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Restoring Fallen Pastors: a Study on Restoring and Reinstating Clergy Who Have Been Involved in Sexual Misconduct

David Lawrence Bissell
Andrews University
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Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

RESTORING FALLEN PASTORS: A STUDY ON RESTORING AND REINSTATING CLERGY WHO HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

A Dissertation
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Ministry

by
David Lawrence Bissell
April 2005
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ABSTRACT

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David Lawrence Bissell

Adviser: Douglas Kilcher
ABSTRACT OF DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

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Date completed: April 2005

Problem

Research among Evangelicals and Seventh-day Adventists shows that approximately 12 percent of pastors commit adultery while in the ministry. What happens to an Adventist pastor who commits adultery? The North American Division policies are straightforward. An adulterous pastor should lose his credentials and ordination, be disfellowshiped, and never be rehired by any church entity. However, administrative practices are not consistent with church guidelines. Often a fallen pastor is moved to another district without a lapse in the service record. Some are restored to ministry after having had a time out. This apparent discrepancy may be due to eroding standards or because the church has recognized the importance of grace and restoration.
Method

The problem of sexual immorality in pastoral ranks is discussed, a brief history of how the Christian church has responded to this problem is presented, the complexity of the issue is addressed, sound biblical and Ellen White theology for restoration is presented, a survey of one hundred North American Division Adventist leaders was taken to see if the church may be ready for change; interviews with pastors who have committed adultery and been restored are recorded, and recommendations and suggestions for policy revisions and processes that would be more comprehensive and redemptive are introduced.

Results

The Bible and the writings of Ellen White support the concept of restoring fallen pastors to ministry. About three-fourths of the leaders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in North America who responded to the survey felt that present church policy is inadequate. Eighty-one percent believe that a more comprehensive policy that is redemptive might be implemented. The Pacific Union Conference, the Alberta Conference, and the NAD have prepared policy changes that could help resolve the inconsistencies between practices and policies.

Conclusion

In light of evidence from the Bible and the writings of Ellen White for restoring fallen pastors, and in view of possible support from leaders in the North American Division, the church should move ahead to vote a comprehensive restoration policy that would include procedures for restoring fallen leaders, helping to heal their families, their victims, and the churches they have wounded.
This dissertation is dedicated in love to the following people. To my wife, Jeanette. She has supported me and spent lonely hours while her husband has been working on this project.

To my brother, LeVerne Bissell, who has spent untold hours working on the statistics that buttress the research.

To his wife, Juanita Bissell, who has spent countless hours editing the manuscript.

To the Cedar Rapids Seventh-day Adventist Church members who have encouraged me to press on to completion, even though their pastor was distracted from complete service to the church, and to those Seventh-day Adventist leaders who have encouraged me to write about this sensitive topic.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose

Few things in life are more painful than a moral failure. Betrayal of trust impacts the fallen pastor, the victim, the homes of both parties, the congregation, and the wider community of believers. The large number of lapsed pastors creates a drain on the pastoral talent pool, and the toll on congregations because of their moral failure is heavy. Not only is the community of faith traumatized, but the world looks on critically, expecting more from those who claim to represent God.

In the journal *Adventist Today*, Dr. Errol Lawrence summarizes the heartfelt cries of several of his fallen colleagues who wonder if restoration is ever possible:

These former colleagues ask me many questions: “Are there solid biblical reasons or statements in Ellen White's writings about a defrocked pastor not returning to his vocation? Does God forgive and restore us when we commit adultery? Does the church really understand the meaning of forgiveness? Does the church have a ministry of reconciliation for the people in which it has invested thousands of dollars year after year? Can God use a repentant, restored sinner to win souls? Is restoration a dirty word to some church leaders? What help is being given to local congregations or denominations whose pastors experience a moral fall? Does the church have a theology of restoration?”

These questions call for an answer. Should the Seventh-day Adventist (Adventist) Church employ ministers who have lost their ministerial vocations because of a moral fall but have demonstrated their repentance and re-dedication over time? This is not a question of

whether God can forgive pastors who make mistakes. It is a question of whether God can use
individuals who have fallen.

At present Adventist policies are plainly defined, but the application is clearly mixed. In
most circumstances, adulterous pastors are discontinued from ministry. In many cases,
administrators would never consider reinstating a tarnished leader. But inconsistency seems to
plague the practices of church administrators.

Seventy Adventist Church leaders gathered October 26-28, 2003, for the John Osborn
Lectures in Ministry at LaSierra University in Riverside, California, to discuss how pastors can
better prepare to avoid sexual misconduct. The topic of inconsistencies regarding discipline
became a part of the session. One of the speakers, Dr. Rosa Banks, Human Relations Director
for the Adventist Church, noted the variance in how sexual misconduct is handled by church
administration. She stated, “Some pastoral abusers have been disciplined to the point of losing
their credentials and licenses, while some have been given a pat on the back and transferred from
one part of the country to another. . . . I believe one problem is inconsistency in administering
disciplinary policies across the board.”

Her concern was an echo of another General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC)
leader. In 1994, James Cress, GC Ministerial Secretary, wrote an article in Ministry calling for
consistency on how we deal with sexual infidelity. He decried the practice that allowed some
adulterous pastors to be transferred without even a lapse in service records.2

Officially, the Adventist Church takes a firm stance. Policies for The North American
Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD) state that adultery will result in loss of credentials,
voiding of ordination, loss of membership, and future debarring from employment by any church

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entity. But many administrators and pastors feel that present policies are not adequate. In essence, the decision to reinstate a fallen pastor is dependent upon whom he knows and which conference he may approach.

It may be asked why some have strayed away from the clear-cut, “discontinue and never rehire” policies. There are those in the NAD who believe the policies do not reflect the grace of God. Considering that the policies do not allow for restoration, Dr. Errol Lawrence, Chair of Religious Studies at Canadian University College, asked this pertinent question, “Where then is the grace?”

Concerning the possibility of restoration, Pastor Erwin Lutzer said it this way, “No one can predict what the Lord might do through the life of a repentant restored sinner. Sometimes the bird with a broken wing, after healing, does soar again.”

It seems we may have come to a critical time when the implications of Cress’s plea to deal with the issues rather than letting them slip under the rug must be carried out. Nearly ten years ago he recommended, “If present policy needs to allow for employment restoration for clergy involved in sexual misconduct, an appropriate process exists for debating and amending policy in which every issue can be discussed and evaluated.”

The inconsistencies need to be addressed. The church should either evenly enforce the policies or take a more redemptive approach that could speak to the needs of those who have been injured, to the legal and moral issues, and to those pastors who have fallen. Some have suggested that re-entry into the ministry could occur after a period of heart-felt repentance,


2 Lawrence, 21.


4 Cress, 28.
sufficient time of personal victory and appropriate accountability, and renewed trust on the part of those who have been injured. Some feel this would fulfill the essence of the gospel. Others are appalled at this idea, believing that such a shift in policy could undercut the sanctity of the home and the purity of the gospel message. The issues are complicated and not easily resolved. Perhaps this is one of the reasons the church has not formulated such a policy.

The purpose of my dissertation is to confront the inconsistencies and to foster a climate for redemptive debate regarding this issue. Legal issues, biblical and spiritual principles, and practical concerns must be brought to bear in formulating a conclusion. This is the task which will be addressed now.

