THE SIN OF SAINT PETER
Letters

Bangalore Annual Council

As an avid reader of Ministry for more than two decades, oftentimes I itched to respond to articles that stimulated my thinking, and now is the time. In my opinion, missiologically the most significant statement I ever saw published in my favorite journal is found in John Fowler’s editorial “Bangalore: Affirming the Future” (February 1994). The section “The Test of Stewardship” says it all by raising some pertinent questions that, if dismissed, will only be to our peril.

Yes, why is the Seventh-day Adventist Church in India still dependent on the mother/father church for economic sustenance after 100 years? Why do similar situations remain elsewhere, such as in my own area?

Research on the issue of self-support of the Egypt Field shows that one of the side effects of long-term financial dependency of mission fields on the churches of the developed world is paralysis of development within. Ongoing appropriations meant to be a boon turn out to be a bane for the recipients of such aid.

Fowler raises some appropriate questions: “Does self-support mean financing an infrastructure and an organization too burdensome for the constituency and too alien to be supported? Should not administrative and pastoral style and function stay within the context of the widow’s mite, if that mite is all the income that can be generated within a field? . . . What should define our stewardship: structure or mission, bureaucracy or nurture, elitism or servanthood?”

I am also moved by the Annual Council’s call on “stewardship, self-reliance, and sacrifice.” Total life stewardship is what it’s all about. The Lord of mission spoke to the leaders of our world church meeting in Bangalore. The question is this: Will we act, or will we keep the status quo, run-of-the-mill, business-as-usual, bureaucratic-don’t-rock-the-boat posture? It’s up to us, really, isn’t it?—Claude Lombart, president, Egypt Field of SDAs, Cairo, Egypt.

Thank you for your remarks on Mizoram. In 1949 we went there as the first missionaries. The capital city was a one-street village. The street was about 100 yards long, and at times in the night one could see a tiger or a leopard stroll across the street. But in all those little villages of Mizoram, there were people whom God loved. As we worked with them, we took time to disciple them. Most of our people in other parts of India did not understand what we were doing. We got “spanked” by some leaders more than once for the way we were doing our ministry, and for the slow baptisms. But the work is the Lord’s, and He has brought it to fruition. Thank you for understanding why and how Mizoram became a conference.—Helen and Willis G. Lowry, Coalmont, Tennessee.

Marrying non-Adventists

I have always enjoyed your Ministry articles, though I do not agree with everything. However, this is the first time I am responding to an article. The issue of marrying non-Adventists (February 1994) has bothered me for many years, and I have discussed this with many pastors. They agree with my stand, but choose to remain with the tradition of the church.

There seems to be a misinterpretation of the Scriptures, and this has caused many believers to either remain single or choose not to be part of the church family. Some Adventists, in spite of the tradition, marry non-Adventists anyway, and I have been in favor of them.

My daughter was and is in love with a Baptist believer. He wanted to marry her and join the church. But when they went to our pastor with a request to marry them, the pastor told him he needed to join the church before he could marry them. Because the pastor used the word “unbeliever,” he felt insulted. He went then to his church, and received the same insult, except this time it was directed at my daughter. Then they went to a Lutheran pastor, to please my mother-in-law, and they were both insulted with the word, “unbelievers.” So I suggested that they elope, and they did. We all went to the justice of the peace, parents and grandparents, and it was the most beautiful ceremony I have ever attended. They are very happy today, not because of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, but because of love.

I asked our pastor for biblical proof for the policy, and he could not find it. Your article also fails to show any Bible text to support the tradition of the church.—Abimael Acosta, Irving, Texas.

I have three concerns regarding the proposed Church Manual statement on marrying non-Adventists. First, the effect this kind of statement would have on church members. When we add such a “strong” recommendation to our “strong” emphasis on Adventist education, the result is a formula, intentional or not, for “good” Adventists, that unfortunately almost never results in a positive demonstration of “love and concern with the purpose of encouraging.” Rather, we end up with an Adventist class system with the inevitable tensions and conflicts that result between the “good” and the “not-so-good.”

Second, such policies tend to undermine confidence in God’s ability to inspire appropriate choices by those who have committed themselves to Him. Whenever the church attempts to use undue

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Editorial clarification

In the April issue of Ministry I shared four views of the church that appeared in another magazine, none of which spoke for the church. In that editorial I did not state where I stood. My purpose was to demonstrate that as Adventism has grown so has its diversity, its way of seeing things. I did not state whether that was good or bad but rather sought reaction from my readers without prejudice.

However, instead of letting others set the agenda on these issues, it is time that church leaders reclaim the high ground by affirming the truly historic truths of Adventism. I believe that these core historic truths are: salvation by grace alone, sola scriptura, the Sabbath, the second coming of Jesus, the Sanctuary, the state of the dead, systematic stewardship, and spiritual gifts, especially the Spirit of Prophecy.

Ministry is totally committed to these historic truths and to the primary reason we are here, to evangelize and disciple people for Jesus Christ. Anything that distracts us from this goal is illegitimate. May we like Paul say “For Christ’s love compels us” to preach the gospel (2 Cor. 5:14).
How can Adventists today experience the elusive quality of community that is our birthright in Christ? One group we can learn from is the church after Pentecost (see Acts 2:42-47). That community of believers had it all: love, unselfishness, camaraderie, great joy, and daily church growth.

The key word in Acts 2 describing them is “fellowship,” translated from the multifaceted koinonia. Let’s note its usage in the Bible. First, in describing our relationship with God through Christ: “God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship [koinonia] of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9).* Beyond that, it applies to our community with fellow believers, as John says, “that you also may have fellowship [koinonia] with us; and truly our fellowship [koinonia] is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:3).

At the Communion table we share koinonia: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [koinonia] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [koinonia] of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). This mutual koinonia through Christ is the heartbeat of Christian experience (see Phil. 1:3, 5; Eph. 3:9; Rom. 15:26; Phil. 3:10). Koinonia symbolizes everything we need as a church to experience the quality of community lost in Adam and restored in Christ. It summarizes the meaning of perfection as it applies to His corporate body of redeemed believers.

Koinonia and the pillars

I believe that koinonia with its community oneness is vital present truth for the church of the 1990s. Let’s test what it does for five major Adventist doctrines:

1. The Sabbath. Some of us were taught to regard God’s weekly day of rest as a 24-hour personal performance during which we tiptoe along the tightrope of legalism. But when we accept our position in Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, the day becomes a feast of koinonia. We still shun secular business but not for the sake of proving anything or gaining individual points with God. Our purpose in setting aside personal pursuits is to join fellow believers in celebrating communally the accomplishments of Jesus. So the Sabbath is a day for koinonia in Christ. It draws us out of individual business into communal worship through our mutual life in Christ.

2. The sanctuary and the judgment. Having one’s name come up in the heavenly sanctuary has been the mother of all threats to many Adventists. But when we understand how koinonia fits in, the judgment no longer intimidates. Individual successes or failures do not matter, because all human righteousness was condemned at the cross (see John 12:31). But another righteousness was established there—the righteousness we share together in Christ which was certified at His resurrection (see Rom. 4:25). Where do works come in? The presence of koinonia in our lives, which is the keeping of God’s law of love, proves that we are partaking of our new humanity in Christ rather than living with the world in Adam’s rebellion (see John 3:18).

3. The Second Coming. Those who don’t know the benefits of the righteousness we share in Christ see His soon return as a terrible threat. They don’t feel individually worthy of going to heaven. And, of course, nobody is or ever will be. Only through accepting our righteousness in Christ can we have confidence regarding His coming. “Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light” (Col. 1:12; see also verses 13, 14).

So everyone in Christ is worthy of heaven. This isn’t once saved always saved. Lucifer lost his heavenly position through selfishness and pride, the opposite of koinonia. If we revert to that lifestyle, we too will be lost. Daily we must live by faith in Christ, continually exchanging what the world offers for our corporate position in Christ. Then we can rejoice together that we are accounted worthy, which stimulates a lot of koinonia.

4. The state of the dead. The Bible says Jesus “abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Through our position in Christ we don’t die, as such; we enter an unconscious sleep in the grave (John 11:11, 14, 25, 26; 1 Cor. 15:22, 23). Satan’s deception says that Christians travel alone to heaven at death, but the Bible says we are all going together when (Continued on page 23)
Let’s preach the distinctives

Robert S. Folkenberg

Adventist preaching finds its distinctiveness in the context of the gospel in its end-time setting.

In previous articles of this series I’ve shared two convictions about preaching: that it should be biblical and that it should present the gospel clearly and convincingly. Here I share another concern: we also should proclaim those truths that set us apart as a people.

Seventh-day Adventists are called to preach “the everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6, 7), but in a particular setting. Throughout history God’s messengers have proclaimed His only way of saving humanity from sin. While the essential message hasn’t changed, its context has. In Noah’s time, the gospel came in the setting of the approaching flood. In Moses’ day, the Exodus experience shaped it. For the people of John the Baptist’s era, the message was cast in the expectation of the Messiah’s appearance. Jesus, the Word made flesh, proclaimed the gospel in terms of the kingdom of heaven that was breaking through in His life and work.

So today God commissions us to preach the good news in the setting of a worldwide call to “fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (verse 7). Seventh-day Adventist preaching, then, cannot be just like that of any others. We are a prophetic people with a prophetic message!

What are the Adventist distinctives?

The three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12 give us our marching orders. For us, the everlasting gospel comes in the setting of:

1. A global mission. Every congregation, no matter how small in size or how humble in its meeting place, is part of our worldwide fellowship. Our message indeed is going to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. God has brought this church together in a unique blend of people of more than 200 countries. Seventh-day Adventist preaching should lift the sights of the people, helping them to think big, plan big, do big—to be global in their outlook. Further, our preaching should call us all to rejoice in the incredible diversity of God’s people, as we respect and love one another regardless of color, race, language, age, gender, and social standing. We are one in Christ.

2. The judgment hour. This truth opens up the understanding of the heavenly sanctuary, with Jesus as our great high priest who represents us before the throne of God. It sweeps our minds away from the petty things of this earth to the very headquarters of the universe.

3. Worship of the Creator. In an age when men and women worship themselves, sex, sports, pleasure, or money, Seventh-day Adventist preaching must exalt God as the only true object of adoration. It must proclaim Him as the Creator and Source of all things, as well as our Redeemer and Lord.

