

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 126

“REFLECTIONS ON THE 58TH GC SESSION - PART 2: PROFILING ADVENTIST LEADERSHIP”

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Greetings from Venice, Italy, where I am privileged to spend two weeks with my wife. We are staying at the sea-resort town of Jesolo, located 30 miles North of Venice.

Our Venitian Vacation

This is one of the very few occasions when my wife and I spend some days together. In fact, this is also the first time when most of our family members spends a vacation together in Italy, our native country. We are joined by our daughter Loretta, who teaches nursing at the Florida Hospital School of Nursing; our son, Daniel, an architect; his wife Michelle, a science teacher; and their two children, Christian and Lauren. Our younger son, Gianluca, a lawyer in Chicago, was unable to join us with his family, because his wife, Silvia, delivered a beautiful 9.5 pounds boy few days ago. We miss them, but we have promised to plan a similar vacation in the future when all our extended family can be together. We all live such busy lives that we treasure the opportunity of coming together as a family to reknit our family ties.

Reasons for our Venitian Vacation

We came to Venice for two reasons. First, my wife was born near Venice and all of her relatives live here. She was eager to visit them, especially since her two brothers and her sister have health problems. Second, we are hoping that few days spent sunbathing and breathing native sea-air, will help my wife fight her persistent migraine headache, that make her life miserable.

Our hopes are not disappointed. During the past 12 days we have spent in Jesolo, my wife did not take a single shot of imitrex, the only medication that alleviates her migraine headaches. She take a shot almost every other day to kill the pain. Over the years she has taken

scores of tests and has tried numerous natural remedies. She even spent three weeks at Weimar. Nothing seems to work, except her native fresh air and sunshine. Thank you for remembering my wife in your prayers. We have done our best, only God can do the rest.

The two weeks we are spending in Jesolo, are for me a working-vacation. I spend about an hour a day on the beach with my wife (I am not a beach-boy), but then I retreat to our hotel room which has a glorious view of the beach and Adriatic sea. No phone, no interruption, only a peaceful, delightful setting to read, think, and write.

During this working vacation, I have replied to a few hundred email messages sitting in my mail box; I read all the 5 CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP presentations given at GC Session in St. Louis; I wrote my reflections on each of them for this newsletter; and I went up to Germany on July 22-23 to speak at a rally of several churches in Hannover. The rally was held in a magnificent old Lutheran Cathedral that was packed with believers who came from near and far by car and rented buses. The reception and response was truly marvellous. As we are getting ready to return home, we look back to the days we spent together with a deep sense of gratitude to God for the blessing bestowed upon our family.

REACTIONS TO THE LAST NEWSLETTER

Subscribers from different parts of the world, have expressed their appreciation for the reflections of the last newsletter on some of the devotional talks delivered at the 58th General Conference Session in St. Louis. Many wrote saying that they appreciated the expanded practical applications of some of the devotional talks about Christian living, especially since they were unable to attend the General Conference.

Several subscribers encouraged me to reflect also upon the series of informative presentations on “Christian Leadership” given during the General Conference Session. At first, I thought I would devote this newsletter to an analysis of “The Roots of Moslem Terrorism”—a phenomenon which after the London bombing of July 7, is spreading paralyzing fear in European countries. I became aware of this development during the past few days I spent in Italy and Germany. The Media shows that

Europeans are waking up to the reality that the threat of terrorism, is no longer only an American problem, but a global problem that calls for a global response.

Will the War on Terrorism Ever be Won?

In the next newsletter I plan to share some thoughts that I gleaned from reading informative articles in Germany and Italy. Contrary to the American propaganda which promises a speedy victory over terrorism, European analysts argue that the war on Moslem terrorism will be a never-ending conflict similar to Vietnam, with no victory in sight. For the next dozen of years Muslim terrorists will intensify their suicidal missions, to the point of weakening the resolve of the Americans and other countries to fight them. Like in Vietnam, American troops will eventually withdraw without defeating the terrorists. Thus, ultimately terrorists will succeed in humiliating the most powerful nations and in gaining a global victory for Jihad.

If the above scenario is correct, then as Adventists we need to reconsider our prophetic Endtime scenario by asking some probative questions: Is Islam part of the apocalyptic Endtime Antichrist responsible for the final deception and tribulation of God's people? Should we still put all our eggs in the basket of the Papacy or expand our prophetic interpretation by including also the possible role of Islam? This is a sensitive and divisive subject, but it can hardly be ignored in the light of the increasing acts of Moslem terrorism killing innocent lives in different parts of the world.

My reflections on "The Root of Moslem Terrorism" will be posted in the next newsletter. This newsletter offers a review of the informative presentations given at the GC session on "Christian Leadership." The encouragement for this review has come from many subscribers who were unable to attend the GE Session and who found very helpful the reflections of the previous newsletter on the G. C. Devotional talks on the theme "Transformed in Christ."

A Sample of Responses to the Previous Newsletter

An Adventist man wrote saying that for years he prioritized his daily schedule in accordance to the suggestion given on July 9 during GC Sabbath School discussion led by Clifford Goldstein, the Editor of the Quarterly. Simply stated, it was suggested that in setting up our daily agenda we should give priority to those activities which are of a more religious or spiritual nature, like devotional exercises or church-related activities. Other activities of a more physical or secular nature should be treated as secondary in importance.

This brother said that he has followed this counsel for the past 20 years, by giving priority to religious activities at the expenses of the physical needs of his body. To put it simply, he was so busy doing church work, that he had no time to work out physically. The result was a recent bypass heart-surgery, which taught him in a costly way that his religious priorities were killing him.

As Christians we are called to set our priorities each day, not by giving priority to religious exercises or programs at the expenses of the physical needs of our body, but in seeking to fulfill in a balanced way all our religious and secular obligations in a God-centered way. We need to remember that saving our soul is just as important as caring for our body, because the two are an indissoluble unity.

Reflections on the Resurrection

Another subscriber appreciated my comments on the devotional “Transformed Through His Resurrection.” She was pleased to learn that for the early Christians, Christ’s resurrection was an *existential reality*, rather than a *liturgical practice*. They celebrated the resurrection, not on a weekly Sunday or annual Easter-Sunday, by living victoriously every day by the Power of the Risen Savior.

She felt that this information will help her to respond to her Sundaykeeping friends who believes that the Sabbath was changed to Sunday to celebrate the Day of Christ’s Resurrection. Such popular belief is discredited by the fact that Sunday is never called “The Day of the Resurrection” in the New Testament. The first usage of this phrase appears

in the writings of the historian Eusebius of Caesarea (about A. D. 325). In his commentary on Psalm 91:1, “This is the day the Lord has made,” Eusebius interpret it to be “The Day of the Resurrection.”

Reflections on the Second Advent

Several readers expressed appreciation for my reflections on the devotional entitled “Transformed Through His Promised of the Second Advent.” In our preaching and teaching the focus often is more on the signs of Christ’s imminent Return, than on how to live in the joyful expectancy of His soon-Coming. The result is that many are more interested in prognosticating the nearness of the End, than in preparing themselves and others every day for Christ’s Coming. They want to be ready ON THE DAY when Christ shall come, rather than TODAY and EVERY DAY UNTIL the Day of His Coming.

