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The mission of a going church for a coming Lord

I thank God for the inspiring article "The Mission of a Going Church for a Coming Lord" by Professor Zebron M. Ncube.

It is very touching, especially for Adventists who care about the present condition of the church.

The issue addressed has been my great concern since I became an Adventist. I am very happy to note the condition of the church.

When we are making plans and other timely messages. Frankly speaking, we have lost focus. The enemy has kept us busy unnecessarily with irrelevant things. It is not too late to make a change.

—Olooto David Dannon, Lagos, Nigeria, West Africa.

The Great Controversy theme: What it means to Adventists

I read with interest the article by Herbert Douglass concerning the Great Controversy theme (December 2000). Historically, I believe it should be noted that within that overall theme there have been individual Adventist interpretations as to “how and when” God’s justice and law are vindicated.

Some suggest that God still waits to be vindicated in the future when His law is revealed in the life of the saints prior to Christ’s appearing. I suggest it is significant that God has already “been vindicated” and proved Himself just at the cross when His own Son became the propitiation for our sins. He is righteous and just, “at the present time,” and a justifier of those who have faith in Christ Jesus (Rom. 3:26).

“In surrendering His spotless soul a living sacrifice, Jesus was bearing the sin of the world; he was enduring the curse of the law; he was vindicating the justice of God. Separation from his Father, the punishment for transgression, was to fall upon him, in order to settle the controversy between Satan and the Prince of heaven in regard to the changeless character of that law” (Ellen G. White, Signs of the Times, December 9, 1897, paragraph 5).

I would suggest that having human beings vindicate God turns the plan of redemption on its head, placing the saints in the redeeming and justifying position! Have we settled this issue or do we yet lack faith in the sufficiency of the atoning sacrifice of Christ and thereby ourselves become a party of Satan’s accusations?

It is finished! Our God is just and reigns today. The ruler of this world is already judged (John 16:10). Christ who now reigns, will soon come and destroy the wicked and the last enemy, death! The "inaugurated kingdom will have become the "consummated Kingdom!"

—Patrick Travis, chaplain, Florida Hospital.

Editorial note: Well said!

Thanks for featuring “The Great Controversy Theme: What It Means to Adventists” so prominently. And I congratulate Herbert Douglass on his basic conclusions. This Adventist doctrine must surely be our most unappreciated and under-researched theme, as much as it is arguably our most central and fundamental doctrine. My recent and unfinished post-graduate research [M.Th., Avondale College] has reinforced this conclusion in my mind.

And yet however vital Douglass’ conclusions may be, I believe that there is even more to be said. I believe that by using Ellen White’s Great Controversy theme as the “orienting concern” of Adventist theology, we may re-envision that theology as a “practical theology.” Such a “practical theology” is not interested in developing an elaborate theological system. It is, however, interested in nurturing and shaping the worldview that determines the tone and practice of believers.

Such a “practical theology” may be a looser collection of theological concepts and therefore an “orienting concern” may well take the place of the systematic theologians’ “organizing principle.”

I am indebted for the above insight to Randy Maddox, a leading Wesleyan scholar. He has applied the concept of “practical theology” to John Wesley’s theology. I assert that they apply equally well to Ellen White and to Adventist theology in general.

—Peter S. Marks, Australia.

The divergent tracks of Adventist identity

I think both you [Will Eva (editorial)] and Paul McGraw (December 2000)] continued on page 27

Free Subscription

If you’re receiving Ministry bimonthly and haven’t paid for a subscription, it’s not a mistake. Since 1928 Ministry has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can’t use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.
The Bible opens with a dramatic portrayal of direct communication between God and humanity. God is described as essentially speaking face-to-face with the first humans. In language they understand He says, “Be fruitful and increase in number... subdue [the earth]. Rule over... every living creature (Gen. 1:28, NIV). There is no question in their minds as to who they are, what they are to do and what their relationship is to God. God Himself has told them directly and audibly and this direct communication becomes a prototypical pattern of communication between God and His people throughout human history.

However, perhaps the most far-reaching effect of “the Fall” was the banishing of our primordial parents from the Garden and the chasm that was fixed between God and His children. While God still spoke with people, the operative mode of communication became one in which designated patriarchs and prophets took on the role of being mediums between God and the people. In this pattern, the less direct mode of visions and dreams was often involved. Common to the language of the prophets are words such as “This is the word of the LORD...” or “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says...” Following such authoritative introductions the thoughts and/or words of God are expressed by the prophet, even in the form of quotation.

The crucial shift in divine-human communication that came with Jesus is summarized this way: “In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son... The Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being (Heb. 1:1-3, NIV). “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us” (John 1:14, NIV). In Christ there is a reversal of the negative, post-Fall fortunes. Jesus speaks directly to us and lives visibly among us, even though His divinity is shrouded in real human flesh.

But Jesus is crucified and ascends to His Father. In His physical departure He inaugurates an all important, elemental Reality. To His followers, anxious at the prospect of his absence, He says, “Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you... I will send Him to you (John 16:7, NIV). Thus the Holy Spirit comes to communicate with the world (verse 8) and with believers, specifically to “guide [them] into all truth... he will speak only what He hears... by taking from what is mine and making it known to you” (verses 13-15, NIV).

And so the fire falls and the Christian Church is born of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Although there is still prophecy and now apostleship and the Holy Spirit speaks with direct clarity to the early Christian leaders, as a critical part of His guiding, the Spirit also inspires into existence what we call the New Testament, which with the Old makes up the primary king-pin component in God’s communication with humanity. The Bible becomes a tangible, understandable, objective manifestation of the voice and presence of God in the believing community.

Throughout the history of God’s interaction with people many have had difficulty believing that He communicates at all with human beings, if they have even believed there is a God. They have largely preferred to rely on the evidence of the five physical senses. During the last century and a half particularly, this merely physical, five-sense approach to processing surrounding reality has been refined into disciplines that have now come to dominate the way human beings understand and interpret their world and their experience. The resulting worldviews, that may justly be called purely or merely materialistic, have come into being largely through making use of rational or scientific processes alone. This outlook has spawned an impressive array of insights, discoveries and inventions that have been seen to, or have in fact, spectacularly enriched everyday human life.

The impressive accomplishments of the rational and scientific approach seem to have overawed much of contemporary culture. Thus many today have come to believe that because the scientific approach has so effectively handled the riddles posed by “A” it is also automatically a fine resource for handling “B.” In other words, contemporary humankind has largely concluded that the rational process alone should be able to crack the secrets that lie at the heart of the most transcendent realities of the universe. It therefore should also, they believe, ably decipher the mysteries of consciousness and meaning that dwell hidden at

continued on page 29
O
n May 29, 1919, Arthur Stanley Eddington pointed a telescope toward an eclipse and proved that gravity did, as Einstein had theorized, bend light. Unfortunately, nothing has been pointed in the heavens, in the earth, or in any direction that has proved, with such verifiable and empirical objectivity, that Christ is the Son of God who shed His blood at the cross as an atonement for sin. People need what is called faith to believe that “in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump . . . the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible” (1 Cor. 15:52), or that “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). People do not need faith to understand that “for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction” or that the force of gravity between two objects “diminishes by the square of the distance between their centers.”

This general context, no doubt, is what inspired philosopher Bertrand Russell to proclaim, “What science cannot tell us, mankind cannot know.”

Really, now? Though Russell’s scientific, materialist worldview has formed the background for some of humankind’s greatest intellectual, pragmatic, and scientific achievements, just how valid are its presuppositions? How much credence does such a worldview deserve, especially from the point of view of mature Christian faith, and more particularly still from the perspective of those who minister to Christians who live in the midst of a world largely dominated by this perspective? What, if anything, may be given to the materialistic axioms that dominate the Western intellectual elite? Is the secularist, scientific worldview as worthy of its firm entrenchment in our cultures as many, like Bertrand Russell, would have us believe? Are many Christians, even ministers, surrendering, perhaps even unwittingly, to a worldview that—besides being antithetical to the Christian faith—is built on faulty, even crumbling foundations?

The chemistry of a major shift

From the time of Protagoras, who said, “Concerning the gods, whether they exist or not I do not know because of the difficulty of the topic and the shortness of human life,” on up through the materialistic presuppositions of modern science—a spiritless, naturalistic worldview has had a long but thin (in that few adhered to it) history. After thousands of years of consideration, it is only during the past 100 or so that cultures have actually embraced the flimsy but thickly insular perspective of secularism, which now may be said to have tilted the whole edifice of thought and worldview—particularly in the West.

Conceived in the debris of the seventeenth-century Cromwellian Revolution, birthed in the arable soil of Enlightenment ideals, breast-fed by the goddess of reason, schooled in Parisian salons, parented by science and technology and unwittingly encouraged and embraced by those ostensibly adorned in the numinous garb of Christ—secularism has come to maturity only in the twentieth century, where it has been so infused into Western culture that we’d have to climb out of our eyes in order to see what it has done to our minds.

For hundreds of years men slit each other’s throats because they couldn’t agree on what God did to them after their throats were slit. Today, by contrast, people argue in a systematic, calculated, and scientific manner that there is no god at all who does anything to us (either before or after we slit each other’s throats). Thus the chassis of an entire civilization has shifted away from the premise that there is some kind of god behind the human
scene. Never before has there been such a widespread, institutionalized, and intellectually fertile movement to explain creation, and all its predicates (life, death, morals, law, purpose, love, whatever)—without a Creator.