4. The law of God. God’s last-day people will love and follow Him, no matter what the cost. “Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (verse 12). We...
are law keepers, not in order to be saved, but because we have been saved. For us, obedience is the expression of who we are as children of the King of heaven.

5. The Sabbath. Of all the commandments, the Sabbath is the seal of our love for and allegiance to our loving heavenly Father. By choosing to set aside for Him the day that He set aside and blessed, we honor Him as Creator and Lord of time and space. For us, Sabbathkeeping isn’t a burden but a privilege and a blessing. More than ever, we look forward to its sacred, peaceful hours in the midst of the frantic pace of modern living.

6. The great controversy. We believe we are engaged in a cosmic struggle between good and evil. The “beast” mentioned in Revelation 14:9-11 represents the forces that oppose God’s last-day people. But we serve One who is far greater, One who holds the destiny of the world in His hands and who will bring us through any and all troubles. By His cross He has won the decisive battle in the struggle with the demonic powers, and His triumph is assured.

7. The Second Coming. “I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one ‘like a son of man’ with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand” (verse 14, NIV). We are Seventh-day Adventists—we believe Jesus will come again. We know He will keep His promise (John 14:1-3). We believe that the great prophetic time lines and the signs all around point to the climax of the ages when God will send forth His Son a second time, just as He sent Him to earth 2,000 years ago in “the fulness of the time” (Gal. 4:4).

8. The Spirit of Prophecy. Another Seventh-day Adventist distinctive, not found in the three angels’ messages but identified in Revelation 12:17 and 19:10, is our belief that God has revealed Himself to His end-time church through the Spirit of Prophecy. We believe that God used Ellen White to bring His messages to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Her counsels do not add to or take the place of Scripture, but we accept them as a continuing source of guidance and nurture. While Adventist preaching should be utterly biblical in its foundation and content, it should not fail to affirm confidence in the Spirit of Prophecy.

What breathtaking themes are these! They speak powerfully to life in our times. Seventh-day Adventist preaching cannot help being relevant!

In a number of places Ellen White calls our distinctive teachings “the pillars,” “the landmarks,” or “the foundations.” She specifically identifies them as the sanctuary and its cleansing, the three angels’ messages, the law of God, the Sabbath, and the nonimmortality of the soul. “Let the truths that are the foundation of our faith be kept before the people,” she urges. “We are now to understand what the pillars of our faith are—the truths that have made us as a people what we are, leading us on step by step.”

She further counsels: “Ministers should present the sure word of prophecy as the foundation of the faith of Seventh-day Adventists . . . The twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew is presented to me again and again as something that is to be brought to the attention of all. . . . The time in which we are living calls for constant vigilance, and God’s ministers are to present the light on the Sabbath question. They should warn the inhabitants of the world that Christ is soon to come with power and great glory. The last message of warning to the world is to lead men to see the importance that God attaches to His law.”

How shall we present the distinctives? We should present our distinctive truths only in terms of the everlasting gospel. This means that Christ will be the center of every doctrine, whether it be the sanctuary, the Sabbath, the law, or the state of the dead. Christ must not be added as an afterthought. He must be the foundation, the heart, the alpha and the omega, the first and the last.

Sometimes I find that some Seventh-day Adventists do not seem interested in doctrinal presentations. The reason, I think, isn’t that our distinctives don’t touch people’s lives. What could be more relevant than the Sabbath and the Second Coming? Too often in the past we have preached these truths in a dry, theoretical, or argumentative manner. We haven’t presented them with the love of Jesus. We haven’t applied them to daily living so people can see the difference such doctrines can make.

So we must study much and pray much if we are to present our distinctive truths effectively. We must ask the Lord to set aside our pride. Our purpose isn’t to prove that we’re right and someone else is wrong. It isn’t to put down someone we know, perhaps even one of our own members. We are called, not to preach at people, but to proclaim the everlasting gospel, which is always good news no matter what the specific subject is.

Finally, if we want our preaching to have power, we’d better plead with the Holy Spirit for power to live the distinctives as well as speak about them. We must treasure the Sabbath as a precious, gracious gift from our loving Father. The Second Coming must be the “blessed hope” of meeting our Saviour face-to-face, not an event of terror and anxiety. The judgment must give us hope as we trust in the One who speaks on our behalf and frees us from all uncertainty and apprehension. The great controversy must focus on the power and victory of Jesus, not the deceptions of Satan and the trials of the last days.

What we are will mean more than what we preach. Our strongest sermon will be our lives overflowing with Christian love for all.

May the Lord send His Spirit to revive His people. May our preaching be biblical preaching that comes from the Word and centers in the Word. May our preaching be gospel preaching that points listeners to the Lamb of God who takes away our sins and gives us the assurance of salvation now. And may our preaching faithfully portray the Seventh-day Adventist distinctives that provide the setting for the proclamation of the everlasting gospel in our day.

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2 Ibid., p. 29.
The sin of Saint Peter

Racism remains a cancer in the body of Christ.

Caleb Rosado

Events in Los Angeles following the Rodney King incident have demonstrated just how pervasive racism remains in the United States. Like a virus that destroys the immune system of what appears to be a healthy person, racism is a cancer that is slowly devouring the moral health of our nation. The church must directly confront this social disease, for it militates against the very fabric of the gospel.

Unfortunately, our church has tended to be “loudly” silent regarding racism. Such a posture must be repented of before we can fulfill our mission. Fortunately we have much biblical precedent for engaging in such a reversal. One passage in particular stands out—the incident in Antioch where Paul exposed the sin of Saint Peter (Gal. 2:11-14).

Rites of passage

Every society and culture has certain “rites of passage,” transition points that mark the break of the future with the past, the new with the old, the what-is-becoming with the what-has-been. Just because the rite of passage has taken place physically does not mean that psychologically the old reality is discarded and the new embraced. Thus, the young couple on their wedding day may not “feel” married, or the recently divorced person feel single. Many African-American slaves at the end of the Civil War did not necessarily feel free, even though Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation declared them such. The new is often difficult to accept just as the old is often difficult to forget.

The death of Jesus Christ on the cross can be regarded as the greatest rite of passage in earth’s history. It marked the end of death and the beginning of life, the end of alienation and the beginning of reconciliation. It also signified the demise of the old sectarian religion: Judaism; and the beginning of a new, vibrant, world-encompassing faith: Christianity. This painful struggle of separating new from old sparked some of the most heated debates and early heresies in the young church. It stimulated controversy over what constitutes the community of faith, resulting in Paul’s letter to the Galatians.

The sin of Peter

At the heart of the Galatian controversy lay a conflict that Paul in his day confronted but couldn’t eradicate. Throughout the long history of Christianity it continued to embarrass the church, negating “the truth of the gospel” (Gal. 2:14).* It is a problem that yet ravages society. I am referring to the sin of racism—the belief that one ethnic group is innately superior to another group and therefore deserves unequal treatment and a greater share of society’s rewards. Such a system of belief and behavior arises out of a group-centered perspective, the view that one group’s way of life is the standard by which all other groups must be measured and valued.

First-century Jewish Christians felt that way about Gentile believers, imagining themselves superior as God’s chosen people. This prejudi-
cial attitude threatened the very survival of the early church. Paul describes a particular incident in Galatians: "But when Cephas came to Antioch I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles" (verses 11, 12).

Arriving in Antioch, the apostle Peter found himself attracted to the spectacle of Jewish and Gentile Christians living together, worshipping together, eating together, fellowshipping together in one harmonious "all nations" community. He joined in this fellowship in fulfillment of the loving oneness for which his Master had so earnestly prayed (John 17:20-23).

How would one describe what was happening to the Christians of Antioch through living the gospel? Theologian Hans Dieter Betz explains: "To them the Christian faith meant that the age-old dream of human freedom had become a reality. For them 'freedom' was not merely a theological notion, but they regarded themselves as free from 'this ... evil world' (Gal. 1:4, KJV) with its repressive social, religious, and cultural laws and conventions. They had left behind the cultural and social distinctions between Greeks and non-Greeks, the religious distinctions between Jews and non-Jews, the social systems of slavery, and the subordination of women. They had overcome their 'ignorance of God,' and their barbaric superstition. ... They were the avant-garde, a 'new creation.'"+

No wonder Luke declares in Acts, "It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called 'Christians'" (Acts 11:26). Their experience was so radically unique that nonbelieving observers simply called this new behavior "Christian"—meaning Christlike.

To the believers in Antioch, the Jewish Christians among them included, there was nothing surprising about this social attitude. They were simply putting into practice the "new commandment" (John 13:34) Jesus had taught the disciples: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (verse 35). Thus, for them there was no longer Jew or Greek but oneness in Christ Jesus (see Gal. 3:28).

Then something happened. Some of the Jews from Jerusalem showed up, and fearing reprisals, "he drew back and kept himself separate" (Gal. 2:12). The tense of the verb indicates that Peter did not immediately withdraw from the Gentile tables when he saw the brethren coming, but gradually, under the pressure of their obvious displeasure, he "separated" himself. Today we use different words with the same meaning: "segregation," "apartheid," "caste," "tribe," "ethnicity."

Peter's action affected the others who were with him: "And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy" (verse 13). Paul, in using the word "hypocrisy," indicates that Peter's theological convictions had not changed, nor had those of Barnabas. Both still believed that the fellowship they now shunned was morally and theologically proper. Then why did they not stand up for what they believed? It was the fear of political reprisals from Jerusalem, the center of power for the early church. The strength of this social pressure is seen in how it swept away even Barnabas, Paul's close friend and fellow worker, whom the Bible declares to have been "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith" (Acts 11:24).

Now we come to the heart of the problem: "But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, 'If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?'" (Gal. 2:14). Paul regarded this phoney behavior as a negation of the gospel. Since Peter's action was mostly public, the condemnation and rebuke of that action also needed to be public. Thus Paul declares: "I said to Cephas before them all ..."

The expression "not acting consistently" is the failure "to walk a straight path, without wavering, without faltering, without crumbling at the knees." This wasn't the first time Peter had crumbled at the knees. It is frightening to stand alone for truth when church leaders are compromising in the face of social and political pressure. Paul declared Peter's conduct of segregation and racist behavior as sin against the gospel.