The Justification

The Significance of Numbers

When I first began to research the topic Restoring Fallen Pastors, I wondered whether this subject would be of significant value to our faith community. I knew that we live in a sex-saturated society, and on several occasions I had become aware of high-profile pastors who have been discontinued from the ministry because of inappropriate sexual involvement with someone. But, I had no idea of the extent of the problem until I read T. C. Muck’s article “How Common Is Pastoral Indiscretion?” in Leadership, a popular pastoral journal. One thousand clergy were surveyed, and the respondents revealed that one in nine pastors had committed adultery. As the boundaries were pressed regarding the meaning of sexual indiscretion, the numbers of those who had been involved in some type of inappropriate behavior increased to 25 percent. Similar findings were discovered in a survey of 277 Southern Baptist pastors. Approximately 14 percent were involved in some type of inappropriate sexual activity and about 10 percent disclosed that

they had a sexual relationship with either a present or former member of the church.¹

In addition to problems of sexual indiscretion, involvement in pornography and sexual addiction is of concern. Internet porn has become a significant pastime for ministers as well as church members. Christianity Today did a survey of pastors and discovered that 18 percent of the pastors visit a pornographic site at least twice a month, with some visiting more than once a week. Thirty-three percent admit they have visited a porn site at some time.²

At first, I had thought I should survey our own church to find out the extent of problems of infidelity. However, Leonard McMillen’s article “Adventist Ministry and Sexuality,” in the 1994 Ministry magazine, a journal for Adventist pastors, convinced me that I did not need to do any further probing. Although his study was not as extensive as the Leadership article, his findings were similar. During 1991 and 1992, McMillen presented seminars on sexual ethics in nine North American conferences and at Andrews University. Sexual ethics surveys were taken before the presentations. They were administered in a crowded room, with no privacy, and with spouses sitting in close proximity, suggesting that the results should be considered conservative. There were 586 total respondents of whom 416 were male. More than a third of the pastors, 37 percent, had been inappropriately involved with someone of the opposite sex. Sixty-five percent struggled with sexual attraction to someone other than their spouse; 12 percent had committed adultery, and 12 percent admitted to having had an affair. “That means that with approximately 3,900 church professionals in the North American Division (3,200 in actual pastoral assignments), nearly 480 have had an affair and approximately 2,500 have struggled with sexual


attraction to someone other than their spouse."¹

These kinds of statistics indicate more extensive problems for the family. The Alban Institute did a lengthy study on pastoral families and discovered that 16 percent of pastoral families are divorcing. Even though this percentage does not rise to the level of the average church member, thirty-five years ago divorce among the clergy was unknown.²

This rising divorce rate is a reflection of the breakdown of the family in North America. Two professors, one from Rutgers and the other from Chicago Divinity School, did a two-year study on marriage in America and pointed out the decline in marriage. This decline is the main factor in the deteriorating well-being of our children. The United States has gone from the most marrying society, to a society with the most divorced and unwed mothers. The authors point out, "If we are concerned about teen pregnancies, illegitimacy, dead beat dads, and children in poverty, then we can no longer ignore the common denominator—the steady weakening of marriage."³

These same authors noted a study that was done by a group of 18 scholars who are part of The Council on Families in America. The research indicated that the percentage of married adults decreased from 72 percent to 62 percent between 1970 and 1990. Fifty percent of first marriages are now likely to end in divorce.⁴

At Hanford University in 1993 and 1994, an extensive study of 4,500 clergy from fifteen denominations was done, and it was found that 25 percent of female and 20 percent of male


⁴ Ibid.
clergy have been divorced. This is compared to 23 percent and 22 percent nationally. It was discovered that clergy, in particular, have difficulty in seeking outside help, so they tend to delay until it is too late.¹

Clergy, like most members of the helping professions, frequently come from dysfunctional families. Candace Benyei, internationally known researcher, psychotherapist, and professor, in an extensive research study, discusses pastoral family-of-origin issues, in her book *Understanding Clergy Misconduct in Religious Systems*. These astounding statistics from the study should touch our hearts: 91 percent came from chronic dysfunctional families, 83 percent of the families had chronic emotional disorders; 66 percent had experienced substance abuse; 58 percent were involved in affairs that resulted in having illegitimate children; 50 percent had episodes of physical violence; 25 percent were troubled with incest; and 8 percent had problems with chronic gambling.²

Adventist church growth comes from society at large. We cannot avoid the reality of our cultural milieu. As people from varying backgrounds join the church, they bring with them their previous hurts. The church must recognize that young pastors who have been redeemed from traumatic life experiences bring with them their personal brokenness. The wounds sometimes linger and fester. They take time to heal completely. A caring church will consider the impact of society upon its incoming pastors.

The Need to Resolve Inconsistencies

As cited earlier, Cress called for consistency in following the NAD policies; but this would probably be easier if all were in agreement. Concurrence is not easy to achieve because the issue is complicated. Church leaders tend to see things from different points of view.


² Ibid., 37.
Noting the seriousness of the problem, one author decries the epidemic of gross sin in the church: "But even worse is the problem of lowering standards by bringing fallen pastors into leadership. This indicates the church is rotten to the core."1

The church and society have a right to expect churches to monitor their spiritual leaders. When they fall, they should be disciplined and not allowed to victimize again. If the church rehires fallen pastors, it is feared that those pastors are more likely to repeat their sin. To protect the purity of the church, and engender respect for the high calling of the ministry, the church cannot afford to lower the standards to accommodate those who have failed their spiritual responsibilities. One distressed writer admonished.

Recent scandals involving high profile clergy, as well as entire religious organizations, make it impossible for us to ignore the problem. Historically, the church has not responded very well in learning moral/ethical lessons from society. However, to ignore this concern is irresponsible, perilous and tragic. The difficulty lies in loss of ability to witness to society. How can society trust the church when it is unscrupulous with regard to a legitimate moral concern? Clergy sexual malfeasance has damaged the credibility of the church and the problem is compounded by covering up the sin rather than confronting it.2

Conversely, some believe that failure to restore spiritually and reinstate selectively denies the very essence of the healing nature of the gospel. They point to stories in the Bible of David and Bathsheba, Solomon, Mary Magdalene, and Peter as examples of Christ’s redemptive, forgiving nature. If Christ can forgive, the church should be able to follow His example. It should be the work of the church to forgive and restore.

The Adventist Church has been cautious regarding these matters. It has been our tendency to separate ourselves from worldliness and to uphold high standards. If we allow for official changes in church policies that permit fallen clergy to be restored, we may be giving

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public permission for laxity in morals. On the other hand, it may be possible for policies and processes to be set in motion that will address the need to maintain the sanctity of the high calling of ministry and yet allow for a second chance. If such processes could be formulated, perhaps they could bridge the gap between policies and practice.

The Need to Consider Varying Circumstances

The varying circumstances that may be involved in each case are not addressed in current policies. They do not speak to the issue of whether the pastor’s downfall was a one time slip or a pattern of adulterous behavior. They do not deal with whether the pastor confessed or sought help, whether there was repentance or hardness of heart. They do not discuss the issue of whether the pastoral family remains intact or whether by a period of restitution and godly living, confidence has been restored. The varying circumstances may be one of the reasons for the gap between regulations and reality. Lack of consistency tends to exacerbate the problem, whereas consistency between policy and practice might mend the fence.