Reflections on the Spiritual Meaning of the Sabbath Rest

The largest number of comments related to the devotional “Transformed by Entering His Rest.” This was a refreshing devotional, designed to help people appreciate more fully the meaning of the Sabbath rest.

Several subscribers were intrigued by the deeper spiritual meaning of the act of resting on the Sabbath, which is explained as a faith-response to God in Hebrews 3 and 4. This is the only place in the Bible where we find the deeper spiritual meaning of the Sabbath rest. The author of the Epistle explains that we cease from our work on the seventh day as God ceased from His work, in order to enter into God’s rest (Heb 4:10).

Simply stated, we rest from our work on the Sabbath, not only to enjoy physical relaxation, but also to make ourselves free and available for God. We stop our work to allow God to work in us more fully and freely, and thus experience the awareness of His presence, peace, and rest in our lives. Properly understood and experienced, Sabbathkeeping can be a joyful celebration of God’s creative and redemptive love.

The concept of resting for God on the Sabbath, has never been popular. It has largely contributed to make Sabbathkeeping the most con-

troversial commandment. A major reason is that people are very touchy about their time. This is especially true today in our pleasure-oriented society. Most people want to use their Sabbath time seeking for pleasure and profit, rather than for the presence and peace of God in their lives. By challenging us to give priority to God on the Sabbath, the Sabbath challenges to give priority to God every day.

Before reflecting on the five informative lectures delivered at the G.C. Session on “Christian Leadership,” let me post a few announcements about my weekend seminars and church-related products.

UPCOMING WEEKEND SEMINARS

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the date and the location of the upcoming seminars for the month of August and September 2005. Every Sabbath it is a great pleasure for me to meet subscribers who travel considerable distances to attend the seminars.

AUGUST 5-6: NEW YORK CITY– SOUTH OZONE SDA CHURCH

Location: 120-20 140th Street, South Ozone park, NY 11436.

For information call Pastor Richard Bryant at (718) 622-4081.

I will also be speaking during Sabbath School at the Jamaica SDA Church located at 8828 163rd Street, Jamaica NY 11432.

AUGUST 12-13: LOS ANGELES CENTRAL FILIPINO SDA CHURCH

Location: 777 East Colorado Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90042.

For information call Pastor Simeon Rosete at (323) 255-7718 or (323) 255-7149

On Sabbath morning, August 13, I will also present a mini SABBATH SEMINAR at the **EAGLE ROCK SDA CHURCH**, located at 2322 Meron Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90041. For information call Pastor Donald Smith at (661) 298-1843 or (818) 415-0279.

AUGUST 26-30: HONG KONG

For location and information, call THE CHINESE UNION MISSION at (852) 2838-3991 or (852) 2441-8333.

In Hong Kong, I will speak first at a rally of Adventist believers, and then at a Lutheran and Baptist seminaries.

SEPTEMBER 9-10: LONDON -MILTON KEYNES AND WEST BLETCHLEY SDA CHURCHES

Location of Milton Keynes SDA Church: 1 Veryan Place Fishermead, Milton Keynes, Bucks MK6 2SP, England.

Location of West Bletchley SDA Church: 3 Porchester Close, Whaddon Way Bletchley, Milton Keynes, MK3 6BH, England.

For information about the meeting at both churches, call Pastor Colin Stewart at 01908 673 979 or 0795 693 1469.

SEPTEMBER 16-17: LONDON - LUTON SDA CHURCH

Location: Hightown Methodist Church, 100 Pomfret Avenue, Luton, LU2 OGL, England

For information call Pastor Andrew Leonce at 01582 413 948 or 0797 1218101

SEPTEMBER 23-24: LONDON-PECKHAM SDA CHURCH

Location: 149-159 Ivydale Road, Nunhead, Peckham, London SE15 3DX.

For information call Pastor Wilfred Blake at 020 8325 3794

A CLARIFICATION ABOUT SOUTH AFRICA

A Vice-President of the General Conference called me to explain to me that the integration that is promoted in South Africa, is strictly at the administrative level, not at the congregational level. In other words, while Adventist conferences are asked to merge in accordance to the policy dictated by the new government, local congregations will continue to function according to their racial compositions. No effort will be made to force integration within congregations. Adventist members will remain free to worship in the church of their choosing. I feel that this clarification is needed to dispel any misunderstanding that may have been caused by my report on the forced integration in South Africa.

WHY DO I INCLUDE ADVERTISEMENTS IN MY NEWSLETTERS?

Some readers have commented that my advertisements detract from the biblical nature of my newsletters. A word of explanation may help to clarify the two major reason for the ads.

First, the newsletters are free, but they are costly to produce. I spend an average of 100 hours (sometimes even 200 hours) to research and write a newsletter. Were I to be paid a modest rate of \$20.00 per hour, each newsletter represents for me an investment of about \$2000.00 worth of time. This means that you receive a \$2000.00 Bible study with each newsletters free of charge. I took an early retirement to fulfill this ministry of biblical research on relevant issues. Since I receive no compensation for this ministry, my income derives from subscribers who purchase my publications or recordings.

Second, the special price I have been able to work out for HITACHI projectors, HONEYWELL Remote Presenters, and DA-LITE screens, help our churches and schools to purchase quality equipment at a substantially discounted prices. Yesterday I spoke with a pastor who bought an HITACHI CP-X445, 3200 lumens for \$3550.00, when he could have saved \$750.00 by buying from me at \$2800.00 or now at the GC offer of \$2595.00. Unfortunately he did not know about my service. Another church recently bought an HITACHI CP-X1250 4500 lumens for \$5900.00, when they could have bought it from me for \$4200.00, including the \$285.00 three years 24/7 warranty. This would have been a saving of \$1700.00.

For me it is a great satisfaction to know that I can help our churches and schools to save money by buying state-of-the-art equipment at a substantially discounted price. Lately hundreds of Adventists have asked me to work out a deal with a major lap top producer like DELL or TOSHIBA, in order to help them buy a lap top computer at a considerable discount. I would love to help them, but at this time I do not have the time necessary to negotiate an agreement with these companies. The point is that the vast majority of my subscribers appreciate the service that I provide.

SPECIAL OFFER ON ALL MY DVD/CD-ROM RECORDINGS

At this time we are offering the complete package of all my recordings for only \$100.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$490.00. The package includes the latest 3ABN two hours interview on THE PASSION OF CHRIST on a DVD disk, ONE CD-ROM with all my research (17 books, 200 articles for over 7000 pages), ONE CD-ROM with all my PowerPoint lectures, TWO MP3 AUDIO disks with 22 popular lectures, and the FIVE DVD DISKS or FIVE VIDEO TAPES with 10 live PowerPoint lectures of my SABBATH/ADVENT seminars, taped few months ago by a TV crew at Andrews University.

The special offer is ONLY \$100.00, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$490.00. Read the details at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/SPECIALPACKAGEOFFER.htm>. If you have a problem ordering the package through my website, just email us your order or call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to take your order by phone and mail you the package immediately.

