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Ministry report
From North America
**The competent pastor**

David VanDenburg's article, “The competent pastor,” (February 1999), is one of the kind. I want to plead with church administrators and directors at the various levels to read the article. . . . It is irritating and utterly embarrassing to hear the incessant lashings and bashings on the work force for not “meeting their goals” and all that goes with it. I wholly believe with VanDenburg that an “incompetent ordained pastor” is an oxymoron. It is high time they stopped generalizing and avoid demoralizing the “competent” ones.—Pastor Gaius A. Umahi, Nigeria Union Mission.

**Ellen White’s compilations**

Leroy Gillian (Letters, May 1999) is right when he talks about “new” Ellen G. White books. I have a compilation that claims to prove that Ellen White taught that the wicked will not burn—ever.

Using the current denominational standard for new E.G. White books, one could use this compilation, and advertise it as a new book by her on the fate of the wicked. Our denomination needs to correct this practice.—Pastor Clarence Philpott, Seventh-day Adventist Church, Oakdale, CA.

**Contemporary manifestation of the prophecy gift**

“Fantastic!” is all I have to say concerning Roy Naden’s “Contemporary manifestations of the prophecy gift” (June 1999). Articles such as these encourage those in the ministry, knowing that God is indeed leading His people. Far too often we can get caught up in the “run of things” and forget that there is always more to be seen, always more to be applied from the inspired counsel of Scripture. May God continue to open our eyes to His amazing grace and guidance. All praise be to Jesus!—Pastor Jerry Smith, Saint John, New Brunswick, Canada.

**June 1999 cover**

I can’t remember when I’ve seen a cover of *Ministry* magazine so outperform the print, in its impact on the pastor’s very heart and soul as in the way it has in the June 1999 issue. Perhaps during my years in departmental ministry and administration, I just did not have or take the time to ferret out the deeper thrust of the cover pictures of *Ministry*. Even now I do not consciously spend much time looking at magazine covers. But the June 1999 cover artistry fairly flew in my face as it leaped from its envelope to challenge me in a way I had not been challenged before. We encourage our parishioners to give the Saviour first place in their lives, but to even consider that Jesus might indeed be waiting for a little time with me! I want for Him to have free access into my life, moment by moment, and I pray never to lose from my mind that challenging cover picture decorating my study.—Bob Lehmann, Senior Pastor, Rutland Seventh-day Adventist Church, British Columbia, Canada.

**The gray wave**

May I commend you for a fine article, “The gray wave,” in the August 1999 issue of *Ministry*. I was there for James Cress’ session with the retirees at the Pine Springs Ranch. I am glad that my fellow retirees were responsive and able to provide a lot of interesting items to combine into a fine column.—Don Roth, (retired), Loma Linda, California.

**Clean and unclean meat**

In his article, “Clean and unclean meat” (June 1999), David Merling says, “Even some Seventh-day Adventists have suggested that Jesus in Mark 7:9 had done away with the clean and unclean distinctions of Leviticus 11.” The footnote for this statement cites my article “Unclean or Unhealthful? An Adventist Perspective,” in *Spectrum*, February 1981. Dr. Merling misunderstands my position in this article by failing to note an important distinction that I made. The distinction concerns the difference between Leviticus 11 as God originally intended it, and the clean/unclean distinction as it was understood in the first century (see the italics at the beginning of p. 22 of my article). My point is that both Jesus (Mark 7) and Paul (Romans 14) intended to abolish the clean/unclean distinction as it was understood within Judaism of the first century. That distinction is theologically important.

There are two ways in which the understanding of clean and unclean in the first century was antithetical to the gospel. One, it made one’s relationship with God dependent upon externals rather than matters of the heart, and second, it supported the exclusion of Gentiles. I use examples in the article of the first century sources to show that this was the Jewish understanding in the first century. This is not to suggest, however, that these New Testament passages are at odds with God’s original intention, nor do I have any

continued on p. 30
A couple of days ago I received an all but ordinary e-mail from an Adventist chaplain. When I say “all but ordinary” I am thinking especially of its uncompromising yet thoughtful ardor, its exasperation and frustration. Even as I re-read it there seemed to be no way of picking a circumspect path through the words and sentences so that their effect would be a little less disruptive to my more conventional ministerial mind. Here’s a slightly edited sampling quoted with permission:

“The October ’99 Ministry cover featured ‘Church Planting/Recapturing the Vision’ but after the letters section I could not see myself reading any more! Is this really where we’re at 155 years after ‘The Great Disappointment’? . . . People are starving around the world. Children are naked in the streets of our cities. Those in jail sit in isolated silence waiting for a word of hope from some visitor. And what’s our ‘hot button’ topic? . . . Jewelry and hermeneutics. I’m so sick of seeing our time and emotional energy drained away by a preoccupation with such issues—by all the stuff that keeps us from feeding, clothing, and visiting. I’m fed up with being part of a church that exhausts its spiritual resources on arguments at such a level.”

Before your well formulated soul rises, as mine did, to object to such an outburst by saying something like, “Now there’s a man, unbalanced by his anger” or “. . . Another attempt to compromise the unique evangelistic call of God to Seventh-day Adventists,” let’s look squarely into the eyes of what is true in what our colleague has said. For instance, in Jesus’ most penetrating exposition on the end of time and the judgment he concluded by speaking explicitly about the fact that it is how we work or don’t work with the hungry, the naked, the sick, the imprisoned and others like them, that will determine how we will be appraised by God in the final hour (Matt. 25:31-46). The same concern is at the heart of the “woes” of Matthew 23, where Jesus takes on the matter of paying tithe on mint and anise and forgetting the weightier matters; observing religious decorum and etiquette while the central, enduring substance is all but non-existent.

James defines pure and undefiled religion in God’s eyes as visiting “orphans and widows in their distress and [keeping] oneself unstained by the world” (James 1:17, NASB). And so we could cite line upon biblical line, particularly if we look at Scripture’s overall emphasis and its almost omnipresent call for justice and mercy and especially if we ponder the profoundly well balanced ministry in which Jesus immersed Himself—the ministry which defines ours.

Certainly other aspects of ministry are by no means to be neglected, such as the one in the second half of James’ exhortation above—that we remain unspotted by the world. But I am afraid and I am convinced that our obedience to the summons of the first half of that text (to minister meaningfully to those in concrete physical, emotional and spiritual need) has been seriously sidetracked in our local congregations. This neglect is largely due to our inordinate and unbalanced concentration on “hot-button” issues such as those recently presented in Ministry and thus commented upon in the letters column in the October issue of Ministry to which our colleague refers.

There are of course a lot of things Adventists do along these lines, such as the ministry of ADRA and the work of our Health Systems and prison ministries and our local community services, but what I am concerned about is the essential orientation of the ministry that is called forth by us as pastors in our local churches around the world. Here it is not difficult for us to become immersed in less important concerns so that the things that really matter are neglected.

I think my friend is right. Like much of the religion of Jesus’ Jerusalem, we spend huge proportions of our emotional and spiritual capital on casuistic theological and behavioral fiddling, while the world suffers and dies around us.

We spend huge proportions of our emotional and spiritual capital on casuistic theological and behavioral fiddling, while the world suffers and dies around us.

continued on p. 30
Seven hundred years ago, in the Euganean Hills of northern Italy, a guilt-stricken nobleman approached God with a proposition.

Moved by a frightening vision of the last judgement, Enrico degli Scrovegni of Padua bargained for his soul with the Lord of lords. In exchange for his own salvation and the redemption of his late father, Enrico promised to build a beautiful little chapel on the land he had purchased for the construction of his private palace. When the promise was completed six years later in 1306, the single-nave church was adorned with glorious frescoes that would change the course of European art. But more importantly, the little votive chapel in Padua had become a stunning reminder of the absolute incongruity between the gospel of grace and any attempt to earn eternal salvation through human effort.

Scrovegni used his abundant wealth to secure the services of the brilliant young Florentine painter, Giotto di Bondone. In his first mature masterpiece, Giotto garnished the chapel walls with scenes from the life of Jesus. One scene is more striking than the rest. In the middle of the north wall, just above eye level, is Giotto’s bold depiction of the Lamentation. The lifeless body of Jesus has been removed from the cross and now is sprawled on the ground in the foreground of the picture. Intense emotional pain is etched deeply on the face of Mary as she cradles the cold body of her precious Son. To the right, a distraught Mary Magdalene stares at the feet she so recently bathed with her tears and dried with her long hair. John, the beloved disciple, throws his arms backward in a violent gesture of heart-rending grief. Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus stand in voiceless agony at the horror of the scene before them. Above them all, ten small cherubs are arrested in flight by the unbearable sorrow and immeasurable meaning of the death of Jesus.

I am overwhelmed by this passionate work of art. From across the centuries it speaks to me with a clarity I cannot ignore. Here is the dramatic and convincing proof of the unquenchable love of God for me (Rom. 5:8). Here is the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world for my sin (Rev. 13:8). Here is Jesus suffering at the hands of His enemies “so that by the grace of God He might taste death” in my behalf (Heb.
schedule, my latest, best sermon. I am so capable of interposing my self into the transaction: my commitment, my obedience, my high standards, my genuine sorrow for personal failures, my repentance, even my growing faith in God’s uncompromising grace.

