Let the Church Grow!
According to a reader, the Biblical inerrancy debate misses the point by not understanding the extent of inspiration or the nature of truth. Can Scripture contain factual errors and yet be true? Yes, he says.

Inerrancy and truth
I just finished the editorial “Should We Have a Loose-leaf Bible?” (July, 1982). I don’t know whether it was an error or just human fallibility that caused you not to mention the canon. I like the analogy of the road map because it points all of us to our ultimate goal, and it leaves us free to pick our own route as long as we stay on the road! Can I, or could the Scripture writers, tell someone that he should take the direct route or the scenic route, observe this speed limit or that, or where to stop for rest and food? Two things are clear in both cases—the starting point and our destination. In your case, by not starting with the canon, I think you embarked on a trip in error, unless those canon decisions were infallible. —United Methodist, Missouri.

In response to the editorial “Should We Have a Loose-leaf Bible?” I would like to point out that the real problem with inerrancy is that, in the name of protecting the authority of Scripture, the battle obscures the meaning of Scripture and distorts its image of God and humanity. The real problem with inerrancy lies in its conception of the locus of inspiration and the meaning of truth.

Scripture is inspired at every level of development. Not only in its writing by individuals who were very human but also in the choosing of the books to be included in the Canon, in the process of its transmission, in its translation into various languages, and not least in the hearing of the Word. Its authority comes from the Spirit, not human doctrine.

Another aspect of the quarrel exists because inerrantists accept the scientific understanding of truth as “that which is factual.” Thus, for them, if Genesis, Esther, Daniel, and Job are less than factual, they are false. Much time is spent “proving” that Genesis is an accurate description of the scientific process by which we came to be. Daniel is interpreted (and reinterpretation) to prove that his timing was not off and that he wrote in the seventh century B.C. and not the second. Esther is compared with secular historians of the period to prove that it might be an historical account.

It really doesn’t matter, however. We cannot always define God by human facts. God lies beyond our understanding and calls us to trust His Spirit to lead us beyond the place that we can see clearly. Whether I accept Daniel as the product of verbal inspiration in the seventh century or spiritual inspiration in the second, I must still be concerned with his vision of a world under God’s control moving toward a defined end in a relatively short time span. Whether I accept Esther as history, legend, or folk tale, I must contend with its portrayal of the believer’s relationship to established government. The Bible is the sole authority for faith and practice, not because it is factual or even because it is true, but because God has spoken through it to us, and still does so by His Spirit, so that we may come to know Him. Thus it needs no defense. Those who insist on defending it only show their lack of faith in its power to transform. —Congregational Church, Kansas.

We certainly agree that divine guidance was involved in the formation of the Canon, the transmission of the text, its translation into different languages, and that the Spirit guides today in impressing its truth upon our minds as we hear the Word or read it. It seems, however, that Scripture itself claims a different quality of divine guidance for those who actually wrote it under the inspiration of God. That is to say that the inspiration the Christian receives from the Holy Spirit in illuminating the meaning of Scripture to his mind today is not the same as that which the Bible writer experienced when putting on paper the message God gave him.

We cannot agree that the “truth” of Scripture is independent of what the Bible actually says. To do so, it seems to us, leaves the Christian on an uncharted sea in which no objective standard of truth is possible, and whatever “truth” an individual sees in Scripture—even conflicting views—is equally valid. —Editors.

Soul winning primary
“Passion: The Indispensable Ingredient” (July, 1982) was an excellent challenge to all churches. When our church programs are not people-centered to equip us for the winning of souls, they become demonic. When any church’s primary concern is promotion of its own programs, it has lost the evangelistic commission of our Lord in Matthew 28:18-20. As C. S. Lewis said, “There is no neutral ground in the universe. Every square inch, every split second, is claimed by God and counter-claimed by Satan.”

Keep your provocative, Biblical articles coming. Richard Hammill’s “Spiritual Gifts in the Church Today” was excellent. —Lutheran Church, Pennsylvania.

Read aloud
My hearty thanks to you for the complimentary subscription. The July issue had two articles, “Conquering the Clock” and “Struggling With Stress,” that were particularly helpful. They were so good, in fact, that I had them read aloud in our staff meeting with the other two ministers. MINISTRY is an excellent publication. —Community Church, Tennessee.

No lawyers
In response to the letter in your September issue from the Grace Brethren Church, which threatened legal action if its name was not removed from your list, our church is also calledGrace, but we have no lawyers! I don’t always agree with my friends, but I still keep them. Or with newspapers, but I still read them. Or even with television, but I still watch it. Having one’s ideas challenged helps one to grow. I’m not always right, but neither am I always wrong. Reading MINISTRY, which approaches matters from a direction usually different from my own, I gain either way—whether I’m encouraged by our agreement or challenged by our disagreement. —Grace Episcopal Church, Wisconsin.

MINISTRY is a publication that is well done and is usually fair. In response to a testy letter from Grace Brethren Church, you stated (September, 1982): “What is a church called ‘Grace’ doing with lawyers?” Such a response is both harsh and lacking in grace itself. While probably intended as a clever aside, it belies a legalism and judgmentalism of its own. If you are poking fun at lawyers, let me remind you that there are some very devoted Christian lawyers. If you are poking fun at Grace Brethren’s angry letter, let me remind you that Jesus also became angry on occasion. Are we to infer that such anger demonstrates a lack of grace?

Whatever prompted your quip, be it anger, hurt, or an attempt at jesting, it was ill-timed and ill-put. —United Methodist Church, Oregon.

(Continued on page 27.)
Let the Church Grow/4. Skip Bell has identified four congregational patterns that inhibit growth. Perhaps your church has "koinonitis." Or maybe the members are worried about pioneer land rights. No matter what the problem, patterns can be changed, and your church can begin to grow again.

Equipping the Minister's Workshop/6. Merrill S. Williams. A carpenter without tools would be a rather ineffective carpenter. And a minister without books is in much the same category—in-effective. For books are the tools of the minister's trade, his tools for building effective sermons.

How to Preach so as to Convert Nobody/8. Long ago Evangelist Charles Finney penned these insightful rules on how to avoid converting anyone. If you follow them carefully you certainly won't have a "problem" with church growth!

The Millennium: Its Old Testament Roots/10. Hans K. LaRondelle. We usually think of the millennium as a New Testament concept, but the author finds convincing evidence for Old Testament origins in predictions concerning the apocalyptic "day of the Lord."


Imperatives of Salvation/14. Norman H. Young. While it is true that the New Testament writers placed much emphasis on the "indicatives" of salvation, they also placed equal importance on the "imperatives"—commands to participate in the salvation already established.

Visiting Those Who Hurt/16. Larry Yeagley. Visiting the sick, the lonely, and the emotionally ill can present awkward moments. A chaplain offers some advice based on personal experience.

Consistent Christianity/18. Continuing the series This We Believe, G. Arthur Keough discusses the relationship between what a Christian believes and his daily life.

Feed the Lambs; Not the Giraffes/21. Morris Chalfant.


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A healthy church, like a healthy body, consists of many smaller units that provide nourishment and life for the entire organism. The body of Christ is a living thing, and living things grow.

Let the church grow!

Our church grew rapidly its first two years, but for the past three membership has stood practically still; I don’t understand why God hasn’t blessed my ministry here with more growth."

Pastor Smith’s congregation of 140 persons is a typical Protestant church in North America. It began five years ago with thirty members and quickly grew to more than a hundred. Now the church is struggling simply to maintain its size. Few new converts have been added in recent years.

The majority of Protestant churches in America remain small. Research by Lyle Schaller has shown that 50 percent of such churches in the United States have fewer than seventy-five persons in attendance at the weekly worship service; 75 percent have fewer than 140. These small and middle-sized congregations are the typical Protestant churches of America. Only 5 percent of Protestant churches in America average more than 350 in attendance (The Multiple Staff and the Larger Church [Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon, 1980], pp. 28, 29).

Should churches grow larger? After all, small churches provide more spiritual intimacy, greater security in a personal acquaintance with each member, and a sense of being needed. Large churches aren’t for everyone! Small churches have their place. Many pastors rightly feel that God would have them plant more small churches instead of growing larger ones.

On the other hand, a large church is big enough for effective youth ministry, a singles ministry, outreach ministry groups, and an exciting service of worship. Many people like the feeling of being “where the action is” that a large church provides. Bigness can be an evangelistic tool. We are called to make disciples, and in the priority of that task the large church serves a vital function. Large churches too have their place!

Most pastors would like their churches to grow, but are frustrated in their attempts to lead their churches into dynamic growth. The hundreds of transient programs for evangelism add to their feelings of futility.

Church growth is neither the work of man nor an accident; it is first of all the work of the Holy Spirit. Churches grow because God chooses to bless them with growth. Depending on the Holy Spirit, however, does not diminish our need to understand how church growth occurs. We need to study the nature of a growing church. Of all the images used in Scripture to describe the church, perhaps none is as important to understand in terms of growth as the image of the church as the body of Christ. The body of Christ is a living thing, and living things grow. We may view Christ’s body, the church, with an X-ray perspective. If the “internal organs” of the body are healthy and well, the church will grow. Let us then examine the vital internal organs of the church body with an eye to recognizing what promotes their health.

The weekly worship service is normally the only time the entire church membership group meets together. This is celebration. It is rewarding to be together in one place with many other believers and have the sense of being of one mind. The primary function of this weekly gathering, or celebration, is worship. Secondary functions include identity, various services, various departments, Bible knowledge, unity of doctrinal teaching, and motivation for mission. In a church larger than 140 members, the weekly worship celebration cannot provide personal fellowship, a need that is absolutely vital to the spiritual health of the individual Christian.

People come to church expecting to find
close and warm fellowship. "The people here are so loving that I know that God is with them," candidates for church membership typically declare. An individual can become personally acquainted with as many as sixty persons, but will tend to feel isolated in groups larger than sixty. Thus within the celebration group are many smaller "congregations," whether recognized or hidden. A congregation is a group small enough to permit the people in it to become personally acquainted with one another and have authentic fellowship. These congregations number from ten to sixty persons each. Their primary function is fellowship. Here personal acquaintance and the warmth of close fellowship exist.

Secondary functions of the congregation may include Bible study, Christian growth, reclaiming inactive members, reinforcing spiritual roots and traditions, and employing spiritual gifts and ministry. Schaller's study, cited earlier, reveals that 50 percent of churches in the United States never grow to be larger than a single congregation or fellowship group. Most churches don't recognize the need for or provide multiple congregations within the celebration group; thus they limit their growth.

When a local church is made up of healthy congregations, cells will exist. Cells are spiritual kinship groups from three to ten persons each. The primary function of these cells is personal spiritual accountability or heart-to-heart sharing. Five ladies within a certain congregation may determine to get together on Tuesday mornings for the express purpose of studying the Gospel of Mark and praying together, but the real need that brings them together is the need for a close spiritual kinship. Cells provide for spiritual renewal. Secondary functions may be study, prayer, or witnessing. Cell groups are identified by a very close spiritual relationship among three to ten persons.

Promoting the good health of these vital internal organs of the body is an important task for the church growth leader. This may necessitate changes in church structure, and that can be a gradual and painful thing. But there are some good places to begin.

Congregations within the church membership require intentional structuring in order to be effective. The church leader can begin to promote the health of the church by examining the life of congregations within the body. These congregations should include people with like interests and backgrounds. This adds to the satisfaction of members and makes the congregation attractive to others. Most churches can identify many "people groups" within their membership—retired persons, young adult-, young singles, a group of intellectuals, mature widows or widowers, or factory workers—who would enjoy being together with "their kind of people." The first step in encouraging healthy congregations is to identify these people groups within the church. This application of the principle of "homogeneous units" will help your church make a start toward growth. A word of caution: people can't be forced to associate with certain other people; they will, however, naturally move toward a group in which they feel comfortable. Forming homogeneous congregations is a process that can be encouraged but not forced.

The structure for these congregations is lying at our proverbial "fingertips." Most church denominations have a Christian education program in which children and adults study a denominationally prepared Bible curriculum in the Sabbath or Sunday school. These class units are an ideal nucleus for congregations within the church membership. Simply recognizing the homogeneous-unit principle and providing a study class for various people groups within the church will make it possible to transform an ordinary class into a dynamic, growing congregation within the church. The primary function of the class unit when it takes this shape becomes fellowship, with Bible study, outreach, and other activities as secondary functions. Members of a Bible study class in a Sabbath or Sunday school often recognize the need of fellowship with one another. Some will express that they enjoy the small class more than any other church activity for the very reason that it provides opportunity for a personal acquaintance and a sharing of themselves with other members of the church. We should recognize that meeting this need and promoting it is in itself an effective evangelistic tool. People quickly become comfortable in such a setting and will come to church when such congregational units exist because they feel love and warmth.

The effectiveness of the congregation will multiply, however, if it has a planned organization. People within the congregation who have gifts of a pastor-shepherd should be recognized and made responsible for visiting and nurturing members of the congregation. People with the gift of hospitality should provide social functions, home get-togethers, or regular fellowship dinners. Those with the gift of teaching should teach. Those who have the gift of evangelism should evangelize inactive members and seek to plant them in the congregational group. Such a congregation may have the study class as its nucleus but include other members of the church as well. The congregations of a church may become the focus of nurturing activity, since they are small enough for its leaders to know the spiritual condition of each person. But they should not take the place of the larger celebration. The celebration of the entire body is an important role of Christian experience that the congregation cannot replace. Those who nurture or teach a congregation must recognize this.

When congregations exist within the church, cell life occurs spontaneously. It can be discouraged by the pastor or other leaders originating small groups within their own homes. The joy and benefits of spiritual renewal through cell life will spread quickly.

Often these vital organs of the body exist in a church, but their structure is such that they create barriers to church growth instead of aiding it. When this is the case, eliminate the barriers! Remember, a living plant grows!

