How much diversity can we stand?

You ask, “How much diversity can we stand?” (April 1994). Here is my answer: “The third angel of Revelation 14 is represented as flying swiftly through the midst of heaven crying: ‘Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ Here is shown the nature of the work of the people of God. They have a message of so great importance that they are represented as flying in the presentation of it to the world. They are holding in their hands the bread of life for a famishing world. The love of Christ constraineth them. This is the last message. There are no more to follow, no more invitations of mercy to be given after this message shall have done its work. What a trust!” (Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, pp. 206, 207).

How much diversity does the above allow?—Jeremia Florea, retired pastor, Bee Branch, Arizona.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church came into existence through the providence of God. Our mission is found in the words of Revelation 10:11: “Thou must prophesy again before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings.” The immediate context indicates that this “prophesying” would have as its primary focus the end-time prophecies of the book of Daniel and its companion book, Revelation. All of these end-time prophecies are encompassed in the three angels’ messages of Revelation 14:6-12. We do not have the option of picking and choosing what portions of this last-day message we are to preach to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. Our mission is to preach all of these three angels’ messages!—David H. Sharpe, pastor, Paradise Valley SDA Church, Phoenix, Arizona.

Are there four significant segments within the church today: mainstream, evangelical, progressive, and historic? If that is so, let us get rid of them at once and fulfill the prayer of Jesus in John 17:17, 21 that there be, not four segments but one.—A. N. Riggins, retired pastor, New Farm, Queensland, Australia.

The best in Adventism is that which is biblical. The Adventist position on truth should never be reduced to an idolatry of our history. We as a church must never become so concerned with the traditional formation and interpretation of the exact truths of the church that we lose sight of the path we took in discovering them.

We need to ask ourselves, “Is Adventism based on tradition, human intellect and rationale, the writings of Ellen White and our church founders? Or is it founded and built on the Bible and the Bible alone?” If we say that we truly base our belief and doctrine on the Word, then that which is of central importance should be that which the Bible is focused on—the cross of Christ. Then the Adventist Church should serve to enlighten and uplift Jesus and the cross. The crucified and risen Saviour “is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer” (The SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 6, p. 1113).—Macgregor L. Ostrander, pastor, Findlay Seventh-day Adventist Church, Findlay, Ohio.

Jesus warns us that a “house divided against itself shall not stand” (Matt. 12:25). We are not a creedal or a dogmatic church, but we are united on the basic belief that the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy provide the structure on which we base our faith and the reason for our existence. History has shown that denominations with a flexible core of beliefs have lost their credibility.

Our distinctive Adventist beliefs help us define the character of God, the nature of His kingdom, and the meaning of the gospel. Since beliefs can be replaced only by other beliefs, we risk reshaping our understanding of these subjects on the basis of new nonbiblical but seductive teachings in fashion in the world today.—John Ferraro, pastor, New Haven Seventh-day Adventist Church, New Haven, Connecticut.

Some diversity there will be and should be, but what justifies our existence as a church? The Adventist Church is distinctive in its mission to recover and proclaim truths revealed in Scripture that have been neglected or lost sight of, truths that are especially relevant for the end-time. These include:

1. The character of God. God is love. He will not burn sinners in hell forever. His sovereign will does not determine who will choose to be saved. He extends salvation to all.

2. The nature of humanity. Humankind was made in the image of God with freedom to make moral choices. We are not inherently immortal. We are made to live a wholistic life.

3. The nature of sin. Sin is rebellion against God. Salvation includes obedience to all of the commandments of God, including the Sabbath, made possible by the restoration of a loving relationship with God through righteousness by faith.

4. The nature of God’s judgment. We are living in the pre-Advent judgment time, at the end of which Jesus will return to bestow immortality upon all who are called by His name.

These and other distinctive truths make up the “Advent message.” Without this Seventh-day Adventists have no right to exist.—Steven P. Vitrano, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

(Continued on page 30)
It is not often that administrators enter the theological arena, but Herman Bauman, president of the Arizona Conference, contributes to the discussion regarding the humanity of Jesus in the article “And the Word was made flesh.”

This year we have presented 10 articles on preaching and we add two more in this issue since we left one out in the October printing. Rex Edwards caps a great series with his piece on “The art of expository preaching.” Victor Hulbert adds a variety of ways in which the preacher can keep the attention of children: no mean feat. I am especially interested in readers trying out some of his ideas and writing us on what happened.

Alfred C. McClure tells us about one of the greatest evangelistic thrusts the North American Division has ever planned—Net ’95. This one centers on using the latest satellite technology. And a pastor, James Ellithorpe, stirs up our minds regarding better ways for the organization to accomplish its mission. Greg Bratcher encourages us to learn from the life of Nehemiah how to be more effective pastors and leaders.

As we close this year, thank you for all your support and many encouraging letters. May the grace and peace of our Lord and Saviour be with you at this time.

MINISTRY is the international journal of the Seventh-day Adventist Ministerial Association.

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The other day I became an uninvited witness to an engaging after-dinner conversation among several Christian friends. The debate began quite harmlessly by the remark of one who considered himself a born-again Christian: “What will it be like in heaven? Will we have tables and chairs when we eat?” Answers ranged from strongly positive to aggressively negative. The “yes” answers were buttressed by arguments that heaven is not a place for the lazy or the ease-loving; it is an active place in which every craft of human skill will be perfected. The “no” answers were supported by equally good arguments that heaven must not be interpreted in terms of human understanding of the world, with its materialistic emphasis on food and drink.

In the midst of our lively conversation a wit remarked that she knew for sure that some in that room would have no opportunity to practice their earthly professions. Her remarks were directed to one doctor, two nurses, and one police officer in our party. Everyone laughed and got back to the argument of what life in heaven will be like. We generated a lot of theological heat, but no light, and the debate threatened to lead to a loss of temper, when one hitherto silent but thoughtful person raised another important issue: “Wouldn’t it be better to talk about how to get to heaven?”

Although our conversation ended on that sober note, it reminded me of what is so common in Christian conversation and conduct. With apologies to C. S. Lewis, we might call it the Screwtape technique. In his book *The Screwtape Letters* Lewis presents a series of imaginary letters that a senior demon called Screwtape writes to a junior partner not experienced in the skillful art of tripping human beings, especially the ones who consider themselves saints or on the verge of being so.

In these letters Screwtape gives detailed instruction as to how to divert people’s attention from important issues, vital priorities, and appropriate concerns. For example, when John is praying for his mother who is suffering from rheumatism, Screwtape advises the junior demon not to cause John to lose faith in prayer. Instead John should be encouraged to pray for his mother at all times; meanwhile, John’s attention should be diverted from the necessity of massaging his mother’s aching joints.

In another letter Screwtape suggests that Christians must be encouraged to worry and fret over great and grave issues in order to divert their attention from real and immediate problems. For example, Christians must be concerned about the workings of the United Nations and world peace. Screwtape would not only encourage that, but lead Christians to be so engrossed in world peace that they have little or no interest in promoting peace with their spouses or their children or their community.

The name of the game, says Screwtape, “is to have them all running about with fire extinguishers whenever there is a flood.”

How often we become victims of the Screwtape technique and pat ourselves on the back that we are pretty good saints! We spend enormous time debating the minute points of a doctrine but hardly tell anyone that Jesus saves. We are so busy speaking of Global Mission that we can’t cross the street in the name of Jesus. We are concerned about the movements of the body during the worship hour, but hardly let our inmost beings be touched by the demands of that worship experience. We like to preach like Spurgeon, but can’t help out in kindergarten. We sing amazing grace, but trust in our inner strength. We tithe in mint, but give justice and compassion an extended holiday.

Again, with apologies to Lewis, and in keeping with the season, I wonder: If there were two doors, one marked “Christ,” and the other marked “Christmas party,” which one would we choose?

The Screwtape technique suggests the second. That’s the natural choice. It involves little risk. It demands nothing of a personal sacrifice or surrender. It promises fun.

But true Christian calling has no room for the Screwtape technique, no room for pretension. Christianity calls us to face reality without recourse to illusion. It defines sin by its right name. It seeks righteousness with all the demands that it involves. It is neither easy nor gullible. It calls for a decisive, firm choice—today, every day—to be with Jesus, to let Him be all in all. With all His grace, with all His demands, the gospel is neither superfluous nor illusory.
The art of expository preaching

Rex D. Edwards

It is proclaiming the Word of God.

In 1928 the July issue of Harper’s magazine carried an article by Harry Emerson Fosdick in which he criticized expository preaching as outmoded and undesirable. Rather than focusing upon incidents involving the history of an antiquated people, preaching, said Fosdick, should promote contemporary themes. It is easy to agree with his caustic remark that people seldom come to church deeply concerned about what happened to the ancient Jebusites! One still hears objections from ministers and occasionally from congregants that expository preaching has little place in the pulpit of the nineties. Let us examine these objections, define expository preaching, and review the preparation and advantages involved in this arena of homiletics.

Objections to expository preaching

1. Expository sermons are dull and uninteresting. This criticism is valid for a counterfeit of expository preaching in which the homiletic juice is drained from each word and phrase of a lengthy passage and then seasoned with a dash of platitudinous exhortation. No wonder many object to this impostor of biblical preaching.

2. Expository preaching is antiquated, doctrinaire, and unrelated to life. Society is plagued by a multiplicity of perplexing problems that demand relevant answers, whereas the Bible is clothed in the language and thought forms of antiquity. Critics of expository preaching argue that ancient peoples and places cannot speak to our problems as can the insights of modern science, particularly the sciences relating to mental, emotional, and group behavior.

Yet the Bible is a book of life; it grew out of life and speaks to life. It deals with the reality of human wickedness and failure, sorrow and death, while also confronting us with the reality of redemption, the possibility of forgiveness, and the assurance of life eternal in Christ. The effective expositor brings God’s Word out of the past and lets it speak to life today.

3. Expository preaching requires time and training lacking for the average minister. Many pastors, caught up in the round of weekly activities and congregational demands, feel like hamsters in a pet store treadmill. Topical sermons are easier and less time-consuming to prepare than expository sermons, which involve hours of intense preparation. But members can learn to respect their pastor’s study hours provided they know he or she has specific time set aside for this and they hear sermons bearing the fruit of such research.