One church leader expressed his concern for the church and for pastors this way. "Traditionally, pastors are usually trashed. There is no hope, no communication or encouragement. Since we are all recipients of God’s forgiveness, where is the forgiveness we are called upon to express if no organized attempt is made to restore those who have fallen?" This same church leader who served on a committee to develop a restoration process noted the incongruity, "We have a very rigid policy that is many decades old, and a very lax application in many instances. This leads to cynicism and abuse."1

A former president of the Canadian Union, speaking about fallen leaders, said, "It would be better to repair than amputate. If someone is caught in a fault, we should seek to restore. If

amputation is necessary, we should seek to heal and restore the amputee as quickly as possible.\^1

The kind of climate we create in ministry will have its impact on a leader’s preservation or failure. We demonstrate the gospel by how we respond to those who fall. If the environment is not safe, the tendency may be for those who struggle with impurity to go underground. Such seems to be the case noted in the Leadership research. Only around 4 percent of congregations ever find out about their pastors’ sexual lapse.\^2

In his classic book, *The Perils of Power*, Dr. Richard Exeley describes the practical dilemma for a struggling pastor. "Ministers have the same psycho-sexual desires as the normal population; but the difference is that ministers have no where to turn." These are two responses from fallen pastors whom he counseled. One said, "We have no one to turn to. . . . We are afraid to go to a counselor for fear that word of our problems will somehow leak out." Another responded, "I wouldn’t dare tell a fellow minister my problems in this area. My denomination would forgive murder, but not impurity of thought!'\^3

Exeley continues to describe the tendency for pastors to hide their secrets. "The stakes are high if ministers reveal sexual problems. Ministers, therefore, tend to live in self denial. . . . The more successful a man, the more difficult and greater risk to confess. He has too much to lose, too many people to hurt. Even his success becomes a trap with reputation to keep and an image to protect. Fighting, lonely, and losing, he is not a bad man, just a man with a secret life. He loves God and his work, but doesn’t know how to make it work. The tragedy, however, is that secret sin, not overcome, will destroy him.'\^4


\^2 Muck, 13.


\^4 Ibid.
The Risks of Secret Keeping

Leaders and administrators often seek to contain the pain. However, if leaders cover up the sin, it is understandable if parishioners' confidence in pastoral integrity is eroded. When members discover that their pastor was spirited away to another assignment, without his confessing or facing the consequences, their confidence in the church is shaken. Churches that suffer under a cloud of clergy sexual misconduct develop a history of distrust, both of the clergy and protective lay leadership.¹

Unfortunately, out of misguided love, in covering up the weaknesses of its leaders, the church has suffered immeasurably. Understandably, it faces a dilemma. To reveal the sins of its leaders tends to challenge the viability of the church and to cast aspersion on the gospel itself. But to cover up their sins has its dire consequences as well. Benyei reiterates, “Keeping the secret is also a common way of maintaining a position of power.... Such behavior requires a lot of energy, and eventually more and more persons will participate in both the knowing and the secret keeping. This rule, somewhat like a virus, tends to be highly contagious, and, as we shall see later in more detail, also facilitates the perpetuation of abuse.”²

Benyei continues: “The recent epidemic of clergy being exposed to sexual misconduct is the result of protectionism. Because religious institutions do not wish to confront or even recognize the problem of sexual misconduct, no resources to confront or help are dedicated to fixing the problem. However, institutional denial compounds the problem by allowing greater pain while people hurt for a longer period of time.”³

In their classic book Betrayal of Trust, authors Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell cite noted psychologists Imber Black and Peter Rutter concerning the toxic effects of keeping family

¹ Benyei, 13.
² Ibid., 50.
³ Ibid., 31.
secrets. Black states, “The presence of a central family secret distorts and mystifies the communication process.” Rutter adds, “It impairs development, frustrates problem solving, engenders shame and produces guilt and anxiety.”

It could be that the moral downfall of pastors and the institutional tendency to cover their secret sins has resulted in the loss of public confidence in the ministry. Data collected over a period of twenty-two years show that public confidence in religious leaders has fallen sharply. This is true for the population at large and for every age and demographic group. In contrast, personal commitment to religion itself has grown. It is interesting to note that there has been a loss of religious authority rather than a decline in individual piety.

The congregation that suspects its leader has crossed the line sexually, and is not informed honestly, becomes a victim of a cover-up and has no opportunity to participate in the healing process. Not all congregations are capable of handling an awareness of pastoral failure. However, in cases where there has been a pastoral fall, administrators of conferences could wisely educate local congregations to become a part of the healing process.

No Intentional NAD Processes Exist for Healing

There are no intentional denominational processes for ministering to the victims of pastoral indiscretion. No structures are in place for ministering to congregations that are traumatized by their failed pastor. The organization seems to focus on containing the damage, rather than on healing. As a result, victims are seldom ministered to in a meaningful way.

When a pastor succumbs to sexual sin, NAD policy encourages the hiring organization to provide a brief period of counseling for the pastoral family, and occupational retraining for the

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1 Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell, Betrayal of Trust (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1995), 14.

pastor. A financial settlement based on years of service is also given when the pastor is discontinued from ministry. Regulations suggest that a fallen pastor might be forgiven and restored spiritually, but no process for spiritual renewal or restoration is suggested.1 As a result, pastors who were once colleagues in ministry are often treated as nonpersons.

One pastor described his devastation this way: "It was as if I had dropped off the face of the earth and ceased to exist. My membership was dropped without even a conversation. It was like shooting a race horse with a broken leg."2 Perhaps this kind of distress has fostered the thought that the church is the only army that shoots its wounded.

Adventists are not the only ones who struggle with the issue of how to relate to leaders who have a moral lapse. A pastor from another denomination described his journey this way: "There was reduced social contact and I was relegated to 'news letter only status.' There was pressure for me to vacate my home, and I became a nonperson. No one called, and no one cared. There were hints that I was crazy and even threats and insults."3

What happens to these pastors of the flock, who were discontinued for reasons of moral failure, should be of concern to all who are leaders. To my knowledge no research about the whereabouts of fallen Adventist pastors in North America has been done. In Australia, John Mark Ministries did a study of 10,000 ex-ministers. It was discovered that the spiritual and emotional strain of exiting the ministry resulted in unusually high divorce and suicide rates. Fifty percent of the Baptist ex-pastors no longer attended any church. The article stated that among Adventists, the rate of no church involvement among former pastors was much higher.4

4 "Flashpoint," South Asia Division Record, February 15, 1992, 8.
Inconsistency Leaves the Church More Vulnerable to Litigation

Our society has become a litigious society and this has caused significant vulnerability for churches. The news media seem to major in stories of sexual abuse and misconduct on the part of clergy. The financial costs for litigation for pastoral sexual misconduct cases is a factor to be considered. In 1996 and 1997, the Adventist Church had to respond to 313 cases of alleged clergy sexual misconduct to the tune of $20,487,037. This amount was paid out by Risk Management, the denominational insurer in such cases.1 This alone ought to help us realize that we need to do more than bandage the wound.

