Dieu Est Amour
Dievs Ir Milestiba
Dio E Amoure
Ang Kiyos Mao Ang Gugma

GOD IS LOVE

One Message Many Cultures
The misunderstanding of the church

As a local church elder, I found Fritz Guy’s article “The Misunderstanding of the Church” (December 1991) very interesting reading. The apostles recognized the problem and did the most logical thing. They separated the primary responsibility of the pastor and the lay members: “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the Word of God in order to wait on tables” (Acts 6:2, NIV). The pastors today spend most of their time “waiting on tables,” and they seem to want it that way. If they would leave the business of running the church with the members and would give full attention to the spiritual work of the church, God would greatly bless.

Dr. Guy says that a church simply cannot succeed as an organization. I believe we can if we follow God’s plan for the church both as an organization and as a fellowship of believers winning souls for Christ. The church organization should primarily be under the control of local lay leadership with guidance from the pastor.

The churches need to look at their mission. Church board meetings are almost exclusively devoted to running the business of the church. Though the Church Manual says that the Lay Activities Council should meet at least once each month, it never does. Please, pastors, do more to get the churches involved in spiritual outreach and give the laypeople more responsibility for the operation of the church.

Dr. Guy’s argument needs our full attention: “The general impression is that the function of the members is to support their pastor in doing the work of the church... Although this picture seems natural enough because of its familiarity, it is not the proper function of the people, according to Scripture, to help the professional ministers do their work; it is rather the function of the ministers to help the people do their work.”—Karl Eide, New Port Richey, Florida.

The overall effect of this is that we have less remaining to budget for “ourselves” because the Lord is getting more. However, we do not count this as a problem, for the Lord is faithful in making “our” portion go much farther. In our eight years of family finance, we have never had an unpaid bill (except when I forgot to mail it), never had to borrow, and thus have paid no penalties or interest fees.

This has even been a witness to my unbelieving family. My brother once asked my father if he believed in God. When my father replied that he now did but didn’t use to, my brother asked what changed his mind. He replied, “Well, every time Karen and Dean look as though they are about to fall flat on their face, they say, ‘Don’t worry, Dad, the Lord will take care of us,’ and they don’t fall. So there’s got to be a God watching out for them.”

Let’s always put God first.—Karen Lifshay, Las Vegas, Nevada.

This is in reference to Celia Cruz’s article on family budget, which seems to indicate that tithe is calculated on after-tax income. Our church has always taken the position that tithe is to be calculated on gross earnings, not on after-tax earnings. The reason for this position is that the taxes we pay, whether they be income taxes or Social Security taxes, provide benefits in the present as well as in the future, just as do other budgetary items.

Our office has put out a pamphlet “Tithing Principles and Guidelines” that answers some of these concerns.—George Crumley, treasurer, North American Division, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904.

Abortion and the Christian

In the December 1991 letters, many readers stated that abortions should be stopped. Only one addressed how we, as a church, should deal with this problem constructively. Sadly, we are not willing to take time and energy to provide the resources for other alternative decisions.

We are the church, and we as
Taking the gospel to all the world continues to challenge the ingenuity of human beings. Borge Schantz in his article beginning on page 8 reveals the complexities of sharing the good news of salvation across cultural lines. How do we contextualize the gospel without emaciating it? You will want to read his article.

Then the editor interviews Robert Folkenberg, president of the General Conference, to find out how much his views may have changed since his groundbreaking article in Ministry three years ago.

Monte Sahlin addresses the issue of Lab 1 and hypnotism. The hysteria that surrounds this subject in the minds of many is simply amazing. Assertions and accusations fly left, right, and center when it comes to what is taught in this course. Some will accuse us of self-serving in publishing this material but people need to know the facts which are far different from the fiction that so many are promoting.

What about fish and chicken? Dr. Scharffenberg gives us the latest scientific research that shows we are still better off avoiding these items. Vegetarianism is still the best policy and the most healthful way to eat.
Is the church softening its stand on alcohol? No!

J. David Newman

Some may have thought that the Seventh-day Adventist Church hesitated to affirm its historic stand against the use of alcohol at the 1991 Annual Council in Perth, Australia. The General Conference Health and Temperance Department presented a document reaffirming our historic stand on temperance which world leaders tabled.

Here is the statement that was referred back for further study: “The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists reaffirms its historic stand for temperance principles, policies, and programs as set forth in the Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and past General Conference actions, upholding abstinence as a commitment of each member. “The nonacceptance of monies or other gifts from the alcohol, illicit drug, and tobacco producer or seller has been based on this premise, and such funds are recognized as “stained with the blood of souls” (Temperance, p. 232).

“No one needs to be informed that the drink traffic is one that entails upon its victims, misery, shame, degradation, and death, with the eternal ruin of their souls. Those who reap a revenue, either directly or indirectly, from this traffic, are putting into the till the money which has come through the loss of souls of men” (ibid., p. 231).

“Therefore, we reaffirm these principles, appealing for a revival of temperance among our people, that no individual, congregation, institution, or self-supporting organization among us ignore or counteract these standards. “Further, we therefore assert that accepting funding from alcohol, illicit drug, and tobacco industries and cartels is unethical and immoral, considering their physical, mental, social, and spiritual consequences to the individual as well as their devastation to society.”

Floor discussion

When this statement came to the floor at Perth, discussion centered around accepting money from alcohol interests. No one hesitated to condemn accepting money from illicit drug and tobacco sources but there was some reluctance to apply the same standard to liquor merchants.

One person tried to amend the action by inserting the word “unsolicited” in front of “funding” but that did not pass. Then one of the division presidents stood and said that if this action was passed it would cause problems for at least one of the hospitals in his territory. This hospital was receiving unsolicited money from liquor interests. He then moved that this recommendation be referred back to the Health and Temperance Department for further study which was voted.

By this action it seemed to some that money outvoted principle, right gave way to expediency, and pragmatism replaced idealism. If we as church leaders cannot take stands on clear moral issues how do we expect our institutions to follow suit? Temperance principles have always been part of the bedrock of this church. Society and the world at large are now confirming what we have consistently said about the hazards of alcohol.

This document was resubmitted with a few editorial changes to the Spring meeting of the General Conference for recommendation to the 1992 Annual Council. Church leaders enthusiastically recommended the following as part of the statement:

“1. The Seventh-day Adventist Church reaffirms its historic stand for the principles of temperance, upholds its policies and programs supporting Article 21 of the Fundamental Beliefs, and calls upon each member to affirm and reveal a life of commitment to abstinence from alcohol and tobacco and irresponsible use of drugs.”

“2. The 1992 Annual Council calls for a revival of temperance principles within the church, and asks members and church organizations to refuse donations and favors from the alcohol or tobacco industries.”

The need to reaffirm our historic stand against alcohol is vital when reports keep surfacing of a trend among some church members to imbibe these intoxicating liquids. Some institutions are alleged to have served alcohol at certain functions.

Alcohol advertising saturates the media in many countries of the world. And although Adventists may consider themselves impervious to such influences, alcohol marketing and advertising are so pervasive and invasive that it is nearly impossible in today’s society to escape exposure to their messages. And chief among these messages is the simple but insidious concept that drinking is a normal and harmless activity.

Not only are some church members slipping but some institutions have
accepted money from alcohol interests. Ellen White gives this graphic account of the origin of alcohol. "Satan gathered the fallen angels together to devise some way of doing the most possible evil to the human family. One proposition after another was made, till finally Satan himself thought of a plan. He would take the fruit of the vine, also wheat, and other things given by God as food, and would convert them to poisons, which would ruin man's physical, mental, and moral powers, and so overcome the senses that Satan should have full control" (The Adventist Review and Sabbath Herald, April 16, 1901).

When funds are desperately needed for worthy projects it is easy to rationalize, even from a good conscience, acceptance from dubious sources. Other entities in our society have begun to see the impropriety of accepting monies from the alcohol industry. "Would you want the Mafia underwriting anti-crime programs?" asked one columnist (The Wall Street Journal, May 21, 1991). And many of the institutions that have refused alcohol funding have a lot more to lose economically than does the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Since January 1989 Reader's Digest, for example, has refused liquor advertising in response to letters asking it to explain the inconsistency of printing at the same time alcohol advertisement and articles on the dangers of alcohol use.

Some leaders in the music industry have begun to question long-standing relationships with the alcohol industry as sponsors of concerts and other events. Citing a report commissioned by the alcohol industry itself, one columnist points out that nearly two-thirds of American adults view the alcohol industry as "uncaring, not responsible... not a trustworthy source of information, and not honest and ethical" (The Wall Street Journal, August 21, 1991, p. B1).

"In the sponsorship business," the Billboard columnist writes, "any company would likely reject a deal with a performer whose poor public reputation might damage its own. It may be time for artists and managers to look across the table at alcohol sponsors—past all the money piled there and do the same" (Billboard, September 7, 1991).

Principle versus expediency

Jesus was always motivated by principle, never expediency. Ellen White says of His acceptance of the invitation to the dinner at Levi-Matthew's house that "the entertainment was given in honor of Jesus, and He did not hesitate to accept the courtesy. He well knew that this would give offense to the Pharisaic party, and would also compromise Him in the eyes of the people. But no question of policy could influence His movements. With Him external distinctions weighed nothing. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the water of life" (The Desire of Ages, p. 274).

Principle should also never be sacrificed for the sake of unity. "Jesus prayed that His followers might be one; but we are not to sacrifice the truth in order to secure this union, for we are to be sanctified through the truth. Here is the foundation of all true peace. Human wisdom would change all this, pronouncing this basis too narrow. Men would try to effect unity through concession to popular opinion, through compromise with the world, a sacrifice of vital godliness. But truth is God's basis for the unity of His people" (Our High Calling, p. 329).

"It is a grave mistake on the part of those who are children of God to seek to bridge the gulf that separates the children of light from the children of darkness by yielding principle, by compromising the truth" (My Life Today, p. 77).

Principle versus compromise

The Bible tells the story (1 Kings 13:1-32) of a nameless prophet whom God commanded to give a message to King Jeroboam and then to return home without stopping to eat or drink. On his way home, however, he stopped to rest and another prophet caught up with him and invited him to his home for dinner. When the nameless prophet replied that God had commanded that he not stop to eat or drink the false prophet lied and said God had told him otherwise.

So this nameless prophet compromised and disobeyed God. As a result a lion killed him that same day. Are we as a church in danger of emulating that nameless prophet? God has given us a clear temperance message to give to the world. But we have grown weary; like the prophet we have stopped to rest. We hunger for acceptance from the community around us. But we too will suffer the same fate. We too will die as a distinctive church bearing God’s special message for these last days unless we ignore the false prophets whispering to us.

Now is not the time for leaders to equivocate, vacillate, or appear indecisive.

As leaders we should be eager to obey the counsel of the servant of the Lord: "We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment. Unfurl your colors to meet the cause of men and angels. Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise. In your opinions and faith there must not be the least appearance of wavering: the world has a right to know what to expect of us" (Evangelism, p. 179).

There is always a danger that between now and the 1992 Annual Council that some of us will again get cold feet as we fear the loss of needed funds, but now is not the time for leaders to equivocate, vacillate, or appear indecisive. Back in 1903 the House of Commons debated protectionism. The prime minister, Arthur Balfour, said he had no "settled convictions" on the subject. This prompted an opposition MP to write this piece of doggerel:

"I'm not for Free Trade, and I'm not for Protection;
I approve of them both, and to both have objection.
In going through life I continually find,
It's a terrible business to make up one's mind.
So in spite of all comments, reproach and predictions,
I firmly adhere to unsettled convictions."