Paul Tournier called this need to bargain with God the “reflex of self-justification.” J. I. Packer refers to it as “the faith that has animated pagan religion ever since there was such a thing—namely, the belief that we can repair our own relationship with God by putting God in a position where he cannot say no to us.” C. S. Lewis observed the same temptation in his life as Enricho’s. The infinite currency is the only kind that has any sway when the issues of salvation are at stake. In this setting the triumphant work of Jesus dwarfs any form of human action. Abounding grace embarrasses all human attempts to cause salvation even when the best of this work is proffered. The fullness of the gospel exposes the futility of “co-redemption.”

My natural reflex

Nevertheless, my natural reflexes and trained sensibilities persistently resist the good news of grace. The Scrovegni impulse rages in my life. Frequently, like Enrico, I approach God with our hands full of something of my own to use in the bargaining. In his frescos, Giotto also depicted a red-haired young man kneeling in front of Jesus, the Judge, holding up a model of the little chapel in an apparent attempt to influence a favorable sentence. In my case I present my orthodoxy, my service record, my busy

and, as usual, precisely unmasked the temptation: “Thus, depth beneath depth and subtlety within subtlety, there remains some lingering idea of our own, our very own, attractiveness. It is easy to acknowledge, but almost impossible to realize for long, that we are mirrors whose brightness, if we are bright, is wholly derived from the sun that shines upon us. Surely we must have a little—however little—native luminosity.” And then Lewis identified the remedy: “For this tangled absurdity of a Need, which never fully acknowledges its own neediness, Grace substitutes a full, childlike and delighted acceptance of our Need, a joy in total dependence.”

Running away from the gospel

Total dependence is a tough assignment. Obviously, Scrovegni wasn’t the first or the last to be overwhelmed by the desire to contribute something to the salvation equation. The impulse is as ancient as Cain, as persistent as Sarah’s laughter, as quick as Moses grasping credit for bringing water from a rock. Our words betray us. “Make me like one of your hired servants,” we insist, speaking the language of merit so stubbornly that we miss the warmth of our Father’s welcoming embrace, the significance of the robe and ring of acceptance, the joy of the opening moments of the resurrection celebration (Luke 15:17-24). It’s almost as if we were running away from the gospel, as if we were afraid of grace, not wanting to be that rich, that forgiven, that sure.

We publish our cautions far and wide. “If grace becomes the central focus of our experience,” a pastor admonished with disquieting fear, “the Sabbath may lose its importance in our understanding of the end of the world.” Doesn’t an emphasis on justification by grace through faith lead to a neglect of holiness and the fruits of the indwelling Spirit? Don’t we need to be careful to maintain “a balance between God’s mercy and His justice?” Isn’t the pendulum swinging “too far away from law toward grace?” Aren’t those who preach grace “cheapening” Christianity just so they can fill their pews in these “member-competitive times”? Don’t we “nullify the law by this faith” (Rom. 3:31)?

It is important to address these concerns and put them to rest. But in the process we must never allow our focus, personal or institutional, to shift from Jesus to anything else. In our sincere efforts to respond to God’s call to be peculiar, distinctive people, we must not rush right past the core definition of our existence or push it into the periphery of our experience. “When all the shouting dies away, when all the issues are laid on the table, when all the doctrines have been discussed, when all the policies have been voted, the only thing that matters is Jesus and our relationship with Him.” Whenever we stray from our foundation at the foot of the cross of Christ and make any
other ground our central position, we come perilously close to completely missing the point of the truth as it is in Jesus.

Not long ago an individual publicly reminded me that Adventists have been called to be a people of the end time. “It is our eschatology that makes us unique,” the gentleman instructed, “and what does grace have to do with the Second Coming?” I was so shocked by his question that, for a moment, I couldn’t speak. Tears rose to my eyes. Beyond the obvious answer that grace has everything to do with our salvation, even his question was wrong. It would have been much more accurate, and infinitely more Adventist, to ask, “What does the Second Coming have to do with grace?”

The true treasure of the church

The doctrine of salvation by grace begins with God’s realistic evaluation of humanity’s total inability to earn eternal life by confronting His will. With His heart full of pain, God concluded early in human history that “every inclination” of us mortals was “only evil all the time” (Gen. 6:5, 6). Over the next several thousand years the conclusion would remain the same. “There is no one who does good, not even one,” David observes in Psalm 14. Paul repeats David’s observation, then goes on to describe fallen humanity in the bleakest of terms: “worthless,” “vipers,” “powerless,” “ungodly,” “God’s enemies,” “dead in your transgressions,” “disobedient,” “by nature objects of God’s wrath,” (Rom. 3:10-23, 5:6-10, and Eph. 2:1-3). Paul is not talking about “them”—he’s speaking of you and me. The stark conclusion is unmistakable: None of us can earn or merit salvation. It is impossible (Matt. 19:26). “No one will be declared righteous in his [God’s] sight by observing the law” (Rom. 3:20). “By observing the law no one will be justified” (Gal. 2:16, emphasis added).

Adventists fully accept the consistent biblical testimony that humans cannot contribute to their own salvation. “We profoundly believe that no works of the law, no deeds of the law, no effort however commendable, and no good works—whether they be many or few, sacrificial or not—can in any way justify the sinner.”10 “We can contribute nothing to Christ’s gift of righteousness.”11 “It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God’s law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen, and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God.”12

But, thankfully, the doctrine doesn’t end there! Since the beginning, the message of the “grace of God that brings salvation” (Titus 2:11) has been given to us to provide the “hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7). From the Tree of Life in the center of the Garden of Eden to the dry ground in the middle of the Jordan River, from the jubilant worship in Solomon’s temple to the quiet reflections of Paul in his prison cell, the gospel of our salvation (Eph. 1:13) has been the truth set before us. “Through the love of God the treasures of the grace of Christ have been laid open before the church and the world.”13 The good news of God’s grace (Acts 20:24) is the matchless truth: “Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ’s character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.”14

The glorious reality of God’s salvation embraces us in every book of the Bible. Salvation requires perfect righteousness. All humans have sinned and are incapable of being perfectly righteous. God, in His justice, judges our sin, pronounces us guilty, and demands that the penalty for sin be paid. Then, in the incarnation of grace (John 1:14), God pays for it all Himself, forgives us in Jesus (Jer. 31:34; Micah 7:18; 1 John 2:12) and accepts the perfect righteousness of Christ as sufficient atonement (2 Cor. 12:9). We accept His gift through faith, confessing that we cannot by any means save ourselves but that we are fully persuaded that God has the power to do what He has promised to do (Rom. 4:21).

This is the gospel of our salvation (Eph. 1:13), the Bible truth about how we are saved—by grace alone, through faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone. There are no exceptions. “We are saved by grace through faith in the Saviour’s merits, or we are not saved at all.”15

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1 Enrico’s father, the wealthy Reginaldo, had been placed in hell in Dante’s Inferno for usury.
11 Seventh-day Adventists Believe… (Silver Spring, Md.: Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1988), 131.
14 ———, Steps to Christ, 62.
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A FRESH LOOK AT THE DYNAMICS OF INSPIRATION

While sitting in the pastor’s study of the Adventist church in Boston, Uncle Jim heard the doorbell. At the door he found a disheveled-looking man in old army fatigues.

After a few minutes of conversation, my uncle discovered that the man claimed to have heard a voice from heaven. He insisted that God had commissioned him for a life of service. “The voice from heaven,” the visitor explained, “said, ‘From henceforth thou shalt be called Dewdrop.’”

Uncle Jim decided that Dewdrop was no prophet.

Dewdrop, of course, is not alone. Many have claimed to have the prophetic gift and have ventured out to denounce the church or to proclaim what’s about to come.

Reflecting on several such claims and trying to find where they might fit into the dynamics of revelation and inspiration, I began to think about some deeply significant issues: (1) The mental normalcy of those claiming divine revelation(s) and inspiration; (2) the role played by the community of faith; (3) the approach in determining the dynamics of inspiration; (4) the quest for an appropriate analogy for divine inspiration; (5) the modeling of inspiration as found in Ellen White; (6) error in inspired writings; and (7) the various approaches to interpreting inspired writings.

I. The mental competency of inspired persons

I’ve seriously questioned the mental health of many of those who have claimed to have received divine information. This judgment of mine has troubled me because I grew up never questioning the sanity of Moses, Isaiah, Paul, or Ellen White. In fact, I still accept their claims to inspiration at face value. So I really cannot a priori rule out the possibility of the prophetic gift being manifested in perfectly normal people.
The April-June 1957 issue of *Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases* published an article titled “The Psychopathology of Religion—The Seventh-day Adventist Denomination.” Written by psychiatrist Helen Yarnell, the article critiqued Adventism in general and Ellen White in particular.

The author faulted Ellen White for writing “a jumbled outpouring of Biblical phrases” and for “popularizing...doctrinal clichés...Perhaps the almost nonsensical confusion increases the effect of the supernatural,” Yarnell suggested. “My impression is that her relation to the congregation was something like that of an anxious, possessive, nagging mother.”