Defining expository preaching

What, then, is expository preaching? According to Jeff Ray, expository preaching “is the detailed explanation, logical amplification, and practical explanation of a passage of Scripture.”1 Blackwood defines expository preaching as “the interpretation of life today, in light that comes from God today, largely through the Bible.”2 In like manner, H. E. Knott suggests that “the expository sermon is an effort to explain, illustrate, and apply the Scrip-
tures to life. . . . Its purpose is to help the hearers to find in the Sacred Writings the true interpretation of life.”

Donald Miller offers a broader definition. He contends that all genuine preaching is expository in that it sets forth divine truth, the substance of the preaching being drawn from the Bible. Thus “expository preaching is an act wherein the living truth of some portion of Holy Scripture, understood in the light of solid exegetical and historical study and made a living reality to the preacher by the Holy Spirit, comes alive to the hearer as he is confronted by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit in judgment and redemption.” For Miller, a sermon’s content is far more important than its homiletic form. High definition would label as expository any sermon—whether doctrinal, ethical, evangelistic, or life-situational—provided its approach is rooted in the Scriptures and it throws biblical light on the contemporary scene.5

What is the distinction between the textual and the expositional sermon? In the textual sermon, the text—usually a verse—furnishes the topic of the main divisions of the message. It may follow the natural divisions of the text, it may consist of inferences drawn from the text, or it may be based upon a great truth within the text. When the sermon divisions are derived partly from the text and partly from the subject, we have a textual-topical sermon. An expositional sermon, on the other hand, is based upon a passage or a unit of Scripture, and the theme with its divisions and development comes from that passage. The expositor is concerned about the biblical truth as the sacred writer declared it.

For example, what was the message given to Isaiah or Paul or John and what does it say to us today? The unit of Scripture handled may be a verse or verses, a chapter, or on occasion an entire book. In every case, the expositor seeks to find the revealed truth and to apply it to the needs of contemporary living. Expository preaching follows the “contextual principle” emphasized by G. Campbell Morgan. It is an excellent corrective for “proof text” preaching in which preachers isolate a verse or passage and impose their own thoughts upon it. Other forms of preaching (topical, textual, etc.) may contain elements of exposition and ought to embody, illustrate, and apply biblical truth. The expositor seeks the true understanding of the passage. To Jeff Ray, the expository preacher of the Word must be an inherently religious person endowed with vivid imagination and intellectual honesty.5 If preaching is “the communication of truth through personality,” then the first task is the making of a messenger of God who will handle aright the Word of truth. The making of the message, however, is our concern in this discussion.

Expository sermons, like other forms of preaching, include subject, scripture, introduction, discussion, conclusion, explanation, illustration, and application. As in the case of the Welsh woman and her recipe for rabbit pie, a great deal depends on getting the rabbit! There must be an idea and a passage of Scripture before there can be a sermon.

The expositor must take at least five steps:

1. Selection. This is the prelude to preparation. The preacher may wish to bring a series of messages on the great texts of the Bible, expounded in the light of the immediate context (the paragraph or chapter) or the remote context (the book and its main thought or purpose). This would involve the notable texts that have gripped him or her from the Bible—not from one of the sermonic “lazy aids.” There might well be a continuous exposition of some particular book. Having a planned course of sermons should be flexible enough to allow for interruptions caused by special occasions within the church year. In any case, the passage gives the preacher a theme to develop.

2. Exegesis. The expository sermon rests upon a thoroughgoing exegesis of the passage. This involves a “microscopic” study of the text, a careful analysis of words and phrases to determine what they mean in the biblical setting. With the aid of a lexicon, commentary, and Bible dictionary, the expositor mines the high-grade ore. A grasp of the ancient languages is a tremendous asset, yet a preacher can do a pretty fair job without a Greek shovel and a Hebrew spade.

Exegesis is an exciting part of sermon preparation, but what may fascinate the preacher may be meaningless to the congregation. An expositor with any degree of wisdom will not therefore parade his exegetical abilities in the pulpit. The people are in need of a word from God, not a series of word studies. Hungry people want good food, not a lot of talk about cooking processes!

Exposition rests upon careful exegesis. An exegete is the diver bringing up pearls from the ocean bed; an expositor is the jeweler who arranges them in proper relation to each other.7

3. Interpretation. The expositor focuses on the question “What does the Bible say?” The goal is presenting a faithful interpretation of the sacred writer’s thought, giving regard to the history, customs, and religious and mental framework of that age. Eschewing allegory, typology, and other unworthy forms of interpretation, the expositor seeks the true understanding of the passage. A superficial treatment of the passage threatens to im-
pose unnatural meanings upon it. If our chief responsibility is to “preach the word,” our aim in sermon preparation must surely be to discover what that word is and discern its relevance for our congregation.

4. Organization. The expository sermon must show unity and progress. It is not a rambling commentary on consecutive verses of the passage, ignoring logical arrangement, encouraging anticlimax, and boring the audience with needless details.

Unity is achieved partly by the selection of a sermon theme that reflects the theme of the passage itself. The sermon divisions grow out of the theme; consequently they are derived from the scriptural text. It is perfectly permissible, in the interest of logical order, to rearrange the ideas found in the text. Such a rearrangement will not destroy their essential meaning, and often aids the movement of the sermon toward the climax. True exposition builds the structure of the sermon out of the biblical materials at hand. Frequently, however, some of the materials gathered have to be discarded. A preacher must learn the art of omitting if the sermon is to move smoothly, show unity, and keep within proper time limits. There will be other days when the discarded ideas can be used. For, as one discerning member reminded her pastor, “we want you to preach the whole gospel, but not at one time!”

Sometimes a word or phrase in the text or passage may assist in sermon development. Psalm 51 is one of the most penitential pieces of literature in existence, communicating David’s longing for divine forgiveness and restoration to useful moral living. One word leaps out at the thoughtful reader, the word “spirit.” This suggests a possible topic: “The Spirit of a Cleansed Person.” The introduction might give the setting of the psalm. Three uses of the word “spirit” furnish the divisions of the sermon, thus: the penitent spirit (verse 17), the steadfast spirit (verse 10), and the willing spirit (verses 12, 13). The conclusion could promote the possibility of forgiveness and moral renewal for any person who has lost the joy of salvation. Obviously the psalm could not be used in its entirety, but the essential theme can be preserved.

5. Application. To make biblical truth clear, there must be explanation; to make it relevant, there must be application. Like all good preaching, expository sermons need a specific objective. Unless there is a definite purpose, why preach at all? “The object of preaching is not alone to convey information, not merely to convince the intellect . . . . The words of the minister should reach the hearts of the hearers.” We desire changes in the lives of people. Sometimes a preacher may start with a contemporary need and then relate biblical truth to it. Other times he or she will set forth the principles found in the passage, then make suitable application either along the way or in the conclusion. In any case, the preacher will throw the light of divine revelation upon human need and will present the resources of grace sufficient for that need. Such sermons disclose the vital relation between the passage and actual life. Though the setting of the text is ancient, the living word through it speaks to personal need and in the present tense.

Anyone who has dealt with human nature will appreciate the wisdom of making pointed applications in preaching. The effective sermon is specific and direct: “Thou art the man”; “This do and live”; “Thou art evil here and there.” While the business of conviction and confrontation belong to the Holy Spirit, the preacher is the herald who proclaims the gospel that touches every corner of human life, bringing hope and peace.

Advantages of expository preaching

Expositional preaching has impressive historical precedent to showcase its advantages. This is true whether it be Ezra causing the congregation of returned exiles to understand the words of the law (see Neh. 8:8); Jesus expounding a passage from Isaiah (see Luke 4:6-21); Peter at Pentecost interpreting God’s acts; Paul disclosing God’s purpose in Jesus by references to the Old Testament; the writer of Hebrews giving his understanding of the gospel; or the giants of the church from Augustine and Chrysostom to Luther, Calvin, Knox, Alexander Maclaren, G. Campbell Morgan, and John A. Broadus, effectively using this mode of preaching. Historical usage encourages the exposition of Scripture today.

A distinct advantage of expository preaching is that it magnifies the Bible, thus communicating the inspired and authoritative Word of God. Further, the people who sit under such preaching are helped to think and live biblically. Both pastor and people develop what Charles R. Brown has called “the scriptural point of view” with regard to the great doctrine of our faith. They view the whole panorama of divine truth rather than the tiny segments found in isolated texts.

Expository preaching also adds depth and comprehensiveness to preaching. From Scripture the preacher can handle controversial ethical issues, challenge unchristian attitudes and erroneous views, and encourage people in moral living. Is there not clear insight from the Word that can be thrown upon the disturbing problems of family disintegration, race relations, alcoholism, tyranny in political

—John MacArthur, Jr.
Rediscovering Expository Preaching, p. xv.

Benefits of expository preaching

- Expresses exactly the will of God with respect to His ultimate authority.
- Connects the preacher with the mind of the Spirit who authored Scripture.
- Promotes biblical literacy, yielding rich knowledge of redemptive truths.
- Transforms preachers themselves, leading to transformed congregations.

(Continued on page 29)
Net '95—it’s a net, not a hook!

An interview with Alfred C. McClure, president of the North American Division, by J. David Newman, editor of Ministry

Ministry: What is NET '95?

McClure: NET '95 is an exciting new innovative concept in evangelism. It takes advantage of breakthroughs in modern technology to communicate the gospel. Through the miracle of satellite transmission a single evangelistic series can be viewed in churches throughout North America.

Recently Billy Graham conducted a satellite evangelistic campaign from Europe with over two million attendees participating in 1,400 cities in 59 countries. Surprisingly, decisions for Christ were higher in meetings using large screens than in the live meeting where Mr. Graham was personally present.

Since the mission of the church is evangelism, NET '95 lifts our vision to something bigger than we have yet achieved. It places priority on evangelism. It unites the division in a common purpose. It is a process of ongoing systematic evangelistic training and outreach as a way of life for the North American Division.

Ministry: Why should a local church participate in NET '95?

McClure: There are ten advantages that a local church will receive by participating in NET '95.

1. NET '95 gives local congregations a sense of unified purpose. It enables them to be part of a larger plan to win North America for Christ.

2. NET '95 links local churches who may not have skilled trainers to a “speakers bureau” of the most outstanding presenters the North American Division has to offer.