As church leaders we must have "settled convictions" on temperance. I believe that we will vote this at the 1992 Annual Council and that every member and institutional head will also heartily endorse this action. Is the church softening its stand on alcohol? No!
The fullness of ministry

John M. Fowler

The scene on the crowded street froze me in horror. There he lay—naked, with a million flies feasting on the open sores of his emaciated body. "Dead," someone whispered. Soon another spread a sheet to take up a funeral collection. Even the poor can be generous in the face of death, and many began throwing coins on the sheet. A tall gentleman, dressed in impeccable white, hurrying perhaps to a nearby temple or to a business conference, stopped by. Generosity gripped his heart and he did a little better than the priest and the Levite; he tossed a one-rupee coin toward the cremation fund. The coin bounced, and landed on a bleeding sore on the left palm. Instantly the fingers moved, the eyes opened, and there he was—dying but not dead.

Shock waves gripped the crowd. No funeral that day. One by one the onlookers faded into the winter smog of Calcutta. Either ashamed at the face of death or frightened to come down from their ivory towers to face life at its last ebb, the crowd vanished into the anonymity of the city. And then it happened. Two teenage girls, in white saris with blue borders, rushed him to Mother Teresa's sanctuary for the dying and the destitute. The million flies did not bother them. The stench of his emaciated body seemed to them no concern. One girl cradled the man's head in her bosom. The other asked them why. They were young, beautiful, at an age when they should be somewhere having fun. Why this? One of them looked straight into my eyes and said: "In the face of that dying man we see our dying Lord." As a minister I came away absolutely stunned at this definition of ministry. My seminary never taught me that. All the theological readings I have done did not lead me to that discovery. All the philosophy in the world could not portray the agony and the ecstasy I discovered on that street corner in the form of a dying man and two ministering angels.

Obviously, not all of us have either the capacity or the audacity to walk in the valley of the shadow of death and rescue the helpless therein. Obviously, not all of us can emulate Mother Teresa or her sisters. But one thing we can be sure of: we cannot ever say "They have their job; we have ours." That is not an option for Christian ministry.

What, then, is ministry? Our Lord defined it for us long ago, when He stood at His hometown pulpit: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18, 19, NIV).

This declaration provides a three-dimensional definition of ministry.

Calling

Ministry is a calling. No one can read the Bible without becoming convinced of this. See Noah or Abraham or Moses or Isaiah or Daniel or Peter or Paul. Or study the history of Christian proclamation. Or search for the secret of Moody, Booth, or Ellen White. A divine calling, a personal encounter with God, an inescapable burden for the proclamation of the kingdom, is the sole driving force for a meaningful ministry. Any other motivation leads to distortion and manipulation.

Leslie Weatherhead tells of a young man who decided to be a minister. Asked when and how he came to that decision, the boy replied that he made that decision after hearing a sermon in his high school chapel. Weatherhead asked him, "Who was the preacher?" The boy's answer: "I don't remember the name of the preacher. All I know is that I heard the voice of God that day bidding me come." In the final analysis, Christian ministry is not theology, not eloquence, not financial wizardry, not organizational expertise, but a sure and certain calling. The litmus test is: Have I seen Christ face to face? Have I heard His voice?

Proclamation

Ministry is proclamation. If ministry as a calling bonds the minister to the person of Jesus, then ministry as a proclamation must bond the pastor to the Word. "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel" is Paul's way of expressing that commitment (1 Cor. 9:16, NIV). No ministry can throb with power unless it ministers the Word of God in all its fullness. It is in the Word we learn of God, His love, His grace, His Son on the cross, His kingdom to come. Love and life, history and existence, the real and the ideal, take on meaning within the context of God's Word. When preached with the power of the Spirit, the Word of God releases "the creative energy that called the worlds into existence" and "imparts power; it begets life.... It brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature of ministry.
and re-creates the soul in the image of God.”

Caring

Ministry is caring. If the calling gives the authority, and proclamation gives the content, the caring dimension gives ministry its context. Jesus’ assertion in Nazareth that His ministry was to proclaim freedom, to provide sight, to release the oppressed, tells us something about the nature of the Christian gospel. It is not a pie in the sky by and by; it is relevant to life now as and where it is found. Ministry is both a witness to the Lord who saves, and service in the name of the Lord who cares. Says John Stott: “[God’s] concerns are all-embracing—not only the ‘sacred’ but the ‘secular,’ not only religion but nature, not only his covenant people but all people, not only justification but social justice in every community, not only his gospel but his law. So we must not narrow down his interests. Moreover, ours should be as broad as his.”

Often the very mention of freedom, caring, healing, and justice sparks an immediate accusation of social gospel with all the negative baggage of that phrase. However, a caring ministry does not mean minimizing proclamation, but it does mean maximizing its effect. Proclamation without caring leaves one with a message but no audience; caring without proclamation leaves one with an audience but no message. Both extremes are foreign to gospel ministry.

The temptation to identify ministry with either extreme has been at the root of the failure of Christian mission in our times. Consider the burning passion of mission movements in the past: William Carey not only gave the Bible to India, but also revolutionized its social structure by waging a one-man crusade against widow-burning. James McKean spoke not only of the cross but also about the mosquito, smallpox, and leprosy, and changed the face of Thailand. The evangelist Charles Finney was responsible for turning out converted young men who stood for human dignity and spoke against slavery in the United States. History is a witness that whenever the gospel is proclaimed as total freedom from all the ills of sin, the individual as well as the community stand transformed. John Gladwin reminds us: “It is because this is God’s world and he cared for it to the point of incarnation and crucifixion that we are inevitably committed to work for God’s justice in the face of oppression, for God’s truth in the face of lies and deceits, for service in the face of the abuse of power, for love in the face of selfishness, for cooperation in the face of destructive antagonism, and for reconciliation in the face of division and hostility.”

But such a dynamic is operative only when substance becomes more important than shadows, when mission becomes more important than structure, and when people become the focus rather than a program. Is that possible? What happened after the Nazareth proclamation says yes. When ministry puts on its working clothes, gets down to the street corner, and sees in the dying, the starving, the sick, the hopeless, and the lonely the reflection of what God’s grace can do, that ministry becomes omnipotent.

3 John Gladwin, God’s People in God’s World (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1979), p. 125.

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One message—many cultures: how do we cope?

Borge Schantz

Attempting to enforce one’s own culture in religious instruction hinders the advance of the gospel.

If I followed your advice on health," exclaimed a poor widow to the missionary, "I would exhaust my monthly pension in three or four days."

The missionary, a keen health reformer, had enthusiastically urged on her a comprehensive list of foods recommended in the writings of Ellen G. White. Well-trained in Western eating habits, he never bothered to indigenize his knowledge to the local culture. He failed to realize that equally healthy ingredients of a balanced diet were available within her budget at the local market.

About this time a new field president arrived and conducted his first workers’ meeting. One of the national pastors asked the foreign leader if he would permit them on Sabbath to wear national dress. Many previous missionaries had insisted that black suits and white shirts with ties were the only proper pulpit attire, even though this was the tropics and traditional costumes were modest as well as more comfortable than Western suits. The request caught the president off guard, but after some reflection he decided there was nothing wrong with local dress. After all, paintings of Jesus portrayed Him as wearing clothing similar to the customary dress of that region.

A more serious example of cross-cultural confusion is something that happened to a civil servant we will call Mr. Ibrahim. One of the few Christians in a predominantly Muslim area, he was a keen Bible student with a special interest in the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. Mr. Ibrahim was also skilled in evangelizing people of his culture.

One day when the missionary perused the records of church members in his district, he discovered that the name Ibrahim was not on the books. Surprised, the missionary visited his home to learn why. With some sadness, Mr. Ibrahim acknowledged that he had never been baptized. A few years earlier when he had become a Christian and accepted the Advent message, he was a polygast with two wives.

The missionary attempted to solve the problem by suggesting that Mr. Ibrahim divorce one wife and join the church with the other wife. Mr. Ibrahim readily agreed that the ideal Christian marriage was monogamy. The missionary promised to advise him about which wife was expendable after visiting the home and observing the family.

Seeing the harmonious relationship in the polygamous family, how all the children related to both wives, the missionary concluded that this husband of two wives would commit a great sin by divorcing either of them. Such an attempt to rectify a less than ideal situation would create something worse. Bound by the SDA Church Manual, however, the missionary did not feel free to baptize Mr. Ibrahim.

These incidents, different as they are, share one common denominator: the failure of many church leaders to understand the significance and power of local culture. The Christian message must be clothed in the cultural dress of the people to whom it is proclaimed. Neglecting this reality has hindered church growth, ham-
pered church planting, and produced superficial Christians.

The three cases I have shared could be augmented by legions of similar incidents related by missionaries around the world representing all Christian traditions. However, since the Adventist Church is one of the most widespread Protestant denominations, we should be especially sensitive to the crippling effect of enforcing cross-cultural methods in our evangelism.

Concepts that influence

Let us examine four concepts that affect our ability to evangelize in variant cultures. Then we will review some models that reveal principles for cross-cultural communication. Finally we will attempt to establish some principles for an Adventist contextualization methodology.

1. Concepts of language and words. People think that when they understand the words they hear, they also get the right meaning. Such is not always the case. Difficulties lurk within one’s own language in a monocultural situation; how much more when we go across cultures to explain Bible words, idioms, and images set in an ancient Middle East culture. We take many biblical metaphors and illustrations for granted. For instance, the Good Shepherd of John 10 effectively illustrates to us God’s loving care. However, to the Hausaus in northern Nigeria, the shepherd is a symbol of poverty and weakness. Therefore scriptural idiom must be interpreted adequately to convey the intended meaning.

Another biblical symbol, Revelation’s prophetic dragon, accurately communicates to Christians in Western cultures Satan’s enmity against God and His people. In China, however, the dragon carries a completely different meaning. In the past it represented the emperor himself. Even now it remains a positive symbol portraying authority and good luck. In the Year of the Dragon (1988), Chinese parents thought that children born that year would receive special blessings.

In these two cases, biblical language and concepts must be explained and reinterpreted before they can be applied.

2. Concepts of time. The biblical concept of time is linear. Because of the Judeo-Christian heritage, we in the West have acquired this sense of time, a concept of history, a responsibility to the present, and a meaningful future. Such a concept, however, is foreign to many non-Christian traditions, for instance, African tribes, among whom we baptize many. Explaining to the African the biblical concept of future is not easy, for the simple reason that events that have not happened have no meaning. The Indian worldview considers time as cyclic, a continuum of life and death in an unending and uninterrupted pattern of existence and nonexistence. In such a culture, teaching prophetic time is not easy. And yet events connected with time spans involving the pre-Advent judgment and Christ’s work in the heavenly sanctuary remain essential and must be proclaimed.

3. Concepts of morals and ethics. Hebrew and Greek manuscripts comprising the Scriptures are translated carefully into many languages, preserving intact the original ideas. However, people who listen to the biblical texts will naturally interpret them through their own cultural grid. Certainly this is the case in matters of priorities and ethics. A Bible teacher in his class had students from both Third World and Western backgrounds. When they discussed the story of Joseph in Egypt, the teacher asked what was the most important lesson to be drawn. Students with Western backgrounds suggested that Joseph’s refusal to commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife was of extreme significance. This response came from the Western preoccupation with sexual sins and marital infidelity. However, some students from cultural areas where family loyalty and solidarity are uppermost might emphasize Joseph’s active concern for his father and brothers during the famine.

Even the Ten Commandments must filter through the cultural understanding of the reader. The fifth commandment, for instance, bids us “Honor your father and your mother” (Ex. 20:12). To a Chinese Christian, this command enhances the traditional parental role of authority in where their offspring live, whom they marry, what occupation they choose, and how they arrange their wealth. For some American and European Christians, the same commandment seems to allow them to place their elderly parents in retirement homes, preserving the highly prized Western concept of independence.