On the one hand, a quick survey of some of Ellen White’s books could lead a critic to label her “an anxious, possessive, nagging mother” figure. On the other hand, a more complete overview of her entire life and ministry could lead to a different conclusion: that she was a caring wife, mother, and church member. That she cared so deeply about spiritual things that she might have slipped into what Dr. Yarnell labeled “anxious, possessive, nagging.” But that’s only part of the Ellen White story.

Arthur G. Daniells, her contemporary and General Conference president, knew her probably as well as anyone. On July 30, 1919 he said of her: “Sister White was never a fanatic, she was never an extremist. She was a level-headed woman. She was well-balanced. I found that so during a period of 40 years of association with her.”

2. The role of the community of faith

When a tree crashes to the forest floor during a storm does it make a noise if no one is around to hear it? Although a falling tree sends out sound waves, noise is a subjective element and does not exist unless there is a nearby receptor for the sound waves. Similarly, God’s Word may truly be a product of His inspiration as well as His attempt to communicate with us. But unless someone receives that Word with faith, no communication takes place. Likewise a prophet’s ministry is contingent upon a community of faith who accepts the messages as divine communication. Donald G. Bloesch has observed: “The Word of God exists for us only when God is actually speaking and we are actually receiving His Word.”

Some may find it difficult to agree with the preceding paragraphs. They would stress the objective aspect of what they saw to be taking place. The point is that no matter how objective something might be, the subjective element must also be factored in. You may send me an e-mail—something objective is transmitted—but unless I turn on my computer, log in, and read your message with some degree of receptivity, no communication takes place.

Similarly, regardless of how many dreams a prophet may have and irrespective of how many visions he or she might receive, the prophet has no ministry without the acknowledgment of a community of faith.

From Paul’s list of the gifts of the...
Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12, it appears that parallel to the gift of prophecy is the gift of “discerning of spirits” (verse 10). That is why the apostle could instruct the Thessalonian believers to “quench not the spirit” (1 Thess. 5:19) and “despise not prophesying” (verse 20).

Apparently the gift of prophecy in Thessalonica was accompanied by the gift of discernment, because Paul urged them to “prove all things” (verse 21). The verb used here means to put to the test with the purpose of finding something good—to ascertain the genuineness of that which is being tested. And the Thessalonians were to put “all” (there is no noun for the word “things” here) through this rigorous evaluation. “All” in this context means all prophetic claims.

In assessing their prophetic claimants, the Thessalonians were to “hold fast that which is good” (verse 21). Whatever failed their appraisal, they had to abstain from or avoid (verse 22).

Note the important role the community of faith plays. The community should not despise any claim of prophecy but must investigate all such claims. Those who pass the test are to be cherished; those who fail are to be avoided. When God takes the initiative to communicate to us through the prophetic gift, He also gives the gift of discerning the spirits so that the community of faith will be able to differentiate between the authentic and the fake.

3. Determining the dynamics of inspiration

Obviously, those in Thessalonica who were going to examine each claim to inspiration must have had some clue as to the dynamics involved when God reveals Himself and inspires an individual to record that encounter.

We learn from the New Testament that God’s great “mystery of Christ” has been “revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Eph. 3:4, 5) and that “all scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16).

But 2 Timothy 3:16 poses two problems. The first is the fact that the grammatical structure Paul used in this passage is such that his words can mean “all scripture is inspired and is useful” (as in the KJV) or “all inspired scripture is useful” (as in the NEB). Assuming that the KJV rendering reflects the apostle’s original intent, we’re still left with the second difficulty. “All scripture is inspired” is a proposition. But is such a claim the same as the assertion that a plane triangle has three sides and all its interior angles always add up to 180 degrees?

One can experimentally prove geometrical propositions, but what about the statement that all Scripture is inspired? How does one demonstrate such a truth? It is, in fact, an assertion of a different sort. A mathematical proposition is a claim of knowledge, whereas a religious proposition is a claim of faith. The former is far easier to prove than the latter. In fact, some might understandably prefer to call the latter “opinion” rather than “knowledge.”

We accept Paul’s statement as a valid truth claim and accept the proposition as it is translated in the KJV. We conclude, therefore, that something supernatural has been at work, but exactly what does this “inspiration” or revelation entail? It is one thing to assert the existence of inspiration at work, but entirely another to understand the dynamics involved and authenticate the subject matter of the inspired material.

The expression translated “inspired of God” in the KJV—theopneustos—literally means “God breathed,” but the derivation of a word does not always provide helpful information or supply us with answers to our questions. Besides this, theopneustos is used only once in the Bible. That complicates matters, because normally we would turn to other uses of the same word that might help us understand it better. In the Hellenistic usage of the word, its recipients were considered divine tools void of their own personal initiative. But need we infer from this that the word has the same overtones of ecstatic experience when Paul used it? Maybe, but maybe not.

We have no assurance that the common Hellenistic use of theopneustos had either the same denotation or connotation as it bore when Paul used it. As a result, Eduard Schweizer has concluded that “it may be asserted that 2 Timothy 3:16 is not using a specific term from the world of enthusiasm.” Probably the minimum we can infer from this metaphor is that Scripture gains its existence from God. And because the word “existence” is a synonym for “life,” it is probably safe for us to conclude that God is the Creator of Scripture just as
He is our Creator. In fact, the metaphor in a biblical context could remind us of Genesis 2:7, which describes how God “made man of the dust of the ground (ha’a'damaah) and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man (ha’a’adaam) became a living soul.” God’s breathing vivified Adam, and we might infer that it does the same in the case of Scripture, which is described as “living and active” (Heb. 4:12, NIV).

As Bloesch suggests: “Inspiration . . . means being ‘dominated’ by or ‘filled with the Spirit of God.’ It does not mean, as the ancient Greeks supposed, that our rational faculties are suspended or that our personality is negated.”

Now, we can understand the dynamics of inspiration in two ways. On the one hand, we can deduce from our presuppositions about God and His attributes what we think would be logically coherent for us to project onto inspiration. On the other hand, we can induce from a clear example of inspiration at work that which can perhaps be predicated in the case of other similar instances.

All of us use deductive logic when we formulate syllogisms. Probably the most famous syllogism is: All humans are mortal; Socrates is human; therefore, Socrates is mortal.

Some have daisy-chained syllogisms together when they’ve tried to comprehend the dynamics of inspiration, such as:
- The word “perfect” means being free from error; God is perfect; therefore, God is free from error.
- God, who is perfect, can create only perfect things; God created Scripture; therefore, Scripture is perfect.
- Perfect means being free from error; Scripture is perfect; therefore, Scripture is free from error.
- Being free from error means being inerrant; Scripture is free from error; therefore, Scripture is inerrant.

Such reasoning can often be difficult to controvert because it is logically valid. One assumption leads coherently to the next. But anyone who has worked through such processes knows that things are simply not that simple! Sometimes what we may logically expect is not true.

For example, chemists know that sodium, when dropped into water, reacts violently, sputtering across the surface of the water and shooting miniature flames as it decomposes into something highly poisonous and reactive. Chemists also know that chlorine, a yellow-green gas with a strong odor, is highly toxic. Chlorine is so potent that it bleaches clothing. We pour it into our swimming pools to kill the algae and bacteria that could contaminate the water. But combine approximately equal parts of these two poisonous chemicals, and you get table salt or sodium chloride. Without salt none of us would live. Just imagine the syllogisms you could construct to “prove” that sodium chloride is a doubly lethal compound deleterious to life and health!

All of us also use inductive reasoning, and with considerable success. Science stems from inductive reasoning. Scientists examine the phenomena about us and form conclusions called hypotheses. If these hypotheses appear to hold up under repeated experimentation, they may be called a “law.”

Because no investigator or group of researchers can examine all the evidence everywhere and throughout all time, conclusions are still always more or less tentative. It is always possible, though maybe not probable, that further investigation will reveal an example that violates an observed pattern.

Often systematic theologians explicate inspiration by using deductive methods. Beginning with God’s attributes, they formulate sets of syllogisms that ultimately elucidate—among other things—an inerrant Scripture (as we did earlier).

More often than not, biblical theologians form their conclusions via inductive methodologies. Beginning with what is found in Scripture itself and then moving to those claiming the prophetic gift in other religions and cultures, they tend to allow considerable diversity, cultural conditioning, and even mistakes in the product of inspiration.

You and I have, however, a plus factor we can turn to in our inductive reasoning about inspiration. We belong to a community of faith that accepts the prophetic ministry of Ellen White.

4. Finding an appropriate analogy

Once investigators reach a conclusion about the dynamics of inspiration, they frequently look for an appropriate analogy to help illuminate important points.
Some, who by deductive reasoning have concluded that Scripture is free from all error, have pressed into service the analogy of a CEO dictating letters to a secretary. What the boss says is exactly what the stenographer types out. The secretary does not add to the letter or correct what the supervisor said, unless first obtaining clarification and authorization. Consequently, the vocabulary, grammar, syntax, and overall style perfectly correspond with what was spoken into the transcription device by the chief executive officer.

When applied to Scripture, this model of inspiration leads one to maintain that the Bible is absolutely inerrant—at least in its autographs. For these theologians, the assertion that “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:21) means the prophets wrote down precisely what they heard—no more and no less. W. A. Criswell, for example, states: “Each sentence was dictated by God’s Holy Spirit. . . . It is God’s voice, not man’s.”

