yourself? It has been said that the strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian. Do you fit such a description?

During my career as a pastor’s wife, I’ve seen more than one husband get involved with a woman less attractive and less talented than his own wife. And sex didn’t seem the great attraction; rather, the husband had found someone he could communicate with and who was willing to accept him for what he was.

I remember a wife who was intelligent, a good cook, an immaculate housekeeper, and very particular about her children. But she had become a slave to the 105,823 things that seem to demand daily attention. Each of those things was no doubt important, but she had forgotten what was most important—being a loving and lovable wife to her husband! Although we can never never place all the blame for a failed marriage on one spouse, apparently this wife, in her preoccupation with household drudgery, had neglected to fill her husband’s needs. The case went on the church records as adultery, but “drudgery” could well have been listed as accessory to the fact.

It is no secret that homes are breaking up at alarming rates today. And these are not newly established homes in many cases. Divorce is claiming marriages of fifteen, twenty, twenty-five years, and even longer. Nor is the parsonage exempt. Pastors and their wives are finding that their marriages are coming apart almost in the same numbers as the general population!

How can we become more loving and lovable? The daily demands on a wife usually are not the priority items in her marriage. Most important are relationships. First, our relationship with Christ. We become more loving by allowing Jesus first place in our life. But like the disciples in the sudden storm on Galilee, we stay busy bailing as fast as we can until we see there is no way we can keep out the sea and we give up. Then, when we have no other options left, we call on the One who has always been there and who is able to help us at any time. The answer is to put Jesus at the very center and in first place in our lives.

This experience must take priority. We cannot wait until the 105,823 necessary tasks are finished, for if we do we will continue to bail and bail until the lives closest to us are seriously injured. When we spend quality time with our heavenly Friend who knows all the answers and has all the power, and wisdom, we will know what the most important things should be in our lives and homes. He will quiet the storm of anxiety over a work that is never finished; He will give us power to cope with the overwhelming responsibility of lives depending on us. His methods will become ours.

The results of this relationship can improve marital relationships. By studying the methods Christ uses to make us His friends and lovers, and applying them in our marriage, we give happiness a head start.

For example, do we accept our mate and love him as he is? Or are we trying to change him? God doesn’t insist that we change before He loves us. He loves us unconditionally. He loves us while we are yet sinners. He loves us even when we are His enemies. He sees the best in us even when we fail, and loves us still. Unconditional love doesn’t demand transformation; it inspires transformation. The hen-pecked husband spends too much time dodging the pecks to make progress spiritually. If he feels condemned and criticized rather than accepted and loved, he will keep his feelings to himself, and communication will be broken. Sometimes a husband (or a wife) needs a listener, not a counselor.

Yes, we may be all too aware that areas of his ministry need improvement: he should spend more time with his family (isn’t that always at or near the top of the list!) and more time visiting. He needs to be more (or less) aggressive and put more illustrations in his sermons. He attends too many meetings, dresses sloppily or over-

Ruthie Self, a pastor’s wife, writes from Goodlettsville, Tennessee.
dresses. Marriage means communication; problem areas demand candid discussion, so that each knows how the other feels and why.

But instead of nagging (we usually call it counseling), should we not give the problem to the only One who knows the answers? God alone can convict of need and bring about change. And while we're seeking for a minor adjustment, God may be working for transformation. So instead of bailing all the time and becoming more and more frustrated, cast “all your care upon him; for he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

God created us with the desire to love and be loved, and only the Christian can experience the depth of meaning and fulfillment in the marriage relationship. One reason is that the Christian interprets love to mean more than two bodies meeting; love—and sex—means commitment of body, mind, and spirit. We should be open with our mates in discussing what pleases us in sex, a gift God gave not only for procreation but for pleasure. Someone has said, “Sex isn’t the most important phase in marriage, but it surely helps grease the wheels so that all parts run well.”

Husbands and wives have many pressures from every direction. Especially is this true of pastors. The pastor-husband needs to find satisfaction, fulfillment, and acceptance from a loving wife. The wife who does not fill her husband’s wholesome sexual needs may be more responsible for adultery than she would care to admit. (If you need a bit of help on the subject, I’d recommend The Act of Marriage, by Tim LaHaye. If you need more help, don’t hesitate to seek professional counseling.)