4. Concepts of soul-winning methods. In Western thinking, organization and money are important in all aspects of life. Even when dealing with strategies for evangelism, Western Christian leaders end up discussing how funds should be raised and spent, and which level of church administration is responsible for each of the different outreach programs. Actually, Western churches have “institutionalized” the spiritual gifts of evangelism, administration, and contribution. In many non-Western areas experiencing real evangelistic growth, institutionalized strategies are not so important—at least not on the grass-roots level where soul winning happens. To those Christians, what count are people and the Holy Spirit. They regard witnessing as an integral part of their church membership. In their mind, evangelism is not dependent on specialists, finances, and organizations—important as these are in their proper places. Jesus Himself talked about money, hardly as a means of evangelism, though; His concern was its competition with God for control of the soul (Matt. 6:24). Evangelism occurs naturally because a converted person is always prepared to witness when and where circumstances make it possible, regardless of financial conditions.

How do we as Adventists relate to all this? Are we prepared to accept the fact that the various cultures of the world have differing interpretations of biblical teaching? We believe in one church, one doctrine, and one common financial pool. We have one “eternal gospel” to give to “every nation, tribe, language and people” (Rev. 14:6). Is it permissible to adapt aspects of this special message to the many different cultures? Are there tenets of biblical teaching and our Adventist application of it that can be negotiated? Is it even possible that some of our “biblical beliefs,” to a certain extent, have been influenced by cultural factors pervading the place and time where and when they were formed?

Three models

Let us briefly study three models where inspiration seems to reveal some principles for cross-cultural evangelism. These could serve as guidelines for Adventist global mission.

1. The Example of Jesus. On earth Christ became one in culture and custom with the people He came to save (see John 1:11-14; Phil. 2:5-11). His lifestyle, practices, language, and illustrations were immersed in Palestinian culture, Jewish traditions, and a Hebrew worldview. And even here He seemed to focus more on Galilee than Judea. He intended, no doubt,
Ellen White did not assume it possible to transmit the pure message of the Bible without modification for the hearer.

to establish a stronghold in one homogeneous unit before commissioning His followers to branch out.

Consider Christ’s visit to Sychar and His conversation with the Samaritan woman, where He made a clear distinction between a divine absolute and the Jewish cultural norm. First, we notice that He spoke to her freely, contrary to accepted Jewish custom. He could never have had a similar encounter at the well in Jericho. There, rabbinical practice prescribed that “a man should hold no conversation with a woman in the street, not even with his own wife, still less with any other woman, lest men should gossip.”

The disciples, returning from buying food while Christ waited at the well, “were surprised to find him talking with a woman” (John 4:27). Perhaps they equated Jewish customs with divine absolutes. Jesus did follow Jewish customs when they did not contradict moral absolutes, knowing that unnecessary deviation in minor matters would hinder His ministry among traditional Jews. Samaritan customs, many of which no doubt differed from Jewish customs, were not necessarily in disagreement with God’s law. Divine truth can be expressed in many different ways according to cultural forms, and we should be generally accepting as long as the essence of the gospel truth is undisturbed.

In this outstanding example of cross-cultural ministry at Jacob’s well, Jesus showed that morals and ethics are not to be interpreted by a single cultural form. His experience with the Samaritan woman provides profound insight into proper methods of personal evangelism.

2. The example of the apostle Paul. The apostle Paul was the missionary par excellence. His upbringing in the Diaspora and his mastery of several languages contributed to his successful cross-cultural ministry and adaptability. To this we must, of course, add the guidance and working of the Holy Spirit.

Paul accommodated himself and his message to the various cultures, even religions, of his prospective converts: “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

This passage reveals Paul’s preparedness to sacrifice personal privileges for the benefit of those he sought to win for Christ. In customs and matters of lesser importance, Paul adapted not only himself but his message, as well. He was willing to let less significant issues in cross-cultural and cross-religious matters remain unchanged in order to present the more important biblical universals.

In the apostle’s missionary experience, there is an interesting case where he applied his principles of cultural adaptation. Jewish Christians outside Palestine had problems accepting Gentiles who were uncircumcised and ate meat sacrificed to idols. Their alarm intensified as the gospel spread outside Jewish society. The danger of a schism in Antioch necessitated a special council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-35). Among other things, church leaders decided that Gentile converts should “abstain from food sacrificed to idols” (verse 29).

The Jerusalem Council was held in A.D. 49. Eight years later Paul in writing to the Corinthians (see 1 Cor. 8), made the question of eating meat sacrificed to idols a matter of individual conscience and interpersonal strengths and relationships in Christian fellowship. Do we here detect guiding principles for cross-cultural ministry? Paul in 1 Corinthians 8 proclaims divine absolutes, such as only one true God (verse 4) and brotherly love (see verses 12, 13), that apply universally to all Christians, but he distinguishes them from cultural variables, such as eating meat sacrificed to idols. Are we prepared to take a similar stand when the Adventist message crosses cultures?

3. The example of Ellen G. White. In 1895 Ellen White wrote: “The people of every country have their own peculiar, distinctive characteristics, and it is necessary that men should be wise in order that they may know how to adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people, and so introduce the truth that they may do them good.”

This statement, written at the time our church really was getting involved in world mission, calls for missionaries to adjust their message to their targeted society. She does not say that Adventism with its concept of unity should expect different nationalities to adopt one special “Adventist world culture.” Instead, gospel workers should adapt themselves to the peculiar ideas of the people. In other words, cultural differences require different methods of presenting the truth.

Ellen White further stated: “The worker in foreign fields will come in contact with all classes of people and all varieties of minds, and he will find that different methods of labor are required to meet the needs of the people. A sense of his own inefficiency will drive him to God and to the Bible for light and strength and knowledge.

“The methods and means by which we reach certain ends are not always the same. The missionary must use reason and judgment. Experience will indicate the wisest course to follow under existing circumstances. It is often the case that the customs and climate of a country make a condition of things that would not be tolerated in another country. Changes for the better must be made, but it is best not to be too abrupt.”

Ellen White reveals in such statements that she had an instinctive anthropological sense. She did not assume it possible to transmit the pure message of the Bible without modification for the hearer. Jesus Christ in His incarnation completely identified Himself with us so He could communicate God’s message, yet He did not lose His own identity. While becoming human, He did not cease to be God. In our striving to adapt ourselves to the peculiar ideas of the people, we too must retain our identity. Missionaries must empty themselves of all except their personal authenticity.

Adventist contextualization

Now let us consider some ideas about meeting cross-cultural challenges. Western Christianity assumes that many of its
customs are spiritual absolutes even though they are not mandated in the Holy Scriptures. Among these customs are church architecture, church dedications, dress styles, worship format, manner of prayer, male-female roles, clergy-laity roles, funeral rites, wedding ceremonies, church officers, church budget, frequency of Communion services. These elements of our church life have their proper places—we could hardly imagine Adventist worship without them. However, let us remember that Western culture has placed its stamp on many customs that inspiration neither enjoins nor condemns.

Contextualization is a must for effective missionary service. The word came into use in 1972, although the principles involved have been implemented whenever God’s message has been preached across cultures. Contextualization means literally “to put into context.” In a practical sense, it involves presenting the gospel within the framework of local culture. Comprehensive contextualization takes into account all factors that constitute a relationship between one community and another, including social, economic, and political matters.

In contextualized cross-cultural communication, the dynamics of gospel proclamation are multidimensional. At least three cultures should be understood:

1. The culture of the Bible. In the Holy Scriptures we have an expression of God’s eternal will for all humankind. It is of extreme significance that the biblical teaching be rightly understood in its original setting. The teaching and stories of the Holy Scriptures must be understood in their ancient west Asian setting. In this respect, studies in such disciplines as biblical backgrounds, archaeology, and ancient history are of great importance.

2. The culture of the missionaries who bring the gospel. The missionaries must come to terms with their own worldview and value systems. They must know how to assess objectively the difference between what in their own experience is biblically based and therefore must be retained and proclaimed and what in their own experience is culturally based and therefore can be left behind. The apostle Paul, in his missionary work in the Roman Empire, had to decide what were God’s universalials that bound everyone everywhere and what was Jewish culture and therefore not binding on Gentile believers.

For the Adventist missionary, Sabbathkeeping is a case in point. The Bible teaches that the Sabbath is a memorial of Creation, a day of rest when no work and trade are allowed. In honoring this absolute, however, standards of conduct will differ somewhat from Godthaab in Greenland to Georgetown, Guyana. The climate will certainly influence Sabbath afternoon activities. Nevertheless, in both places the biblical precept for right Sabbathkeeping must be maintained.

3. The culture of the receptor people. Appreciating the importance of understanding cultural presuppositions and customs is what this article addresses. Missionaries must have an interest in the people they serve, which requires that they study local culture and religion. Recent advances in comparative religion, anthropology, and sociology enhance our appreciation of factors that influence society. These factors include legal, educational, religious, economic, political, and sociological dynamics of a community. All these are significant in applying the Advent message to a particular culture, since any emphasis on Christian wholism touches on health, education, welfare, stewardship, and other realities of life.

A note of warning is appropriate here. Christian churches are tempted to lose hold of pure doctrine and objective ethics when they accept uncritically that God’s Word is always and at all places culturally and historically related. The contextualization process definitively raises some problems. Adapting biblical teachings to the cultures of the world will bring the communicator into contact with elements that are false, evil, and even demonic. The sad result of going too far is a damaging syncretism, forcing opposing religious elements to coexist.

What principles do we apply in this contextualization process? By what guidelines do missionaries accept or reject cultural customs? As already mentioned, biblical absolutes and not local culture must be the determining factor in contextualization. The gospel is both an approver and a judge of cultures. Probably most cultural traits can be accepted and successfully used as vehicles for the Christian message. However, in all cultures, including our own, there are customs condemned by the gospel, and what is rejected by the Scriptures must be rejected by the missionaries and national leaders.

Another consideration is the adoption of a cultural element that disturbs oversensitive consciences. Here we are really dealing with the “weak brother” problem in 1 Corinthians. Paul said he had liberty of conscience to eat meat offered to idols, yet he did not exercise that freedom in order that he should not cause offense to someone else. The weak conscience should be respected, but it should also gradually be educated to become strong.

Conclusion

The task of bringing God’s eternal gospel to the nations of the world presents a demanding challenge in adapting to the many cultural groups. Yet such contextualization is the most significant single element in effective evangelism. This element facilitates the transition of new converts from previous experiences to Christianity. It also increases the number of converts, since they can join the church without crossing racial, linguistic, or class barriers. All this is in harmony with the New Testament Jerusalem Council, where James, the spokesperson, concluded: “It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God” (Acts 15:19, emphasis supplied).

The time has passed when the missionary/minister/theologian can remain insensitive to cultural factors. We cannot preach and teach in the same way to every audience, be it African or Armenian, Muslim or Buddhist, Catholic or Confucian. The Lord of mission must grant us wisdom to differentiate between universal elements that must be proclaimed worldwide and the optional variables of Western culture.
Folkenberg three years later

The editor interviews Robert Folkenberg.

Has the president changed his views since the publication of his article on church structure three years ago?

When you wrote “Church structure—servant or master?” for Ministry (June 1989) you had no idea that within a year you would become president of the General Conference. Now you have been president for two years. Have your views changed now that you hold the top position in the church?

Regarding the issues in that article, if I were to write about them today I would do so from a different perspective. However, I don’t feel I would change anything significant. In some areas I would probably state them even more strongly than I did then. Structure must be subservient to the church and its mission. Since becoming president I am more aware of the degree to which we allow our traditions and structures to drive and manage us.

However, I caution those who support my candor to be very careful, because it leads down a painful path. It is easy to point out the failings of structure. It is another matter to prescribe the remedies. Here at the General Conference as we have restructured and downsized we have begun the strategic planning and budgeting process. For the first time those who dream the dreams, who receive funds, also determine the budget. It calls upon leaders to balance their needs and/or wants against the needs of others, including the unreached. This revolutionary approach to budgeting helps make the structure subservient to the mission.