When a fallen pastor is shuttled to another place of employment, without skipping a beat in his service records, the church is left open to significant legal ramifications. If churches do not monitor themselves, the courts will. We live in a new litigious environment, and churches need to take steps to lessen the likelihood of being sued.2

One concerned church leader wrote, “When one considers what other denominations, notably the Roman Catholics, have paid in legal costs for failure to protect members from predatory clergy, one realizes how vulnerable we are with our all-or-nothing approach, especially when it is applied so capriciously.”3

Philip Hiroshima, an Adventist lawyer, says that the church should be more responsible in these situations. He cautions that they should not transfer the pastor who has been sexually involved with a parishioner. Potentially, the referring conference becomes liable, so he believes that the church must terminate a pastor’s employment with no further opportunity to victimize.4

Civil courts are now willing to award huge settlements. If the church is unwilling to

discipline abusive pastors, the courts will. The courts also recognize that a pastor serves as an
authority figure to the local church member. As a care-giving professional, the pastor is
responsible for the safety of members. He may be considered abusive, even though it may have
appeared that the conduct was a consenting relationship between two adults. Conferences and
pastors should be more aware of this potential liability. This may cause some conferences to be
more cautious about hiring or passing an offending pastor. Finally, if the hiring conference does
not follow the recommended disciplinary policies of the denomination, it could also become
liable.

Restoring Fallen Pastors Could Be Financially Beneficial

Some estimate that the cost of educating, training, and financially supporting a pastoral
family for twenty years is about 1.3 million dollars. For this reason, there are leaders who
believe it would be better for the church to try to redeem its fallen clergy. One administrator
suggested, "A crass reason to pursue this topic has to do with church resources. Perhaps this is
the argument the church would understand best. It is cost effective to return clergy to ministry.
Here is a group of individuals who are trained and experienced. It would save money and
retirement expenses. In a few years, if projections about our current aging clergy pool are
correct, there will be a significant need for pastors. Those that are restored could be a valuable
cost-effective source to fill this coming need."\footnote{Ernest Furness to the author, (email), February 2, 2001.}

Broader Policies Could Be Redemptive and Reveal the Gospel

If an offending pastor sought to make restitution, publically confessed to the local
congregation, underwent a period of time out from ministry and became a part of a small
restoration accountability group, perhaps the victim, the congregation, and the pastoral family
could recover. Such processes have been tried successfully in one Canadian Conference.¹

Bryant suggested, “Conferences need a recovery program for various problems. A church that amputates a worker and makes no effort to heal is sinning. If the church kicks people when they are down, it doesn’t demonstrate God’s love.”²

One church interviewed a restored pastor, and after he was honest about his past, responded, “If you are a broken person, we’ve got a place for you.”³ The image of a wounded healer seems to appeal to many who see the gospel as being restorative in nature.

NAD Leadership May Be Ready for a Change

During my several years of research on this project, several Adventist administrators have expressed their interest. None have made negative comments regarding this topic. All have expressed the need for such a study. While some are not very hopeful that such an endeavor will have much of an impact, they have encouraged me to pursue the topic. Without revealing the names of specific leaders, here are a few of their messages to me.

Response 1: “Many thanks for letting me in on your study of a crucial topic. The comprehensiveness of your thinking on the subject is impressive.”

Response 2: “Thanks for your letter. I commend you on the area you have chosen for research. It is long overdue. . . . Our conference has a restoration policy. Better yet, we have a restoration form that allows latitude to adapt to the needs of the participating clergy person. We lead them through a five year process that involves counseling, mentors, and placement in a church, with regular reports to the conference personnel committee.”

Response 3: “I have been talking with the Union officers here about establishing a


² Bryant, 12.

‘System’ where a pastor for any reason could come to a ‘safe’ group and say, ‘this is what is happening with me . . . ’ and the group would restore the person, on a person-to-person basis, over a period of time. They might have to quit pastoring, but they would not be ‘dumped.’ Some pastors are involved with internet porn; some are gambling; some are working a second secret job; some are having affairs; some have just had the ‘wheels fall off the wagon’ and are sick of pastoring; some hate their spouse; some are having tough times with kids; some are in sick churches and they want to quit the ministry. So, write your dissertation. Forget the naysayers.

Nothing changes in this church unless we have people willing to stand and take the heat that leadership brings.”

Response 4: “I have some concern that your efforts may be a good research topic but ‘in vain;’ but regarding the possibility of something happening I am in high hopes that something might come of all this to get a system in place that is better than the current situation.”

A Restoration Policy Could Reflect Ellen White’s Precedents for Restoration

Prominent GC leader, Robert Spangler, wrote an article in Ministry a number of years ago entitled “Sex, Sin and the Savior.” His observations regarding the writings of Ellen White were of particular interest. He said that she “encouraged forgiveness and a second chance, even though she took a strong stance against sexual deviation.”

Other leaders have suggested that the church should consider her writings more carefully in formulating processes for dealing with fallen pastors. Two unpublished but significant documents, Manuscript Releases #448 and #449, are paramount in a study of this issue. These documents were written specifically to deal with those workers and pastors who had committed adultery. At this juncture in the history of our church, it would be highly relevant for us to consider the counsel and precedents that were presented by one whom Adventists consider to be a “prophetic voice.” Her wisdom might close the gap between policies and practice.

In summary, present denominational policies are not followed consistently. They do not take into consideration the varying circumstances, the needs for congregational healing, the hurting victim, or the possibility of pastoral restoration. Because no hope for re-entry exists, the risks for revealing sexual temptation are very high, making secret keeping a more attractive human option than seeking help. Secret keeping is destructive to the integrity of the body, opens us up to greater liability in the courts, and tends to encourage the very problems we seek to avoid. Because of the complexity of the problem, the church has not addressed the issues in a formal way. The purpose of my dissertation is to confront the inconsistencies squarely, determine whether there is a theological framework for restoration, survey NAD leadership to see if there is sufficient interest to review the policies, and provide workable suggestions that will address this multifaceted problem.

**Definition of Terms**

The following terms are defined as they are used in this dissertation.

*The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (GC)*. The Adventist Church is representative in its form of government. The highest authoritative body within the church is the GC. The GC makes final decisions on policy changes. The GC meets every five years and attracts leaders from all over the world to discuss major policy changes and to share reports of the growing membership. During these sessions administrative officers are elected to carry out the business of the church between sessions. These administrative officers do not have the power to make any major policy changes. They are only free to recommend necessary revisions and to carry out policy changes that are voted by the entire body of several thousand representatives, but they cannot adopt any new policies without the vote of representatives from the entire world field. In this document, the GC refers primarily to the officers who are elected, but it may also be used to refer to the GC session that occurs every five years.
The North American Division of Seventh-day Adventists (NAD): The NAD is one of the thirteen world divisions of the church. Its jurisdiction is over the work of Adventists in North America. The NAD may make policy changes that affect North America; however, it may not make policy changes that change the church manual without the vote of the entire GC. For this reason, any policy amendments in the church manual that may be recommended regarding reinstatement of fallen clergy will need to be voted by the GC.

Conference: In the Adventist Church, the local conference is a group of members in a region or state who make up the body of the church. It may also refer to the region or territory that comprises all of the local churches in that area. Where the population is large, a single state may be divided into several conferences. In cases where the number of church members is sparse, a conference may comprise two states. The conference may also refer to regional administrative officials or departmental personnel who are elected by the constituent members to do the hiring, credentialing, and supervising of ministers. They oversee and foster the growth of the church in their area of service. The local church does not hire or pay the monthly salaries of the pastor. This is done by the conference. In this paper the conference will usually mean the administration.