Are we continuing the early attentions? God Himself wants to continue the “first love” relationship; should our husbands not expect it? While dating, we learned our lover’s favorite perfume, color, sports, and foods. We showed our love by writing notes and giving him gifts. Has that attitude fallen casually to the years? Maybe the rut of inattention has become too deep. Maybe we’re too busy bailing to notice. Perhaps we excuse our lack of attention by feeling sorry for ourselves. After all, we are taken for granted too. Often we don’t get gifts or even verbal thanks.

The word is selfishness. It begins to creep in. It’s the root of all evil. Our Lord kept no record of rights and wrongs. Though unappreciated and the recipient of few gifts, He served us lovingly, unfailingly. His love is described in 1 Corinthians 13: “... suffereth long, and is kind... seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked” (verses 4, 5). We need to read this chapter often.

The loving wife. Greater than an immaculate house; greater than 105,823 jobs finished; greater than being a superb cook and an excellent nutritionist; greater than a prestigious career; and even greater than being the esteemed minister’s wife is simply to be a loving wife.

The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian. The strongest bond of marriage is a loving and lovable wife. The right relationship with Christ and the right priorities in the home can make our homes a shelter from the pressures and demands of the outside world—places where love holds forth supreme. “The greatest of these is love” (verse 13, N.I.V.).


---

**Prayers from the parsonage**

I want to teach our children so many things, Lord. Principles such as love for You and for others. Character traits such as self-control and obedience. Habits such as cheerfulness and politeness.

And so I advise and admonish throughout the day: “First the blessing; then we eat.” “You both need to play with your toys.” “We don’t call people ‘Dummy.’” “No more books out till you’ve done your chores.” “Wipe your feet.” “Take turns.” “Don’t interrupt.”

Some days I stay positive and smiling like a good coach. But there are days when—if I listen to myself—I have to admit that I’m nagging. Tired and tense, I wonder, “Will they ever learn?” “I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now” (John 16:12).

More than anyone, Lord, You had a lot to cover in a few years. How much You longed to teach Your well-meaning but uncomprehending disciples! Had they been ready, they could have grasped the most profound concepts as well as all the necessary truths.

But You accepted the fact that at times no amount of discussion helps and even the best explanation falls on deaf ears. Rather than sigh over their lack of understanding, You restrained Yourself and shared only what the disciples could absorb.

Lord, show me what Lisa and Hans need to learn so I can focus on specifics. Keep me close to them so I can take advantage of teachable moments. Make me perceptive so I can match my methods to their personalities. Let me be quick to praise and slow to scold.

When I am overwhelmed by the potential of my example, help me to remember that others also seek my children’s good and can help in their training.

What our family can’t achieve, we trust to You. May the Holy Spirit possess our minds, guiding us into all truth, as we are ready.

---

**Reach out and touch someone**

calls to ten or twelve different people who I think might appreciate being remembered. Needless to say, the response has been encouraging. Further, I find it takes the sting out of “request calls” when I ask them to do something for the church. They know that they are not being taken for granted and that the pastor doesn’t just call to “use” them.

With the initial phoning blitz proving so effective, I decided to have a rerun at least every six months. When Christmas and New Year’s rolled around I spent another fifty or sixty hours on the telephone. The rewards were just as great as before. I learned about sicknesses, bereavements, upcoming surgeries, and a host of other things of which I had been totally unaware. But with scarcely an exception, the people took it as a great honor to know that a pastor would take the time to wish them a happy holiday and just say that he cared.

All of us as pastors love each member of our flocks. All of us wish them the very best and would be only too happy to assist them in any way possible. Unfortunately, many of us have not conveyed this love and concern to them. Undoubtedly, there are limitless ways whereby we can convince them of our interest in them and their lives. Different areas of the world will need different methods. But thanks to the suggestion of a disgruntled layman, my experience has shown me that one of the simplest ways to realize a maximum return for a minimum of effort is the telephone. The Bell Compy is right! It isn’t a bad idea to “reach out and touch someone!”
This page lists in one convenient place all the ministerial resources currently being offered to our readers. Select from a variety that includes sermon planning, healthful living, archeology, and more.