Wrapped in airtight numbers, expressed with precision by scientists and explained by universally testable theories—the secular worldview has claimed and commanded an aura of objectivity, of validation and of demonstration that is beyond the reach of religious faith. Special Relativity has enjoyed proofs that the death and resurrection of Christ haven’t and can’t, at least short of the parousia itself.

**Flimsy foundations**

Fledgling, relatively short-lived, and parochial, the materialistic, scientific worldview has, nevertheless, harnessed the moment. This is true even if its tethers are proving to be inadequate as they slowly unravel under the strain of their own intricate and feckless knots and loops.

Despite accolades that continue to be sung to the triumphs of scientific rationalism, with all it has genuinely accomplished, its victories have never been tethered to anything far beyond its own rather dogmatic presuppositions. And the fit of presupposition with conclusion is not as tight as has been claimed. The longer such an ill-fitting shroud covers the world, the more threadbare it tends to become. More and more, reality is laying threadbare its seams and the frayed gape becomes more and more visible as it is placed under the light of the truer needs and longings of the humanity it is said to serve.

Sure, the world flashes across our senses as material; sure, rational thinking solves puzzles and helps jets fly; sure science has been hugely helpful in creating cures for all sorts of human woes; sure it has dissected the atom and constructed the Space Shuttle. Yet these facts don’t prove that materialism, rationalism, and science contain the potential, or even the tools, to explain all reality any more than classical physics alone explains France’s 1998 World Cup victory, or fluid dynamics a ballerina’s dance, or endocrinology love.

There’s something about Tennyson’s *Enoch Arden* or Alexander Pushkin’s *A Little Bird* that accesses a dimension where science is too bulky, too crude, too broad, too clumsy to enter, a dimension where reason is too staid, too hard, too inflexible to pass through. Equations, cold, dead, and static serve a purpose in human existence, but at the same time they are incapable of actually defining a reality riotous with passion, effusive with thought, and spry with creativity. They may help and they may hinder, but either way they simply can’t actually do the job that needs doing. Asking them to do so is asking to.

Theories, formulas, principles, and laws don’t make stars shine, robins fly, or mothers feed their young any more than carving the symbols $E=MC^2$ on a piece of refined uranium will make an atomic explosion.

**Chemical scum**

However great the scientific achievements of the past few hundred years, something primal, something essential and intrinsically human has been squandered along the way. Between Isaac Newton’s words, “O God! I think thy thoughts after thee!” and Stephen Hawking’s, “The human race is just a chemical scum on a mod-erate-sized planet, orbiting around a very average star in the outer suburb of one among hundreds of billion of galaxies”—a whole dimension that cannot be fitted into test tubes or conformed down to formulas, has been drummed out of nature, demoted from reality to myth. It has been largely dismissed because it could not be reduced to a size and shape amenable to full physical explanation by the human intellect.

In this new calculus, heaven—instead of being the throne of the cosmos—has been shattered, the pieces parcelled and fragmented, made to appear as nothing but fickle myths scattered around the superstitious halls of an over-religious over-anxious, imagination. And the God who once reigned in that heaven, if He is seen to exist at all, now instead cowers, in the minds of many, twice removed from that throne, created by the creatures He once created.

Yet not only has the divine been contorted and demoted to fit the frame that for the past hundred years has outlined the boundaries of all reality. Whole aspects of human existence have been painfully crammed by scientific rationalism and materialism into containers that can no more hold them than a fishnet can whirlpools. Ethics and love, hate and hope transcend not just the Periodic Table of Elements but all 112 other facets of the reality the Table represents. No matter how microscopically fine-tuned and balanced the proportions, they cannot fully explain heroism, art, fear, generosity, altruism, hate, hope, and passion, and to pretend that they can or that they ever might, is to be most truly preposterous.

A worldview that limits its view and thus its world, only to rationalism, to materialism, and to scientific atheism, misses all that’s beyond them—which is so much of who we are, what we hope for, what we aspire to, what we imagine, what we dream and laugh and cry about and love and worship and live and die for.

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(Ages 2-12)
loftier worlds, doesn’t envision eternity, doesn’t write Les Miserables, doesn’t weep for the pain of others, doesn’t evoke the sublime, doesn’t desire immortality, doesn’t seek the Good, and doesn’t love (either conditionally or unconditionally). That formulas and chemicals are part of it, an important part, of course. That they are all of it, never.

Moral culpability?

There is more to consider. In a purely materialistic, chemical, and mechanical world, how can humans ever be responsible for their actions? If physical laws alone control us and explain us, we’re like the wind, or combustion, or any single automatic response dependent on chains of reaction and interaction. Any society based on purely materialistic premises would have to let all its offenders—murderers, child-molesters, thieves, rapists—go free because we’re machines, and who can ascribe moral culpability to a gizmo?

No society, even those engorged on secularism, allows for such moral inculpability, except perhaps among the criminally insane. Every culture, every society, rejects hard-core materialism, believing instead that we’re morally responsible beings influenced, not manipulated, by deterministic physical forces beyond our control.

We’re animated, obviously, by something more than what we immediately perceive—even if we don’t know what it is or how it works. Kant argued that the mere act of reason surpasses nature, transcends emotions, trumps urges, and upstages instincts. How, too, could we even think transcendent thoughts if there were not something about us beyond nature, something greater than the sum of our chemicals, something more to our minds than pulsating meat?

Isn’t there some principle out there stating that effects can’t be greater than their causes? Are Flaubert’s Madame Bovary and St. Augustine’s Confessions nothing but
chemical reactions? Isn’t there more to imagination than quanta of neurotransmitters lunging across synaptic clefts? Otherwise, what does the brain do, secrete ideas like the liver does bile?

“An uneasy sense nonetheless prevails,” wrote mathematician David Berlinski,—it has long prevailed—that the vision of a purely physical or material universe is somehow incomplete; it cannot encompass the familiar but inescapable facts of ordinary life.”

**Stepping outside the system**

Scientism and materialism cannot in fact even justify themselves, or their own existence, much less explain everything else’s. Austrian mathematician Kurt Gödel showed that no system of thought, even scientific, can be legitimized by anything within the system itself. One has to step outside the system, to view it from a different, grander and broader perspective in order to properly appraise or validate it. In other words, how does one judge X, when X itself is the very criterion used to do the judging? How can humans objectively study that act of thought, the act of thinking, when they have only the act of thought, the act of thinking, to do it?

For years reason has reigned as epistemological king of the Occident, the sole criterion for judging truth, the monarch whose word was law, creed, and dogma. Yet what has been the criterion for judging reason? Reason itself, of course. After all, what else can one use to judge reason but reason? Yet to judge reason by reason is like defining a word by using the word itself in the definition.

The problem for scientism and materialism is, How can one step outside a system, into a wider frame of reference, when the system itself purports to encompass all reality? What happens when we reach the edge of the universe? What’s beyond it? If there were a wider frame of reference to judge it from (God perhaps?), then the system itself would not be all-encompassing, as scientific materialism often claims to be, or takes for granted that it is.

“In short,” wrote scientist Timothy Ferris, “there is not and will never be a complete and comprehensive scientific account of the universe that can be proved valid.” In other words, even science will always have to be taken on or by . . . faith.

Could it then be that the inherent limits of science itself require faith? But isn’t faith, the notion of belief in something unprovable, outside the purview of science, whose whole purpose is to prove things empirically? Isn’t the concept of faith a leftover from a distant, mythic, pre-scientific, pre-rationalistic age?

Because science is based on the understanding of matter, science implies (at least hypothetically) that everything should be accessible to experiment and empirical validation. Ideally, there shouldn’t be room for faith in a scientific, secular, materialistic universe, yet the very nature of that universe demands it.

What a paradox! The same system that verbally refutes faith inherently implies it. Within the materialistic and scientific worldview, then, there reigns the potential for something beyond it, something outside of it, something that could explain why love is more than endocrine function, why ethics is more than chemical synthesis and why beauty is more than mathematical proportions . . . something, perhaps, divine?

**The natural man**

Ultimately of course, Christians can’t “prove” their faith. Not, at least as Arthur Eddington, with his telescope, could prove Einstein’s General Theory of Relativity. Faith is a different kind of knowledge, requiring a different kind of epistemology. So it is that using the tools of science alone for theology is like using socket wrenches on computer software.

Thus, Lord Russell’s words, “What science cannot tell us, mankind cannot know,” present an exceedingly narrow view of reality, a view that the apostle Paul—almost 1,900 years earlier—answered with words still valid for those who trust that reality stretches beyond where science can go: “But the natural man receives not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14).

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**Jumping the Hurdle**

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The mountains or the Maker

Words of encouragement

Sandra Pearson

Do I look to the mountains, expecting my help to come from them? No, my help comes from the Lord who made the mountains. He will not let you slip or fall but is always there to hold your hand. He never slumbers or sleeps but watches over His people day and night. The Lord is your keeper; He shades you from the blazing sun. The sun will not hurt you and the moon will not harm you. The Lord will help you so you will not fall into evil. He will preserve your soul. He will watch over your comings and goings as long as you live" (Psalm 121, The Clear Word).