Recently, conference officials have taken a less authoritarian approach and serve more in an advisory capacity in the selection of candidates for pastor. Church policy states that the local church determines whether a pastor may be disfellowshipped or dropped from church membership. Even though conferences and local churches are most closely associated with the immediate life of a pastor, ultimately the GC at its five-year session, which is composed of representatives from local churches, conferences, unions and divisions, decides the policies that govern the local organization and conference in administering discipline. Therefore, even though the local conference employs the pastor, it may not deviate from the Working Policies of the church.
**GC Working Policies:** The GC publishes a set of guidelines that cover practical issues of church operation for the worldwide church. These guidelines include policies for disciplining ministers who have fallen into sexual sin. They are guidelines that affect North America and the entire world organization, rather than selective regions.

**NAD Working Policies:** The North American Division has its own set of guidelines for the operation of the church in North America. As long as the guidelines are in harmony with the world church, yet specifically localized to the NAD, it is not necessary to achieve GC approval for policy changes. However, in the case of determining standards and specific guidelines for restoring fallen ministers the NAD Working Policies would have to be approved by the GC. For that reason, any significant variation to existing measures will require time, and sufficient support from the world field to make a difference.

**Ordination:** In the rite of ordination, the church gives full recognition to the minister as a pastor. Before ordination, a pastor may serve for a year or more as an intern under the supervision of an experienced pastor. Thereafter, the pastor will usually be on his own as a licensed minister until ordination, which usually occurs after about four years in the NAD. During the initial training or probation, a pastor has ministerial credentials, but these credentials are not those of a seasoned pastor. Whatever policies that might ensue from this study would apply to both of these ministerial credentials. If a pastor is rehired, credentials are renewed, and the pastor may or may not be recognized as an ordained minister again. Since there is no official permission for re-employment no decision has been made as to whether a pastor needs to be re-ordained or not. Whether a fallen pastor should be re-ordained is beyond the scope of this research.

**Fallen pastor:** In this document, the term fallen pastor is normally used in a specific way to identify a pastor who has fallen sexually or committed adultery. Some may think it is a misnomer to limit the meaning of fallen to a sexual connotation. We are all fallen sinners, they
say; however, *fallen* has become a common term used specifically in reference to a leader who has had a sexual fall. Several books regarding this subject have been written which have titles that include the words *fall* or *fallen*. *Fallen pastor* may also refer to one who has lost employment because of the offense. The sin may be known publicly and people perceive it as a moral failure.

The term *sexual misconduct* is suitable as well; however, *sexual misconduct* is generally considered something that could be legally punishable by the courts. It would not necessarily cover addiction to pornography, visiting topless bars, watching x-rated movies, or going to adult book stores. Therefore, the term *sexual misconduct* alone is somewhat narrow in aiding Adventists to completely unravel the inconsistent response to sexual sin.

The term *sexual indiscretion* is too narrow in its scope as well. *Sexual indiscretion* may refer to many types of inappropriate sexual behavior, but these may not necessarily be considered serious enough to remove a pastor from office. In some cases, a pastor may have had an affair with a church member, which did not involve sexual intercourse. The inappropriate contact could be considered *sexual indiscretion*, however, since there was no physical culmination of the relationship, the pastor might be moved to another district without a lapse in his service record. For this reason, I did not use this term in the title, although it certainly is a part of the issue.

Perhaps a partial reason for inconsistency between policy and practices in the church may be the fact that sexual immorality is not specifically delineated. There are those who may feel that having an affair, in which no physical act of adultery has occurred, may not be serious enough of an offense for the removal of credentials or ordination. However, a long-standing affair, in the minds of some, might be sufficient cause for loss of credentials.

Finally, the Adventist Church in its official policies uses the term *moral fall* to define an offense that is considered serious enough for loss of credentials. The church uses the term *fallen* in its definition of what constitutes a reason for disciplining an offending pastor. Even though
the term is somewhat nebulous, in general it refers to the act of having committed physical adultery or some type of serious sexual sin. Perhaps if the church were more specific in its definition, it could tailor-make policies to fit the varying circumstances of each individual case.

_Discontinue:_ This term is used in place of the term _fired_. Sexual sin is officially considered the “unpardonable sin” when it involves a credentialed pastor. However, rather than _fire_ or terminate a pastor, it is church practice to request the offending minister to sign a letter of release, and to hand in his credentials. If he resigns, he may be re-employed, and may not be compensated. But if he is _discontinued_, officially he is never to be re-employed. In the case of _discontinuance_, the pastor may be compensated with severance pay, marriage counseling, and vocational retraining, providing the pastor is cooperative. _Discontinuance_ is not an official term used by Adventist authorities. But, it is more descriptive of the process by which the offending minister is terminated from office. In some instances, where knowledge of the pastor’s failure is bound to come to light, the conference may inform other employees of the reason for _discontinuance_. Usually, administrators like to hush the reason that a pastor has been _discontinued_ from the ministry. In this way the conference can avoid shame and public embarrassment for itself as well as the offending pastor.

_Censure:_ If church members commit a offense that is known, they may be censured. This type of discipline does not remove the person from membership but disallows them the privilege of voting or holding a church office. Censure is usually for a short period of time, perhaps from three to six months. At the end of this period, a review of the person’s situation ensues and the censure may be removed, at which time the person may return to serving as a church officer and may vote again. This could be used as a form of discipline for pastors who have fallen but it is not even considered as an option in the NAD Working Policies.

_Disfellowship:_ When church members commit a sin that is considered serious, they may be discontinued from church membership. Disfellowship means they lose all rights to vote and
participate as church members. Attendance is not forbidden, however, those who are
disfellowshiped rarely darken the doors of the church. The act of disfellowshiping is associated
with assigned guilt, and the condemnation often evokes a strong reaction. In many cases a person
can regain church membership by re-baptism. To disfellowship someone is similar to
excommunication in other churches. In the case of a fallen pastor, policy allows for a re-baptism
but re-baptism does not allow for re-entry into ministry. There are cases in which fallen pastors
have been re-baptized and reinstated, but no mechanism exists within church structure for this to
take place. Although policy does not permit fallen pastors to be re-employed, I am not aware of
any conference reversing its decision, once a tarnished pastor has been re-instated to the
ministry.

*Restore:* To restore may mean to **reinstate** a pastor to the office of pastor or to employ a
pastor again, or it may mean to renew spiritually. The term is retained in the title of my
dissertation so as not to limit the study to the narrower concept of **reinstatement.** Since the
church has no intentional system to restore leaders, either spiritually or occupationally, the entire
question of the importance of restoration needs to be addressed.

*Reinstate:* When a Seventh-day Adventist pastor is discontinued because of a moral fall,
his credentials or license to practice as a minister are withdrawn. In addition, the Working
Policies recommend that the pastor’s ordination be revoked. If a pastor is to be re-employed as a
pastor, it would necessitate his being reinstated if he is to be recognized by the NAD. Those
administrators who **reinstate** pastors do so without the specific approval of the NAD or GC.
They take it upon themselves to hire the pastor in question.