And what is the truth of the gospel? It is the manifestation of God's grace. Peter denied this grace in the same manner that the false brethren in Galatia later did, thus undermining freedom in Christ. Betz suggests that Peter's conduct in Antioch may have influenced the Galatians to follow suit in adopting "another gospel" (see Gal. 1:6, 7). This was a gospel of enslavement and bondage to human rules and social regulations that gave adherents a false sense of spiritual and racial superiority while at the same time preventing them from experiencing true spiritual and social freedom in Christ. Thus, the sin of Peter—racial segregation and preferential treatment, racism—became the sin of the church.

Racism, by definition, is an ideology of supremacy that perpetrators evil through an objective, differential and unequal treatment of people. It then justifies this evil by placing a negative meaning on biological and/or cultural differences, undermining the power of the gospel and making of noneffect the grace of God. There is no question that the sin of Peter has become the great sin of today's church.

Solving Peter's sin
How can this problem be resolved? Paul explains that "if I build up again the very things that I once tore down, then I demonstrate that I am a transgressor" (Gal. 2:18). Normally one would expect him to say the opposite—to tear down what had been built up. But here we have Paul denouncing the building up of what had been torn down. This can mean only the dividing wall of hostility referred to in Ephesians 2:14-16. Racism builds up again what Christ broke down, the wall of racial divisions and social factions. The result within the church is war instead of peace.

If the gospel we preach fails to dismantle that dividing wall, allow-
ing members to maintain their smug segregation and racial exclusiveness, then according to Paul we have “another gospel,” a counterfeit. Such belief and behavior violates both the grace of God and the “law of liberty” (James 2:12).

Yes, it is a challenge to live according to the gospel in a hostile world like ours. Long ago the noted sociologist Karl Mannheim remarked: “To live consistently, in the light of Christian brotherly love, in a society which is not organized on the same principle is impossible. The individual in his personal conduct is always compelled—insofar as he does not resort to breaking up the existing social structure—to fall short of his own nobler motives.”

Since racial division and preferential treatment are socially constructed, reflective of society, they can be reconstructed by “breaking up the existing social structure” in the church. We must not tolerate anything in the church that is incompatible with the kingdom of God. Equality is no option left to the pleasure of the church; it’s a divine mandate and commandment. The church is only the church of Jesus Christ when living by His teachings and principles. Short of this it is merely a social club suffering under a profound spiritual delusion.

What transforms a social club into the church is the experience of Galatians 2:19, 20: “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” The power to break up the existing social structure does not come from human sources. Only through the power of the indwelling Christ will victory come to us individually and corporately. Though the ultimate breakup of the existing structures will not happen until “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15, margin), we can and must be agents of change in the present—the salt, light, and leaven that stimulate spiritual and social transformation.

In a time of upheaval such as society is presently experiencing, the church cannot be swept along with the current of convenience. If the gospel means anything, it means transformation. Thus only when the church is an agent of change is it really the church.

* Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture citations in this article are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Redemptive discipline

Jay Gallimore

Church discipline is an unpopular subject. In the Western world, where people are on a binge to be liked, the matter is avoided like the measles. The counseling world, with a dysfunctional compassion that often strokes good and evil at the same time, finds the issue a good one to beat up on.

People want a religion shaped in their own moral molds. They make it smell good, taste good, and feel good. Their slogan seems to be: "Glory hallelujah," we accept everybody! Park 'em, seat 'em, massage their emotions, and you'll pack 'em and fleece 'em. Church discipline might get in the way of all this. It could threaten one's compassionate reputation, shrink the crowds, and be a tithe crasher. So the thinking goes.

Church leadership obsessed with ego and crowds, money and power, would probably prefer to skip over church discipline. But for leaders who love their Lord and their congregations, loving discipline is a cornerstone of spiritual prosperity. Like Moses' rod it will, rightly used, shepherd the saints, rescue the straying, and build a fortress of goodness in an evil world.

There is no question that the enemy of souls hates the proper use of discipline. God has a better way: redemptive discipline.

Judgmental discipline

When the saints punish fellow members for their sins, judgmental discipline is happening. Now, nothing is wrong with justice itself. God Himself is just, and who would want to live in a town without judges? Preserving life and civilization from those who would destroy it is in fact one expression of love. God, however, in mercy seeks to save the offender from judgment while maintaining His government of justice. Toward that end He sacrificed Himself in Christ, who sets us free from the condemnation we all richly deserve.

Sadly, many members lack the mercy of God in dealing with those who fall into sin. Some of the stories that rise out of their judgmental discipline go like this: Brother B was seen smoking. He was called in before the church and examined. Determining that it was true, the church promptly disfellowshipped him. While this might be an extreme or overstated case, it illustrates the attitude.

Ostrich discipline

Reacting against judgmental discipline, many churches have developed ostrich discipline. Masquerading under compassion, it's actually a selfish, uncaring spirit that regards a
church member’s spiritual condition as that person’s own business. Actually, it is our responsibility. We must not neglect this obligation to members of our church family.

Some churches have deceived themselves into believing that God doesn’t care if two people live together without benefit of marriage. Why? Because “they’ll probably get married anyway and make it all right.” The sin and destruction of fornication is “not so bad,” their reasoning goes. “Besides, who wants to be judgmental? If we confront them about their behavior, they might leave the church and thus forever prevent us from helping them.”

This head-in-the-sand attitude results in many members acting no differently than their worldly counterparts. Like arctic cold, apathy numbs the congregation. Right and wrong seem to blend. The church becomes better known for its dinners, fellowship, and fruit sales than for righteousness, nobility, and holiness. Doctrine becomes something merely to muse about. Pastors in the pulpit pluck the strings of emotion without touching the hard-hearted behavior of sinners. The church loses its mission and its message. Such are the results of ostrich discipline.

**Redemptive discipline**

God’s alternative is redemptive discipline. As introduced in Matthew 18 and expounded later in this article, redemptive discipline enables the church to prevent the loss of members, restore those who are wounded, and when necessary, bury the spiritually dead.

The initial focus of redemptive discipline is preventing loss. This much-neglected Christian responsibility requires members to cultivate meekness and humility in relating with one another. There will be no sizing up of each other, only willingness to bear a fellow Christian’s burden (see Gal. 6:2). Regardless of money, power, or social standing, everyone will be esteemed equally as a fellow member in Christ’s body. This spreads around the congregation the magnetic influence of heavenly love.

Effective member retention requires making the church a nursery for baby believers. Tenderly caring for them is not just the pastor’s business—it’s everybody’s business. But you know how it is in a normal family when a baby comes along. Older brothers and sisters frequently feel jealous about the attention the new arrival is receiving. It’s often the same in the flock of the Good Shepherd. Unless trained and full of love, the established rams and ewes often will resent the presence of new lambs. This attitude is a stumbling block to baby believers. One measure of how strongly Jesus feels about mistreating the little ones of His flock is His warning that it would be better to have been wrapped in chains and drowned than to face His Father’s displeasure in the day of judgment (see Matt. 18:6-10).

Unless the whole church is continuously educated and involved in nurturing the needs of new believers, redemptive discipline is difficult to minister.

**Restoring wayward sheep**

Christ’s parable of the one lost sheep in Matthew 18 makes it clear that His method of discipline is redemptive. The sheep is a member who has lost his or her way and is no longer sheltered in the safety of the church family. Jesus summarized the parable by saying that His Father is not willing to lose one (see Matt. 18:12-14). Against this backdrop He gave practical instruction about steps to take in restoring a lost sheep.

Sometimes the procedures Jesus gave are viewed as an attorney’s advice: “Check them off so you can be legal.” While due process is important, Jesus wasn’t thinking in terms of “cleaning” the books. He does want clean books—but not empty pages.

**Private visit**

In Christ’s method of redemptive discipline, the first thing to do is: “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault” (Matt. 18:15). Often in my ministry someone would report how a fellow member had strayed, then ask: “Pastor, what are you going to do about it?” I’ve learned to listen and answer kindly: “The real question is What are you going to do about it?”

Early Adventists called this private visitation concerning misbehavior “being faithful to a sister or brother.” Many neglect this duty because they don’t know how to approach a straying member. In such cases, you as the pastor may need to coach them on how to express their concern in a redemptive way.

### Methods of discipline contrasted

Let us note the differences and similarities of judgmental, ostrich, and redemptive discipline.

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<th>Judgmental</th>
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<td>Church satisfied when the guilty is punished</td>
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<td>Church is a court</td>
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Going privately to an erring one often requires multiple visits. This fosters repentance while reducing the necessity of exposing the sin to the whole congregation. As the Bible says, love covers a multitude of sins (see James 5:19, 20).

As a pastor, I once had a deaconess whose husband became sexually involved with someone at work. When I went to him privately, he confessed in tears. His wife and children almost left him but opted to forgive and keep the family together. Since the man's sin wasn't known publicly and true repentance was evident, we quietly rejoiced in his restoration and left the matter private. The object of redemptive discipline was accomplished—the lost sheep was restored.

One benefit of a private visit is that a member can better discern whether his or her suspicion indeed is correct. Some years ago a sister was sure she had seen a pastor smoking. Instead of going to him privately, she contacted the conference brethren, who called a committee to confront him. Out of his pocket the pastor pulled a Vicks inhaler. Putting it in his mouth, he asked the sister if this was what she had seen. Now embarrassed, she admitted that it was.

The next step

If the private approach doesn't work, the next step is to take someone with you on the next visit (see Matt. 18:16). Often this is where the elders and pastor should get involved. What Jesus is doing is stepping up the power of personal influence—a power that is often underrated. God turns up the power of love in hopes that the influence of two or three who care about the offender can draw him or her away from the power of sin.

When I was a pastor our elders met monthly to not only discuss the earthly business of the church, but also its spiritual well-being. We watched over our members like shepherds. If it came to our attention that one was straying, we spent time in earnest intercession and then planned a rescue. With the permission of the church business meeting, the board of elders at their discretion were allowed to place erring members on a "period of grace." This would give us time to work with them quietly before taking the issue to the entire church.

Empowered with this strategy of love, we saw God redeem some pitiful cases. We didn't win all of them, but we were trying. As people were restored and sometimes rebaptized, it was harder to lose them again. Often the back door swings because the pastor and elders have not closed it through earnest intercessory prayer and hard work.