These words have affirmed multitudes at the summit of contentment, and sustained even more in the valley of despair. They have become so synonymous with affirmation that tears of joy and smiles of contentment often appear the moment recitation begins. It’s one of those psalms that always seems appropriate, no matter what we face.

There’s another layer beneath this serene surface. Some commentators claim the psalmist is suggesting that we often look to mountains for help when it is the Maker of the mountains who deserves our trust. This calls for a question: Do we, particularly when in crisis, trust in what is created; in human beings, in wealth, in things, even in mountains, rather than the One who created all this? Do we trust in the powers of earth when His providence, power, and goodness are so available? I think we do. We wouldn’t be human if, at least at times, we didn’t.

Mountain ranges

What resources and individuals represent mountains in our lives that we consciously or subconsciously have come to depend on to help maintain our stability from day to day?

When I reflect on 33 years as the spouse of a pastor, as a mother, a homemaker, and a professional, I realize that it is His unchanging hand that has helped me juggle these roles. Jesus was the invisible, irreplaceable, irredicible reality standing within the shadows to keep watch over my family and me through all the years.

But it is still a huge blessing, isn’t it, to be surrounded by mountains? They are so magnificent, so strong, exuding stability, security, and certainty. I have been blessed to have many mountains in my life.

Until a few years ago, my parents were mountains for me. Their thoughtful direction during my childhood was priceless, but not more meaningful than the encouragement that they supplied for me later in adulthood. They became best friends to my husband and me. We visited them, vacationed with them, and drew strength from them regularly. They were dedicated Christians whose wise counsel and mutual devotion represented a virtual fortress. Family is for us a great, central mountain range.

In a most realistic sense, my husband is a mountain for me—and I believe that he would say that I am the same for him. My adult children and I fondly recall, for example, the lectures that he repeated whenever we arrived at a new church. He would remind the congregation that he was the only member of our family who was paid to weather their criticisms and suffer patiently through their tirades. He warned that if anyone attacked his wife or our children, they had better pray that the Holy Spirit got hold of him before he got to them! He is a mountain, a great and strong one, in fact.

Early in my experience, I was blessed to have a few superlative role models. They were more experienced wives and mothers who, by precept and example, enriched my emotional and information base. Their nurture and advice enveloped me at critical periods in my development as the spouse of a minister. They
were there, stable and inspiring, mountains in my life.

Through the years, God has strategically placed peers in my pathway who empathized and understood my trials. Trust developed between us as we shared joys and sorrows. Because distance or some other barrier often forced me to walk without the support of a fellow shepherdess, I learned to treasure those relationships and depended upon them to comfort me in times of need, especially those times when I felt not only lonely but forsaken.

**Objects of attack**

It is no mystery, no secret: pastoral spouses are singled out as targets of the enemy’s attacks. The influence of the spouse on the pastor’s effectiveness is greater than most imagine. “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.”

The influence of the pastoral spouse is so pivotal that it cannot be ignored by Satan. His attacks on the spouse have the potential to wreak a devastation just as serious as direct attacks on the pastor. Each of us must recognize our importance to our spouses and the significance of our own spiritual strength in the larger scheme of things. When we are strong, our spouses tend to be affirmed and encouraged; if we allow ourselves to be overcome, the effectiveness of our spouses may be diminished.

Thus, the crucial question is, Upon whom do we lean in times of vulnerability? My strength comes from the Lord of Hosts and from the knowledge that we are preserved by a “Keeper” who neither slumbers nor sleeps, but who protects and refreshes us like a cooling stream running beneath the shade of a full, spreading tree in the full heat of the day. He is never far away. He is close. He is at our right hand, and since the right hand is thought to be the working hand, He assures us that He gives us strength to accomplish tasks that seem to never end. He will not allow us to lose our footing in times of distress. Though adversity and criticism may try to overthrow us, He dispels our fears by keeping our feet from being moved.

“Do I look to the mountains, expecting my help to come from them? No, my help comes from the Lord who made the mountains.”

Those are words all pastoral spouses and all pastors need to remember and to rest in, no matter whether they live among the highest summits, or on the most barren and desolate plain in the world.

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**Looking above the mountains**

Mountains are sometimes there for others. Mountains sometimes rise to represent problems instead of solutions, but Jesus is always there to defend and encourage. He is a very present help in the time of need. The same Power that spoke the world into existence, that launched the heavenly bodies on their paths through the cosmos; the same Power that gave life to all things living, is always present to intervene for us. Yet we must look above the mountains to find Him.

There may be pastoral spouses who have never encountered adversity, but I have never met them. There are those who seem to think that “Mount Pretense” is a reliable mountain in which we sometimes trust. At length, however, wounds and frustrations must be dealt with or they will turn into resentments. Jesus stands above the mountains with healing for every malady.

There are those who cherish the belief that the organization to which we fondly refer as “the church” will somehow attend to the needs of every worker and supply the personal resources required to sustain each pastoral family. While I thank the Lord for the strong mountain of the church, we must insist that we have to look even above this mountain. The same Jesus whose power and authority constantly steadies the “ship of Zion” through the raging waters is careful to hold pastoral families in the palm of His hand.

I can testify to the faithfulness of God. He has always been there to see my family and me through it all. Whether I was serving the church as a volunteer Bible counselor, volunteer personal counselor, or juggling the responsibilities of parenting, homemaking, and a professional career, I was never alone. I just had to look above the mountains to see His face.

I wouldn’t trade the experience of being married to a pastor for anything. It has allowed me to see for myself how the triumphant power of Jesus overcomes evil, even at the times when my role seemed to be the most thankless, endless, and lonely one in all the world.

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1 Ellen G. White, *Pastoral Ministry* (Silver Spring, Md.: General Conference Ministerial Assoc., 1995), 86.
Pastors, stop throwing away your money!

Every month pastoral families in the United States are throwing away money that's rightfully theirs. This year they will literally give away to creditors a minimum of $15,000 to $20,000. In one's working lifetime, an ordained pastor may give up to half a million dollars to the banks and financial companies.

If this seems preposterous, consider the facts. The average American family will purchase ten vehicles in the first forty years of employment and spend an average of $4,000 in interest on each car loan, adding up to a total of $40,000. In their pastoral work, many clergy probably wear out twice as many vehicles, hence their total could be closer to $80,000.

Annual credit card interest of $1,500 will tally up to $60,000 for those forty years. A loan of $100,000 for a modest home will cost over $200,000 in interest charges. The total for these three financial items is over a third of a million dollars, and we haven't included loans for education, furniture, furnishings, and other major items.

To find out more about how ministerial families manage their finances, in 1998 the Stewardship Ministry of the Pacific Union Conference in the North American Division conducted the first money management survey of local church pastors and conference leaders. The 72-question survey covered three sections. The first part dealt with demography, focusing on social, educational, and ethnic questions. The second and largest, dealt with how pastors manage their money, including everything from their current consumer debt to whether they have an updated will. The final part related to congregational giving and stewardship issues.

Of the approximately 670 pastors surveyed, 387 responded either by filling in the forms at a conference ministerial retreat or sending the forms by direct mail to Loma Linda University Center for Health Research, which was commissioned to compile the final data.

How pastors manage their money

Since four of the seven conferences of the Pacific Union are in California and three of them include two of the largest American cities—Los Angeles and San Francisco—it was expected that the largest number of pastors would live in a metro area, or surrounding suburbia and in mid-size townships. That proved to be the case, with 91 percent serving in urban areas. Fifty percent of the pastors were facing retirement in the next 15 years. Nearly 80 percent were over the age of 40. Without significant exception, the ethnic background of pastors was consistent with the ethnicity of their congregations.

When it comes to debt, Adventist pastors in America live in a society with a consumer debt (excluding home mortgage) of over six and a half trillion dollars. The first survey question sought to find if the pastors followed the community debt pattern. In this area pastors get high marks, as one-fifth of the Adventist clergy had no debt, and 80 percent had a consumer debt of under $20,000. Seventy-eight percent of the older ministers owed nothing in school loans. Of the pastors under 40, 82 percent planned to pay off their school loans in less than ten years.

How do pastors use the credit card? Nearly 50 percent had two or three credit cards and 36 percent had none. When compared with the average American family, which has 10 to 14 credit or charge cards, Adventist pastors are well below the norm. Only 38 percent of the pastors carried credit card balances at the end of the month, as compared to 75 percent of the general populace. Of those who did carry a monthly balance, 50 percent were under $500 and 86 percent under $4,000. When it came to credit card limits, 20 percent had less than a $5,000 limit, 40 percent less
than $10,000, and less than 5 percent had over $20,000. Half of those who had credit cards did not use a rebate program, with the rest using mainly frequent flyer rewards (22 percent) or a cash rebate (18 percent).

When it comes to home ownership, 64 percent owned a home and 36 percent rented. Of those who rented, 24 percent have done so for 10 or more years and 18 percent for over 20 years. The fact that one third of Adventist ministers had lived in their current house over six years indicates long tenures in parishes. Of those who owned their homes, 15 percent had either paid up the mortgage or planned to do so in less than five years. 45 percent had less than 20 years before they could burn the mortgage papers. Only one-fifth had more than 25 years before they could claim title to their home. Two troubling aspects of this survey on homes was the gain versus loss ratio resulting from moves to new districts (only a pastor’s two previous moves were surveyed) and the lack of planning among pastors that was revealed in relationship to property taxes and household maintenance.