What is the stumbling block that prevents this happening throughout the church?

As you look at our resources and what we consume, it becomes apparent that we have a serious problem with what I call collective sacrifice versus collective selfishness.

For example, local churches frequently say to their conference president: We now have a church of so many members and our tithe is so much. We are entitled to a greater level of pastoral care. Now, pastoral care is a valuable component of church growth, but the concept of entitlement to serve me is the kind of collective selfishness I am talking about. This is the opposite of saying the tithe and the size of my church have nothing to do with the services I receive as a church (or conference). There needs to be objectivity on the part of Christian organizations and individuals that can adequately balance the needs of their local community with needs in places where there are no Seventh-day Adventists.

The government of one large Middle-Eastern country with no Seventh-day Adventists has invited us to help them. We have been invited to send missionaries of every type. We can put in English language schools and medical programs. The prime minister went on public television and invited us to come. We were on the front pages of the newspapers. This is a Muslim country inviting us to come. We need to balance world needs against our local needs. We should not have to depend only on the downsizing of the
opportunities like this one. Every level, comparatively infinitesimal resources weighing world needs against local needs. Including the local church, should be recommended that they first take up an offering to help build churches in Bulgaria.

The president thought they might raise $20,000 to build one church. Instead they raised $67,000. And the next Sabbath when they took up the evangelism offering they received $13,000 instead of $7,000. So the conference was blessed, and the people were unified around a common vision.

What are your greatest challenges as president?

I see four basic areas: assurance of salvation, Global Mission, our youth, and effective church organization.

The first on my list and most important is to emphasize assurance in Christ. I see that as a unifying force in the church. It is obviously also an area of controversy. I understand the fear of those who are concerned that if we seem to discount the need for the evidence of salvation we will provide license for abuse. That is one extreme. The other extreme is emphasizing evidence to the exclusion of assurance. For the sinner the question is What must I do to be saved? Once you have accepted Christ, that is no longer the question. The question now becomes What must I do to be lost? The answer is By knowingly, persistently, and continually choosing to live in willful sin, we reject the Son's sacrifice and the salvation He offers.

I recognize that keeping both aspects of this message in balance will not be settled this side of the kingdom. The church has debated this down through the centuries. Therefore, I am not saying it is something I can correct, but I do want to emphasize the beautiful balance between assurance in Christ and victory over sin as the evidence of salvation.

Every time I speak or write on the assurance of salvation I immediately become suspect to a certain group in the church. Immediately my legitimacy is questioned. I have to recognize that.

Therefore I cannot allow myself the luxury of lapsing into hyperbole. Every time I present the assurance of salvation I must also present the fruit of salvation. This fruit is not a means but a lifestyle that provides credibility to the onlooker. God does not save me because I am victorious, but because of Jesus' victory. He accepts me as one of His children when I repent. Then He gives me His Spirit to gain victory in my life.

When you talk about evidence of salvation, what kind of evidence do you mean?

I am talking about what Paul presents in Galatians 5:22: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control." Evidence can be divided into correct behavior and right relationships. As a church we have tended to major in behavior but neglected a similar emphasis on relationships. Study how Jesus interacted with the Pharisees. They emphasized behavior. While Jesus did not discount correct behavior, He stressed that right relationships are always the basis for right behavior. A person can perform the right behavior (outwardly) and still be lost.

After assurance of salvation, what comes next?

Global Mission will not work unless you understand assurance in Christ. I believe the greatest hindrance to mission has been our confusion over the relationship of works to salvation. We say, officially, that we are saved by grace alone, but many act as if works are part of the basis of our salvation. If I don't have peace of mind, I don't have good news to share. "No assurance" leads inevitably to "no witnessing." You can no more promote the church into witnessing, apart from the peace that comes from assurance in Christ, than you can push a wet noodle! There is no substitute for the inner peace of the Holy Spirit.

Now to the relationship of Global Mission to the local congregation. While its first mission is to its local community, the local church should never neglect its global responsibility. We are called to preach the gospel in Judea, in Samaria, and in the uttermost parts of the earth. If we selectively emphasize either to the exclusion of the other, we are not fulfilling part of our mission.

What I am thrilled about is the emphasis of the past couple of years encouraging direct involvement in various projects. Many said that because of that, our mission offerings would decline. In fact, the opposite has occurred. In 1991 the NAD gained 2.3 percent in mission offerings over 1990, reversing a declining trend in mission giving. This is fantastic news. People are opening their minds and seeing a broader field out there that they have a role in. It is a tragedy that there are some churches that, while trying to preach personal unselfishness, actually teach their members selfishness is OK by seldom, if ever, taking up a mission offering.

I believe that young people come next.

Probably most of the people reading this interview will not be young people. So let me tell them what I am telling the young people so they will not be surprised if their young people start acting differently.

I say to the youth, Don't wait to be invited to get involved. Get together yourselves. Develop your own vision. It will sound like a cheap excuse on the day of judgment: "The church board wouldn't let me do something." What is your plan? Do you have a dream? This is your church too. It is not the elders' church or the conference officials' church. I give them three guidelines to guide their vision-setting process: 1. Deal gently with the truth. Setting your own vision and objectives doesn't give license to destroy the fundamentals of the church. 2. Whatever your dream is, make it spiritual, more than just a weekly pizza party. Though your plans may include social activities and fun times, make sure that what you do is truly Christ-centered and spiritually driven. 3. Don't become so introspective that you become young navel-gazing counterparts to the old navel-gazers. If your vision does not include outreach, it will fail and will stagnate regardless of the age group. Offer others Christ.

Young people, when you run into an obstacle, maybe someone like me with gray hair, treat that person lovingly—don't challenge, confront, fight, or argue. If the board says no to something (say like church fellowship), fine, don't do it. Stick together and find another way to reach your objectives. Carry out your activity on Tuesday night. Find your way around, over, through obstacles. Don't take no for an
answer—as long as you live within those guidelines!

Just a word to the “old timers.” Don’t judge young people harshly because they comb their hair different, dress different, or listen to music you don’t like. Don’t judge them or set up obstacles to what they feel led to do. Enable them, don’t criticize them. Remember, the Lord may be judging you on the way you are judging them. Don’t try to take His place. Be forgiving. The Lord has just started with them; He has been working with you a long time, and look where He’s gotten. Help them make their vision a reality by encouraging them. And if it is something the Lord is blessing, it will succeed, if not, it won’t. Don’t panic. Help them succeed.

Yes, there may be things you define as principle that they do not define as principle. Don’t try to always be the judge. Encourage them. Why not set an objective to have one third of your church board be young people? Not junior deacons or junior elders, but fully empowered elders? What were the ages of the pioneers in our church? Many of them weren’t 20 years of age. They had a vision of what kinds of things to do.

You have a burden for a more efficient church organization. Please elaborate a little more.

Most people are aware of the restructuring of the General Conference. We reduced the number of standing committees from more than 100 to 27. This has freed the officers to do other things. The budget is becoming more mission-driven. More authority has been delegated to the departments. Additionally, the 1991 Annual Council in Perth appointed a commission on world church organization that will evaluate church structure around the world. Yes, I believe firmly in the thesis of my 1989 Ministry article.

Will the role of unions be studied?

Yes, but I should tell you up front that I am convinced of their necessity. Some feel that they aren’t needed anymore. These demonstrate a lack of awareness of how our church operates administratively. Our church is built not on conferences, but on unions around the world. The union is our basic building block. They are necessary to help the communication process between different levels. The concerns are more acute in North America partly because of the special relationship this division has had with the General Conference. The North American model has become somewhat aberrant owing, in part, to the lack of a strong, well-defined division. As a result, conferences and unions have tended to shift into roles not originally intended.

If a pastor wants to see a change, say in the Church Manual, what process should he or she follow?

The pastor should first write a letter to the conference president and urge that the conference administration pass this on for consideration by the Church Manual committee. The president can determine if he would like it to have the backing of the conference committee or process the suggestion administratively. Of course, the pastor can send a copy directly to the General Conference Church Manual Committee. Needless to say, the suggestion will carry far more weight if it receive support from the conference, union, and division committees.

Are there some areas that the church should clarify its position, or take a stand, such as abortion and ordination of women?

A commission on the Christian view of human life was established several years ago. One of the areas they are considering is abortion. They have submitted a preliminary report, and I expect this matter will be on the 1992 Annual Council agenda. It is too bad we are taking a position this late in the game. Some have interpreted our silence as approving abortion or downplaying the sanctity of life. We need to take a stand on something that has such clear moral overtones, regardless of how controversial it is.

You mentioned women and ordination. I don’t feel that it would be appropriate to reopen that debate at this time. I feel it would be destructive and divisive to the church to continue debating this issue. The second action taken at the Indianapolis GC session provided divisions such broad latitude in terms of function that I believe the emphasis now needs to shift to the implementation of that action. These functions have nowhere been implemented to their maximum.

I don’t pretend to be a prophet, but it could be that this matter would be discussed at some time in the future, but it would be inappropriate to consider it further at this time.


I would say several things in addition to all of the above. There are many elements that contribute to unification, but these at times seem to be few compared to the forces trying to pull us apart. I would add to your list our fundamental beliefs. I would also add our representative church organization, which admits that there is an authority greater than mine to which I may be called upon to yield my opinion. I may argue long and hard, but eventually I will yield my authority to a duly constituted group. This step is very painful, especially in an individualistic society. Sometimes I wonder which gospel we are preaching—the gospel of individual rights or that of Jesus Christ. It is vital to remember that in our church, no individual (especially the General Conference president) has the right to draw these lines of identity. Only the world-wide community of believers has that authority. At that time I can choose to accept the will of the body or step outside the body.

The 27 fundamental beliefs constitute the boundary that defines a Seventh-day Adventist?

That is right. Whether you land in Papua New Guinea, Malawi, or Sweden you will meet people with common beliefs and practice. All may not see everything in quite the same way, but they will share the same fundamentals. But back to the question of what holds us together. The Adventist Review and Ministry provide a forum for debate, discussion, interchange of ideas and purposes across cultural boundaries, communication of resources, etc.

When all is said and done, we must never forget our total reliance on Jesus. As Paul has reminded us so well: “We will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work” (Eph. 4:15, 16, NIV).
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Pastor, Dakota Conference

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Pastor, Dakota Conference

I appreciate this, and it was a shot in the arm to me. It stimulated me to do more evangelism in my ministry and gave me some ideas how. Thanks. I will use this.

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Are Adventist pastors teaching hypnotism?

Monte Sahlin

Have you heard the story? Hundreds of Seventh-day Adventist pastors have been trained to use hypnosis in their visitation and counseling. They are transferring their knowledge to unsuspecting lay volunteers. Since no self-respecting Adventist would ever agree to learn hypnosis, the instruction is disguised as “NLP” or “Lab I.”

A photocopy of a computer printout is available to “prove” the allegations. Sure enough, it lists names of Adventist pastors under the heading of Lab I and Lab II. Books can be found in secular bookstores on the subject of neurolinguistic programming (NLP), including some with obvious links to New Age ideas and organizations.

Is there a conspiracy at the General Conference? Is it another example of how far church standards have fallen, or perhaps how naive leadership is permitting New Age principles to worm their way into the church?

What is Lab I?

Back in the 1970s an interdenominational training organization named LEAD Consultants, Inc., developed a seminar to teach pastoral visitation skills. Founder John Savage, a Methodist minister, was interviewed in Ministry by Robert Spangler in May of 1983. Savage titled his seminar “A Laboratory School on Skills for Calling and Caring Ministries,” commonly referred to as Lab I. His instructor training program became known as Lab II.

A number of Adventist ministers began using the curriculum because we had no comparable materials. Their goal has been to encourage effective visitation of church members, especially in reclaiming nonattenders. Lab I provides information about why members drop out and how to encourage them to come back. It focuses primarily on helping them to cope with suffering from such crises as illness, death of a loved one, divorce, unemployment, loss of faith, etc.