One congregational pattern that inhibits church growth may be called koinonitis. "Koinonitis" exists when members of a congregation enjoy their fellowship to the exclusion of new persons. It meets their needs, and they are comfortable with it the way it is. Change is perceived as a threat to their fellowship.

Other congregations inhibit growth because they are overweight. They may include a class of fifty persons, and when family members are included, seventy-five or more. There is simply no room for a new person to come into the group and expect to find the personal fellowship needed in a congregation. The size of the group is a barrier to growth.

Sociological tissue rejection is another barrier to church growth. It exists when a prospective member is grafted into a group of people whose life style is unfamiliar to him, transgressing the homogeneous-unit principle. Leaders may be unfamiliar with the importance of this concept and fail to help a prospective member find "his kind of people." The new member or visitor is simply not comfortable with the group of people he finds. He may try two or three times to find a group he is comfortable with, become discouraged, and stop coming.

A fourth congregational pattern that inhibits growth is the attitude called pioneer land rights. Unfortunately, this is

In a church larger than 140 members, the weekly worship celebration cannot provide personal fellowship, a need that is absolutely vital to the spiritual health of the individual Christian.
fairly common in many churches. The pioneers are the ones who have forged the program, and established the structure. They may not tolerate “homesteaders” who view the church as more flexible or who have new ideas. Change is threatening, and the pioneers find themselves, in subtle ways, rejecting new members because of the threat of change.

But if these barriers can be dismantled, congregational units within the church can be made to promote church growth. How rewarding it is when a group of people recognize themselves as a fellowship group and begin to realize that God can use them for kingdom growth! Absorbent congregational patterns are easily identified.

Motivation for growth is the first indication of an absorbent pattern. Members of a congregation must recognize the priority of kingdom growth and be motivated to achieve it. Class units should invest time weekly in this important part of their existence. Testimony, study, and prayer regarding the work of the Holy Spirit contribute to growth motivation. Leaders should talk of adding new members to the group and consider that faithfulness to God requires them to do so.

Accountability to the Lord should become specific. A congregation motivated for growth will establish faith objectives for their growth. This means that class units will have soul-winning objectives. Souls will be prayed for and answers to prayer expected.

When a congregation grows to such a size that there is no longer room to add new persons, it should divide and form two smaller congregations. This is a typical absorbent pattern. But the pride of the members, teacher, or other leaders in the size of their group can often prevent such division. This human pride must give way to an expression of glory to God in His work of adding souls to the church. We provide for the work of the Holy Spirit when we leave room for new persons.

A congregation that invites new members displays an absorbent pattern. A class group can do this easily by advertising its congregational nature. For instance, a young adult class can advertise in the local newspaper that a Bible Study for young adults is being held at the church, giving the time of the weekly meeting and inviting attendance.

Nurture is part of church growth, and time for nurture should be given when the congregation is together. Absent members should be visited and the sick prayed for. Personal interest in each member should be shown. This type of nurture is the most effective, for it is heartfelt and sincere because the members know and love one another.

The growth of the church is the will of God. By understanding the nature of the church as the body of Christ, we can cooperate in God’s plan to multiply believers and let the church grow!
A preacher without books is like a carpenter without tools. The reason is simple: a preacher's books are his tools.

Just as the carpenter uses a hammer, saw, and plane to build a beautiful cabinet, the preacher uses a commentary, Bible dictionary, and concordance to structure a symmetrical sermon. No one can preach well who lacks the necessary tools of his trade.

There is absolutely no shortcut to effective pulpit ministry. The way to productive preaching follows the route of rigorous and disciplined study, and the tools of our trade are books.

**When to get them**

Now is not soon enough to begin stocking your workshop shelves. When as a teen-ager I first felt called to the ministry, I began to buy and read Christian books. Since then, I have consistently added valuable volumes to my study shelves. Having pastored now for only a few years, I occasionally wonder where I will put all my books when I have served twenty-five years in the ministry? If now is not soon enough to begin, never is too soon to stop adding precious books to your workshop.

**Where to get them**

Denominational publishing houses, religious bookstores, mail-order suppliers, local bookstores selling both new and used books, library sales, and private sales can all contribute needed works to your library.

While in seminary, a friend and I visited an estate sale in Baldwin, Kansas, where the Methodist school Baker University is located. The owners were selling the house and all its contents. Among the items for sale were a couple of boxes of old books. What do you suppose we found nestled in one box? A two-volume set of John Miley's Systematic Theology published in 1892 and long out of print. The price? Two dollars! Just this year I was able to buy a set of the Interpreter's Bible for $25 from a woman whose deceased husband had been a pastor. Keep your eyes open, and you're sure to find similar treasures.

If you live near a good public library, or better yet, near a Christian college or theological seminary, you may often be able to borrow what you need instead of buying it.

**How to afford them**

The Christian preacher will never invest money in anything more valuable than good books. And they do cost money. Anyone who is serious about preaching will have to determine his priorities and then hold tenaciously to them. To buy books is to leave many other items on the shelf unbought.

Fortunate is that pastor whose board realizes that its pastor's books are a professional expense. If he did not serve as their pastor, he probably would have no need for his library. But since he does, and since the church sincerely wants to be fed the meat of the Word, he must regularly supply his sermonic grist mill in order to produce and break the bread of life. And to do that he must read, read, read. True, he will take his books with him when he leaves, but he will leave behind a lasting legacy of well-fed sheep.

Some ministers designate the money they receive from weddings and funerals as their book allowance. But if you have no other means of acquiring your tools, budget them out of your personal finances. If necessary, forego something else in order to equip your sermonic workshop properly.

I have thanked the Lord many times for a wife who understands the value of books and their importance to her husband's livelihood. Of course, one reason she does understand is because I have not purchased books at her expense. Her interests lie in other directions, and she is free to pursue those interests.

**What to get**

I hope I have not left the impression that if one book is good, two are better. Quality is far more important than quantity. One man measured the books in his library on a certain subject by feet and yards. But yards of books adorning our shelves do not necessarily result in an adequate library. Certain books are more valuable than others. Better to own fewer volumes if they are the best available.

Remember our analogy: Books are tools to aid the preacher in his craft of sermon construction, not crutches to prop up his faltering lack of sermonic skill. The Biblical preacher, therefore, ought to follow the advice of Donald Miller and concentrate on reference works.

When I first noticed the deterioration of some of my cloth-bound volumes, I attributed the decay to the humid climate. But only certain works were affected. Only later—after the covers were badly defaced—did I realize that insects were attracted either to the cloth or the glue, and were eating the bindings. Immediately I had the church fumigated, and haven't been bothered since.

Ideally, it would be best to enclose your books in cases with glass doors. They would be less affected by dust and temperature. If that is not possible, at least dust them periodically and check to be sure insects, temperature, or other agents are not harming them. It's important to keep the temperature and humidity as constant as possible to avoid mildew.

Be sure, also, to compile a list of every volume you own and keep it in a safe place away from your study. Some people have a fear of flying. I suffer from what might be called bibliophobia: fear of my books burning! My fear—my nightmare—is that the flaming hand of fire might reach out one night and destroy my precious treasures, my books.

If fire or vandals should destroy part or all of your library, the insurance company will want an itemized list of the damaged or stolen volumes. Don't trust your memory to be able to recall all the titles; you'd probably miss half of them. Keep a running list in the study to record new books purchased. And every six months or so, transfer your accumulated volumes to the permanent list either at home or in a safety-deposit box at the bank.

Can you imagine a carpenter trying to build a house with nothing but a hammer and a chisel? Can you imagine a preacher trying to build a sermon with nothing but a church history and a book of illustrations?

The only way to consistently construct messages that will minister to the minds and hearts of your parishioners is to hammer them out on the anvil of study in a sermonic workshop well equipped with good books.

**How to care for them**

When I finally got around to organizing and categorizing my library, I tried to use a complicated system that required labels on the outside of the books. One year during vacation I invested three days on this project, typing the labels and ironing them on the binding with a hot iron. Not only did I waste a great deal of time, but not all the labels stuck! Later I came across a simpler way to organize my books that was just as adequate as any so-called sophisticated system.

I have the volumes arranged on the shelves according to category: biography, Christian living (a miscellaneous grouping), church growth, church history, evangelism, homiletics, missions, New Testament, Old Testament, philosophy, sermons, and theology.

I don't label the shelves because, from use, I know where the groups are. Then within each subject category I place the books in order by the author's last name. One could arrange them in alphabetical order by title just as well. But however you do it, you need some kind of organization that will enable you to find the book you need when you need it.

**How to arrange them**

When I finally got around to organizing and categorizing my library, I tried to use a complicated system that required labels on the outside of the books. One year during vacation I invested three days on this project, typing the labels and ironing them on the binding with a hot iron. Not only did I waste a great deal of time, but not all the labels stuck! Later I came across a
How to preach so as to convert nobody

You don't want to be known as a negative preacher coming down hard on sin and making your people feel bad, do you? The world is too full of condemnation and stress as it is. What people need today is an upbeat message that reassures and gives some positive reinforcement to their lives. Here are forty-two tried and proved rules that are guaranteed to keep the sinners in your church comfortable and happy.

C. G. Finney

The design of this article is to propound several rules, by a steady conformity to any one of which, a man may preach so as not to convert anybody. It is generally conceded at the present day that the Holy Spirit converts souls to Christ by means of truth adapted to that end.

It follows that a selfish preacher will not skillfully adapt means to convert souls to Christ, for this is not his end.

Rule 1. Let your supreme motive be to secure your own popularity; then, of course, your preaching will be adapted to that end, and not to convert souls to Christ.

Rule 2. Aim at pleasing, rather than at converting, your hearers. Aim to make your hearers pleased with themselves and pleased with you, and be careful not to wound the feelings of any one.

Rule 3. Aim at securing for yourself the reputation of a beautiful writer.

Rule 4. Let your sermons be written with a high degree of literary finish. Let your style be flowery, ornate, and quite above the comprehension of the common people. Give your sermons the form and

This article by the well-known revivalist Charles Finney is adapted from the Advent Review and Herald of the Sabbath of July 29, 1875. The old-fashioned language may betray how many years have gone by since it was written, but preachers who follow these rules carefully can be as certain of converting no one as were their colleagues of more than a century ago.
substance of a flowing, beautifully written, but never-to-be-remembered essay, so that your hearers will say, "It was a beautiful sermon," but can give no further account of it.

Rule 5. Be sparing of thought, lest your sermon contain truth enough to convert a soul. Make no distinct points, and take up no disturbing issues with the consciences of your hearers, lest they remember these issues, and become alarmed about their souls.

Rule 6. Avoid preaching doctrines that are offensive to the carnal mind, lest they should say of you as they said of Christ, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" and lest you should injure your influence.

Rule 7. Denounce sin in the abstract, but make no allusion to the sins of your present audience. Avoid especially preaching to those who are present. Preach about sinners, and not to them. Say they, and not you, lest anyone should make a personal and saving application of your subject.

Rule 8. Keep the spirituality of God's holy law, by which is the knowledge of sin, out of sight, lest the sinner should see his lost condition, and flee from the wrath to come.

Rule 9. Preach salvation by grace; but ignore the condemned and lost condition of the sinner, lest he should understand what you mean by grace, and feel his need of it.

Rule 10. Preach no searching sermons, lest you convict and convert the worldly members of your church.

Rule 11. Do not make the impression that God commands your hearers now and here to obey the truth.

Rule 12. Do not make the impression that you expect your hearers to commit themselves upon the spot, and give their hearts to God.

Rule 13. Leave the impression that they are expected to go away in their sins, and to consider the matter at their convenience.

Rule 14. Dwell much upon their inability to obey, and leave the impression that they must wait for God to change their natures.

Rule 15. Make no appeals to the fears of sinners; but leave the impression that they have no reason to fear.

Rule 16. Make the impression that if God is as good as you are He will send no one to hell.

Rule 17. Preach the love of God, but ignore the holiness of His love that will by no means clear the impenitent sinner.

Rule 18. Try to convert sinners to Christ without producing any uncomfortable convictions of sin.

Rule 19. Flatter the rich, so as to repel the poor, and you will convert none of either class.

Rule 20. Make no disagreeable allusions to the doctrines for self-denial, cross-bearing, and crucifixion to the world, lest you should convict and convert some of your church members.

Rule 21. Do not rebuke the worldly tendencies of the church, lest you should hurt their feelings, and finally convert some of them.

Rule 22. Should any express anxiety about their souls, do not probe them by any uncomfortable allusion to their sin and ill desert; but encourage them to join the church at once, and exhort them to assume their perfect safety within the fold.

Rule 23. Preach the love of Christ, not as enlightened benevolence, that is holy, just, and sin-hating, but as a sentiment, an involuntary and indiscriminating fondness.

Rule 24. Be sure not to represent religion as a state of loving self-sacrifice for God and souls; but rather a free and easy state of self-indulgence. By thus doing you will prevent sound conversions to Christ, and convert your hearers to yourself.

Rule 25. So select your themes and so present them as to attract and flatten the wealthy, aristocratic, self-indulgent, extravagant, pleasure-seeking classes, and you will not convert any of them to the cross-bearing religion of Christ.

Rule 26. Be time-serving, or you will endanger your salary; and, besides, if you speak out and are faithful, you may convert somebody.

Rule 27. Do not preach with a divineunction, lest your preaching make a saving impression. To avoid this, do not maintain a close walk with God, but rely upon your learning and study.

Rule 28. Lest you should pray too much, engage in light reading and worldly amusements.

Rule 29. That your people may not think you in earnest to save their souls, and, as a consequence, heed your preaching, encourage church fairs, lotteries, and other gambling and worldly expedients to raise money for church purposes.

Rule 30. Do not rebuke extravagance in dress, lest you should uncomfortably impress your vain and worldly church members.