**Subscriptions**

**Ministry Tape of the Month.** A professional-growth program covering preaching, worship, teaching, leadership, theology, evangelism, and counseling. Twelve months, one 90-minute cassette per month, $45.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Smoke Signals.** A monthly how-to help, toward nonsmoking that includes scientific information. $4.00 a year.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Books**

**From Sabbath to Sunday.** Investigates the intriguing question of how Sunday came to be observed as the day of rest and worship by the majority of Christians. By Samuele Bacchiocchi. 372 pp., $7.95.

Quantity _______ Total $________


Quantity _______ Total $________

**Divine Rest for Human Restlessness.** Offers a theological interpretation of the value of the Sabbath for such contemporary problems as human tension and restlessness, human rights, identity crisis, competitive pressures, and marital tensions. By Samuele Bacchiocchi. 320 pp., $7.95.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**The Great Controversy.** Unfolds the drama of the conflict between Christ and Satan, beginning with the fall of Satan and continuing until the battle is over and the earth has been restored to a perfect state. By E. G. White. 640 pp., $2.00.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Marked!** Recent release that explores what the Bible says about the “beast” and its “mark.” Avoids sensationalism while focusing on God’s most solemn warning. By MINISTRY Editor J. R. Spangler. 156 pp., $1.50.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**The Ministry of Healing.** This health classic has inspired many to adopt a more healthful way of life. By E. G. White. 383 pp., $1.00.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Patriarchs and Prophets.** The stories of Creation, God’s dramatic dealings with Israel, the division of Canaan, and the setting up of the kingdom under David are all told with persuasive power. By E. G. White. 647 pp., $2.00.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Steps to Christ.** A small devotional treasure that describes the steps in the conversion process and leads the reader to an understanding of the joy of Christian living. By E. G. White. 134 pp., free, one per reader. Also available in boxes of 100, $25 per box.

No. boxes _______ Total $_______
Free copy _______ Total $_______

**Miscellaneous**

**Archeology, Bible Study Tools.** “What Is New in Biblical Archeology?” by Dr. Siegfried H. Horn, and “Tools and Their Use in the Minister’s Workshop,” by Dr. Walter F. Specht. Originally included in April, 1980, MINISTRY. 24 pp., $1.00.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Relics of the Past.** Description of the important Biblical artifacts that repose in the major museums of the world. Dr. Siegfried H. Horn explains their significance to Bible history. 16 pp., $1.00.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Sermon Plan Book.** From Advent through the Trinity season, this new workbook provides one planning page for each religious service regularly scheduled during the entire year. Each page serves as a practical outline for drafting future sermons, together with all other aspects of the service. $3.95.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**The Complete Plan Book for Sunday Eucharistic Celebrations.** The Catholic version of the sermon plan book described above, edited by the Word of God Institute, and fully reflecting the appropriate theology and semantics of the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. $3.95.

Quantity _______ Total $________

**Packet of Four Pamphlets:** “How to Stop Smoking,” “If You Smoke,” “Alcohol: Ten Reasons Why You Don’t Need It,” and “Is Marijuana Really All That Bad?” Plus catalog from Narcotics Education, Inc. $1.00.

Quantity _______ Total $________

Indicate the items you wish to order, fill your name and address, and mail the entire page (or a photocopy of it) along with payment to: MINISTRY Services, Box 217, Burtonsville, Maryland 20866. (Offer limited to U.S. and Canada.)

Name ____________________________
Address __________________________
City, State, ZIP ____________________

Total enclosed U.S. $______ (Checks payable to MINISTRY.)
The annual Institute on Mental Health is to be held this September in Ohio; the induction loop system can help your hearing-impaired members; and a book is available to help you prepare your church newsletter.

Improving your newsletter

A church newsletter is an important part of a growing church. Now there is a publication that can be a great help to you in its preparation—Editing Your Newsletter—A Guide to Writing, Design and Production, by Mark Beach.