Redemptive discipline does involve work for the elders. One person who had written bad checks was given an interval of grace. Every month for a year one of the elders or the pastor visited with the member, offering spiritual counsel, prayer, supervision of repayment, and affirmation of progress. People under restoration need lots of tender loving care.

Unfortunately, we often load our elders with nonbiblical functions, and their most important spiritual work doesn't get done. Committees can hum, activities soar, and the church can appear successful. Yet often in the midst of this noise, the sheep are straying and no one has time even to notice. We freed our elders from as much table serving as possible. What a difference it began to make in our congregation.

The final step

The final effort in redemptive discipline is to "tell it to the church." If all other influences have failed, then Jesus opens up the floodgates of love. Unfortunately, when a problem gets to this place it is often presented and voted on at the same business meeting. Such methodology is not the plan of Jesus. After saying, "Tell it to the church," He instructs: "If he refuses to listen even to the church..." (verse 17). In other words, the reason for telling it to the entire church is so everyone can reach out to the erring one, assuring him or her of their love and imploring his or her repentance. Done correctly with intercessory prayer, this can have an unusual power to save and restore.

I don't think Jesus intended that only one representative voice of the church is to speak to the "lost" one. The entire church, or at least a large portion, must become involved.

The ministry of disfellowshipping

Only after erring members refuse the call of the entire church are they to be removed from fellowship (verse 17). This does not mean shunning, as some denominations do, but it does mean a change in relationship. The disfellowshipped one is to be regarded as a "sinner" to be won back. Winning back does not mean giving him or her the same intimate privileges as before, such as assisting in the Communion service. Paul told the Corinthians to turn such a one out so the devil would make life so miserable that the person would want to come back into the church fellowship. Shouldn't we strive to build such a communion of fellowship in Christ that one who has left us would eventually get so homesick he or she couldn't stand the world any longer? Of course, this does happen many times.

When a member reaches the place that he or she refuses to listen to the appeals of the church for repentance, the church must exercise its responsibility of disfellowshipping. Unwillingness to bury the spiritually dead threatens the health of the entire
It sends a message to our- selves and the world that we don’t really believe what we say. It tells the erring that we really don’t care about them. Disunity, fragmentation, apa- thy, and wickedness in the pew are the sure results.

In disfellowshipping unrepentant members, we must also consider that they are not the only ones who need healing. The whole body hurts when one member suffers. Beyond that, the nonchurch community often is hurt when declared Christians behave in such as way as to deny their Lord. Often the progress of the gospel is hindered when the church refuses to bandage its own wounds.

Censure and probation
There may be times when indi- viduals are repentant but their behav- ior has caused such deep wounds, or confusion, that the church still must express its sorrow through discipline. This is done only to give opportunity for healing in the body and the community. If truly repentant, erring mem- bers will do everything possible to cooperate, not projecting blame on others for their misbehavior. In such cases my preference is not to use disfellowshipping but censure, probation, or a pe- riod of grace.

One time, in the process of restoring a couple who had tested the limits of sin but became very repentant, an elder asked, “But what if they do it again?” Going back to Matthew 18, we found that Peter had the same concerns after hearing Christ’s three-step process. Jesus gave only one choice. As long as they re- pent we are to forgive.

Many today would agree with Pe- ter rather than Jesus. To them, seven times ought to be the limit; otherwise church discipline is a mockery. But Jesus, understanding the weakness of humanity, said there must be no limit to our forgiveness and willingness to take back the repentant (see verses 21, 22). In light of this, our elders determined that if sin broke out again with this couple we would be pre- pared to work again for their repen- tance and restoration.

Repentance and restoration
Repentance must not be taken lightly. Many unfortunate stories exist of couples who got unscriptural divorces and remarriages and then played games with repentance. Often they asked for their names to be dropped and then showed up at a neighboring church for rebaptism. Some pastors will do little or no check- ing with the previous pastor before rebaptizing such people. Great dishon- or, confusion, and weakness have resulted from this regrettable behav- ior. Since nobody has led them to repentance, they are dead branches grafted to a living tree.

The three pillars that support res- toration are repentance, repentance, repentance. Sorrow for sin is not say- ing “I’m sorry for getting into a mess” it’s saying: “If I had to do it over I wouldn’t do it.” It is sorrow for the behavior itself, behavior that brought pain to Christ and the church.

These steps provide healing for the individual, those wronged, and for the church body. The church will also be spared the testimony of one professional I remember vividly. She and her husband were restored with- out repentance. Sitting with a group of members after lunch, she bragged that the abandonment of their former spouses and their adulterous relation- ship were the best things they ever did. I shudder whenever I recall that incident.

Tough love
Love of others praise must not keep us from being faithful to a brother or sister who needs redemptive disci- pline. Christ must not be crucified afresh on the altars of our ego. We really are responsible of others. Abel’s faithful testimony cost him dearly, and true redemptive discipline will cost us pain as well-especially if the church body has been neglecting it.

Soon after arriving in one church I learned about a man who had divorced, moved to another state, and was pres- ently living with another woman without any interest in marriage. His name was still on the books even though the situation had been going on for a year. When I approached his son (a faithful church attender) for his father’s phone number, he was irate that I would even consider contact- ing his father. The son feared that his father’s feelings would be hurt and he would never return. I explained that merely having our names on the church books will not protect us in the day of judg- ment from premeditated, ongoing dis- obedience of God’s commandments. His father, I explained, was in a lost condition and needed to be redeemed. Ultimately we lost that battle. Despite our appeals of love, the father refused to repent. Perhaps someday, when circumstances soften his heart, like ancient King Manasseh he will heed the Spirit’s call to repentance. At that point our tough love, which refused to enable him in sin, just might provide the memory he needs to gain.

Jesus gave only one choice. As long as they repent we are to forgive.

People being restored should be taken through the following process:

1. Confess that if they had to do it over they would not do what they did, no matter what the cost;
2. Be willing to apologize to the wronged parties and, as far as possible, make the matter right;
3. Humbly submit their situation to the church family, or its representa- tives, for review;
4. If the sin became public knowl- edge, confess sorrow for it publicly. However, use wisdom and common sense. Rebaptism may be the only expression needed.

(Continued on page 23)
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Ministerial students visit Manila

Archibald P. Tupas

In March 1991, 35 ministerial students of Philippine Union College traveled to Manila for field education. They visited that great metropolis with its glittering neon lights of nightlife. They saw the high-rise buildings in Escolta (Broadway) for the powerful rich, contrasting with the piles of rotting garbage where the powerless poor swarm to survive. They walked streets filled with children begging, passing crowds of students, metro aides (street workers), factory workers, and youth from the provinces seeking employment.

Away from the inner city, in the slum of Smokey Mountain, the students visited the barong-barongs (shanties) built on a huge mountain of garbage from Manila. Smoke from the perpetually burning trash polluted the settlement of 20,000.

Memories and testimonies
Following their return to the college, the students reported on their adventures. Bobby testified about finding an old man sleeping in front of St. Cruz Catholic Church. He had come to Manila for medical treatment, but with no money left he could not go home. Having no relatives in Manila, he sought help from a welfare institution and other places. All to no avail. He resorted to begging, which worsened his health. Bobby brought him to the bus station, provided fare, and saw him safely on the bus heading home.

Elmer, another of our students, told how he became acquainted with some street people whose only clothes were those they were wearing. Removing his own undershirt, he handed it to one of them. Another student in our group, who was carrying a bag of soiled clothes to be washed, emptied it and distributed the contents among the needy. Elmer promised to return with some pushcarts that the street people could use in earning a little more income in garbage collection, with the ultimate goal of meeting not only their financial but also their emotional and spiritual needs. To this end, Elmer and some fellow students joined the metro aides in sweeping the streets and riding in the dump trucks. Understandably, the workers were delighted to have their company.

Similar to the struggle of the street people is the plight of the slum resi-
dents of Smokey Mountain. Dennis described how they live off the mountains of garbage, gathering plastics, empty cans, and cartons for recycling. In one family visited, the husband scavenged, while the wife sold vegetables. That enabled them to survive, until she fell ill and lost her capital. To get back into business, she would need 50 pesos (about US$1.50). Dennis and his group handed her a 100-peso bill. Taking it gladly, she insisted that she would repay the gift once her business resumed.

Our students saw the need to teach the poor how to earn a better living, coordinating with private and government employment agencies. They reported on the good work done by Catholics in organizing training in trade skills for the community.

While directing much effort toward the poor, our students also worked to reach the wealthy. Arnold described the group’s activities among the elite in Escolta, whose primary concern was health, then peace of mind, occupational success, and family life. Learning this affirmed our students’ confidence in the Adventist health message. The students suggested that our church could use media to promote health consciousness among the upper classes. They also recommended that prominent church members become friends of community leaders to communicate our knowledge of health and family life.

Contact with other religions
Lisa provided food service for the evangelistic team. She found time to visit the worship service in the 17,000-member Cathedral of Praise. She told how much she enjoyed the warm reception and the lively service. An interview with the pastor showed that the church has a strong visitation ministry, with the goal of every member being involved in witnessing.

Our students also met with the Muslim community, the biggest ethnic group in the Philippines, with 50,000 in metro Manila. Group members visited a mosque and dialogued with prominent citizens of the community about their culture and community needs, being careful to avoid theological discussions. One Muslim leader suggested that this could be the beginning of a better relationship between Adventists and Muslims. Many Muslims expressed gratitude for the health services provided by our Mindanao Sanitarium and Hospital in Iligan City. Adventist health programs could be a bridge for the gospel in reaching Muslims, not just in the Philippines but elsewhere.

Our group also visited the university belt, contacting three denominations that have student centers serving university youth with Bible studies and premarital counseling, along with vocational and career guidance. In those facilities students also can socialize, worship, and study in air-conditioned comfort. Our visit to these places showed the need for Adventists to establish a similar ministry in the university belt.

Exposure to other Christian groups was an exciting element of our ministry in Manila. We visited the new Philippine Council of Evangelical Churches headquarters and learned about DAWN 2000 (Discipling a Whole Nation), a worldwide church-planting effort begun by evangelicals in the Philippines.

Ten days in metro Manila gave the ministerial students new insight on the work of urban pastors and an awareness of the great challenge the Adventist Church faces in the cities.

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Cell groups bring success in Hong Kong

J. H. Zachary

I was concerned. Something was missing! The conference was sponsoring a major evangelistic series in a city of more than 5 million; a large hall was rented, but not one handbill, not one newspaper ad, not one radio or television spot, had been prepared.