By inductive logic others have concluded that Scripture as the written Word of God is quite parallel to the living Word of God—the incarnate Jesus Christ. So the Incarnation is their analogy of choice. In much the way Jesus was both human and divine, so is the Bible.

Applied to Scripture, this model of inspiration leads one to maintain that within the very materialistic and natural aspects of Scripture (paper, ink, language, vocabulary) is enclosed a divine aspect as well. However, only the eye of faith discerns this supernatural essence.

For these investigators, the verse “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” means that the biblical authors were influenced directly by God in ways different from those you and I experience. But in sharing with the community of faith what God communicated to them, they were free to select their own vocabulary. God also left it up to them to choose a genre—poetry, law, epistle, gospel, apocalyptic.

Because those who have adopted
this metaphor allow so much human freedom in the dynamic of inspiration, they feel no discomfort in talking about the differences in the mental and even spiritual capacities of the biblical writers. They generally do not wince when speaking about cultural conditioning on the part of David, the Chronicler, Matthew, or Peter. Nor do those who hold to this model of inspiration recoil if some sort of inaccuracy in fact or figure can be pointed out in Scripture.

Ellen White says: “The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. . . . Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. . . . The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language.”

Those who argue for verbal inspiration may suggest that the Holy Spirit inspired not the writers but the books, but that’s not Ellen White’s stand: “The Bible is written by inspired men, but it is not God's mode of thought and expression. . . . God, as a writer, is not represented. . . . God has not put Himself in words, in logic, in rhetoric, on trial in the Bible. . . .”

“It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men. . . . Inspiration acts not on the man’s words or his expressions but on the man himself, who, under the influence of the Holy Ghost, is imbued with thoughts. . . . The words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused.”

Metaphors, though not identical with the reality itself, are generally very helpful. But metaphors have a life of their own. At first they can have great power, but as time goes by they can become trite, losing power and finally dying.

Metaphors consist of a vehicle and a tenor. The vehicle is the concrete analogy itself. For example, the incarnation of our Saviour is the vehicle. The tenor is the idea of a dual nature blending the divine and human into an integrated whole. It is conceivable that different vehicles may have nearly the same (if not identical) tenor. So it may be appropriate when a metaphor dies—that is, when the vehicle loses its explanatory power—to select another metaphor with a different vehicle but the same tenor.

From an inductive study of Ellen White’s work and ministry and from her own statements delineating the dynamics of inspiration, many Adventists would opt for the incarnation metaphor rather than the CEO metaphor. But the incarnation metaphor is very old. Might there be another metaphor with a different vehicle but with a similar tenor? There may be. It’s a relatively new metaphor that has very ancient roots.

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105), David sang nearly three thousand years ago. His pre-scientific concept of light was surely not identical with ours. However, the understanding of light now current in modern physics might make a powerful metaphor for a contemporary understanding of the dynamics of inspiration.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727), famed scientist and student of Bible prophecy, became fascinated with light and color, publishing his findings in 1704. According to Newton, light consists of particles, which he called corpuscles. And Newton’s contemporary, Christian Huygens (1629-1695), a Dutch mathematician and physicist, dared to differ with Newton. Huygens said that light consists of waves—not particles—and his research backed him up.

Years went by. Most scientists sided with Newton.

Then in the eighteenth century continued on p. 29
Dear Pastor,

Many of you recently participated in NETNY'99. You can now anticipate “Revelation of Hope” with Mark Finley of It Is Written. Uplinked from Los Angeles four nights a week between March 3 and April 15, this highly illustrated new series can effectively bring many of your current interests to decision.

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Do it today! TODAY!!
Will Christ return in 2000? Some Seventh-day Adventists believe He will. They reason: “For just as the work of Creation took six days, so human history will last six thousand years.”

Norman R. Gulley, Ph.D., is a research professor in systematic theology at Southern Adventist University, Collegedale, Tennessee.

Just as the Sabbath followed six days of creation, so the millennial Sabbath in heaven will follow six thousand years of human history. They see the Creation week as an analogy of the seven thousand years between Creation and re-creation. They refer to prominent Adventist leaders of the past who taught this view, such as O. R. L. Crosier, J. Joseph Bates, T. M. Preble, W. H. Little John, S. N. Haskell, and J. N. Andrews.

Were the pioneers right in their teaching? By whose authority did they come to this conclusion? Who told them that human history would be only six thousand years? It isn’t found in the Bible. Nowhere in Scripture does it say the purpose of Creation week is to inform us about the length of human history. Creation week is history, not prediction. Creation week is about what Christ did and not about what He will do. Scripture is silent on the date for Creation and the Second Advent as well as the length of time between the two. Eschatology is based on prophecies and not on protology, the study of first things like Creation week.

Some see sabbatical years (Lev. 25:1-7) as a type of the coming millennium. Just as six years were followed by a sabbatical year, so six thousand years of history will be followed by a millennial rest (Rev. 20:1-7). The sabbatical cycles (six years of harvesting the land and one year of rest) were pragmatic, not prophetic. They were for the good of the land and had nothing to do with eschatology. Every fiftieth year was a jubilee, a time of liberty when people and land were freed (Lev. 25:8-55). Some see this jubilee year as a type of the millennium. Pope John Paul II speaks of the year 2000 as a jubilee year. Will the coming jubilee be the millennial Sabbath? There is no biblical evidence that the jubilee year ever acquired prophetic significance.

Typology cannot be assumed. It cannot be assigned to a passage from an external source like human reason. Biblical typology is always stated within scripture. One is not left to read typol-
ology into scripture. The absence of biblical typological statements must not be made up by creative interpretation. Richard M. Davidson says, "The nature of biblical typology remains ambiguous as long as an a priori understanding of its conceptual structure is brought to the biblical text instead of allowing these structures to emerge from careful exegetical analysis." Unless there is a clear, unequivocal biblical linkage between the sabbatical and jubilee years with the six-thousand-year time frame of history and the millennium, there is no sure foundation upon which to build such a hypothesis.

Some would argue that since one thousand years are like a day to God (Ps. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:7, 8), six days of creation represent six thousand years of history. But this won’t do. If these passages are used to argue for seven thousand years of salvation history, it could also be argued that each creation day represents one thousand years, and it took six thousand years to complete Creation. Both arguments are wrong.

Usher's chronology

What about Archbishop Usher’s six-thousand-year chronology? R. H. Brown, scientist and specialist in age-dating, and former director of the Geoscience Research Institute, wrote a perceptive article on the question. According to Brown, computations as to when the six-thousand-year period concludes vary radically from A.D. 336 to 1822 to 2037, depending on which factors are taken into consideration. That’s a difference of 701 years! This is surely not a good guide for telling us when Christ will come.

So if the Bible is silent on the length of human history, do we get the six-thousand-year theory from the early church fathers, Usher’s chronology, or Ellen White?

If the Bible is silent on the length of human history, do we get the six-thousand-year theory from the early church fathers, Usher’s chronology, or Ellen White? It is true that many of the early church fathers did speak of the seven-thousand-year time frame. It was "characteristic of the first three centuries" and taught in subsequent centuries. In A.D. 221, Sextus Julius Africanus believed the earth would last only six thousand years, the millennium to come in A.D. 500, or 254 years from his time. A contemporary, Hippolytus of Rome, in A.D. 234 counted 5,738 years back to Creation, hence the millennium would begin in 262 years from his day. Lactantius (A.D. 260-330), speaking of the last times, said, "I have already shown above, that when six thousand years shall be completed this change must take place, and that the last day of the extreme conclusion is now drawing near." These last three church fathers concluded that nearly all of the six thousand years had passed by their time. By contrast Augustine (A.D. 354-430) said, "There should follow on the completion of six thousand years, as of six days, a kind of seventh-day sabbath in the succeeding thousand years." He considered the millennium to be from the first coming of Christ until the end of the world, and hence already in progress. These views about the millennium are all based upon one thousand years for each Creation day. The fact that they varied on when the seventh millennium begins shows their uncertainty of the Creation date.

Ellen White and six thousand years

Perhaps the early Adventist writers were influenced by Usher’s chronology. Adventists today looking for the return of Christ in 2000 are doing so perhaps on the basis of statements made by Ellen White. In The Great Controversy she speaks of six thousand years. Concerning time just before Christ’s return she says, "For six thousand years the great controversy has been in progress." Commenting on the controversy after the millennium, she says, "For six thousand years he [Satan] has wrought his will, filling the earth with woe and causing grief throughout the universe." What do we make of these statements? First, it should be noted that these statements do not specify the year 2000. They merely talk about six thousand years. They do not use any biblical evidence for their assertion. Was Ellen White using the popular Usher time frame for writing historical sequences in The Great Controversy? The fact that she had no date in mind is seen by her repeated warning against setting a date for the Second Advent. Also, soon after 1844 she said Christ could have come by then if the saints had been ready.

There’s no mention that He really could not come because six thousand years of human history hadn’t yet transpired. He delayed because of human unreadiness, not because the year 2000 was still future. So He could have come nearly one hundred fifty years before the year 2000! Of course it could be argued that the six-thousand-year statements take all this delay into consideration. Yet even that does not bring us to the year 2000, for no one knows when the six-thousand-year period began.