3. NET '95 enables pastors with multichurch districts to conduct revival meetings, training events, and public evangelistic meetings under the direction of a competent elder where the pastor may not be personally present. These will be available on a regular, ongoing basis.

4. NET '95 achieves an “economy of scale” by purchasing evangelistic supplies in large quantities.

5. NET '95 focuses on local congregations’ attention to evangelism. It lifts the vision to mission.

6. NET '95 provides local churches an opportunity to purchase the necessary satellite equipment at reduced cost. The equipment can be used to receive Adventist Communication Network broadcasts regularly.

7. NET '95 enables a local congregation to conduct a full-scale evangelistic meeting at a reduced cost.

8. NET '95 brings the expertise of one of Adventism's most experienced evangelists to a local congregation thus maximizing the potential of having a successful evangelistic meeting.

9. NET '95 provides local pastors with a support base to do effective evangelism. Division staff, Adventist Media Center personnel, and successful evangelists across the country will be available to provide counsel as well as answer questions.

10. NET '95 will provide local pastors the creative skills of Adventism’s leading evangelistic thinkers in developing effective handbills, advertising, slides, sermon materials, and seminar support materials.

Ministry: What is the difference between satellite evangelism and a conventional series of meetings? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

McClure: Satellite allows us to evangelize in 4,632 places simultaneously. Imagine how long it would take us to accomplish the same outreach if we had to travel to each church one at a time. No church great or small need miss the convenient opportunity provided by satellite evangelism. One potential disadvantage is the impersonal nature of television. However, with proper organization on the local level and warm, friendly staff, this disadvantage is easily overcome. Keep in mind that television brings everything right into our living rooms and that form of the “personal” has been a great success.

Ministry: Who will satellite evangelism appeal to?

McClure: Satellite evangelism could reach North Americans of all races, ages, backgrounds, and cultures. It can reach urban and rural areas, large and
small churches. It will also reach behind doors that we could not otherwise penetrate.

**Ministry: What preparation should a local church plan?**

McClure: For most churches most of the plans have already been developed. However, on January 14, 1995, a Discover Jesus Seminar will be uplinked from Chattanooga. This is an inspiring seminar on the "Greatest Life Ever Lived." This seminar especially emphasizes Jesus' prayer life, the cross, second coming, and how to live the Spirit-filled life. This seminar continues weekly in local congregations for five weeks until the beginning of the evangelistic meetings.

**Ministry: Where and when will this evangelistic series be conducted?**


**Ministry: Who will conduct the series?**

McClure: Pastor Mark Finley, speaker of the *It Is Written* telecast, will be the speaker. Pastor Charles Brooks, of the *Breath of Life* telecast, will share in every presentation by answering Bible questions in a question-and-answer format.

**Ministry: What equipment is needed and what will it cost?**

McClure: All events will be broadcast live from Chattanooga for participation across North America. Each church will need a satellite signal reception dish, an addressable VCR, control boxes, cables to bring the signal into the church, a large-screen video projector, and screen or simply a large television set depending on the size of the church. The cost to the local church will be for the satellite signal reception equipment for which the Adventist Media Center has arranged a special price of approximately US$3,000. However, if there is some local equipment already available, this amount can be reduced. A large-screen video projector costs about US$2,000. In addition to this there is the cost of whatever local advertising the church may wish to do.

**Ministry: What costs will be paid by the division, union, conference, and local church?**

McClure: The North American Division will pay for all production and satellite broadcast expenses. Policies will vary slightly in each union and conference. However, there will be financial support from the unions and conferences to help pay for advertising, materials, and possibly provide equipment subsidies. There is no cost to the local church for any of the broadcast programs.

**Ministry: What will be done to follow up the evangelistic series?**

McClure: Follow-up will be cared for at the local level. This should include:

1. Personal visits;
2. A baptismal class or Discover Jesus Seminar;
3. Fellowship activities in the homes of church members and at the church building;
4. Training programs to ready new believers to share their faith with others and to serve Christ. We plan to offer several special events by satellite. These will be advertised at a later time.

**Ministry: How many churches have signed up for this special event and is it still possible for churches to sign up?**

McClure: At least 800 churches are planning to be involved in NET '95. Yes, there is still time to become involved, but a church would need to contact its conference leaders immediately to work out the details.

**Ministry: Can individual members who have a satellite dish participate by hosting meetings in their home?**

McClure: Yes! Small groups can be formed in homes, and I hope that thousands will participate in this way.

**Ministry: Where can a person get further information?**

McClure: Most information can be secured from your local conference ministerial secretary. For information on equipment you can call 1-800-ACN-1119.

**Ministry: What would you like to say in conclusion?**

McClure: God has blessed us with all kinds of exciting technology that can be used for the proclamation of the gospel. We need to use every available medium to prepare the world for the soon return of Jesus Christ. Satellite evangelism is one important way that we can use this new technology. But more important than any technology is each member of the church. The most effective witness is how each member lives out the life of Jesus in their own individual lives.

Ellen White reminds us that if we were "kind and courteous and tender-hearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one" (*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 189). Hundreds of prayer groups are forming across the division, pleading with God to make this evangelistic outreach something out of the ordinary. Here is a grand opportunity for this church to share with our neighbors in the North American Division what Jesus means to us.
The Gospel vs. Legalism

Galatians contains troublesome texts in which Paul seems to make contradictory statements about God’s law. In his studies to find out what Paul really meant, Marvin Moore discovered that Paul’s Epistle has a powerful message for SDAs today. His compelling book explores God’s intent for the law and shows how we can escape legalism to experience joyful freedom in Christ. Paper, 192 pages. US$10.95, Cdn$15.85.

Wings of Steel

Terrifying falls, biting cold, intense hunger, furious storms, and the sabotage of jealous climbers couldn’t keep Richard Jensen and Mark Smith from a record-breaking 39 days on the face of El Capitan, pioneering a controversial route. Wings of Steel is a fascinating adventure and powerful spiritual odyssey. By Richard Jensen. Paper, 160 pages. US$8.95, Cdn$12.95.

The Nature of Christ

Help for a church divided over perfection Roy Adams, associate editor of the Adventist Review, faces the most explosive theological issues in Adventism: the human nature of Christ as it relates to perfection, the 1888 General Conference session, and what some have called the apostasy of the SDA Church. This book is must reading for those on both sides of these issues. Paper, 160 pages. US$9.95, Cdn$14.40.

Watching the War

Meet Malachon and Pershia, rulers of Planet Senteria. Through the aid of their all-seeing screen, they watch horrified as an evil force plummets Earth into darkness. Breathlessly they wait to see what the Trinity will do. Then the incomprehensible happens. The Father, Son, and Spirit call it redemption. Unable to grasp it, Malachon and Pershia simply call it love. An unfallen world’s view of Calvary, by David B. Smith. Paper, 128 pages. US$5.95, Cdn$8.60.

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Victor Hulbert

**It's not enough to preach about the family.**

Family Celebration. That slogan enticed me to visit a nearby church to see what ideas it might have for reaching children. I was impressed. There was a magnificent children's story, and the sermon was family-centered. But then I noticed that my children, along with other children nearby, were taking little interest in the message preached. Actually, I could not blame them. The pastor's long words went way above their heads. While the sermon was about the family, it was not for the family.

My mind flashed back to my childhood years. Church services for me meant listening for peculiarities in the preacher's voice, or surreptitiously scribbling in the back of the hymnbook. Sermons were endured rather than enjoyed. I would time the pastoral prayer with a stopwatch. Eight and a half minutes was the record.*

Making church both interesting and a learning experience for adults and children is quite a challenge—one that is unmet and perhaps largely unrecognized. In the current debate on worship, children are left on the fringes. They have their five-minute storytime, and everything else is targeted toward adults.

Is it any wonder that many youth drop out of the church? Not primarily because they disagree with its beliefs, but rather because they are bored with its practice. This fatal boredom begins while sitting by mother's knee in church.

What is the solution? How can we make the church service interesting to the whole family, including the children, while still communicating the great themes of salvation and our distinctive Adventist message?

**Christ's example in reaching children**

Jesus succeeded in reaching both children and their parents. He spoke in simple terms and told stories. Those stories had a simple meaning for the children and a deeper meaning for the deeper minds.

In secular communication, one of the broadcasting principles used by the BBC is that all programming should be understandable to a 14-year-old, even the deepest documentary. How much more so for Christian sermons! Some preachers seem to relish exhibiting the prodigious eloquence of their extensive vocabulary. But in Christlike communication, a short word is better than a long one.

The use Jesus made of illustrations shows how they can clarify a message and drive it home, carrying the audience all along the way. Illustrations also provide a breather between two deep thoughts. Children—along with many adults—will remember your stories long after your sermon notes have turned yellow.

Another communication tool Jesus employed was humor. Can you imagine someone trying to take a plank out of his own eye? Or a camel squeezing
through the eye of a needle? Can you imagine a father giving his son a stone to eat? Or that persistent widow continually banging on the judge's door, with the bleary-eyed judge, nightcap on and candle in hand, eventually promising justice? Jesus no doubt told these stories with a smile on His face. Appropriate humor remains an effective tool today, even with the important and serious messages we must preach.

Children's work sheet

One method I have found especially helpful in keeping the attention of children is to provide them with a work sheet for the sermon. I design it immediately upon finishing my sermon preparation while the ideas are still bubbling through my mind. It takes only a half hour and access to a photocopier, but the dividends are immense. The work sheet does not have to be a technological masterpiece or even particularly creative. Yet to my amazement, children use it to follow along with every word of the sermon.

Benefits realized far surpass the sermon itself. The children even relate to me as their pastor in a more positive way, realizing that I care enough about them to provide for their interest.

Preparing a work sheet

Here are some suggestions useful to me in preparing the work sheet and to others in using it:
1. It must directly relate to the sermon.
2. The flow of questions and ideas should follow the flow of the sermon. For example, the first question should find its answer somewhere in your introduction, and so on throughout the sermon.
3. If you have artists available, ask them to add some little drawings. I use a simple desktop publishing program with religious graphics, but before I had a computer the children were just as happy with my printing.
4. Make sure the children receive the work sheet. Some deacons may not be convinced of its importance, so ask the children to raise their hand if they need one. Have pencils available as well.
5. Encourage parents to help their children with the work sheet, perhaps going through it with them later in the day. This way both parents and children retain more of the sermon content.
6. Let the children know that this is not a test to prove themselves; it is all for fun and learning. You are not going to check their answers, though you will be delighted to see their work.