EXTENSION OF GC OFFER ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

In occasion of the General Conference Session, the HITACHI Corporation of North America agreed to offer their lines of projectors at a special ONE TIME OFFER, to help especially our churches and schools in developing countries. To meet the expected demand, I bought about 200 HITACHI projectors. Most of them were sold at the GC Session. At this time I have about 20 projectors left of different models.

The day before I left to set up my booth at the GC, HITACHI offered me 58 projectors CP-X870, 2000 lumens for the incredible price of only \$1600.00. The reason for this incredible price is that this model is discontinued, but it has the standard 3 years 24/7 replacement warranty. I never sold this model before because it is a very sophisticated and expensive. To give you an idea, while the standard 2000 lumens CP-X328, weighs 6 pounds and has been offered to our churches for \$1785.00, the CP-X870 weighs 13 pounds and has been offered for \$3000.00. This pricy projector is loaded with such features as high definition, wireless

connection, automatic zoom, focus, keystone, 4000 hours of lamp guaranteed, etc. It is designed for professional multimedia production. I could not believe that we could get it for \$1600.00.

People were so impressed by the demonstration of this projector at the GC booth, that in two days I sold all the 45 unit I brought along. I still have 5 CP-X870 left. If your church is interested in an outstanding projector at a bargain price, feel free to contact me by email or by phone at (269) 471-2915 or (269) 978-6878. If by the time you call, we still have one, I will gladly mail it to you immediately.

The other few remaining models which I bought at the very special GC OFFER are as follows:

Four HITACHI CP-X328, High Resolution, 2000 lumens at \$1495.00

Six HITACHI CP-X430, High Resolution, 2500 lumens at \$1995.00

Four HITACHI CP-X445 High Resolution 3200 lumens, wireless, with 4 speakers, networking, etc. at \$2595.00

Four HITACHI CP-X1250, High Resolution, 4500 lumens, wireless, shift lens, 4 interchangeable lenses, etc., for only \$4200.00.

When these remaining projectors are sold, the special HITACHI prices for our Adventist churches/schools will be between \$300.00 to \$500.00 more. Feel free to take advantage of these special offers by contacting me by email or phone (269) 471-2915. We can ship you immediately any of the remaining models.

BED AND BREAKFAST IN LONDON, ENGLAND

If you are planning to travel to London, England in the near future, you will be pleased to learn about a most gracious Adventist couple who offer the best bed and breakfast service you can find in London for only £20.00 a day. I stayed with this couple numerous times and they have always treated me so well that I promised to announce their services in this newsletter. They have three nice guest rooms, a lovely garden, and a modern bathroom. The home is close to Heathrow airport and

at a walking distance from the Subway. You will be treated royally at a bargain price. You can see the pictures and read the details at my website <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/BED&BREAKFAST.htm>

THE BEST SDA COMMENTARY ON REVELATION

Much of the prophetic message and mission of the Seventh-day Adventist Church derives from the Book of Revelation. Yet until now our church did not have an authoritative commentary. Finally, Andrews University Press has published a thorough Commentary on the Book of Revelation, authored by an outstanding Adventist scholar. This new commentary provides a wealth of information needed to unlock the meaning of the prophetic message of Revelation for our times.

Read the full story at my website: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Promotions/RevelationofJesusChrist.htm>. If you have a problem ordering the book through my website, just email us your order or call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915. We will be glad to take your order and mail you the book immediately

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR AN EXCELLENT REMOTE FOR YOUR POWER POINT PRESENTATIONS?

If you are looking for an outstanding Remote for your Power-Point presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has just come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market. You can view it at <http://www.powerremote.com/>

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. The operating distance between the remote and the receiver is officially 150 feet. But I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three button: forward, backward, and laser.

The brand new model is hard to find in the market, but I signed a contract with HONEYWELL to distribute it to our churches and schools. By buying 50 units at a time, I can offer this incredible remote for only

\$120.00, postage paid. To order a remote, call us at (269) 978-6878 or (269) 471-2915 or email us your order at sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY, the largest manufacture of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens at a about 30% discount price. To find the screen that you need, visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da.lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that you need, call me at (269) 471-2915 or email your request [<sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>](mailto:sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com) I can email your order immediately to DA-LITE at 30% discount. It is as simple as that.

“REFLECTIONS ON THE 58TH GC SESSION - PART 2: PROFILING ADVENTIST LEADERSHIP”

Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D.

Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

It is most unusual for a General Conference Session, with a full business agenda, to set aside time to listen and discuss five presentations on the personality and character of “Adventist Leadership.” The choice of this topic reflects the awareness of the urgent need today of gifted and dedicated church leaders, capable of meeting the unprecedented challenges our Adventist church is facing today.

The challenges are of different nature. At the local level some churches are declining in membership because members feel that their spiritual needs are not met. Other churches are divided over such controversial issues such as worship style, women ordination, doctrinal beliefs, or the appointment of “unworthy” church officers. At the Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference levels the challenges can be poor administration, misappropriation of funds, unbalanced influence of certain officers, competing organizations, or lack of communication with local congregations.

The five presentations given at the General Conference deal, not with specific problems posed by incompetent leadership, but with the basic character qualities Adventist leaders in general should exemplify. What was said is important and pertinent to the situation of our church today, but there are other leadership qualities that should be mentioned. This we will attempt to do in this newsletter.

My plan is to consider first what was said and second what could be added. This means that first I will briefly examine the major points of the 5 presentations, dealing with important qualities to be expected in Adventist leadership. Then, second, I will discuss some additional important leadership qualities that deserve consideration.

The problem of Business Incompetence

Experience tell us that some Adventist leaders have failed miserably in their job, causing untold financial losses to the church and unnecessary laying off of workers, not because they lacked the leadership qualities of spirituality, humility, integrity, and vision outlined by the presenters, but largely because of their business incompetence. A man can be a great pastor or evangelist, but a poor administrator.

An example, is the recent firing of over 40 workers by the Florida Conference and a similar number by the Northeastern Conference. To my knowledge the problem was not the lack of spirituality, humility, integrity, and vision on the part of key Conference leaders, but their business incompetence which resulted in substantial financial losses and laying off of workers. To administer a Conference, or a school, or a hospital, it takes more than moral and spiritual qualities. It takes unique business skills and vision that few people possess. This explains why only a few persons ever become the CEO of major corporations.

In profiling Adventist Leadership qualities, I am proposing to consider also some of the unusual qualities exemplified by the late Pope John Paul II. He is rightly regarded as the most influential and successful religious leader of our time, if not of all times. No church leaders has ever won the sympathy and admiration of so many people around the world like John Paul II. His funeral visibly and vividly showed how

people of all religions, color, and stripes were eager to pay their respect to a man whom they admired, and in many cases loved. The fact that as Adventists we reject John Paul II's heretical doctrinal positions, should not deter us from considering some of his outstanding leadership qualities, worth emulating by Adventist leaders.

President Jan Paulsen's Keynote Address

Jan Paulsen, our General Conference President, was the keynote speaker for the first of a series of five presentations on leadership. On July 3, he spoke on "The Character and Personality of Adventist Leadership." He stated at the outset: "I feel strongly in my heart that the time has come for us to speak clearly on this subject. We must define and address what is expected globally of leadership in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. How does it function? What is the best climate or mode in which leadership in our church can express itself? What is acceptable, and what is clearly not? Where are the boundaries?"