Rule 31. Ridicule solemn earnestness in pulling sinners out of the fire, and recommend, by precept and example, a jovial, fun-loving religion, and sinners will have little respect for your serious preaching.

Rule 32. Cultivate a fastidious taste in your people, by avoiding all disagreeable allusions to the last judgment and final retribution. Treat such doctrines as obsolete and out of place in these days of Christian refinement.

Rule 33. Do not commit yourself to much-needed reforms, lest you should compromise your popularity and injure your influence. Or you may make some branch of outward reform a hobby, and dwell so much upon it as to divert attention from the great work of converting souls to Christ.

Rule 34. So exhibit religion as to encourage the selfish pursuit of it. Make the impression upon sinners that their own safety and happiness is the supreme motive of being religious.

Rule 35. Do not lay much stress upon the efficacy or necessity of prayer, lest the Holy Spirit should be poured out upon you and the congregation, and sinners should be converted.

Rule 36. Make little or no impression upon your hearers, so that you can repeat your old sermons often without being noticed.

Rule 37. If your text suggests any alarming thought, pass lightly over it, and by no means dwell upon and enforce it.

Rule 38. Avoid all illustration, repetition, and emphatic sentences that may compel your people to remember what you say.

Rule 39. Avoid all heat and earnestness in your delivery, lest you make the impression that you really believe what you say.

Rule 40. Be tame and timid in presenting the claims of God, as would become you in presenting your own claims.

Rule 41. Be careful not to testify from your own personal experience of the power of the gospel, lest you should produce the conviction upon your hearers that you have something which they need.

Rule 42. See that you say nothing that will appear to any of your hearers to mean him or her, unless it be something flattering.

The experience of ministers who have steadily adhered to the above rules will attest the soul-destroying efficacy of such a course, and churches whose ministers have steadily conformed to any of these rules can testify that such preaching does not convert souls to Christ. If souls are converted in congregations cursed with such a ministry, it will be by other means than the preaching.
The millennium: its Old Testament roots

The antecedents of John’s prophetic view in Revelation 20 can be found in the Old Testament predictions concerning the apocalyptic “day of the Lord.” We cannot fully understand one without the others.

Hans K. LaRondelle

Several lines connect John’s apocalyptic vision of the millennium in Revelation 20 with the prophetic and apocalyptic eschatologies of the Old Testament. Indeed, our Christian understanding of the three visions incorporated in Revelation 20 (note John’s triple use of “I saw,” in verses 1, 4, and 11) is illuminated greatly by uncovering the Old Testament roots of the millennium.

First, consider the term abyss, which is used twice (Rev. 20:1, 3) to refer to the “prison” (verse 7) in which the ancient serpent-dragon will be detained for a thousand years. As a term by itself, abyss functions both in the Revelation (9:1, 2, 11 [cf. Ps. 88:11; 11:7; 17:8] and elsewhere in the New Testament (Luke 8:31; Rom. 10:7) as a synonym of the grave, of death and destruction, and of the prison house of “the beast” and of demons. When Christ cast out certain evil spirits from a demon-possessed man in Galilee, “they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss” (Luke 8:31).

In the Greek version of the Old Testament, abyss is used in Genesis 1:2 to describe the uninhabited earth before Creation week: “The earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep [abyssos].” The New Testament seems to have taken this prehistoric description of an empty, chaotic earth as its prototype for the concept of abyss as a dark pit and prison house for demons.

Beyond the implications of the term abyss, the Old Testament prophetic perspectives throw further light on the apocalyptic imagery of the millennium. Jeremiah’s vision about the imminent and total destruction of Judah by Babylon is fraught with typological significance for the final judgment of the whole world: “I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty; and at the heavens, and their light was gone. . . . I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away. I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the Lord, before his fierce anger” (Jer. 4:23-26). In Old Testament prophetic eschatology, the day of judgment is generally characterized by a twofold perspective: the immediate historical day of Yahweh for a particular rebellious nation, and the ultimate, eschatological day of Yahweh for the entire world. This simple, yet complex, concept of God’s future reign, which reveals no concern for chronological, ethnic, or geographic distinctions, is rooted in the theocentric character of Israel’s prophetic hope. The focus is on the same God who, in both historical situations, will act in the same way for judgment and salvation. G. E. Ladd summarizes this twofold perspective of prophetic eschatology this way: “This historical Day of the Lord is painted against the backdrop of the eschatological Day of the Lord.”

Jeremiah’s vision of the coming devastation of “the earth” has, therefore, a definite apocalyptic dimension for the final judgment, when the devastation of earth and sky will reach its cosmic-universal range and climax. In that apocalyptic day of judgment the whole earth will return to its primordial state and become again an abyss: dark, formless, and empty (see Jer. 4:23, 28; cf. Gen. 1:2). That apocalyptic day, as the New Testament makes clear, is the second advent of Christ (see 2 Thess. 1:6-9; Rev. 6:12-17; 19:11-21). Then the whole world will become one great abyss—the earthly condition for a millennium, a prison house exclusively for Satan and his demonic spirits. The judgment of the second advent of Christ will leave no person alive on earth, according to Paul’s eschatology. The saints, either by their resurrection or by their translation, will all be taken to the Father’s house in heaven (see John 14:1-3; 1 Thess. 4:16, 17; 1 Cor. 15:51-55); the wicked will all be destroyed and laid in the dust of the earth by the consuming glory of Christ’s appearing (see
6:15-17; 16:17-21; 19:11-21). If no man remains alive on earth, it is evident that Satan, detained by God in the abyss of this ruined earth, is bound by a “great chain” of circumstances that Christ Himself has brought about by His glorious advent. During the millennium, Satan will be absolutely kept “from deceiving the nations any more” because he can no longer influence either the righteous in heaven or the wicked in death.

This apocalyptic imagery of Revelation 20:1-3 should not be confused with Christ’s victory over Satan at His first advent. It seems unwarranted to identify completely the apocalyptic perspective of Satan’s cosmic-universal binding in Revelation 20 with the fact that he is “bound” whenever the Spirit of Christ, through the gospel, releases individual believers from his dominion (see Matt. 12:28, 29). If it is true that Satan’s apocalyptic binding has already been realized in the cross of Christ, once and for all, how then could Satan ever be released from this bondage again as announced in Revelation 20:7? We should be careful not to identify or confuse Christ’s work at His second advent with that at His first advent.

The purpose of John’s Apocalypse is not to repeat the four Gospels, which center upon the first advent of Christ, but to convey a progressive revelation centered more on His second advent. In Revelation 20, not only the time of Satan’s binding is different from that in the Gospels, but also its nature and purpose. A. A. Hoekema states that the apocalyptic binding of Satan means that Satan’s influence “is . . . curtailed [so] that he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel to the nations of the world” and that “the nations cannot conquer the church, but the church is conquering the nations.” But this view does not fully honor the radical nature of Satan’s apocalyptic binding—a definite confinement in the abyss of a ruined world “to keep him from deceiving the nations any more” (Rev. 20:3). To minimize the binding of Satan to the point that the millennium becomes simply an era of prosperous church development does not take seriously enough the absolute nature of Satan’s binding in the Apocalypse.

The empirical fact remains that, centuries after the cross, Satan and his false apostles are still able to deceive the world by blinding the minds of unbelievers to the gospel (see 2 Cor. 4:4; 11:13, 14); the devil still “prows around like a roaring lion” (see 1 Peter 5:8) and “is now at work in those who are disobedient” (Eph. 2:2). Even after his defeat at the cross of Christ (see Col. 2:15), Satan is still successfully deceiving the world with his miracles and signs (see 2 Thess. 2:9, 10), “filled with fury, because he knows that his time is short” (Rev. 12:12). John can even write, “The whole world is under the control of the evil one” (1 John 5:19). Certainly, the cross stripped Satan legally of all his rights before God, but not yet of his power to deceive mankind. To deprive him of that power is the apocalyptic reality of Christ’s second advent, and its purpose is the specific theme of the Isaiah Apocalypse.

Two Old Testament passages seem to cast further light on the apocalyptic significance of the millennium: Isaiah 24:21-23 (within the Isaiah Apocalypse of chapters 24-27) and Ezekiel 36:39. Isaiah pictures the final judgment as God’s retributive justice on a cosmic-universal scale: “In that day the Lord will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days. The moon will be ashamed, the sun ashamed; for the Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously” (Isa. 24:21-23).

Several remarkable features can be observed in this apocalyptic passage: (1) the prophet sees God’s judgment passed not only upon men but also upon angels, “the powers in the heavens above” (cf. Dan. 10:13, 20; Ps. 82; Eph. 6:12); (2) all these rebellious powers of heaven and earth will be “herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon” (“pi’t”, R.S.V., K.J.V.); (3) “shut up in prison,” they will actually be punished only “after many days,” that is, after a long, unspecified period of imprisonment. One cannot fail to notice in these three facets of Isaiah’s Apocalypse the germinal concept of the millennium, with its binding of Satan in the abyss for a thousand years.

Of special significance is Isaiah’s declaration that while all the evil powers are kept secure in detention, the whole earth lies in a state of waste and desolation. Here again is the picture of a worldwide abyss: “The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The Lord has spoken this word” (Isa. 24:3; cf. verses 19, 20). Only God’s throne on Mount Zion stands secure.

In Isaiah’s vision, God’s final judgment comprises several phases: the evil powers will first be seized but not immediately punished; they will be detained for “many days.” This preliminary judgment will be followed by a final judgment executed by God Himself. The anti-godly powers are symbolized by a multiheaded serpent-dragon (see Isa. 27:1; LXX: drakon; cf. Ps. 74:13, 14), revealing another specific link with the apocalyptic imagery of Revelation 20 (see verse 2).

The Isaiah Apocalypse reveals further that this cosmic judgment causes resurrection from the dead for the faithful covenant people of God: “Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. . . . The earth will give birth to her dead” (Isa. 26:19). With the blast of a “great trumpet” God will gather up “one by one” all faithful ones so that they may participate in the apocalyptic banquet of Yahweh “for all peoples” on the holy mountain (see chap. 27:12, 13; 25:6-9; 24:23). In John’s Apocalypse, this banquet of Yahweh is transformed into “the wedding supper of the Lamb” (Rev. 19:6-9), when the Bride, the church of all the ages, will be forever united with her Saviour. This wedding feast is a central aspect of the future millennial kingdom of God in heaven, which takes place after the married saints have come to life again in the first resurrection (see chap. 20:4, 5).

Like Isaiah, the prophet Ezekiel speaks, too, of eschatological events in apocalyptic language. In chapters 38 and 39, he outlines a final war (“after many days”) by Gog, Meshech, and Tubal against the restored Israel of God. Popular dispensational writers, without considering the New Testament’s application of these chapters in Revelation 20, have seen in Ezekiel’s apocalyptic prophecy a detailed chronicle of “the coming Russo-Israeli war.”

However, Bible scholars of different theological persuasions agree that the seven judgment visions of John, found in Revelation 19:11 to 21:8, constitute a self-contained unit patterned basically after the outline of eschatological events in Ezekiel 36-48, although conflated as well with motifs from Daniel and Isaiah. Ezekiel’s prophetic scheme for the future of postexilic Israel culminates in a dramatic apocalyptic war against Messianic Israel and the final judgment of Yahweh. First, Yahweh will resurrect a new covenant people from Babylon and restore this cleansed and holy Israel to the Promised Land (see Eze. 36:24-32; 37:1-14). This faithful Israel of God will be ruled forever by the Messianic King—“my servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd” (chap. 37:24, 25). Yahweh Himself will put His Shekinah glory among them forever in a perfectly realized covenant relationship—“My

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dwellig place will be with them; I will be their God, and they will be my people" (verse 27).

Against this Messianic theocracy of Israel, Ezekiel portrays "after many days" (chap. 38:8) the apocalyptic attack of Gog, king of Magog, leader of the confederate nations of the world (see chapters 38, 39). The Israel of God does not engage in combat at all. It does not need to, because Yahweh will be the Divine Warrior who will fight this holy war alone, with the weapons from His own storehouse: "I will execute judgment upon him with plague and bloodshed; I will pour down torrents of rain, hailstorm and burning sulfur on him and on his troops and on the many nations with him. And so I will show my greatness and my holiness, and I will make myself known in the sight of many nations. Then they will know that I am the Lord" (Eze. 38:22, 23; cf. 39:6; Dan. 7:11).

John culminates his apocalyptic perspective, similarly, with God's judgment on Babylon (see Rev. 17, 18) and with the coming of the Messiah as the divine warrior from heaven who will destroy the persecutors of His church, "the beast," "the false prophet," and "the kings of the whole world" (see Rev. 19:19-21; cf. 16:12-21). For His faithful people, Christ then brings deliverance and resurrection from the dead (see chap. 20:4), the joys of the wedding banquet in the New Jerusalem in heaven (see chaps. 19:6-9; 21:2, 7), and the authority to judge on heavenly thrones in His kingdom for a thousand years (see chap. 20:4). This millennial kingdom will end with the descent of the New Jerusalem from heaven to earth, by the power of God. Satan will be released from his abyss, because now—at the end of the thousand years—the resurrection of the godless dead takes place (see chap. 20:5, 7; cf. John 5:28, 29; 1 Cor. 15:24). This sets the scene for Satan's final deception and the universal attack by God's enemies of all the ages on the New Jerusalem, "the camp of God's people," according to Revelation 20:7-10. To indicate the basic continuity of this apocalyptic war with that of Ezekiel's vision, John identifies the satanic forces with "Gog and Magog" (verse 8). The following parallels may bring Ezekiel's and John's corresponding structural outlines into sharper focus.

1. The resurrection of a dead Israel from the graveyard of Babylon to be a new, holy covenant people of Yahweh (see Eze. 36:24-28; 37:1-14).