With considerable apprehension I went to the auditorium the first night. One thousand empty seats met me! As the team made final preparations, the managers opened the doors at 7:00. Soon I heard the sounds of people. Attendees came in small groups and sat together. Each person had a reserved seat. As I stepped to the microphone at 7:35, the hall was filled with a warm, receptive audience!

On the first evening I extended a call for accepting Jesus as Saviour. Having preached previously in Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, I expected only five or six to respond. However, more than 50 came forward! In four nights more than 200 responded.

On the fourth night a specific call went out for baptism. Fifty roses were ready to be handed to the candidates. As the flowers disappeared, James Wu, coordinator for the meetings, remarked, “Our faith was too small.” As these lines are written, 57 persons have been baptized. Many more are in preparation.

Cell groups are the secret

In recent years the local conference had sponsored several major crusades. Advertising drew large crowds but yielded meager results. Curiosity seekers had come for the multimedia programs, the archaeology, or the music. Much of the audience was new every night. What made this 1993 meeting so different?

Three years previously, the Hong Kong-Macao Conference had organized and equipped an evangelism center with James Wu as director, assisted by Johnny Yip. Prayerfully the team planned and prepared materials. The main thrust of the evangelism program was the development of small cell groups.

Twelve months ago 50 volunteers joined five cell groups in a pilot project to test new materials and concepts, make adjustments, and share results with all the churches in the colony. The following activities were recommended:

1. Each cell group would operate for three months, after which the unit would divide into two groups.

2. Groups would focus on three areas:
   - Gospel activities: Bible study, prayer bands, studying and experiencing righteousness by faith.
   - Support activities: developing friendships and supporting each team member, since many converts were the only Adventists in their families and needed loving support.
   - Witnessing activities: group members sharing their faith.

3. The three-month cycle was divided thus:
   - Weeks 1-3 for organization and securing members,
   - Weeks 4-12 for developing bonding among members and spiritual growth witnessing,
   - Weeks 13-16 for preparing cell division and securing new members.

4. Cell groups would engage in three types of meetings:
   - A weekly cell meeting where the group shares a light meal, Bible

A warm spirit of fellowship pervaded the meetings.

J. H. Zachary is an associate secretary of the General Conference Ministerial Association.
study, and fellowship prayer bands.

- Monthly social meetings: fellowship dinner, picnic, hiking, and/or other social activities. Sometimes two or three cell groups would band together for a social.
- A quarterly celebration of praise and testimony where members from all cell groups in the city come together.

5. A monthly newsletter would publicize experiences, plans and testimonies among all members.

6. The evangelism center stocked several training videos and Bible videos for the cell groups to borrow.

7. The evangelism center developed a data bank.
   - Hong Kong was divided into various areas, each assigned to a team.
   - Each team received names and addresses of the following persons: active members, missing members, radio interests, seminar attendees, etc.
   - Team members personally visited each of the interests. All were invited to join a cell group.
   - The evangelism center targeted unentered sections of the city for new cell groups with the goal of entering every part of the city with the gospel.

Results were remarkable. One year ago, only five cell groups existed. By the fourth month we expected to have 10 groups; instead we had 12. The 12-month goal was 40 cell groups; we reached 60.

Churches revived as well

Those 60 cell groups made the difference in our four-day harvest meeting. During the previous 16 weeks, members had developed personal relationships with missing Adventists, relatives, friends, and other interests. The groups enjoyed Bible study, witnessing, and sharing activities.

The 1,000-seat auditorium was filled with “hot” interests. What a thrill to speak to hundreds of non-Adventists already closely tied to church members. No wonder there was such a good response. No wonder the audience applauded when their friends came forward to express their decision for baptism.

As my wife and I departed Hong Kong, peace filled our hearts. We knew the newly baptized persons plus all others who came forward would each join a cell group. They would be nurtured. They would continue Bible study. They would be supported in their newfound faith. The number of dropouts would be minimal.

And so it has been. Following the meetings in the auditorium, the conference invited the entire group to a camp meeting. Four additional topics were presented to follow up the crusade. Conference president Chapman Wong reports that it was the best-attended camp meeting in their history. The cell groups not only brought in new members, but helped revive churches as well.

On December 4, 1993, all cell groups including new members, congregated for the quarterly celebration. What an experience of testimony, praise to God and wonderful fellowship! If caring cell groups can bring success in Hong Kong under the Holy Spirit’s blessing, I believe that any city in the world could enjoy a new experience in evangelism. ■

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Metaphor in your message

A metaphor is a means, not an end.

Luis F. Acosta

The way truth is explained has everything to do with how we understand it. For example, it’s possible to describe the church as a besieged fortress, a busy hospital or an international business. Each illustration on its own results in a different understanding of what the church is. Clearly, these are aspects of the church’s multifaceted mission. None is wrong, and none is complete. Indeed the church’s mission includes and transcends the composite picture these and other illustrations present.

Illustrations are what metaphors are about. According to Webster, a metaphor is “a figure of speech containing an implied comparison, in which a word or phrase ordinarily and primarily used of one thing is applied to another.”¹ We use metaphors and word pictures to illustrate, to make understanding easy, to move from the known to the unknown.

The value of metaphors

A metaphor helps us understand truth. But truth is more than the point made by the illustration, and therefore must not be limited to the illustration. Weller Embler emphasizes this point well: “A work of literature can be discussed sociologically, biologically, economically, psychoanalytically, anthropologically, in the vocabulary of those disciplines . . . . And the insights derived from application of, say, a theory of society to a work of literature may be valuable and enriching. But one can never say all there is to be said of a work of art either sociologically or psychoanalytically, or through any single systematic method of analysis.”²

If this is true for a literary work of art, how much more should this principle apply to biblical truth? Truth is what God tells us. But even all the biblical illustrations cannot project a complete picture of truth. For example, the truth of salvation is more than the sum of all that the biblical metaphors can communicate. The Gospels do not reveal everything about the kingdom of God; but they contain different pictures—for example, each of the parables about the kingdom, making a unique contribution towards understanding the kingdom.

Proper use of metaphors

Metaphors should be easy to understand. They should not be so complicated that they require additional illustrations to explain them.

Illustrations using metaphors may vary in length. The leaven in the meal (Matt. 13:33) and the hidden treasure (verse 44) are just one-verse parables containing great truths about the kingdom. On the other hand, the parable of the king and the two debtors (Matt. 18:23-35) and the laborers who were paid equally for varying hours of work (Matt. 20:1-16) are fairly lengthy ones.

Illustrations must be specific and to the point, each one focusing on a main emphasis. The four parables mentioned above are well focused. Although they all speak about the kingdom of God, each metaphor emphasizes a specific point. The parable

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of the leaven shows that the kingdom of heaven affects everything. The hidden treasure calls for total allegiance in the search for the kingdom. In the parable of the king, the two debtors refer to relational requirements on the part of the aspiring citizens of the kingdom. The parable of the laborers who were paid equally yet worked different lengths of time points to the fact that the ultimate in the kingdom is dependent not on our length of service, but our commitment to the One who calls.

Several illustrations may be grouped together to emphasize a broader view of a theme. New Testament metaphors often lend themselves to such treatment. For example, Jesus is not just the lamb of God—He is also the lion of the tribe of Judah (see John 1:29; Rev. 5:5). Jesus is judge, lawyer, and victim (see John 5:22, 27; 1 John 2:1; Gal. 3:13 and 2 Cor. 5:21). He is a shepherd as well as a door to the fold (see John 10:1-18); He is a husband (see Eph. 5:22-32; Jer. 3), a foundation (see 1 Cor. 3:9-11); a farmer (see Matt. 13:37ff); a king (Rev. 17:14); and a servant (see Isa. 53:11; Matt. 20:28).

Jesus often grouped metaphors to bear force on a particular teaching. For example, the condition of human lostness and divine grace is illustrated by three parables in Luke 15: the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. “By using a variety of illustrations [Christ] not only presented truth in its different phases but appealed to the different hearers.”

Interpretation of biblical metaphors should not lead to teachings that are not supported by or that contradict other texts. The parable of Lazarus and the rich man is a prime example. The parable’s main purpose is not to teach about a fire that will literally burn forever, or about the immortality of the soul, or about the immediate reward or punishment after death. Such interpretations contradict the teachings of the Bible elsewhere.

Another example is the metaphor that Jesus’ return would be “as a thief in the night” (1 Thess. 5:2). The metaphor does not teach secret rapture, as that doctrine is in contradiction to other scriptural teachings (see Matt. 24:23-31; 1 Thess. 4:13-18 and 5:4; Rev. 1:7). The point of the metaphor is not secrecy but suddenness. The time of Jesus’ return will be as sudden and unexpected as a thief in the night.

Metaphors must not be given imported meanings. For example, to say that God is our Father is one thing; but from that to imply that God is male and married is an unwarranted importation into the metaphor. Nor could we inversely make God female just because we might want to address God as mother. God transcends gen-

“By using a variety of illustrations [Christ] not only presented truth in its different phases but appealed to the different hearers.”


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The kingdom of heaven is like a physician who became wealthy, having discovered a cure for a fatal disease. After some time, when he knew he would not be living much longer, he decided to give his wealth to some people in real need.

One day he went out on the street and found a man lying on the sidewalk, hungry, hopeless, and almost naked. The doctor took pity on him, and extended to him a bank card. He said to him, "Take this card. It gives you access to a bank account with 100 million dollars. You must make withdrawals every day for all your needs and to help others as much as you can."

The outcast looked at the card. He looked at the physician. He looked at the card again. He couldn't believe anything the good man said. Could it be, he thought, that this stranger has gone out of his mind? Angrily, he grabbed the card, threw it away, spat on his would-be benefactor, and returned to his sidewalk bed.

The doctor continued his search. He found a poor woman in an equally sad situation. He made the same offer to her and she accepted the card happily, but did not go to the bank immediately. As the day dragged on, she got distracted by her problems and lost the card—the very card that could have solved her problems. And she made no attempt at finding the doctor.