Although not prepared with the church newsletter particularly in mind, it does offer many helpful suggestions. Intended for people with no training in writing, design, or production, it leads the reader through the entire process. For the more sophisticated it has up-to-the-minute information on word processing. Much of the content may involve techniques beyond those used by the average church and its simple mimeograph machine; yet there are basic elements and considerations that will prove challenging and helpful. The 75 pages contain many illustrations, forms, tips, and examples.

For your copy of Editing Your Newsletter send $7.50 to: Coast to Coast Books, 2934 Northeast Sixteenth Avenue, Portland, Oregon 97212.

Your people can hear!

An estimated 14 million people in the United States alone are hearing-impaired but not deaf. Many of these have only slight hearing loss or an impairment confined to one ear. But there may be as many as 6 million who have a genuine difficulty hearing in theaters, auditoriums, and churches.

Hearing aids and public-address systems alone will not enable most of these to hear what is being said. Hearing aids have the unfortunate tendency to pick up and amplify background sounds the average person does not notice. The volume of most public-address systems is set at a level acceptable to people with unimpaired hearing and directed to the back of the church. People in front get little help.

There is a solution, however. It's called the "induction loop amplification system." The mechanism is basically a microphone, an amplifier, and a wire that encircles the church. The wire acts like an antenna, sending out magnetic signals. If a hearing-aid wearer has a telephone switch on his aid, he can pick up the signals and hear beautifully every thing spoken into the microphone. Most hearing aids have such switches, and older models can usually be modified.

The induction loop system costs between $1,000 and $5,000. For additional information, write: Organization for the Use of the Telephone, Box 175, Owings Mills, Maryland 21117—Roy Lechtreck, Montevallo, Alabama.

Institute on mental health

"Emotional Factors in Family Conflict" will be the theme of the twenty-seventh Institute on Mental Health sponsored annually by Harding Hospital, a comprehensive psychiatric center located in Worthington, Ohio. The three-day institute will be held September 19-22 on the hospital campus.

Persons attending the institute will also participate in a one-day symposium titled "Divorce and the Effects of Divorce on Families," presented by Judith Wallerstein, Ph.D., School of Social Welfare, University of California, Berkeley, and Gay Kitson, assistant professor, Department of Family Medicine, Case Western Reserve University School of Medicine, Cleveland, Ohio.

The institute, which began in 1955, is designed to bring together pastors and Christian mental health professionals to discuss common problems and concerns.

According to George T. Harding, Jr., medical director, many pastors, administrators, and educators have expressed a desire to understand people and the problems that arise in their lives better. "It is our belief that there is a distinct advantage in studying mental health issues with people who share a common faith and religious point of view," he concluded.

Other topics to be discussed during the institute are "Signs of Mental Breakdown—What Do Symptoms Really Mean?" "What Makes Counseling Spiritual?" "Psychotherapy and Counseling," and "What Is the Mind and How Does It Work?"

Registration fee for the institute is $80, which includes all meals, tuition, and educational materials. Applications may be obtained by writing to Medical Director, Harding Hospital, 445 E. Granville Road, Worthington, Ohio 43085. Or phone: (614) 885-5381.

You can help

Are you receiving more than one copy of MINISTRY each month? If so, would you take just a moment to let us know! Drastically increased postage costs have caused us to look carefully at such duplication. Just send the address label of the copy you want dropped to: MINISTRY, 6840 Eastern Ave. NW., Washington, D.C. 20012. Mark it “Duplicate copy; please delete.” We’ll do the rest—and save postage.

Discover your Puritan roots!

Not many Christians are familiar with Joseph Alleine, John Owen, Richard Baxter, John Flavel, Francis Bampfield, and other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Puritan writers. And that’s too bad.

The English Connection demonstrates just how much in present Christian thought and practice has come to us from these godly Bible expositors. You’ll be stirred by the clear manner in which they dealt three hundred years ago with so many of the same doctrinal and practical questions that you face today.

