"I, if I be lifted up . . ."

Thank you for your open letter (October 1992). How desperately we need the revival of true godliness that Ellen White long ago said was our greatest and most urgent need. Unfortunately, we have all been so busy “doing the Lord’s work” that we have not taken the time to seek that revival. Mrs. White says that the way to revival lies through the dark valley of “confession, humiliation, repentance, and earnest prayer” (Selected Messages, book 1, p. 121), and there has been little or no inclination to walk that way. We can’t even frankly admit that we have a problem. When someone does, as you did in your “Global Mission” article (April 1992), others attack that person as a troublemaker of Israel.

I support your call for a Christ-centered, cross-centered, gospel-centered Adventism. Too many of our people are Adventists first and Christians second. They speak of their commitment to “the truth,” which for them is a commitment to the various doctrines of Adventism rather than a commitment to Jesus Christ, who is the truth. In any testimony meeting you will hear people tell of how and when they came into “the message,” but seldom will you hear people tell of their discovery of the gospel, or their encounter with the cross, or their love for Jesus.

When I discovered the gospel 20 years or so ago, I committed myself to preaching what Paul was committed to: “nothing . . . except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2, NIV). Since that time, in five pastorates in three conferences, I have had a number of my parishioners chide me for preaching what they said they could hear in other churches; they wanted me to preach the unique doctrines of Adventism instead. Certainly we need to preach the whole Bible. The same Paul who said he was determined to know nothing but Christ and the cross declared to the Ephesian elders that he had given them “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27, NIV). Clearly Jesus and the cross must be the center, everything else peripheral.

I hope your editorial will open a fruitful dialogue on the gospel in Adventism. Until such dialogue brings about consensus, we will continue to have, not one church, but two or more, each with its own center.—David VanDenburgh, Campus Hill church, Loma Linda, California.

The conference brethren were justified in expressing their concern. They expressed the opinion of many. You are assuming that the Adventist Church does not uplift Christ. No church uplifts Him more in both His sufferings and His teachings. Like other evangelicals, you present the gospel without its fullness, and this shall be the case as long as you do not stress what the Saviour is doing now in the heavenly sanctuary. The cross alone, although central, is not the full gospel. Revelation 14 cannot be omitted from the gospel. There is no better way to uplift Christ than to teach what He teaches in His Word. Were it not for the Word, Christ could have died and we would not know about Him.

Submissive cooperation with Christ in keeping His standards and His commandments will never fail to uplift Him, and it will take us beyond the kind of gospel generally preached by the non-Adventist ministry.—Roy R. Henneberg, Hayden, Idaho.

Members of the Round Rock Seventh-day Adventist Church are earnestly praying that the Holy Spirit will use your open letter to inspire our church to return to the first love of our Lord. How could a church that has the writings of Ellen G. White (especially The Desire of Ages) become so confused, cold, and powerless?

As long as we are in a stupor, as pride and spiritual arrogance, and sees itself as an instrument to be used by the Holy Spirit to lift up and glorify the Saviour, you can be sure Satan will excite the bitterest persecution.

When we lift up Christ, He will draw people to Himself, and this church will prepare the world to receive the Lord. To our membership at Round Rock, this is not speculation or wishful thinking, but a reality. Our membership has grown from 14 to 105 in three years. Our church attendance each Sabbath averages from 120 to 150, with 15 to 20 non-Adventists.—Hagar Thomas, Round Rock, Texas.

I appreciate your emphasis on the two sides of evangelism: reaching Christians and enlarging their picture of Jesus and the cosmic controversy, and reaching non-Christians.

The problem is we have not merely failed to recognize both sides of the coin, but have focused almost entirely on the Christian side. We continue to spend 85 percent of our evangelistic dollar on 15 percent or less of the population that is already Christian. Sheep stealing is so much easier. It is a tragic fact that more than 90 percent of our interdivision (missionary) calls are for maintenance work, and not for reaching the non-Christian world.—Bruce C. Moyer, Columbia Union College, Takoma Park, Maryland.

Your editorial articulated very comprehensively the multifaceted dimensions of a problem of long standing. With a background of Adventist birth, schooling, and decades of lay leadership I can say that it addresses the perceptions of many in the church today and will do much to unify the church. Standards and/or their absence will fade as an issue as the beholders “become changed” into the divine image exalted before them.

I pray for courage to admit our shame and to exalt Him who is mighty to save. Courage will be needed, and it will not go unrewarded.—Robert H. Allen, Ontario, New York.

How long will it be before we face up to the need for keeping our membership figures up-to-date? During my

(Continued on page 27)
Visitors to Washington enjoy the Smithsonian exhibitions, particularly the Air and Space Museum. Favorite among the attractions there are the science films in the IMAX theater. Recently I watched one of them with my family. As the lights lowered, a shocking realization struck me: I'm sitting in a theater! Here I am—an Adventist minister going to the movies!

Was my guardian angel forced to wait outside the IMAX theater, wringing his hands in anguish, while I learned the latest from God's book of nature? Or was he inside with me enjoying the movie himself? Perhaps it's not the building but the content that makes a movie good or bad. While most of what comes out of Hollywood is hopelessly polluted, occasionally something wholesome and worthwhile bursts through the smog. Our youth groups need practical guidelines in evaluating video entertainment. Fred Crowell offers them in his article "Movies: Where or What?" We hope you will find his ideas insightful rather than inciteful.

Back on the hotseat climbs David Newman with his latest editorial, "Laodicea and Corporate Repentance." David is a peacemaker, much more a sweet potato than a hot potato. But he doesn't mind heating up the oven when necessary for the sake of the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. And why not? The Lord would rather have His beloved Laodiceans angry and enlightened than lukewarm and needing eyesalve.

Sometimes people are lost who don't appear to be. Jim Cress, our new ministerial leader, offers practical advice on reaching them for Christ. See the Pastor's Pastor page.

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Friendly wounds

Martin Weber

Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6).

One morning last October Elder Bob Spangler came by my office to talk. For years I’ve respected and appreciated the man who was both editor of Ministry and leader of the Ministerial Association. Bob told me he had a concern to share. Several people had told him they were offended by my sermon the previous summer at the Potomac campmeeting. They were reluctant to tell me directly, perhaps afraid to wound my feelings. Bob, my true friend, didn’t hesitate to take that risk in order to help me.

I had been preaching under the title “Good Old Days?” analyzing why Jesus has not come. I asked the audience: “If the good old days were all that good, why are we still here? Why was God unable to use our law-abiding ancestors to give the gospel to the world?” I declared with some passion that the problem was both legalism and lack of commitment, from which we still suffer today. “Evidence is in the ValueGenesis report, which documented the sad reality that only 29 percent of our youth in North America feel loved by the adults of the church. Jesus said that whoever is forgiven much loves much. Therefore an unloving attitude betrays a lack of appreciation for forgiveness. In other words, legalism.”

What I said was valid and vital to understand. It takes both courage and grace to preach such truth. Unfortunately, I had more courage than grace that Sabbath morning. Some older mem-

bers present didn’t feel that I loved them, and they were hurt. Others didn’t care whether I loved them or not; they were just angry that I seemed angry. And I must admit they had a point. Even though I affirmed that each passing generation had its share of faithful Caleb and Joshua, the overall tone of my talk was strident and rebuking rather than loving and tender.

I told Bob Spangler that I deserved the criticism he heard about my sermon. My wife had already convinced me that too often when I preach my version of the straight testimony, I haven’t had “tears in my voice,” as Jesus did. I’m trying to change, I assured Bob, and my wife says I’ve made real progress recently.

Now, I don’t want to go to the other extreme and become afraid to get up on my hind legs and say whatever needs to be said for the Lord. It’s hard to strike a balance between being afraid to speak out and speaking out too strongly. We all find ourselves tempted at times to temper the truth, sacrificing conviction on the altar of career ambition or survival instinct. We are taught to think along political lines: Don’t let your convictions get you in trouble. If somebody gets mad, you must have said the wrong thing. Keep from offending anyone, like “gentle Jesus.”

Actually, Jesus was no people-pleasing pushover. He said some pretty bold things to the misguided extremists of His day. They were angry at our Lord all the time. Even His disciples were perplexed: “This is a hard saying,” they complained; “who can understand it?” (John 6:60, NKJV). Christ’s own neighbors tried to throw Him over the cliff when His preaching offended their righteousness.

Whatever the political cost, the Good Shepherd spoke up for His sheep. Sad to say, we often fail to follow His courageous example. How many times the sheep have been scattered—new members and youth chased away from our churches—because a hireling pastor didn’t defend them. I’m convinced that one of the most important pastoral duties is to deal with the wolves who ravage the sheep.

In standing up to extremists, though, we may find that we haven’t been as loving and tender as we ought to be. This has been a problem for me, and I’ve been asking the Lord for help to overcome it. You may have noticed that my writing style has changed since my first “hot potatoes” book. I still believe everything I wrote—now more than ever—but I try to be kinder and gentler. I’ve learned to depend upon my wife and several trusted friends to help me “decaffeinate” my words of any stridency or sarcasm. The editing process is a wonderful sanctifier.

Unfortunately, there are no second chances to decaffeinate a sermon once you’ve preached it. All you can do is apologize after the damage is done—and many times you can’t even do that if you live across the country from your audience.

May the Lord have mercy. And He does. He is kind to me when I misrepresent Him and also kind to the people who misunderstand or misrepresent me. I want to reflect His love, which is the essence of keeping His commandments. Please pray that I’ll have those tears in my voice when I feel compelled to talk about what few may want to hear. And when my friends have to wound me with something I don’t want to hear, may the Lord give me grace to accept their good counsel and profit thereby.
Laodicea and corporate repentance

J. David Newman

My open letter to the General Conference president (October 1992) produced many reactions, mostly favorable, but some negative. First, I need to clarify how much I appreciate the outstanding leadership the General Conference president brings to this church. I intended my open letter as a literary device to highlight matters of great importance.

Second, I need to explain why I raised such sensitive issues in such a public manner. Some feel, especially some leaders, that church publications are not the place to broadcast bad news. Some of our magazines will not even print letters to the editor because they want nothing negative in their papers. I respect and understand that philosophy. At the same time, I believe there are times when church publications need to address certain issues, unpleasant as they might be. The Bible does record many unpleasant things about God’s people.

Message to Laodicea

God gave a special message (which we frequently ignore) to the church of Laodicea: “To the angel of the church in Laodicea write: These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God’s creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth. “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see.

“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches” (Rev. 3:14-22).*

Ever since the 1850s we as individual Adventists have acknowledged our Laodicean condition, but is there a difference between individual recognition of this fact and corporate recognition? Some have tried to educate us in this area, but we have ignored their pleas. Could it be that before this message can really take hold on the individual level that there needs to be a corporate recognition of our need as well? We as church leaders need to spend much more time studying and applying this passage.

Corporate responsibility

The Laodicean declaration concludes with the statement that we should listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Is it possible that we have misunderstood the message of Laodicea all these years? Do we tend to think individually more than institutionally? Robert Worley argues: “It is a common assumption that individuals shape institutions. Therefore the prescription that is made for every church problem is to get rid of the troublemaker, be it the minister, an assistant or associate, a disgruntled layperson, or a group of disgruntled laypersons. We have not asked how institutions shape persons. We do not perceive the institution as the source of our difficulties. We do not think institutionally, but individualistically. For this reason, when a minister is in trouble or a layperson is seen as a problem, we locate the problem in the person. It becomes a personality or character problem rather than an institutional one.”

We need to ask the question: How do institutions shape persons? We need to ask whether there is an institutional or corporate responsibility for Laodicea as well as an individual one, Ellen White asserts that God expects corporate responsibility as well as individual responsibility: “The same disobedience and failure that were seen in the Jewish church have characterized in a greater degree the people who have had this great light from heaven in the last messages of warning. Shall we, like them, squander our opportunities and privileges until God shall permit oppression and persecution to come upon us?” When the Jewish nation rejected Christ, the leaders made a corporate decision endorsed by the people (John 19:6, 7, 12; Matt. 27:25). God holds groups accountable as well as individuals (Acts 2:23).

Ellen White comments further: “The Laodicean message must be proclaimed with power; for now it is especially applicable. . . . Not to see our own deformity is not to see the beauty of Christ’s character. When we are fully awake to our own sinfulness, we shall appreciate Christ. . . . Not to see the marked contrast between Christ and ourselves is not to know ourselves. He who does not abhor himself cannot under-
How we face injustice, sorrow, difficulty, and trouble will distinguish us from those who have little or no faith in God.

stand the meaning of redemption. . . . There are many who do not see themselves in the light of the law of God. They do not loathe selfishness; therefore they are selfish.”

What did Ellen White mean when she said “The Laodicean message must be proclaimed with power”? How can we fulfill this mandate when Laodicea’s predicament concerns an inability to recognize any fundamental problems within the church? As church leaders we believe that, on balance, the work is making rapid progress. While church growth is not as great as we would like, it is still satisfactory. Our great successes in EuroAsia, Africa, Inter-America, and other places can lull us into a false sense of security. In other parts of the world, maintenance of the status quo seems to be the main priority. Every year for the past almost 150 years, leaders have been saying: “The Lord’s coming is just around the corner; our evangelistic endeavors are bringing more and more fruit.” Yet Jesus still has not returned.