President Paulsen mentioned some of the challenges the church faces today, which call for competent and dedicated leadership. First, he mentioned the challenge of preserving our Adventist identity and values in a fast expanding church, expected to reach a 50 million membership by the year 2020. Closely related is the challenge of "permanence and change," that is, of preserving on the one hand "specifically defined landmarks which we hold to as a church," while on the other hand adapting to changes that do not compromise our identity.

Next President Paulsen spoke of the challenge of living creatively with people of all cultures and races. He said: "Cultures and traditions are on the move. Furthermore, communication is global. And we move into each other's world even when we do not physically relocate. And into this mix there is a constant transfer of opinions, assessments, and judgments. Let us not pretend that this is not happening on a significant scale in our church, for it is."

The Need to Recognize the Legitimate Customs of Every Culture

Adventist leaders, President Paulsen said, are called “to clearly identify the values of faith and conduct which transcend time and culture, values which identify us as a church community and which we will continue to hold.” In other words, the task of an Adventist leader, is not to promote the values of his own culture at the expenses of other cultures, but to recognize in every culture those values and customs that can legitimately be used to proclaim the Adventist message.

I became aware of the importance of this principle last Sabbath, July 23, 2005, in Hannover, Germany, where I spoke in a majestic Lutheran Cathedral at a rally of Adventist believers representing different cultures, and speaking four different languages. For the first time in my itinerant ministry we faced the challenge of deciding in which language should my sermon be translated from the pulpit. We decided in favor of a German translation to be given from the front of the church and for the other translations in the back part of the sanctuary.

What impressed me of the service, was the Ghanaian women choir, which sang with power and melodious harmony, unique Adventist hymns. The Ghanaian pastor explained to me that Adventists in Ghana are well-known for composing music which is distinctively Adventist in content and expression. He estimated that about 20 percent of the new converts in Ghana are won to the church through the Ghanaian Adventist music, which is specifically composed to teach our Adventist message. How sad it would be if an American missionary was to try to persuade Ghanaian believers to abandon their unique Adventist music and replace it instead with contemporary choruses which hardly express fundamental Adventist beliefs.

A Concern for the Unity of the Church

Another important point made by President Paulsen is that Adventist leaders “at any level or in any capacity, will always seek that which is good for the whole body. A leader may be elected by a small constituency, but he/she functions in the interest of the whole church. That cannot be compromised without the broader unity of the whole

church being undermined. If an individual cannot see this or will not abide by it, he/she should not accept a leadership appointment in the church.”

Unfortunately, the concern for the unity of the church is not always respected by all churches and institutions. For example, I have been in some churches where women are not even allowed on the platform to read Scripture or to pray. By contrast, in other churches women preach, baptize, celebrate marriages, and preside at the Lord’s Supper. Such radically different roles of women in the Adventist church, undermine the unity of the church.

A final important point that President Paulsen made, is that Adventist leaders must work “on the basis of consultation and consensus. This means that one may not, at the risk of traumatizing the church, be able to move ahead as quickly as one had wished, even with that which, when the time is ripe, will be acknowledged as good, creative, and progressive ideas. Leadership will be sensitive to what the church can accept at any given time and not to outpace the community it serves.”

Had this important counsel always been followed, many congregations would have been spared the trauma of being pressured to adopt a new style of worship with beat music and drama—a style of worship unacceptable to the majority of the members.

In discussing the qualities of Adventist leaders, President Paulsen emphasized that besides spirituality, which is fundamental, “what people are looking for in a leader are humility, integrity, and vision. They want to be sure that they can trust their leader, and they will feel more secure if they can be sure that what they see is what they get. Transparency is the filter through which humility and integrity are seen. Next to spirituality, these are the highest qualities needed in Adventist leadership.”

There is no question that “spirituality, humility, integrity, and vision,” constitute essential qualities to be found in the lives of those called to lead the church at a pastoral or administrative level. Developing these qualities should be the goal of anyone called to serve the church in a leadership role.

“Integrity: A 21st Century Imperative”**By B. Lyn Behrens MB, BS****President of Loma Linda University**

Dr. Lyn Behrens, president and chief executive officer of Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center in California, presented the second lecture on the Adventist leadership series, entitled “Integrity: A 21st Century Imperative.” I found her presentations very perceptive and timely.

To highlight the importance of integrity as a distinguishing leadership quality, Behrens quoted from a recent report, published in *USA Today*, on white-collar crime in corporate America. The front-page article in the business section, offers this staggering statistics: “As of last year, 1,300 corporate executives were charged with fraud. Of that, 693 were either convicted or pled guilty to charge.” The problem of breach of integrity affects not only business leaders, but also church leaders.

Behrens discussed the meaning of *integrity*, as indicated by its Latin root *integer*, (the Latin root is *integritas*, not *integer*), meaning “wholeness.” She explained that “integrity is being ‘one person.’ Many of the words we use to indicate a lack of integrity have the sense of being ‘split in two’—words such as ‘duplicity’ or expressions such as ‘being two-faced,’ and being ‘double-tongued.’”

To bring home the meaning of integrity, Behrens noted that this quality manifests itself “as authenticity—being who I claim to be and doing what I promise to do. As honesty, sincerity, forthrightness and consistent truthfulness. As promise keeping and the avoidance of all forms of deception.” She gave examples from the Bible and recent history showing how integrity is manifested in the lives of leaders.

Our 21 century is already marred by blatant breaches of integrity by secular and religious leaders. As Behrens point out “The fallout from immorality is always devastating. Clearly, the lives of family members are severely disrupted and most times they are irreversibly damaged. Corporate communities and Church organizations also feel the impact. At a minimum, confusion occurs about the moral code for living. Church members become disillusioned. Trust, the social fabric of our families,

communities and our Church entities, is ruptured. And God's name is always dishonored."

Two Examples of Breach of Integrity

The timeliness of Beherens remarks were brought home to me by two email reports I received while writing this newsletter. The first report relates to financial irregularities in the operation of Lake Region Conference discovered by a recent audit. This Regional Conference administers 109 churches with a membership of 27,541 members scattered in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The findings of the audit have not been made public, but their gravity is indicated by the decision to suspend several pastors, including two top administrators.

According to Gary Burns, the Communication Secretary of the Lake Union Headquarter, "The Lake Region Conference executive committee has relieved one officer, Pastor Hugo Gambetta, vice president and director of multilingual ministries, of his position, and removed him from his ministerial duties. Regional church treasurer Pastor Leroy B. Hampton resigned after he was placed on a leave of absence. Three other financial employees of the Lake Region Conference also left church employment. Four local church pastors, Ciro Aviles, Jose Osmin Hernandez, William Rojas and Alfredo Solis, were each placed on a leave of absence, pending further action by church leaders."

Whatever is the nature of the financial irregularities that caused the suspension of these pastors and administrators, the fall out is bound to be devastating. Elder Walter Wright, President of the Lake Union Conference, told me in a brief conversation at the Chicago airport, that the problems are serious and could affect the whole church. When church members learn that some of their respected church leaders have been suspended for financial reasons, they become disillusioned and their confidence in the integrity and honesty of their leaders can be severely damaged.