The English Connection was written by Bryan W. Ball, Ph.D., and published by James Clarke and Company, Cambridge, England. Order now and take advantage of a special subsidized price for MINISTRY readers. The usual retail price is US$17.25; you pay only US$12.95 for this 256-page hardcover book. Offer good only in the United States and Canada; expires September 30, 1982. Order from MINISTRY Services, P.O. Box 217, Burtonsville, Maryland 20866.
Recommended reading

Are you bewildered by the seemingly unending stream of Bible translations that pour off the religious press? Have you ever felt you needed a score card to keep track and evaluate? Here's help!

The English Bible From K.J.V. to N.I.V.: A History and Evaluation

After a short history of the English Bible, the author evaluates the following translations: King James Version, American Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, New English Bible, the New American Standard Bible, The Jerusalem Bible, The New American Bible, the New World Translation, The Living Bible, the Good New Bible, The New International Version, and The New King James Bible. In these evaluations Lewis pays attention to the intent of the translators while judging the texts used, accuracy, consistency, style, communicability, and possible theological bias. Especially helpful are the sections on changes made in later editions of these translations.

Large sections are given to examples, sections that do not read easily and are more in the nature of reference material. For this reason a scripture and subject index would have increased the usefulness of the book. Guidelines for selecting a translation would also have been helpful.

The Gospels

Have you ever tried to wade through the books Biblical scholars write? If so, you probably encountered a deluge of tongue twisters, and figured that Biblical theologians all are endowed with the gift of tongues. Craddock's book is refreshingly different. The editors' foreword indicates that the book belongs to the Interpreting Biblical Texts Series, which seeks to speak "in language that will be understood by scholars, clergy and lay persons alike" and which deals "with concrete texts, actual problems of interpretation, and practical procedures for moving from 'then' to 'now.'"

Craddock has succeeded in reaching those goals; his book blends current Biblical scholarship with an understandable vocabulary and a readable style.

The book has two major divisions. In the short introduction Dr. Craddock explains the need for interpreting any document and the factors that complicate the task of an interpreter. He then briefly discusses the formation and the role of the canon, and concludes by explaining the nature of a Gospel as literature, the special interpretative problems posed by the four Gospels, and the criteria he used to select certain Gospel passages for inclusion in this study.

In the second and longer part of the book, Craddock presents four passages from each Gospel that are representative of the individual Gospel writer and that demand a particular type of methodology. He shows the problems inherent in the passage, explains how to understand the point intended by the Gospel writer, and relates the text to our needs today. Scattered throughout his unfolding of the text Craddock has included sermonic hints like the candy nuggets in a chocolate-chip cookie.

The Gospels is more than a Bible commentary. It is a lode that the pastor can mine for sermonic ideas that will confront his congregation with the significance of Christ. Craddock does not present an outline or write the sermon. He does, however, break up the massive Gospel ore so the pastor has ready access to the golden veins of the Gospels.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible

In an increasingly permissive society where greater credence is granted to psychological evaluation than to divine revelation, it is refreshing to encounter a book that tries to deal with Biblical pronouncements on marriage and divorce as they are, and not as we might like them to be. While not claiming a facile solution to the problem of marital breakdown within the church today, Adams nonetheless succeeds in establishing a theological framework wherein the marital obligations of husband, wife, and church are clearly delineated. His conclusions, though ponderous, are exegetically sound; the real issue is whether—particularly in today's social milieu—husbands, wives, or the church will have the courage to accept a doctrine so demanding that it even two thousand years ago elicited the comment, "If this be the case, it is not good to marry."

Church Growth—A Mighty River

This book gives an excellent overview of the church growth movement and helps one to become acquainted with its leaders and major features and concepts. Its notes point out significant works of the past thirteen years.

The chapter "Its Biblical Basin" is perhaps the most valuable for the pastor who wishes to find sound Biblical principles to share with a learning congregation. As the Word is studied, spiritual growth should occur, which in turn will help lead to numerical growth. Concerned pastors will want both.

MINISTRY does not have the facilities to sell or order these books for readers. If you wish to obtain a book reviewed here, please order through any bookstore.