Our church is growing faster than the world’s population. I asked Don Yost, director of archives and statistics for the General Conference, to tell me, based on our rate of growth over the past 10 years, when our membership would equal fifty percent of the world’s population. He ventured an estimate that the church will surpass half the world’s population sometime during the year 2118! That is still 125 years away. Is this what God is waiting for? No! Baptisms in and of themselves are not enough.

“...I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing.” We are reluctant to admit that we really are “wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.” How can we admit our condition when we are accomplishing so much in church growth? I tried to show that all is not well by citing various statistics in my open letter. My revealing these issues caused the negative reaction. However, if we resist admitting our need, as a church, we will never make God’s remedies our priority. And He will continue to wait.

Excellence in lifestyle

If we would confess our need and acknowledge that need, we would sweep away most of the ammunition that fuels so many of the independent movements. There is a level of excellence that God expects from the people who herald His coming. But if His people, in the quality of their life and relationships with people, are virtually indistinguishable from the community at large, how can they witness with power to the great things God has done? Christian excellence will never come as long as we concentrate on our success and our lawkeeping and ignore our need to make Christ the center of everything. Godly lifestyles are a result—not the ultimate goal.

The last generation, the generation that witnesses to Christ’s coming, will be a special generation. Because of the unprecedented trials the church will have gone through it will emerge “blameless” (Rev. 14:5). It will perfectly reflect the character of Christ. It will focus on God’s character of love: “The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.” “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35, NRSV).

How do we reveal God’s character of love? By showing the same loving concern for others that God has shown to us; by doing nothing out of selfish ambition and, in humility, considering others better than ourselves (Phil. 2:3); by making ourselves nothing (verse 7); by being pure, peace-loving, considerate, submissive, merciful, impartial, and sincere (James 3:17); by looking after the poor and needy (James 1:27); by rejoicing in suffering (Rom. 5:3); by feeding our enemies (Rom. 12:20). How we face injustice, sorrow, difficulty, and trouble will distinguish us from those who have little or no faith in God. It seems that we are far from the experience God expects from us.

How do we as a church admit our responsibility? I am not suggesting a formal action by the General Conference Executive Committee, or even the General Conference in session. I am talking about a general agreement among church leaders at all levels that we have failed to emphasize His remedies; that we have failed in making the gold, white clothes, and salve our emphasis.

“Faith and love are the true riches, the pure gold which the True Witness counsels the lukewarm to buy. However rich we may be in earthly treasure, all our wealth will not enable us to buy the precious remedies that cure the disease of the soul called lukewarmness. Intellect and earthly riches were powerless to remove the defects of the Laodicean church, or to remedy their deplorable condition. They were blind, yet felt that they were well off. The Spirit of God did not illumine their minds, and they did not perceive their sinfulness; therefore they did not feel the necessity of help.”

Ellen White reminds us that while church growth and soul winning are important, they do not comprise first place in our list of priorities. “Faith and love are the true riches,” she says. These are the remedies for our lukewarmness. However, if we do not agree that there is an institutional problem, institutional lukewarmness, Laodicanism on a corporate level, then we will not emphasize faith, love, the righteousness of Christ, and the heavenly eyesalve; we will not make them our priority on a corporate level. This in turn prevents us from proclaiming the gospel to its fullest extent—saving from sin and bearing the fruit of overcoming sin.

What the message is not

What actually is the core of the Laodicean remedy? What do the gold, white clothes, and salve represent? Some suggest that they mean greater character perfection, more perfect keeping of the law; that the emphasis is on being “blameless.” However, while God does say “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot,” He also says that He wants us one or the other; in other words, be on fire for Him or fiercely antagonistic to Him. Character perfection as such is not the primary issue. Our deeds, whether good or bad, do not concern God as much as the quality of our commitment. In most cases the motive
behind the deed determines its morality. An immoral act is always immoral, regardless of the motive; but a seemingly moral act may or may not be moral depending on the motive.

God reveals that the main problem is self-satisfaction. We are actually doing quite well in our deeds; we are accomplishing much for God. The remedies He suggests are rather surprising. He does not tell us to work harder, raise and spend more money on church growth, conquer every sin. Rather He tells us to “buy” from Him “gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so that you can see.”

God is telling us that we need to redefine our measurement for success—gold; admit that we are naked and need white clothes; recognize our blindness—quit pretending that everything is fine.

What the message is

God begins His list with one of the most precious substances known at that time—gold. He chose a solid slab of gold for the mercy seat of the ark; the ark and all the furnishings of the tabernacle were overlaid with gold (Ex. 25:10, 11, 31, 38). The “sons of Zion” were “worth their weight in gold” (Lam. 4:2). The New Jerusalem is made of “pure gold” (Rev. 21:18). The commandments of the Lord are “more precious than gold” (Ps. 19:10). When God punishes the wicked He says that He will make “man scarcer than pure gold” (Isa. 13:12).

Scripture consistently portrays gold as the most precious of substances. But it also portrays one substance as of even greater importance—the blood of Christ. “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18, 19). The Laodicean message is a call to the exaltation of the most precious substance in the universe, the spit blood of God Himself. This means that Jesus Christ, His life, His death, His coming again, needs our passionate embrace and commitment. Thus God says “buy” the gold. The only thing we have to trade is our own miserable selves, our selfish hearts.

“But what do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. And yet men think it hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it.” Jesus said, “I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). The message of Laodicea requires making Christ first in everything we do.

Ellen White, as we have seen, likens the gold to faith and love. And this remains true as long as the focus of our faith and love is Jesus Christ.

The white clothes represent the righteousness of Christ imputed to the believer. The Scriptures talk about receiving a “wedding garment” (Matt. 22:1-4) and being “clothed with Christ” (Gal. 3:27). Adam and Eve tried to cover their nakedness, but it took an act of God to truly cover them (Gen. 3:21). We may perform all the good works we possibly can, but it still takes a divine act to credit us with the only works that count—the works of Christ (Rom. 5:19).

“If you would gather together everything that is good and holy and noble and lovely in man and then present the subject to the angels of God as acting a part in the salvation of the human soul or in merit, the proposition would be rejected as treason.” We need to focus more on Christ, for “it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil. 2:13).

The third ingredient in the heavenly prescription for lukewarmness is salve for the eyes. Today we place drops in the eyes so that we may see more clearly. So God gives the Holy Spirit to convict us of sin and guide us into all truth (John 16:8-11). As we open our hearts to the Holy Spirit, whose primary task is to tell of Jesus and bring glory to Him (John verse 14), the Holy Spirit helps us be honest and candid about our real condition. Thus, we are led to search for the true remedy: the righteousness of Christ.

Ellen White summarizes in one glorious paragraph the core of the Laodicean message: “The Laodicean message has been sounding. Take this message in all its phases and sound it forth to the people wherever Providence opens the way. Justification by faith and the righteousness of Christ are the themes to be presented to a perishing world.”

How to implement

If we seek the true remedies, then as church leaders we will make the burden of our committees, our councils, our gatherings, a study of, and a seeking for the righteousness of Christ rather than a push for church growth. The statistics we cite should not reflect the statistical growth of the church, but when possible, the qualitative growth. The burden of our gatherings should be to seek the remedies for our Laodicean condition. Let us convene a world gathering of leaders and pastors whose only agenda is to study the message to Laodicea. If this proves impossible, let us do it division by division, conference by conference. After Jesus ascended to heaven, the disciples did not immediately begin their evangelism. They prayed in an upper room until God had subdued their selfishness and they were ready for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Then they experienced explosive church growth.

What would happen if instead of spending the first hour each day of an Annual Council listening to the preaching of the Word we spent each morning in study, prayer, and sharing? At the last Annual Council, George Knight presented stirring, Christ-centered messages. What would have happened if we had broken into small groups to discuss the implications of his messages for ourselves and then for the people we lead? What would have happened if we had spent one hour each day during the business session in prayer?

True success

Why was the early church so successful in its evangelism? Because, paradoxically, it did not make baptisms its priority. When division hit the Corinthian church, Paul reminded them of the solution: “For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power” (1 Cor. 1:17, NRSV). Now, please do not misunderstand me; bap-
People will take notice that we have been with Jesus, and they too will want to be with Jesus.

tisms are important. They form an integral part of the gospel commission. But the kind of church growth most of us are longing for will never happen until we admit our need of Christ’s righteousness. So how do we tell what our priorities are? By the same yardstick Paul used. All we have to look at are our reporting procedures and what we give the major amount of time to at committees and workers’ meetings. When we gather as leaders for union, division, and General Conference meetings, what is the focal point of our discussion?

In the early church Luke reports that the church leaders began to get bogged down in administrative detail, in running an ever-expanding enterprise. People were being added to the church on a daily basis. Church leaders became so busy in organizing, planning, and implementing that they began to neglect their most important duty: that of being spiritual leaders. So Luke tells us the apostles appointed spiritual men to be the administrators of the church, freeing them up for their most important duties: “prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The church discovered that in its eagerness to fulfill the gospel commission it had been risking neglect of “ministry of the word of God” (verse 2).

The Bible reveals that church leaders should be known as men and women of God, deep Bible students, highly spiritual, not immersed in administrative detail. How much time each week do we actually spend in prayer, meditation, and Bible study? Do we lead by example in these areas, or more by exhortation?

This is why the Laodicean message is so powerful and yet so hard to implement. Riches are preferable to poverty, and success preferable to failure. We bask in the success of what is easily measurable, forgetting that what God counts as success may be very different from our definition (Luke 12:13-21). We do not like to think of ourselves as failures, and we need not remain in such a condition. Ellen White encourages us to see hope in the Laodicean message: “But the counsel of the True Witness does not represent those who are lukewarm as in a hopeless case. There is yet a chance to remedy their state, and the Laodicean message is full of encouragement, for the backslidden church may yet buy the gold of faith and love, may yet have the white robe of the righteousness of Christ, that the shame of their nakedness need not appear. Purity of heart, purity of motive, may yet characterize those who are half hearted and who are striving to serve God and Mammon. They may yet wash their robes of character and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.”

What have we done with Jesus?

Notice again that the issue does not concern our success at soul winning, meeting financial budgets, or building new institutions. Rather, the issue centers on what we have done with Jesus Christ. I know that I need a much greater measure of His grace in my life. I need to spend more time with Him, more time reflecting on His goodness, His justice, His mercy, His love. I long to see us give much more time to prayer, fasting, and Bible study, with the emphasis on knowing Jesus better. We need the latter rain, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. But when we pray for the Holy Spirit we need to make sure that we are not just praying for victory over sin or greater success in evangelism, but that we pray for the Holy Spirit to help us lift up the cross more, to preach Jesus Christ better, to witness to Him better.

When Jesus is truly first in our lives, as seen by our attitudes, our repentance, our sharing His love, our making these themes the priority in our meetings and gatherings; when people see the love that we have for one another; when we sorrow for our sins; when we long to mirror the character of Christ more completely; when we would rather die than bring God shame; then God will respond to every creature” (mark 16:15, KJV). The Lord would give us no such commission without placing resources at our command sufficient for the work.”

Lifting up Jesus

Victory over sin, character perfection, lifestyle changes, power for witnessing, come only as the sinner beholds Christ lifted up on the cross as the only perfect sacrifice. The application of His sacrifice in the heavenly sanctuary to us today is in proportion to the emphasis we give to what Christ did for us 2,000 years ago. What Christ does for us and what He does in us form an indissoluble union. However, the success of Christ working in us is always predicated on us focusing and emphasizing what He has done for us. The way to character perfection is through the cross.

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). “For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).

“Lift the cross higher, that many may behold, and look and live. Christ died for the world, and His command is, ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ (mark 16:15, KJV). The Lord would give us no such commission without placing resources at our command sufficient for the work.”
"Often doctrinal subjects are presented with no special effect; for men expect others to press upon them their doctrines; but when the matchless love of Christ is dwelt upon, His grace impresses the heart. There are many who do not know what they must do to be saved. Oh, expect others to press upon them their doctrines; but when the matchless love is presented with no special effect; for men know of the doctrine, whether it be of God© (John 7:17, KJV)."

If we are not careful, the call to character perfection can lead us away from an emphasis on the righteousness of Christ. Ellen White defines character perfection as the spontaneous acting out of God's love: "Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by trying to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance."

Are we revealing God's character of love? Is this what we mean by character perfection?

The call to repentance to the church of Laodicea is to make prominent the righteousness of Christ, to make this our emphasis. This is the only path to follow if we want all the other blessings that God has promised. Ellen White again and again emphasizes the importance of making the cross central in our lives, preaching, committees, and programs. The cross is the ONLY way we can move the world. "Christ declares, 'I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.' If the cross does not find an influence in its favor, it creates an influence. Through generation succeeding generation, the truth for this time is revealed as present truth. Christ on the cross was the medium whereby mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. This is the means that is to move the world."