When it came to the most recent move by a given pastoral family, two-thirds sustained a loss on their property value. On the relocation preceding the latest, 60 percent suffered loss. This is a major concern since over half the clergy had moved over seven times with 19 percent relocating more than 13 times. Over 25 percent of ministers did not save for property taxes, and two-thirds did not include a maintenance section in their budget for home repairs. On owning a debt-free home upon retirement, only 30 percent said this was a realistic possibility and an equal number indicated that they did not consider it realistic in their case.

In the area of savings, during the last 10 years, the average American family has saved less than 2 percent of their income. Are Adventist pastors any better? Financial planners urge that a family save 10 percent on an annual basis. If the average ordained pastor’s gross salary is $4,000, only one-fifth of ministers in this survey saved the necessary 10 percent—$400 or more per month. Forty percent of the ministers saved less than $100 per month. One of the best methods to save is to have it deducted from the paycheck by direct deposit; yet 55 percent of Adventist pastors surveyed failed to do this.

Of the 40 percent of pastors who had a savings account, how many had a reserve account for emergencies? Twenty-nine percent said that they had two months’ reserve, 19 percent had three months, and 36 percent had over four months.

The other area of savings we surveyed was in relationship to retirement. Even though a majority of pastors planned to retire in the next 10 to 20 years, over 70 percent were saving less than $2,000 annually, with 64 percent having less than $10,000 currently in tax sheltered annuities. The picture became even more gloomy when the survey revealed that approximately one-third of the clergy were not paying into Social Security and 44 percent of these were saving $100 or less per month.

Vehicle ownership and usage is another important area covered by the study. Ninety-two percent of pastors owned their vehicles, while others leased. Fifty-nine percent of the 58 individuals who leased, stated it was for their profession or work. The variety of vehicles owned or leased ranged from motorcycles (3 percent), mini vans (22 percent), pickup trucks (20 percent), full-size cars (28 percent), mid- to small-size cars (92 percent) to recreational vehicles (7 percent). Fifty percent of pastors had no vehicle payment. On the total debt owed on all vehicles combined, 9 percent of the ministers owed over $20,000, 18 percent $10,000 to $20,000, and 27 percent less than $10,000. The rest owned their vehicles outright.

Having a family budget was important to 40 percent of the pastors with another 40 percent saying they more or less believed in having one. The rest were divided between the extremes of not having one and needing it, and definitely not needing it at all. Nearly two-thirds of the pastors had attended a personal financial seminar with their spouses.

On having wills, 44 percent said they did not have one. Of those who had a will, 25 percent said it was current, and 33 percent indicated that it needed updating.

Coming back to the original question: Are Adventist pastors throwing away their money? Our Financial Survey provided a mixed answer. “Yes” in the areas of saving for short-term and emergencies, and also in the area of long-term planning, such as for retirement, with the most serious lack of planning occurring in the area of home ownership and ministerial moves. “No” when it comes to outstanding debt and credit card purchases. Overall, pastors are to be commended on their money management principles. With a little tuning, they could pass a financial audit with flying colors!

What pastors should do

Savings. Since their dreams and needs are important to their future, pastoral families need to develop definite savings strategies. This should be considered along with the new retirement plan in North America. One of the weaknesses of pastors is
that, because they move approximately every five to eight years, they fail to think and plan long range. Here are four steps to assist pastors in having a viable savings program.

1. Make a list. Sit down with your spouse and write out a list of your dreams—Christian education for your children, further professional education, a trip to the Holy Land or the countries of the Reformation, your first home, or being totally debt free from school loans in two years. Once you have made the list, prioritize the items on it. Set a realistic amount to be saved in each pay period. Set a realistic long-term time frame in which to achieve the goals you set. To boost your motivation to save, post a picture in your checkbook or on your bathroom mirror of your new home, your trip, or your degree.

2. Use direct deposit. The easiest way to save money is to have the amount automatically transferred to a savings account. Often your conference will be willing to do this for you. Set a minimum savings goal of 5 percent of your income.

3. Save from unexpected sources. Tax refund is one such source. Over the last five years the annual tax refund for the average American family has been about $1,200.00. Without the magic of compound interest this would amount to close to $50,000 in your 40 years of ministry. Investing the money wisely would make it much more.

4. Save from expected sources. After paying off the last installment on your current vehicle or school loan, start putting that money directly into your savings account. Discipline yourself to save the same amount for the next vehicle or other future purchases.

Credit cards. If you are like one of the 25 percent of ministers in our survey, and fail to pay your cards in full each month, keep the total credit limit on your card to a minimum. For most pastors $2,000 would be adequate for daily needs and any unexpected emergency. Only purchase what you have budgeted. Make sure you pay your credit cards within the grace period allowed. In fact, making the payment a week before the end of the grace period will often save you further interest.

On the other hand, if you are like the ministers in our survey who faithfully make their payment each month, then you need to make credit cards work for you by receiving a rebate or other offered benefit. Choose the benefit that is to your advantage. For example, if it’s a vacation or the need to visit friends and relatives who live some distance away, get a card with frequent fyer benefits. If you need an automobile, some credit cards offer a 5-percent rebate of up to $3,500.00 toward your next vehicle. If you have three churches in your district fifty or more miles in opposite directions, then make your purchase with a gasoline credit card and receive up to 70 free gallons.

Vehicles. If there is one line item in the pastor’s budget that is never satisfied, it is the pastor’s vehicle. A number of things can assist the pastor in reducing this financial drain.

Purchase only used vehicles that are no more than two years old and have less than 20,000 miles on the odometer. This will save you between three and five thousand dollars in depreciation and still leave you with a minimum of 15,000 miles under factory warranty.

Determine to pay cash for each vehicle. If you have not done this in the past, here is how you would go about it. Continue to make the monthly installments on your current car and when you have made the last payment, open a new savings account and begin to put away the same amount. Four years later you will have the amount needed to purchase a new pre-owned vehicle. This may seem unachievable, but working deliberately toward such a goal is definitely worth it.

Retirement. Since the average ordained pastor in the United States earns over $50,000 a year (with benefits and tax relief taken in), he or she will earn two million dollars in 40 years of church employment. If you faithfully save 10 percent of your annual income and you received an average of 8.5 percent in interest on your savings, in 40 years you will have 100 percent plus of all the money you would have earned during your working life. For Adventist clergy under the new retirement plan this does not need to be a financial stretch. The local conference gives you 4 percent, plus an additional 1 percent if you match it with another 2 percent of your own money. If you add an additional 3 percent making a total of 5 percent of your own monies, you will achieve the 10 percent goal for retirement living.

Home purchases. Purchasing a house is perhaps the most difficult financial challenge pastors face. In the last two decades more and more Adventist clergy are staying longer in their parishes; often over ten years, which now gives them the advantage of owning a house. If you plan to be serving your current congregation for the next ten years, it would be wise to purchase a home with a 15-year mortgage. A 15-year mortgage does not mean twice the monthly payment of a 30-year mortgage; in fact, it is usually about one-third more. The real advantage is that instead of less than 3 percent equity on a 30-year mortgage in each monthly payment, it is more like 33 percent. If you were to add an additional $200 in principal each month, the home would be paid off in ten years with a saving of over $150,000 in interest.

In all of this it is obvious that a working spouse is a critical variable. This is, of course, a personal matter and one that requires careful thought and prayer.

Providing for your family’s current necessities, as well as saving for the future, is a biblical principle. Use the strategies mentioned in this article. Put the brakes on runaway interest. And with God’s help, give yourself financial security.
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Public evangelism still works (part 1)

Kerry Mhando

Late in 1990 I was appointed ministerial secretary and personal ministries director for the Tanzania Union. The appointment puzzled me: how could I lead in evangelism when I had not been fully involved in evangelism? I prayed, fasted, and sought for a clearer vision of what I should do.

First, I needed to set soul-winning goals for my own ministry. “Someone in charge of evangelism must set an example,” I said to myself. “I must set a high goal that I can only reach by the power of God.” I was impressed to set the goal of baptizing an average of five people a day in 1992—a total of 1,830. In addition, I set out to train 500 active lay preachers. By the end of the year, and five crusades later, 2,850 souls were baptized, and more than 600 lay evangelists had been prepared for their ministry. In 1994, four crusades yielded 4,000 baptisms and we trained 1,000 lay preachers.

In September 1995 my wife and I arrived in Andrews University. In the academic setting of the seminary, one can easily lose one’s moorings, and die professionally and spiritually. For this reason, I decided to prioritize two things: to study hard, and at the same time to be involved in evangelism. God soon opened doors for me to evangelize. Every spring break and summer I was invited to different countries to conduct crusades. From 1996 to 1999, my wife and I have conducted 17 crusades.

Two-year evangelism explosion

My doctoral study concentrated on evangelism and church growth. For my dissertation, I chose to focus on the mobilizing and equipping of lay members for evangelism. To do this I chose to spend two years in an “evangelism explosion” program. The two-year evangelistic marathon involved 11 crusades.

The marathon began in 1998 with a five-week crusade in Kishnev, the capital of Moldova. Meetings were translated into Russian and Romanian. We began with an attendance of about 800 and ended the fifth week with over 1,800. We baptized 310 souls, and trained more than 200 lay evangelists.