Lab I is not designed to be doctrinal in nature. What little theology it contained offers no threat to Adventist beliefs. Almost all of the time is spent learning 14 listening skills in order to improve interpersonal communication during visits. Good listening enables one to show compassion to a burdened individual.

What is NLP?

One item presented in Lab I is the concept that people have different thinking patterns. Through genetic inheritance and environmental influence, individuals process information in various ways. People not only think different things; they think the same things in different ways. Much research in recent years has probed how the brain functions, and at least three major patterns of information processing are identified.

The technical term for the way an individual processes information is called the “neurolinguistic programming of the brain”—NLP. To understand this concept, consider how a computer requires a Disk Operating System (DOS) before any word processor or other application.
can work. Similarly, the human being has a basic information processing system that enables and influences all learning, language, and thinking.\(^1\)

One page in the 78-page Lab I manual presents this idea. The suggestion follows that during home visits, one should observe the NLP, or thinking style, of the church member to know what choice of words will communicate most effectively. This is much like hearing another person speak Spanish and (if one is bilingual) switching to Spanish in order to facilitate the conversation.

It is also following the counsel of Paul who tells us we need to adapt our communication to be like the person we are attempting to reach (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

**Is NLP dangerous?**

Several organizations have taken the above information about the neuro-linguistic programming of the brain and developed a method of counseling that claims to cure entrenched habits in a single interview.\(^2\) They teach NLP therapy and give a NLP certification. Many ideas espoused are speculative, and the Adventist Church cannot endorse them.

No NLP therapy or certification is taught in Lab I. Some books about NLP therapy are listed in the bibliography of the Lab I manual, but Adventist ministers who teach Lab I should warn the participants that these books contain ideas Adventists cannot accept. Some even tear the bibliography page out of the manuals before distributing them.

It would be best if we Adventists had our own materials, not only eliminating bibliographies we cannot endorse but also teaching visitation skills based on a firm foundation of Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Four years ago writing began on just such an Adventist curriculum, and the Church Ministries Department and Ministerial Association of the NAD are now sponsoring its distribution at our Learning to Care seminars.

**Using ideas from non-Adventist sources**

Some Adventists object to any method or idea that originated outside our church. Unless a particular approach or program can be traced to the Spirit of Prophecy or Adventist traditions, they urge that we ignore it. This seems a safe policy, but it contradicts the counsel of Ellen White herself. In the book Evangelism she insists: “New methods must be introduced. God’s people must awake to the necessities of the time in which they are living.”\(^3\) She also asserts that “in these perilous times we should leave untried no means of warning the people.”\(^4\) In Medical Ministry she specifically points out one source of new ideas. “I have been shown that in our labor for the enlightenment of the people in the large cities the work has not been as well organized or the methods of labor as efficient as in other churches that have not the great light we regard as so essential.”\(^5\)

She further counsels us to seek new approaches in dealing with changing reality: “The work of bringing the message of present truth before the people is becoming more and more difficult. It is essential that new and varied talents unite in intelligent labor for the people.”\(^6\)

Ellen White counsels against being too quick to reject new methods and new ideas. “There has been much lost through following the mistaken ideas of our good brethren whose plans were narrow, and they lowered the work to their peculiar ways and ideas.” She continues by saying that this narrow-minded thinking results in the failure to reach some kinds of people because “the appearance of the work” was made to seem like “some stray off-shoot of religious theory, that was beneath their attention. Much has been lost for want of wise methods of labor.”\(^7\) “There must be no fixed rules; our work is a progressive work, and there must be room left for methods to be improved upon. But under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, unity must and will be preserved.”\(^8\)

**Is there any truth to the rumors?**

Most of us believe that “where there is smoke, there must be fire.” The “fire” under this particular cloud of smoke seems to have been sparked by the fact that LEAD in the last few years has been sponsoring NLP certification classes and publicizing names of those who have taken prior courses or purchased materials. Some Adventists who have no real knowledge of Lab I have jumped to the conclusion that it is the same thing as the NLP certification program and thus spun a story from quotes out of various books.

Have Adventist pastors learned hypnotism? No! Not in any training program known to the North American Division staff. The denomination has taken a position against hypnotism, and if any workers were teaching it, they would be immediately disciplined.

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**Ellen White counsels against being too quick to reject new methods and new ideas.**

Isn’t NLP really the same thing as hypnotism? As stated above, what is taught about this topic in Lab I and Lab II is in no way connected to hypnotism.

It is true that LEAD now offers courses in NLP. This may be part of the reason that some people associate “hypnotism” with Lab 1. But hypnotism has never been part of Lab 1. Doesn’t the computer list of names prove that something is going on? What it proves is that someone collected a list of names. It may even prove that certain people attended certain seminars. However, it proves nothing about the content of those training events or the behavior of the people named on the list.

Is lab learning dangerous? A laboratory style of learning in which students not only hear lectures and have discussion but actually practice the skills they are learning is the most effective kind of adult education. Some may oppose it, asserting that lecturing is the only legitimate method.

Ellen White counsels: “It is highly important that a pastor should mingle with the people that he may become acquainted with the different phases of human nature, readily understand the workings of the mind, adapt his teachings to the intellect of his people, and learn that grand charity possessed only by those who closely study the nature and needs of men.”\(^9\) “It requires a knowledge of human nature, close study, careful thought, and earnest prayer, to know how to approach men and women on the great subjects that concern their eternal welfare.”\(^10\) “Men in responsible positions should improve continually. They must not anchor upon an old experience and feel that it is not necessary to become scientific workers.”\(^11\)

Is “mirroring” a manipulative approach? “Mirroring” is another word for adapting language and approach to the other person’s language and pace. Some assert that doing this manipulates the
There are those who, apparently for their own personal advancement, have developed sophisticated means of circulating rumors of this nature around the world even more quickly than denonational organs can disseminate official information. They have access to high-tech video and publishing systems. What is their agenda? Who finances them? Why do some members believe them?

Those who criticize Lab I may wish to consider a Spirit of Prophecy passage from Gospel Workers, which specifically recommends the same listening skills and basic approach that the Lab I curriculum is designed to teach—and does so in the same context: reclaiming inactive members.

“The sheep that has strayed from the fold is the most helpless of all creatures. It must be sought for; for it cannot find its way back. So with the soul that has wandered away from God; . . . unless divine love comes to his rescue, he can never find his way to God. . . . There is need of shepherds who, under the direction of the Chief Shepherd, will seek for the lost and straying. . . . It means a tender solicitude for the erring, a divine compassion and forbearance. It means an ear that can listen with sympathy to heartbreaking recitals of wrong, of degradation, of despair and misery. The spirit of the true shepherd is one of self-forgetfulness. He loses sight of self in order that he might work the works of God. . . . By personal ministry in the homes of the people, he learns their needs, their sorrows, their trials; cooperating with the great Burden-bearer, he shares their afflictions, comforts their distresses, relieves their soul hunger, and wins their hearts to God. In this work the minister is attended by heavenly angels.”

The Lab I curriculum has attracted the attention of so many Adventists precisely because of the way it relates specifically to the counsel in this passage. 1. It concerns how to reach church members who have “strayed from the fold.” 2. It is based on solid research that shows that the dropout “cannot find his way back” unless someone “comes to his rescue.” 3. It teaches “forbearance” and how to “listen with sympathy.” 4. It prepares the visitor to hear “heartbreaking recitals of wrong, of degradation, of despair.” 5. It teaches the discipline of “self-forgetfulness” in visitation ministry. 6. It is training for “personal ministry in the homes.” 7. It teaches how to learn the needs, sorrow, and trials of the people visited, and to “bear one another’s burdens” rather than preach or give advice. 8. Its goal is to relieve “their soul hunger, and win their hearts to God.”

When we are told that “in this work the minister is attended by heavenly angels,” how can we take a position against it? The North American Division has a massive dropout problem. More than a million nonattending and former Adventists live in our territory. There is a universal feeling among our members that our church needs more compassionate, caring visitation ministry and a better listening ear on the part of the clergy. When a tool like listening lab training effectively addresses these pressing needs and whose principles have the obvious endorsement of the Spirit of Prophecy, we have to wonder about the real source of the destructive criticism.

The critics have offered no proof showing how the skills learned in these seminars have hurt anyone. Abundant evidence can be given to the contrary showing how many people have been blessed. I feel rather foolish writing this article. I told the editor, when he asked me to do so, that there are really more important topics for which I covet these pages. Topics like reaching the large cities of the globe, the deep spiritual hunger spreading in North America, how small group Sabbath school classes can foster a closer walk with Christ, New Testament church planting strategies, and reaching the masses in our secular age. When will private publications and the rumor mill discuss these questions?

2 Ibid., p. 267.
4 Ibid., p. 63.
6 Ibid., p. 300.
7 Evangelism, p. 68.
8 Ibid., p. 105.
11 Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 93.
12 Gospel Workers, pp. 183, 184.
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Evangelism: inviting someone to come and see

J. H. Zachary

The first step in evangelism is to tell someone to come and see.

There are more than 15 million people in the United States who would attend a religious meeting if someone would only invite them!" The speaker continued his presentation, but I could not follow. I was stunned! More than 15 million people willing to attend a religious service? I remembered seeing hundreds of empty chairs in recent evangelistic meetings. During one crusade I removed scores of chairs and spaced the remainder farther apart to "fill" the tent. Empty seats! And 15 million people waiting for an invitation!

Who are these people? What are their interests and needs? What is the best way to invite them? What do we have to offer that would help them? What time of the week would be best for them to attend a religious meeting? My mind raced with ideas to meet this challenge.

Dr. George Barna, president of Barna Research Group in southern California, found that one out of five adults in his sampling expressed a desire to attend a religious service, if invited. What a challenge! Is it not time that we make some major changes in our approach to this group?

The awaiting group
What do we know about them?
1. This group represents a major block of unchurched people in our communities, but with a difference. They are not attending any religious services now, but would like to if invited. They acknowledge an interest in spiritual things.
2. They are part of the general American culture, and they are not willing to commit beforehand to attend evangelism meetings three to five nights a week for four to six weeks. But they are ready to invest some time in spiritual meetings.
3. The group has little or no basic knowledge of the Bible. A secular society in which families no longer conduct family worship and rarely attend religious services is ignorant of the Bible and its teachings. We need to start with the gentle milk of the Word that speaks to felt needs of our modern neopagan populace.
4. It is safe to assume that these 15 million Americans spend considerable time with sports and television. Our religious services must not compete with these pet diversions. If they do, we will still have hundreds of empty seats in our meetings.
5. Generally, the group is not interested in spending a lot of time in our meetings. Therefore, our meeting format should be of shorter segments and carry more human interest content. The atmosphere of the service must be warm, open, friendly, and noncontroversial. Remember, Jesus uttered His rebukes with tears in His voice and with a heart breaking in sorrow for the salvation of souls.
6. Members of the group are troubled with one or more of the following deeply felt needs: (a) guilt; (b) stress; (c) concern about the future; (d) worry about
death; (e) health concerns; (f) coping with single parenthood; (g) issues related to marriage and divorce; (h) concern for the moral issues facing the community; (i) search for personal security.

Approaching the group
How do we approach these 15 million people who have an interest in religion and who are waiting for an invitation? Just inviting them to our normal religious services is not enough. Special approaches for particular situations are the answer. Here are some points that could help in winning these potential listeners to the gospel.

1. Begin where they are. In most communities the Adventist church or perhaps a public hall would be the ideal place for such a meeting. What about an ideal time? The average person has a mind-set that Sunday morning is the time for religion. Why not capitalize on that? Ellen White used the term “disinterested” when speaking of offering services to the community. The thrust of Sunday evangelism must not appear evangelistic. We must meet people’s needs even if they never express an interest in the Lord or in church membership.