Not long after that, the physician found another man in desperate need and offered him the same deal. The man took the card thankfully and was careful to keep it with him at all times. Wherever he went, he proudly showed his bankcard and spoke enthusiastically about the immense amount of money he had in his account. "I'm rich," he would say, "and have need of nothing." But he was still dressed in rags, still dirty and disheveled and hungry, and still dependent on handouts. Whenever he said he was rich, nobody would believe him because he lived just as he did before accepting the bank card.

Another woman caught the famous physician's eye. She was in the greatest need of all: deathly sick, thin, and weak. The doctor took pity on her, and extended to her a bank card. She held the card in her trembling hands, and saw her very own name on it. She thanked the rich man, and went straightaway to the bank. She walked up to the teller, presented the card and dared to ask for $100. She could not yet fully understand the vast riches at her disposal. The teller was a friend of the wealthy doctor and was aware of his offers. She could see the woman's true distress and kindly responded, "Is that all you need? You'll make more interest in the time it takes me to count it than what you asked for!" The woman, in total disbelief, then asked for what she thought was a staggering $5,000.

The woman rented a small apartment, bought food, and new clothes, took a badly needed bath and went to the rich physician for healing of her sickness as well as advice on how to prevent its recurrence. The woman began to live as much like a rich person as she knew how, and sought to imitate the only wealthy person with whom she was acquainted—the physician. Following the instructions given her, the woman went to the bank every day to make withdrawals, and shared her wealth with others in need.
show the way in which traditional phrases and formulae were and are able to be accepted currency for the mystery of which they spoke. If theology may alert other disciplines to the claims of mystery and insight and disclosures, it must learn from other disciplines how to be more reliably articulate.”

The apostle Paul was aware of this. He used many different approaches to bear on the same truth because he well knew that no single word picture could (or can) adequately describe what he was trying to say. Each snapshot contributes to the picture album of God, but by itself one photo limits our understanding.

When talking of what God in Christ did for humankind on the cross, Paul used many different illustrations: (1) justification/imputed righteousness—a judicial or legal term (Rom. 8:15); (4) sanctification—an expression from the Hebrew cultus (1 Cor. 1:30; Heb. 10:10); (5) redemption—common to Hebrew civil law regarding land inheritance and reacquisition (Rom. 3:24; Heb. 9:12); (6) freedom from slavery or bondage—the possible result of several different situations, including some mentioned in Hebrew civil law (Rom. 6:22); (7) wages—of labor and pay (Acts 20:28; Rom. 6:23); (8) marriage—a divinely instituted relationship as the basis of family (Eph. 5:22-27); (9) forgiveness—a commercial expression (Acts 13:38; Eph. 1:7); (10) washing/cleansing—from the Hebrew cultus (Acts 22:16; Titus 3:5); and (11) salvation—rescue from a dangerous situation such as war or threat of war (1 Tim. 1:15; 2 Tim. 1:9). Even with all these varied metaphors and illustrations, what God accomplishes for us and in us remains beyond human understanding.

That should lead us to approach the Word of God with a spirit of humility and a desire to listen to what it says. Keeping an open mind, we can learn from the Word, and see many aspects of truth from different points of view without having to fight or argue over differences in emphasis and without loosing the need to treat one another with love and respect at all times.

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4 The 11 instances are Matthew 13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1; 14.
5 White, pp. 11, 12.
Making your school successful

James A. Cress

Your church school’s success depends on your personal support. Pastors have both the privilege and the responsibility to promote Christian education. As this school year concludes, now is the time to help make next term even better. To give less than your best effort to Christian education is to fail one of our greatest mission opportunities: our own children.

Beyond advocating that parents should place their children in Christian schools, you can take the following positive actions to assure that the schools under your watchcare will thrive.

Plan for growth. Never be satisfied with the status quo if there is one child who could be enrolled. With only about half of Adventist children attending Adventist schools, opportunities abound. Challenge your church and school boards to develop school-growth eyes. Vision for growth expands only to the extent that leaders set the pace. So think growth yourself and encourage others to see the mission potential of a growing school.

Affirm Christian education both by word and by action. Preach the value of Christian schools versus public education and maintain the emphasis of reaching and holding our own young people. You may wish to invite the conference education director to speak to your congregation. Also, your actions must match your rhetoric. If you have children, enroll them in church school. If personal circumstances prevent you from enrolling your children in your church’s school, request assignment to a district that does not have a school. Your example, as well as your words, must signal clear support for Christian education.

Affirm the ministry of teaching. Honor your teachers in front of the whole congregation for the sacrificial ministry they provide. Seek ways to express appreciation for your teachers and to acknowledge their successes. Support school activities by your attendance at functions they plan. Acknowledge the contribution of your school in public ways such as a dedication service at the start of each school year in which you offer special prayer for teachers and students, or a special Sabbath service in which the school plans and leads the worship service. Try a Teacher Recognition Sabbath in which you present a small gift to each of the teachers and tell of their personal ministry to the church. Also, credit your teachers’ influence on the spiritual decisions that children make.

Encourage parents to prioritize. Help them understand that Adventist schools are not only different from public education, but also distinctly different from other Christian schools. Adventist atmosphere, lifestyle, and doctrine pervade all curriculum subjects. If parents want their children to grow up in the church, they should enroll them in the church school.

Help teachers. Assist in planning programs that will exhibit the value of your school such as open houses or school visitation days. Conduct chapel services and special Weeks of Spiritual Emphasis for the students. Offer to teach a class once or twice per year or to serve occasionally as a substitute teacher. Drive for a field trip, or just stop by the school to chat with students and teachers during recess or lunch breaks. Welcome the students on the first day of the term.

Make recruiting visits to the homes of all potential students. Nothing makes a greater impact than the pastor and teacher together visiting the home of each family with school-age children. These visits should include an invitation to place the children in your school, along with helpful information about registration processes, a school calendar, financial plans that are available, and preferably some memento of your visit for each potential student. By the way, don’t take returning students for granted. They also deserve a visit. Furthermore, the families who already recognize the benefit of church school can be one of your best sources for locating other potential students. Ask each family you visit if they know of someone else who could be invited to enroll in your school.

Encourage experimentation. For families who wonder if Adventist schools are really best, offer a money-back guarantee. In my own pastorate, we encouraged parents to enroll their children experimentally, with the guarantee of fees and tuition refunded if they were dissatisfied and enrolled.
their children elsewhere. The school rarely had anyone ask for a refund. The parents’ experiment demonstrated the worth of our school.

**Raise assistance funds.** Not every family can pay full tuition and fees. Their children also need to be in your school. I enjoy helping my members realize that we operate a "church" school and not just a "parent" school, and I enjoy raising money to assist worthy students who otherwise would be unable to attend. Every parent should contribute something, but never rule anyone out of attending because of lack of funds.

**Develop a work-study program.** Older students can make a helpful contribution to the school or church by performing tasks that otherwise would be hired out. The funds you would have spent to have someone empty the trash, answer the telephone, wash windows, sweep sidewalks, fold and insert letters and bulletins, or vacuum floors might easily be accomplished by a student in a few hours after school.

**Remember the mission.** Adventist schools are evangelistic. I have seen families baptized whose first contact with the church was enrolling their children in the school. If you have available space, recruit nonmember students whose families will be a great source of potential new members. After all, Adventist education is mission!

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**Koinonia is the key**

*From page 4*

Jesus comes. Imagine the koinonia we’ll enjoy together on the way to heaven!

5. **Spiritual gifts.** The doctrine of Christian community really stands out here. I used to think that those who avoid indulging when tempted are complete Christians. Now I understand that koinonia requires not just resisting sin but much more. We are saved to serve Jesus by building up His corporate body with the spiritual gifts entrusted to us individually. Not all gifts are the same; some are more visible and have greater impact than others, particularly the gift of prophecy. We Adventists recognize this in the ministry of Ellen White. But whatever our spiritual gifts may be, we need not feel inferior. In ourselves we all are incomplete, but together we share completeness in Christ. And each of us is essential in comprising and nurturing the communal body of Jesus. Our participation in koinonia involves the loving, serving expression of each one’s spiritual gifts. Nothing less will complete the global mission that Jesus has entrusted to His church.

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**Redemptive discipline**

*From page 13*

respect for the salvation Jesus provided on the cross. May God help us, as pastors and elders, to be faithful to His principles of redemptive discipline. May we be zealous in keeping our members, relentless in winning them back when they stray, prompt in taking appropriate measures when appeals fail, insistent on genuine repentance, and abundant in forgiveness.

Why? Because judgment is coming!

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*All Bible texts in this editorial are from the New King James Version.

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*Unless otherwise noted, all scriptures in this article are from the New International Version.

1 To protect confidentiality, illustrations have been changed, but the substance remains intact.

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**THE LIFE OF THE CROSS**

with the outward (missionary) orientation of the kingdom, chap-
ter 18 is a collection of teachings devoted to internal relations-
successes or failures. Jesus' teaching on divorce (19:1-12) has been
included in the chapter because it also deals with internal relations in the kingdom. This entire section of Matthew, running from 18:1 to 19:12, can be viewed in terms of Christian liv-

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**Applying the Word**

Matthew 18:1-20:34

1. What is my view of greatness? Have I operated in my daily life? In what spec-
   ific ways do I prove that implementation?

2. How have I exemplified mercy this past
   week?

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**Researching the Word**

1. Matthew 18:10 brought to our attention guardian angels. Through the use of Guardian angels, what do you discover that you can about the angels in both testaments. List their rela-
tions to humans, God, etc. After study, it will be helpful to compare

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Previewing the remnant

Wilma Zalabak

God’s people at the end of time

I saw a church. It was not a steeple, not an organizational chart, not a ledger sheet. I saw a church. It was not a code of beliefs, nor the property of preachers. There were many ministers.

It was a church on a restless earth. The time was the end, and the Sabbath was outlawed. Money and property holdings by Sabbathkeeping organizations were illegal and therefore either confiscated by government or bought out by conforming entities. No Sabbathkeeping leader had legal authority.

Still, I saw a church. Kneeling members proclaimed their total inadequacy for their work of reaching all the world, yet they eagerly anticipated the realization of those dreams. Perhaps because of this individual and corporate admission of powerlessness, I saw great energy spent toward accepting and affirming one another. No one seemed bent on controlling or changing another.

Honesty and affirmation

I saw honesty in that church, each member striving to understand the underlying life laws of his or her own experience. Not having to diagnose the motives of others freed immense energy toward personal growth and group life.