The resurrection of the beheaded witnesses of Christ who refused to worship the Babylonian "beast or his image" (see Rev. 20:4).

2. Israel, as the new theocracy, lives peacefully in the Promised Land under the rule of the new David, the Messiah (see Eze. 37:15-28).

The resurrected saints reign with Christ for a thousand years (see Rev. 20:4-6).

3. After "many days," the final attack against Israel from the north by the armies of Gog, king of Magog, receives a smashing defeat through fire from heaven (see Eze. 38, 39).

After the saints' thousand-year reign, the armies of "Gog and Magog" attack the camp of God's people, the Holy City, from all directions, but are destroyed by fire from heaven (see Rev. 20:7-9).

4. The vision of Yahweh's theophany in a new Jerusalem (see Eze. 40-48).

The vision of the New Jerusalem, which descends from heaven to earth as the bride of the Lamb (see Rev. 21:1-22:5). While the religious-political character and anti-Christian goal of the apocalyptic war is the same in both Ezekiel and John, specific differences can be observed that reach an important hermeneutical principle in apocalyptic interpretation. The ethnic and geographic restrictions of Ezekiel's old-covenant imagery ("my people Israel," "my land," Gog "in the far North," "Gog attacks the land of Israel," the earthshaking theophany of Yahweh, etcetera) are all transformed by John's Apocalyptic into a thoroughly Christocentric dualism on a higher, transcendent level. John's Apocalyptic is a Christian Apocalyptic, which is characterized by the integration of the gospel of Christ into the prophetic and apocalyptic eschatologies of the Old Testament. This integration or redefining of Israel's eschatology takes place consistently and organically according to the Christological-ecclesiastical principle. This is the essential ness of the Christian Gospels and of the apocalyptic eschatology of the New Testament.

The apocalyptic perspective of the Old Testament is basic for the understanding of the ultimate triumph of God's everlasting covenant in the great controversy between God and Satan. The forecasts by Israel's prophets of the universal abyss and the divine punishment or judgment on all the ungodly spiritual and earthly powers receive their interpretation from Christ in John's Apocalypse.


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Turning the funeral around

Just because "we've always done it that way" doesn't mean that the usual funeral procedure is the most beneficial in all cases. The author gives some convincing arguments for reversing the normal order of service.

Neal A. Kuyper

When a 40-year-old wife, the mother of three children, died in an early-morning accident, the shock, the pain, and the sudden disruption overwhelmed the family. In making preparations for the service, the funeral director and I sensed this family needed to be in touch with the realities of the tragic death. How could we help them move from the suddenness of it to some acceptance of the reality of their loss? A viewing at the funeral home was agreed upon, but it seemed that we needed time at the gravesite. Why not have the committal at the cemetery prior to the memorial service in the church? We decided the unusual order was just what this family needed.

If your reaction is like that of most pastors, you're saying, "What! Reverse the traditional funeral procedure and conduct the graveside committal service before the memorial service in the funeral chapel or the church?" That is exactly what we decided to do in this case, and I am convinced by the funerals I have conducted since that this procedure is often the most helpful. When planning the service, families have been most receptive to the idea, and later these individuals have had positive and grateful things to say about having the committal service first.

The family whose wife and mother had been so suddenly killed met at the cemetery with the body already placed over the grave. After a short committal service, I asked for expressions from the family members. One daughter responded by singing "Memories"; the family joined with her. The 17-year-old daughter told of the love she had felt from her mother and of her own love for her. The husband talked of the loss he felt and of his gratefulness for the support family and friends were giving. The stepfather gave a spiritual testimony affirming life in Christ and expressing his hope for a reunion of the family in the life to come. The graveside service was a genuine proclamation of human warmth, caring, and affirmation of faith.

When we returned to the church from the cemetery, we were then ready for a service of remembrance and thanksgiving. Family, colleagues, neighbors, and friends joined together in this service of gratitude that became a celebration of the resurrection. Without the need to leave this service for the cemetery, the family were able to linger and meet all who attended following the worship service. They embraced, they talked. It was a time of love, of being together, and of genuine caring.

The reversal of the usual order seemed to work so well in this instance that I decided on a similar procedure when a young attorney's death came from cancer. I invited all those who planned to attend the memorial service to come first to the cemetery for the committal. In addition to members of his law firm, members of the Rotary Club and clients were present to grieve the loss of their friend and colleague. His young widow was a schoolteacher, much loved by her class of children. They had been experiencing the loss of her presence in the classroom during recent weeks and knew of their teacher's grief. They were also present at the cemetery. At the close of the service, each member of the community, each schoolchild, and each family member placed rose petals on the coffin. Now they were ready to go back to the church for a service of witness to the resurrection. The warm, friendly fellowship time that followed enabled persons to greet one another and gave out-of-State relatives time to mingle with friends from the community. The widow later indicated that this fellowship time following the memorial service was one of the most comforting experiences of the entire funeral. She had time with people who cared and loved her. Rushing to the cemetery following the worship service would have deprived her of some of that needed comfort.

Finally, I had occasion to use this idea with a family that had never experienced death before. A young man was tragically killed in an early-morning auto accident. In their overwhelming grief, they wanted only a simple service, limited to immediate family—no friends, business partners, or schoolmates. They could not share their grief; it was too personal, too painful. Some pastoral counseling was necessary to help them understand that they needed to help others, as well, deal with the grief felt in this loss. What would the father say to his business colleagues when he returned to work? They needed to be able to grieve with him at the chapel. The dead boy's classmates could not undergo the suddenness of loss without some means of absorbing the reality of their friend's death. At last, the family consented to having the graveside service before the memorial service.

When the family arrived at the cemetery, the grim reality of their son's death was present. It was a painful time for them. After the committal, they returned to the funeral-home chapel for the memorial service. There they discovered human warmth from friends. The class of schoolmates was present; their faces, too, were like the faces on Mount Rushmore—not a movement—until they cried as they shared experiences with one another in the narthex after the service. If we had left this service immediately to go to the cemetery, we would not have been able to have this time of affirmation.

What! Have the graveside committal before the memorial service! Yes. Once the body has been placed in its resting place, amid the cold of winter, the rain, the heat, or even perhaps on a beautiful day, the returning to the church or the chapel with expectations of quiet meditation, reading of Scripture, and worship helps the family move from physical realities to spiritual and emotional affirmations of faith and comfort. Following the service, they are with friends and family in an atmosphere conducive to comfort and caring. They need human warmth, love, and assurance of continuing support from each another. This happens best, I believe, when the committal precedes the memorial service.
The New Testament ringingly proclaims the "indicatives" of salvation—those unequivocal statements concerning the accomplished, historical facts of the gospel. No less surely, however, does it confront us with the "imperatives"—those commands to participate in the salvation already established. This too is an indispensable factor in redemption.

Norman H. Young

Imperatives of salvation

New Testament scholars frequently use two grammatical functions of the verb—the indicative and the imperative—to describe two aspects of the Christian gospel. The indicative mood is the form of the verb that makes statements and asks questions. When scholars refer to the "indicatives of salvation," they mean the great statements of the New Testament concerning the accomplished historical events of the gospel. For example: "Christ died for our sins" (1 Cor. 15:3); "Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6); "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Gal. 3:13).

The imperative mood describes that function of the verb that makes commands or requests. For example, "Sit still"; "Come here"; "Spare a penny"; "Help me." In its proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the New Testament uses what may be called "imperatives of salvation." These imperatives, in the main, are addressed to two distinct groups, those who are apart from faith and those who are in faith.

Those imperatives that present a call to faith we can describe as "imperatives of evangelism," while those that exhort a member to remain in the faith, in the community of believers, or the church, we can call "imperatives of the ecclesia." The distinction is not, of course, rigid. When apostasy threatens, imperatives of evangelism can be directed to believers. However, imperatives of the ecclesia are never addressed to the world. In general, then, the categories are reasonably well defined, and a study of these two groups of imperatives will illuminate our understanding of the New Testament's doctrine of salvation.

The basic meaning of many of the verbs used as imperatives of evangelism has to do with physical motion or receptive action; others move more in the realm of the intellect or senses. But common to all the examples discussed here is the appeal to change one's position or attitude.

The New Testament conceives of the man who is apart from faith as "away from the living God" (Heb. 3:12), "without God" (Eph. 2:12); so it is understandable that imperatives of evangelism challenge the unbeliever (or one whose faith is failing) with appeals demanding movement or receptive action. We find, for example, such invitations as "Come to me, all who labor" (Matt. 11:28); "The Spirit and the Bride say, 'Come'" (Rev. 22:17); "'Come to me and drink'" (John 14:12).
7:37); “Follow me” (Matt. 4:19; John 1:43); “Come to the marriage feast” (Matt. 22:4); “Seek first his kingdom” (chap. 6:33); “Enter by the narrow gate” (chap. 7:13); “Do not harden your hearts” (Heb. 3:8, 13; 4:7); “Draw near to God” (James 4:8).

Sometimes the imperatives of salvation demand a real physical action but contain an underlying spiritual movement or reception. Among such are “Rise, take up your cross, and follow me” (John 5:8); “Let him ... take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24); “Take, eat” (Mark 14:22, K.J.V.); “Stretch out your hand” (chap. 7:13); “Receive the Holy Spirit” (chap. 20:22); “Put your finger here” (verse 27).

Not all the imperatives of evangelism contain the graphic idea of motion or receptive action in either a literal or metaphorical sense; many are abstract verbs referring to the intellect or senses. Nevertheless, even in these cases the idea of a change of attitude is still very strong, as is obvious in two of the most frequently occurring imperatives of evangelism, believe and repent.

Some examples: “Repent, and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15); “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2; 4:17); “Repent, and be baptized” (Acts 2:38); “Repent therefore, and turn again” (chap. 3:19); “Believe in the light” (John 12:36); “Believe also in me” (chap. 14:1); “Believe me” (verse 11); “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22); “Believe in the Lord Jesus” (Acts 16:31).

Besides repent and believe, the New Testament uses a variety of other verbs as shown by the following verses: “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40); “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20); “Fear God and give him glory” (Rev. 14:7); “Listen to him” (Mark 9:7); “Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts” (James 4:8).

The imperatives of evangelism always presuppose and are grounded in God’s prior redemptive act in Jesus Christ. The call to come out (Rev. 18:4), to follow, to take or receive or accept, et cetera, is always the invitation for man to participate in a salvation that God has already established. But true as that is, the human response to the imperatives of salvation is an integral and indispensable factor in the total redemptive activity.

Having entered into the salvation of the Lord does not mean that the man in faith is secure quite apart from a continuing response. This is made clear by the second category of imperatives—the imperatives of the ecclesia.

Whereas the imperatives of evangelism always carry the idea of change and often of movement, the imperatives of the ecclesia convey the idea of constancy, of staying out. Christians are urged to stay clear of sin with imperatives such as these: “Keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21); “Shun the worship of idols” (1 Cor. 10:14); “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Thess. 5:22); “Put to death therefore what is earthly in you” (Col. 3:5). Perseverance is admonished by using verbs such as continue, remain, hold fast. Here are some examples: “Hold fast what you have” (Rev. 2:25; 3:11); “What you received and heard, keep that” (verse 3); “Guard the truth that has been entrusted to you” (2 Tim. 1:14); “Walk ye in him” (Col. 2:6, K.J.V.).

Notice that most of the examples so far have come from contexts in which apostasy is the major concern, as is the case with such writings as the book of Revelation and the Epistles to the Hebrews, as well as 1 John. This remains true for most of these further examples: “Keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21); “Little children, abide in him” (1 John 2:28); “Abide in me, and I in you” (John 15:4); “Abide in my love” (verse 9); “Continue in what you have learned” (2 Tim. 3:14); “Cast not away therefore your confidence” (Heb. 10:35, K.J.V.); “Awake, and strengthen what remains” (Rev. 3:2); “Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth” (1 Cor. 16:13); “Stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of a slavery” (Gal. 5:1); “Stand firm thus in the Lord” (Phil. 4:1); “Stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught by us” (2 Thess. 2:15).

The New Testament makes it abundantly clear that these imperatives of the ecclesia are urgent and earnest, for final salvation depends directly on the believer’s continuance in a robust and obediently vital faith. A series of conditional clauses found throughout the New Testament puts us to this end: “Stand firm in what you have learned” (2 Tim. 3:14), “Have faith in God” (Mark 11:22), “Believe in the Lord Jesus” (Acts 16:31). Besides repent and believe, the New Testament uses a variety of other verbs as shown by the following verses: “Save yourselves from this crooked generation” (Acts 2:40); “Be reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20); “Fear God and give him glory” (Rev. 14:7); “Listen to him” (Mark 9:7); “Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts” (James 4:8).

The imperatives of evangelism always presuppose and are grounded in God’s prior redemptive act in Jesus Christ. The call to come out (Rev. 18:4), to follow, to take or receive or accept, et cetera, is always the invitation for man to participate in a salvation that God has already established. But true as that is, the human response to the imperatives of salvation is an integral and indispensable factor in the total redemptive activity.

The grand truth that salvation is grounded in God’s prior acts in history must never be permitted in any way to reduce the truth that the New Testament’s proclamation of these divine events is in itself a call to decision.
Have you ever left the bedside of a critically ill parishioner, feeling that you have fumbled badly? It isn’t always easy to know just what will be the most helpful way to minister to the sick, the lonely, and the despairing. A hospital chaplain talks about how to get “inside the skin” of the hurting person.

Larry Yeagley

Visiting those who hurt

My hospital roommate, the victim of an automobile accident, received a visit from his pastor. It was a disaster. The pastor acted like a bashful schoolboy. The conversation was tense and painfully long, and closure was a gigantic problem. Finally, when the patient’s family entered the room, the pastor mumbled a few words and left. Sighs of relief followed his departure.