A highly personalized program developed specifically to address the felt needs of the people in the local community will create genuine interest in the meetings. People today are willing to pay for seminars that meet their needs. We must develop relevant, helpful seminars and have them presented by qualified persons.

Initially, there may be little or no interest in heavy doctrinal subjects or in the study of Daniel and Revelation. Present these topics after the people have been personally helped and have gained confidence in you and in the Adventist message.

2. Be faithful to the whole message. Need-based proclamation does not mean diluting the message. The evangelist needs to transmit the whole message to meet the entire needs of an individual. Faithfulness to the cross is at the core of meeting human need and opening the doors of eternal life. The great testing truths of the last days—the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the judgment, righteousness by faith, warnings against apostasy, and the call to follow Jesus—must not be minimized.

3. Communicate clearly. Our presentations should be in “receptor terms.” Your unchurched listeners will not understand much of Christian and Adventist terminology so commonly used in sermons and Bible studies. For these people, the gospel must be presented in their language, without, of course, changing its content or dynamic.

The same principle applies to singing, as well. Because the Christian idioms familiar to us are not understood by the non-Christian, it is wise to select songs with language familiar to the target group. The music should be joyful and easy for the new person to learn.

4. Cultivate personal relationships. True religion is fellowship. Genuine friendship within the context of sharing God’s truth builds good relationships, and the Holy Spirit has a way of using these ties to bring about commitment to Jesus. Conversions will follow.

A Southern Baptist pastor in California tells of planting two churches within 20 months and tripling the size of his membership. Here are the steps he took:

a. Without his church members believing in evangelism and supporting it fully, he could hardly begin. So he spent nearly six months winning the backing of his congregation. When the plan became the project of the congregation, he was ready to begin.

b. After surveying the community to determine the felt needs, he developed 10 different seminars, each under a qualified leader.

c. For a special target group in the community, the church selected listeners to a local hard rock radio station.

d. They rented a theater in the center of the city for use on Sunday mornings.

e. They prepared a special radio advertising spot using the music, the culture, and the language of the target audience. To their joy, 200 persons turned up for the opening meeting.

f. Guests could join any of the 10 seminars. There was no regular Sunday school program. One of the seminars presented the current Southern Baptist Sunday school lesson.

g. Following the seminars, the group assembled in the main theater for the worship service. Lively music and an abbreviated sermonette in “receptor terms” followed.

What were the results of this evangelistic approach? Fifty percent of the original audience of 200 became regular attendees and organized themselves into a growing church.

Soon the parent church followed the same approach to evangelize the Vietnamese community, with results equally gratifying. The pastor now takes the same Southern Baptist message and presents it in a different style to each of his three congregations.

Obstacles to overcome
For Adventist pastors to serve their communities in this manner, they need to overcome at least three hurdles. First, they may find their congregations unwilling to commit to Sunday mornings on a regular basis. However, the advantage of placing resources in one people-oriented witnessing activity may persuade enough members to commit their time and talents. Shared planning and decision making usually winample support.

Second, it may be difficult to find qualified seminar leaders. This should not become an excuse to go for canned video seminars. No gadget can take the place of a good leader. Either train leaders from within your church or look for help from neighboring churches.

Third, it may be difficult to find sufficient materials to present seminars with a wide variety of interests. Many seemingly “good” materials may contain concepts foreign to the Word of God. With care and creativity, the evangelistic committee of the local church can come up with suitable materials for many needs-fulfilling seminars.

Yes, 15 million people are out there waiting for an invitation to attend a religious service. A service that will meet their needs. A service to which someone will say, “Come and see.”
Every pastor longs to lead an active, growing congregation. But how do you organize for action? How do you plan for growth? Two basic suggestions: set objectives; use committees to reach those objectives.

Set objectives

Don’t be frightened by the formality of setting objectives. The process need not be complicated. Objectives simply clarify what the church wants to do and how it plans to go about doing it. At least once a year, and preferably once a quarter, the church should look at its objectives—the goals it has set for itself.

The most important time to review old objectives and form new ones is just before new officers are chosen. Leaders elected and committees formed should not depend just on what was done the previous year, but on what you plan to accomplish in the coming year. Planning for the future can make all the difference between a dying and a growing church.

The three essential elements of an objective can be expressed in an acronym, SAM: specific, attainable, measurable.

1. Is the objective specific? Suppose one of your objectives is to help your youth grow spiritually. But that’s not specific enough. Instead, plan to hold a Friday evening vespers for youth each week.

2. Is the objective attainable? You might decide that every member should win a soul during the year. Unfortunately, it’s not likely that everyone will, and so such a high goal sets the church up for failure. Set goals that are high but reachable.

3. Is the objective measurable? It’s easy to measure the number of baptisms in a year, which is one reason we place so much emphasis on baptismal statistics. But helping those new members grow spiritually is harder to measure, and perhaps that’s one reason we don’t emphasize this as we should. Yet spiritual growth is measurable to some degree at least by monitoring Sabbath school or church attendance, faithfulness in stewardship and witness, and so on. Set objectives that are measurable; otherwise, there’s no accurate way of knowing when or whether you are achieving them.

4. Is the objective a result of consensus? Objectives must grow out of some kind of dialogue within the congregation. Pastors or even board members should not set objectives without consulting the congregation at large. Only when people have had a say in setting goals do they become “owned” goals. The General Conference Ministerial Association has instruments available for helping churches set objectives.

Use committees wisely

Committees are Christian. The church believes strongly in the committee system. This is so, not just because of our tradition, but because of our theology. The Bible says a church is like a human body. Each part is important. The body operates on the basis of group participation. All of us together are bound to be wiser than any one of us alone.

Committees are costly—they take up too much time. Here are some time-saving suggestions:

Don’t chair too many committees. You, or an elder whom you designate, should presumably be an ex officio member of every committee. Sometimes you need to attend to show your interest in and support of the group. Sometimes committee chairpersons appreciate pastoral support. On the other hand, they can be a bit intimidated and threatened by the pastor’s perpetual presence.

Eliminate the trivial. Make decisions at the lowest level possible. For example, don’t take to a business meeting items that can be settled by the church board. Don’t take to the board items that can be settled by the Sabbath school council. And don’t take to the Sabbath school council items that can be settled by the Sabbath school superintendent. This not only saves time, but improves committee attendance when committee members know that only significant items will be considered.

Double up. Hold committee meetings before or after other services, such as prayer meeting, especially if you have satellite churches. Several committees can meet at once, and you can spend some time with each.

Evaluate annually. Review the work of each committee every year. Is the committee necessary? Are the right personnel on it? A good rule of thumb is that one third of a committee’s membership should be new each year. Is the committee size-efficient? Research indicates that ideally, committees should range from 6 to 12 members.

Does each committee have terms of reference—it’s areas of concern, its authority to act or recommend for approval by another body?

Objectives carefully prepared and regularly reviewed, along with a wise use of committees, will go a long way toward organizing your church for action.
During the Middle Ages the clergy became distinct from other members as a superior element. The Adventist Church today still struggles to reform that medieval tradition, seeking to restore the biblical concept that all believers are ministers together (see Eph. 4:11, 12). To fulfill your own ministry as a local church elder, it will be helpful to consider your role in the light of New Testament principles.

The role of the elder
First, you are an undershepherd, working in close relationship with the pastor and accountable to the pastor and church board. Regularly scheduled fellowship among elders and the pastor enhances their spiritual and social bond and provides opportunity to discuss the needs of the congregation.

As an elder you also serve as a member of the church board. In addition, you are often assigned to one or more planning groups, such as an evangelism council, worship committee, Sabbath school council, or youth ministry committee. Beyond that, there should be some involvement in outreach ministries and visitation.

Time commitment
The multitude of these functions may cause you to wonder just how much time is required to be a local elder. Obviously, you must manage your schedule wisely and balance priorities. Generally, two to four hours a week represent an appropriate commitment for your ministry. Since it is possible to be so busy in the Lord’s service that one’s own spirituality might suffer, you will want to maintain a balanced Christian lifestyle by preserving time for spiritual growth mingled with family and personal recreation. At the same time, investing less than two to four hours of ministry per week fails to represent sufficient involvement as an elder of the church.

Appropriate spiritual gifts
Spiritual gifts that can be employed in the work of a local elder include exhortation, pastoring/shepherding, administration, leadership, hospitality, and extraordinary faith.

Exhortation is a special ability God gives some to bring encouragement and comfort to others. It is a helping and healing ministry. The literal meaning of the Greek word translated exhortation is “to call to one’s side.” In Acts 16:40 and 20:1 Paul is spoken of as giving encouragement to the churches. This ministry may be exercised with the bereaved, lonely, or discouraged. It is also employed in offering members spiritual counseling.

The gift of pastoring/shepherding is the ability to shoulder personal responsibility for the spiritual welfare of a group of believers, serving them as a shepherd, overseer, protector, and guide (1 Peter 5:1-5). You may be surprised that the professional pastor is not the only member in your church entrusted with the spiritual gift of pastoring. Any church has a number of members endowed with the ability to be a pastor/shepherd, able to provide spiritual food and nurture.

Administration appears as a spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 12:28. The Greek word for administration describes the service of directing or steering something. In Revelation 18:17 and Acts 27:11 the word describes a ship’s master. An administrator guides the church toward its destination; that is, fulfilling its stated goals. Faithful lay administrators serve the church with love and selflessness.

Leadership describes the ability to (1) help a congregation set goals in accordance with the purpose of God for the church, and (2) communicate those goals to others in such a way that they work together harmoniously to accomplish them to the glory of God. Romans 12:8 speaks of this spiritual gift of leadership, explaining that a leader should exercise diligence and faith in this aspect of ministry.

Hospitality is the ability to offer the fellowship of an open home and a warm heart. The Bible says: “Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others” (1 Peter 4:9, 10, NIV). A good elder extends hospitality not just to church members but to visitors and unbelieving neighbors as well.

Extraordinary faith is a specific perception of God’s will in a particular situation along with extraordinary confidence that God will act on behalf of the church.

Next month we will examine further New Testament principles concerning your role as a local church elder.
What about fish and chicken?

J. A. Scharffenberg

Most people know that red meats like beef, pork, and lamb are not the best for us. But what about white meat like fish and chicken that health authorities are recommending?

When researchers discovered that saturated fats had a greater effect in elevating one's blood cholesterol than did dietary cholesterol, leading scientists did recommend leaving off the red meats and using fish and chicken. Fish and chicken contain a lot less fat and also much less saturated fat than do the red meats.

Now there is a slight swing of the pendulum back in the direction of avoiding cholesterol in the diet more than worrying about saturated fat. Cholesterol comes only from animal sources, but saturated fat can come from both plant and animal sources. However, 70 percent of the saturated fat comes from animal sources.

Dr. Jeremiah Stamler, noted authority in heart attack risk factors, reexamined four large population studies and discovered some interesting facts. Those who get 2,000 calories a day containing 200 milligrams of cholesterol (one large egg yolk provides 213 milligrams) and increase their cholesterol intake to 600 milligrams a day raise their heart attack risk by 30 percent. If they are used to 600 mg. a day of cholesterol intake and reduce that to 200 milligrams, they lower their risk of death from all causes combined (this includes cancer) by 37 percent. That is the equivalent of living 3.4 years longer.

Dr. Stamler states that if we can get rid of the cholesterol in the diet, then saturated fat would take care of itself. He points out that in animal studies, small amounts of cholesterol will cause hardening of the arteries even though it does not appreciably raise blood cholesterol levels. In other words, you need to eat properly, with little cholesterol in the diet, even if your blood cholesterol level is normal.

Dr. Blankenhorn of the University of Southern California placed patients with clogged coronary arteries on the American Heart Association's phase II diet of less than 250 milligrams of cholesterol and less than 8 percent of daily calories as saturated fat. In fact, he was even stricter in that he allowed no more than 5 percent of fat to come from saturated fats. When rechecking these patients after one year, he found that their coronary arteries were more clogged than before. The American Heart Association phase II diet was not good enough to help these patients.