The last biblical time prophecy ended in 1844 (Dan. 8:14), and Ellen White says, "Our position has been one of waiting and watching, with no time-proclamation to intervene between the close of the prophetic periods in 1844 and the time of the Lord’s coming." Christ said of His coming, "The Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him" (Matt. 24:44; Luke 12:40). So there is always an urgent imminence that transcends any date.

A disappointment in 2000?

What if time goes beyond 2000? Could there be a great disappointment...
for those who expect Christ to come that year? That is a real possibility, and such a disappointment could cause many to give up as they did in 1844. Calendar dates should have nothing to do with our belief in Christ’s return. Fulfillment of biblical prophecy has everything to do with His coming. That’s the only safe place to fix our gaze. We must be people of prophecy and not people of speculation. My latest book, Christ is Coming! traces the many end-time movements that are rapidly fulfilling prophecy—like spiritualism, the charismatic movement, the Christian Coalition, the global power of the Papacy, the uniting of church and state, Dominionists, the New Age movement, the promotion of Sunday, and the uniting of churches. When one looks at the total picture, it provides convincing evidence that Christ could come soon. Imminence and certainty of His coming are what are important. Setting dates and references to the year 2000 are not.

3 James White, “The Age to Come Will Be the Great Jubilee, the Seventh Millennium, in Which the Land, the Whole Earth Will Rest.” The Advent Review, September, 1859, For reference to God’s great week as six thousand years of history and one thousand years of rest, see Review and Herald, March 6, 1856.
4 T. M. Peeble, “But we all as advent believers, have, and do still expect our rest in the seventh thousand years.” A Tract Showing That the Seventh Day Should Be Observed as the Sabbath, Instead of the First Day; “According to the Commandment.” See copy in George Knight, 1844 and The Rise of Sabbatarian Adventism (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1994), 184.
5 W. H. Little John, Review and Herald, March 4, 1844.
6 S. N. Haskell, “The Weekly Sabbath Was a Stepping Stone Leading up to the Other Sabbath Institution; and Besides Being a Memorial of Creation, It Pointed Forward to the Final Rest of Jubilee.” The Cross and its Shadow, (South Lancaster, Mass.: The Bible Training School, 1914), 248.
7 J. N. Andrews wrote a Review and Herald series of six articles (July 17 and August 21, 1883) titled, “The Great Week of Time, or the Period of Seven-Thousand Years Devoted to the Probation and Judgment of Mankind.”
11 For example, Irenaeus (c. 130-200), Against Heresies, 3.3.2; Anti-Nicene Fathers, 1:565; and Lactantius (260-330), The Divine Institutes, 7.14, ANF, 7:211; Barnabas, Epistles of Barnabas, 15.1-5; Johannes Questen, Patrology (Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1990, 5th printing), 1:89.
19 Ibid., 673.
20 White, Last Day Events, 32-42.
22 White, Last Day Events, 36.
A gritty, ironic voice spoke behind me. A few minutes before, I'd finished preaching my first sermon in my first church. People had shaken my hand and welcomed me; gradually the foyer had cleared.

I turned to face a bearded man with a challenging glint in his eye.

“Thank you for the message,” he said.

“You’re welcome.”

Smiling, I got ready to ask his name, but he cut me short, saying, “In your sermon you said you used to be a college English teacher.”

“That’s right.”

“I think you need to know,” he said, “that you committed three grammatical errors this morning.” And in his grating voice he remorselessly exposed and analyzed them one by one.

Back in those days I was hollow-cheeked and earnest, so during that crisp grammar lesson I only barely managed to hold on to a glassy smile as my face flushed dusky red. Nowadays I would have prodded him in the ribs and chuckled a comeback I’ve picked up since then: “Ah, come on. I was just being deliberately colloquial.” (Usually people are so impressed that anyone can even pronounce “deliberately colloquial” on their first try that they’ll back away and give me space.)

Kidding aside, good spoken grammar is important. It’s all right to be deliberately colloquial once in a while, but people do tend to wince when they hear untutored speech. Sermonic grammatical gaffes are like static on a cell phone call, or cable interference on a TV program: they short-circuit a sermon’s smooth flow. The discriminating listener wonders whether grammatical carelessness signals doctrinal or exegetical carelessness as well. Bad grammar muddies sermonic waters, and when a message is delivered on behalf of Heaven, clarity counts.

That’s why I’m writing this article. Though, obviously, I can’t cover every point here, I’ll just deal with a few of the major verbal errors that could interfere with your preaching.

My wife and I (subjects and objects)

A couple of weeks ago at a ministers’ meeting, a fellow pastor sidled up to me.

“When I preached last weekend,” he said, “one of the doctors in my congregation heard me say, ‘my wife and
me.’ I really meant ‘my wife and I.’ Which is it?’

Actually, it’s both. It just depends on where in the sentence you and your wife happen to be perching. Remember those old grammatical terms, subjects and objects? The subject of a sentence performs the action. The object has the action done to it. Look at this sentence:

I lectured him on law and grace.

What’s the subject? In other words, who’s doing the action (the lecturing)? I, of course. Not me. I and me are the same person—they’re different forms of the same personal pronoun—but I is what you use for subjects of sentences (and clauses, which are complete sentences tied into other sentences), and me is used for objects.

Look at the law-and-grace sentence again. What’s its object? In other words, who’s getting the benefit of all that lecturing? Him, not he. Him is the form used for the object, not only of the verb (as in this case) but also of a preposition. As you’ve probably already noticed, law and grace are objects of the preposition on.

Take a moment to mull over these two lists:

These pronouns are used as subjects (of sentences or clauses): I, he, she, we, they, and who.

These pronouns are used as objects (of verbs or prepositions): me, him, her, us, them and whom.

Not too complicated, right? But what trips people up is when somebody else is added to the mix. Like a wife:

My wife, Mary, and [I? me?] walked to church with you and [she? her?]?

A quick rule of thumb: mentally eliminate the non-pronoun subjects, and see what sounds good:

I walked to church with her.

Everything falls into place, right? I is the subject (I is doing the walking), and her is the object of the preposition with.

My or myself

Okay. Now you’ve got a firmer grip on the I/me matter. And just in time, too. Because today is your wedding anniversary, and a few church members have thrown a surprise party for you.

Amid the chatter and laughter, you rise to your feet, forming in your mind what you hope will be a gracious sentence of gratitude:

“I really appreciate all you have done for my wife and (I? me?).”

Me is of course correct. But me sounds too chummy somehow. Myself just might add the proper sort of deprecatory modesty you’re hoping for. Can you get by grammatically with my wife and myself?

Nope. (Sorry, I was being deliberately colloquial there.) Why can’t you use the classier-sounding myself? Because myself, along with himself and herself and probably a bunch of others, are what are known as reflexive pronouns, and the only thing for which you can use a reflexive pronoun is to refer back to the subject of the sentence. Here’s an example.

I am going to teach myself Hebrew. (Myself is just another name for the person known as I.)

So there at your anniversary party you smile, and simply say, “I really appreciate all you have done for my wife and me.” Or you could dodge the whole problem and say, “My wife and I appreciate all you have done for us.” Often the best way out of an uncertain grammatical swamp is to revise the sentence.

And remember: if you muck it, you can always duck behind “deliberately colloquial.”

Subject-verb agreement (is or are?)

Your anniversary party winds to its close. Even though the announcement said “No gifts, please,” several people brought presents, and you’re eyeing them with an expression which you hope contains just the right blend of “how nice” and “oh, you shouldn’t have.”

The new schoolteacher, who’s just come into the room, walks up to you. “Look at all those gifts,” she says.

“Aren’t they nice?” you reply. And since she’s a schoolteacher, you take care to form your next sentence in your mind instead of just blurring it out:

“Each of those gifts (are? is?) perfect.”

The tricky part, of course, is the prepositional phrase, of those gifts. Thanks to the generosity of your guests, the gifts are definitely plural. So why can’t you use are?

Sadly, you and I weren’t around to vote on this when the crazy English language was being patchworked together, so we’ll just have to live with the following fact:

Each, either, neither, someone, somebody, anyone, anybody, everyone, everybody, no one, and nobody are all singular. No, I’m not kidding. Even everyone and everybody are singular. So—

“Each of these lovely gifts,” you say confidently to the schoolteacher, “is perfect.” Smiling, she credits you with deliberately colloquial.

Dangling modifiers

“What on earth are modifiers,” you ask yourself, “and what’s so wrong about letting them dangle once in awhile?”

You’re about to pose this question to the new schoolteacher, when suddenly you remember that many of the people at your party don’t even know her yet. So you pause and mentally rehearse a sentence of introduction:

“As your new schoolteacher, I’d like...
to introduce to you Miss Mary Jones.”

Wait a minute. Something’s wrong there. But what? You take another mental glance at that sentence. Come to think of it, it sounds vaguely like you are claiming to be the new schoolteacher.

That pesky phrase “as your new schoolteacher” is, of course, the modifier. A modifier is a word, phrase, or clause that limits or qualifies another word or word group. In other words, the “schoolteacher” phrase tells us some useful information about Mary Jones. If we didn’t have that phrase, we might think of her as a stockbroker or a short-order cook rather than a dispenser of wisdom and a shaper of young minds.