Content of the work sheet

Here are particular features I include in my work sheets:
1. Texts with words missing for the children to fill in.
2. A question about a passage or illustration in the sermon. For instance, while preaching about Christ's visit to Bethany in Luke 10, I asked them to listen for the names of the three characters in the story.
3. Multiple-choice questions based on the thoughts in the sermon. This is especially helpful when using long theological words that need explaining. Given three alternatives to choose from, a child may for the first time realize what "sanctification" means.
4. A box for marking the number of times they hear a particular word in the sermon. This is great for topical sermons, such as when preaching on the Holy Spirit or on baptism. Or you

Maintaining interest during the sermon

- **Use visual aids.** When I preached on forgiveness I had a stone with the word "FIRST" painted on it. I asked the congregation what it meant—and it was the children who got the answer first. (If you are still wondering, check John 8:7.)

- **Use overheads.** The eye remembers more than the ear. The two together are most effective.

- **Use children.** Involve children as part of the sermon. For example, a week in advance you might hand those who wish to participate a numbered Bible text. Then during next week's sermon, each participating child can stand and read out loud the text at the appropriate moment. Another idea is to have children help with holding up a chart or conducting some "experiment."

- **Listen to them.** When did you last visit the cradle roll or kindergarten Sabbath school? Sit with children on your knee. Listen to their wisdom. They may give you the topic for your next sermon! At the least they will appreciate your interest in them.

- **Make the children's corner interactive.** Ask the children how their week has been. Involve them in the story. Ask if a boy or girl would like to pray for the congregation before the children return to their seats.

- **Divide your sermon** with special music or by using different speakers. My wife and I sometimes preach together. The change of flow, the different style, and the different voice add interest and variety.
might have them write in the box how many times they hear a Bible text quoted.

5. Questions that cause them to think but that are not so difficult that they get bored.

6. A challenge at the end of the sheet. This should be related to the sermon, but may differ from the challenge you are giving their parents. If the sermon is a call to commitment, you may write out a short prayer, asking them that if they agree with the prayer, to sign their name at the bottom. If you are preaching about the family, ask them to make a secret commitment to do something special for mommy and daddy this afternoon. (Next week in the children’s corner you can ask them what they did.) Sometimes I give them a task that they can do only with adult help. Thus the message of the sermon truly becomes a family affair.

Worth the effort

If you accept the challenge of providing the children with a work sheet for your sermons, I guarantee you will be impressed by the response. They will be sitting, pencils poised, ready to answer your next question. They will come up afterward to thank you or to show you their work. And you will find yourself becoming more aware of their needs and interests in the content of the sermon itself. The week you forget to do a work sheet, you will make a vow never to let it happen again.

Encouraging youth and child participation in the worship service takes time and effort, but the rewards and the satisfaction are immense. “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (Matt. 25:40).

—James O. Ellithorpe

Toward a workable structure

James O. Ellithorpe

One pastor shares his burden as to why and how the church needs to change its structure.

Our church is facing a threefold crisis related to structure. First, a crisis in organization. The reorganization of 1901 was appropriate for that time and has served us well. But as we approach the twenty-first century, is our structure bloated?

Second, a crisis in mission. We have forgotten that pastoring and evangelism are our primary business. Too much of our resources are used simply to maintain an outdated and inefficient form of organization. The ratio of pastors and evangelists to mid- and upper-level administrators is way out of proportion—not enough “Indians” and too many “chiefs.” And church growth in North America remains stunted.

Third, a crisis in budget priorities. When budget crunches come, all too often pastoral bloodletting occurs. The very people who help the local churches grow somehow can no longer be afforded. There was a time when pastors were relieved of their duties only because of immorality or financial irresponsibility, but recently we have seen a trend: pastoral careers ending for other disturbing factors such as a tithe shortage. (See “I used to be a pastor,” Ministry, May 1992.)

What can we do to reverse the process? I believe if we follow the three R’s we can change this trend: we must redefine, reorganize, and restructure. My comments pertain primarily to the North American Division, but the principles can be applied to the world church, as well.

My thesis is this: There is absolutely no need for duplication of services in the current system. With the savings achieved, we can revive our emphasis on pastoring and evangelism and spur church growth.

How do we do it?

First, streamline the church organization. I see three possibilities: (1) Eliminate all the local conferences
and have the churches report directly to the current unions, which in turn would report to the division; (2) Eliminate all the unions and have churches report directly to the local conferences, which in turn would report to the division; (3) Eliminate all the local conferences and unions and reorganize regionally, which regions would report directly to the division.

After tossing and turning over the merits and demerits of each option, I see great advantages and savings in eliminating the current local conferences. Eliminating the unions would not really save us a whole lot, since there are so few of them. Establishing new regions would be slow and cumbersome. The solution perhaps lies in how the local churches and pastors are organized.

How churches should be organized

Currently churches are organized into districts, with some districts having four or five churches. I have pastored districts with as many as four, and I know of pastors who have had as many as six! What is the ideal number? Members would all love to have their very own pastor. That’s virtually impossible except for large congregations. Most can accept sharing a pastor with another one or two churches, but when districts become too large, membership rebels. Administrators have responded by assigning on an average one pastor to two or three churches. The result? Pastors have so many people to please and so many duties to balance that church growth suffers. We pastors endure this, hoping and waiting for a “better” situation. However, for most of us, we move from one lateral position to the next. Indeed, not everyone can move “up the ladder,” whatever that means.

I look back in our history, and also look overseas, to see the church grow by leaps and bounds. Pastors outside North America sometimes can have 20 or more churches in their districts, with the laity largely responsible for the results. What would happen if we organized districts like that in North America? “Rebellion in the ranks!” you might say, but let’s not be so hasty. If you examine the period in North America when the church was growing at its fastest rate, you would find something very similar to the situation overseas. Only when we have gotten “lazy” and accommodated our members’ wishes for pastoral coverage have we seen a decline.

I propose organizing church districts into areas, and assign pastors (note the plural!) to each area, taking into account their personalities, spiritual gifts, and talents. Churches would be organized within state territories by phone area codes or another reasonable method. Pastors within these areas would share the preaching and overall care for their area. One of the pastors, with gifts and abilities in administration and leadership, would serve as the “senior pastor,” with the other pastors serving on the “staff.” The senior pastor would be directly responsible to the ministerial director of the larger denominational entity. Each staff would have pastors who would specialize in pastoral care, evangelism, visitation, missing member ministry, youth ministry, etc. This would have the direct benefit of minimizing deficiency and maximizing ability. Setting up pastoral teams within areas can optimize individual talents, skills, and gifts.

Furthermore, each area would have a central office location with a church secretary to care for necessary church duties. Using computerized church management software, all the churches in the area could maintain current mailing lists and streamlined treasury functions. With fax machines, cellular telephones, and pagers, the senior pastor could keep in regular touch with the staff and deal with emergencies as they arose.

New pastoral approaches

Laypersons can be trained for additional church responsibilities. Overflow seminary and college graduates could staff volunteer pastoral programs, thus freeing experienced pastors for evangelism in areas with the most potential for growth. Such restructuring of personnel resources and use of laypersons and volunteers would maximize evangelism and pastoral care, while at the same time conserving funds.

Pastoral remuneration needs close examination too. Does our wage structure reflect the importance of pastoral ministry? Does it provide incentives for excellence in pastoral work? Does our remuneration take into account years of service, quality, difficulty of service, and total responsibilities involved in pastoral work? Should there be room for rewarding excellence?

Pastors and evangelists should be the last people laid off, not the first, and done only in extreme circumstances. When the church recognizes a pastor’s calling and vocation and when the pastor accepts that call, they do so to serve the church for the rest of their lives. The church has an obligation to maintain them. At the same time, the church should not hesitate to replace ineffective and unproductive pastors.

In summary...

Implementation of any new idea is not easy. The restructuring proposed here would take time, but given a bold and willing leadership and an appropriate climate, the church could do it in five years. Resistance, of course, could be formidable. It would most likely come from those whose position and influence would be jeopardized. However, we as a church must be willing to fulfill the law of self-sacrifice for the overall good of the church. To do nothing condemns us and future generations to pain and pressure.
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A giant leap of faith in Brazil

The most ambitious and successful evangelistic thrust in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church took place last year in Brazil. This past spring, sponsors of the Voice of Prophecy radio program heard first-hand from Voice of Prophecy speaker Lonnie Melashenko how some 20,000 Brazilians were baptized into Christ through that ministry’s unprecedented nationwide campaign.

The evangelistic thrust into Brazil’s major cities coincided with the fiftieth anniversary of thatcountry’s Voice of Prophecy program, A Voz da Profecia. Tens of thousands across Brazil packed stadiums, auditoriums, university halls, and churches to hear the Word of God. Laypeople assisting local pastors prepared the way for the meetings. Working side by side with Brazilian youth were Adventist college students from North America.

Other North American Adventists, unable to travel south for Brazil ’93, supported the project through donations to the Voice of Prophecy. The sponsorship group, known as “VisionBuilders,” met this past spring in Palm Springs, California, to celebrate the success of the Brazilian crusade and devote themselves to new evangelistic projects.
The Brazil '93 team in Salvador, a seaport in the northeast, included North American and Brazilian Seventh-day Adventist college students.

Bougainvillea blossoms floated in an 80-foot-long baptistry constructed on a soccer field in São Luís.

The governor of the state of Espírito Santo received Pastor Melashenko at his office. The governor and his wife were among state and city officials who attended the Voice of Prophecy rally in Vitoria.

Nearly 30,000 came to the Fonte Nova soccer stadium for the closing rally that included a 50th anniversary celebration for the VOP in Brazil.
Did Jesus possess a sinful or a sinless human nature? Two basic positions are often presented. One is the prelapsarian position (the Latin lapsus, “to slip”). The advocates of this position state that Jesus possessed a human nature like Adam’s before he fell into sin; in other words, a sinless human nature. Jesus was, therefore, 100 percent sinless. He was born sinless and He never chose to sin. Thus, His life was in every way perfect. Because He was perfect and absolutely sinless, He was able to be our substitute on the cross and died to pay the price of our sins. In exchange for the sins we gave to Him, He gives to us His perfect righteousness. Consequently, when God looks at us, He doesn’t see weaknesses or failures, but only the perfect life and perfect record of Jesus, which cover us. The main problem people perceive with this view is that Jesus had an advantage over us and thus could not be our perfect example.