From Moldova we flew to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, my home country. We began our meetings there with an attendance of 3,000. By the end of the first week, attendance grew to 10,000 and doubled by the end of second week. By the end of the third week we had a crowd of about 50,000. Some 150,000 were coming to the meetings in the final week of the five-week campaign. We had never witnessed anything of that kind in any of our previous crusades. In the end we baptized 1,620 people.

Then there was Arlington, Texas. A small church, meeting in a rented hall with fewer than 150 members, hosted the meetings. The four-week program began with a small attendance. The parking lot was only half-full. Local church leaders warned me that it was possible that we would not baptize anybody. However, by the end of the fourth week the parking lot was overflowing. When the crusade ended, 52 people had been baptized, including 15 couples. The crusade brought such revitalization to the church that today more than 300 people are attending every Sabbath, and the congregation is worshiping in its own facility. Contrary to the way we sometimes feel, public evangelism can work even in places that are not thought to be productive fields.

The year 1999 saw the Great Nairobi Crusade in Kenya. One of my goals for the year was to reach and evangelize the higher class in society. In fact, I was determined to share the gospel story with the presidents and top leaders of different countries. I was determined to do whatever I could to reach these thought leaders. Nevertheless, I did not know how it would happen. My duty was
only to work hard, lay all my plans before God, and leave the results with the One who knows no failure.

The first thing I did when we arrived in Kenya was to share my dream with the pastors and church members. I told them that the impact of the crusade should reach the State House. During the second week of the crusade I told the pastors and church elders that I needed 25 buses to pick up people from outlying areas around the city so that they would be able to come to the crusade. They frankly said this would be impossible. They simply did not have the budget.

After a few days, I met one lay member, an influential and financially blessed person. I told him I needed 25 buses to bring our members and their friends to and from my meetings every night. I told him that I had chosen him to coordinate the program. He and his wife would give part of their money toward this project, and find a few of his friends to sponsor a few buses each. “You and your wife pray about it, and let me know,” I said to him.

After a few days, the man and his wife came up with a donation of 300,000 shillings (about US$5,000) toward the bus project. Other contributions swelled the bus fund to more than 1.5 million shillings. My donor had also contacted the bus company, and from the third week of the crusade buses were bringing people from all parts of the city for free. The attendance kept growing from 20,000 until it reached over 200,000, and included every class of people—from cabinet ministers to office workers, from business leaders to just ordinary people. We baptized 3,200 souls.

The president of Kenya was aware of what was going on in the city. One of his ministers attended our meetings daily. As a result, the president invited me to the State House where I had the opportunity to share the Word of God with him, and to pray for him. Along with the president of our Eastern Africa Union and other pastors and lay members we spent almost an hour with President Daniel Arap Moi.

Next we went to Blantyre, Malawi. Here, too, we had the privilege of being invited to meet with the president, the Honorable Bakili Muluzi. Even before meeting him, he had sent a personal donation for the crusade. When we met him at the State House, we spent about one hour with him, spoke the Word of God, shared some books, and prayed with him. How wonderful our God is! He surely can bring anything about.

In Harare, Zimbabwe, the crusade coordinators had chosen a small auditorium because of budget constraints. But I needed the National Sports Stadium, one of the most beautiful and modern stadiums in Africa. It can accommodate more than 50,000 people, and no one needed to be embarrassed to attend because the venue was sub-standard. But again the problem was one of finances.

I now knew that money was no longer a problem when God was in our evangelistic endeavors. I asked the steering committee if they knew at least three financially blessed people in the city. They did. I chose one, and sent two of my team members to meet him.

“Go to this man,” I told them, “and tell him that Herry Mhando is here to evangelize Harare for five weeks. He has sent us to you, and he would like you to do two things. First, to arrange for the use of the stadium for five weeks. Second, to pay the rental for the facility.”

“Are you coming with us?” they asked.

“No,” I said. “However, before the crusade ends, I will make sure that I visit the person who funds this crusade and pray with him.”

They left and came back smiling after one hour. The man had agreed to pay for the stadium, and for the public address system and the stage and advertising on television, radio, and the newspapers. How can our God fail us financially when we depend upon Him to do the work that is, in fact, His business? In Harare we baptized 1,523 souls.

Our last crusade for the millennium was in Kisii, Kenya. This was to be the largest reaping crusade in all the 48 that I had conducted thus far in my life. We had a team of 1,000 lay members, actively working with me.
The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has an estimated population of about 140 million. Of these about three million are Christians, or approximately 400,000 families. For religious, political and practical reasons Christians live in 800 neighborhoods spread widely over the whole country. The constitution of Pakistan, based on Shariat law, guarantees some religious freedom. In Islamic understanding this means that those born Christian are permitted to remain in their traditions, protected to some degree in the practice of their faith. They are always encouraged to become Muslims. On the other hand, Muslims are not allowed to become Christian. Proselytizing among Muslims is forbidden. Transgressing in these proscriptions can result in serious prosecution.

Christian missions in Pakistan, with good results among the Hindus, took root in the 1890s. Today there are 35 Christian denominations active in Pakistan. Christians are, of course, permitted to change their religious affiliation. Unfortunately, over the years mission societies have left many churches without proper pastoral care. This has weakened their spiritual life, influence and witness.

Seventh-day Adventist work had a modest beginning in 1901. The present membership officially stands at about 7,000 adults. By way of the Pakistani count, this represents roughly 3,000 households. In reality 18,000 to 20,000 persons are affiliated with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

The evangelistic event

Over the years evangelism in Pakistan has often been conducted by short term, itinerant workers who have had success working together with a Pakistani pastor in establishing an Adventist presence in 150 of the 800 Christian neighborhoods.

In August and September 2000, three teams joined together for a five-week evangelistic thrust in the Hyderabad area. Eight national pastors were assisted by four expatriate workers from Korea, England and Denmark. These combined teams concentrated on three Christian areas. People from six other nearby Christian villages were bused in each night. At the close of the campaign baptismal services were held in four locations where 154 persons joined Christ and the church. The campaigns were run on a moderate budget. The teams were able to stay within the budget to the extent that residual monies made it possible for four young people from the area to be sponsored to attend Pakistan Adventist Seminary.

In connection with the General Conference session in Toronto the Ministerial Association published a book by Borge Schantz, featuring evangelism in developing areas titled A Path Straight to the Hedges. All three teams used this manual as a guide. They adapted the principles set forth in the book to fit into their own situations. It was rewarding to observe how well the principles outlined in the book operated in the Pakistani “trial run.” New experiences, however, were gained, which means that a few paragraphs could be added to the book. These new techniques are an important part of this article.

The campaign itself

The five-week campaign began with a deliberate demonstration of the presence and purpose of the meetings in the Christian neighborhoods. We visited many homes and invited people to the 10 sessions held sequentially each night. We spent no money for advertising or hall rental. Despite the lack of advertising, the first night of the 10 public lectures the meeting places were filled, as people crowded in to sit on mats. Sound equipment placed on surrounding roofs and poles enabled the whole neighbor-
hood to hear the message.

We selected the topics for the meetings with three factors in mind. They had to express the uniqueness of Christianity in general and Adventism in particular, they should be relevant to the culture and religion of the area, and they should be presented so that illiterate people (up to 50 percent of the audience) would understand them. The topics included such subjects as the Bible, law and grace, the origin of evil, the Sabbath, women in the Bible, the Second Advent, heaven and hell, the nature of death, conditional immortality, baptism and church membership.

We did not use visual aids such as films, overhead transparencies or slides. Instead, we illustrated our lectures by the simple means available on the spot. (Hell, with the actual burning of straw; Conditional Immortality, with a torch light; Baptism, with a doll and a washtub). One reason for using these simple illustrative methods is that the national pastors, who were not only partners in the venture but also students of evangelism, would not have access to the expensive electronic equipment we had.

During our visits in the homes of the people, we prayed with the families and answered questions arising from the lectures. These visits also provided opportunities for evaluating the interest level of the attendees and in the light of our evaluation, inviting people to forthcoming baptismal classes.

**Baptismal classes**

We conducted five baptismal classes. During these sessions we dug deeper into the Word of God and Seventh-day Adventist eschatology, lifestyle, and church structure.

During the public lectures we had presented the Sabbath as an important command in the center of God's Law, but we had not been able to cover some of the eschatological aspects related to the Sabbath question. If one wishes to make matters such as Sabbath keeping genuinely significant in a society with high unemployment and limited social amenities, one must move beyond an initial public proclamation of such verities. We had opportunity to do this in the baptismal classes. We focused on the Seven Seals in Revelation 5 to 8, a prophecy that is easy to understand. With the four horsemen the historical development of false doctrines and the consequences of it are obvious. We drew the conclusion that at the time of end there would be a church that would "obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus." In other words, Sabbath is more than resting on Saturday instead of Sunday. It is a test and a sign.

In both the public lectures and the baptismal classes we put special emphasis on the biblical truth about conditional immortality. Such an emphasis is especially needed in various religions in the world, including many Christian traditions. Worship in almost all world religions is centered in one way or the other on the veneration of ancestors, reincarnation, immortality of human souls and spiritualism. These beliefs are perhaps the greatest obstacles for the biblical teaching of what happens after death.

**An SDA Confession of Faith**

During our Pakistan meetings we also tried an approach that proved successful. We wrote a 10-point Seventh-day Adventist confession of faith which was translated into Urdu. The confession was based on the baptismal vows. At the beginning of each baptismal class session everyone in attendance recited these points in unison.