I thus appeal to all my fellow church leaders: Will you listen to the divine call "Be earnest, therefore, and repent"? If we will repent, then Christ promises to "come in and eat with us." The greatest proof that we have not repented as a church is the fact that we are still here. After almost 150 years we are still here. The church that was raised up by God to announce the coming of Jesus with great power in a single generation is still here. It takes only one generation to finish the work that God has given. He is not short on power. It is us who still refuse to empty ourselves and be filled with His Spirit thereby preventing this church from broadcasting His glory across this world. How long must He wait? Are we willing to pay the price to reorder our priorities?

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*Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture texts are from the New International Version.
3 ---, Review and Herald, September 25, 1900.
5 Ibid, pp. 415, 416.
6 ---, Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 88.
9 Ellen G. White, Letter 24, 1892.
10 Ellen G. White in Review and Herald, Aug. 28, 1894.
11 ---, Testimonies to Southern Africa, p. 64.

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Practicing Laodicean Repentance

Here are some suggestions for pastors and leaders at all levels of the church on how to implement the Laodicean message. This will not be easy. It requires a major change in our organizational culture.

1. Frankly and openly acknowledge that the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are accurate in their description of our church as being in a Laodicean condition.

2. Individually commit a significant portion of every day to prayer and Bible study; fast on a regular basis; share regularly what Jesus has done for you.

3. Determine that board meetings and committees will address the spiritual condition of the church and that time at each meeting be spent studying the life of Christ. Let the following counsel from Ellen White be applied to our meetings too. "It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ. . . . As we thus dwell upon His great sacrifice for us, our confidence in Him will be more constant, our love will be quickened, and we shall be more deeply imbued with His spirit" (The Desire of Ages, p. 83).

4. Examine every sermon, every talk, every devotional, and ask, Have I presented Christ as outlined in the following statement? "Never should a sermon be preached, or Bible instruction in any line be given, without pointing the hearers to ‘the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29, KJV). Every true doctrine makes Christ the center, every precept receives force from His words" (Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 54).

5. Schedule frequent meetings whose major theme is to present Christ and hear testimonies regarding what Jesus has done for your group.

6. Examine all our evangelistic material—Bible studies, sermons, leaflets—to see if each study relates the subject specifically to the cross of Christ.

7. Evaluate, at least annually, how well we are responding to the Laodicean challenge: "I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing." But [I] do not realize that [I] [am] wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked" (Rev. 3:17). How much have we opened the door and let Christ in? (verse 20).

MINISTRY/FEBRUARY/1993 9
Spirit-filled marketing

Kermit L. Netteburg
George A. Powell

Nine principles for attracting a crowd

A church in a small Southern town plans a prophecy crusade. Members ask the union communication department for help in attracting a crowd. The advertising plan includes 12,000 handbills and some ads in the local weekly paper and on the local radio station. More than 400 visitors flock to the meetings at the local civic center.

A suburban church analyzes its territory and pinpoints an area with demographics identical to those who typically become Adventists. They decide to conduct a Revelation Seminar in the church rather than in a neutral hall. From a mailing of 26,000 handbills only 70 visitors attend.

What attracts people to some crusades and suppresses attendance at others? What means joy for one church and disappointment for another? There are many determining variables, too numerous to explain in perfect detail here. But the following nine general principles form a foundation for drawing a crowd.*

Nine evangelistic attraction principles

1. Know your community. Drawing a crowd for evangelistic work requires knowing the community and then planning advertising and programming that fits local interests and needs. Identify your target audience. Where do they live? What radio stations do they prefer? What interests them?

Several resources are available for help. Contact your conference or union office. Consult the Institute of Church Ministry at Andrews University, or visit a local public library or chamber of commerce. They all have ways of profiling your community.

If you know about the community and still aren’t sure what to do for evangelistic advertising, your union or conference communication director can help. So can the Institute of Church Ministry. Or you can contact one of the handbill producers around the country; often they can tell which handbill will appeal best to the type of people in your community.

2. Different strokes for different folks. People differ. What attracts a 29-year-old mother of three preschoolers probably will not attract a 29-year-old single anthropology professor.

This is precisely the point of Jesus’ parable of the soils in Matthew 13. Some ground was immediately ready for the seed. Other dirt samples needed different approaches. Rocky soil required more careful cultivation. The soil on the path needed preevangelism to soften the ground. Some soil needed a Breathe Free program to get rid of the weeds.

3. Shoot a rifle, not a shotgun. The parable also teaches targeting. The farmer attempted to sow all the seed in the good ground. Likewise, our demographic studies should direct us to those most likely to respond to the type of evangelism and advertising we have to offer.

Perhaps you have an unlimited budget. If so, targeting isn’t important. If not, your resources need to be directed toward those most likely to respond to your type of outreach.

Target the type of programming you offer as well. Some pastors aspire to reach community leaders with crusade-style evangelism and thus direct their
advertising to them, a group that rarely responds to this method. They have missed other types of people who might have been interested but weren’t invited.

4. Count your sheep. Jesus’ parable also illustrates accountability. It offers an explanation of why various efforts failed while others succeeded. Even in good ground some results were more successful than others: “some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matt. 13:8, NRSV).

The same is true for evangelism. Some methods work better than others. Keeping records of who attended, from where, because of what medium of advertising, along with other information will prove helpful in future planning.

5. The beast may not work. We should expect different types of people to respond to different types of evangelistic programs and handbills. The ongoing evangelistic advertising program of the Southern Union has found that the “News Clippings” handbill attracts a middle to lower middle class audience. The “Beast Rising Out of the Sea” handbill draws a lower middle to lower class audience.

Unfortunately, no handbill currently available attracts an upper or upper middle class audience. Several are being tested, but there are no answers yet. This probably reflects the current disinclination of the upper class toward most public evangelism rather than a weakness in graphics or themes of any handbills.

Your church growth strategy should recognize that some people may never attend a crusade. Prayerfully analyze your parish and decide whether to begin a day-care center, open a Community Services facility, sponsor concerts, establish a vegetarian restaurant, provide a recreation ministry, or start a cruise ship evangelism center. (We’re kidding about that last one.)

6. Mix it in. Handbills alone are not as effective as handbills reinforced with newspaper or radio advertising. Many people lump all junk mail in one letter carrier’s bag. They see the free notation on Adventist handbills and think of the carrier’s bag. They see the free notation on Adventist handbills and think of the carrier’s bag. They see the free notation on Adventist handbills and think of the carrier’s bag.

The mix of advertising through direct mail and through paid media adds credibility—and crowds. The late J. L. Shuler referred to various approaches as prongs in a rake—the more you have, the more people you’ll rake in.

A word of caution. Radio and TV need sufficient repetition to stick in the minds of the audience. Allocating a meager amount to those media just in order to have more prongs is a poor investment.

7. A friend invites better than a brochure. Members inviting friends are better than any commercial method of attracting people to evangelistic meetings. Inviting friends with whom they have had Bible studies is even better. These are key reasons for the success of Black and Hispanic evangelism in North America. Anglos, on the other hand, do not seem to be inviting friends to crusades. Anything a pastor can do to adjust this will help attract crowds to evangelistic meetings, especially crowds of people likely to be baptized.

To change this, Anglo churches should hold more evangelistic meetings. Adventists who have been members for 20 years seldom know any non-Adventists whom they could invite to meetings, while those who have been members less than a year or two have many friends they could invite to meetings.

If you held a crusade in 1992 and baptized 25 people, hold another one this year. Those 25 have lots of friends they are ready—even eager—to invite to meetings this year. Growth begets growth. As Jesus said: “For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance” (Matt. 25:29, NRSV).

8. The evening and the morning. Older people sometimes are reticent to attend morning programs. In communities with many older people, a 10:30 a.m. Revelation Seminar will be as well attended as one at 7:30 p.m. Conducting two seminars simultaneously is extra work for the pastor, but it doubles the attendance and the potential baptisms.

9. The right stuff. Jesus used different evangelistic methods to reach Nicodemus in John 3 and the woman at the well in John 4. To Nicodemus Jesus boldly asserted, “You must be born again.” From the woman at the well Jesus quietly asked a favor: “Could I have a drink, please?” In both instances Jesus made a call for surrender, but His initial approach varied depending on His target audience. We too need to use varied methods in evangelism.

Prophecy-based evangelism is still the most common, and the results are the most predictable. People appreciate three things about prophecy-based outreach: (1) they learn Bible study methods; (2) the prophetic insights make a difference in their personal lives; (3) they make sense out of world events that seem chaotic on the evening news.

Archaeology-based programs attract a lot of people, including intellectuals and the upper class. John Carter drew more than 2,000 to a Los Angeles crusade that featured archaeology. Two problems, however, plague most archaeology-based efforts: (1) it is difficult to translate the large attendance into large numbers of baptisms; (2) some evangelists offer only an archaeology veneer. Attendees feel misled.

We need to discover how to preach the beliefs of the church while describing archaeological findings. And then we need to find a way to make archaeological preaching convict souls of their need for baptism.

Family- or health-related subjects have been tried frequently. For reasons not adequately researched, the response to most has been disappointing.

Three specific applications

These nine general principles of Spirit-filled marketing apply in different ways in different locales. We have space to review only three specific settings and to determine the best way to attract a crowd in each setting.
1. Multichurch, multitown district.
You’re the pastor of three churches, each about 20 miles apart in towns that are quite small. What’s the best plan to draw the largest group to your meetings in one of the towns? Probably the local newspaper and radio station. You might not even use handbills. Why? Printing costs depend on volume. With this small population, printing rates are greater per handbill than for a larger press run. Don’t ignore handbills, but instead rely on a neat but inexpensive schedule of subjects. Then hand them out.

Use the newspaper because everyone in the small town reads the weekly paper. It’s probably only 20 pages or so, meaning your ad won’t get lost in the clutter of pages. Rates are probably cheap enough that you can buy a half page for two weeks—again the week before you open and the first few days after opening night.

One caution. If your town is in the shadow of a major city, the big-city media may dominate your town, vastly reducing the audience of any local medium, especially radio.

You pastor only one church, the only Adventist church in a small city. What do you do? Rejoice. You’ve got the most promising situation. Your city probably is large enough to be media-independent, to be the home city for the dominant newspaper and radio stations in the area. Yet the media are probably small enough to be affordable.

Buy newspaper and radio. Have a large enough newspaper ad so that it can’t be missed on the page. Run it two or three times before the meetings open and once after the meetings start. Buy at least 10 radio ads, preferably 20 or more (especially on AM stations), so your message will be remembered.

Use handbills, too! Target them by selecting only the zip codes filled with the demographic segments most likely to respond. You might even be able to target carrier routes.

A word about television. Often it’s too expensive, but in this kind of city you may be able to find bargain rates, last-minute rates in the time slots when your target audience is watching. The TV station can tell you who’s watching what when. All they need to know is what demographic group you want to reach.

Small cities have another advantage. People here will have less resistance than people in rural areas, where church identities and family traditions are strong.

You pastor only one church, one of several in the metropolitan area. What’s your best plan? Black evangelism flourishes in cities, but Anglos face challenges. Advertising on a budget is one of them. Newspaper buys are expensive, and much of the circulation purchased is wasted because it is miles from your

25 guidelines for evangelistic advertising

While these are not rules to follow blindly, they are the rules of the trade for advertising evangelistic meetings. You can ignore these guidelines, but do so for a reason.

General guidelines:
1. Don’t “bait and switch.” Advertising something cute or fancy may draw a crowd, but people won’t stay if you don’t deliver.
2. More women than men attend crusades.
3. To make guests feel more comfortable, tell members to fill out coupons, raise their hands, and do all the other things asked of the audience on opening night.
4. Spend a few minutes on opening night piquing guests’ interest about topics to be addressed during the series.

Guidelines for media advertising:
5. Electronic media attract younger audiences; print media draw older audiences.
6. Ads in paid newspapers draw better than those in freebies or shoppers. Paid newspapers have more credibility. Besides, your ad will get lost in the clutter of colorful inserts and commercial ads in a shopper.
7. Unless the discount is substantial, stay off the religion page.
8. Try to get an upper right-hand spot in section A. Sports, society, food, and entertainment sections appeal only to special groups.
9. Run daily newspaper ads on Thursday (if you can afford only one).
10. Provide camera-ready ads to limit the potential for errors or “sabotage.”
11. Be wary of “free” newspaper articles or radio interviews before opening night.
12. A public facility is often easier to find than the church—a must for broadcast advertising.

Guidelines for direct mail:
13. Resist well-meaning efforts by the “saints” to dictate direct mail routes or radio stations. Go fishing where the fish are.
church. Moreover, the many sections and numerous pages can leave your ad almost unnoticed.

Likewise, radio stations cover the entire metro area, and ad rates are dreadfully high. Further, there are so many stations that no single outlet has a corner on the market.