Perhaps you have been in the shoes of that fumbling pastor. I have. But I discovered a few principles of visitation that changed the whole course of my ministry to the sick, the lonely, and the despairing. I’ll share them with you.

The first two minutes of a visit spell your success or failure. If you express interest in the patient as soon as you enter, the patient will know that you are interested in being there. If you talk about the weather or the lovely flowers the minute you enter the room, the patient will know that you are threatened by the expression of feelings.

Keep the conversation on the feeling level. There is risk involved in talking about the patient’s feelings, but at the feeling level is where the hurt and the healing are located. This requires concentrated listening love. This is simply listening at deeper levels in an effort to comprehend the deeper levels of hurt and healing.

After the sharing of feelings, you might ask how the patient is managing, or plans to manage, the crisis. Here is where you observe the effectiveness of the patient’s spiritual tools. At this point you might wish appropriately to share added resources of spiritual strength out of your own experience—as long as it is brief, genuine, and not preachy.

It is very easy to cheer up the patient superficially, but this does more harm than good. Talking about the depths of sorrow demands that the pastor enter the sorrow of the patient to a degree, but for the patient there must be pain before healing can occur. Tears are a God-given way of releasing pressure. Don’t be afraid of the tears in the patient’s eyes or in your own.

Always point the patient to things of gratitude and hope. Recount the blessings of God together, but not so early in the visit that the expression of feeling is stifled. Let prayer and Bible reading be the choice of the patient. Otherwise the patient may see this pastoral activity as just another form of losing control over life. Be sure that your prayer is an outgrowth of the visit. Let the patient suggest his or her favorite scriptural passage.

Remember that sickness is accompanied by multiple losses. The accompanying grief includes reactions of shock, anger, guilt, denial, hopelessness, and depression. Lis-
(no text provided)
We believe that this true faith, being wrought in man by the hearing of the Word of God and the operation of the Holy Ghost, doth regenerate and make him a new man, causing him to live a new life. . . .
It is impossible that this holy faith can be unfruitful in man; for we do not speak of a vain faith, but of such a faith as is called in Scripture a faith that worketh by love, which excites man to the practice of those works which God has commanded in His Word. Which works, as they proceed from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable in the sight of God, forasmuch as they are all sanctified by His grace: howbeit they are of no account towards our justification.—The Belgic Confession (1561), Article XXIV.

This We Believe/11  G. Arthur Keough

Consistent Christianity

W e believe that consistent Christianity requires that faith and works must go hand in hand in such a concept is not unique to us, but it has been convincingly articulated by M. C. Griffiths in his book Consistent Christianity (published by Inter-Varsity Fellowship). The consistent Christian is one who, by the grace of God, has been convicted of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment (John 16:8). Looking at himself and his condition, he cries out, “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” (Rom. 7:24). Then the answer comes to him, as it came to the apostle Paul, “Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (verse 25).

Looking at Jesus in His life, His death, and His resurrection, the consistent Christian sees the infinite love of God, and this leads him to repentance. In faith he accepts the provisions God has made for his salvation. New life surges into his veins. “He is a new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17). He is born again into the family of God (see John 3:3). Having followed his Master’s footsteps into baptism, he is raised from the water to live a new life (Rom. 6:4).

Being reconciled to God, the consistent Christian loves God with all his heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). He also loves his neighbor as himself (verse 39). This means that the Christian does not want to do anything that will displease God, but, on the contrary, he wants to do only those things that please Him. He is anxious not to do anything that will hurt his neighbor, because God indeed loves that neighbor. On the contrary, he always keeps his neighbor’s good in mind. The consistent Christian loves God with all his heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37).

There is a high standard of conduct set before the Christian. He is called “to live a holy life” (1 Thess. 4:7) and to be holy in all that he does (1 Peter 1:15). Paul, writing to the Corinthians, says: “Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Cor. 7:1). The statement is strong, excluding nothing from the process of purification!

Jesus Himself insisted on a high standard of righteousness for His disciples; it had to surpass that of the religious leaders of His day (Matt. 5:20). He does not require a mere outward conformity to the law, but an inward wholeness of spirit that finds itself in harmony with God and enters into the very recesses of the heart and mind (see chaps. 5-7).

Such a high standard of conduct is an impossibility unless it is accompanied by resources to match the demands. And here is where the gospel is desperately needed. While the Christian has to “make every effort to enter through the narrow door” (Luke 13:24), he is not alone in his efforts. He can say with the apostle Paul: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13). Jesus pointed out the close connection that must exist between Himself and His disciples in terms of the vine and branches; if the branch remains in the vine it bears fruit (John 15:4, 5). Outside of Christ there is no power to do anything worthwhile.

The secret, therefore, of proper Christian behavior is abiding in Christ. When the Christian is in constant touch with the Source of life and power, he lives “a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way” (Col. 1:10). He is eternally grateful to the One who has rescued him from the dominion of darkness and brought him “into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (verse 13). The book of Hebrews says it this way: “Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name” (Heb. 13:15).

G. Arthur Keough is chairman of the religion department, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.
One matter needs to be made perfectly clear: The Christian does everything to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). He is a full-time Christian and never goes "off duty" when it comes to his various activities. When he works he works for the Lord, rather than for men (Col. 3:23, 24). When he plays he plays as one who represents Jesus in his play. There is a modern tendency to divide activities into sacred and secular. For instance, some would think a person is more of a Christian when praying than when playing golf. Thus it is easy for some to become one-day-a-week Christians. The truly consistent Christian is wholly immersed in doing God's will in every activity of life, living as Jesus lived.

The Christian and his food

Since God is interested in every aspect of the Christian's life, it is not surprising to discover that God is concerned about man's diet and has made provision for it (Gen. 1:29). Seed-bearing plants and fruits are apparently the ideal diet in ideal circumstances. It was in the area of eating that man was to be tested, although Eve noted that it was "good for food" (chap. 3:6). The question seems to be, Will man be guided by what God has indicated is right and proper, or will he follow the dictates of his own taste and reason?

After the Fall, the Creator made changes in man's diet. The ground was cursed (verse 17), and man was to share with the animals "the plants of the field" (verse 18). After the Flood his diet was extended to include the flesh of animals (chap. 9:3). Yet there was this restriction: He was not to "eat meat that has its blood still in it" (verse 4).

Does the provision to eat flesh meat include every type of animal? A cursory reading of Genesis 9:3 would indicate that this is the case. However, the account of the animals entering the ark refers to "clean" and "unclean" (chap. 7:2, 8). More of the clean were preserved than the unclean. The next reference to clean and unclean animals is found in Leviticus 11, and this has to do with what was fit and what was unfit for food.

Scholars differ as to what is meant by the terms clean and unclean. The most common suggestion is that clean creatures were those that could be used for sacrifices; they were ritually clean. But the list of clean creatures in Leviticus 11 includes those that were never used in temple services. Therefore, it seems reasonable to infer that the distinction between the clean and the unclean animals is more than ceremonial; it also is used to indicate what man may or may not eat.

A significant question now comes to our mind: If God decided that certain animals were clean or unclean even at the time of the Flood, if He gave some clear distinctions to the children of Israel, do these distinctions still hold today? Or have they been abrogated? Do the regulations of an Old Testament period carry over to a New Testament situation?

Seventh-day Adventists believe that the Bible must be taken as a whole. What is recorded in the Old Testament is there for our learning (Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11). Is God arbitrary when He says that some animals are clean and some are unclean? Has the nature of animals changed so that there are now no distinctions? Seventh-day Adventists feel that God has good reason for doing what He did in Old Testament times, that the world of nature has not necessarily changed for the better down through the centuries. Regulations for our health should be studied with care and applied with consistency.

Some New Testament texts are interpreted as abrogating Old Testament restrictions. For instance, Mark 7:19 records a comment by the author: "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods 'clean.'" But is this really an abrogation of the distinction between clean and unclean? The point of contention between Jesus and the Pharisees was the matter of whether they must "live according to the tradition of the elders" or whether they could eat their food with ceremonially unwashed hands according to popular custom (read verses 1-5). The Pharisees contended that to eat food without a ceremonial washing rendered a person unclean. But Jesus insisted that it was not what went into the body, but what came out of him as a result of immoral and other evil thinking, that made him unclean (verses 15, 20-23).

Another text that is quoted by many Christians as abrogating the Old Testament distinction between clean and unclean meats is Romans 14:20. Paul says, "All food is clean." Definitely Paul is writing to the Romans about the Christian attitude to food. He says that "one man's faith allows him to eat anything, but another man, whose faith is weak, eats only vegetables" (verse 2). Does the Christian eat "everything"? Is all food clean? Looking at the context, we find that Paul is not laying down any rules for health. Rather, he is suggesting how Christians ought to relate to one another in matters of differences relating to conscience. We should not impose our private inclinations on others, nor should we permit our freedoms to cause another to stumble. We must be considerate of one another, recognizing individual differences and remembering at all times that "the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (verse 17).

Seventh-day Adventists do not find here an abrogation on Paul's part of any Old Testament dietary principles, but they feel that the Christian, while doing what he is convinced is right according to the teaching of the Bible, is not to boast of any superiority of action. He is what he is and he does what he does only by the grace of God, and only to God's honor and glory.

In matters of diet, therefore, the Christian must value the Scriptures for the guidance he receives. He recognizes that his diet may vary according to time and place. He should always pick the best available to him, because it is his responsibility to preserve health and strength in order to be a blessing to himself and to others. Whatever God has provided he accepts with grace and thankfulness, knowing that even in his eating he lives to the glory of God.

The Christian and his drink

Does Scripture make allowance for the Christian to drink wine? If He could have it provided by a miracle as was done at the marriage at Cana, that would be fine, for whatever Christ does is always perfect. The master of ceremonies agreed that it was the best (John 2:10). It would be interesting to know that wine by which He judged it best. We are not told.

There is a type of wine that the Christian is clearly warned against—"it sparkles in the cup, . . . it goes down smoothly" (Prov. 23:31). Those who indulge in drinking this add to their woes (verse 29). The results of intoxication are vividly described in verses 32-35. The wise man concludes that "wine is a mocker and beer a brawler; whoever is led astray by them is not wise" (chap. 20:1).

Does the Bible make allowance for drinking in moderation? F. S. Fitzsimmons concludes his article on wine in The New Bible Dictionary as follows: "It may be said that while wine is not condemned as being without usefulness, it brings in the hands of sinful men such dangers of becoming uncontrolled that even those who count themselves to be strong would be wise to abstain, if not for their own sake, yet for the sake of weaker brethren" (Rom. 14:21). The Christian knows that he is better off without it. He needs to preserve his dignity, to provide wisely for his family, and to maintain his health; and the drinking of intoxicating liquors, even in moderation, can only undermine these objectives.

Is the Christian free to drink coffee, tea, and cola drinks? Of course, the Bible is silent in this regard. However, modern science is clearly indicting caffeine as the cause of "a wide range of health problems" (Leo R. Van Dolson, "Is Your 'Pick-me-up' Letting You Down?"") (1981). Brian MacMahon, in the New England Journal of Medicine, March 12, 1981, page 630, says that there is "a strong association between coffee consumption and pancreatic cancer." Since tea and the cola soft drinks also contain caffeine, the Christian finds it wise to avoid their use.

The Christian and drugs, tobacco

The use of drugs is as old as mankind
The Christian and his recreation and entertainment

The Christian recognizes that he cannot take part in one type of activity continuously, even though good in itself. He must live a balanced life. The fourth commandment of the Decalogue points out that, although he is to work six days in the week, he must rest the seventh.

The ideal kind of recreation is that kind of activity that allows the body to have a change of pace. Has a man been working under stress? Let him now relax. Has he been using his muscles in physical work? Let him now rest and read or discuss or meditate or socialize. Has he been studying hard, using the powers of his mind? Let him turn to physical exercise.

Recreation, true to its name, enables a person to renew, to re-create, his energies. After a period of change in pace and type of activity, he is ready to go back to his work or occupation with greater zeal and power.

The Christian takes his work and his recreation seriously because for him life is serious. Life has a purpose and a goal. Therefore he will not engage in any activity that will hinder him from discharging his responsibilities in life. But this does not mean that the Christian cannot enjoy a good time and pleasant activities. The fact that he is a Christian means that he gets maximum happiness out of life. But he differentiates between recreation and mere amusement or entertainment for entertainment’s sake.

There is a tendency on the part of some to ask the question: What is wrong with going to the movie theater? What is wrong with attending the dance hall? The question is being put in the wrong way. The question to ask is: What is right with this or that activity? The question of the rightness or wrongness of a particular movie or any other activity can be best settled by Philippians 4:8: “Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Are you, as a Christian, really comfortable engaging in an activity that is popular among non-Christians, where all kinds of non-Christian attitudes, emotions, and desires are expressed?

Although the Bible does mention a legitimate form of dancing (Ex. 15:20, 21; 2 Sam. 6:14), there is a form and type of dancing that is far from acceptable. When the children of Israel danced before the golden calf, their conduct was reprehensible, and Moses was rightly indignant (Ex. 32:19). Such dancing was accompanied by orgies, with eating and drinking (verse 6).

With dancing, too often the movements are sensual and suggestive, arousing impure thoughts. It is of no avail to accuse the beholder of wrong doing because it is often the dancer who intentionally creates an atmosphere in which the passions can be aroused. The New Testament gives an example of this type of dancing (Mark 6:21, 22).

Music, like dancing, can be perverted into wrong uses. If music is used to attract people away from the path of rectitude, obviously it is wrong. If it is unbalanced, so that there is melody without harmony, or rhythm without musical substance, then it cannot be wholesome. If it is out of place, out of tune, it cannot please the ear. If it is too loud, too insistent, it is harmful or just annoying.