A second example of breach of integrity is the alleged fraud claims by the Florida-based Adventist Health System Sunbelt Healthcare Corporation, three affiliated hospitals and a management company that

administered ambulance operations at the three hospitals. According to the Justice Department and the Department of Health and Human Services, the above-mentioned institutions agreed to pay the U.S. government \$20.3 million to settle allegations that they overcharged Medicare for ambulance transport of patients which were not medically necessary.

This report about million of dollars paid by Adventist operated institutions to settle allegations of fraud, can cause incalculable damage to the public image of the Adventist church, besides weakening the confidence of Adventist members in the integrity of their institutions. These two examples that came to my attention while writing this newsletter suffice to show the timeliness of Behrens' lecture on integrity as a fundamental quality of Adventist leadership.

Seven steps to safeguard personal and organizational integrity

In closing her perceptive and penetrating analysis of the essential quality of integrity for Adventist Leadership, Behrens suggests seven steps to safeguard personal and organizational integrity. I would urge every readers to reflect on these timely suggestions:

· “Always practice transparency: beware of believing that the end justifies the means.

Treat all employees fairly: create a nurturing work place that is free from discrimination and harassment. Avoid nepotism.

Be courageous: speak truthfully, listen carefully, ask tough questions, give forthright responses.

Establish and maintain appropriate boundaries. Avoid all appearances of impropriety.

Declare conflicts of interest.

Acknowledge errors promptly. Implement corrective actions.

Investigate concerns fairly and impartially. Appropriately disclose the results.”

Absolute integrity at all times and in all places, is an ideal that few (if any) leaders achieve. The problem is not the occasional lapses in our integrity, but how do we react when we discover that we have strayed

from the path of righteousness. Do we acknowledge our mistake and ask God for forgiveness, or do we make excuses for our transgressions, hoping that the conviction of wrong doing will eventually fade away? The Good News of the Gospel is that if we confess our wrongdoings, God is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us, that is, to restore our integrity (1 John 1:9).

“Church Authority Should Benefit Others”

Angel Rodriguez, Ph. D.,

Director of the GC Biblical Research Institute

Dr. Angel Rodriguez, Director of the GC Biblical Research Institute (BRI), delivered on July 5, 2005, the third presentation of the series on “Adventist Leadership.” He focused on some of the challenges to the authority of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He said that among these challenges are: “corruption, unbalanced influences from certain regions of the world, difficulties in obtaining consensus, the growth of parallel and competing organizational structures, and the sidelining of minorities.”

There is no question that the use and abuse of church authority is a live issue today, often causing divisions and contentions. Rodriguez rightly emphasized that church authority, should be used in the same way that Jesus used His divine authority, namely, for the benefit of others. He also stressed that church authority ultimately rests on the normative authority of the Bible, through which God continues to reveal His will for our lives. This means that the teaching authority of Adventist leaders is to be tested by Scripture, and not viceversa.

In order to guard against the abuse of authority, Rodriguez pointed out that Adventist leaders should focus on three key areas: message, mission and unity. Of these three areas, the unity of the church is perhaps more vulnerable. He said that it is “the unity of the church . . . that enables the global church to speak with one voice to the world.”

Rodriguez’ concern to preserve the unity of the church stems from his position as Director of the Biblical Research Institute—an office comparable to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which

is the doctrinal watchdog of the Roman Catholic Church. The BRI is constantly bombarded by studies submitted by Adventists claiming to have a new or better understanding of church doctrines or prophetic interpretations. Due to his unique position, he feels more than any of us the threat of new teachings to the unity of the church. I can relate to his concern because I do also constantly receive lengthy studies supposedly containing new light for the church. In many cases such studies reflect a fertile imagination, rather than an objective investigation of Scripture.

The Tension Between Unity and Growth in Understanding

The challenge that all denominations face today, including our own Adventist Church, is how to preserve the unity of the faith while allowing for a fresh re-examination of denominational teachings. Any fresh investigation opens the door for possible modifications or even radical changes that can threaten the doctrinal unity of the church. This is why historical churches hold fast to their ancient creeds in order to preserve their identity and doctrinal unity.

I remember the exchanges I had with Dr. James Kennedy, of Coral Ridge Ministry in Florida. I responded to his TV sermons and articles against the Sabbath by preparing a 49 pages essay, exposing the flaws of his arguments. For good measure, I also sent him a copy of my four books on the Sabbath. After about three months, I received a short reply, acknowledging in many ways the validity of my research, but reaffirming his commitment to his Calvinistic tradition. Simply stated, for Kennedy (and countless people like him) what Calvin or Luther said, is more authoritative than what the Bible says.

The attachment to tradition is especially true for the Roman Catholic Church. Doctrinal changes are impossible in the Catholic Church, because they have already been discussed and defined in the past by Councils, Popes, and the Doctors of the Catholic church.

During the five years I spent at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, in several classes we studied the historical development and gradual acceptance of certain dogmas. No serious attempt was ever made to test the biblical validity of such dogmas as that of papal infallibility, promulgated in 1870 by Vatican I. I remember the professor expressing reservations about the modality followed to ensure a majority vote for the promulgation of that dogma. But he did not dare to discuss

the legitimacy of the notion of papal infallibility, because to do so would be tantamount to a betrayal of his allegiance, first to his Jesuit order and second, to his Catholic faith.

Tradition and Adventist Beliefs

The examples just cited serve to illustrate the blinding effects of tradition in the study of Bible truths. Our Seventh-day Adventist Church is not immune from this phenomenon. For many Adventists what our pioneers taught is the “truth.” and any deviation from their teachings is “heresy.” A few examples will serve to illustrate this point.

Lately, I have received numerous studies on the TRINITY, written by concerned Adventists. They cite extensively some of our pioneers to show that originally our Adventist church was Arian, not Trinitarian, that is to say, they believed that Christ was created by God, but not co-eternal with the Father. He is a divine Creature, but not the divine, eternal, self-existing Creator. For them, the doctrine of the Trinity is a Catholic heresy gradually adopted by our Adventist church. Thus, to be true to the doctrinal legacy of our pioneers, our Adventist Church should abandon the doctrine of the Trinity and return to the Arian view of Christ as the first creature of God.

Incidentally, Jehovah’s Witnesses are notorious for rejecting the Trinity, promoting instead the divine creation of Christ. To support their teachings, they have even published their own Bible, based on manuscripts more agreeable to their teachings. It is noteworthy that Jehovah’s Witnesses as well as the various churches stemming from Church of God Seventh Day (Worldwide Church of God, United Church of God, Church of God International, etc.), inherited the view of Christ as the first creature of God from our own Seventh-day Adventist Church. The reason is that they left our Adventist church prior to our acceptance of the doctrine of the TRINITY.