TV? Unless you’re in a citywide crusade with a large budget, you can’t afford it. Stations broadcast to hundreds of thousands of people spread over a 50-mile radius. Also expensive are public meeting facilities, which may be where some people feel uncomfortable going at night.

There’s still good news. Give primary emphasis to handbills. Because you’re printing many thousands, rates are low. Target just the area and just the demographics you want. Isolate zip codes, even carrier routes. Here’s where the demographic analysis you’ve done will really pay off.

You can buy newspaper ads that target your audience. There may be one whose target audience is Black. There also may be Spanish- or Korean-language papers in a large city.

The big-city paper may have zoned editions. Advertise only in those zones that cover your area. It’s a good buy. (Avoid the regional tabloids the paper may produce weekly; readers ignore them too.) Buy an ad large enough to dominate the page, but don’t buy the whole page. You’ll save money and still attract readers.

Radio isn’t out. Pick a station whose format reaches the kind of people you want. Black radio stations have strong reach with Black audiences. Ethnic language stations also have a good appeal. A mix of adult contemporary, country, and religious stations will reach the most responsive Anglo audiences.

Another advantage of big-city evangelism is mobility. People who have just moved to the city often are looking for a way to blend into the city, for a new sense of identity and extended family. Your evangelism can show them that the Adventist church provides that sense of family in a setting of biblical beliefs.

All the materials and strategies can’t overshadow the compelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is essential

We’ve dealt with advertising methods, the topic that the Ministry editors gave us. But all these materials and strategies can’t overshadow the compelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit.

Any experienced evangelist can recount examples of people who attended in defiance of all advertising logic. The Holy Spirit knew where they were and saw to it that our humble, imperfect...
efforts reached souls searching for truth. Never substitute marketing expertise for prayers that God will lead you to those who desire salvation.

On the other hand, never ignore marketing methods just because you have prayed. A blend of the two will bring heaven’s greatest blessing to your meetings. Without good demographics, results may suffer.

One church in an upscale community, for example, failed to research response potential before they plunged into their meetings. Had they checked, they would have realized that crusade-style evangelism was not the best method suited for their community. Many of the professional people there are out of town five nights a week. Beyond that, the summer crusade suffered from vacation schedules.

Only seven nonmembers attended the series. And the only one baptized had been ready before the meetings and asked to wait until after the series to be baptized. The church spent $8,000 on the crusade and prayed for God’s blessing and guidance. They mailed 32,000 handbills and organized child care, music, greeters and ushers. Then they urged members to “support” the meetings by attending.

Despite the disappointing results, the church found a way to call the meetings a success. Many members had been refreshed spiritually. Several children had learned about Adventist doctrine and had asked for baptism. But the pastor—and the Saviour—had hoped for more. More people attending. More people baptized. More people closer to Jesus.

So remember to research your community. What do they want to hear? How can they be drawn to the Saviour? Jesus adapted His methods to the needs and interests of His hearers. We too must adapt ourselves to our communities, finding the point of common contact where we can meet them and then lead them with the help of the Holy Spirit to a full knowledge of Jesus and His truth.

Attracting a bigger crowd doesn’t cost more, doesn’t take more effort, doesn’t require another two months of planning time. Working smarter, not necessarily harder, means planning a crusade and promotional methods targeted at the responsive people in your area.

* Excellent sources to study church marketing include books by Dan Day, Bruce Wrenn, and George Barna, all of which are available at Adventist Book Centers.

16 guidelines for evangelistic advertising in the third world

Carlos E. Aeschlimann

General guidelines
1. Encourage church members to bring interests and visitors to the meetings. This is the best advertising.
2. Prepare a large number of candidates before the meetings. The doctrines can then be reinforced before the individuals take a stand for their beliefs. This increases results.
3. Present topics to attract the whole family.
4. Expect many young people and children and plan programs especially for them.
5. Give prizes to those who bring the most visitors.

Advertising
6. Devise economical ways possible to reach the largest number of people.
7. Advertise in newspapers, radio and television, as your budget allows. Provide a script and try to get the media to give you free advertising.
8. Print handbills or flyers for each week of meetings, listing the topics.
9. Send a letter of invitation to all interests, radio school students, seminar attenders, and family and friends of the church members. If finances are tight, ask members to deliver the invitations in person.
10. Rent a prestigious, well-known public hall, if possible. Be aware that some interests may drop out when the meetings move to the church.
11. Conduct an evangelistic campaign each year in the church. It costs less to use the church, and those who are really interested in spiritual matters will come.

Duration of meetings
12. Begin the campaign on Sabbath or Sunday evening.
13. Hold the meetings every night, if the crusade is of short duration.

Topics for the meetings
14. Survey the public to learn what topics interest them. Start with those subjects.
15. Avoid titles that attack other religions.
16. Present Christ-centered, Bible-based topics and adapt them to the audience.

The more the members participate, the greater will be the results.
A special honor

Mildred J. White

Doug sat holding Jeannie’s hand as he shared their plans for marriage and the pastoral ministry. My husband and I had known him ever since he was a junior in one of our churches. As the four of us visited that evening, my husband offered counsel and courage for the young couple.

During a pause in the conversation, Doug turned to me and said, “Mrs. White, one reason we came tonight was to get some insights into the life of a pastor’s wife. Jeannie feels a little uneasy about her future role.”

She nodded, her long blond hair framing an earnest face. “So many people tell me I’m facing a difficult task. I need some practical advice.”

Her plea for help reminded me of the uncertainty I once had. I told her about it, then added, “I have four suggestions that will make being a pastor’s wife a joy and pleasure.

“First, saturate yourself in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy. Read something from each day. On busy days it may be only one or two Bible verses and one paragraph from your favorite inspired book, but other days you can read a chapter or two. I’ve read the Bible through many times, using various versions. I keep a notebook handy and jot down any texts that impress me, in order to memorize them. On another page I write short quotations from my Spirit of Prophecy book. These form my focus for the day. Sometimes the verses and quotations are so precious I’ll ponder them for several days.

“A natural result of this study is to lift my heart in prayer. So on another page in my notebook I write my prayer requests with a promise beside it. The Lord has used this method to help fulfill His promise ‘You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You’ (Isa. 26:3).”

“Second, love the pastor. A young minister’s wife was once asked what she loved most about being a pastor’s wife. She answered without hesitation, ‘The pastor!’ Doug and Jeannie chuckled at that, looking at each other as if to say ‘That’s too easy!’

“I know what you’re thinking,” I said, laughing with them, “but sometimes what seems so easy can be difficult. Pressures in the ministry can build up, and sometimes it seems that the pastor has time for everyone except his wife and family. Remember, Jeannie, no matter how busy Doug gets, assure him of your love and support. Then, too, you may find that Doug has some habit that is irritating to you. One minister’s wife complained that her husband was always tugging on his trousers as he stood to preach. Real love and a little humor cover a multitude of such irritations and weaknesses. Let Doug know that you feel it’s an honor and privilege to be known as ‘the pastor’s wife.’ That label can be very special to you.

“Third, be friendly. As the first lady of the church, Jeannie, all your members will appreciate a smile and greeting from you. Be ready to give it. A lot of hurting people come to church each Sabbath. A smile and friendly greeting from you will do much to encourage them. Recently I visited a church that we had pastored several years ago. An elderly man who had been a greeter there for many years welcomed me warmly, then unburdened his heart.

“Finally, be a good listener. Often we don’t have a solution to the problems or sorrows that members are facing—but we can listen with our hearts. A letter came today from a single mother thanking me for helping her with some overwhelming problems. I didn’t really have answers, but I listened and pointed her to Him who had the answer. I also shared some of His promises to cling to. The Lord will give ‘a word in season to him who is weary’ (Isa. 50:4).

“Well, Jeannie,” I concluded, “that’s my advice. If you follow these simple guidelines, you’ll experience much peace and joy as a pastor’s wife.”

“I’m so glad we came,” Jeannie exclaimed as she and Doug rose to leave. “Whenever I’ve been telling my friends that I’m going to marry a minister, they all say they feel sorry for me. Now I know it will be a privilege and an honor to stand at my husband’s side.” Her face was beaming as she slipped her arm through Doug’s and said, “I’ll always love my pastor.”

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All texts in this article are from the New King James Version.
Movies: where or what?

Fred E. Crowell

Guiding principles emerge from confusing standards.

I t is our first Sabbath visiting in a church we will call home for the next few years. We slide into the pew, hoping to go unnoticed so we can see what’s going on in our new congregation. Opening the bulletin, we find an insert advertisement for a movie tonight in the youth chapel. That’s good, because we don’t have any plans for the evening. But wait a minute! This must be a misprint! It says here they are going to show *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids*. Wasn’t that at the theaters recently? Surely the church shouldn’t be showing this type of movie!

My thoughts race. We have two teenage daughters whom we wouldn’t allow inside a theater to see this movie. Now here it is in our youth chapel. Maybe this church shouldn’t be our new home!

Finding other activities that night, we chose not to watch the movie. Two months later, after settling into this conservative Midwestern university town, we rented *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids* for home viewing. We were pleasantly surprised. It did not have bad language, gross violence, or immorality. We felt a bit guilty about misjudging the film before having seen it or reviewing a critic’s comments.

I felt compelled to reevaluate my position on movies. As a pastor, what should I tell my members? Some still strictly follow our *Church Manual*’s guidelines. Others have revised their standards to a more liberal position.

I began my investigation by examining several editions of the *Church Manual* to see what each said about movie attendance. I started with the 1959 edition and concluded with the 1986 edition. Surprisingly, the wording is virtually the same in each version. A short paragraph deals with movies.

“We earnestly warn against the subtle and sinister influence of the moving-picture theater, which is no place for the Christian. Dramatized films that graphically present by portrayal and by suggestion the sins and crimes of humanity—murder, adultery, robbery, and kindred evils—are in no small degree responsible for the present breakdown of morality. We appeal to parents, children, and youth to shun those places of amusement and those theatrical films that glorify professional acting and actors. If we will find delight in God’s great world of nature and in the romance of human agencies and divine workings, we shall not be attracted by the puerile portrayals of the theater.”

I realize that many Adventists would never see a movie at the theater; others select carefully and feel comfortable in the theater watching a “good movie.” A growing number of church members are willing to see anything that comes across the silver screen.

The issue goes beyond the public theater. The videocassette recorder, as popular in Adventist homes as elsewhere, has turned the family room into a theater. Adventists who wouldn’t go to Cinema 5 need wait only three months or so to watch currently popular films on their VCRs. Of course, regular and cable television offer their own profusion of movie entertainment.

How can we as pastors deal with this
confusing situation? Stuart Tyner in the September 1989 issue of Insight\Out explores the three options available: (1) watch anything and everything; (2) totally eliminate all movies; and (3) be a discriminating viewer. Let's ponder these in turn.

Anything goes?

*Number 1—watching anything and everything—would fill the mind with profanity, immorality, and violence. This transgresses the counsel given in Philippians 4:8: “Finally, brethren, what- ever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.”

Obviously we must rule out the majority of offerings from the motion picture industry. Michael Shaugnessy, writing on pornography, human mutilation, and psychological dysfunction, reports that the popular “slasher” films rely heavily on desensitization so that people exposed to X-, NC17-, and R-rated movies tend to moderate their attitudes toward women and violence. What justification could there be to watch such movies as Rambo, Nightmare on Elm Street, or Henry and June?

Perhaps the following advice from Ellen White about reading material could apply also to movies: “Avoid reading and seeing things which will suggest impure thoughts. Cultivate the moral and intellectual powers. Let not these noble powers become enfeebled and perverted by much reading of even storybooks.”

Now, what about the less-offensive PG or PG-13 movies, which are targeted especially toward teens? While the sex in these “innocent” films may not be as explicit, the language as strong, or the violence as flagrant, inherent problems remain. Lynn Minton, who features a column in *McCall’s* magazine entitled Movie Guide for Puzzled Parents, had this to say when interviewed about teen movies: “With some films, it’s not so terrible that a young person sees them. What’s terrible is when certain values go unchallenged.”

Referring to the current wave of movies portraying sexually active, happy-go-lucky adolescents, Minton continued: “I do find some of these movies upsetting because of the image they project. Everyone’s jumping in and out of bed casually, and hardly anyone’s left out or emotionally upset by the encounter. Well, this is not real life. In real life, people sometimes get hurt. What’s more, a young person who isn’t interested in casual sex could well get from these movies the idea that something was wrong with her or him.”

We have here a principle for judging movies that goes much deeper than simply how much sex, violence, or bad language is used.

Total abstinence?

*For me personally, the second option—eliminating movie-watching totally—would be ideal. There are just not many good films available, and a zero-tolerance approach would remove the burden of determining which are OK and which are not. Time spent watching movies could be more profitably invested with the Bible or enjoying a Christian book, or in family activities. This approach, however, would also ban Christian films shown at vespers and Saturday night socials.*

As for going to a theater to see a good movie, Francis Nichol ably expressed the traditional call for total abstinence: “Every institution has its own atmosphere. The church has the atmosphere of prayer. We find ourselves in a certain mood when within the influence of that atmosphere. A business office has another certain atmosphere. Likewise a moving-picture house has its own clearly defined atmosphere. The atmosphere of the theater hangs heavy with evil. The atmosphere produces its effect on ones who frequent such a place.”