*Minister:* According to the Bible, ministry is not limited to the work of those who are
paid clergy. Paul notes that pastor/teachers are “to equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph
4:12). However, in Adventism, the word **minister** is often used in a specific way to define the
position of one who is ordained, credentialed and hired by the church to perform the work of
pastoring a church. Even though the Adventist church does not limit the meaning *minister* to paid or ordained clergy members, in this work the term *minister* will usually refer to paid, credentialed pastors.

**Limitations**

All of the varying nuances of this complex, controversial, and challenging topic could not be covered in one document. The following are limitations to this study:

1. There is no specific Scripture passage in the Bible that states unequivocally that pastors should be restored. Conversely, there is no specific Scripture that prohibits fallen pastors from being re-instated. The main spiritual leaders in the Old Testament were prophets, priests, and kings. Those who were referred to as elders in the Old Testament cannot be perfectly compared to pastors or bishops in the New Testament. Furthermore, what may be argued for a prophet, priest or king, may not necessarily be argued for pastors. Even the New Testament, which spells out the qualifications for what we would consider as pastors or elders within the Adventist Church, does not specifically address the issue of whether a person who has committed sexual sin could, over a period of time, reclaim those qualifications for office.

   As answers to questions are sought theologically, they will have to be rooted in general biblical principles, rather than in specific dogmatic proof texts. The fact that no specific text exists for proving that pastors should be restored is not to say that basic scriptural themes do not provide important implications. The issue is no less complicated than the paradoxes of law and grace, or God’s sovereignty and man’s free will. Every author tends to have some bias and may be more capable of pointing out certain nuances of Scripture. A bias towards grace is hard for me to avoid.

2. This study is restricted to North America due to limitations in time and financial resources. Because the Adventist Church is a worldwide church, confining the study to North
America may make it somewhat difficult to foster significant changes. Important alterations can be made only if the entire church votes upon them.

It is conceivable that North America could chart its own course in the early debate on this subject. In the long run, the American academic community may be able to impact the world field in this matter, providing sufficient grounds for the change are convincing.

3. *The Adventist Year Book* for 2003 was used to select 100 survey participants from across North America. They were selected from the following groups: administrators, department directors, professor/Bible teachers, chaplains, counselors, pastors, and lay elders. The number of surveys mailed were evenly distributed among these groups. The study was limited to this small number. Because of this the statistics are primarily descriptive rather than prescriptive.

4. It was difficult to obtain the names of pastors who have been restored to ministry because restoration is not even allowed according to policy. Because the personal reasons for pastoral discontinuance are usually hidden, and pastors who are restored usually move to another conference, it is impossible to draw from a large pool of fallen pastors. Logistics and restricted financial resources limit the number of in-depth interviews as well. Only three fallen pastors were interviewed. The interviews were mostly done by phone.

5. Even though there was a brief analysis of historical views regarding the reinstatement of pastors, historical positions taken by the early Church Fathers, the Roman Catholic Church, and Protestant churches do not play a significant role in resolving this question. History regarding this issue is sketchy at best. Furthermore, the RC church moved toward celibacy for priests, and the regulations that guided those clerics would be somewhat different from those of married persons. With regard to guiding principles, customarily, Adventism has been more interested in biblical rather than in traditional theology. Thus, emphasis is given to an analysis of Scripture and the writings of Ellen White, specifically to Manuscript Releases #448 and #449.
6. It would be very helpful to do an in-depth study of the legal ramifications of broadening church policy. This cannot be overlooked in carrying out individual decisions. Although the depths of legal implications were not probed in this paper, a cursory description of major issues was presented. Because of my lack of competency in this field, deeper analysis of this important factor will be left to those who are trained in this area. On the other hand, the Adventist Church can learn from other denominations regarding legal complications resulting from restoring pastors.

7. Rather than being all-inclusive, there was a focus on only a few pastoral discipline/restoration policies from other churches. Views from some of the larger denominations have been considered. Five of these denominations have been chosen as illustrative of denominational practices regarding reinstatement. The churches that were selected are the Roman Catholic, the Presbyterian, the Lutheran, the United Methodist, and the Assemblies of God churches. These specific denominations have been chosen because of their size and because they illustrate a variety of responses. The theoretical underpinnings for change, however, are based on scriptural analyses.

8. No attempt was made to determine the number of Adventist clergy who succumb to a moral fall. The statistics compiled by McMillen in the Adventist church and the findings in Leadership are very similar, therefore, it seemed unnecessary to replicate these studies. Even though the numbers in both surveys do not total more than 1,586 respondents, the findings from the McMillen and Leadership studies seem to be representative of Adventists.

9. Little attempt to present an extensive psychological or sociological explanation for a sexual fall took place. We looked at the perceptions of fallen pastors to discover if anything might have helped to save them from a fall and to ascertain what they think would have been helpful in the process of their dismissal from office. Selected authors were cited to provide a limited background for possible reasons for a pastoral fall.
10. Even though general recommendations for specific processes regarding varying circumstances and types of sexual sin may be made as a result of this study, detailed proposals could be suggested by further research. My main purpose in writing this dissertation was to investigate, in a general way, the advisability of restoring fallen pastors. It is not my purpose to specify rules for individual situations. For example, little attention was given to comparing addiction to pornography with a single act of adultery. Precise implementation of suggested revisions to policies and specific processes would of necessity be left to administrators and committees.

**Methods**

1. Past and current literature was reviewed. The Bible and the writings of Ellen White were primary sources. A brief survey of history and other denominational policies was presented. Major books and articles on the problem of pastoral indiscretion and the advisability for restoration were cited.

2. Concerns and reasons for not restoring pastors were addressed. The book *Can Fallen Pastors Be Restored*? by John Armstrong, received considerable attention. This recent book by an Evangelical scholar summarizes serious objections to restoring fallen pastors.

3. A survey of NAD administrators, teachers/professors, chaplains, pastors, and lay members was conducted to discover how they perceive present policies and to determine whether sufficient support exists to update these policies.

4. Three fallen pastors were interviewed to see how they view present policies and practices and to discover possible improvements that could be made to present processes.

5. In light of the findings, changes to policies and processes were suggested that could be redemptive, and could harmonize Biblical theology with current practices and concerns.
CHAPTER 2

THE RESTORATION OF PASTORS IN LITERATURE AND PRACTICE

The Complexity of the Problem

Living in a Corinthian Age but Prepared for a Victorian Age

Temptation to sexual sin has always been around. Gary Collins, a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, is particularly concerned about pastors today. He said that those who are entering the ministry know about the world of the Bible and theology but they do not know the real world where they live. He fears that we are living in a Corinthian age but we are prepared for a Victorian age. It is impossible to get away from the constant barrage of sensuality that permeates our society.

This impacts the church in several ways. Church members face a more pervasive sexual influence than ever before. Hard-core pornography is available in the privacy of home with the click of a mouse. As society becomes more dysfunctional, the wounds we experience make us more fragile. Since inner healing is not always instant, those who enter the church bring with them their weaknesses and brokenness. In many cases, individuals become pastors to redeem the past, not realizing that family-of-origin issues remain. Studies indicate that a person who has had premarital sex is a greater risk for a moral downfall than one who has not. It is interesting to

\[1\] Muck, 12.