What makes that sentence so confusing is that the “schoolteacher” phrase has drifted so far away that the subject of the sentence, I, got between it and Mary.

But, confident now in your well-grounded grammar skills, you clear your throat, adjust your tie, plop the “schoolteacher” phrase right up close to Mary where it belongs, and do your duty as a host.

“May I have your attention for a moment?” you ask, smiling at the crowd. “I’d like to introduce to you the new schoolteacher, Miss Mary Jones.”

Other grammatical improvements

Okay, I know that out there in the wide world of communication there are lots more complicated sentences than the examples we’ve used here. Is there anything you can do to prepare for them?

Sure. For one thing, get into the practice of spotting subjects and verbs in sentences you read. Make it a hobby. And remember that a whole cluster of words can make up a subject—like this: Reading Augustine on the bus improved Kayla’s day right from the start.

Verbs come in three basic flavors. Some need an object to make sense: Greg kicked the football. Some don’t: Yesterday Maria gardened. And some verbs aren’t even action words at all: Camillo seems happy.

Also, see if you can pick out prepositions and the phrases that cling closely to them. Here are some prepositions to watch for: about, above, after, against, at, behind, below, by, for, from, in, into, of, off, on, since, through, to, under, upon, with. Remember, if you’re not sure what grammar function a word has, simply look it up in a dictionary.

And there are some great books that can help you. Like the superb The Elements of Business Writing, by Gary Blake and Robert W. Bly (Collier/Macmillan, 1991). The whole book is great, but the grammar section beginning on page 93 is the best brief summary, in the plainest language, I’ve ever seen.

Sure, the study of grammar might not be the most exciting topic, but if you take just a few minutes a day brushing up, it could make a big difference in your preaching.
Though the job of pastor’s wife can be exciting and challenging, not all women relate to it in the same way. Personality, social background, and a host of other factors influence how she plays this crucial role.

In Minister’s Wife: Person or Position? Marilyn Brown Oden writes that pastors’ wives may be broadly divided into three basic groups: the detached, the background supporter, and the incorporated or active participant.

What does it mean to be in one of those groups?

The detached
The detached pastor’s wife does not perceive herself as a particularly important part of her husband’s ministry. She is married to the man, not his job. It is important to her that her husband’s profession not interfere with their personal life. She is not necessarily concerned about fulfilling the expectations of the congregation. Because she refrains from this role, she is freer to be herself and, among other things, to perhaps pursue her own career goals or to devote herself more single-mindedly to the rearing of her children, especially if they are at their younger stages of development. It is important to note that not every pastor’s wife who pursues her own career or concerns is necessarily detached.

The detached wife may be frustrated when people simply associate her with her husband’s ministry. In this kind of pastoral marriage, a husband may feel a lack of support from his wife and experience a sense of aloneness in his ministry and, perhaps, in his marriage as a whole. This could negatively affect his work. He might, for example, find it difficult to minister to some of the female members of his congregation or to effectively fulfill some of his roles as husband and father.

Molly Wesley, wife of Methodist preacher John Wesley, is an example of the detached pastoral wife. She was not as educated as her husband. She did not have the same social standing. Apparently, because of these and other factors, she never really felt part of Wesley’s public ministry. Wesley, in fact, seems to have become hesitant to have her appear with him in public, not being sure what she might say or do in such situations. She ended up standing aloof, at least from the public aspects of his ministry.

The less assertive woman may not want to be heavily involved in working with many people, especially in the public aspects of ministry. She may lack the needed confidence or giftedness for such a role. She may be shy. She may feel she lacks skills in ministerial work and, therefore, sense that she has little...
to offer her husband in his work. She then may tend to feel detached.

The key factor in this kind of pastoral marriage is that a wife remain emotionally and spiritually available to her husband and the work of ministry and that the two of them communicatively forge out a mutually satisfying relationship.

The background supporter

The background supporter feels she is a part of the ministry but prefers to work in the background. She helps where she can but does not take a leading role. This wife is in a better position to give counsel and advice to her husband and to share in his life and ministry, because she is in a position to observe his work. For example, although she carries no church office, the wife may watch the congregation’s responses during a sermon, thus utilizing some of her behind-the-scenes giftedness to the benefit of her husband’s ministry and that of the congregation. The pastor will have respect from the congregation because he fills his role without public interference from his wife. This couple works together, rather than in competition.

Emma Moody “enjoyed a behind-the-scenes place” yet was a great supporter to D. L. Moody. Although “she shunned the limelight... her gifts as a teacher were recognized. In Moody’s Sunday school she taught a class of about forty middle-aged men. Once, Moody was escorting a visitor through his Sunday school, and the visitor remarked about the propriety of the situation: ‘Isn’t that lady too young to be a teacher of a class of men like that?’ Moody responded that he thought the teacher was handling the class quite well. The visitor agreed but still insisted that it seemed improper. Finally Moody said rather proudly, ‘That sir, is my wife.’” Much of the success of Moody’s ministry is attributed to his wife’s support. The adage “Behind every successful man is a good woman” applies well in this case.

The wife who is a background supporter to her husband can be so in a virtually unlimited array of ways. Her essential emotional and spiritual support is what is key to her role as a pastor’s wife.

Incorporated participant

The incorporated participant is actively involved in the ministry. Such a wife has in fact found her particular niche—a ministry of her own that complements that of her husband. She does not hesitate to take a leading role. I heard of one wife who participates in church board meetings with all voting powers. She is a member by virtue of being the pastor’s wife. If the pastor is unavailable, she does not hesitate to give counsel in matters of church programs and administration. Although there are some dangers present in such participation, her involvement is strong and can be edifying.

Some women, with more assertive or aggressive personalities, may fit into this category of pastoral spouse. This kind of wife is almost an “assistant pastor,” always in the forefront. Such involvement, however, could create serious complications that the pastor may find difficult to rectify and that may develop uneasy frictions among the congregation and in the marriage. The couple may even tend to compete with one another. However, if their roles are well-defined and there is honest communication between them, a viable team ministry is possible and the congregation can benefit from and even emulate this cooperation.

Again, although this wife may effectively fill in where her talents lie, some cautionary limits should be in place. The wife should not be seen as superseding the pastor, who is the designated leader of the congregation. Talented as she may be—she is not the pastor, but rather, his support person.

“The wife of a minister of the gospel can be either a most successful helper and a great blessing to her husband or a hindrance to him in his work. It depends very much on the wife whether a minister will rise from day to day in his sphere of usefulness or whether he will sink to the ordinary level. Wives of the ministers should help their husbands in their labors and be exact and careful what influence they exert, for they are watched, and more is expected of them than of others.”

Conclusion

Each of us has been called from a different social background, and each has differing inherited and acquired traits. Therefore, each is to minister in a different way.

Christian ministry calls for commitment from every believer, including the minister and his wife. Commitment in one without an answering commitment in the other hurts both. But each marriage and each church situation is different. In all of it, surrender of life and will to their Lord is crucial, for then His Spirit can work to balance their disparate traits so that the husband-and-wife team can work together in an effective, Christ-centered pastoral ministry, while their home and their marriage is strong and rewarding.

3 Ibid., 107, 113, 114.
Ever wonder what Bethlehem looked like at the time of Christ’s birth? Take time for a virtual Walk Through Bethlehem, and see the basket weavers, soldiers, and shopkeepers busy at work. Witness as the shepherds and wise men receive their messages from the angels, and Herod sends out the decree to find the baby Jesus.

This is an excellent opportunity to invite your community and neighbors to view an exciting Christmas program and hear some inspiring seasonal stories.

For more information on ACN’s First Wednesday, call 800-ACN-1119, ext. 7, or visit their Web site at acnsat.org.
As a survivor of Florida's Hurricane Andrew, I have come to stand in awe of the raw power of nature in a ferocious mood. The strength of the winds, the speed and force of the rain, the wake of destruction have all left their marks upon me. After the storm I remember seeing film footage of the incredible devastation. One amazing picture remains in my mind, that of a two-by-four inch wooden beam thrust clean through the trunk of a tree. I remember, too, finding private mail blown from miles away, lying wet at my front door. The power was immense.

Now, seven years and a thousand miles from Florida, having recently attended my own church board meeting, our conference executive committee, and a gathering of Adventist college and university Bible teachers—all within a week—I have been reminded again of power, just of a different kind; the power of God manifested in the community of faith known as the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

In my one concentrated week among those disparate committees and meetings I have come to think about the core of our church and what indeed drives or moves it. I have noticed different conceptions of what it should be at the core, or what should indeed move the church.

And I have wondered, are there in fact parallels between a hurricane and our church?

I believe there are.

Message or movement?

"Whatever is at the center of our life," wrote Steven Covey, "will be the source of our security, guidance, wisdom, and power."1 Of course, this is just a modern expression of the biblical truth expressed by Christ, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matt. 6:21). What is at the center of our church, locally and globally? This is a relevant question because whatever is at the center, the core, will be the source of corporate security, guidance, wisdom, and power.