“For this reason, if no other, I think an Adventist presents a weak and worthless argument when he declares that he wishes to go to a moving-picture house only occasionally to see a good movie. Doubtless I might secure at a saloon a glass of pure water to quench my thirst, but I would rather find a good drink elsewhere. I don’t like the atmosphere of a saloon. If I went in there, I might even be tempted to drink something else besides water. Adam and Eve found out long ago that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was a bad tree to visit.”

The old arguments were clear: (1) movie theaters are bad places—the atmosphere is still evil—your angels won’t go there; (2) movies, like books of fiction, with their professional actors, harm the mind and the soul. Unfortunately, while these arguments may support the ideal standard, for the great majority of people they don’t provide a practical or realistic rebuttal to the moviegoing dilemma.

First, theaters themselves are obviously not bad places. The church even holds evangelistic meetings in them occasionally. Second, all pictures and professional actors aren’t bad. What about Faith for Today’s productions? Third, most people have televisions, and many more are acquiring VCRs or have access to them, so movies frequently have nothing to do with theaters. Fourth, should we protect our children from reality to the point that they will find themselves confused, bewildered, and unprepared to avoid drowning in its muck? Fifth, the “absolutely no movies” approach isn’t helpful or realistic in the nineties. Most Adventists watch TV movies and aren’t going to stop because of renewed church pressure.

A workable answer

We are left with Tyner’s *third option*: being selective about what we watch. Since many members young and old view movies at least at home, I suggest offering some criteria by which they can evaluate their video menu.

Consider the concept of movies from a Christian perspective. All of life can be regarded as a continuum, with the devil and total depravity on one end and Christ and complete perfection on the other. To start with, all of us need to evaluate where our lives stand on that continuum. Having honestly done that, we can ask
ourselves some questions about entertainment—questions that go deeper than such matters as immorality, violence, nudity, and profanity. We must concern ourselves with broader principles, such as these:

1. What is the difference between a Christian’s view of the film and a secular person’s concept?
2. Does this movie enhance or detract from my system of values?
3. How does the movie make me feel and why?
4. What is the main point of the movie?
5. Is the theme Christian or anti-Christian?
6. How does this movie affect my relationships with Christ, my family, and my everyday associates?

### Putting into practice

Using the above questions, one Saturday night I led our church youth group in an experiment on critical movie evaluation. First we went to a video store, where I asked them to select a movie, PG-13, PG, or G. They spent at least 45 minutes looking, picking up movies, and putting them back. In the end they decided on one called *Three Fugitives*.

The main stars were Nick Nolle and Martin Short. It was about a father robbing a bank for money to keep his little girl in a special school. Since the death of her mother, the little girl hadn’t spoken a word. As Short’s character was robbing the bank, Nolle, having just gotten out of prison for robbing banks, was there depositing the money he had earned while in prison. Short took Nolle hostage. The police, however, accused the ex-con with masterminding the holdup.

The rest of the movie showed the physical and emotional struggle between Nolle, Short, and his daughter. The hostage was torn between his own desire for survival and his interest in helping Short escape to Canada, where he could live in peace with his daughter. It was Nolle who finally got the little girl to talk again when he threatened to abandon her father and daughter to fend for themselves. In the end both men were arrested, but Nolle was freed and helped care for the little girl.

The youth and their leaders enjoyed the movie. It was very touching despite a fair amount of profanity and some violence. We evaluated it from the standpoint of my six questions, which I had discussed with them earlier.

In answer to the first question, they felt that secular people and Christians would view the film in much the same way—as an entertaining comedy. They felt the Christian, however, would be more sensitive to the bad language. For some, the swearing did attack their sense of values. A couple others, however, said that they heard such language all the time, so it didn’t really bother them.

Despite the swearing and a lack of realism in some of its portrayals (such as

### Resources for reviewing movies

#### Magazines

- **Parents of Teenagers**, Box 482, Mount Morris, IL 61054. This magazine has a Music and Movies section that evaluates current entertainment offerings from a Christian perspective. It is an excellent source of discussion starters.
- **TV Guide**, Radnor, PA: News America Publications, Inc., 100 Matsonford Road, Radnor, PA 19088. This popular weekly lists the top 10 videos, supplying a short synopsis of each movie’s content along with its rating. *TV Guide* also tells whether there is nudity, violence, strong language and other “adult” themes.

#### Books

- **Video Movie Guide**, Mick Martin and Marsha Porter, Ballantine Books, New York, NY, 1991 edition. This volume of 1,515 pages rates the quality and content of more than 10,000 movies, identifying those with profanity, sexual content, nudity, and violence. It also separates them into categories such as action, children, and family viewing. Lists for $7.95; available at most U.S. shopping mall bookstores.

#### Newsletters

- **Movieguide: A Biblical Guide to Movies and Entertainment**, Good News Communications, Movieguide, P.O. Box 9952, Atlanta, GA 30319. (404)237-0326. Excellent resource for evaluating movies from a Christian perspective. Ted Baehr, editor and author, has two dozen volunteers across the country who report on the latest releases regarding profanity, obscenity, violence, and nudity. Specific concerns are addressed: Is the movie anti-biblical? Is it anti-authoritarian? What is the underlying premise? *Movieguide* rates films from an R rating on up the scale. The suggested donation is $30 per year, for 24 issues.
- **Preview Movie Morality Guide**, John Evans, Senior Editor, 1309 Seminole Drive, Richardson, TX 75080. (214)234-0195. This twice-monthly newsletter rates PG-13 and PG movies. It provides a summary of each film’s plot along with an analysis from a moral and Christian perspective. Also included is a description of the frequency and intensity of offensive elements such as obscene language, sex, nudity, violence, etc. Positive aspects of each film are also pointed out. Suggested donation is $23 per year; free sample available.
the bank holdup scene), the youth judged the movie in general to be good. They endorsed what they considered its main point and overall theme, helping others. Nolle, for example, was willing to forget about himself to risk helping Short and his daughter. One person said it reminded her of the good Samaritan story in the Bible.

Because assisting others with life's problems harmonizes with Christian principles, the youth concluded that watching the movie enhanced their relationship with Christ. They did, however, express a concern that continual viewing of films with profanity, violence, or immorality might desensitize them and leave them less resistant to these things in their own lives. They felt this would happen to them even if the movie came out OK in the evaluating criteria. They acknowledged that prolonged exposure to negative ideas and themes would make them weaker as Christians and jeopardize their stand for God.

In summary

As a pastor I am concerned when my members watch a lot of movies, including those on television. There's no way I can compete with the entertainment industry when I step into the pulpit. The razzle and dazzle of Hollywood can make church services seem dull and hard to sit through.

The situation would improve if we parents and church leaders took stock of what we and our young people watch. I trust that the guidelines suggested here will help toward that end.

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Charles V. Jenson

Does 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 model an imperial imagery? Or does it promise a glorious rapture-ascension?

A study by Robert H. Gundry on the eschatology of Paul's epistle to the Thessalonians\(^1\) has posed an interesting challenge to the traditional Seventh-day Adventist understanding of Christ's return and the rapture-ascension\(^2\) of the saints to heaven.

According to Gundry, 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 speaks of Christ returning in glory, being met in the clouds by His saints, and descending to the earth. Gundry believes that Paul adapted the words of Jesus in John 11:25, 26 concerning the resurrection to announce to the Thessalonians the return of Jesus.\(^3\) Gundry further holds that Paul "Hellenized" the teachings of Jesus for his Gentile readers. The apostle's use of words such as \textit{parousia} (coming) and \textit{apantesis} (meeting) and of trumpet fanfare leads Gundry to see in 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 the return of Jesus along the lines of an ancient imperial approach to a city. In the imperial model, the citizens of the city would exit the gate, meet the imperial personage, and escort him back to the city. Gundry points out that the word \textit{apantesis} is used in ancient literature for such a meeting and ceremonial entrance.\(^4\)

The implications of Gundry's position are obvious: If Christ comes down to earth from the "meeting in the air" and establishes His earthly reign at that time, Charles V. Jenson

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The righteous will at some point in the future, and for some duration, be in heaven.

an ascension cannot be part of the complex of events at His return. While such an interpretation is commonly used to refute the dispensational “secret rapture” theory, the challenge to the traditional Adventist teaching is clear. Is Gundry right in so interpreting 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17? Is Adventism’s teaching on rapture-ascension biblically correct?

This article will set forth biblical evidence that establishes the return of Christ and the rapture-ascension of the saints as taught by Seventh-day Adventists. We will first address two questions: (1) Does the Bible picture the saints as being in heaven at some future time? (2) Does the Bible speak clearly of a rapture-ascension? Then we will deal with 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and Gundry’s challenge.

The saints in heaven

In the Old Testament the hope of God’s saints was in a restored and beautified earth. References to this abound in the prophets (e.g., Isa. 11:60-66; Hosea 1:10, 11; 14:4-9; Joel 3:18-21). Isaiah declares to the holy ones of Zion: “Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; they will see the land that is very far off” (Isa. 33:17). The prophet puts a question in the mouths of Zion’s hypocrites and provides the divine answer: “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He who walks righteously and speaks uprightly, he who despises the gain of oppressions” (verses 14, 15). Even though sinners ask the question, Isaiah places the righteous in God’s eternal presence, defined as being “on high” (verse 5).

Turning to the New Testament, we find Jesus speaking of entering the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20; 7:21; 19:23, 24); of obtaining the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:3, 10); of the righteous shining forth as the sun in their Father’s kingdom (Matt. 13:43); and of tax collectors and harlots entering God’s kingdom (Matt. 21:31). Often Jesus’ references to the heavenly kingdom had to do with the work of grace operating then and now upon the lives of sinners. Where the future aspect of the kingdom is prominent, the location is not clearly discussed.

Jesus assured the repentant thief on the cross that he would be with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43). Here we have an intimation of the reward of the just. By comparing this passage with 2 Corinthians 12:4, where Paul’s “acquaintance” was caught up into Paradise, and Revelation 2:7, where the overcomers have the promise of eating from the tree of life in the Paradise of God, it becomes clear that at some point in the future the righteous will be in Paradise.

Jesus’ prayer in John 17 reveals our Lord’s intention to have His disciples of all ages join Him in heaven. Notice the references to heaven in these: “Glorify Me together with Yourself” (verse 5); “I am no longer in the world... and I come to You” (verse 11); “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am” (verse 24).

Other New Testament passages point to heaven as the dwelling place of God’s people. Hebrews 11:10 speaks of Abraham looking for “the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” He and other patriarchs desired “a heavenly country” (verse 16). Ephesians 2:6, 7 pictures the prospect of sitting “together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace.” Finally, the apostle John portrays a heavenly reward: “I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God” (Rev. 3:12); “I will grant [him] to sit with Me on My throne” (verse 21). John also saw a great multitude standing before the throne of God and the Lamb (Rev. 7:9-17), having come out of the great tribulation.

From these it is seen that the righteous will at some point in the future, and for some duration, be in heaven.

The rapture-ascension

Now to the second question: Does the Bible speak clearly of the saints being raptured and taken to heaven at Christ’s return? Jesus spoke of angels at His coming gathering His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other (Matt. 24:31; see Ps. 50:1-5). Here is lateral motion and not necessarily upward motion.

In Paul’s writings even that great chapter on the resurrection, 1 Corinthians 15, says nothing about being taken to heaven. First Thessalonians 4:13-18 does not mention an ascension to heaven. The saints are “caught up” in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Nothing is said of the direction of travel from that point on. Paul assures us that we will always be with the Lord (verse 7), but leaves the Lord and His beloved church suspended in the air.

John’s Gospel, though, suggests an actual journey to heaven at Christ’s return. In John 14:1-3 Jesus plainly declared that He was going to prepare rooms for His disciples in His Father’s house. This is clearly in heaven, the Father’s abode, where He had already said He would go (John 7:33). Jesus also clearly stated His intention to return—“I will come again” (John 14:3). Jesus’ plan to be reunited with His disciples is also clear from the words “receive you to Myself.”

Does the verb “receive” imply a journey to heaven? Two observations are in order. First, the verb is a compound form of the simple lambano (to take), which means “to take to oneself,” “to take along,” or “to take with.” The use of the compound form paralambano certainly accommodates—and in fact, strongly suggests—the idea that Jesus takes His saints up to the rooms prepared for them.

Second, the context around the verb makes a rapture-ascension to heaven mandatory. Jesus is returning from heaven to take us to heaven.

1 Thessalonians 4:15-17

We now turn our attention to 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 and look at several key elements in this passage.

It must be granted that the passage, as Gundry points out, has words evoking the imagery of an imperial visit. The words parousia (verse 15) and apantesis (verse 17) are associated with the heralding angel’s shout and the trumpet
blast. Christ in His position as imperial Lord descends. In I Thessalonians 2:19, 20 Paul associates glory, joy, and a crown of exultation with Christ’s parousia, thus heightening the event. Does this fact mean that Christ’s return must correspond to the Hellenistic model in every respect? The answer is clearly no.