Concerned Adventists who reject the TRINITY because some of our pioneers were anti-trinitarian, fail to recognize that our pioneers gradually understood Bible truths. It took them years to sort out what was biblical and what was unbiblical in the teachings of their previous denominations. This means that whatever our pioneers wrote and taught

must be tested in the light of Scripture, not viceversa. (A chapter of my forthcoming book on POPULAR HERESIES is devoted to a biblical and historical study of the TRINITY. Unfortunately the completion of this book has been delayed by other pressing assignments).

Another example of the blinding effect of tradition is the popular interpretation of the number of the beast “666” (Rev 13:18), as VICARIUS FILII DEI, a title allegedly used by the Pope on his Tiara—a claim that has been proven to be wrong. In a recent Sabbath School Quarterly devoted to the Book of Revelation, Dr. Angel Rodriguez, Director of BRI, acknowledged that the traditional interpretation, though popular, lacks textual and historical support. Instead, he proposed the figurative interpretation of “666” as the symbol of incompleteness, imperfection and rebellion. Concerned Adventists expressed their bitter disappointment with the new figurative interpretation of 666. They viewed it as a rejection of the traditional interpretation developed by our pioneers.

The above examples serve to show how difficult it is to maintain the unity of the faith, when some of our members are committed to uphold traditional interpretations, even if they are found to be devoid of biblical and historical support. Our challenge is to help our members understand that we are a dynamic movement, growing not only in numbers, but also in the understanding of biblical truths. Our fundamental beliefs are not etched in stone, but based on a growing understanding of biblical teachings.

“Acting With Responsibility: Aspirations of a Servant Along Pathways of Governance”

Ted Ramirez, J.D.

Attorney Specializing in Health Care, Merger and Acquisitions, and Corporate Governance

Ted Ramirez, an Attorney specializing in health care, delivered on July 6, 2005, the fourth presentation of the series on “Adventist Leadership.” It was entitled “Acting With Responsibility: Aspirations of a Servant Along Pathways of Governance.” As suggested by the title, Ramirez explored how to be responsible leaders in the Adventist church. He asked: “How do we, as leaders, act with responsibility in a relentlessly irresponsible world? . . . Within our church, how well do we foster

a consistent, dependable sense of responsibility and keep irresponsible behavior outside the church?”

These are perceptive and pertinent questions that deserve serious considerations. Unfortunately, I did not find clear answers in the written version of Ramirez’s lecture. The essay is extremely long (over 25 pages) and filled with technical, abstract legal concepts, that are hardly comprehensible to lay persons. It uses terminology and concepts associated with “corporate governance.” Some of the concepts are applicable to church leadership, but its primary audience seems to be the managers of corporations.

For example, in discussing the challenges of responsible leadership, Ramirez has a paragraph entitled: “*Tension Among the Essential, Necessary, Good and Useful.*” He writes: “We experience tension and incompatibility among competing values, principles, standards and goals. We struggle over alternative *governance mechanisms*, boundaries, and the increasingly articulated demand for ‘transparency.’ Let us pause to ask, ‘What is ‘transparency?’ Does the person who demands it bear any responsibility to define what he or she expects? What level of micro-minutiae will we demand of our leaders in terms of ‘the right to know?’ We find that reaching alignment among *leaders and governors* requires time, prayer and extended conversations over time to resolve or learn to live with our differences and to galvanize our effectiveness.” (Emphasis supplied)

Frankly, I have great difficulty to understand the relevance of this legal jargon to Adventist leadership. The notion of “reaching alignment among *leaders and governors*,” reflects the challenge of effective management in corporations, rather than in a religious organization. I am not aware of the existence of “governors” in the Adventist church, who need to reach alignment with other “leaders.”

Again Ramirez speaks of “*leaders and governors*” few paragraphs later, under the heading: “*Governance Disabilities and Dysfunctions.*” He writes: “As we consider our participation in the governance of our Church at all levels, we may encounter random, often humorous, characteristics of *leaders and governors* past and present. Among these, we find an array of governance disabilities that express themselves

through recurring personalities and *actors*. While well-intended, these dysfunctions can frustrate even the best leadership, however talented and competent, slow down constructive decision processes, and disrupt unity, communication and action.”

This legal jargon of “governance disabilities and dysfunctions, governors, actors” is foreign to the challenge of leadership in the Adventist church. My impression is that Ramirez tried to rework a legal lecture he had prepared dealing with “Responsible Governance of Corporations.” Perhaps, because of lack of time, he failed to remove those legal words, phrases, and concepts, which do not apply to our Adventist organization. Most likely, Ramirez made significant changes in the oral presentation which I was unable to hear. The printed version needs to be reworked to make it relevant to Adventist leadership.

“Responsiveness to Diversity”

Leslie N. Pollard, D.Min., Ph.D. (cand.) MBA

Vice-President for Diversity

Loma Linda University Adventist Health Sciences Center

Dr. Leslie N. Pollard, Vice-President for Diversity at Loma Linda University, presented on July 7, 2005, the fifth and final presentation of the series on “Adventist Leadership.” His lecture is largely drawn from his book *Embracing Diversity: How to Understand and Reach People of All Cultures* (Review and Herald, 2000).

I found the printed version of Pollard’s presentation, most perceptive and timely. I recommend it as a “must reading” for church leaders in particular and Christians in general. Being a black man, I feared that he might promote forced racial and cultural integration as a Gospel mandate, as argued by some of the respondents to my essay of *THE BIBLE AND RACE*. But my fears were mistaken, because in a masterful way Pollard shows that Christian leaders must not eliminate, but accept and respect racial and cultural differences as an opportunity for service.

Much of Pollard’s talk is built on an in-depth analysis of Paul’s cross-cultural ministry. He finds in the Apostle a fitting example of the Christian response to “the racial, national, cultural, gender, and ethnic diversity within and beyond the Christian community.”

The key text of Pollard’s reflection is 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 which reads: “For though I be free from all, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. [Leadership requires fellowship] And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without the law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without the law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all persons, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.”

Pollard notes that what made it possible for Paul to transcend his Jewish racial and cultural identity, was the “identity transplant” he experienced on the way to Damascus. “The transforming encounter with the risen Christ deconstructed his inherited identity and replaced it with another primary identity. Paul became a new creature in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:7). New perceptions of the world, new perceptions of society, new priorities, new ambitions, new criteria of perception—all these and more separated Paul from his former identity.”

Three Lessons From Paul’s Experience

Christian Leaders Must Define their Life from Christ’s Perspective. Pollard draws three important lessons for Christian leaders from Paul’s “identity transplant.” First, Christian leaders who have become new creatures in Christ, no longer define the reality of their existence in terms of their racial or cultural identity. “In the mind of the Christian leader, these distinctions are psychologically relocated to a secondary level of importance. They are reduced to what they really are—not objective measures of social worth or standing, but temporal distinctions that have no salvific value.”

Pollard continues observing that “For Paul, any former or presentism that is not surrendered to Christ becomes idolatry. While the many centrism of our day—whether Asia-centrism, Afro-centrism, Euro-centrism, or Latino-centrism—will clamor for our allegiance, the Christian leader must resist. The gospel never allows believers to organize their

perspectives around any other center than Jesus Christ. No person can serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). We can have only one center, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2).”