On the local level, this church worked together after the spiritual gifts model of church life with affirmation of each other, room for mistakes, and communication through the obstacles.

Although I saw leaders go out and start other groups, they quickly transferred the decision power from themselves to the people they served. Leadership roles took the appearance of facilitator, communicator, servant. Participation percentages and enthusiasm held high as each group developed its own identity and management. This left those called as pastors free to oversee several groups at once and those called as evangelists to start new groups.

Evangelism planning focused more on training and support network for lay preachers than on accessions. Of course, when a newcomer preached in his or her former church enough to be disclaimed there, accessions did happen, along with those who had no previous church affiliation.

I heard members urging newcomers to choose mentors. A mentor could be anyone who had something in his or her spiritual journey that another could respect and with whom he or she could build rapport for ease in sharing. Service as a mentor included listening nonjudgmentally, telling one’s own story, encouraging, but never seeking to control another’s life. The continual admission of each person’s powerlessness appeared to be crucial to the success of this caring.

Group participation

I saw the worship service, easily recognized as Adventist by its order
and atmosphere. Yet there were definite windows within that structure where I felt special openness and real presence with one another. I saw many different people serve during the worship service, some reading Scripture, some praying, some singing, some opening doors, and many shaking hands. There seemed little distinction between audience and leaders; apparently even newcomers could serve almost anywhere.

The worship service fit well with what the members understood as the group's mission. It was stated quite clearly that the mission of the group was to make the Adventist Christian message relevant to the needs and emptiness of the surrounding culture and people. Visitors who came in contact with the need-oriented programs of the church felt powerfully attracted. They returned again and again.

In studying official structure, I found a lean officer's list but a large base for involvement and decision making. Even people who couldn't qualify as officers or as members felt they were making a contribution. In fact, membership itself apparently operated on two separate levels. A simple desire to belong easily got one in and accepted, but to hold official membership and any office, one was expected to be making certain lifestyle choices that define Adventism.

Humble discipline

I watched the local group work through a painful situation in which trusted leaders had chosen behaviors out of line with the voted definition of Adventism. I saw the meeting where other leaders led the way in tears and prostration before the Lord over their own deficiencies and stumbling, the meeting where the decision was made, haltingly and prayerfully, to ask the unfaithful to relinquish their official membership. It was clearly stated that this was not a punishment or judgment, but merely a clarification of behaviors that do not fit the official stance of the group.

I did my best to follow all interactions in this case, and in every instance saw only acceptance and respect for the choices that had been made. I did see many individuals visiting personally with those asked to separate. Some found opportune moments to share their own story, their own choices and reasons, in relation to the behaviors in question. Those who could hurdle the emotional pain maintained ongoing friendships. I tried to understand the philosophy that would allow this church to manifest such acceptance in the presence of sin, personal convictions, and the desire to keep itself pure.

Although the group recognized the presence of certain absolutes, they also recognized that a specific behavior is sinful to an individual only after conviction occurs from the Holy Spirit. They never claimed that their own understanding of sin represented the full extent of universal absolutes. They refused to engage in leverage by one individual on another.

Each person felt his or her impurity on coming closer and closer to Christ. Group purity, they believed, rested in the hands of God and the mediation of Jesus Christ, probably to be recognized only by Him and the universe in the end. Never claiming absolute purity, they were content to think continually of Christ.

Powerful helplessness

Yes, I saw a church. I have tried to report accurately what I saw on the local level. I did investigate the broader, world affiliation, also. That was more hidden, given the illegal status of any organization keeping the Sabbath.

Most obvious of what I saw in my survey of the world church was the surrender, the admission of powerlessness for any of the goals or functions desired. This seemed paradoxical, however, since the church's confessed helplessness seemed to be the foundation and stimulus of its great successes. Despite legal suppression, this church added new members and congregations even in inaccessible places at a rate hardly believable.

Several other observations stand out. Each congregation developed its own mission. The mission related to which spiritual gifts were present among the people of the group as well as to where they could find their niche in the needs of the local community. This meant great differences between congregations in terms of programs and projects and even worship atmosphere. These differences received affirmation and support from world leaders.

In fact, the facilitator model of leadership prevailed even at the world level of this church. The leaders considered themselves but servants, always acting in awareness of their accountability to the members and the local groups. Because of their responsible approach, an atmosphere of trust flourished, allowing them enough authority to carry out the necessary decisions for support of world activities. Of course, the high level of trust was probably related also to the high level of each member's participation in this church.

Although most activities of this church proceeded with little movement of moneys, still the flow of funding, beyond what was used locally, went from the local groups to the world organization. Funds passed on in this way maintained broad support services, on too large a scale for a local group to surround.

At this level, as on the local level, decisions were accepted when a majority consensus could be reached as individual members voted their consciences. I saw that minority desires and dissenting views did mold the majority vote as the Holy Spirit clarified the issues. Certain parameters were accepted as defining Adventist lifestyle throughout the world. These were respected, welcomed, and adopted by the local groups in the spirit of trust that prevailed.

Triumph out of tragedy

In one way, things progressed from bad to worse for this church. From illegal, it went to search warrant, to death decree. But in another way, triumph is the only word to describe the events. Although some frightened ones abandoned fellowship, innumerable others linked up every day. One day God declared His affirmation, the universe agreed, and the church went home to live happily ever after.
The Contemporary Christian Music Debate: Worldly Compromise or Agent of Renewal?

What kind of music is appropriate in the worship service? The question has preoccupied Christians, in particular Adventists, in recent years. Steve Miller brings some new insights to the discussion. Ministry editors asked two reviewers to respond.

Review 1: A biblical basis or a cultural compromise? By Kenneth Mathews, Jr., M.D., M.S.P.H., director, occupational medicine, Takoma Adventist Hospital, and choir director of the Greeneville Seventh-day Adventist Church, Greeneville, Tennessee.

Steve Miller believes in a biblical basis for the ministry of contemporary Christian music (CCM) and Christian rock. "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22, RSV) becomes the key text to justify CCM in reaching secular people. He opines that out-of-date music and worship styles hinder outreach to the unchurched.

Miller crystallizes the debate over the role methodology plays in reaching souls for Christ. He raises important questions: Do we win the unconverted with nineteenth-century religious music and tradition? Or do we Christianize secular music, drama, and the culture of the day? How did Jesus win the unchurched? Did Jesus use a methodology we have not tried?

Part I of the book shows that many criticisms of CCM are scientifically unproven: 1. Heavy beats do not degrade behavioral performance or reduce vigilance. 2. Stress does not naturally occur when people are listening to rock music. 3. Rock music does not elicit ungodly responses from people; the intentions of people and the incitements of the performers, rather than the style, govern response. 4. The beat of a song is not linked to those used in demonic traditions. 5. The desirable qualities of a song are based on the value systems of the culture. 6. The highest form of music today is not necessarily the classics. Miller starts a good analysis, but he lacks the last word on how the secular music counterculture invades our being.

Part II introduces the author’s biblical perspective on music. He gives practical advice on selecting and performing church music, but ignores the ramifications of using “all legitimate means” of evangelism.

Part III deals with the history of Christian music, showing the secular origin of some favorite hymns.

Part IV deals with the book’s real purpose: how to harness the power of CCM to save souls. Adventism has looked longingly at the growth of certain churches. But as we study the phenomena, can we honestly believe that CCM and new liturgy provide the magic that will finish the work?

Miller argues that since music means so much to modern youth, we should use it to send a Christian message. He states that “the truly confusing factor in reaching the pagan people in America is our heritage of Christian music.” Some truth here, but there is more to reaching pagan people than music.

Some will be disturbed by this book while others will applaud Miller’s work. But readers must question if the author comes too close to arguing situation ethics. For example, did Jesus drink beer in the Jewish saloon with the alcoholic in order to reach him, or did He go to the saloon to call the drinker to a new life? Do we need to sing like the secular musician in order to reach the masses and call them from their secular pursuits?

In his eagerness to justify CCM, Miller does not cover all the theological bases. One could discuss the qualities of heaven and Jesus: order, harmony, simplicity, unity, joy, the purpose of giving glory to God, and being saved by hearing the preached word.

Whatever your inclination, this book will force you to come to grips with your own view of the Bible on Jesus, music, and the gospel commission. The issue needs to be addressed in a corporate and Christian fashion. Now is the time to begin!

Review 2: A convincing case for contemporary music. By Cristina Matos-Grys, associate pastor, Miami Temple Seventh-day Adventist Church, Miami, Florida.

The music debate has two basic factions: 1. Those who believe that contemporary music contains rhythms, harmonies, and beats that make it inherently bad, promote sensuality and moral decay, and provide an open door for the world to invade the church. 2. Those who believe that good and bad in music come by psychological association. The new styles of music can be used effectively to introduce secular people to Christ.

Steve Miller advocates the latter approach using a four-step plan. First, he faces the other faction head-on addressing the main objections one by one. He shows how some “scientific studies” on the effects of music are unsound, incomplete, subjective, and improperly used. Second, he uses biblical principles to analyze the nature of praise and worship in music. Third, he introduces us to a delightful compilation of historical facts on the origin and development of church music. Fourth, he gives a convincing case for using contemporary Christian music.

The author effectively formulates and answers such important questions as:

Do contemporary music styles lead to moral corruption?

Do we compromise if we take something from the world and use it for God?

What does the Bible say about music and styles of worship?

How can parents talk to their children about their music?

How can churches use contemporary Christian music without alienating those who object?

Is there a place for contemporary Christian music in missions?

How are growing churches using contemporary forms in worship?

Miller writes well, documents his work, and uses logic in his apologetic.
Whatever faction you may belong to, I guarantee this book will open your eyes to factors pertinent to the Christian music debate.

Ashamed of the Gospel

If I could afford it, I would give a copy of this book to every Adventist pastor. MacArthur’s burden—that a market-oriented ministry must not replace biblical preaching—should be our burden too.

As a springboard the author uses Charles Spurgeon’s nineteenth-century warnings against modernism. MacArthur fears that evangelicism today faces a similar danger from the popular church growth movement. Himself a successful pastor, speaker, and author, he warns against making success the only test of a method: “Pragmatism as a test of truth is nothing short of satanic,” he declares, for the gospel often fails to reach hearts, while deception may prove effective.

The book decries the church’s use of entertainment to draw a crowd, thus allowing theology to take a back seat to methodology. “Everything seems to be in fashion in the church today except biblical preaching.”