The word parousia (coming), though often used in the special sense described above, is also widely used in a common way. It occurs 24 times in the New Testament: six times in connection with the arrival of Paul or his associates, once involving the coming of the man of sin (2 Thess. 2:9), and the rest dealing with Christ’s return. There are enough dissimilarities between the imperial model and the many passages in which parousia announces Christ’s return that one should be more tentative in making the two events exactly parallel. Note, for example, the special, predicted signs of Christ’s parousia: the false signs and false messiahs, and the accompanying lightning and clouds (Matt. 24:24, 27, 29, 30; Rev. 1:7).

As to the word apantesis (meeting), a greater case might be made in Gundry’s favor, considering the New Testament usage of the word. The word occurs in three other places: In Matthew 25:1, 6 the 10 virgins are called to go out to meet the bridegroom; the five wise ones meet the groom and then accompany him to the feast. In Acts 28:15 believers in Rome, hearing of Paul’s approach as a prisoner, go out as far as Appii Forum and Three Inns to meet him and presumably escort him back to Rome.

However, the word apantesis in itself has nothing that demands such an interpretation. In each case the context must be the determining factor. Apantesis simply means “a meeting.” The Septuagint also uses it in this sense (see 1 Sam. 15:12).

F. F. Bruce, commenting on I Thessalonians 4:17, cites examples of the imperial use of apantesis, and then concludes:

“These analogies [Matt. 25 and Acts 28] (especially in association with the term parousia) suggests the possibility that the Lord is pictured here as escorted on the remainder of His journey to earth by His people... But there is nothing in the word apantesis or in this context which demands this interpretation; it cannot be determined from what is said here whether the Lord (with His people) continues His journey to earth or returns to heaven.”

As is so often the case, one passage of Scripture considered alone might lead to one conclusion, but when placed in the context of all other passages on the given subject might lead to another conclusion. Paul may have indeed been influenced by imperial scenes as he penned I Thessalonians 4:15-17, but such imagery pales in comparison with the scene he described. When informed by John 17 and 14:1-3, as well as other texts, it is clear that I Thessalonians 4:15-17 may conform, if at all, to the Hellenistic model only in certain features.

Christ, according to Paul, will return and rapture His waiting saints. The rapture places the Lord’s beloved with Him in the clouds in the air. It is left to Jesus, in John’s Gospel, to complete the picture. The saints then ascend to the Father’s house and the Father’s throne.

A final word about Gundry’s imperial model. Is it possible that the Hellenistic imagery is completely reversed in the Bible? After all, it is God’s church in all ages that has prevailed and overcome and been victorious over Satan (Rev. 12:11), and each victor will sit on the throne (Rev. 3:21). Once the conflict is over, Christ throws open the gates of the heavenly city, then with the angelic host leaves the New Jerusalem and descends to meet and escort His victorious saints to the eternal city. “And thus we shall always be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17).

It is God’s church in all ages that has prevailed and overcome and been victorious over Satan, and each victor will sit on the throne.

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2 Thus designated so as to distinguish the event from that envisioned by “secret rapture” proponents, who often refer to the secret rapture as only the rapture.

3 There is a bewildering array of opinions as to what Paul means in saying “For this we say to you by the word of the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:15). Is Paul reinterpreting something Christ said during His earthly mission? Did Paul receive this information directly from the Lord? Efforts to solve this problem will no doubt remain fruitless. It is enough for those of faith to simply accept this passage as “of the Lord.”

4 Gundry, pp. 162-166.

5 Among dispensationalists there are several schools of thought on the secret rapture. We make no attempt here to distinguish among them. By secret rapture we refer to the doctrine that Christ would return in secret, seen only by believers, to rapture the church quietly and mysteriously into the clouds and on to heaven, there to remain for seven years. After this period Christ returns in glory with His saints.

6 All Scripture passages in this article are from the New King James Version.

7 The popular idea that the repentant thief departed that day for Paradise is unwarranted and flies in the face of the clear Biblical teaching of the nature of man and death. The Bible portrays death as an unconscious state, a condition of “sleep.” Jesus, on the cross, gave the repentant thief the immediate assurance, “today,” that he would, following the resurrection, be with Jesus in Paradise.

8 Seventh-day Adventists teach that the Second Coming and rapture-ascension inaugurates the millennium and that the saints will spend the 1,000 years of Revelation 20 in heaven. At the end of this period the New Jerusalem descends, the final judgment takes place, and the earth is restored to Edenic beauty to become the eternal home of the blessed.


The Latin translation of harpazo here is rapio from which we get the English word “rapture.” Technically, the rapture gets the saints only as far as the clouds (see 1 Thess. 4:17). Thus, we have added the word “ascension” to complete the journey heavenward.

10 Gingrich, pp. 161, 162.

11 Gundry, pp. 162, 163.

12 Commonly, the New Testament writers employed Greek words and imagery, but invested them with distinct Christian meaning.

13 Interestingly, several Bible versions, including the KJV and the NKJV, translate the noun apantesis, as an infinitive in each of its four occurrences.

Adventist identity and Evangelical criticism

C. Raymond Holmes

Seventh-day Adventism is experiencing an identity crisis. Ironically, the present confusion is in direct contrast to the confidence of Adventism’s pioneers.” So states Kenneth R. Samples in an article in Christianity Today. He associates the identity crisis with a “doctrinal controversy that... can be traced to their interaction with Evangelicals in the 1950s.” 1 The interaction is a reference to the “extensive meetings” Adventist leaders had with Walter Martin, who later wrote The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism, and Donald Grey Barnhouse, then editor of Eternity. That dialogue “established an unprecedented openness between Adventists and Evangelicals.”

Samples believes that these talks led to an Evangelical current within the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A major factor characterizing this trend is the belief that righteousness by faith consists of justification, with sanctification being the fruit. The implication is obvious: such a view was not held within Adventism prior to the influence of Martin and Barnhouse.

The article further suggests that the “crisis” in Adventism surfaced in the 1980s with the firing or resignation of “Evangelical Adventists,” the most prominent being Desmond Ford. Thus the article creates an impression that Adventism in the 1980s was purging itself of those who held to an uncompromising stand on justification by faith alone.

Back to history

Facts, however, are different. Seventh-day Adventists have long believed and preached justification by faith. A primary example is the 1929 publication of Christ Our Righteousness, by Arthur G. Daniells, then retired president of the General Conference. In simple, uncomplicated language Daniells articulated the doctrine of justification by faith alone: “It is the gospel that reveals to men the perfect righteousness of God. The gospel also reveals the way that righteousness may be obtained by sinful men, namely, by faith.” 2 The sinner “yields, repents, confesses, and by faith claims Christ as his Saviour. The instant that is done, he is accepted as a child of God. His sins are all forgiven, his guilt is canceled, he is accounted righteous, and stands approved, justified, before the divine law. . . . This is righteousness by faith.” 3 Daniells makes it clear that “the knowledge of sin; not the deliverance from sin,” comes by the law: 4 “This wonderful truth should be perfectly clear to every believer; and it must become personal experience.” 5

Long before Daniells, Ellen White had said that the message of righteousness by faith (1) was sent by the Lord specifically to the Adventist people in 1888 at a time when many of them had lost sight of Jesus; (2) is a message to be given to the whole world; (3) is the third angel’s message to be given with a loud voice resulting in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and (4) will lead to obedience to all of God’s commandments. 6

Critical pressure from Evangelicals has tempted some Adventists to abandon part of the message of righteousness by faith, brought to this church 100 years ago. The rub is Ellen White’s fourth point relative to justification: the evidence that righteousness by faith has been received is obedience to all the commandments.

The question must now be posed as to whether some Adventists have listened so intently and so believingly to Evangelical criticism that we are in danger of losing sight of what happened historically in 1888 . . . and of our mission.

Crisis in Evangelicalism

One of the dangers for Adventism today comes from the identity crisis and...
doctrinal controversy that seems to be sweeping contemporary Evangelicalism itself. This crisis in Evangelicalism is revealed in the writings of two of its own theologians.

John F. MacArthur, Jr., a prominent pastor and Bible expositor, speaks of the erosion of the gospel within Evangelicalism: “Sinners today hear not only that Christ will receive them as they are but also that He will let them stay that way!” 7 “Multitudes approach Christ on those terms… They have been deceived by a corrupted gospel.” 8 What is missing in the popular Evangelical understanding of faith is the “determination of the will to obey truth.” 9

Evidently there are Evangelical preachers today who are telling their listeners that all they have to do is be saved, and that salvation does not necessarily result in changed behavior. “The teaching that Christians are freed from observing any moral law is rampant in today’s Evangelical community.” 10

Donald G. Bloesch, professor of systematic theology at Dubuque Theological Seminary, recognizes that “the contemporary church is in a state of theological ferment.” 11 He proposes a “theology of Evangelical devotion” to Christ. Hallmarks of that devotion are twofold: (1) the believer being made righteous and (2) victorious living. “Devotion to Jesus Christ separates us from the world in its sin as well as identifies us with the world in its suffering.” 12 “Sanctification must follow justification, since God makes righteous those who He declares righteous.” 13 And “it is not the cross of Christ so much as the power of the risen Christ, the Spirit of Christ, that needs to be given special attention today.” 14 He also speaks of the kingdom of God as the “remnant of the faithful,” 15 and says that “justification is to be fulfilled in sanctification if it is to benefit us.” 16

Cost of discipleship

Thus the minimization of sanctification is a major problem among Evangelicals today, with its inevitable impact on grass-root ethics and morality. Dietrich Bonhoeffer spoke of this problem to a church that had preached justification through faith for more than 400 years: “Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner.” 17 In writing of Luther’s famous discovery, Bonhoeffer says: “It is a fatal misunderstanding of Luther’s action to suppose that his rediscovery of the gospel of pure grace offered a general dispensation from obedience to the command of Jesus, or that it was a great discovery of the Reformation that God’s forgiving grace automatically conferred upon the world both righteousness and holiness… It was not the justification of sin but the justification of the sinner that drove Luther from the cloister back into the world… In the depth of his misery, Luther had grasped by faith the free and unconditional forgiveness of all his sins. That experience taught him that this grace had cost him his very life, and must continue to cost him the same price day by day. So far from dispensing him from discipleship, this grace only made him a more earnest disciple. When he spoke of grace, Luther always implied as a corollary that it cost him his own life, the life which was not for the first time subjected to the absolute obedience of Christ. Only so could he speak of grace. Luther had said that grace alone can save; his followers took up his doctrine and repeated it word for word. But they left out its invariable corollary, the obligation of discipleship… [Luther] always spoke as one who had been led by grace to the strictest following of Christ.” 18

Notice the relationship between free forgiveness (grace) and the obligation of discipleship (obedience) in Bonhoeffer’s understanding of Luther. The orthodoxy of Luther’s followers relative to free grace (justification) “spelt the end and destruction of the Reformation as the revelation on earth of the costly grace of God. The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship.” 19

In other words, there is an abandonment of the essence of the Reformation. That abandonment is manifest today by a shifting of the focus to such concerns as ecumenicity, resolution of social issues, and a political and social interpretation to the kingdom of God upon earth. Have the followers of Luther today forgotten the Reformation’s intent? Whatever be the case, it is my contention—and history supports it—that the Seventh-day Adventist Church was called into being to recover and restore the Reformation’s emphasis on what Bonhoeffer refers to as costly grace. This is not arrogance or exclusivism, but simply the recognition of reality.

Cheap grace and easy believism

Contemporary Evangelical Christianity, critical of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, would have it join in the preaching of cheap grace and easy believism. This kind of Evangelicalism does not see Christian obedience as part of faith and salvation. It holds that any consideration of sanctification/holiness is legalism.

Genuine faith, however, always includes the need to obey. Without obedience, the message of salvation is incomplete and corrupted. According to Paul, the gospel is to be obeyed (Rom. 6:17; 1 Thess. 1:8, 9). John the Baptist taught obedience to Jesus; for him faith and obedience were synonymous (see John 3:36). The early church clearly saw a harmonious blending of faith and obedience (Acts 6:7). Hebrews 11 makes no separation between faith and obedience. As far as the Bible is concerned obedience is proof of faith, and disobedience proof of disbelief. As one of my professors was fond of saying, “Good works do not save you, but their absence will damn you.”

MacArthur says: “Jesus characterizes true righteousness—the righteousness that is born of faith (cf. Rom. 10:6) as obedience not just to the letter of the law, but to the spirit of the law as well (Matt. 5:21-48). . . . Jesus sums up the gauge of real righteousness in this shocking statement from the Sermon on the Mount: ‘Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’” (Matt. 5:48). 20

Because His standards are beyond the reach of human endeavor alone, God graciously provides faith to believe, as well as all the resources of heaven to enable the believer to follow Him successfully in faith and obedience. While individuals may want to know the blessings of salvation, they do not necessarily want to acknowledge or submit to the authority, the lordship, of Christ. Jesus as Saviour, yes! Jesus as Lord, no! But it is in the very nature of sonship to obey. Jesus was obedient to His Father’s will, and the Christian cannot do any less.