The "Confession" reads:

1. I believe in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
2. I believe in the Bible as the Word of God.
3. I believe in Jesus Christ as the only Savior from sin.
5. I believe in the seventh-day as the Sabbath.
6. I believe that only God has immortality.
7. I believe in the Second Coming of Christ.
8. I believe that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and will honor God by taking care of my body.
9. I believe in the ordinances of the Seventh-day Adventist church.
10. I believe that as a member of the SDA church I shall support it with my attendance, personal witness and financial means.

Praise be to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

The introduction of the "SDA Confession" (that no doubt still needs some refinement) went over well. Initially we had in mind that it would help the illiterate people in the audience to memorize, give an account of and understand what they believe. We discovered, however, that all participants in the baptismal classes—literate as well as illiterate—enjoyed the recitals. Quite a few could say it by heart on the last evening. Some of the pastors decided they were going to have church members recite it each Sabbath at the beginning of the divine service.

**Baptismal services**

From the onset of the campaigns, we conducted Sabbath School and church services. At the first public meeting, we announced that on Saturday morning there would be a special service, and invited all to come. Surprisingly, many attended.

On the last weekend after four weeks' intensive work we conducted the baptismal services. Whenever possible, baptismal services were conducted in the neighborhood where the new convert lived. This made the baptismal event itself a witness to family, neighbors and friends.

At the baptisms we asked photographers to take pictures of each baptismal candidate at the moment the

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A Christian theology of divorce and remarriage

Keith A. Burton

What is the biblical teaching on divorce and remarriage? Two instances, Matthew 19:1-12 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-15, give us clear direction on this issue.

Matthew 19:1-12

In order to get to the heart of Jesus’ teaching, it is necessary to follow the flow of the dialogue in this passage. Many who analyze the course of the passage tend to jump from verse 3 to verse 9, and forget that there is a logical progression to the discussion.

Jesus leaves Galilee on His final journey to Jerusalem. Some Pharisees approach Him with a question on the issue of divorce.

The Pharisees’ question (19:3b). The question seems basic: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every reason?” On one level, it may seem as if the Pharisees are inquiring about legitimate grounds for divorce. However, as we look closely at the text, we see that the issue for the Pharisees is not whether there is any reason for divorce, but whether one could divorce for “every reason” (*pasan aitian*).

To understand the question, we must appreciate the social context of the inquiry. The Pharisees were attempting to engage Jesus in an ongoing rabbinic debate over the grounds and methods of divorce. Much of the discussion is recorded in Mishnah Gittin,

which ends with the following statement:

A. The House of Shammai say, “A man should divorce his wife only because he has found grounds for it in unchastity.

B. Since it is said, *Because he has found in her indecency in anything* (Deut. 24:1).

C. And the House of Hillel say, “Even if she spoiled his dish,

D. Since it is said, *Because he has found in her indecency in anything.*

E. R. Aqiba says, “Even if he found someone else prettier than she,

F. Since it is said, *And it shall be if she find no favor in his eyes* (Deut. 24:1).”

It seems that the Pharisees were attempting to align Jesus either with the conservative position of Shammai, or the more liberal stance of Hillel, which is preserved in later tradition by Rabbi Aqiba.

Jesus’ initial response (19:4-6). Although Jesus was almost certainly aware of the rabbinic debate, He responds by appealing to Scripture: “Haven’t you read that the one who created from the beginning made them male and female? And said because of this a man shall leave father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh. Therefore, they are no longer two but one flesh. That which God has yoked, let no person separate.” In this Jesus constructs a logical argument that places Him in control of the discussion. He does not even attempt to engage in the legitimacy of rabbinic authority, but takes the issue back to Scripture.

By appealing to Scripture, Jesus upholds the divine ideal. He first refers to human creation in Genesis 1:27 and affirms marriage as a divine initiative. Then, He points to Genesis 2:24 as evidence that not only did God place the first couple together, but He is actively involved in solidifying the union of the marriage relationship. In some mysterious way, the married couple becomes “one flesh.” Jesus uses the metaphor of “yoking” to describe the marital union.

With this in mind, if we reduce Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees’ question to one word, it would have to be “No!” A person cannot secure a divorce for every reason stipulated in rabbinic tradition. For Jesus, the Scripture is clear that marriage is a lasting institution in which God binds two individuals together. Constructing a list of escape clauses to unyoke what God has yoked is to trivialize the sacred and mystical nature of the union.
The Pharisees’ counter question (19:7). Not satisfied with Jesus’ answer, the Pharisees prod Him further: “Why then did Moses legislate that a husband could give his wife a divorce writ and put her away?” They have followed Jesus onto His turf and are willing to meet Scripture with Scripture. The Mosaic legislation is found in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. In appealing to this text, the Pharisees are suggesting that Jesus is going against Moses.

Jesus’ second response (19:8, 9). Jesus refuses to move from His position as He places the Mosaic stipulation in its social context. He answers, “Because of your hardheartedness Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.” This is not so much an indictment against Moses as it is against the rebellious people who refused to submit to the divine ideal. Moses did not initiate the divorce law; he simply permitted (petrepsen) it.

Notice that the purpose of the Mosaic legislation was not to establish grounds for divorce, but to discuss the issue of sexual defilement. The existence of the divorce law is taken for granted in Deuteronomy. There is no explanation concerning its origin; it simply existed. However, although it existed it was clear to Jesus that it was not a part of God's original plan.

Given the flow of the discussion so far, the interpretive task would have been a lot easier if Jesus had stopped here. If Jesus had ended His discussion at this point, much of the current controversy would have been alleviated. However, Jesus ends His dialogue with a stern pronouncement: “I say to you that whoever divorces his wife, except for porneia, and marries another, commits adultery.” Some manuscripts go even further: “and the one who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

What makes this statement in Matthew even more astounding is the fact that the parallel version in Mark 10:1-12 says absolutely nothing about an “exception” clause (except for porneia/adultery). Even Luke’s brief reference is absolute (Luke 16:18). Matthew is the only one that provides an escape hatch.

The interpretation of porneia has challenged commentators for centuries. The normal biblical understanding of the term is “fornication,” but the pre-marital connotation of “fornication” has led to obscure translations like “unchastity,” “infidelity,” “unfaithfulness,” and even “adultery.” I say even adultery because many hold that this is the unpardonable sin in marriage. However, if Matthew meant adultery, he would have used the correct term as he does further on in the verse and also in 15:19. Further, in 5:27, adultery includes not just the physical act, but the preceding act of the mind as well. This would mean that one had grounds for divorce even if a spouse thought about having an affair! So, what is the meaning of porneia?

The term itself is related to the Greek word for a female prostitute (porne) and a male who solicits a prostitute (pornos). However, it is not only used to describe this ignoble profession, but also refers to other forms of sexually deviant behavior, particularly premarital sex. The idea is that those who engage in premarital sex are behaving in the manner of prostitutes. Is it possible that Jesus has this understanding in mind? Could Jesus have been stating that the only ground for divorce is premarital sex?

This merits further explanation. Jewish marriages in the first century commenced at the time we today may call “engagement.” However, the marriage was not consummated until twelve months after the engagement. If a woman were found to be pregnant during the time of the engagement, three questions would be asked: (1) Was it the impatient fiancé? (2) Was it another man after the engagement? (3) Was it another man before the engagement?

If it were the fiancé, the marriage would commence immediately. If it were another man after the engagement, the woman would be guilty of adultery and consequently executed (Deut. 22:23, 24). If it were with another man before the engagement, she would be guilty of fornication and biblical law mandated that she be executed (Deut. 22:13-21). However, for the third category, rabbinic law does not appear to be as harsh as bib-
The disciples' reaction (19:10). While the case of Joseph and Mary does provide a likely context in which to understand Matthew's exception clause, the verdict is still out on the exact meaning of porneia. Whatever it means it certainly caused a stir among the disciples. Apparently after the Pharisees had left, the disciples told Jesus: "If this is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry!" This extreme reaction suggests that Jesus' statement seriously limited any grounds for divorce. The disciples in effect were saying that if a man was thus stuck with his wife for life, it was better to remain single.

The impact of Jesus' statement is even greater when seen in the light of the immediate rhetorical context. Just before the encounter with the Pharisees, Matthew records Jesus' teaching on forgiveness (18:15-34). Could it be mere coincidence that the topic of marriage follows these important lessons on forgiveness? I don't think it is. If this contextual, rhetorical continuum is indeed a deliberate part of the way Matthew constructs his Gospel, the message is clear that no hurtful action perpetrated by a spouse is unforgivable—not even adultery. Thus the integrity of marriage may well remain intact, even when adultery is a reality.

Jesus' concluding statement (19:11, 12). Knowing the hyperbolic nature of the disciples' statement, Jesus retorts: "Not all can take this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who are that way from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs on account of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to receive this let him receive it."

Jesus recognizes the disciples' impulsiveness and brings them home to reality. Not many people are willing to sacrifice the pleasures of marriage for a lifetime of celibacy. He also acknowledges that many people are unable to accept the seriousness of the divine ideal—"not all can take this saying." Nonetheless, despite the difficult challenges that arise in a lifelong marital commitment, God calls for His people to take the union seriously.