The second position is the postlapsarian. According to this view, Jesus possessed a human nature like Adam’s after he fell into sin; consequently, Jesus possessed a sinful human nature. They claim it was necessary for Him to have a sinful human nature in order to begin at the same point at which you and I begin. Only then could He truly be our example and show that it is possible for humanity to gain victory over sin and live a life of total obedience.

The postlapsarian theory has a number of problems. If Jesus possessed a sinful human nature like that of Adam after the fall, wouldn’t that make Him a part of the sinful human race that needs to be redeemed? If He Himself needed redemption, how could He be our redeemer?

That also brings up the question “Are people born guilty of sin and in a lost condition, or do they become guilty and lost only when they choose to sin?” In other words, is sin a condition or a choice? If we are born guilty and lost, every human being needs a Saviour. If we are born only with the possibility of sinning and do not become guilty until we choose to sin, then every baby who dies, every individual who does not reach the age of accountability, and everyone who does not sufficiently mature mentally will be saved without a Saviour. Could God allow heaven to have people in it who did not have a Saviour?

**Sinless perfectionism**

The main reason for believing and promoting the sinful human nature of Jesus is the concept of sinless perfectionism. There are those who believe and teach that God has to have a final generation of people who will prove to the universe that it is possible for human beings to keep God’s law. The suggestion is that we are that generation and that we must work diligently toward reaching that point of total victory over sin.

The usual response to that is twofold. First, Jesus has already provided the evidence, the only evidence the universe needs, that God’s law can be kept by human beings. He as fully human kept God’s law perfectly. Since then there’s been no question of created beings regarding God’s right-
ness and fairness in requiring obedience. Second, if God requires perfect obedience from all of those who as a part of this last generation would be ready to meet Him, is it not extremely discouraging that there is no one in history, except Jesus, who ever reached that perfect standard? If Jesus is the only successful one so far, that doesn’t give us a great deal of encouragement.

It is true that God does demand perfect obedience to His law. Notice how Ellen G. White expresses it: “God requires of all His subjects obedience, entire obedience to all His commandments. He demands now as ever perfect righteousness as the only title to heaven.”

But there is only one way we can accomplish it: by accepting Jesus as our Saviour. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8, 9). “The moment the sinner believes in Christ, he stands in the sight of God uncondemned; for the righteousness of Christ is his: Christ’s perfect obedience is imputed to him.”

We then are seen by God not simply as sinners who have been forgiven, but as though we had never sinned. “Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”

We need have no fear of the judgment; for God doesn’t look at us to see how well we have done in our Christian life, but He looks to see how well Jesus has done and credits that to our record. “Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute.”

“Be ye perfect”

Matthew 5:48 troubles many people. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” To be as perfect as God is? What a challenge! Ellen White helps us understand that text: “As God is perfect in His high sphere of action, so man may be perfect in his human sphere.”

Will we ever reach the ultimate goal, a state of total sinlessness? “At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God’s purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be continual advancement. Sanctification is the work of a lifetime.”

If sanctification is the work of a lifetime, we will never reach the goal of perfection unless we reach it at the moment we die. So while my life goes on I must continue to grow in Christ and move upward toward sanctification—perfection. Perfection is the goal to strive for, but with the realization that I will never fully reach it. Christ “is a perfect and holy example, given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern; but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it and, according to the ability which God has given, resemble it.”

“God doesn’t give us a great deal of encouragement that there is no one in history, except Jesus, who ever reached that perfect standard? If Jesus is the only successful one so far, that doesn’t give us a great deal of encouragement.”

The word “perfection” as used in Scripture could often be better understood as maturity. So God is inviting me to continue to mature in my Christian experience and my relationship with Him for as long as my life lasts.

“It is our lifework to be reaching forward to the perfection of Christian character, striving continually for conformity to the will of God. The efforts begun upon earth will continue through eternity.”

Perfection as maturity

Let me illustrate the concept of perfection in “our sphere” and at our stage of development. My wife and I have a beautiful granddaughter. When our son called to tell us of her birth he said, “She’s perfect.” And she was, perfectly formed and normal. Perfect in her sphere. Perfect for her stage of development. But she was far from being ultimately perfect and mature.

God sees us, when we are in Jesus, as perfect, even though our deeds and performance fall far short of ultimate perfection. Just as a baby grows and develops, learns and matures, as long as life lasts, so must we grow, develop, learn, and mature spiritually as long as we live.

Our granddaughter lives about 2,000 miles from us and so we don’t get to see her nearly often enough. When she was about 22 months old, she and her parents came to visit us. Breann had not yet learned to use the terms Grandma and Grandpa. We didn’t coach her to learn or say the words. We just developed our relationship with her while everyone called us Grandma and Grandpa. Our week together passed all too quickly, and we took them to the airport to return home. As we bade them goodbye, Breann looked straight at me, waved, and said, “Bye, bye, Gamma.” Let me tell you, my heart swelled with love and gratitude, and I assure you that indication of recognition and relationship was totally acceptable to me.

That’s the way God relates to us. Though at any stage of life our performance will not be 100 percent perfect, since we are in Jesus, He accepts it as though it were. And He sees it as perfect for our stage of development.

Now, it goes without saying that if Breann still calls me “Gamma” 20 years from now, I won’t be quite as thrilled. We expect her to mature and progress. So God doesn’t like to look at us and see us no nearer sanctification and perfection today than we were 20 years ago. But remember, our acceptance with Him is not based upon our spiritual growth; our spiritual growth is the result of knowing we have been accepted by Him.

Is perfection overcoming sin?

By the way, is perfection simply a matter of overcoming every known sin in one’s life? I talked with someone a short time ago who claimed that he had not sinned for the past two years. Ellen White has some counsel for those who make such claims. “Those who live nearest to Jesus discern most clearly the frailty and sinfulness of humanity, and their only hope is in the merit of a crucified and risen Saviour. . . . And the claim to be without sin is, in itself, evidence that he who makes this claim is far from
holy. . . . The greater the distance between himself and Christ, and the more inadequate his conceptions of the divine character and requirements, the more righteous he appears in his own eyes.” 9 Again she says, “None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin. . . . So it will be with all who behold Christ. The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves.” 10

Why so much confusion?

Now, why do we have two camps of Adventists taking opposite views regarding the nature of Christ? Those who hold one view as the “historic,” or “true,” Seventh-day Adventist message refer to the other as “heresy” or “new theology.” Numerous books and several independent ministries claim to proclaim the “truth” regarding this issue. At the same time, the book Questions on Doctrine, published by the church in 1957, has been condemned as heresy and a sellout to the evangelicals.

Why the confusion? The Bible assures us that “in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:1, 14). Yes, Jesus did indeed become a human being, a member of our race. The Bible also seems definite about Jesus being without sin: “The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (John 14:30). The devil could find nothing in Jesus by which He could be condemned. Peter expressed the sinlessness of Jesus “as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). The author of Hebrews identifies Him as holy and undefiled: “For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens” (Heb. 7:26).

Though the Bible seems clear regarding Jesus’ sinlessness, we get into trouble with the writings of Ellen White. The following Spirit of Proph-ecy references seem to support the prelapsarian, or sinless nature, view of Jesus.

“We should have no misgivings in regard to the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Christ.” 11

“Be careful, exceedingly careful as to how you dwell upon the human nature of Christ. Do not set Him before the people as a man with the propensities of sin. He is the second Adam. The first Adam was created a pure, sinless being, without a taint of sin upon him; he was in the image of God. He could fall, and he did fall through transgressing. Because of sin his posterity was born with inherent propensities of disobedience. But Jesus Christ was the only begotten Son of God. He took upon Himself human nature, and was tempted in all points as human nature is tempted. He could have sinned; He could have fallen, but not for one moment was there in Him an evil propensity. He was assailed with temptations in the wilderness, as Adam was assailed with temptations in Eden.” 12

The temptation of Jesus

Jesus, the “second Adam” and perfectly sinless, was tempted; in fact, He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). He was tempted in all things as we are, yet He never sinned, and is thus our perfect example. He was tempted to a far greater extent than we have ever been tempted. Observe Ellen White’s description: “The enticements which Christ resisted were those that we find it so difficult to withstand. They were urged upon Him in as much greater degree as His character is superior to ours.” 13 Think of the temptation He faced to use His divine power to protect Himself or meet His needs. How great the temptation must have been to come down from the cross! I have never been tempted that severely. Have you?

In the chapter “The Temptation” in The Desire of Ages, Ellen White describes Jesus’ greatest temptation. Attacking Jesus in the time of His greatest physical and emotional weakness, Satan tried to convince Jesus that He was not really the Son of God.

In fact, he tried desperately to turn the tables, to prevail upon Jesus that he, Satan, was really the son of God and that He, Jesus, was the angel fallen from heaven. Can you imagine how great was the temptation, in the face of that doubt and uncertainty, for Jesus to turn the stones into bread? I ask you, have you ever been tempted that severely?

Jesus: prelapsarian or postlapsarian?

Consider first the following quotations from Ellen White on the sinless human nature of Jesus.

“Never, in any way, leave the slightest impression upon human minds that a taint of, or inclination to, corruption rested upon Christ, or that He in any way yielded to corruption. . . . It is a mystery that is left unexplained to mortals that Christ could be tempted in all points like as we are, and yet be without sin. The incarnation of Christ has ever been, and will ever remain a mystery. That which is revealed is for us and our children, but let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such an one as ourselves, for it cannot be.” 14

“Christ is called the second Adam. In purity and holiness connected with God and beloved by God, He began where the first Adam began. Willingly He passed over the ground where Adam fell, and redeemed Adam’s failure. . . . In His human nature He maintained the purity of His divine character.” 15

“In the fullness of time He was to be revealed in human form. He was to take His position at the head of humanity by taking the nature but not the sinfulness of man.” 16

“Christ did not possess the same sinful, corrupt, fallen disloyalty we possess, for then He could not be a perfect offering.” 17

After reading these quotations there can be no doubt regarding the perfect sinlessness of the human nature of Jesus and that He possessed the nature of Adam before the Fall.