What this means to me is that though I am an Italian by birth and upbringing, I must evaluate people, not from my own Italian racial and cultural perspective, but from Christ’s perspective. I must learn to relegate to a secondary level my Italian identity, because whatever is admirable in my culture, it is only a temporary distinction which has no saving value.

Christian Leaders Must Use their Cultural Identity as a Resource. A second lesson to be learned from Paul’s statement “To the Jews I became as a Jew,” is that Christian leaders are not called to suppress or abandon their racial or cultural identity, but to use it effectively to communicate the Gospel. Pollards says: “By critically analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the culture and world view that has been passed on to us, we will be better able to access and utilize our personal history as a leadership resource. This is absolutely essential for the cross-cultural leader.”

“Paul retreats from the racial and ethnic idolatry that could only divide and alienate.” But he did not ignore his ethnic identity. As Pollard observes: “His intimate experience as a Jew is modalized so that he can be ‘as’ a Jew. Do not misunderstand me! Paul works for his own ethnic group, but only as an ambassador from another kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:20). He adapted himself to the customs of the Jewish people when working among them. He took a Nazarite vow (Acts 18:18). He had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:13). He took part in purification rituals and paid Nazarite expenses for the sacrificial offering (Acts 21:23ff). His ministry was Jewish led, but not Jewish limited. But Paul can also be as one ‘without the Law,’ that is, a Gentile. While with Gentiles, he did not enforce Jewish ceremonial ritual upon them (Gal 2:11-14; Colossians 2:11, 16). Here Paul lays out the possibility for cross-cultural ministry. Paul will work for his ‘own’ Jewish people but refuses to be restricted to them. He extends his ministry to all people alienated from Jesus Christ. Their diversity represents his opportunity-to stretch himself, to move beyond his own comfort zone, to love as Christ loved.”

Christian Leaders Must Have a Passion for Souls. A third lesson that Pollard draws from Paul’s cross-cultural ministry is the need for Christian leaders to have a passion for souls. “Love for Christ is the law under which Paul functions (verse 21; also Galatians 6:2). His mission is to win as many as possible. Paul’s cross-cultural service is motivated by agape-love. And he considers this opportunity his blessing (1 Corinthians 9:23). Agape love means that the bonds between diverse brothers and sisters of different races, cultures, nationalities, and genders are intensified.”

When everything is said and done, love is the secret of successful cross-cultural outreach. When Christ’s love is manifested in our hearts, we will be able to accept and respect people of all races and cultures. We will be able to tolerate more readily those cultural customs that we may find objectionable.

Differences Must be Recognized, Affirmed, and Accepted

Pollard discusses also the dilemma of racial and cultural differences. My discussion of this issue in recent ENDTIME ISSUES newsletters (131 and 132), generated an unusual volume of responses, especially from South Africa. Most writers took issue with my statement that the Bible teaches us to accept and respect racial and cultural distinctions, but not to eliminate them through interracial marriage or forced integration. A good number of respondents objected to my conclusion, by arguing that in Christ “there is no Jew or Greek” (Gal 3:28). For them this text teaches us that in Christ racial, ethnic, and cultural differences no longer exist, or at least, they do not matter anymore. Allegedly, a Christian does not see skin colors, because all people are one in Christ.

In my response I pointed out that the text affirms the soteriological unity of mankind, that is, salvation is open to all races and sexes without distinction, but not the sociological integration of all races, that is, the melding of all races into one new race. The Gospel did not perform the miracle of eliminating all racial and gender distinctions in the Apostolic Church. Greeks remained Greeks and Jews were still Jews. Males and females were not transformed into unisex beings. The text does not teach the homogenization of the human family, but the acceptance and respect for every human being, no matter what their race or culture might be.

Pollard Calls upon Leaders to Affirm and Appreciate Differences

In many ways Pollard reaches the same conclusion, though from the perspective of leadership. He discusses the three common answers given to the dilemma of racial and cultural differences. First, there are those who reject the idea of differences. He finds such a position “unacceptable,” because “Paul never rejects difference. He affirms it—Jew, Gentile, weak, etc. He understands differences not as obstacles. He accepts difference as opportunity. Racial, ethnic, gender, and cultural differences present us an opportunity to serve the higher plan of God for the diverse human family. . . .Christian leaders see difference as opportunity.”

Second, there are those who claim to be blind to color differences. Pollard finds even this solution “unchristian.” “The person who says, ‘I don’t see colors, I just see people’ sounds like the person who visits a flower garden in full bloom and declares, ‘I don’t see colors, I just see flowers.’ After all, it is God who made the colors, is it not? And if God made the colors, he wants them seen and appreciated. Leaders who take this position ultimately homogenize the human family by invalidating uniqueness. They deprive themselves of the enjoyment derived from the richness and diversity of the human family. Such homogenization of the human family is alien to diversity competency and leadership.”

Third, there are those who take the “differences-do-not-matter” approach. Pollard notes that these also “walk contrary to the example of the apostle. Failure to explore the significance of difference leads to cross-cultural incompetence. After all, if the difference does not matter to me, then I will not take the time to improve my communication, leadership, or relational skills. The differences mattered to Paul enough to view each group with its culture, orientation and world view as a unique entity worthy of special attention.”

Summing up, Pollard’s essay “Responsiveness to Diversity” offers much food for thought. He challenges Christian leaders, not to homogenize the human family by invalidating racial and cultural differences, but to affirm and appreciate them as part of God’s design to be used as a vehicle to fulfill His mission. In many ways this is also the

conclusion of my essay on “The Bible and Race,” which generated an unusual volume of negative responses, especially from South Africa.

LESSONS FROM JOHN PAUL II FOR ADVENTIST LEADERS

The five presentations on Adventist Leadership we have reviewed focus on important moral and spiritual qualities such as spirituality, humility, integrity, proper use of authority, concern for church unity, acting with responsibility, and sensitivity to cultural diversity. Each of these qualities constitute an important asset for Adventist leaders. Yet it is possible to possess all of these qualities, and yet fail to emerge as an outstanding leader. The reason is that outstanding leaders tend to break the mold. They possess unusual qualities that transcend the profile of a typical leader. A look at the leadership style of the late John Paul II will serve to illustrate this point.

The late John Paul II is rightly regarded as the most influential and successful religious leader of our time, if not of all times. No church leader has ever won the sympathy and admiration of so many people around the world like John Paul II. An editorial in *USA TODAY* captures the unprecedented outpouring of sympathy for John Paul II at his funeral with these vivid words: “In life, Pope John Paul II reached out to the world as no pope ever had. This week, the world reached back with a dramatic outpouring of respect and affection. An unprecedented flood of presidents and prime ministers, royalty and religious leaders and at least 4 million simple pilgrims swept into Rome to celebrate his life and mourn his death.”

The outstanding success of John Paul II in winning the sympathy of million of people inside and outside the Catholic church, invite us to consider some of his leadership qualities worth emulating by Adventist leaders. For the sake of brevity we will consider three of them.

A Passion For People

The first outstanding leadership quality exemplified by John Paul is his passion for people. This leadership quality was largely ignored by the five presenters, yet it can spell the difference between the success or

failure of a leader. The success of a church leader is largely determined by his willingness to dedicate his time and energies to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of people.