1 Corinthians 7:10-15

Those who are still not convinced about the radical nature of Jesus' statement can look to Paul's parallel admonition in 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11. Surely any confusion over Jesus' admonition would have been resolved by the time Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

According to 7:1, Paul is responding to inquiries about marriage and sexual relations between Christians. His teaching is clear: "To those already married I command (not I, but the Lord), that a woman is not to separate from her husband (if she separates, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife." Paul gets straight to the point: Christian partners are bound together for the rest of their natural lives. Christian husbands who have the power to initiate a divorce are prohibited from such action.

Similarly, Christian wives who want release from the relationship are not free to remarry but must remain single for the rest of their lives. And just in case Paul is accused of inventing this "difficult" saying, he makes it clear that he received it directly from the Lord Himself.

The only exception Paul makes is with marriages in which only one person has converted to Christianity while the other has not: "To the rest I say (I, not the Lord): if a certain man has an unbeliving wife and she agrees to live with him, he must not divorce her; and if a woman has an unbelieving husband and he consents to live with her, she must not divorce her husband. . . . But if the unbelieving leaves, let him leave; the brother or sister is not bound in such cases" (7:12, 13, 15).

Here Paul admits that he did not receive this advice from the Lord, but feels that it nevertheless makes sense. If a spouse does not profess Christianity, he or she cannot be forced to share the values that are promoted in verses 10 and 11. A divine command means nothing to a person who does not recognize divine authority. In such cases, if the unbeliever chooses to separate, the Christian brother or sister is not "bound." In this Paul seems to be saying that only those Christians who fall in this category are free to remarry. However, those marriages in which both partners claim to be Christian are expected to last until the death of a spouse (1 Cor. 7:39; Rom. 7:1).

Conclusion

From our investigation, the basic biblical teaching is clear. Jesus prohibits divorce for Christian couples. Instead, He promotes lifelong unions for those who unite together under God. For those couples who feel that they cannot live under the same roof—for whatever reason—the Bible suggests that they remain single until either reconciliation or the death of the other spouse. Thus, according to this line of thinking and interpretation, a Christian can only be released from the marriage relationship under two circumstances: (1) If it is discovered soon after marriage that the spouse has either impregnated or been impregnated; (2) If a married person becomes a Christian and the non-Christian spouse decides to desert him or her. The rest of us are bound by the vows we made before divine and human witnesses: "Till death do us part."
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Five benefits of integrated family-life evangelism

G. O. Martinborough

What is integrated family life evangelism? It is an approach to evangelistic outreach and ministry that combines the presentation of family life issues with conceptually compatible Bible doctrines in unified Christ-centered outreach programs. Here are five reasons why family-life evangelism is beneficial to the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

God’s methodology

First, family-life evangelism uses one of God’s great methods of communicating truth. Consider Abraham facing his life’s severest test. Isaac is willingly bound and lies upon the altar on Mount Moriah. The parting words are spoken between father and child! The anguish of Abraham’s heart rises as he raises the knife to kill his only son. And then there is the voice from heaven; and the ram. What a parable of redemption. “When the father’s hand was stayed . . . even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man’s salvation.”

What was God doing on Mount Moriah? He was using the parent-child relationship to teach the mystery of the Gospel. And that is the essence of family-life evangelism. It is using the literal family as a parable of the spiritual family.

Not only did God use the parent-child relationship to teach truth, He also employed the husband-wife relationship. Through the prophets Isaiah (54:5-8), Jeremiah (6:3), and Ezekiel (16; 23), to name a few examples, He repeatedly likened Himself to a loving husband craving the love of Israel, His wife. The story of Ruth employs the same concept, and the whole book of Hosea is one great powerful parable of the family.

New Testament strategy

When Christ came He was known as “Rabbi,” Teacher. And one of His best teaching strategies was the use of parables. “Without a parable spake He not unto them” (Matt. 13:34). Some of His most compelling stories were centered on the family. They were about bridegrooms and weddings and bridesmaids. And who can forget the immortal parable of the prodigal son? What was Jesus doing? He was using the literal family to teach lessons about the spiritual family. And that is the essence of integrated family-life evangelism.

As with Jesus, Paul used this methodology in a masterful way. In Ephesians 5, for example, he gives family-life counsel to the wife. “Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife” (verses 22, 23). Then he moved to the spiritual family declaring, “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the saviour of the body” (verse 23). Turning to the husband he advised, “Husbands, love your wives” (verse 25). Then he switched and said, “as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it.” Exhorting the couple he said, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery” (verses 31, 32). Then He declared, “but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (verse 32). So what was the apostle’s focus, the human or the divine family? Both. He was giving counsel about the literal family and about the spiritual family simultaneously; he used one to illustrate the other. Therefore, this method of communicating truth is no human gimmick; it is of divine origin.

So the first benefit of family-life evangelism is the consciousness that we are employing a divine strategy.

Dual restorers

Two institutions were created by God and given to the first human beings in the Garden
of Eden: the Sabbath and the family. From Genesis to Revelation these two institutions were elevated. Then, the “sin” arose. The Sabbath was ultimately desecrated and a substitute put in its place. But not only was the Sabbath corrupted, so was the high estate of the family.

And now God has raised up a remnant to proclaim the “everlasting gospel!” (Rev. 14:6). Seventh-day Adventists are to be “the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the paths to dwell in” (Isa. 58:12).

What does the prophet say should be restored? It is not only Eden’s Sabbath that is to be restored by the remnant. It is also the Edenic family.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is famous for restoring the Sabbath. Are we as famous for the restoration of the family? If not, why not? Yes, Adventists are famous for modeling Sabbath observance. Are we as famous for modeling family life? In our own family life, are we repairers or destroyers? Thus, the second benefit of family-life evangelism is that we become active restorers.

Character of God

Third, family-life evangelism presents the great truths of God’s Word in an attractive manner. Occasionally, we hear doctrinal presentations that are abrasive and repulsive. But the marriage of Bible doctrine, even the most difficult, challenging ones, with conceptually compatible family-life concepts makes a package that is not only attractive but almost irresistible.

From the very beginning, at the heart of the great controversy has been a question about the character of God. Whenever an evangelistic presentation makes God look bad it plays into the hands of the opposition. My presentations should reveal that “God is love.” Family-life evangelism puts each Bible doctrine within the framework of a love relationship, human and divine. Thus every truth, even the doctrine of hell fire, is presented under the overarching rainbow of God’s love.

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**Felt need**

There is another consideration. While we rejoice over the miraculous growth of our church’s membership, we are hardly reaching certain groups of people. Many of these consist of materialistic persons who cannot be attracted by a “naked,” purely doctrinal presentation of the gospel. They are looking for something else—gospel plus the meeting of a felt need. Wasn’t that the way Jesus approached alienated people? “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”

**The unfelt need for salvation**

The fourth blessing of family-life evangelism is that it ministers to one of the universal felt needs while attending to the most important, though sometimes unfelt need of salvation. For example, while exploring the dynamics of family communications we may show how to communicate with God. While identifying the marks of true love, we portray Calvary, God’s supreme act of love. While examining the mysteries of conception and childbirth, we lead to conversion and the new birth. While emphasizing the permanence of marriage, the union of husband and wife, we highlight the indestructible union of law and grace. While showing parents how to help children to obey, we teach the compulsion of obedience to God. We minister to felt and unfelt needs simultaneously.

**Revival**

Finally, family-life evangelism has the potential for initiating a spiritual revival. It challenges the presenter to effect change in his or her own family. Then there is the experience of change in the members of the church. As night by night and week by week our own members are exposed to practical life-changing concepts, the honest in heart will experience revitalization in their own homes and families.

So while we are evangelizing the world we are reviving the church. And isn’t that the Elijah message that we are called to proclaim, fulfilling the family-life revival foretold by the prophet Malachi? The revival of the church and the evangelization of the world—that’s our mission.

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Letters continued from page 3

have missed something. You have set up a 'straw man,' a false dilemma, by implying that one must choose between the position of Holmes/Washburn on the one hand and that of Daniells/Prescott on the other.

Clearly, Holmes and Washburn were misguided. Fortunately, their approach to Ellen White's writings has mostly faded away.

Just as clearly, we can be thankful that Daniells and Prescott did not prevail in their desire to keep the unpublished material sealed away in a vault. They were good men, but they weren't able to see all the potentially damaging implications of some of the things they verbalized at the 1919 Bible Conference.

It seems to me that there is a third alternative. It's the one Willie White advocated, which was the very one God led the church to follow: To let the writings speak for themselves. This has resulted in (1) the publication of a wide range of inspired counsel which has guided the church to become what it is today; (2) a united, global church that still holds to a high view of the authority of Scripture, precisely because Ellen White holds us to that high view; (3) broad and growing confidence in the prophetic ministry of Ellen White as the decades have passed, based on the self-authenticating witness of the writings themselves; and (4) a mature, balanced understanding of how inspiration works, thanks to our exposure to this priceless laboratory—a body of "original manuscripts" that help us understand how God works through a prophet to guide His people.

It seems to me that it was Willie who had it right.
—Dale Wolcott, pastor, Midland, Michigan.