But now consider the following references that seem to suggest the postlapsarian position—that Jesus
possessed a sinful human nature.

“Clad in the vestments of human nature, the Son of God came down to the level of those He wished to save. In Him was no guile or sinfulness, He was ever pure and undefiled; yet He took upon Him our sinful nature.”

“In taking upon Himself man’s nature in its fallen condition, Christ did not in the least participate in its sin. He was subject to the infirmities and weaknesses by which man is encompassed.”

“He took upon Himself fallen, suffering human nature, degraded and defiled by sin.”

“It would have been an almost infinite humiliation for the Son of God to take man’s nature, even when Adam stood in his innocence in Eden. But Jesus accepted humanity when the race had been weakened by four thousand years of sin. Like every child of Adam He accepted the results of the working of the great law of heredity.”

“It was not a make-believe humanity that Christ took upon Himself. He took human nature and lived human nature. . . . He took our infirmities. He was not only made flesh, but He was made in the likeness of sinful flesh.”

That passage “in the likeness of sinful flesh” sometimes presents difficulty. Some say it means He took the form and nature that were like sinful flesh, but not really sinful. Others insist the passage means He took the form and nature exactly the same as our sinful flesh. Philippians 2:5-8 says, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”

The phrase “in the likeness” is translated from the Greek phrase en homoiomati. The term is used in Romans 8:3 and 1:23: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” “And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.” Does the term en homoiomati mean exactly alike in all respects? If so, according to Romans 1:23, unbelievers literally changed the “glory of the uncorruptible God” into an image of corruptible man, birds, beasts, and creeping things. Obviously such a conclusion is wrong.

But how do we understand the two sets of Ellen White statements that seem to be in opposition to each other? Does the Spirit of Prophecy contradict itself? Was Ellen White ignorant of the facts? If the answer to either of these questions is yes, we are in desperate trouble.

A possible solution to the dilemma

Let me suggest a possible solution to the apparent dilemma. Though Ellen White used the term human nature when referring to both aspects of Jesus’ humanity, perhaps some different terms and definitions would be helpful in bringing clarity. Perhaps in Ellen White’s day this issue was not a matter of significant concern, or possibly the term human nature was understood differently.

Is it possible that when Ellen White referred to Jesus’ sinless human nature she was talking about His spiritual nature?

Is it possible that when Ellen White referred to Jesus’ sinless human nature she was talking about His spiritual nature? Was Ellen White ignorant of a pure, undefiled, sinless state such as Adam was when He came forth from the hand of the Creator. Again is it possible that when Ellen White refers to Jesus’ sinful human nature she was referring to His physical condition, that is, His physical weaknesses that are a result of sin’s ravages upon the human race? He suffered tiredness, pain, hunger, and thirst. He needed food and rest. He craved human sympathy and needed divine assistance. He was subject to death. His circumstances, as far as His physical condition, were the same as Adam’s after the Fall; in fact, much worse, for He joined the human race after it had been weakened by 4,000 years of struggle in a sinful world.

Notice how both concepts are presented in these statements: “He took upon His sinless nature our sinful nature, that He might know how to succor those that are tempted.”

“He was unsullied with corruption, a stranger to sin; yet He prayed, and that often with strong crying and tears. He prayed for His disciples and for Himself, thus identifying Himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our failings, which are so common with humanity. . . . He was a mighty petitioner, not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points even as we are.”

“The human nature of Christ was like unto ours, and suffering was more keenly felt by Him; for His spiritual nature was free from every taint of sin. Therefore His desire for the removal of suffering was stronger than human beings can experience.”

“For four thousand years the race had been decreasing in physical strength, in mental power, and in moral worth; and Christ took upon Him the infirmities of degenerate humanity.”

Innocent infirmities versus sinful propensities?

Tim Poirier of the White Estate, in his paper “A Comparison of the Christology of Ellen G. White and . . .” (Continued on page 29)
Each one a Nehemiah

Greg Bratcher

Where there is a Spirit-driven leadership, there is a Nehemiah.

"Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the aged foundations; you will be called Repairer of Broken Walls" (Isa. 58:12).

"The work of restoration and reform carried on by the returned exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, presents a picture of a work of spiritual restoration that is to be wrought in the closing days of this earth's history." ¹

Three grave spiritual problems confronted Israel as they returned from Babylonian captivity. First, the sin of materialism caused the Israelites to become lax toward God's cause, leading them to neglect the rebuilding of the Temple, to withhold their tithe and offerings, and even to break the Sabbath (see Neh. 10:31-39; 13:15-22).

Second, the Israelites lost a sense of vision for their larger mission. "With fatal shortsightedness they turned again and again from their glorious destiny and selfishly appropriated to themselves that which would have brought healing and spiritual life to countless multitudes." ² "The chosen people did not become the light of the world, but shut themselves away from the world as a safeguard against being seduced into idolatry. The restrictions which God had given . . . were so perverted as to build up a wall of partition . . . , thus shutting from others the very blessings which God had commissioned Israel to give to the world." ³

A third obstacle Israel faced was a lack of spiritual leadership. Nehemiah himself spoke of leaders who had problems with stewardship and who led the people toward an inward-focused, self-serving religion (see Neh. 13:1-11). Without Nehemiah's leadership the rebuilding of Jerusalem would have languished. What was so remarkable about Nehemiah's leadership style?

A leadership of vision

Nehemiah had a vision for his people. It was a God-given vision, not his own. To make this vision work, he had to deal with Israel's primary problems, and Nehemiah dealt with them head-on. He did not pander to materialism (see Neh. 5:10-14; 10:31-39). He fought self-serving religion (see Neh. 4:6; 11:1, 2). He worked for respect for spiritual leadership (see Neh. 12:44, 45). Nehemiah gave Israel a clear-cut goal, placing before them a measurable God-given objective. As a result, Israel "worked with all their heart" (Neh. 4:6). They responded zealously toward a common purpose. "If the leaders in the cause of truth show no zeal, if they are indifferent and purposeless, the church will be careless, indolent, and pleasure-loving; but if they are filled with a holy purpose to serve God and Him alone, the people will be united, hopeful, eager." ⁴

A leadership of prayer

Nehemiah was a person of prayer. Prayer was very much the source of his strength and the power behind his plans. At times for days he "mourned
and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven” (Neh. 1:4). “As he prayed a holy purpose formed in his mind.”

A self-sacrificing leadership
Nehemiah set aside a secure career in the king’s court to serve God and His people. Even as governor of Judea, he willingly worked on the wall alongside common laborers (see Neh. 4:23). He chose not to take many of the financial benefits that were due his office (see Neh. 5:14-18). He lent poor Israelites his own money without interest (see verse 10). He even risked his life to see the wall completed (see Neh. 6:11).

A bold leadership
Nehemiah was so sure that his plan was God-inspired that he worked with great boldness and confidence. He ventured to ask the king for resources. He confronted the external opposition, and faced Sanballat and Tobiah. But even more courageously, he faced every internal opposition to the cause of God.

In his first speech, he exhorted the Israelites to rebuild the wall that “we will no longer be in disgrace” (Neh. 2:17). Those are strong words. When the nobles and officials were exacting usury from poor Israelites, Nehemiah rebuked them even though he needed their support for building the wall (see Neh. 5:1-12).

A delegating leadership
Nehemiah had enough confidence in the people to give them real responsibility and the necessary authority to carry out their assigned work. When the grassroots people were given this hands-on assignment, they worked diligently (see Neh. 3:5, 20).

The doctrines of the priesthood of believers and spiritual gifts have been in our midst for a long time, but where lies the real power and control? In the hands of the clergy. Ellen White strongly advocates using laypersons in carrying out God’s tasks: “God can and will use those who have not had a thorough education in the schools of men. A doubt of His power to do this is manifest unbelief; it is limiting the omnipotent power of the One with whom nothing is impossible. Oh, for less of this uncalled-for, distrustful caution! It leaves so many forces of the church unused; it closes up the way so that the Holy Spirit cannot use men; it keeps in idleness those who are willing and anxious to labor in Christ’s lines.”

One program that has helped to delegate, and thus motivate, people in regard to frontier mission work is the Adopt-a-People program. Evangelical Christians have empowered local churches to “adopt” unreached people groups with the specific goal of planting indigenous churches. This entails recruiting, training, funding, sending, supporting, praying for, and overseeing their own frontier mission team until the goal is accomplished.

Those who would doubt the effectiveness of such a program may well consider the results. Already one half of the 12,000 unreached people groups have been adopted, with someone responsible for reaching them.

Isn’t it time that we involve local churches in the task of reaching the unreached population segments by encouraging, coordinating, training, and enabling the laity for such responsibilities? The work will be finished the way it started—with local churches taking the lead (see Acts 13:1-3).

A leadership that keeps discipline
Nehemiah promptly rebuked the erring leaders and replaced them with trustworthy men. Then “all Judah brought the tithes . . . into the store-rooms” (Neh. 13:12). A leadership that believes in discipline and administrators it without fear or favor can do much in building confidence in the mission of the church.

Already one half of the 12,000 unreached people groups have been adopted, with someone responsible for reaching them.
Communicating leadership

"Nehemiah bore a royal commission requiring the inhabitants to cooperate with him in rebuilding the walls of the city, but he did not depend upon the exercise of authority. He sought rather to gain the confidence and sympathy of the people." 9

After his arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah first assessed the situation for himself by looking it over. Because of this thorough preparation, "he was able to speak of the condition of the city with an accuracy and a minuteness that astonished his hearers."10 He also communicated with the people "about the gracious hand of . . . God upon" him and "what the king had said" to him (Neh. 2:18). Communication and a constant link with God helped establish his authority and leadership with his people. "Nehemiah's whole soul was in the enterprise he had undertaken. His hope, his energy, his enthusiasm, his determination, were contagious, inspiring others with the same high courage and lofty purpose. Each man became a Nehemiah in his turn and helped to make stronger the heart and hand of his neighbor."11

Nehemiah's leadership proved contagious. With his commitment to the stewardship and mission of God's cause, with his style of leadership, many in turn became Nehemiahs themselves.

What of today? With the potential of almost eight million Nehemiahs in our midst, with the promise of the Holy Spirit ever present, is there anything too difficult for the Seventh-day Adventist Church to accomplish? "The God of heaven is pleading with His erring children to return to Him, that they may again cooperate with Him in carrying forward His work in the earth. They are to reveal an unselfish interest in the building up of His work in all parts of the world."12

* All Scripture passages in this article are from the New International Version.