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note in McMillen’s study that half of the Adventist pastors had engaged in premarital sex.1 That should be no surprise, since fewer and fewer people enter marriage as virgins. Furthermore, one who has viewed a considerable amount of pornography is also more likely to experience a moral lapse than one who has never dabbled in this kind of experience.2 The church needs to look at these issues realistically to develop some kind of support and accountability system. Perhaps something like Promise Keepers could be fostered in order to strengthen the resolve of pastors to be morally pure.

Not only does society impact the church, but the opposite is also true. If the church bows to the pressures of moral depravity, how can it fulfill its purpose to help redeem society? Someone has said that a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. If the leadership of a church is weak, how can the church be a healing influence in the world?

Research indicates that those who have been victims of sexual abuse are more likely to become abusers themselves.3 If this is the case, those who have come from such backgrounds need to have a safe environment where they can find healing. A wise church will help its leadership become aware of their vulnerability and provide processes for dealing with the past.

If the leadership and people in the church have been wounded by family-of-origin experiences, the church itself must be redeemed. Some may think this can occur by setting higher standards and enforcing them more carefully. Indeed, this may be a possible solution. On the other hand, if forgiveness and restoration are not available for the leadership, members themselves lose hope of being restored. It almost seems to be a catch-22 situation.

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1 McMillen, 18.
2 Grenz and Bell, 58.
The Secret Is Out

In the past, the church has tried to keep the mistakes and sins of leaders under cover, and for good reason. The church need not bring further hurt to the pastoral family and to those who may have been damaged. Love covers a multitude of evils, and there should be no reason to make the problem larger or to broadcast the mistakes of those who lead. It could create greater distrust in the church. It makes sense just to keep it quiet and confine the damage?

We may be able to keep individual situations quiet, but in general, the number of pastors who are involved in some kind of sexual sin can no longer be hidden. The voice of the media no longer allows the church the luxury of secret keeping.

If our own vulnerability or the loss of a fallen friend or colleague in ministry does not cry out for help, the sheer numbers of those who succumb to sexual temptation might jolt the church into action. The research of McMillen in the Adventist Church, Muck, and many others should open our eyes to the extent and complexity of the problem. As noted earlier, these studies show that one of every nine pastors has committed adultery or is presently struggling with this sin. One third have had or are having an inappropriate relationship with a church member. This could include such advances as hugging, kissing, or touching. In addition, one of five pastors is looking at pornography on the internet once or twice a month. This creates an internal drain on the moral heart and conscience of the leaders in a church. With only 4 percent of adulterous pastors revealing their secret, it is only a matter of time until the folly of another prominent minister hits the headlines. Is there anything the church could do to mend the broken fence, or is it too late?

Unraveling the Mystery of a Pastoral Fall

The question may be asked, How can people who have dedicated their lives to the high calling of ministry stoop so low as to succumb to sexual temptation? Authors Grenz and Bell...
point out that there are varying types of offenders. Some pastors are predators. These clergy actively seek opportunities to abuse women sexually. This type of manipulation is inexcusable and cannot be justified. Other pastors are wanderers and under normal circumstances never contemplate a sexual liaison with a parishioner. An overwhelming crisis or transition in life may tip the balance. The third kind of pastor who is susceptible to a moral fall is the lover. This pastor is neither motivated by conquest nor the need to overcome inadequacies. He senses he is in love, and the recipient of his affections happens to be a member of the congregation.1

A look at some of the possible reasons may indicate processes to minimize risks, and suggest the possibility of restoring some pastors. John Armstrong, author of Can Fallen Pastors Be Restored? comments on the personal tragedy of a pastoral fall this way: “The overwhelming majority of these fallen pastors began their ministries with a sense of divine vocation, or spiritual calling. . . . They entered their ministries with longing to serve and help people. They have ended up hurting the people they were called to serve, and the deep pain they now feel is the result of failing both God and their church”.2

A number of books and articles have been written that describe the perils of those who are professionally holy. Consider this survey that was done by Fuller Institute of Church Growth as cited by noted Christian counselors H. B. London and Niel B. Wiseman: (1) 90 percent of pastors work more than 46 hours per week (2) 80 percent believe their pastoral ministry has affected their family negatively, (3) 33 percent said ministry is an outright hazard to their family, (4) 75 percent reported a significant crisis at least once in their ministry, (5) 50 percent felt unable to meet the needs of their jobs, (6) 90 percent felt they were inadequately trained to cope with ministry demands, (7) 70 percent say they have lower self esteem, (8) 40 percent reported

1 Stanley J. Grenz and Roy D. Bell, “Predator, Wanderer or Lover?” Leadership, Summer 1995, 35.

serious conflict with a parishioner at least once a month, (9) 37 percent confessed to having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church, and (10) 70 percent do not have someone they consider to be a close friend.1

The same authors draw our attention to the risk factors for pastors in citing a study done by Leadership, in the fall of 1992: (1) 81 percent of pastors have insufficient time together with their spouses, (2) 71 percent argue about use of money, (3) 70 percent express stress regarding their income level, (4) 64 percent have communication difficulties, (5) 63 percent have differences with their congregations, (6) 57 percent have differences over uses of time, (7) 53 percent speak of difficulties in raising their children, (8) 46 percent have sexual problems, (9) 41 percent are angry at their spouses, (10) 35 percent have differences of ministry career, and (11) 25 percent do not agree on the spouse's career.2

The Pastoral Role and Power

Part of the pastoral risk emerges from what noted psychologist G. Lloyd Rediger calls the star factor. He writes: "The clergy role is not intended to be sexy, but it is closely connected to the lure of human sexuality. First, the minister is a sexual being, like everyone else. In addition, the pastoral role has a mystique of closeness to God that is intriguing for both the possessor and the observer."3 It includes the power to influence, and from the victim’s perspective, the pastor is God. Psychiatrist Glenn Gabbard suggests that churches that emphasize clergy authority are especially vulnerable to sexual misconduct among pastors.4

2 Ibid., 71.
3 G. Lloyd Rediger, Ministry and Sexuality: Cases, Counseling and Care (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 16.
Pamela Cooper-White, director of The Center for Women and Religion, the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California, states, "The pastoral role is one of power, in and of itself and one of the most insidious aspects of that power is the role of 'the man of God.' In some sense the minister carries ultimate spiritual authority, particularly in the eyes of a trusting parishioner who looks to him for guidance and support. . . . This is why a minister who violates a parishioner's boundaries takes away the church's appropriate, powerful, sustaining spiritual guidance. . . . Many women report that not only have they lost their parish community, but their trust has been so violated that they cannot go to any church."1

London and Wiseman describe this a little differently. They call it the "Walk-on-the-Water Syndrome." They suggest that most pastors are aware that when they show up, strangers and even parishioners may try to clean up their act because "the pastor is here." But, no holy aura really makes them more holy than anyone else. Unfortunately some pastors begin to believe all the nice things parishioners say about them. They come to believe that they must not and cannot do any wrong. They are above criticism. The desire to imitate God leads many clergy persons to think they must be the answer to all needs, even the emotional and sexual needs of their congregants.2

In an extensive study done among Southern Baptist pastors in six southern states, this same issue was found to be a factor for some senior pastors. The summary reads, "If a minister has narcissistic or grandiose tendencies initially, the massive responsibilities of a senior pastorate could require the minister to develop an attitude of such confidence that distortions of reality, admitting problems and limitations could become extremely difficult."3


2 London and Wiseman, 32.

3 Seat, Trent, and Kim, 370.
Other dimensions to the pastoral role tend to invite sexual temptations. Grenz and Bell point out that "the intimacy of shared work is one dynamic. Two people who work closely together in an environment of trust causes bonding and a sense of completeness. Because sexual intercourse is a symbol of our deepest intimacy, a deepening sense of intimacy with another can arouse sexual desire." Pastors are often unaware of this potential peril.