From the beginning of his pontificate, John Paul made it clear that he would break the mold set by his predecessors by taking the papacy on the road. Previous popes immersed themselves in the managerial details of running the Vatican state, venturing seldom beyond its confines. By contrast, John Paul saw himself first and foremost as a pastor-evangelist, called to minister to his flock around the world. He inspired the faithful and strengthened the faith of new converts, by making them feel as brothers and sisters of the Catholic household of faith. By taking the papacy on the road, he transformed the figure of the pope from a distant icon to a familiar face.

John Paul has set a worthy example for Adventist church leaders to follow. To lead a worldwide church, with members scattered in different parts of the world, our church leaders cannot afford to manage the church at a distance from their headquarter, with occasional visits to a few rallies. They must be willing to travel near and far to share with as many church members as possible, their pastoral concerns, their doctrinal convictions, and their vision for the church.

Believers tend to define their faith and church identity, not only in terms of the instruction and guidance they receive weekly from their local pastor, but also on the basis of the inspiration and directives provided by their Conference, Union, Division, and General Conference leaders. The President or Head of a church, embodies in many ways the identity, mission, and message of the church.

Adventist church leaders must have a passion for people like the pope. They should view themselves, not merely as managers of the church spending most of their time in administrative sessions, but primarily as pastors called to minister to the spiritual and physical needs of our members whenever and wherever possible.

Members must feel that their church leaders care for them, listen to them, and respond to them. Frequently I receive messages from

Adventists complaining that in spite of their repeated efforts, they never received a reply to their questions from certain church leaders they approached. Church leaders cannot afford to ignore people, because their ministry centers on people.

Willingness to Stand for Fundamental Beliefs

A second outstanding leadership quality exemplified by John Paul, is his unwavering commitment to defend traditional Catholic teachings. We deplore the heretical teachings for which John Paul stood, but we can admire his willingness to stand firm for his beliefs in spite of the enormous opposition from his critics. Surprisingly many Catholics who disagreed with the Pope during his life on his stand against divorce, birth control, women ordination, voluntary celibacy, and abortion, when interviewed at his funeral, they praised him for his unwavering commitment to defend unpopular teachings. Somebody said that he expected the pope to uphold moral standards hard for people to accept. After all, if the pope gave in to popular pressures for doctrinal changes, he would no longer be the pope.

Adventist church leaders can learn from John Paul the importance to take a bold stand on fundamental Adventist beliefs and practices that define our church identity, message, and mission. They cannot afford to be politically correct by allowing different views to satisfy different factions within the church. Our Adventist church today is divided on such vital areas as worship styles, women ordinations, the inspiration of Ellen White, creation/evolution, prophetic interpretations, the Sanctuary, the investigative judgement, the Trinity, and others.

Some Adventist churches sound like night clubs, while others look like funeral homes. Some churches have women pastors who preach, baptize and officiate at the Lord's Supper, while others do not even allow women on the platform to pray or announce hymns. (I have preached in one of the latter). Some Adventists believe in the verbal inspiration of Ellen White, while others no longer accept or use her prophetic guidance in preaching or personal devotion. Some Adventist teachers believe in a fiat creation that occurred about 6000 years ago, while others (mostly science teachers) espouse some forms of theistic evolution that occurred

over million of years. Some Adventists tenaciously defend the traditional (Uriah Smith) interpretation of Daniel and Revelation, while others are advancing new fanciful interpretations. The result is that many Adventists are confused and disoriented like sheep without a shepherd. An increasing number are leaving the church, disappointed by the state of confusion.

Some of these issues are complex with no easy solutions. Our church leaders are wise in allowing a certain latitude of understanding and expression. But to restore unity and identity to our Adventist church, a basic consensus must be achieved on crucial areas of beliefs and practices by consultation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Like John Paul, our church leaders must have the courage to draw a line in the sand and face the criticism for upholding some unpopular positions. Failure to do so, will only intensify the fragmentation and loss of identity of our Adventist church.

Improve the Lines of Communication

A third lesson Adventist church leaders can learn from John Paul II is to improve the lines of communications. John Paul will be remembered as a gifted communicator who used the media effectively to share his message with Catholic members and the world at large. In 1995 he ushered in at the Vatican the age of information by launching the Vatican web site which he used effectively to publish his weekly sermons, speeches, and articles.

A famous photograph of John Paul shows him typing on his lap top. He had his own email account and supporters were encouraged to email him messages during his illness. Text messaging also became an instrumental tool for the pope to communicate his messages. In 2004, the Vatican signed a deal with Verizon to deliver daily papal SMS messages to subscribers. The news that the pope had died was first reported via SMS message from the Vatican to journalists.

During the April 3, 2005 interview on “Meet the Press,” Archbishop John P. Foley, president of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, recalled the answer John Paul gave to Cardinal William Keeler of Baltimore when he asked permission for a television camera

to tape the presentation he was about to make. The pope replied: “If it doesn’t happen on television, it doesn’t happen.”

Our Adventist church has been a pioneer in the use of the Media to proclaim our message. But most of the programs aired today by *It Is Written*, *Amazing Facts*, *HOPE*, and *3ABN*, feature professional evangelists who are constantly repackaging our message to make it more appealing to the public at large.

I am not aware of a weekly message from the General Conference or Conference leaders being broadcasted through media channels or websites. Yet our Adventist members need to hear from our top leaders, because they can best communicate their vision and concerns for the world church. They can best serve as the icon of the worldwide Adventist church, just like the pope serves as an icon of the Catholic Church.

Perhaps, like the Vatican, our General Conference, Universities, and Theological Seminaries, may wish to consider developing a special website where sermons, messages, and timely studies from our World Leaders and scholars are posted on a regular basis. The website could also offer the possibility to church members to email their notes of appreciation, questions, or prayer requests.

At present many of our Adventists members do not know where to turn when struggling with unsettling issues. Some treat me as a clearing house for the church by forwarding their questions to me. But I can only speak for myself. It would be reassuring for our members to know that they can email their questions to the GC or Theological Seminary internet services, knowing that some church leader or competent scholar will eventually offer them the needed answer.

Summing up, we have seen that John Paul II stands out in several areas as a worthy example to emulate for Adventist Church leaders. His passion for people, his fearless defence of Catholic traditional teachings, and his gift of communication, are examples worth emulating by anyone called to lead a world church. To this could be added his deep spirituality. Despite his grueling schedule, John Paul spent hours each day praying, usually on his knees.

Unfortunately, his positive virtues are overshadowed by blinding effects of Catholic traditional teachings that caused him to fearlessly defend as truths what in reality are blatant errors, condemned by Scripture. This serves to teach us that above all things Adventist leaders must be biblically correct.

Conclusion

Profiling what an Adventist leader should be like, is like dreaming about a perfect husband or a perfect wife. Such idealistic dreams seldom correspond to reality. The preceding discussion of some of the basic qualities of Adventist leadership, should serve as a reminder of what Adventist leaders should aim for by divine grace. No church leader can be expected to possess all the qualities discussed in this essay, but all church leaders should constantly re-evaluate their strengths and their weaknesses, seeking to become more and more like our Model Leader, Jesus Christ.