2 Ibid., p. 705.
3 Ibid., p. 708.
4 Ibid., p. 676.
5 Ibid., p. 629.
6 Ibid., p. 648.
8 ———, Prophets and Kings, p. 670.
9 Ibid., p. 637.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid., p. 638.
12 Ibid., pp. 706-708.
I believe in literature evangelism

James A. Cress

I believe in literature ministry. I’ve served as a literature evangelist (LE), presented training classes and motivational seminars for LEs, and worked closely with LEs in pastoral and evangelistic work. In fact, I never want to begin an evangelistic series in a city without having a team of LEs preceding me there with literature. I also believe every pastoral candidate should have LE experience as a prerequisite.

We pastors need to reaffirm the value of “bookwork” and rebuild confidence in this vital ministry. In many countries literature evangelists are the only Adventist groups who still knock on doors and visit homes in a systematic way. Although their work hours are long and arduous and their financial reward is limited, most LEs maintain that soul winning is their goal and real reward.

Why do I believe in literature evangelism? Primarily because it is an excellent example of global mission. Every time they enter a home, LEs are reaching an unentered territory. Not only do they sell books to families, but they pray in homes they visit, enroll their contacts in correspondence study courses, give Bible studies, bring interested contacts to evangelistic meetings and church services, and lead souls to Jesus and His church.

Recruit LEs. Ask your conference publishing director to help you find and train a LE for your church. Not everyone is called to literature ministry and not everyone has the basic skills to meet the public. Talk about literature ministry as a viable option to selling cars or real estate. In virtually every district there are some whose spiritual maturity and innate people skills make them potential candidates. Target such individuals and encourage them to consider that God might use their talents in literature ministry.

Pray with LEs. Plan your schedule so that at least once each week you can meet and pray with those whose work is directly contacting the public. LEs pray with dozens of people daily, but they may seldom hear their name lifted to the heavenly throne unless their pastor seeks opportunities for spiritual fellowship. Show interest in their work. Inquire how their work is progressing.

Refer friends. Pastors contact many individuals who would readily respond to an LE’s visit. The success of Christian bookstores demonstrates the public’s interest. Our books and magazines are of the finest quality and easily attract the interest of those who see them. Don’t hesitate to suggest to those you meet that you have a friend who can help them find meaningful spiritual answers. Offer to facilitate an appointment between your contacts and the colporteur. You will reap the results of your referrals by those who begin to attend your church.

Support LEs. Plan your church’s budget to include funds for magazines and small books that LEs can give to those who do not purchase books on an initial visit. I know one church family that provides the gasoline for their LE to travel to various appointments. In another church, members distribute cards and brochures that provide sales leads for their LE. They keep their LE busy meeting people in their homes by doing much of the promotional work in his behalf. This is their missionary service.

Encourage your members to read. Far too many of our people lack spiritual reading materials in their homes. Promote our evangelistic magazines and show your own enthusiasm for our books in your sermons. For example, Ellen White’s Conflict of the Ages series should be in every Adventist home. As you prepare converts for baptism, teach them how to establish family worship. Instruct them to develop a personal spiritual library. Suggest that your resident LE can benefit their spiritual growth.
Credit success. When someone is baptized as a result of an LE’s ministry, invite the LE to introduce the new member or to participate in a meaningful way in welcoming the convert to the church family. Your public affirmation of LEs will build confidence in literature work in the minds of your parishioners and they will enthusiastically support what you affirm.

I believe in the literature work because my LE partners have made my own ministry more effective. You too can experience that!

Russian Jewish evangelism in New York City

Russian pastor Leonid Fundo, wearing a Jewish prayer shawl, leads a worship service in Brooklyn, New York. A number of Jewish worshippers attend the weekly Russian-language Seventh-day Adventist services.

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The Clear Word. A paraphrase to nurture faith and growth.


Reviewed by Martin Weber, associate editor, Ministry.

A useful new Bible study tool—when properly used—is available to Seventh-day Adventists: The Clear Word, prepared by Jack Blanco, head of the religion department at Southern College. To benefit from The Clear Word, we must understand its place among the various translations, paraphrases, and commentaries on the Bible.

Not many laypeople read the original Hebrew and Greek. For them, the next best thing in Bible study is a literal English language translation such as the King James Version, the New King James Version, or the Revised Standard Version. Perhaps the best conservative literal translation is the New American Standard Bible.

If you are willing to risk some accuracy to gain readability, try a "dynamic" version such as the New American Standard Bible, which makes the text nice, safe, and simple. The Bible's not an easy book to understand. And sometimes it's even harder to believe!

The next class of versions is the paraphrase, which does not hesitate to sacrifice accuracy for the sake of easy reading. The most popular paraphrase is The Living Bible, which is not a translation—nor does it claim to be. The authors of biblical paraphrase express in their own words what they believe the text might mean. They aren't bound by strict rules of interpretation as translators are. Paraphrases make for interesting devotional reading but are not sufficiently reliable to teach doctrine.

Some paraphrases take such liberties with the biblical text that they are more like personal commentaries. An example of this is The Message from Navpress. Even greater liberties are taken in the "Cotton Patch" Version, which substitutes the names of Southern American towns for Galilee villages. This type of paraphrase/commentary freely ventures beyond the meaning of the text by introducing thoughts not suggested by the original languages.

Where does The Clear Word fit into the picture? Since the author relies heavily upon extra-biblical sources, particularly the writings of Ellen G. White, it's more of a paraphrase/commentary than a real Bible. For example, he speaks of Adam and Eve wearing robes of light in the Garden of Eden. Nothing in the original text remotely suggests this; there is nothing regarding garments of light upon which to base even a loosely worded paraphrase. Thus The Clear Word is a commentary based upon information from Ellen White—which is fine, so long as we don't treat it as Scripture. The author explains this in his preface.

Nevertheless, there has been considerable confusion and misuse of this study tool. One reason for this was the title of the first edition: The Clear Word Bible. The word "Bible" has now been removed. Another challenge is the verse-by-verse format of The Clear Word, which makes the text appear as a Bible translation rather than as a paraphrase/commentary. Contributing to that misperception is the absence of footnotes to document extra-biblical sources.

To minimize the potential for confusing The Clear Word with an actual Bible, we recommend that it not be used in preaching, in Sabbath school teaching, or in Bible classes. Such use would be a serious stumbling block to nonmember visitors who may already associate Adventists with cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses who design their own Bibles to teach their strange beliefs. Seventh-day Adventists have no such problem; we can teach all our doctrines out of real Bibles familiar to Christians everywhere.

It also needs to be clarified that while The Clear Word is printed and distributed by the Review and Herald Publishing Association, it is not published by them. In other words, this is a private publication.

To summarize: The Clear Word is actually not a Bible but a paraphrase/commentary that, when used properly, can enrich one's devotional study and can be recommended in that way.

Reviewed by Greg Brothers, graduate student in history at the University of Idaho, and former editor of Signs of the Times.

"Who can tell me how Moses crossed the Red Sea?" asked the Sabbath school teacher. "Johnny?"

"Moses called in air strikes against the Egyptians," Johnny replied. "That gave his combat engineers time to build a pontoon bridge. The Israelites crossed; when the Egyptians followed, a demolition team blew it."

"Why Johnny, that's not what the Bible says!"

"No," said Johnny, "but if I told you what it says, you'd never believe me!"

Don't laugh—Johnny's dilemma is real. The Bible's not an easy book to understand. And sometimes it's even harder to believe!

That's why Jack Blanco's The Clear Word fills a real need. It's a midrash—a running commentary that makes the Bible nice, safe, and simple.

The Song of Solomon, for instance, has long suffered from a lurid reputation. (Even the parts we don't understand still sound a little racy!) But in The Clear Word, it becomes an ode to the joys of just saying no. As the maiden sighs in chapter eight: "I am like a wall of solid gold with silver towers against the advances of others. My love belongs to my husband. In my purity I have found contentment and peace."
Or say you’re vexed by God’s tempting of David in 2 Samuel 24:1. Not to worry—in this Bible, Satan is to blame!

Myself, I’d always been troubled by Abraham’s near-sacrifice of Isaac. Needless as it turns out. "[For] though Isaac was sad, he saw it as a privilege to give his life for God while still young. [So] Isaac let Abraham tie his hands, then willingly laid down on the altar" (Genesis 22:9).

Not content to make the Bible a kindly, gentle book, Blanco’s also seen to its orthodoxy. “The Lord’s Day” of Revelation 1:10 is now “Sab- bath morning.” Mark 7:19 no longer declares all foods clean. And in Revelation 21:22, Blanco has added that “the Temple or Sanctuary 1 [John] had expected to see was located outside the city as a reminder of what God had done for His people.”

Obviously, Blanco has given much thought to the controversies wracking our church: the nature of inspiration, the age of the earth, the authority of Ellen White, et. al. And his Bible provides simple answers for them all.

But his simplest answer is reserved for the old question of “What must I do to be saved?” There’s no fussing over works and grace in The Clear Word. No struggle to decide where justification ends and sanctification begins. No, just the simple, simple words of Romans 8:1-4: “Therefore, there is no longer condemnation to those who hide in Christ, who refuse to follow the dictates of their sinful human natures, but whose lives are guided by the Holy Spirit. There is now a new nature working in me giving me a totally different motive for serving God. This new nature is a gift from the Holy Spirit who through Christ has freed me from the controlling power of my sinful human nature which always stands ready to put me back on the road to death. God’s instructions, no matter how well-known or how holy and good they are, are powerless to save me from my sinful self. But what God’s law could not do, God’s Son did. Jesus took on human nature and demonstrated by the power of the Holy Spirit that sin can be overcome. This disproved any notion that there is no out for human beings except to be slaves to their own sinful natures. The Lord Jesus did this to give us an example that we can do it too, when we are not controlled by our sinning but by the Holy Spirit.”

Granted, there are some who would say this paraphrase is too simple, too safe, and too easy. Who would say it’s missing too much of importance?

But suppose we gave our people the very things this Bible lacks: mystery, paradox, terror; suppose we moved beyond its easy answers and trite explanations; suppose we tried to learn from the tough passages of Scripture, rather than explain them away. Just suppose we did all of these things. Who do you think would believe us?