It is in trying to sum this up that the hurricane analogy is helpful. The strength of the hurricane is dependent upon the size of the eye (or the core) of the storm. In the case of the hurricane, the larger the eye, the weaker the storm. The same is true of the church: the larger our core, the weaker our power. The more issues placed at the core of Adventism, the more battles we will be engaged in and the less effective our ministry will be.

The church, as every organization does, goes through identity crises. Beliefs, practices, and policies, once assumed by the world family are now subject to scrutiny and investigation. Many struggle to understand and define the heart or core of our being as a church, and the struggle may be described as a battle between having a message- or movement-centered community.2 The question is, Which are we?

Those championing a message center or core consider the possession of a correct message the condition that will right a listing church. They tend to see the cause for the church's problems to be a flawed or improper message. Each message-centered group is saying, with the others in mind, "If we all just truly believed the right thing, we would be a real force for truth in the world." For example, I have heard of various systems of belief within the church being described as "historic Adventism" and advocating a return to "what the pioneers believed" as the means of getting the church back to what it ought to be.

Those with a movement-centered orientation find organizational leaders and church management to blame for problems they see in the church. "If we had better leaders and better plans, or if we adhered to more effective policies," they say, "then we could become a stronger force." I have heard many different versions of this approach. Movement-centered people believe in the message but find it woefully weak due to the lack of leadership, vision, or effective planning they see in the church.

Which provides a more dynamic and stable center, message or movement? Should our security, guidance, wisdom, and power come from a movement-centered or a message-centered organization? A hurricane with two eyes would have far less power and effect, with winds that may not even reach hurricane force. A community of believers with two cores would wreak far less damage upon the kingdom of Lucifer than a community with a single core. The greater the variety of ideals found at the core of Adventism, the more battles we will fight and the less power, energy, and resources we will have to spread the gospel.

The application of the core

My second observation from hurricane Andrew and my week of meetings is that the more clearly defined the eye of a storm, the more

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Viewpoint articles are designed to stimulate thought and do not necessarily reflect the position of our editorial staff or of Ministry.
dangerous it is. Not only is the size of the eye a factor, but the clarity or “focus” of the eye is important. This observation has to do with the crucial difference between the core of Adventism and the application of that core. Again, that which is the core of Adventism provides the basis for our wisdom, security, guidance, and power. That central core is our main influencing force; it impacts every layer of the community of faith.

This is what writer James Collins refers to as “core ideology.” Collins examined twelve “gold medal” companies; companies that had been at the top in their markets for an average of one hundred years. “A visionary company,” he wrote, “carefully preserves and protects its core ideology, yet all the specific manifestations of its core ideology must be open for change and evolution.” In fact, he said: “It is absolutely essential to not confuse core ideology with culture, strategy, tactics, operations, policies, or other noncore practices. . . . Ultimately, the only thing a company should not change over time is its core ideology.”

Collins admits that this dynamic of “persevere the core and stimulate progress” is the essence of a visionary company. Though there are clear and crucial differences between for-profit and non-profit ventures (i.e., the church), this thesis is certainly applicable in both arenas.

What is our core ideology, and what are the noncore manifestations of that ideology? Is the time of the local worship service a part of the core ideology or part of the noncore manifestation? Is the structure of our Sabbath School classes part of the core ideology or of noncore traditions? Is the current world structure of the church part of the core ideology or is it a noncore manifestation? These are serious questions that will impact each level of church organization. In short, is the movement the noncore manifestation of our message, or is the message the noncore manifestation of our movement? (Admittedly, that question will take some worthwhile thought to decipher!)

Here again the hurricane analogy is helpful. No meteorologist will confuse the eye of the storm with the wall of the storm and the outer bands of the storm. When the core of a hurricane changes, the outer bands of the storm change. Those outer bands remain, but their force and shape are more easily affected. Once again, the power of the hurricane is derived from the core of the storm. The power of that core flows out into the outlying bands and cells of the hurricane. Those cells and bands may be self-contained, but they receive their energy and power from the eye.

This offers significant insight for us as a community of believers.

The question is not an either-or but what is central

Saying that a single core must be the center of our community does not erase the significance of other areas of the community any more than the eye of the storm decreases the significance of the rest of the storm structure. Rather, the outer bands that move away from the core receive their significance and prominence from the core. The core provides the motivation for the various manifestations. Like the outer bands of a hurricane, the outer bands of the community flow and rotate around the core, while the core continually feeds these bands.

This is not an either-or situation but is one with primary and secondary characteristics. Both message and movement are significant. Both have their place within the community. This is a question of centrality or source. Which one drives the other?

If we come to a consensus on what is our single, small, and clear core ideology, it will unite the world church in a way that will provide greater focus and fulfillment. I could suggest a number of worthy ideologies for our core, but even if that core becomes our publishing work, educational work, medical work, local church work, parachurch work, or any other entity connected to the church.
there can be a flow of power, wisdom, guidance, and security which will strengthen each entity and the church as a whole. Truly, the church will become greater than the sum of its parts.

Core walls

There is a third lesson I learn from hurricanes. The real power of the storm is felt in what is called the “eye wall.” This is a fitting analogy to our global community. The areas closest to the core are the areas where the most intense struggles and battles occur. The closer a discussion, a vote, or a statement comes to the core of an organization, the louder and quicker is the response of that person or organization. The blood pressure of the community climbs as the issue moves nearer to the core (unlike a hurricane, where the pressure drops the closer you move to the eye). When you have a number of issues identified as the core, the battles grow in number and significance. Thus, it will seem like most of our energy and time is invested in protecting and securing that multifaceted core.

This provides a window of insight into many of our current church struggles. Many of the struggles of our maturing community reveal a growing awareness that the core of Adventism is presently going through a process of self-examination. There seems to be more of an effort to clarify issues either along message and/or movement lines. This clarifying process, I believe, can be highly beneficial if the result is that the church clarifies for itself its core purpose and thus what will move us into the new millennium with renewed vigor, energy, and vision, and toward the coming of Jesus.

Conclusion

The final analogy to be made between a hurricane and the Seventh-day Adventist Church is a more obvious one. It relates to the incredible power that hurricane winds wield in just a short period of time. Hurricane Andrew lasted about four hours, but it changed the landscape of South Florida forever. The collective memory of the affected communities struck by the storm is divided by the event. Life is viewed through the event. People have never been the same.

Imagine a church energized by the power of extreme unity around a focused core of essentials. Imagine a church moving with such swiftness that people come to view their “before and after” according to the reality of their encounter with this extreme force! It is immensely significant that Christ’s final corporate prayer for and with His closest associates was that they might be one, even as He and the Father are one.

This oneness cannot be dictated from boardrooms, devised by planning sessions, nor decreed from creedal statements. This quality of identity and unity cannot be mandated. Administrators alone cannot decide its parameters, and pastors alone cannot proclaim it. Non-paid ministers (conventionally known as “laity”) alone cannot vote it. Educators alone cannot prescribe it. Somehow, some way, we all must come together through this process and reach consensus through prayerful consideration about what a worthy core actually is and how it will impact us in the new millennium.

After all, the core will provide security in an age of insecurity, wisdom in an information age, guidance in a morally drifting world, and power in an age of apathy.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit blew through the believers like “a mighty rushing wind.” May the Spirit blow through the church again, only this time with hurricane force.

John Grys is pastor for organizational development at the Hamilton Community Church of Seventh-day Adventists, Chattanooga, Tennessee.

2 When I use the word “movement,” I am referring to organizational issues primarily. This includes traditions, practices, and ways of conducting the work of God and conveying the truths of Scripture which contribute to the formation of our Adventist subculture. When I use the word “message,” I am speaking primarily about a dominant theme, concept, or idea which drives, motivates, and contributes to the formation of our Adventist subculture.
4 Ibid., 81 (emphasis his).
5 Ibid., 82.
just when you thought you had lived through all the millennial hype and hysteria, those clever marketers discover that December 31 does not really usher in the third millennium.

Instead, the new year will dawn, along with the realization—"how could we have missed it?"—that we have another 366 days (2000 is a leap year!) for one last gasp of commercialism to exploit our fascination with times, dates, prognostications, and fantasy.

With sobering reality, we watch the world wavering between twin dangers, the one of attaching too much significance to the approaching new year (Y2K destroys civilization as we know it), and its equally dangerous counterpart of attaching too little significance to the promised return of Jesus (eat, drink, be merry, for tomorrow we die).

Adventists affirm, and have always believed in, the imminence of Christ's coming. We have correctly preached the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation and, appropriately, called our listeners to choose for Jesus and against Satan.

This is good and proper! Proclaiming confidence in the imminent return of Jesus motivates sinners to make good decisions and invigorates saints with fresh hope!

On the other hand, with a virulent spirit more deadly than any computer glitch, some have twisted Scripture to their own aims. Fascination with knowledge for the sake of possessing information, has tempted some to pronounce the parousia's general timing, if not its specific date.

Ignoring Jesus' own warning, these overconfident charlatans blare out clever calculations and ponderous pronouncements. Like a dry cloud in a parched desert, they make great pretense and display impressive activity. However, when spiritual thirst really needs quenching, they offer only vapid display and deliver nothing but dashed expectations.