Dr. Ornish, on the other hand, had patients with clogged arteries go on a diet that was low in saturated fat and that allowed only 12 milligrams of cholesterol a day. (One cup of nonfat milk contains 5 milligrams of cholesterol.) A year after they were on this diet their coronary arteries showed improvement and began to open up. Dr. Ornish also had his patients exercise and perform relaxation techniques. What really made the difference was the avoidance of much cholesterol in the diet.

Now, what does this have to do with chicken and fish? Chicken contains as much cholesterol, for all practical purposes, as does beef. There are 69 milligrams of cholesterol in a 3.5-ounce serving of chicken and 70 milligrams in that amount of beef. Chicken is a high-cholesterol food even though it is relatively low in saturated fat.

But what if one uses only the white meat, the young fryer, removing the skin and broiling it to let the fat drip off? That is better, since it reduces the fat content of the chicken—but on an equal-weight basis it still contains as much cholesterol. Lean beef, for example, has slightly more cholesterol than does full fat beef on an equal-weight basis.

But wouldn't fish be better? Fish is not a low-cholesterol food either. Fish contains 40 to 60 milligrams of cholesterol per 3.5-ounce serving. Fish eaters have higher blood cholesterol levels than lacto-ovo-vegetarians and are therefore at higher risk of heart attack.

Studies show that fish will lower blood fat (triglyceride) levels but in the process elevate the bad cholesterol (LDL) in the blood. Then why the big push to use fish?

The EPA factor

In the Netherlands, researchers discovered that those who ate an ounce of fish a day had half the heart attack rate of those who didn't eat fish. Some suggested this was because the fatty acid EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) kept the blood from clotting. Later, however, studies in Canada and Norway revealed that fish eaters and nonfish eaters have no difference in heart attack rate. Even the original Netherlands study showed that fish contains very little EPA. It was then suggested that the selenium in the fish may have done some good.

The EPA in fish does reduce the ability of the blood to clot, and it is the clot that finally causes the heart attack in

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many patients. Since Eskimos consume so much EPA, they have fewer deaths from heart attacks. However, their death rate from strokes because of bleeding is 34-50 percent higher than the average person’s. EPA operates somewhat like aspirin by keeping the blood from clotting. When doctors who had one heart attack were then given aspirin, it reduced their risk of a second heart attack by about 50 percent. However, the risk of dying from a stroke because of hemorrhage increased by 15 percent. If a person who has had a heart attack is placed on aspirin (or some other medication to keep the blood from clotting) and then consumes much fish, he or she is increasing the risk of brain hemorrhage even more.

If one uses Canola oil, flaxseed oil, or even some soy oil, he or she gets alphalinolenic acid, some of which in the body is converted to EPA. Usually when the body gets enough of what it needs it does not produce more. Therefore it is probably safer to get our EPA through these plant sources rather than from fish. That way it is unlikely we will get too great an anticoagulation effect.

Cancer risk

What is the cancer risk among those who use fish? Because of industrial pollution, most species of fish in the Great Lakes now have cancers. The water in which those fish swim contains 900 chemicals. No wonder that when sediment from these lakes is painted on bullhead fish and on rats, they develop cancer.

There is another risk in eating fish. Physicians warn diabetics not to consume fish oils, because they inhibit insulin production. Some recent studies suggest that even nondiabetics are affected in a similar manner.

More and more nutrition authorities are saying that even the best of the meats should be used sparingly. For example, the World Health Organization now recommends fish and poultry in small amounts and less often as the main dish. The Physician’s Committee for Responsible Medicine is recommending a basic four food group consisting of fruits, grains, vegetables, and beans. That is very close to the original diet recommended for humans in Genesis. The committee has forgotten to include nuts, which, according to recent studies, also help to reduce the risk of heart attacks.

Adventists have been counseled concerning the use of fish. “In many places fish become . . . contaminated. . . . Thus when used as food they bring disease and death on those who do not suspect the danger.” * In accordance with both the light from the Spirit of Prophecy and science, the position of the General Conference Nutrition Council is that the best diet is one that is vegetarian—one without meat, poultry, or fish.

Letters
From page 2

individuals and institutions have the responsibility and privilege to make a positive impact on those individuals facing the decision to abort or not to abort. Counseling is only one of the solutions. One woman, Mary Cunningham Agee, has developed “The Nurturing Network” to help women constructively deal with many alternatives (see Jean Libman Block, Good Housekeeping, November 1991, p. B12). The telephone number for this network is 1-800-TNN-4MOM.—Peggy Harris, Burtonsville, Maryland.

Ministry: how candid?

* Your editorial in the December issue, page 4, gives four useful reasons Ministry publishes articles such as “Does Our Past Embarrass Us?” (April 1991). It also makes me feel a little guilty and a lot glad.

Guilty, in that I have caused you some pain. This was not intentional; the article was meant to be constructive and unifying. The reality is that some of the earnest souls who read the journal could not interpret it in terms of my intention. Too often our evangelistic methods and our pastoral procedures have failed to prepare people to understand our heritage accurately. Even so, in seeking to correct that problem, I am sorry it was unavoidable that I gave people arrows to fire at you.

Glad, in that the policy of Ministry is comforting some of the afflicted and afflicting some of the comfortable. It is essential for us to grow together; we cannot grow without being fed on the truth. If there are disturbing facts in the history of a family, it is far better for loved and loving parents to put those facts in perspective than for an uncaring outsider to blunt them out. It is because they love the Seventh-day Adventist Church and are deeply committed to it that some of our historians, exegetes, and theologians have felt compelled on occasion to share disquieting news. Even if we write with a clear sense of conviction, even necessity, most of us feel some stress when the faithful question our faithfulness.

Adventism is essentially a quest for truth. It is buoyant enough to ride out the tides of conflict that, rightly understood, help us to orientate our course better.

So I have enough guilt to keep me sensitive to the feelings of others in the church, and enough gladness to keep me reading (and, occasionally, writing for) Ministry. Thanks for your part in both these motivations.—Arthur Patrick, Cooranbong, N.S.W., Australia.

PREACH

To borrow a phrase from February’s First Glance in Ministry, can the staff of Ministry be “probed, provoked, and challenged”?

PREACH is an excellent idea, but why should the “local level” support a magazine to non-Seventh-day Adventist ministers when the church cannot support its female Seventh-day Adventists who are called to minister?

The New Testament church combined preachers, pastors, administrators, and healers in its ordained arsenal to evangelize the world. Is there any serious widespread interest on the part of Ministry or the Ministerial Association (or the seminary) to unite Seventh-day Adventist professionals (medical and dental and others) for the purposes of evangelism?—Carol Meyer-Marlow, Iowa City, Iowa.

Correction

In its December issue Ministry carried a report that the Pacific Union has “revoked” Ralph Larson’s honorary ministerial credentials. What was really voted was not to renew his honorary ministerial credentials.—R. Ernest Castillo, secretary, Pacific Union Conference, Westlake Village, CA.
The Wit and Wisdom of Charles E. Bradford: Famous Speeches and Engaging Conversations  

As the title implies, this book sparkles with the wit and wisdom of Charles E. Bradford (better known as Brad), retired president of the North American Division and vice president of the General Conference. Bradford tells his favorite stories, recalls the people who influenced his life, and refers to the achievements of Adventist African-Americans. He shares lessons he has learned while serving God in denominational work.

Although the book does not attempt to be a biography, nevertheless the outline of a God-led life emerges. Elder Brad writes of his mother—she influenced his life more than anyone else. We gain insights into what it’s like being Black, yet being Adventism’s greatest contemporary preacher. Many Third World members, and especially African-Americans, will identify with his experiences, though there may be a time and age gap.

In the section on preaching, Bradford gives guidelines for aspiring ministers, those who train ministers, and hiring committees. He notes the need to encourage active pastors. He gives advice to young preachers, and discusses sermon preparation and the meaning of ministry.

As an evangelist, Elder Brad includes an appeal to “get this message going.” Though addressed to the North American Division officers, this message applies to church leaders worldwide.

The Bible records that the Galilean Carpenter—the greatest preacher of all time—said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” Elder Brad has not disappointed those who look for the fruits in their leaders. The book, with sermons in type and on tapes, makes a major contribution to understanding Adventist African-American heritage and preaching.

To supplement the book, the Johnsons have provided two tapes. In the first, Bradford, a third-generation minister, tells how he accepted his father’s (Robert Bradford) encouragement to become a preacher. He tells about his early home life and the influence of Oakwood College. In Johnsson’s conversation with him, Bradford emerges as a man of change. He wants the church to allow people to be real; a good preacher is one who is true to oneself. The church must pursue singleness of purpose.

The second tape is the sermon preached at the funeral of Charles Lee Brooks on December 28, 1989. After describing Brooks’ ministry, Bradford tells of the shock and sadness felt by the entire Adventist community at the passing of this renowned singer, administrator, and evangelist. “What is it going to be like without Charles Lee Brooks?” Bradford asks in a somber voice. We cannot minimize the horrible reality, and the question keeps hanging in our minds—Why him and why now?

Two other sermons complete the tape set. For those struggling to find their place in the Lord’s vineyard, for parents with the sacred obligation of molding faithful children, and for the bereaved and those called to comfort them, these tapes will bring encouragement. And for those who know and love Charles Bradford, either personally or through his ministry, these tapes are a treasure. And finally they give hope for all of us longing to meet our Lord.

Choices: Making Right Decisions in a Complex World  

The language of Choices is ordinary—almost too simplistic.

I began reading Choices with intense interest. Being able to make responsible choices without second guessing myself has been my desire for a long time. The author does a good job of using appropriate object lessons and hypothetical situations to stress his points. But at other times his train of thought drifts from the chapter’s theme. For example, in the chapter “Consider the Consequences,” he includes an extensive discussion on happiness and human needs—survival, growth, and freedom. After several pages of this, one feels that either an editor mislabeled the chapter, or someone (either author or reader) has missed the connection.

I do like Smedes’ approach to his subject. He appeals to logic and reasoning in making choices. He avoids being preachy, dogmatic, or rigid and uses his facts well. If he presents a situation with more than one possible outcome, he suggests the best one but invites readers to decide for themselves. When he gives an opinion, he makes sure the reader understands that it is his own. In this way Smedes refrains from clouding facts with opinions.

The book could have been condensed to half its length, and retitled Choices: Guidelines to Making Decisions.

People of the Truth: The Power of the Worshipping Community in the Modern World  

Refreshingly different describes my reaction to this stimulating work by two well-qualified authors. Webber and Clapp want to see churches play a more active role in modern society. A caring church focuses on worship dynamics rather than political power to help change lives.

Worshiping our Lord energizes churches to act. “Preaching must proclaim a gospel that is never quite manageable,” and “the good news of the kingdom inaugurated and the [evil] power defeated is the heart of preaching.”

Insights on baptism, Communion, and worship, and current issues that the church should involve itself in give the reader new ideas. The authors share several references—“books behind this book.”

Provocative and discerning, this book will appeal to pastors who search for a spiritually conscious church and who have not forgotten the world around them.

Radiant With Hope—A Biography of Robert H. Pierson  

The Seventh-day Adventist Church’s 1966 General Conference session in Detroit, Michigan, elected Robert H. Pierson
as its sixteenth president. At the same meeting I was elected editor of the *Adventist Review*. We spent the next 12 years working closely together until he retired on January 3, 1979. Because of our almost daily association, I opened this book feeling that it wouldn’t have anything new to tell me about Pierson.

I was wrong. The book told me much I hadn’t known. Such as: In the nominating committee at the Detroit session, the North American Division union presidents at first strongly opposed Pierson’s election. When Pierson was a missionary in India, he fulfilled a boyhood dream—to own and ride a motorcycle. When serving in the Inter-American Division, someone mistakenly reported his death in a plane crash; a local elder called his congregation together for a memorial service and sent a cable expressing condolences.