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**ISSUES ANSWERS**

**Ellen G. White and Plagiarism**

1. **Definitional Issue**—
   What is plagiarism?
   Is it different from literary borrowing?

2. **Biblical Issue**—
   Is originality of composition a valid test for a true prophet?
   Is there a biblical precedent for literary borrowing?

3. **Legal Issue**—
   What aspects of plagiarism are actionable in literary law?
   Was Ellen White ever sued?

4. **Ethical-Moral Issue**—
   Did Ellen White deny literary borrowing?
   Was there a “cover up”?

5. **Practical Issue**—
   Why did she borrow?
   How did she borrow?

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MINISTRY/DECEMBER/1994
"And the Word was made flesh"

From page 21

Henry Melvill," deals with this subject. He demonstrates how Ellen White may have used some of Melvill’s terminology in expressing her God-given views of the nature of Christ. Henry Melvill was a popular British preacher in the nineteenth century, a contemporary of Ellen White. Melvill identifies two primary consequences of the Fall of the human race. They are “innocent infirmities” and “sinful propensities.” By innocent infirmities he means such things as pain, weariness, hunger, thirst, sorrow, and death. These, he says, are all consequences of guilt, but are free from guilt. Sin brought pain, but pain is not sin. When referring to sinful propensities, he refers to human tendency and inclination to sin. Melvill then makes it clear that before the Fall Adam possessed neither innocent infirmities nor sinful propensities, but after the Fall he possessed both. Christ, however, he says, took the first, innocent infirmities, but not the latter, sinful propensities.

Melvill sums it up well in one of his sermons (Melvill’s Sermons [1844] is available at the White Estate, with Ellen White’s markings): “But whilst He [Christ] took humanity with the innocent infirmities, He did not take it with the sinful propensities. Here Deity interposed. Christ’s humanity was not the Adamic humanity, that is, the humanity of Adam before the Fall; nor fallen humanity, that is, in every respect the humanity of Adam after the Fall. It was not the Adamic, because it had the innocent infirmities of the fallen. It was not the fallen, because it never descended into moral impurity. It was, therefore, most literally our humanity, but without sin.”

So can we conclude that Christ’s human nature was neither prelapsarian nor postlapsarian, but both? He was perfectly sinless, as was Adam before the Fall. This we may refer to as His spiritual nature. But He suffered the innocent infirmities as do all of us after the Fall. This we may refer to as His human condition.

Praise God, He did become human and lived a perfect life to set for us the perfect example. And praise God, He was perfectly sinless in order to be our perfect sacrifice.

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8 ———, ibid., vol. 4, p. 520.
11 ———, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 256. (Italics supplied.)
12 ———, The SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1128. (Italics supplied.)
17 ———, Selected Messages, book 3, p. 131. (Italics supplied.)
18 ———, Review and Herald, Dec. 15, 1896. (Italics supplied.)
19 ———, Selected Messages, book 1, p. 256. (Italics supplied.)
20 ———, The SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 4, p. 1147. (Italics supplied.)
21 ———, The Desire of Ages, p. 49. (Italics supplied.)
22 ———, The SDA Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1124. (Italics supplied.)

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The art of expository preaching

From page 7

life, and labor-management conflicts? Is there not help for moral problems? Guidance in ethical dilemmas?

John MacArthur, Jr., sums up the case for expository preaching in this enticing appeal: "For those of you who want to preach the Word accurately and powerfully because you understand the liability of doing anything less; for those of you who want to face the Judge on the day of reckoning and experience the Lord’s pleasure with your effort; for those of you who are eager to let God speak His Word through you as directly, confrontively, and powerfully as He gave it; and for those of you who want to see people transformed radically and living godly lives, there is only expository preaching.”

In a day when preachers strive to say something new, we need the faithful proclamation of the Word that is eternally true.

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5 ibid., pp. 26ff.
7 ibid., p. 72.
Marrying a Non-Adventist

In response to the Editorial regarding the proposed Church Manual statement on marrying a non-Adventist to an Adventist (February 1994), I am surprised to read letters from pastors who do not agree.

Marriage of mixed religious faiths is opposed by other churches, as well. Marriage counselors of many faiths agree that to make a strong marriage both partners should espouse the same religious faith.

Since we are living in a time when children need every ounce of stability they can find in a family model and when marriages seem to be falling apart even within the church, it would seem that the church should foster a concept of family unity with strong spiritual dimensions. And pastors need to give the lead.—June Loor, Hendersonville, North Carolina.

As the church gives consideration to the proposed Church Manual statement on marriage, we should be careful that our praxis keeps in harmony with our theology. In our 27 fundamental beliefs we have two articles dealing with the church, namely articles 11 and 12. Number 11 deals with the church in general, and 12 with the remnant movement and its mission. Number 11 is wider than the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as can be noted: “The church is the community of believers who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.” The entire paragraph augments this sentiment.

Despite the clarity of article 11, suddenly when it comes to marriage all those not in the Seventh-day Adventist Church are classified as unbelievers. This has often led to a hard legalistic approach to the problem. It might be wiser if we allowed our practice to catch up with our theology.”—Eric C. Webster, editor, Signs of the Times, Cape Town, South Africa.

The music debate

Kenneth Matthews’ review of Steve Miller’s The Contemporary Christian Music Debate (June 1994) fails to provide an objective analysis of Miller’s arguments. Instead Dr. Matthews allows his personal opinion to cloud what should be a reasonable discussion of Miller’s assertions. The review is filled with loaded phrases and questions disconnected from the actual issues discussed in the book. The review even makes a perhaps unintentional comparison of beer-drinking drunks and contemporary Christian ministry artists: “Did Jesus drink beer in the Jewish saloon with the alcoholic in order to reach him...? Do we need to sing like the secular musician in order to reach the masses?”

Such comments reflect only a shallow perusal of Miller’s discussion. Miller, who says in the preface he was also biased against contemporary Christian music before beginning his research, carefully constructs a biblical, historical, and logical argument that music in itself is neutral. That content and context are more important than tempo and rhythm, and that the definitions of “secular” and “religious” are falsely applied to musical styles. Even Matthews acknowledges Miller proves the “secular origin” of some favorite hymns. Matthews apparently also believes that contemporary music lacks the theological elements of “order, harmony, simplicity, unity, joy, the purpose of giving glory to God, and being saved by hearing preached the word.”

That would come as quite a surprise to the many artists who minister through contemporary Christian music to thousands of people through radio and concerts. I have seen hundreds commit their lives to Christ when attending such concerts.

These singing musicians, minister even in our own denomination, are able to communicate to today’s young people. They do so because they speak through their music on relevant issues and with a relevant means. This is not situation ethics as Matthews implies, but contemporaneity.

Interestingly, Ellen White counsels the use of music as we strive to reach the “pagan people in America.” She writes: “Let the talent of singing be brought into the work. The use of musical instruments is not at all objectionable. These were used in religious services in ancient times. The worshipers praised God upon the harp and cymbal, and music should have its place in our services. It will add to the interest” (Evangelism, p. 150).—Cameron Beierle, Mount Pearl, Newfoundland, Canada.
**Fellowship lunch evangelism**

With a little creativity, an existing program that is taken for granted can become a stellar area of evangelism. Consider, for example, the Sabbath fellowship lunch. I noticed recently that most of my baptismal candidates were coming to ask me for baptism during this common Adventist gathering. The reason for this new trend? My members were inviting them to visit worship services and then join us all for lunch.

The fellowship meal facilitated conversation with even our most timid visitors. Second, we began to focus on our visitors. Instead of letting the visitors sit off in a corner by themselves, we attempted to mix unobtrusively with them. An informal discussion over a meal does more to establish relationships than three or four visits to the church would do alone. Last, I learned that when my members felt comfortable with a return visitor or Bible study interest they would ask them about their interest in joining the church. The member could ask without the pressure that my official office brought to the discussion. And the relaxed atmosphere allowed for open discussion of the pros and cons. Add to this the excitement that a church member feels when they have a direct link to a person being baptized, and you have a real winner.

**Clean desk patrol**

One way I support our local church school is with my “clean desk patrol.” I tell the students that I will stop by unannounced during nonschool hours to leave a small gift on the desks that are clean. I explain to them in great detail what my expectations are. Then every three or four weeks I will make my inspections, leaving on each clean desk a printed slip of paper that says “Your Desk Looks Great!” and an attractive gift.

The gifts are small and inexpensive, just a quarter or less each. I shop discount stores, education shops, drugstores, and museum shops for stickers, pencils, superballs, fancy soaps, seashells, and juice packs. I try to avoid candy.

The clean desk patrol is one way to support the labors of the teacher and encourage cleanliness on the part of the students. The surprises help to brighten their day and create conversation opportunities.—Dan Matella, Provo, Utah.

**Jewish evangelism**

“There are among the Jews many who will be converted, and through whom we shall see the salvation of God go forth as a lamp that burneth” (Evangelism, p. 578).

Shofar Jewish Publications, in association with the Greater New York Conference, provides tracts, books, tapes, and videos to help pastors and members share Jesus with their Jewish contacts. For a free catalog, write Shofar Jewish Publications, P.O. Box 1387, Manhasset, New York 11030.

**Final crisis workbook**

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**Good neighbor evangelism**

A Filipino Adventist family, moved by the spirit of Global Mission, relocated in an unentered territory. Prejudiced neighbors rejected their presence. The family met so much opposition and disappointment that even the community schools rejected their children. But rather than abandoning their evangelistic dream, this dedicated family organized itself into a good neighbor soul-winning unit. Although low on financial resources themselves, they determined to nurture the needs of their neighbors. Members of this family worked side by side with them in civic projects. When someone became sick, they nursed them back to health. When natural calamities came to the community, they cleaned homes, washed clothing, and prepared food for the afflicted. When someone died, they brought sympathy and flowers.

After a while friendships formed. Every Sabbath afternoon the family visited the homes of five neighbors who wanted them tosing, pray, and read a text. Visits were brief, just 8-10 minutes. But after two years of such home visitation and loving community service, there is a Seventh-day Adventist church in that community with 120 active members.

No further proof is needed that good neighbor family evangelism works, without a need for a conference budget.—G. H. Guclitar, ministerial secretary, North Philippine Union Mission.

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