On the other hand, music is a gift of the Creator, and as such needs to be appreciated. It is an effective mode of expression for joy, as when “the morning stars sang together” (Job 38:7), and sorrow, as in the case of dirges (2 Sam. 1:17-27). It is used on sacred occasions, as in the Temple services (1 Chron. 15:16-24), and at feasts and celebrations (see Gen. 31:27). It can be relaxing, even therapeutic, as in the case of Saul (1 Sam. 16:23); but it can also be exciting—a call to march and to war, and also to bring people together to worship (Num. 10:1-10; Dan. 3:5).

Christians must decide for themselves what kind of entertainment they may or may not do in good conscience, while other Christians must refrain from judging. But all must recognize that no man can serve two masters. We are either for Christ or for the world in everything that we do.

The Christian differs from the non-Christian not so much in what he does or in what he wears, but in how and why he does it. His understanding of himself as a child of God colors his outlook and patterns his behavior.
When Adam and Eve were thrust out of the Garden of Eden, Eve turned to Adam and asked, “Oh, what is to become of us now?” And Adam replied, “We are about to experience an abrupt socioeconomic transformation.”

At least that is how the conversation would have gone if the jargon-prone clerics had had a chance to record it. Time’s religion editor chides Protestant scholars for their high-hat vocabulary with these gently sarcastic words: “No theologian today worth his doctorate would dare talk of preaching or teaching—the fashionable forms are kerygma and didache.”

If you would be a preacher who brings blessings to his congregation, avoid the juiceless jargon of the professional made cumbersome and obscure by borrowings from the Greek or German and by mouthfuls of syllables that make something less than sense until they are reduced to simpler terms. It was said of our Lord that “the common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37). It is in the suds of everyday speech that the starch of the schools must be washed out of the preacher’s language. All the mighty evangelists through the centuries have been men who have expounded the Scriptures and set forth Christ in a simple, direct, straightforward manner.

Augustine once said, “A wooden key is not so beautiful as a golden one; but if it can open the door when the golden one cannot, it is far more useful.” Luther added, “No one can be a good preacher to the people who is not willing to preach in a manner that seems childish and coarse to some.” John Wesley wrote all his sermons in full, and read them to the maid. All the words she couldn’t understand he eliminated.

Today, some religious leaders seem to look down on simplicity. They appear to believe that a sermon should be a profound utterance upon some sociological or even political question. Such ministers apparently conceive of themselves as a kind of assistant to Congress. Get a bill through, and the world is in good shape—this is the notion. Other ministers, who have gotten a little beyond sociology, now regard themselves as theologians and are probing deeply the mysteries of the universe. But where does all this leave the poor souls who sit in the congregation?

When the famous theologian Karl Barth visited the United States, a group of young theological students questioned him. One asked Barth to put in capsule form his definition of the Christian faith, expecting a long statement filled with theological terms with which he could disagree and engage Barth in further intellectual discussion. The Swiss theologian was quiet for a few moments as he reflected. Then he said, “I learned it all at my mother’s knee. Yes, if I had to sum up Christianity, I think it would be what my mother taught me—Jesus loves me, this I know, For the Bible tells me so.”

No one likes to ask himself after attending church, “What in the world did the preacher mean?” Or “Now, what does that have to do with me?” Such a response usually results, not from the listener’s lack of intelligence, but from the preacher’s use of Biblical and theological jargon. Who can enjoy a sermon if he must use a dictionary or a theological glossary? Many educated preachers have difficulty expressing themselves in everyday language. In fact, some take years to learn how to explain the great ideas of the faith in words that the average man uses when discussing simpler things. But the preacher must make the transition from his book lingo, or he will be preaching into the wind, and his ponderous prattle will fly back at him, rejected by his puzzled congregation. To communicate the unsearchable riches of God’s truth effectively is still our main task.

An 11-year-old girl had heard adults about her talk much of the brilliant new minister. After hearing him preach a wonderfully clear sermon for the first time, she said, “Daddy, that preacher is not so smart. I understood every word he said.” That preacher was not only brilliant but also wise, for he had followed the example of Jesus. He had preached in a language that all could understand. He had preached with power.

By simplicity in preaching I do not mean shallow or superficial preaching. I mean clarity of thought and expression—the ability to tell others what one has seen and felt until they see and feel it for themselves. Fog is good for lima beans; they prosper in its clammy dampness. But fog has little to offer men. Scientific experiments have indicated that a bank of fog three feet thick, six feet high, and one hundred feet long contains less than one seventh of a glassful of water! One cannot quench his thirst with fog; he cannot even bathe in it. There is only one thing to do with fog, and that is to keep out of it. There was no fog about the gospel when Christ and Paul presented it. A sermon should help people live in a difficult and complicated world. I have often needed help; I still need it. Thank God, I have been able to get it through preaching. So, when I stand up in a pulpit, my great desire is, in the name of Christ, to be of some help to others.

In all our preaching, then, let us be simple, plain, to the point, and deeply in earnest. Remember that Jesus said, “Feed my lambs”—not the giraffes! Some preachers have the instinct of aviators—they announce a text, taxi for a short distance, then take off from the earth and disappear into the clouds. After that, only the din of exploding gasoline is heard, signifying that they are flying high, very high, above the heads of their hearers. In other words, a sermon, rightly presented, should not be a meteor, but a sun. Its true test is: Can it make anything grow?

George Fox, seeking spiritual guidance, walked seven miles to talk to a clergyman who had a reputation for being helpful. “But I found him but like an empty hollow cask,” he reported sadly. The problem with our preaching is that too often people come seeking the water of life, only to find an empty cask. But sometimes they find water—when the preacher with simplicity and authority proclaims Jesus Christ.

Feed your people with the bread of life; cause them to drink deeply of the water of life. Be careful not to confuse simple, easy communication with superficial and shallow preaching. You can dig deep, but you don’t have to come up dry. Use your professional tools at home, but take the Inspired Word alone into the pulpit. With God’s help, your sermons can be profoundly simple and simply profound.

Morris Chalfant

Morris Chalfant is pastor of the First Church of the Nazarene in Norwood, Ohio.
The work of the prophets was to bear witness to Jesus, and the Saviour Himself had no further word for those who refused to take seriously their testimony concerning Him. So closely is Jesus identified with the prophets that our attitude toward them determines our attitude toward Him. What we do with them, we will ultimately do with Jesus.

Morris L. Venden

What Jesus said about the prophets

Jesus stood silent. He did not speak—not even a word. In spite of the many questions put to Him, in spite of the desperate attempts to induce Him to speak, He remained silent. It was the most solemn response Jesus ever made, and there is significant truth to be learned today from that silence.

It was during His trial before Herod. Jesus had been arrested in Gethsemane and taken to the court of Annas, then to Caiaphas, and then before the Sanhedrin. He had been brought to Pilate, and Pilate, in turn, sent Him to Herod. “And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him for a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing” (Luke 23:8, 9).

When I first read about Jesus’ silent treatment of Herod, I was happy. Herod was the one who had killed John the Baptist as a result of a drunken party with his lords and his rash oath to Salome. So when I read how Jesus treated him, my reaction was “Good for You, Lord! That’s the way. Show him whom he’s been fighting against. Ignore him. Be rude.” And if I had been in Jesus’ shoes, I would have curled my lip and put a scowl on my face; I would have looked daggers at Herod. But then I realized that Jesus didn’t feel that way at all. Jesus came to this world to die for Herod just as much as He came to die for me.

We shouldn’t see Jesus’ silence as being rude and vindictive toward Herod. Instead we should see Him standing there silently, perhaps with tears in His eyes, sorrowing that another one of His created children had turned Him down. Jesus was simply accepting the decision that Herod had already made. Herod had rejected the message of John the Baptist, one of the greatest of the prophets, and there was nothing more that even Jesus Himself could do or say to reach him. John the Baptist was a prophet and “more than a prophet” (Matt. 11:19). He taught the people that Christ was greater than he (Luke 3:16). He was a lesser light to lead them to the Greater Light. He was the Lord’s messenger (Matt. 11:10). Once before, a prophet had been “more than a prophet.” We find the record in Numbers 12. Miriam and Aaron had decided that Moses was nothing special. They said, “Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us?” (verse 2). God Himself came to Moses’ defense, appearing in the pillar of cloud at the door of the tabernacle. He explained to Miriam and Aaron that Moses was indeed more than a prophet, and then asked, “Wherfore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?” (verse 8). Miriam, who had been foremost in the criticism, was stricken with leprosy.

Herod, who should have been afraid even to speak against the Lord’s messenger, was so insensible of John’s importance in the eyes of heaven that he put him to death! And when the voice of the prophet was silenced, Jesus Himself had nothing more to say. He had nothing to say because it would have been useless to say more. From the story of Jesus and Herod we can learn that if one is unfriendly to the prophets, he is going to be unfriendly to Jesus Himself. The two attitudes always go together.

One of the outstanding characteristics of the people in Palestine at the time of Christ’s first advent was that they had problems with the prophets. They had always had problems with the prophets. In the days of Christ they came along and garnished the tombs of the prophets and said, “If we had lived in the days of our
Jerusalem, after their buckets were empty, fathers, we would not have treated these Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Ye serpents, ye generations of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell! (Matt. 23:31-33).

The apostle Paul had something to say on this point too: "For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him [Jesus] not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him" (Acts 13:27). So Paul made it clear that whatever the people did to the prophets, they did to Jesus, and their relationship to the prophets was simply a prelude of how they would relate to Jesus.

In Acts 7 we find the well-known experience of Stephen, sometimes called the first Christian martyr. In the middle of his final discourse, he broke off from his review of the history of Israel and ringingly accused his listeners: "Ye stoned the prophets which were spoken of the Lord by the prophet" (chap. 1:22; cf. chaps. 2:15; 3:3; 8:17; 21:4; Luke 3:4; John 1:23; 12:38). Early in His ministry Jesus read from the book of the prophet Isaiah in His own hometown church on the Sabbath day and was pushed to the edge of a cliff as a result (Luke 4:16-30). He quoted from the prophets repeatedly in His teachings—from Daniel (Matt. 24:15), from Jonah (chap. 12:39), from Moses (Luke 24:27), and others.

Jesus spoke to the Jewish leaders, warning them of the danger of following man-made traditions instead of the commandments of God (Matt. 15:1-9). And His disciples, forgetting how often He had read minds, came to Him and said, "Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?" (verse 12). Jesus responded by giving one of His shortest parables: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (verse 14).

This short parable is relevant today, for the church called Laodicea, the last church until just shortly before Jesus comes, also has a problem with blindness, among other things (see Rev. 3, 14-22). It was not only the people in Christ's day who were blind or blind leaders of the blind!

The apostle Paul, comparing the different parts of the body to the different parts of the church, speaks of the eyes of the church (1 Corinthians 12). Now, eyes are for seeing, and in 1 Samuel 9:9 we discover that in Bible times a prophet was called a "seer"—a see-er, or one who sees. In giving to His church the gift of the prophets, God has provided eyes so that we can see and escape being either blind followers or blind leaders.

In Bible times a prophet was called a "seer"—a see-er, or one who sees. In giving to His church the gift of the prophets, God has provided eyes so that we can see and escape being either blind followers or blind leaders.
Covetousness or contentment?

It is impossible to satisfy covetousness, for desire always surpasses its fulfillment.

Allan R. Magie

Walking into a room, she will find everyone aware of the new "smell." However, within a very few minutes, unless she adds to her aura, no one there will notice that particular scent. Their olfactory nerves are still operational, but their brains are now aware of the new scent. So, in order to get fresh attention, our lady will either have to add more of the same essence or a new blend. When that is done, the olfactory nerves quickly make everyone aware of the new level of intensity of the old odor or the presence of a new one. You see, the nerve cells simply stop signaling the brain once it has been done, the olfactory nerves quickly make everyone aware of the new "smell." How is this possible? Because our noses are still operational, but their brains are already aware of the new level of intensity of the old odor or the presence of a new one. You see, the nerve cells simply stop signaling the brain once it has been made cognizant of a change in the body's environment.

In a similar way we quickly adapt to the coolness of a swimming pool, even suggesting to newcomers, "The water's fine; come on in!" It is for this reason that many persons will finish off a hot bath or shower with cold water.

Even when it comes to something unwanted, like pain, this principle operates. We can become accustomed to a given level of pain until we are aware of it only when it fluctuates. Pleasure stimuli, too, are treated similarly by the nervous system.

This virtually automatic adjustment of our sense organs to varying levels of stimulation can be used to understand areas of our experience that are not so easily detected or measured.

As an example, take money. If you are like most clergy, you are accustomed to living on a fairly rigid budget based on an expected income. Periodic raises are expected that may give you an incentive to perform your responsibilities more efficiently. Have you ever noticed how quickly you become adjusted to the new level of income? In fact, if you are like most persons, you have probably already spent or committed the salary increase even before you get it!

Then, before you realize it, you find yourself just as contented, or discontented, with the new salary level as you were before you received the raise. That's adjustment. Instead of adapting to stimuli carried by the nerve fibers, it's adapting to money used to satisfy your needs and wants.

By now the application to the tenth commandment ought to be clear. One reason for not coveting anything is that when you obtain it, it only leads to additional pleasure stimuli, to which you rapidly adapt, and then find yourself not one iota better off than you were before obtaining it.

But now, at this elevated level, a new dimension enters the picture. If you do not maintain this increased level, or actually regress to a former level of existence, the pains of displeasure that you experience will be as great or greater than the anticipated pleasure of achieving a higher level.

Thus, there is really little, if anything, to be gained by reaching a higher level of prestige, income, or other temporary station in life, and therefore, little value in coveting them.

Certainly life has higher rewards and values than those sought by the world today—wealth, honor, fame. Great men of the past, such as Gandhi, Schweitzer, and unnumbered others, have shunned such amenities, to share with Christ the shunning of the goods and conditions glamorized and desired by most men.