Editorial note: Given the evidence, it would be difficult to deny that the position of Willie White was essentially that of Daniells and Prescott, if one limits oneself to the basic issues discussed in McGrow's and Eva's work in the December issue; that is, the nature of Ellen White's inspiration and the authority of her writings. It is also difficult to see how Daniells' and Prescott's position would have done anything but, in the long run, contribute to the four excellent points presented above (with the possible exception of a less liberal release of some of Mrs. White's work).

Ministry welcomes letters from readers

Letters must be exclusive to Ministry, must be signed and must include the writer's home address. Because of space limitations, published letters are subject to abridgment. Although we are unable to acknowledge letters we cannot publish, we value the views of those who send us their comments. Letters should be addressed to the Editor and may be hand-delivered, submitted via mail, or via our email address at norcottj@gc.adventist.org

April 2001
Ordination sermons intrigue me. Having observed and participated in a number of them through the years, I have noticed that the sermons usually follow a pattern of attempting to clearly define the role of ministry, carefully delineate the various responsibilities of ministry, and challenge the candidates to faithful fulfillment of their calling.

Beyond listing pastoral duties, however, there are two even more fundamental considerations. The pastor is called first to be a disciple and, second, to be a disciple maker. I believe this is the essence of what the apostle Paul meant when he wrote “follow me as I follow Christ.” The highest role of God’s ministry today is to first follow Jesus Christ personally and then to invite others to join you in that journey of discipleship. In further articles, we will look at the issues surrounding disciple making, but for now we will concentrate on issues of discipleship.

Remember, Jesus called his own apostles first to discipleship, and then to ministry. Even then, discipleship preceded ordination. This point seems so patently obvious that we tend to overlook it as we rush on to determine proper roles and functions for ministers. Yet, in overlooking these foundational issues, we may be overlooking the essence of what God has called us to do. Become disciples, ourselves. Make disciples of others.

Overlooking the primacy of discipleship tends to shift our attention to less important things. Leadership, for example. I believe every pastor needs to be a leader. Leadership is necessary and good. But leadership, untempered by discipleship, could produce monstrous results. If we pursue a pattern of leadership that excludes or minimizes discipleship, we could rely more on management technique than spiritual power. If so, tragedy results. Far too often we have seen the sad consequences of choosing business plans over biblical models, planning over prophesying, or lobbying over praying.

While goals and objectives are important—even necessary—for success, a discerning of the Spirit and a call to follow in Jesus’ steps is the call God places before ministers today. It is instructive to remind ourselves that it was not in the courts of Egypt, but in the back side of the desert that Moses gained his spiritual power. Likewise, it was not in the councils of the Sanhedrin, but out in the desert of Arabia that Paul learned discipleship lessons that prepared him for great leadership.

Focusing again and again on the importance of discipleship being the source from which all our ministry grows may not be as glamorous or exciting as some ventures, but it may just help us deliver our homes, our families, our congregations, and even our very lives from the snare of Satan.

What does discipleship mean? Rather than recognizing the biblical path that involves cost to discipleship, we have come to a stage in the religious world where discipleship is regarded as only the experience that one happens to have at the moment and that this experience, in itself, is a sufficient definition.

A number of years ago I jotted some notes from a source which I cannot now locate regarding dangers that result from shallow thinking about discipleship. With apologies for being unable to give credit to the author, I share these pitfalls for their importance to our lives now.

Aesthetics admiration. An attitude which confuses outward appearance with genuine spirituality seems to permeate society, politics, business, and community. People like the appearance of religiosity. Becoming known as a religious individual improves your potential for success. Church connections seem to bring advantage. “If it is true that Jesus has never had better press than today, it is also true that rarely has there been less knowledge of His commands, and even less inclination to obey them. Recognition of His greatness has served as a substitute for reckoning the cost of discipleship... It is high time that disciples declare a moratorium on praise and an open session on a more honest study of what Christ’s demands actually require.”

Resistance to authority. We live in a society—and to a certain extent the church mirrors that society in which it lives—which has adopted an anti-authority stance. Such posture is against the very idea of obeying commands. In fact, obedience sounds legalistic and raises hackles. Let nothing restrict our individualistic freedom! But there is danger in libertarian abandon- ment of responsibility. When we conclude that individualism is the greatest of all values and assert that any authority destroys freedom, we are in
danger. Self becomes the supreme authority and self-fulfillment becomes the idol which replaces genuine self-submission. In direct disobedience to the first of all the commandments, the great god “me” becomes intolerant of discipline and self-denial.

Cultural change. Some have concluded that the message and lifestyle of Scripture is for another time. Scripture is dismissed as an irrelevant or non-functioning fossil in an age of artificial intelligence and microprocessors. After all, what does a jet pilot have in common with a Tiberian fisherman? What pressures could a Hebrew shepherd have experienced that even compare with life today? Thus reasoning, people design standards to fit their own criteria rather than striving to discover universal standards. From my same “lost-source” notes, Alan Richardson is quoted, “There is a gradual decay of the ordinary Christian that can read the Bible for himself and discover its meaning without aid from an interpreter.” Even the very ideal of an authoritative guide to discipleship is dismissed out of hand.

Defective models. This fourth barrier to discipleship is probably the greatest hindrance of all. Too many believers and religious institutions are a liability rather than as an asset in learning about God and the character of Jesus Christ. Francis Schaeffer warned shortly before his death, “I’m convinced people all over the world will not listen, even if we have the right doctrine, even if we have the right policy, but if we are not exhibiting the life of Jesus Christ in ourselves, and in our community.” Discipleship means modeling the Teacher. Discipleship means striving to look like the leader.

Understanding discipleship, then, is understanding the mind of Jesus. Then follows disciple-making. People will understand and believe our actions before they will believe our words and when Jesus is lifted up in the lives of His disciples, all individuals will be drawn to Him.

Faith, reason, and the voice of God
continued from page 4

the core of the human soul and in the being of God (see Job 38-41).

Today, the essential modes of the rational, scientific approach have been applied to the study and understanding of the Bible. This application produces one of the most enigmatic applications of what is at its heart a basically rational approach. The nature of human consciousness by all means demands that the rational be applied to our study of Scripture. It is not true that forces destructive to a genuinely Christian faith and worldview arise simply when reason is applied to the Bible. The destructive forces do arrive, however, when to all intents and purposes reason is virtually the only faculty utilized in our study of the Bible.

Chaos brews when we forget or reduce the reality that God lives, loves and still by all means speaks to humanity preternaturally and supernaturally as he has from the beginning.

Today it is the primarily rational and scientific voice of some theology that has become ascendent in our minds. Forgetting or rejecting the testimony of divine-human communication history and hardly hearing the specific elements in the promise of Jesus to his disquieted disciples, that the Spirit and not merely the Bible would lead into all truth we come to lose the hugely significant capacity to hear the voice of God.

It is interesting that the role, and especially the authority, of the “theologian” as such has come of age only recently. This role could be powerfully energized in all of us if what is so valuable in rational and theological discipline could be properly coupled in us to authentically and unequivocally embrace what is borne in on the prevailing wind of the Holy Spirit.

Cliff Goldstein’s lead article in this issue is one that challenges us to review these issues. In effect his article lays before each of us the immensely important challenge to render unto reason the things that are reason’s and unto faith the things that are faith’s.
A model for cross-cultural evangelism

continued from page 19

pastor, who wore a special gown for the occasion, lifted his hand to baptize the candidate. During a visit following the baptismal service the picture was handed to each candidate. They became a visible sign to bring the baptism into memory and prompted the new members to confirm their sacred covenant with God. These pictures were often framed and placed in prominent locations in the homes of the baptized.

Stealing or feeding?

We have mentioned that in Islamic nations Christians have the privilege of direct witness only to non-Muslims. And as non-Muslims in this case were Christians from various traditions our public campaigns were conducted in Christian neighborhoods.

In all lectures we presented Seventh-day Adventist-Christian doctrines, and were careful not to berate other Christian traditions.

As noted, some of the pioneering mission societies have neglected their daughter churches, so members often were left without meaningful leadership, weekly programs, or even pastoral care. Because of this our organized activities seemed to draw people to our places of meeting more than did the preaching of the biblical message per se. We hoped that as the audience listened it would be Jesus and Him crucified who became the main attraction.

It is obvious that many of those we baptized or accepted into church fellowship, were persons who officially belonged to other Christian denominations. For this reason we were accused of “sheep-stealing.” We did not take this allegation too seriously. We concluded among ourselves that when sheep are neglected and left largely unfed, it is only right to feed those who are spiritually starving and who are seeking. As an interesting and positive side effect of our campaigns we found that unenterprising pastors from some surrounding Christian churches suddenly became active in home visitations and meetings.

To bring people into a meaningful and dependable relationship with Jesus Christ and into active church membership is the greatest task entrusted to human beings. This is also the most complex and difficult enterprise in which we could be involved. It means hard work, manpower, finances, faithfulness to truth, and an understanding and ability to adapt to cultures and customs.

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— Douglas R. Rose, pastor, Grand Prairie, Texas.

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— Bryan Gray, Nampa, Idaho.

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- Webmasters / web designers
- Computer science students
- Information technology staff
- Computer professionals
- Computer hobbyists interested in using computer technology to advance global and local mission projects

Features:
- Seminars, tutorials, and panels targeted to technical and non-technical participants
- Networking and fellowship opportunities
- Special Sabbath services
- Banquet, reception, and daily lunches included

Earlybird Registration by April 30: $160
After April 30: $200

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