For example, those who attach too much import to the year 2000 as a significant anniversary of our Lord's birth have missed both the millennium and the message. Since Jesus was most likely born in 4 BC, the millennial anniversary passed about six years ago with as little notice taken by the world or by the church as that which accompanied Christ's birth.

On the other hand, those who attach too little import to the year 2000 fail to appropriately appreciate and utilize the focus of the entire world on the passing of a calendar milestone. They miss both the message and the mission. Just as Easter or Christmas present unique opportunities for witness, so society's enthrallment with a new, albeit artificial, millennium brings unique opportunity to raise the right questions and provide the best answers.

As our former associate editor, Martin Weber, notes in his new book, Millennimentia, millions are pondering whether there is more to the transition of centuries than merely a great date at Sydney Harbor, London's Millennium Dome, or Times Square.

So what are the right questions? I am convinced that asking the correct questions is more challenging than dispensing correct answers. Diagnosis is more difficult than treatment for a physician. As pastors and evangelists, too often we have been so busy offering answers that we have failed to ask correct questions. On the other hand, some have asked so many questions that hope-filled answers never get delivered.

What are the right answers? The response to hype's overstimulation or lethargy about missed opportunities lies in our message and our mission—lifting up Jesus and inviting people to Him.

Clearly, the right answers are not blasphemous attempts to control times and laws or to demand that Heaven behave according to the dictates of our speculation—as if we direct the Almighty to behave in concurrence with our projections.

In a seemingly earnest desire to discover divine mysteries, is it possible that some have loved knowledge more than truth? Some have exalted theoretical conjecture, speculative drivel, and curious interpretations that, though they may momentarily arrest the attention, nevertheless leave a person's spiritual condition unchanged.

These speculative and wrong answers too often are preceded by the wrong assumption that humanity is begging for insight into contrivances of prophecy and current events when, instead, humanity is gasping for a breath of hope that says, "Here is how to cope with the miserable reality of everyday life."

Tinned food delivered to a starving child is useless if not accompanied by a can-opener that gives access. Predictive prognostications falling on hungry hearts do not feed the soul if not accompanied by the Holy Spirit that provides Bread and quenches thirst.

What, then, are the right questions? I believe they surround the heart cry of lost souls who have just recognized their tragic condition. "What must I do to be saved?" "Who will deliver me from my wretched race toward death?"

And the answers? The only satisfying answer for over 2000 years is so simple—knowing Him Whom to know is life eternal!

If we lift up Jesus, the lost will beat a path to the Cross.
Dynamics of inspiration, part 1
continued from p. 14

Thomas Young of England and Augustin Fresnel of France insisted that light was made up of waves. Their experimental results met with skepticism. Later Leon Foucault, James Clerk Maxwell, and Heinrich Hertz finally succeeded in convincing the scientific community that light was wavelike. One last holdout for the corpuscular theory of light remained vocal—Albert Einstein. Despite other persuasive research during the first half of the twentieth century, Einstein seemed to establish "beyond all doubt" the particle nature of light.

Then during the first half of the 1900s, Niels Bohr, a Danish physicist, enunciated the principle of complementarity, which meant that Newton and Einstein were right... as were Huygens and Fresnel. What? Bohr's principle of complementarity insisted that the wave and particle theories of light are not mutually exclusive to one another but complementary. Both concepts are necessary to provide a complete description.1,2

So modern scientists speak of the "dual nature of light" or "particle/wave duality." To speak of one aspect alone is not wrong so much as it is inadequate. You get the point, don't you? King David was smarter than he realized when he said that God's Word is a light.

Since 1930 we can appreciate even more David's use of light as a metaphor for the product of revelation and inspiration. Just as the incarnation model afforded insight into the dual nature of Scripture, now the dual nature of light more than ever drives home the lesson that one cannot do justice to the Bible by merely emphasizing either its divine side or its human origin. Both aspects must be seen as complementary.

This principle of the dual nature of inspiration—the human and the divine—helps us to better understand inspiration as found in Ellen White, errors found in inspired writings, and various approaches to understanding inspired writings. To this we shall turn in the concluding part of this article to appear in February.

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1 From henceforth I shall use the term "inspiration" as shorthand for "revelation[s] and inspiration."
2 Journal of Nervous and Mental Diseases 125, no. 2 (1957): 202, 206.
3 "The Use of the Spirit of Prophecy In Our Teaching of Bible and History," Spectrum, 10:1, 41.
4 Donald Bloesch, Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation (Downer's Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 52.
6 Bloesch, 117.
7 W. A. Criswell, Why I Preach the Bible Is Literally True (Nashville: Broadman, 1969), 68.
11 Ibid., 83.

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Ministry Report

With acknowledgment to Martin Luther for initiating the idea, A. C. McClure (left), president of the North American Division, and church growth expert Ron Gladden (right) nail 95 Theses of Church Planting to the church door during a recent Seeds '99 convention at Andrews University. An avalanche of positive support and reaffirmation for NAD's renewed emphasis on church planting accompanied this event and highlights Gladden's new video series, Church Planting 101, which is available through the Ministerial Association Resource Center.

Letters

sympathy for the view that Christians should eat food that Leviticus specifies as unclean. In fact, I specifically make it clear that they should not (see page 23).—John Brunt, vice president for Academic Administration and Professor of Biblical Studies, Walla Walla College, Walla Walla, Washington.

David Merling responds

On the contrary, I believe it is Dr. Brunt who has misunderstood my article. He has already quoted what I wrote in Ministry. What Dr. Brunt writes is, “Second, in their use of Leviticus 11, many Adventist are not biblical, for the New Testament explicitly abolishes distinctions between clean and unclean,” in Spectrum, February 1981, 17, 18. Again, Dr. Brunt writes, “There are also other passages that could be included here, such as Titus 1:15 and Colossians 2:8-23, but the passages above are sufficient to show that the New Testament rejects the distinction between clean and unclean foods” (ibid., 19). How he can conclude that we disagree—that some Seventh-day Adventists believe the New Testament did away with the distinction between clean and unclean—which is a major point in his paper and a footnote in mine, is a mystery to me.

Where we truly disagree is in his attempt to reintroduce unclean animals as an “unhealthful” practice, which is a non-biblical, but a creative suggestion. I know of no biblical passage that suggests that unclean animals were/are “unhealthful” and Dr. Brunt provides none. For him the New Testament (i.e., “Judaism of the first century”) abrogated a command of the Old Testament and Ellen White resurrected that prohibition as a tradition on the level of all other “unhealthful” practices (ibid., 21, 22). My article suggests that Jesus was more thoroughly astute than either the Pharisees or many of today’s theologians. Jesus taught that all sin (murder, immorality, etc., Cf. Mark 7:20-23), originates from the heart. According to Jesus, unwashed hands can not make food unclean (“common”). “Thus, he declared all food clean” from the “tradition of the elders” (Cf. Mark 7:5-19). In his argument Jesus carefully avoided the use of the Greek word that was used in the LXX for unclean animals. Only wishful thinking introduces the issue of unclean animals into Mark 7.1 believe eating unclean animals is an issue of the heart; not in eating of the flesh but in the regard or disregard of God’s command.

I also suggest that a careful reading of Mark 7 will show that Jesus was not hypocritically blasting the Pharisees for using their traditions to put aside God’s laws, then creating His own new tradition, which contradicted the Old Testament’s previous commands. The issue was plain: tradition verse the commands of God. That issue still lives.

To read my full unedited article, please contact me directly.—David Merling, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Archaeology and History of Antiquity, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49104.

Things that matter continued from p. 4

reactions are far off the spirit and content of my appeal. I am calling for the balance of Jesus’ ministry to be ours, or if you like, for the balance expressed in the whole of James 1:17 to be ours. I am not calling for compromise but for a higher, holier and more complete practice of Christianity and Christian ministry. I am calling for this because, along with my e-mail friend, I think we are in urgent need of rethinking and reworking the proportions of our calling.

I wonder what would happen to our evangelism if along with our uncompromising presentation of the great truths God has called us to proclaim, we were known to be genuinely and effectively a people who unselfconsciously serve the real needs of the humanity about us. I cannot help but believe that our proclamation would be much more effective, just as Jesus’ was.

May I dare you who are at all challenged by this line of thinking, who have a vision for this kind of ministry or who may have done some work along this line, to write a thoughtful article for Ministry outlining how this kind of emphasis could be implemented in the average pastor’s ministry in the average congregation. The question of such an article would be, how may the consciousness and action of the congregation be raised so that more in a local church become involved in personally and genuinely reaching out to the weak and the poor of a given neighborhood? (See the Masthead of any Ministry issue for details about article submission.)
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On New Year’s Eve we ask you to keep your church open all night. Please staff it with volunteers—people who are willing to come for a time period during the night, or stay all night, to pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in 2000 to finish the gospel commission in North America.

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 NIV

Your church is being provided a package of masters for flyers, community information notices, and paper advertisements so that your community will know the “house of prayer for all people” will be open for all people. Some who have never entered a church before will enter that night because of Y2K.

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Please, as the Lord has chosen you to lead His people, you are our contact to reach these remaining unreached language groups. NEI will provide the training, motivation, and prayer support through Pentecost 2000. Your support is needed at the pulpit to lead your people to fill the destiny of reaching these remaining groups.

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