Our Saviour didn't even own a pillow on which to rest His head; yet He lived a full and rewarding life of service. He really didn't ask us to disdain all acquisitions—He only desires that we keep these in perspective to the eternal world to which we journey. Nothing should be allowed to occupy our thoughts and ambitions so much that it distracts us from the great purpose of life—yielding our wills to God and unrestricted willingness to follow in His footsteps of service to our fellow men.

Jesus said: "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself"; "but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:34, 33).

Paul adds this counsel: “Covet earnestly the best gifts”—"faith, hope, charity" (1 Cor. 12:31; 13:13).
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.

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

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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| Free copy |       |

**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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**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.

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We may think we are protected against deception by our knowledge, but being deceived is more a matter of the heart than of the head. The only sure defense against Satan's subtle cunning is Jesus.

In Matthew 24, the signs-of-the-end-of-the-age chapter, Christ repeatedly gave warnings against deception. From what He says in this chapter, these warnings seem to constitute a greater sign of the climax of the ages than any other sign given, with the exception of the worldwide preaching of the gospel. His disciples questioned Him, "When shall these things be?" In reply Christ opened His discourse on the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world with a strong warning against deception. His first remark was "Take heed ("watch out," N.I.V.) that no man deceive you" (verse 4). It seems significant that Christ connected His warning against deception, not with the secular environment, but with the spiritual realm. In other words, He didn't caution His followers against the massive deceptive practices found in commerce and day-to-day business dealings. He was concerned with spiritual deceptions that would lead multitudes into error and eventual separation eternally from God. His words "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (verse 5) are unmistakably plain. There is no hidden meaning.

But Christ does not conclude His deception theme at this point. In verse 11, He repeats it. "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many." Again, in verses 23-26 He adds more detail to His warning. He expands His warning against false Christs and false prophets by adding that these "shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." What stronger language could our Saviour have used? If those whom the Lord knows will be saved are almost deceived, what will happen to professing Christians who have little real relationship with Christ, to say nothing of the masses, who make no profession at all? To put it plainly, deception will be rampant, according to our Lord, and almost overpowering even for those whose faith is fastened in Jesus Christ!

This, it seems to me, is a significant point, especially for Seventh-day Adventists, who have long stressed the return of Jesus. Just to know the scriptural details of how Christ will come the second time does not preclude our being deceived. We may understand that He will return with power, glory, clouds, and a retinue of holy angels as they sweep toward the earth on the royal highway of the skies, with "every eye" (Rev. 1:7) watching—some with fear and horror, others with love and delight. But this knowledge of itself is no guarantee against deception. Admittedly, without a knowledge of what the Bible says regarding the return of Jesus, deception will be facilitated. We should be most diligent students of the Scriptures to understand all that is given there about His coming. We should protect ourselves as far as possible against deception. But knowledge alone is not enough!

The core of any deception is in the heart. Deception succeeds because our desires and emotions spur it on. We believe what we want to believe. Perhaps Goethe was right when he said, "We are never deceived; we deceive ourselves." Deception is one of the cardinal characteristics of sin and is the quality that gives it success. "For sin . . . deceived me" (Rom. 7:11, N.I.V.), Paul announced. Since all have sinned and are sinners, deception has played a leading role in man's experience. We are all more easily deceived by sin and Satan than we would like to admit. Christ referred to the narrow escape of "the very elect." They barely avoid being deceived, but they do escape. How? The main, basic safeguard against deception is conversion and a daily maintenance of that conversion and commitment to Jesus Christ. The difference between the elect ("the picked ones," "the chosen ones") and the nonelect is the new birth experience and all that goes with it. This is fundamental, primary. Without being committed mind, body, and soul to Jesus Christ and led of the Holy Spirit, all the correct knowledge about doctrine will not keep us from being captured by the end-time miles of the master deceiver. For deception is more a matter of the heart than of the head. Our relationship with Jesus will do more to provide a bulwark against deception than any other thing.

According to Matthew 24, Satan will focus in a special way on deception at the time of the consummation of the age and the second coming of Christ. Here Jesus mingles prophetic descriptions of the destruction of Jerusalem with information about the great day of His coming. This discourse had relevance for His followers then, and it has significance for His followers now! Between the time He spoke these words and the destruction of Jerusalem, numerous false Messiahs appeared. And they have continued, and will continue, to appear.

One of the most recent attempts at deception happened this year. Many of you will recall the large, full-page announcements that appeared in certain leading newspapers across the Nation and around the world. On April 25 the bold headline declared, "The Christ Is Now Here." An article in a London newspaper, on June 21, headlined a feature story with the words "Search for Brick Lane Messiah Nearly Over!" The Pope's visit to England and the Falkland Islands crisis upstaged the search for this messiah, but what is happening is exactly what Jesus said would happen! The Scriptures give abundant evidence that the coming of Christ will be visible, literal, and personal. He will come in the clouds of heaven. This is the thrust of the New Testament doctrine on the Second Coming, and especially the Matthew 24:23-27 passage. Christ will not come in any secret or mysterious way. "For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be," He said, leaving no room for a mystical return or even a secret rapture. When our Lord returns, no one will have to be told about it! All the senses of men's bodies will explode with either fear or joy when the heavens are split wide open at the cataclysmic event of His second coming.

But there is no doubt in my mind that if this advertised London "Christ," whoever he is, should appear and begin to show "signs and wonders," such as apparently raising one from the dead, myriads would beat a path to his door, in spite of clear Biblical statements regarding the manner of Christ's coming. And I have no doubt in my mind that among those myriads would be a large number of professing Christians. Purported evidence, nearly irresistible, as false as it is, is plaguing and will continue to plague our poor world. Multitudes are
being swept into the clutches of every brand of heresy and false doctrine.

The glorious doctrine of the second coming of Christ is not the only Biblical truth that is being perverted to deceive many. There are other deceptions. Sorcery, witchcraft, spirituality, and the occult are deluging our planet. TV and movie screens are saturated with intriguing versions of the supernatural, the extraterrestrial, and the unexplainable. I firmly believe that the books, motion pictures, and television programs portraying these intriguing elements are setting the stage for the fulfillment of Revelation 16:14, in which the "spirits of demons performing miraculous signs...go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty" (N.I.V.). The human race is "deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). The arch deceiver, Satan, is busy deceiving "the whole world" (Rev. 12:9). Miracles and wonders are no proof of righteousness. Revelation 13, when studied carefully, reveals that the climax of earth's history involves colossal false miracles and signs done in the name of religion! The apostasy is so great that the term Babylon ("confusion") is used to describe global deception and ruin. "For by thy sorceries were all nations deceived" (chap. 18:23).

To us as ministers and pastors has been given a grand and solemn responsibility. I charge myself and each of you to be spiritually alert in order to give proper shepherding to the dear sheep entrusted to our care. Watchmen on Zion's walls cannot afford to be asleep. A warning sound needs to be made. Our globe is being plunged into horrible disarray. Political, economic, spiritual, and social upheaval is rampant. People are disillusioned, discouraged, and disheartened. We are reaching history's nadir—equal to the world's dark condition when our Lord first came and the masses sat in great darkness. With the precious light of the Scriptures focusing on our Saviour, Jesus Christ, this is no time to become disheartened, but rather a time to renew our dedication to Him, a time to lift up our heads, for our redemption draweth nigh (Luke 21:28). The Lord is soon coming, in power, majesty, splendor, and grandeur. The Emperor of the universe is quickly returning to claim His own—let nothing deceive you!—J.R.S.


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**Letters**

**Mixed reactions**

Ministry is one of those rare pieces of unsolicited mail that I have come to appreciate deeply. The articles are always helpful, relevant, and thought-provoking.—Ontario.

God bless you in putting out a magazine that reflects the times in which we live.—Pentecostal Assembly, Alberta.

How I love Ministry! The articles in the July issue seem to have been designed and written especially for me. Please count this United Methodist as distinctly grateful for your outstretched hand!—United Methodist Church, Kentucky.

Ministry has been coming to me for a long time. I thought when a year was up it would stop coming, but it keeps on. Please stop sending it. I have never looked at any of the copies but the first one. All the rest have gone into the trash at once. I am not a member of your church, never was, and never will be.—California.

Stop sending Ministry! It has too much heresy in it for me.—Baptist Church, Oregon.

**Clergy hesitation**

Each issue of Ministry contains information that catches my attention. In particular, I was attracted to an item in the September issue. "A Report to the President of the United States." Indeed, as your church leader points out, we are an unbelievably wealthy nation. Our churches properly led and taught can do much more to respond to the plight of the needy in our midst. My observation is that the lethargy and reluctance to act and rally resources often lies, not with the people who fill our churches, but with clergy who hesitate to participate unless somehow they and their churches get the credit and glory for the good deeds performed.—Episcopal Church, Michigan.

**Receive as you are received**

After all the nice work the author of "Baptism: Union With Christ" (May, 1982) does with the Greek verb baptizōn (to baptize) which does imply immersion, he goes on to acknowledge that in both Mark 7:3, 4 and Luke 11:38 this meaning is not demanded, since the same word is used in these texts for ritual washings. By this very acknowledgment, he has left open the door for a possible application of baptizōn to the act of sprinkling or pouring. However, he falls to see or admit, let alone accept, the fact.

What hurts us mainstream Christians who consider Seventh-day Adventists to be our brothers and sisters in Christ is not your preference for immersion (some of us also have that preference), but your insistence on nonexistent grounds that only your method of baptism is valid. This amounts to saying that we who are baptized for cultural, traditional, or environmental reasons by sprinkling or pouring are not baptized into union with God through Jesus Christ, in spite of all our faith in Him. Please receive us as we receive you.—Ronald L. McCullough, United Methodist Church, Washington.

**Refreshing breeze**

Ministry is certainly one of the most refreshing breezes to blow across the arid wasteland of the contemporary religious scene in a long time. Like grace, it is free, but not cheap. I especially appreciate the articles on health and religion. I believe it is important for Christians to be reminded of the Biblical truth that our body is indeed the temple of the Holy Spirit and that our lifestyle speaks volumes about what we believe.—Episcopal Church, West Virginia.

**Christ in us**

I found Morris Venden's article "What Jesus Said About Perfection" (July, 1982) as refreshing as a summer breeze. It is important to avoid the extreme of perfectionism that proceeds from an insecurity and lack of assurance of salvation (and that usually reverberates to others as a poisonous atmosphere of criticism). Nevertheless, it is also imperative to acknowledge the Biblical promise of perfection that eliminates sinning through faith in Jesus as the complete and perfect Saviour from sin. As the article put it: "Jesus' life in us will produce the same kind of obedience that we see manifested in His life." This leads me to an ever-deepening appreciation of the magnitude of the sacrifice made for my redemption and a stronger and more steadfast love for the One who first loved me.

For this reason I must differ slightly with one point in the article. Venden says, "To deal safely with the question of perfection, it must be handled lightly, once over, and be done with it." This question is a danger only if we are trying to see perfection in ourselves. If, instead, we are beholding the perfection of His life, love, and sacrifice, how can we do so "lightly, once over, and be done with it"? By dwelling on His perfection, we realize that because Jesus lives in us, this perfection does not remain outside of us. It is reproduced in us. It is my conviction that we should hear more of this from the pages of Ministry.—Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Zealand.

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Receiving is blessed too

One turkey was plenty; what would I do with eight frozen birds? Or with the bale of yellowing turnip greens? But I couldn’t turn them down. Granny had said, “Take everything they try to give you.”

It might not have been easy, but most of us have learned to be unselfish and giving. How about taking? Especially something you can’t use, wouldn’t have chosen for yourself, or have several of already? The Bible says it is more blessed to give than to receive, but ministers’ wives need to learn how to accept gracefully, as well. Gifts are attached to the heartstrings of the giver, and demonstrate either love or some need in one’s life.

Have you had a surprise gift lately? How did you react? Insensitivity on our part in receiving what parishioners give us can cause harmful relationships. Betty Holland, who authored this Thanksgiving feature, is a graduate assistant at Northeast Louisiana University at Monroe where she is working on a Master’s degree in English. As you read these delightful suggestions, may you learn to be a good taker as well as a good giver!—Marie Spangler.

I take it as one of those smaller manifestations of predestination that I, for thirty years a Presbyterian minister’s wife, should have been born and reared next door to a Presbyterian manse.

During my first twelve years, the manse was occupied by the same family. As a late-in-life baby in a neighborhood of adults, I was adopted by all, including the lovely white-haired lady of the manse, who called herself (to me) “Granny.” Then when a larger manifestation of predestination led me forth to be a minister’s wife myself, Granny had the charity of heart not to be astounded at this turn of events. From her nursing home room she sent, along with her love and best wishes, a piece of silver and some words of gold: “Take everything they try to give you,” she wrote. “It is a part of themselves that your church folk offer you, and you must never reject their gifts. If you can’t use what they give, pray and look around you. The Lord will show you someone who needs that very thing.”

She was really saying, “Don’t reject people.” As a newlywed in my husband’s parish, I immediately began having opportunities to learn to accept gifts gracefully. But slowly, so slowly, came the realization that most gifts are attached to the heartstrings of the giver. Granny’s counsel, like most advice received in one’s youth and accepted as wisdom of the head, required a number of years before it could become wisdom of the heart, as well.

I have come at last to accept everything I am offered—most of the time with a thankful heart! The Lord has a use for every gift, even if I don’t.

Not that sincere appreciation and gratitude has always been easy. Take for example, The Year of the Turkey. In our particular parish it was the custom at the Christmas season to drop by the minister’s home with a festive dish or staple as a token of love and good wishes. We knew turkeys were cheap that year in the grocery stores, but by Christmas Eve we had amassed eight of them, and it became increasingly difficult to smile with genuine delight at the sight of another parishioner bearing a frozen bird wrapped in red and green paper! But it wasn’t difficult to think of places where there might be no turkey at all for Christmas dinner, and we were thrilled to be able to say, “This is for you; we’re sharing our blessings!”