Some Evangelicals today would say that while every believer is justified, not every believer will be sanctified, that justification does not necessarily result

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in changed behavior. But that is an incorrect separation of justification and sanctification. It is a false dichotomy. The truth is that every sinner whom God justifies, He also sanctifies. That is to say, true saving faith will result in obedient living.

A person whom God declares righteous (imputed righteousness), He makes righteous (imparted righteousness). While justification and sanctification are distinct theological concepts, they are united in experience. A person cannot have one without the other. It is only those who are justified who can be sanctified; it is only those who are being sanctified who can rightly claim to be justified. The believer is certainly not justified because he is being sanctified, but neither can he be justified without being sanctified. In the words of Jesus: "Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21, NIV).

To go back to Daniells again. His understanding of righteousness by faith was quite clear. He believed that righteousness through faith results in obedience, that the new believers "keep the commandments of God." They have experienced the marvelous change from hating and transgressing the law of God, to loving and keeping its righteous precepts. . . . This wondrous transformation can be wrought only by the grace and power of God, and it is wrought for those only who lay hold of Christ as their substitute, their surety, their Redeemer. Therefore, it is said that they 'keep . . . the faith of Jesus.' "21

Having known and experienced the blessings of justification (that is, regeneration, being born anew, canceled guilt, etc.), "they should know by victorious experience that they have laid hold of, and are being kept by, 'the faith of Jesus,' and that by this faith they are empowered to keep the commandments of God." 22

That is the 1888 message: justification by faith made possible by the grace of God in Christ, and empowering by that grace to obey all of God's commandments. What some contemporary Evangelicals are urging Adventists to abandon is belief in the power of grace to transform the sinner into a faithful and obedient child of God (Eph. 1:18-23; 3:14-21). It is this part of the Adventist understanding of righteousness by faith that disturbs some Evangelicals. Ironically, however, it is the same concern that has motivated other Evangelical thinkers and preachers such as MacArthur and Bloesch to reaffirm the total message of the Reformation.

Some Evangelicals are prepared to relegate Seventh-day Adventists to the cult heap if we persist in maintaining a balance between justification and sanctification in salvation. Samples asks: "In the late 1970s, Seventh-day Adventism was at the crossroads: Would it become thoroughly Evangelical? Or would it return to sectarian traditionalism?" 23 The implied threat is obvious. For Adventism to become "thoroughly" Evangelical would require abandoning its understanding of the interdependence of justification and sanctification in salvation, and opting for the contemporary Evangelical view. A refusal to do so would carry the risk of being classified as sectarian.

(Continued on page 27)
Seeking those who may not appear to be lost

James A. Cress

The condition of those who are lost is not always apparent. Three parables in Luke 15 deserve a closer study, as several areas of our world field launch an intensive search for former and inactive members.

Although their individual journeys are unique, those represented by the lost sheep, coin, and son all end up the same. Each of them begins as part of the “saved” and ends up lost. They start out as part of the group and end up all alone.

The sheep wandered off alone. It's journey away was not a bold move or a mad dash. If so, it would immediately have been noticed by the shepherd and a rescue mission launched. More likely it was unintentional drifting of such a gradual nature that neither the group nor the shepherd or, for that matter, even the sheep itself realized that it was leaving until that it ended up all alone.

The coin never left the premises. It remained in the general vicinity of the sheepfold had been firmly established in my mind. My perception was that the shepherd ventured out into the wilderness only after everything possible had been done to assure security and comfort for the group. But the text says the shepherd left the 99 exposed to the dangers of wild places while he sought the lost.

The son deliberately chose to leave. He put Palestine in his rearview mirror and probably slammed the door as he left. His choice was clear, and his exit was announced. Everything but the end result was carefully planned. He did not plan to end up all alone!

Alone! Perhaps the worst part of lostness is the separation—from Christ or from His body! Regardless of how people exit our fellowship, far too many are left alone at the very time we should be searching for them.

How to find those who are lost

These same parables offer helpful insights into what it takes to find those who have ended up alone, regardless of why they left!

Count. The shepherd would never have known that one sheep was missing if he had never counted the others. A careful record of those who are regular in attendance and participative in fellowship is essential in order to determine who is missing or inactive.

Risk. The shepherd risked the safety of the 99 in order to search for one. Somehow the picture of the group safely protected within the sheepfold had been firmly established in my mind. My perception was that the shepherd ventured out into the wilderness only after everything possible had been done to assure security and comfort for the group. But the text says the shepherd left the 99 exposed to the dangers of wild places while he sought the lost.

Labor. When the woman determined to find the coin, she went to work! Nothing of value comes without effort. The greater the value, the greater the effort that is demanded. In order to find her coin, the homemaker stirred up some dust as she cleaned thoroughly. Stirring up dust probably aggravated her allergies. Have you ever noticed that some people are allergic to soul seeking? We need to cure these allergies.

Wait. God's timing is not my timing. The parable of the lost boy reminds us that God never gives up and neither should we. At the very point when all seems hopeless, heaven becomes most patient. How can I know what circumstance or event might trigger an awareness of need?

Pray. Prayer—that key in the hand of faith that unlocks heaven's blessing—is not for the purpose of changing God's attitude toward the lost. Prayer changes my attitude and my efforts toward the lost, as I begin to see them as Jesus sees them. And what a thing to pray for—to view every person's potential through heaven's eyes.

Love Unconditionally. Jesus does not picture the father as placing any conditions upon his love for his runaway. Love, acceptance, and forgiveness were always ready. This was what the father also offered the son who remained. In fact, loving those who remain is sometimes the greater challenge.

Welcome. The whole atmosphere was conditioned to embrace the prodigal. The father not only waited, but ran to meet his son. His boy had nothing to prove except that he understood which direction to head when he wanted to go home. Everything expressed warmth and welcome.

Restore. Much had been squandered by foolishness, but all was restored to the returnee. The robe, the shoes, the ring, declared his status. The prodigal came home expecting to be a servant and discovered he was a son! He expected little; he received everything!

Rejoice. Throw a party when the lost are found. Invite the crowd and celebrate the good news of resurrection. Dead sons and daughters are alive! Lost souls are saved! All of heaven rejoices when one sinner repents. The least the church could do is sponsor a potluck lunch and a special worship service to welcome him or her back. God won't give us more blessings than we are happy to receive!

Yes! We need to seek even those who may appear not to be lost.
Partners in mission and ministry

Harold L. Lee

The Bible gives several partnership images to enrich our understanding of who comprises the church and what is its purpose. As a pastor or elder in your local church, it is important for you to understand the reality of this partnership and its implications for your congregation.

Webster’s Dictionary defines partnership partially as “a joint interest. A contract between persons to join their money, labor, skills, goods, etc.” As Christian stewards we are in spiritual partnership, joining our interest, our talents, our possessions, and our money with God’s great power. Experiencing salvation by faith in the grace of Christ enlists us in active partnership with Him. We are “stewards of the mysteries of God” (1 Cor. 4:1). And through this practice of faithful stewardship, what wonders may be wrought in the world!

Partnership together in Christ

Partnership with God and Christ involves a “we-with” relationship. The word “we” speaks of togetherness. It portrays that mutuality and community called for in plural pronouns such as “ours” and “us.” Husband and wife, Mr. and Mrs., are “we” words—partnership. “With” is a preposition meaning “alongside of, in the company of, as associate of, by means of, or in the keeping or care of.” The baby Jesus was called Emmanuel, meaning “God with us” (Matt. 1:23).

So both “we” and “with” are relational words. We are partners with God in bringing the good news of His kingdom into real world experience (Matt. 28:19, 20). In the New Testament, mostly in Paul’s writings, we find 45 uses of “with” preceded by a verb to describe the church community’s relation to God.

Think of these “we-with” relationships between Christ and His followers:
- We have been baptized with Him (Col. 2:12).
- We have been crucified with Him (Rom. 6:6).
- We live with Him (2 Cor. 7:3).
- We die with Him (2 Cor. 7:3).
- We are raised with Him (Rom. 8:17).

Clearly, the “we-with” relationship links the Christian and the church community to the events of Christ’s life and work. Some of Paul’s “we-with” statements describe the believer’s linkage with Christ in Christian service or mission:
- We are “fellow prisoners” (Rom. 16:7).
- We are “fellow workers” (Rom. 16:21; Col. 4:11).
- We are “fellow soldiers” (Phil. 2:25) with one another.

Questions raised

The “we-with” dynamic also raises basic questions: How do we as members of a church say “we” to one another? How do we say “we” to the mission of Christ? How do we act in His continuing ministry to the lost?

Christian mission and ministry involve all the people of God. We are bound together in a partnership that involves the human, spiritual, and material resources of all Christians and all churches. Together we share a responsibility to serve the needs of people.

Partnership in the gospel

In Philippians 1:5 Paul speaks of our “partnership in the gospel” (NIV). “Partnership” (koinonia) beautifully describes the mutual ministry between the local church and the local community. In other words, a church that is faithful to the New Testament pattern must embark on a ministry and a mission to its own immediate geographic setting and also support mission and ministry throughout the world. Mission is both local and global. Ministry also is both local and all over the world. Wherever there are believers, there is partnership in mission and ministry.

Elements of mission support

This partnership requires many forms of support, especially:
1. Dependence on God. Our mission is a partnership in which God is always the primary actor. The church marches at Christ’s command. It is empowered by His Holy Spirit. That conviction should give every believer as well as the church body itself courage and confidence in the face of difficulty.
2. Prayer. The Christian mission has always moved on the wings of prayer. The early believers were filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost after days of devoting themselves to prayer.
3. Giving. The believer and the church must be enthusiastic stewards of human resources. Every baptized believer is saved to serve, to be a minister for Christ, reaching out to others in daily life. Each person is entrusted with unique gifts that are essential to a healthy, functioning body of Christ in its ministry in the world.

In summary, all of our individual and congregational resources—human, spiritual, and material—must be shared with the whole world. God wants us to invest not only our money but our prayers, our talents, our energies, and our concern for the lost. Local lay elders, through teaching and example, can do much in their churches to foster this vital partnership.
Adventist identity and Evangelical criticism
From page 24

Perhaps we should challenge Evangelicals with a few counter questions. Have they strayed so far from basic Christianity that they are incapable of recognizing the biblical accuracy of Adventism regarding justification/righteousness through faith? Is it not a case of theological jaundice that they cannot see the balance between justification and sanctification? On what biblical grounds should one concede that a call to sanctification is the same as biblical grounds? In what way is Adventism, or still is, justification/righteousness through faith? Much of the criticism of Adventism has been, and still is, justification/righteousness through faith. Much of the criticism of Adventism as legalistic is based on ignorance, prejudice, changes within the Evangelical understanding of justification by faith, and an unwillingness to see the lordship of Christ and Christian obedience as essential components of salvation and discipleship.

The developing crisis of Revelation 13 is the background for the loud cry of the three angels of Revelation 14. Thus the message given to the church in 1888 was not to be viewed narrowly. God used the Adventist Church to rescue this precious message and set it in the context of other important truths such as the Sabbath, the sanctuary ministry of Christ, His return, and the judgment message of Daniel 7 and Revelation 14. God has also charged the Adventist Church to take this "everlasting gospel" in its entirety to the whole world. Therefore, the Adventist mission is more than a call to proclaim to the whole world a balanced view of law and gospel as part of justification/righteousness through faith.

If the Adventist Church is undergoing an identity crisis it may be because we have been listening to Evangelical criticism for so long that we have begun to believe it. What is needed to recover our identity is the restudy and revival of the biblical message that made this movement such a powerful spiritual force in the world!

3 Ibid., p. 23.
4 Ibid., p. 22.
5 Ibid., p. 29.
8 Ibid., p. 170.
9 Ibid., p. 173.
10 Ibid., p. 190.
12 Ibid., p. 19.
13 Ibid., p. 16.
14 Ibid., p. 17.
15 Ibid.
16 Ibid., p. 19.
18 Ibid., p. 42.
19 Ibid., pp. 43, 44.
20 MacArthur, p. 177.
21 Daniells, p. 83.
22 Ibid., p. 85.
23 Samples, p. 21.

Letters
From page 2

ministerial training, I learned that it was my responsibility never to leave one church for another without "cleaning up the books." I retired from the ministry 17 years ago. I have become more and more aware that this cleaning up is seldom done anymore. I am frustrated that as a church elder I have been unable to do much about it.

Your idea of appointing an auditor to check membership records may be an answer.—Harold K. Dawson, Yelm, Washington.

■ In the discussion on Global Mission and evangelism, one issue needs to be emphasized: strategies on reduction of losses in membership. I would like to hypothesize that for North America this requires not so much a tightening of theology as it does a deeper understanding of the hurts and frustrations of our church members. Therefore, I believe Ministry should carry more articles in the area of pastoral counseling on a professional level, and not just on a devotional level.—Andreas Bochmann, Elkridge, Maryland.