This book needs reading, not for its interesting anecdotes, but for the picture it paints of a deeply spiritual man who believed firmly in the three angels’ messages and remained committed to proclaiming them throughout the world. From the time of his conversion and enrollment in Southern Junior College until his death January 21, 1989, Pierson gave himself to “finishing God’s work.” During his college years he held meetings in nearby communities; as a church pastor or conference departmental secretary he took time out for evangelism; and when he was a union, division, or even General Conference president, he conducted at least one evangelistic campaign each year.

The details connected with these meetings make interesting reading. Pierson once held meetings in a brush arbor in Jamaica. “There was no electricity in the area. Lighting was provided by hurricane lamps. . . . The people brought their Bibles with them to the meetings. When they were unable to read in the dimly lit enclosure, they would catch fireflies, of which there was an abundance, and hold their glowing tails close to the page. The fireflies in Jamaica have exceptionally bright taillights.”

In the foreword to the book, Robert Folkenberg, the current General Conference president, says, “Prayer was, to him, as natural as breathing. He was not reluctant to express his reliance on the arm of God. Few people ever left his office without being asked to have a brief prayer with him, and the visitor went away strengthened and encouraged.”

Pierson proved to be the most prolific writer ever to serve as General Conference president. He wrote at least 30 books, many translated and published abroad. In his almost continual traveling, Pierson kept a notebook that he filled with interesting facts and useful ideas. He often commented, “A short pencil is worth more than a long memory.”

*Radiant With Hope* not only provides information about the life and ministry of its subject, but offers glimpses of secular history. In telling of Pierson’s work in Africa, the author describes the political upheavals of the time. He tells how the staff of the Congo Union Mission—plus Pierson and the General Conference treasurer—got caught in the cross fire of opposing forces, trapping them for several days in the inner hall of the office as shells rained on the building.

When he left office, Pierson wrote in the *Adventist Review*: “I beseech you, brothers and sisters, to ‘stand fast in the faith.’ Do not let anyone—no matter...
who—lead you away from the Christ-centered, Bible-based Advent message. . . . Now is the time for us to move forward, while the doors are open. . . . God is counting on us.”

This challenge is as timely today as when Pierson wrote it. I believe that every church member will benefit from reading Radiant With Hope.

Letting Go of Shame: Understanding How Shame Affects Your Life

The authors have produced a significant book on a topic often ignored—the feeling of shame. The authors’ orientation is chemical dependency and addictive disorders, yet their illustrations easily apply to individuals, families, and groups within the Christian community. One also sees applications to certain functions of church organizations.

The authors define shame as “a painful belief in one’s basic defectiveness as a human being.” A complex set of behaviors give evidence of shame, such as looking down, avoiding, or withdrawing from others (physically or emotionally). People experiencing shame frequently entertain self-defeating thoughts (I am a failure in life) and suffer spiritual despair and emptiness. The authors point out that though shame and guilt coexist, these two emotions differ. Shame invites people to believe they are personally flawed or inadequate, while guilt reflects rectifiable mistakes of action.

Although in moderate doses shame can be useful, this book warns about getting stuck in shame, or being “shame-based.” Such persons become critical of themselves and others and set unattainable standards. Shame-based persons are self-conscious, hypersensitive to criticism, and always alert to possible humiliation. Condemning themselves, they expect criticism. Even in a balanced combination of praise and criticism, they hear only the criticism.

People stuck in shame unconsciously seek relationships that confirm their shame. They may choose spouses, friends, and work associates who attack others. Shame-based people allow humiliation in important relationships, and shame keeps them from getting out. Others wear masks of pleasantness. They try to please, appear confident and comfortable. Convinced others would reject them if they removed their masks, they allow few people to get close to them.

Rage, perfectionism, and arrogance can be other signs of shame. Perfectionists dread making mistakes because they think mistakes equal defectiveness.

Illustrations illuminate and simplify the concepts presented by the authors. They describe shame, its origins, and its manifestations. Implied is an underlying premise that healing cannot take place until one recognizes the problem and understands its origin. Each chapter concludes with a summary and personal growth exercises. In the last section the authors divide healing into the understanding phase and the action phase. They also give suggestions for healing.

Letting Go of Shame combines a readable style and a professional approach in helping the reader understand this complex topic. The book stimulates the reader to go beyond a general awareness of shame to recognize its manifestations in the Christian community.
New 800 phone line for clergy

Kettering Clergy Care Center, an affiliate of Kettering Medical Center, in Dayton, Ohio, is pleased to announce a new national 800 number phone service for clergy. The purpose of Ministry Care Line is to give church professionals and their immediate family members confidential access to the support and consultation of a trained Christian mental health worker can provide. This service is designed to function as part of an organization’s employee assistance program.

Ministry Care Line phone consultants are available Monday through Friday from 1:30 to 4:30 p.m., Eastern time. This service was inaugurated February 17, 1992, serving approximately 1,000 clergy, teachers, and staff from the Columbia Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists and its eight local conferences. Conferences and other employing organizations from clergy and Christian teachers are invited to request a free subscription information packet from: Robert Peach, Director, Kettering Clergy Care Center, 1259 E. Dorothy Lane, Dayton, OH 44519. Or call (513) 299-5288.

Attention all senior workers

The Eleventh Annual Convocation of Retired Workers convenes at Southern College, Collegedale, Tennessee, June 10-15, 1992. Opportunities for reunion and fellowship with old friends in the Lord’s work will be legion.

The spiritual menu includes some of the denomination’s best speakers. There will be prime-time music with Harold Lickey and Melvin West. Specially featured will be the King’s Heralds Quartet (vintage of 1962), Bob Edwards, Jerry Dill, Wayne Hooper, and John Thurber.

The prayer breakfast on Sabbath morning and the Sunday evening banquet will be highlights. There will be discussion groups and alumni reunions mingled with recreation and good fun. Health problems of the elderly will also be on the agenda. General Conference retirement professionals will answer your questions about retirement and medical benefits.

The theme is taken from the courageous words of Caleb to Joshua found in Joshua 14:12, “Give Me This Mountain.”

Please take advantage of this spiritual privilege afforded to retired workers by the General Conference. For a registration form or more information contact: D. A. Delafield, Coordinator, Retirees’ Affairs, General Conference of SDA, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. Or call (301) 680-6816.

High tech MacChurch

Apple Computer in Australia described in its Media Information newsletter how our local church uses the Macintosh machine for multimedia presentations. In addition to the normal uses for a computer, such as word processing and desktop publishing, my Mac helps me dramatize sermons and bring to life scenes from the Bible. Using the MacRecorder device, I import music and voice and later replay it with pictorial animation to achieve a sense of realism. Evangelists traditionally illustrate lectures with slides, which add interest but are static and unyielding. Imagine a scene from Daniel 2 created by scanning in the image and animating it with a program like Macromind Director. Gunshot sounds reverberate around the church as the rock smashes into the screen.

With such computerized visual and audio animation, the atmosphere is nothing short of incredible. Audiences watch in horror as Daniel’s beast slowly sprouts its 10 horns, followed by the emerging little horn with its eyes of the antichrist. The sinister music accompanying the scene creates an overwhelmingly evil impression. I contrast that with a sequence simulating the second coming of Christ, complete with people raising their arms to welcome their coming King.

The technology behind all this is conceptually quite simple, but the effect seems incredible. Audiences watch in horror as the second coming of Christ, complete with people raising their arms to wel come their coming King.

The technology behind all this is conceptually quite simple, but the effect seems to make a difference. I try to be careful not to overdo it and keep the illustrations accurate and tasteful.

Our church system includes a Macintosh IIcx, LaserWriter printer, Sharp JX 300 scanner, UniMac 44MB removable drive, and a Kodak Datashow Presentation Remote (which enables me to roam freely around while preaching). My software for creating pictorial handouts is PageMaker and Adobe Illustrator. I am considering getting a MIDI interface to connect the Mac with an electronic keyboard to get full use of the potential for sound through Macromind Director. The possibilities seem infinite.

As we move toward the twenty-first century, visual images will no doubt play an increasing role in evangelism. Graphic impressions can bring new life to an old faith, becoming a high-tech channel for the Holy Spirit to stimulate decisions for Christ.—Anthony Mitchell, Murwillumbah, NSW, Australia.

Ellen White on Jewish evangelism

Yours for the asking is a new compilation of Ellen White’s counsels on evangelizing Jewish people. Some of her comments are quite compelling and enlightening. My 20-page pamphlet is free, but please send 72 cents (U.S.) for postage and handling to San Enterprises, P.O. Box 623, Thorsby, Alabama.—Sanford R. Howard.

$25 for your ideas

We’ll pay you $25 for your ideas as to how pastors can make their ministry less taxing and/or more effective, provided that these suggestions do not involve a product or service that you are selling. (We’ll consider the latter for publication also, but we won’t pay for the privilege of using them!) Send your ideas to Ministry, Attn. Shop Talk Editor, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904. U.S. citizens, please include your Social Security number. We pay for Shop Talk items upon publication.

Two Special Opportunities to Allow
The Holy Spirit to Sharpen Your Ministry Skills.

Across North America and overseas many pastoral families, lay leaders, denominational leaders and churches are experiencing an unprecedented outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Miracles of grace are taking place. The first two International Adventist Prayer Conferences have resulted in ministries and congregations revitalized in a remarkable way.

You Are Now Invited to the Third
International Adventist Prayer Conference
This Extraordinary Prayer Summit Will Emphasize The
Mighty Energy of the Holy Spirit

Can you say “yes” to these questions?

- Are you thirsty for God’s power?
- Do you desire the experience of Pentecost for yourself, your church?

If you can answer “yes” then come to this “Upper Room” prayer conference.

Speakers and Group Leaders will include:

- Elder Robert Dale
  Vice President, North American Division
- Elder Don Jacobsen
  President, Oregon Conference
- Elder Malcolm Gordon
  President, Southern Union Conference
- Janet Rowe, M.D.
  Pediatric nephrologist, Ft. Lewis, Washington
- Elder Chad McComas
  Pastor and periodical article author
- Elder Jerry Page
  President, Pennsylvania Conference
- Janet Page
  Coordinator of Women’s Ministries
- Elder Kevin Wilfley
  Pastor and author of “Studies on the Holy Spirit”
- Elder Garrie Williams
  President, Trinity Power Ministries, Holy Spirit Fellowship Leader, Author of How to Be Filled With the Holy Spirit and Know It

Sunday, October 25 — 7 p.m. to Wednesday noon, Oct. 28
Cohutta Springs Adventist Center, Crandall, Georgia

The Fifth International Adventist Conference on Building the Local Church Through Dynamic Small Groups

Cohutta Springs Adventist Center, Crandall, Georgia
5:30 p.m. • Oct. 28 to 6:30 p.m., Oct. 31

Elder Mike and Dottie Cauley, host pastoral couple, Cleveland, Tennessee SDA Church. You will hear from the pastors and lay leaders inspiring stories of the Holy Spirit working in the many small group ministries in this church. You will also meet and learn from such successful small group leaders as Dr. Craig Dossman who grew the Ephesus Los Angeles Church from 85 to 850 and is now pastor of the Brooklyn Temple; Dr. Roy Naden, Professor of Religious Education, Andrews University. His material on spiritual gifts is invaluable for small group ministries, and Virgil Covil a student leader who organized dozens of small groups on the campus of Southern College.

Questions Concerning These Two Conferences?
Call Garrie F. Williams, chairman, IAPC and INASGCON (503) 657-9410 or Tom Baez (706) 629-7951 or write Georgia-Cumberland Conference of SDA, P.O. Box 12000, Calhoun, GA 30703-7001 U.S.A.