The Year of the Turkey was followed by The Year of the Grapefruit, The Year of the Duck, and The Year of the Pecan. But always the humor of having more of something than we could possibly use gave way to the wonderful thrill of being able to share the abundance. Someone always needed what we couldn’t use, and though there was often work involved in finding that person, it was well worth the effort for all concerned.

Sometimes when the overabundance of the gift was obvious even to the giver, it was easy to say, “May I share this with Mrs.
P ———? You know she has been sick recently.” Then we identified the true giver to the recipient, and a bridge was built. All we had to do was the legwork!

Some gifts, it is true, seemed totally unusable, either by ourselves or anyone we were remotely acquainted with. But we always found some use for each gift. In one parish, we had an elderly member estranged from his family through some obscure feud forgotten by everyone except himself. He just “happened” to drop by at mealtime so frequently that we wondered where he managed to find food when he didn’t. One Thanksgiving he joined us, by invitation, arriving camouflaged as a bush, so laden were he and his bicycle with a bale of dirty, bug-ridden, yellowing turnip greens! Rosy with pride, he was sharing his bounty with us. Whatever would we do with them? It was a true challenge, but we received the turnip greens with sincere appreciation for what they represented—his love. The humbler the gift, the greater its importance to the giver, we found.

The Lord Jesus, our example in this matter of accepting gifts as He is in all things, sanctified a woman’s extravagance as she poured her very best perfume over His dirty, and no doubt aching, feet. How her heart must have burst with joy when He understood and approved that questionnable gesture! “Give me a drink.” He said to another woman who perhaps needed to learn the art of selfless giving. As a result she received the very Water of Life, and in her turn, proceeded to share it with everyone she knew. Sometimes He borrowed things—a colt, an apartment—and in sharing these material things with Him, unknown persons became part of the world’s salvation.

There is a wrong kind of gift too, which is meant to bribe or curry favor, to control the behavior of others. But however distorted may be the giver’s motives, such a gift is also attached to his heartstrings. Even gifts of this nature can be redeemed by recognizing the need that lies behind them and addressing that need in a direct way without rejecting the giver. The woman who poured perfume on the Master’s feet did so only once. He dignified her impulsive gesture and elevated it to a spiritual level. In so doing, He enabled her to focus on the greater gift, that of service to His kingdom.

Receiving gifts with gracious appreciation when they come is one thing; anticipating and expecting them is another. Our youngest daughter, reveling in the excesses of her fifth birthday party, sat amid the cake crumbs, party hats, toys and other debris and asked with an insatiable gleam of pure greed in her big brown eyes, “How long is it till I’m 6?” The adult members of the minister’s family retain as much of the child in their personalities as anyone else. Often living on a financial scale below that of many of their parishioners, they may find themselves dreaming of a surprise trip to the Holy Land, or even a new television set! The temptation is real. Only in learning to appreciate the pure beauty of a spontaneous sharing of the stuff of life can we mature in the art of taking without greed or avarice.

Paul Tournier’s lovely little book The Meaning of Gifts speaks of the deeper meaning implied in giving and taking: “If each gift is a symbol of love, no matter how small the gift, then surely there must be a love, total and supreme, one that doesn’t fail. This is what men intuitively await, and what they are seeking in the smallest gifts received each day. It is as if successive little payments assure us of the final payment-in-full.”—Page 58. Those in the service of ministering to others would do well to add this small, yet profound, volume to their reading lists.

If each gift bears in it a bit of the giver’s heart, insensitivity in receiving what people offer can do unwitting harm to relationships between clergy families and parishioners. This was vividly brought to my attention recently by one of my neighbors, an elderly widow whose chief delight is working in her tiny patch of vegetables and flowers. Proudly she harvested her first crop of radishes. One by one she washed them and carefully arranged them in a basket. “These are for my new minister,” she announced importantly. But later she told me that when she called to ask when she might bring them, he replied, “Oh, we don’t eat radishes, but thank you anyway.” The young pastor didn’t intend to hurt her feelings. He simply didn’t understand what the radishes represented. She was hoping for a little visit to ease her loneliness and a little admiration for her gardening skill. She wanted to feel that she had demonstrated her pleasure in having him in the community.

Some people on the other hand, seem to have an intuitive knack for accepting gifts from others in such a gracious way that the smallest offering becomes a treasure. One minister friend says that he is often offered items from a late husband’s wardrobe by the widow whom he has counseled through her grief. “I always try to use at least one of the things, a tie or a favorite sport shirt, even if it doesn’t fit very well,” he recounted, “because it brings her such an amazing amount of comfort. It seems to make her feel that a part of the person she loved so much is still near.” Then, with a flash of infectious humor, he added, “But my friends have begun asking me not to look through their closets when they’re sick!” Deeply loved and respected by his church folk, this man has the gift of knowing how to edify the giver by receiving in humility.

In giving, we receive; in receiving, we give. It is truly a paradox. Christians by tradition are generous and openhanded, after the example of their Lord. But also by His example, we need to learn more of the art of taking graciously what is offered, realizing that the giver is incarnate in his gift. “Then, just as little children, we can enjoy all the little gifts of the earthly life, seeing in them so many signs of that great and final gift which awaits us.”—Ibid., p. 63.

What did we do with those inedible yellow turnip greens? Why, we mulched the rose bushes, of course!

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**Prayers from the parsonage**

Today I read that one subtle reason people enjoy eating out is to return for a little while to a time when attentive servants waited on their masters. The best restaurants are known not only for excellent food but for careful service and attention to detail. “Is everything ready to order?” asks the waiter with a slight bow. He brings the food promptly—vichyssoise in a chilled bowl, omelette aux fines herbes on a warm platter. He appears at just the right moment to whisk away plates, fill goblets, replenish bread. Your needs seem to be his only concern; your wishes, his pleasure.

How delightful to be served! How satisfying to bask in luxury! One can soon be convinced that power guarantees position and that money establishes importance.

“And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. . . . And he said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship . . . But he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat but he that serveth?” (Luke 22:24-27).

Lord, at home or in my neighborhood, at church or in my community, at work or in retirement, whether with my family, friends, or strangers, do I wait, folding and unfolding my restless hands, sighing, hardly disguising my impatience, and looking around, expecting someone else to serve?

Point me, I pray, toward my work and help me do it willingly.

———Cherry B. Habenicht———

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Renew yourself and respark your ministry through our full program of Professional Growth Seminars. Check the list for a location near you and participate in this continuing education opportunity. It’s free!

Save energy in your church!

Are you losing heat in your church, under the back door? The front door? Through the roof, because of poor insulation—or no insulation at all? That energy loss is taking money out of your collection plate. The Edison Electric Institute has a do-it-yourself 32-page booklet listing practical improvements you can perform on your church building to help hold down energy bills. And single copies are free! For your copy write: Edison Electric Institute, Station 27-D, 1111 19th St., NW., Washington, D.C. 20036. Ask for publication #07-81-34.

Understanding the unchurched

Do you ever wonder about the unchurched in your community? Who are they? Why don't they attend church? What are their attitudes toward religion?

Now you can find answers to these and other questions in the recently released report, "A Summary of Qualitative Research of the Unchurched," published by Religion in American Life, Inc. This thirty-five-page pamphlet summarizing the results of a larger study of the unchurched conducted earlier by RIAL can be obtained for $2.00 (discounts are available on multiple quantities) from: Religion in American Life, Inc., 815 Second Avenue, Suite 200, New York, New York 10017.

The unchurched tend to live in urban areas. They are well educated and often work in blue-collar jobs or are homemakers. They are less likely to be married or to have children. They are less likely to belong to a civic organization or to vote in elections. They are less likely to have a religious affiliation. They are less likely to attend church. They are less likely to have a religious belief.

Clergy salaries decline

Clergy may rate at the top for honesty. Clergy received top marks in a recent Gallup poll that asked respondents to rate various occupations for honesty and ethical concern. In order, following men of the cloth, were: pharmacists, dentists, doctors, engineers, college teachers, policemen, bankers, TV reporters and commentators, newspaper reporters, funeral directors, lawyers, stockbrokers, Senators, business executives, building contractors, Congressmen, local politicians, realtors, labor union leaders, state politicians, advertising executives, and auto salesmen.

Clergy salaries decline

Clergy may rate at the top of the list in ethics and honesty (see above), but compensation for their services continues to slide. A study in Muncie, Indiana, points out that in the 1920s, senior pastors received a salary equal to that of a superintendent of schools. A decade later, pastoral pay had dropped to the level of the high school principal. In the 1970s the classroom teacher and the minister received comparable salaries.

Festival of Evangelism notebooks

It has taken a number of months to bring together all the materials presented at the American Festival of Evangelism held in April, 1981, in Kansas City. These four volumes of Festival notebooks represent what is probably the largest collection of resources for evangelism ever compiled in a single source. They include the lectures, workshop papers, position reports, et cetera, from the festival, and are the equivalent of 25 soft-cover books. Individual volumes cost $19.95 each, or $79.80 for the entire set. A discount is offered to those who pay cash with their order. For information, write: American Festival of Evangelism, P.O. Box 17093, Washington, D.C. 20041. Telephone: (703) 893-2595.

The 80/20 rule

People who study such little-known subjects have determined that as a general rule, 80 percent of sales come from 20 percent of the customers. Similarly, 80 percent of sick leave is taken by 20 percent of the employees; 80 percent of the work is done on 20 percent of the projects; 80 percent of TV viewing is concentrated on 20 percent of the available programming; 80 percent of telephone calls originate with 20 percent of all callers; et cetera. This is called the 80/20 rule. And while it may not hold true in every situation, the 80/20 rule should let you feel better about concentrating on high-value tasks even at the cost of ignoring many lower-priority items. It's important to remind yourself again and again to focus on the 20 percent that yields 80 percent of the value and not get bogged down in those matters that will produce few results.

CPE Training

Kettering Medical Center, Kettering, Ohio, offers four positions in a twelve-month residency in Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) beginning September, 1983. The program is planned for those who wish to improve pastoral care and counseling skills in connection with parish ministry, or who want to work toward certification as a hospital chaplain. The training is designed to build on an individual's seminary training and pastoral experience. Stipends up to $11,000 are available. Application is due January 15, 1983. At least one unit of basic CPE is a prerequisite for the one-year residency.

Basic and advanced CPE training are also offered in eleven-week quarters—winter, spring, summer and fall. Kettering Medical Center has been accredited as a training center by the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education for the past fourteen years. Descriptive brochures and application forms are available by contacting: Chaplain Dar-
business contracts honored, international treaties taken ordinances and sacraments. Annual Pledge Day, taking its largely responsible for Felix©s ment! Was not Paul©s preach trembling, if not repentance? judgment though not, it ing of judgment to come should be noted, eternal tor...
Does your church’s youth program need help? The “Complete Youth Ministries Handbook” may have just the information you need. And to help you with your preaching, try “Telling the Story.”

**Recommended reading**

**The Complete Youth Ministries Handbook, Volumes I and II**

J. David Stone, Abingdon, 1980 & 1981, 244 & 251 pages, $12.95 & $19.95. Reviewed by J. H. Harris, associate director, General Conference Youth Department.

Volume I is undoubtedly the finest compilation of youth resource materials to come from an American press. Under general editor J. David Stone and ten other highly specialized, professional grassroots youth workers has come forth a resource that every youth director, pastor, and church youth leader should have in their libraries. This practical “how to” manual is filled with time-tested approaches to youth and their needs, from which you can pick and choose to fit your situation.

Volume I covers everything from a beautiful overview, concepts, and models by Stone, to leadership, understanding the junior high age, Bible study, fellowship programming, spiritual disciplines, counseling, meeting individual needs, models of love, sixty games, and rural and small town parish/church ideas for the lay person.

Volume II is a supplement of 251 additional pages, also edited by Stone, assisted once again by a highly skilled team of ten specialists. The preface alone is worth the price several times over. Its philosophy permeates most of the twelve chapters, and one finds himself realizing that structure in the church’s youth ministry program is a virtual necessity if objectives are to be reached.

Both volumes I and II are the best handbooks to come to my attention in years, and I highly recommend them on the basis that the material is church tested, proved to work, and is the result of eighteen independent multichurch authors, thus providing wide-ranging input.

Telling the Story


Books on improving sermonic endeavors usually come from homiletics. *Telling the Story*, however, is written by a professor of systematic theology.

Jensen believes that much of the preaching in the land today is in a rut he calls didactic preaching: preaching that aims to communicate written, or eye information to the mind of the listener. It seeks to teach the lessons of the text in a logical manner that progresses much as a liturgy does.

A second kind of preaching Jensen describes is what he calls proclamatory preaching. This kind of preaching seeks to present the text in such a way that the proclamation of Scripture becomes for today’s listeners the same experience as it was for the original hearers.

Jensen’s major contribution to homiletics is the third type of preaching he presents: story preaching. Story telling does not seek to communicate information as does didactic preaching. Story preaching avoids the direct approach of proclamatory preaching and instead recasts a Biblical story or parable in contemporary story form so that as the story unfolds, the listener becomes engrossed and suddenly recognizes himself in the story. Indirectly the listener is brought to the confrontation with the Word.

**Old Testament Exegesis: A Primer for Students and Pastors**


Designed for those with little or no training in exegesis, Stuart’s book outlines a step-by-step procedure for Old Testament exegesis and shows how to apply the theological results to preaching and pastoral teaching. One section develops methods of exegesis that the busy clergyman can employ in the limited time he has to prepare his sermon. A final section lists study tools that will help the pastor in his exegetical study. A solid, practical, conservative approach.

**Recently published**