“We must give them what they want” appears to be the theory behind community surveys. The “goal is becoming church attendance . . . rather than a transformed life.”

MacArthur’s response to this trend: “The Great Commission is not a marketing manifesto. Evangelism does not require salesmen, but prophets.” He fears that the market-driven ministry caters to people who love themselves rather than God.

Paul did not soften his message so people would be comfortable with it, yet thousands of evangelical churches “would not tolerate for two weeks strong biblical teaching that refutes their doctrinal error, confronts their sin, and calls them to obey the truth.”

MacArthur finds that successful megachurches miss the mark with services that rely on popular music and drama to make them user-friendly. “Whether a method is biblical or not scarcely seems to matter. . . . Does it work? is the new test of legitimacy.”

“The Bible, not a marketing plan, is supposed to be the sole blueprint and final authority for all church ministry,” the author declares. “Ministry should meet real needs, not solve selfishness.”

MacArthur presents the New Testament church, with its emphasis on preaching, fellowship, purity, and godly fear, as our model. “The gospel is often . . . disturbing, revolting, upsetting, confrontive, convicting, and offensive to human pride. There’s no way to ‘market’ that.” The book contends that numerical growth is not the best way to gauge a church’s health. Instead, “if we minister for spiritual growth, numerical growth will be what God chooses it to be.” It warns that merely churching the unchurched accomplishes nothing of eternal value.

Adventist readers will take exception to the author’s contention that teaching conditional immortality undermines evangelism by minimizing the punishment for sin. “Why then are Adventists among the fastest-growing faiths?” The book’s advocacy of Calvinistic predestination will trouble Arminian readers.

In spite of these two reservations, Ashamed of the Gospel presents a powerful challenge. The writing sparkles with quotable lines. And the biblical basis for its arguments is compelling. The Adventist ministry should pause to ponder this book’s message as it adopts the marketing techniques of popular churches.

The Power of Small Groups
Miguel Angel Cerna, Southern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, P.O. Box 969, Glendale, California 91206, 1991, 243 pages, US$13.00, paper. Reviewed by Brian Jones, Seventh-day Adventist pastor, Frametown, West Virginia.

The past 15 years have brought a deluge of books on church growth. Occasionally one of extraordinary merit appears. Cerna has written such a book. The author has something to say, and he says it directly and clearly. From Scripture, the writings of Ellen White, and practical experience he builds a strong case for small groups as essential for dynamic church growth. Passion for the gospel and the salvation of souls permeates Cerna’s book. His material remains free from manipulative methodology and disreputable marketing techniques that can mar church growth.

Many others have articulated the value of small groups. But Cerna presents a valuable twofold approach. He gives the essential ingredients of success in small group ministry and step-by-step plans that enable groups to fulfill their potential for evangelism and nurture.

Recognizing the popularity of small groups, the author also points out that many groups flounder because they lack a defined purpose or miss crucial elements in their activity. To be effective, small groups must have Bible study, worship, fellowship, and mission. The absence of any of these will eventually cause a group to stagnate, unravel, or become imbalanced.

Cerna emphasizes the Jethro principle of Exodus 18 and the apostolic plan of delegation (2 Tim. 2:2). He points out that small groups grow in a church with a well-defined mission. The author tells what happens in small groups, how they function, who makes small groups successful, and when to begin. He clearly defines the work of the pastor in launching and maintaining small groups. And Cerna is no theoretician. By using the plans described in this book, he has baptized 1,300 people in the past seven years in two North American churches. The book is for those pastors who want to see their churches grow in grace, zeal, and missionary effectiveness.

The Great Commission is not a marketing manifesto.
influence to direct the choices of its membership, it causes members to rely on the mandates of the church rather than on God. An element of distrust is automatically introduced when someone chooses differently than the prescribed manner, regardless of the reasons for that choice.

Finally, these policies introduce an element of uncertainty between Adventists and non-Adventists. In trying to stop marriages to non-Adventists we also inhibit relationships with non-Adventists. How can I be friends with non-Adventists and yet tell my children that they can’t marry a non-Adventist? Or how do I explain that it is OK to be their friend, but that you can’t fall in love with them? If, by chance, I am brave enough to allow myself and my family to become friends with those who aren’t Adventist, what message do these friends receive when I tell them my child cannot marry theirs because they aren’t Adventist? Worst of all is the attitude that is represented when we say, “If you would just become an Adventist, then . . .” It is amazing how arrogant and self-centered we can be when attempting to preserve Adventism.

I believe the Adventist Church would be better served if we would untie the hands of pastors and allow them to treat each couple on the basis of their unique relationship.—Daniel J. Nelson, pastor, Parkview SDA Church, Galesburg, Illinois.

We the pastors of Area 6 of the Central California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists are very disappointed with the proposed Church Manual statement regarding “Marrying Non-Adventists.” Even though the Minister’s Manual statement was never a voted policy, to many conference presidents it was so in practice! Many pastors who performed mixed weddings were strongly chastised by their superiors, and in many cases suffered severe consequences for such actions. On the other hand, a good number of conference presidents ignored the “policy,” and allowed the ministers in their conferences to perform such weddings. We know of church administrators who have performed mixed marriages themselves. The problem with the Minister’s Manual policy is one of interpreting “unbelievers.” Obviously, it is interpreted very differently by different people.

Our disappointment is heightened by the fact that the proposed policy does not clarify the issue. To the contrary, it complicates things by defining “unbeliever” as “non-Seventh-day Adventist.”

May we propose the following change to the proposed Church Manual statement, starting at the middle of the fourth paragraph: “For these reasons, the Seventh-day Adventist Church considers that the ideal marriage should be among people of the same faith. But because circumstances change, and because each case is different, we leave the final decision upon the good judgment of the minister who has counseled and worked directly with the couple.”—Antonio Romero, for Area 6 pastors, Lindsay, California.

Another look at Valuegenesis

Helmut Ott’s Valuegenesis analysis (February 1994) prompts me to respond by referring to what Jesus said: “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Jesus is the truth; we need to know Him.

Could it be that our youth don’t have assurance because most of the adults around them are destitute of it? Could it be that salvation and justification have been looked upon solely as a gift outside of the context of the new covenant? “A covenant is an agreement by which parties bind themselves and each other to the fulfillment of certain conditions. Thus the human agent enters into agreement with God to comply with the conditions specified in His Word. His conduct shows whether or not he respects these conditions” Ellen G. White Manuscript Releases, vol. 1, p. 110).

Maybe our response is so weak, our searching so shallow, because we haven’t found the Pearl of great price. An infinite sacrifice was made and an infinite cost was paid for sinners, and when kids see us in our demeanor and devotion quite casual they must get the impression the gift is not worth all that much.

Kids are smart. They see from our style how much we value the gift of God. Maybe it’s time we all discover anew so great a salvation, and confess that maybe we’ve missed the priceless treasure.—David Merrill, Cornville, Arizona.

Helmut Ott touches one of the most critical problems in the life of a Christian. Having learned to accept Christ as our only hope, having made great progress in daily living and getting victory over sin, yet recognizing that not a day passes without temptation, can we close the day with songs of gratitude for complete preparation for the end of life? As we close the day on our knees, sincerely thankful for every good blessing received in this day, is there a consciousness at the same time of the need for forgiveness, and further preparation for our last days on this earth?

It has been 84 years since I made my full surrender to Christ. Can I lie down to rest at the end of the day with assurance and peace in my heart, relax quietly, go to sleep? Yes, I can and I do. I am sure if there is more He needs to do for me, He will give me another day, and He continues to do just that. Every new day is a promise of greater blessings.

How can I be sure? My answer is in Matthew 22:37-39—love. You close the day with love in your heart, to your Maker and Saviour, and your neighbor.—R. J. Roy, Prescott, Arizona.
Great controversy tour
Gerard Damsteegt, of Andrews University, will host a visit to the roots of Adventist heritage in Europe from June 5-21. Places seen will include Rome, Austria, Prague, Germany, and France. The tour will focus on the heroic experiences of God’s people from early Christianity, the Dark Ages, the Reformation, to the French Revolution.

The tour will include outstanding speakers such as H. Stephen Glenn, Nancy Van Pelt and Richard Sawin. Campus housing available. Call Dr. Millie Youngberg’s office at 616-471-6366 or write: Family Life International, Andrews University, Bell Hall, Room 214, Berrien Springs, MI 49104.

1994 School of Evangelism
You can register now for the 1994 School of Evangelism conducted by the Adventist Evangelistic Association in Newbury Park, California. The faculty for the November 29-December 8 session includes Mark and Teenie Finley; Don and Margie Gray; Lyle and Peggy Albrecht; Dan and Gloria Bentzinger; Richard and Mary Halversen; Leo and Tammy Schreven. Enrollment is limited. 805-373-7612.—C. Lloyd Wyman, coordinator.

Family Life International
Revitalize your ministry by attending Family Life International at Andrews University. July 10-18! FLI provides seminars for pastors and laypersons to discover God’s solutions to family problems. Celebrate our twentieth year with Drs. John and Millie Youngberg along with hundreds of pastors, family life educators, teachers, and parents from around the world.

FLI ‘94 offers two areas of study: parenting (blended families, stepfamilies, managing family resources) and methodology (methods of family life instruction). Participants can receive either two or three credit hours toward updating teacher certification and toward Andrews University Certification of Family Life Educators.

Outstanding speakers include H. Stephen Glenn, Nancy Van Pelt and speaker/author Margaret Sawin. Campus housing available. Call Dr. Millie Youngberg’s office at 616-471-6366 or write: Family Life International, Andrews University, Bell Hall, Room 214, Berrien Springs, MI 49104.

Ministry Index, 1993
Daniel J. Drazen, editor of Seventh-day Adventist Periodical Index, Andrews University, has prepared a complete index to 1993 Ministry magazine, including author, subject, and book review listings. Readers wanting a free copy of the index may write to the Ministry office.

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Unique glimpses of the Saviour await you as Calvin B. Rock explores the role and place of Christ in the plan of salvation. From Sin-bearer to Sacrifice, from Substitute to Standard, from Shewbread to Seed, he examines the multiple attributes of Christ and shows how His righteousness is the solution to our salvation needs. Paper, 159 pages. US$9.95, Cdn$13.95.

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