■ Your article speaks of the vote of "displeasure and disgust" taken by the officers of a conference. What could an editor of Ministry write that would elicit that kind of response? I searched for and read your original article in the April issue.

It does appear that many Seventh-day Adventists, including the clergy, do not believe that we are saved by what Jesus has done.

The Valuegenesis study discovered that most of our youth have the same problem. Recently I heard a seminary-trained pastor preach seven sermons on righteousness by faith that affirm your view in the Ministry article. I told the pastor that I concurred with him and asked him if there's any difference between what he preached and the 1888 message. He said he didn't know.

Yes, I have heard Elder Taylor Bunch preach a series of sermons on the 1888 General Conference session.
I have read the special edition of Ministry on 1888. I wrote to my friends in the 1888 Righteousness by Faith study committee, and got six tapes on the subject.

I still don't have the answer. I am no theologian. Could someone give me an answer in less than a page—

Albert C. Koppel, New Market, Virginia.

Communion for unbaptized children

Joseph Wamack (Letters, October 1992), believing that unbaptized children should be allowed to receive Communion, asserts that nowhere is it written to the contrary.

For starters, I would like to call his attention to John 13:10, where foot washing serves by way of synecdoche to represent the entire Communion. There the Lord teaches that bathing (Greek louein, referring to baptism) is prerequisite to washing (Greek niptein, referring to foot washing). Add to that the powerful warning in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, and it is easy to see that there is scriptural support for the uniform tradition of the early church (as seen, for example, in the Didache, which is the earliest extant church manual) that only baptized persons may partake of Communion.

Any child who is old enough and has come to faith enough to take part in Communion is old enough and has come to faith enough to be baptized. Why hasn’t Brother Wamack baptized his boys? Is Communion less sacred than baptism?—Robert M. Johnston, chairman, New Testament Department, SDA Theological Seminary, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

To celebrate or not to celebrate!

It seems as though Pastor Fredericks (August 1992) is missing the point. Of course we should celebrate and extol the majestic goodness and love of our Creator and Saviour! A spontaneous, God-centered spirit of praise and rejoicing is not the issue that is so offensive to many of our members.

The so-called celebration that is causing divisions is the new style of worship literally forced upon the congregations, in an effort to try to “loosen them up.” This new style sacrifices the time we should be giving to vertical, God-centered, reverent study, worship, and praise. Instead it has disruptive, horizontal, social interactions, cheap, noisy music and skits, and other unnecessary, disorderly, irreverent items.

Surely if all our ministers would earnestly and prayerfully seek to make the services as reverent, orderly, educational, and inspiring as possible, there would be a lot less of this present controversy. They should seek to eliminate what is potentially divisive and unnecessary. Genuine celebration is found when the church family is given more opportunities to praise their Saviour for His love and guidance in their lives, and to share the insights that He has given them in a way that can be clearly heard by all.

—C. A. Powell, Redding, California.

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A Woman’s Place, Seventh-day Adventist Women in Church and Society
Rosa Taylor Banks, ed., Review and Herald Publishing Assn., Hagerstown, Maryland, 1992, 189 pages, $12.95, paper. Reviewed by Neal Wilson, former president of the General Conference and currently serving as special assistant to the General Conference president.

The strength of A Woman’s Place lies in the women who participated in the production of this volume. These women reveal a genuine love for their church. Their writings evidence the tremendous ways in which God’s Spirit moves among women in kingdom building.

The 14 authors of A Woman’s Place are women who want change; women who believe they can influence the church in bringing it about; women who assume that prejudices exist; and women who desire fulfillment and honest recognition without reference to gender.

Having read the book three times, I believe in its positive contribution. The first book of its kind to be produced by a group of Seventh-day Adventist women, it deserves a fair hearing of its careful analysis and scholarship.

The writers appeal to us to look beyond gender stereotypes. They explore such subjects as the theology of women, philosophical concerns, statistical studies, historical data, and sociological implications. Some chapters include life sketches of women achievers. Others discuss the role of Ellen White. Some writers also offer new and workable strategies for the church and its female members.

The authors claim Jesus as a model for both men and women, seeing in Him a life not bound by stereotypes. They show how Christ successfully operated a hierarchy among equals. We find the Spirit of the gospel reflected in mutual interdependence and appreciation for the special gifts God gave us. This, they say, presupposes mutual submission, resolving the problem of headship and subordination. The authors contend that at Creation God gave authority to both men and women to take care of the earth.

One writer asserts that both male and female are needed to give an accurate image of God. She shows how God often uses feminine terms and figures to describe His character. Only with the creation of woman does man become complete and God can say of His creation that it is “very good.” She makes a courageous and persuasive appeal for masculine/feminine people, suggesting that Jesus was the perfect combination of the finest human qualities and virtues.

Another author gives a fascinating explanation of Paul’s statements restricting women (1 Cor. 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15). She argues that Paul should not be understood as stating an eternal law. Paul’s statements are best discerned as applications of the law in the unique setting of the Greek congregations.

Ordination does not appear as a primary issue in A Woman’s Place. But the reader expects the idea to emerge, and it does subtly! However, the writers handle the issue of the ordination of women professionally and ethically. Therefore, the value of this book does not stand or fall upon this point.

Some readers might be offended by certain terms, or they could suggest that the findings have little significance. They may even feel this reviewer is biased!

Those who view this as just another book, need to read it carefully. Much more than a book, A Woman’s Place speaks with a united voice to the church, giving a message that needs rapt attention!

Sexual Paradox, Creative Tensions in Our Lives and in Our Congregations

If heresy falls short of the complete truth, Sexual Paradox is an heretical account of the respective roles and contributions of men and women in our congregations! But who can write in one slim volume the complete truth about any complex issue?

Celia Allison Hahn offers a summary explanation and description of women’s and men’s different approaches to understanding, valuing, and acting. This alone makes the volume informative for church leaders and members. Hahn goes beyond description, giving helpful suggestions about how these approaches differ in faith practice and enhance our individual and corporate lives. The author does this with full respect for the marvels of male and female creation—their differing ways of being human and how the mystery interplays between the sexes and speaks of the mystery of the God in whose image they are made.

The book makes a contribution in describing how essential femaleness differs from and complements essential maleness. Such knowledge will certainly impact positively on the home, workplace, and the church. However, Hahn
misses providing a persuasive account of the equality of the sexes. We assume equality because God made human beings, and what God makes is "very good." But Hahn does not discuss why women's acting from "the heart" is no more or less valuable than men's acting from "the head." She does not say why we need to cherish vulnerability as much as power; ecstasy as much as ethics; diffusion as much as focus. She does not give serious consideration to nontypical cases (the 40 percent of people who depart from the male and female approaches); thus, she opens the door for stereotyping. Although Hahn carefully notes these exceptions, the reader needs to look elsewhere for fuller discussions of these departures and what they mean in personal and public life.

Nevertheless, if readers can hold the tensions between differences and equality and the typical and stereotypical, they will find this a valuable volume in the work of ministry.

Abendmahl und Fusswaschung (Lord's Supper and Foot Washing): Studien zur adventistischen Ekklesiologie
Biblical Research Committee, Euro-Africa Division of Seventh-day Adventists, Saatkorn Verlag, Hamburg, Germany, 1991, 296 pages, paper. Reviewed by Daniel Heinz, dean, Theological Seminary at Bogenhofen, Austria.

Current discussions between Catholics and Lutherans on the significance of the Lord's Supper demonstrate the importance of the issue for ecumenical dialogue.

In this book several Adventist European scholars take a new look at the ordinances from a biblical/theological and practical/liturgical perspective. The study represents the first of a series in Adventist ecclesiology published in German and French. The most comprehensive analysis done by Adventists on the topic, the study consists of two parts. The first deals with exegetical, dogmatic, and historical aspects of the Eucharist. The second part discusses the significance of foot washing. This latter section also covers practical questions, such as how to perform the Lord's Supper and who can participate. It discusses how to serve Communion to the sick and dying; should Communion be open or closed; and should we use a common or single cup. A compilation of Adventist statements, taken from Ellen White and other sources, complete the study.

The study focuses on the Christological nature of the two ordinances, exposing anything unbiblical added by tradition. The book accomplishes its goal to contribute toward a conscientious translation of the words and deeds of Him who instituted the Lord's Supper and the rite of foot washing.

Practical and liturgical suggestions help pastors proclaim and practice the ordinances. It is doubtful that this worthwhile work will soon be replaced as a major Adventist study on the ordinances. Therefore, it needs to be translated into English for a larger readership.

Pastoral Care in the Church

A well-researched and documented volume, Pastoral Care in the Church...
shows an exceptional grasp of its subject matter and audience. The author calls for the full attention of everyone involved in the discipline of religious care giving.

Brister divides the book into three sections: 1. “Foundations of Pastoral Care” lays the groundwork for the writer’s argument that pastoral care has been and should be a universal practice in the life and mission of Christian churches. 2. “The Shape of the Church’s Ministry” emphasizes the needed action of the ministry (ordained or lay) to contribute their gifts in building up the body of Christ. 3. “Procedures and Problems and Pastoral Care” sees counseling as an authentic pastoral role and urges proper respect for the counselee. The author also deals with life and death issues; shame, guilt, and forgiveness; and the pastor’s responsibility in illness and grief.

Brister covers all phases of the pastoral life relating to church activities. He admonishes us that service and care be rendered with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not merely to humankind, knowing that whatever good we do we will receive the same again from the Lord.

Today’s Music: A Window to Your Child’s Soul

Al Menconi, a frequent seminar speaker, has put his perspectives on contemporary Christian music into book form. He shares his journey from being a rocker to becoming a Christian and burning rock records. He writes of his frustration with the short-lived results of getting kids to burn their albums. When a new idea on how to deal with rock music came to him, he returned to the lecture circuit to implement a positive approach to music.

Menconi deals with some common accusations against rock music. One popular belief among conservative Christians is that all rockers are satanists. Another rumor says Christian rock calls up demons and is used in voodoo dances. The author has researched these claims and discloses their sources. You need not be duped by the next record-burning evangelist who uses weak arguments and strong emotion.

The book covers the history of rock and roll from its inception up to the current music scene. How adults can deal with music receives a hopeful and positive treatment rather than an antagonistic one. As a true musical expert, Menconi gives practical advice. His sharing of how he dealt with his own teenagers and their music helps make this a useful and enjoyable book.

The author uses many biblical texts, most quite well. But he does quote a few for an isolated word or two rather than their entire message. Music’s effect, as opposed to the lyrics or performers, receives little treatment other than suggesting secular music affects emotions. For example, is there a difference in the music of “A Mighty Fortress” and “I Come to the Garden Alone”? Nevertheless, Menconi has written one of the best books on the market regarding the Christian’s relationship to contemporary music and those who listen to it.
Sabbath school planning guide

Sabbath schools throughout Oregon have been revitalized through the new annual planning guide. Its 54 pages of charts, forms, and instruction are available for US$2. Contact the Oregon Conference, 13455 SE. 97th Ave., Clackamas, OR 97015; or phone the director of church ministries at 503-652-2225, or by fax, 503-654-5657. Shown right is one of the many forms in the planning guide.

Adventist Contact

Isolated singles are frequently frustrated in their attempt to find dating partners within their faith community. One solution for such members of your congregation is Adventist Contact, a computerized service that for a nominal fee introduces singles to suitable potential partners. Every effort is made to match them spiritually, emotionally, and in every other way. What happens afterward is up to them with the guidance of the Lord.

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Free television time

Most cable TV stations have a public access channel. Any nonprofit organization can air a program for little or no cost. Major cities have so many requests for airtime that you might need to put your name in a hat and hope to get selected. Other markets are easier to get into. Call the major cable station in your city and ask if they have a public access channel. If not, ask what company does and speak to the person in charge to inquire about local policies and restrictions. Most cable stations prohibit soliciting over the air or the use of derogatory language.

Getting on the air is simple. They will mail an application, or you can pick it up. Usually it is not necessary to produce a demo video; they are satisfied to learn that the program is from a local church.

In Albuquerque, New Mexico, we went to the station and filled out the application. They had just had a cancellation for Wednesday night at 9:00 p.m. Our Power to Cope was launched with a potential viewing audience of 300,000.—Peter Tadej, 1100 9th S., No. 814, Great Falls, MT 59405.

SDA lapel pin

We have designed a lapel pin, about the size of a dime, suitable for members to wear anywhere. The pin has a dark-blue background, three angels in white, and the initials S.D.A. It is useful as a conversation starter with non-Adventists and also for identifying ourselves to other church members. Additionally, it is a fund-raising tool for local projects. One of our local members had these pins manufactured for such a good price that they can be sold for US$1 each, leaving your church to make a profit of 25 cents on each pin sold. Contact Pastor Quinton M. Burks, First West Palm Beach SDA Church, 6300 Summit Blvd., West Palm Beach, FL 33415.

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