Emotional transference is another issue. Feelings of church members can be triggered by the pastor's role as worship and spiritual leader. The pastor awakens in congregants a yearning for God, however, unconsciously the worshipers may end up focusing their attention upon the pastor instead of God. Transference feelings may also occur because the pastor is a caregiver. The pastor may be the only person church members have ever trusted with the secrets of their lives. This creates a special bond between the parishioner and the pastor. A female who bonds with her male pastor may transfer to him feelings left over from a debilitating past. Such emotional emptiness may be experienced by single or divorced women and by women who have emotionally distant husbands.

The Tendency of a Destructive Lifestyle

London and Wiseman discuss three destructive lifestyle issues that tend to set pastors up for moral failure. Number one is the leader who places himself above criticism. To be a strong leader of a religious organization, one is likely to be a strong-willed person. Since people tend to follow those with strong opinions, leaders tend to ward off ideas that may erode their plans. This strength often becomes a terrible hindrance to taking counsel from others.

The second lifestyle issue is a lack of familiar boundaries. We live in a pluralistic, no-

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1 Grenz and Bell, *Betrayal*, 52-53.
2 Ibid., 53-54.
3 London and Wiseman, 78-79.
holds-barred culture that exhibits itself in a traveling lifestyle, with little accountability to anyone. But one of the greatest restraints to sin is a fixed community where people know you well. Few now take on the responsibility for counseling and correcting. Nevertheless, beneath the skin of our Christianity lies a barbarian and the moment the restraints disappear, a person may be more vulnerable to temptation.¹ Distant seminars and meetings open the door as well.

Addiction to success is the third destructive force. Successful people come to believe they are indestructible. They think that what they are doing is the most important thing in the world. “Since God gave me this vision, I must be great.” This tends to lead people to think they are beneath a moral meltdown.² Nevertheless, it has been said, He who carries a full cup has greater likelihood of spilling it than does he whose cup is half full.

Personal Adjustment

John Thoburn and Jack Balswick, directors of the Sonora Center for Individual and Family Development, have shown that there is a correlation between feelings of mistrust for others and sexual temptation. Feelings of low self-esteem, rejection, and shame are all corollaries in sexual temptation. For a pastor who feels low self-esteem and rejection, sexuality is conquest and projects a sense of power. “Shame is not only feeling unworthy in other’s eyes, it is feeling fundamentally unworthy in one’s own eyes. In sexual impropriety some dysfunctional persons ingeniously devise a method that will both disguise the impaired real self, and at the same time, risk exposure and humiliation.”³ This is part of the insanity of the shame of sexual misconduct.

Noted researcher Nancy Hopkins has concerns about the emerging profiles of clergy.

¹ Ibid., 79-80.
² Ibid., 80-81.
She notes that a disproportionate number of pastors may come from shame-based families of origin where true intimacy was in short supply.¹

Thoburn and Balswick summarize it this way: "Low self-esteem creates a climate for the development of a pseudo-self, hiding the real, fragile, and vulnerable self beneath a pseudo-competent air of virility and conquest. . . . An inability to trust out of fear of rejection, of feelings of shame often leaves pastors isolated and lonely, and isolated loneliness is often the precursor to clinical depression. Obsessive thoughts about sex or fantasies about having extramarital sex may be ways to mask feelings of depression."²

**Family Issues**

A pastor’s response to times of crisis in the congregation tends to mirror his own family-of-origin patterns. Compulsive family systems are marred by conflict and overly responsible children. A pastor from that background may unconsciously use the ministry to replay childhood tapes. Such a pastor may become a voyeur in the life of his congregation.³

A pastor who comes from a dysfunctional family may be affected in another way. His background may color his ability to set healthy boundaries, and he may become a rescuer.⁴ More and more, as the home falls apart in society, people who come to serve the Lord from abusive, dysfunctional backgrounds bring with them their experiences of woundedness. We may tout their testimonies without knowing the personal issues they face.

The pastoral family often forms the obvious starting point for one who is prone to sexual failure. This is particularly true about marriage. Lack of warmth and dissatisfaction with marital


² Thoburn and Balswick, 46.

³ Ibid., 287.

⁴ Grenz and Bell, *Betrayal*, 50.
sex have often been factors. The pastor himself may be responsible for the lack of intimacy and trade his weakness for pornography, prostitutes, or an affair. Some pastors have unrealistic expectations of marriage, and like many men they enter marriage with unrealistic anticipations. When marriage is not the heaven they expected, they may blame their wives.\textsuperscript{1}

A major factor that led to extramarital relationships, as reported in the \textit{Leadership} study in 1988, was marital dissatisfaction. Forty-one percent of pastors reported this as being the most frequent component leading to relationships outside of marriage.\textsuperscript{2}

Thoburn and Balswick point out that lack of intimacy in marriage is a leading factor in having an affair. Ministers tend to look to their mates for support and encouragement. They themselves may be responsible for the lack of closeness, nevertheless, “if a minister isn’t constantly working at his own marriage relationship, he will tend to start looking around at others to meet the needs that are not fulfilled in marriage.”\textsuperscript{3}

\section*{Sexual Issues}

The importance of being a part of a strong emotional relationship cannot be overstated. However, statistics and pastoral responses show the need for a wholesome sexual relationship. Lack of a healthy sexual relationship is usually not the fault of only one partner. Even so, several ministers identified lack of sexual interest on the part of their mates as being a key factor in sexual temptation.\textsuperscript{4}

The computer has become a vehicle for fulfilling that temptation. Studies indicate that half of all those who have email addresses are into viewing sexually explicit sites. The internet

\begin{footnotes}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{1} Ibid., 47.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{2} Muck, 13.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{3} Thoburn and Balswick, 290.}

\footnote{\textsuperscript{4} Ibid, 291.}

\end{footnotes}
provides unlimited fantasy and visual sex at little risk to the viewer. "Increasing availability, secrecy, and reduced cost make false intimacy more destructive than anything our society has seen," writes noted author, Dr. Harry Shaumburg, who works with those who have problems with sexual addiction. In his book *False Intimacy*, he tells the story of people he counseled who met their sexual partners over the internet. Neither one had plans to carry out an actual relationship, but as things heated up, one man flew hundreds of miles to have a sexual encounter.1

Thoburn and Balswick’s findings support the causal relationship between infidelity and a pastor’s consumption of pornography, but this ultimately becomes a saboteur of spiritual life. Studies indicate that pastors, "in order to disguise their feelings of pain, loneliness and vulnerability, will go to great lengths to receive affirmations of success and/or competence, or intoxicating feelings associated with intense pleasure, and feelings of ‘specialness’."2

"Part of the problem," according to Peter L. Steinkie, a respected psychologist with Lutheran Social Services in Texas, "is that clergy have a difficult time recognizing their vulnerability. What is unresolved with a spouse often gets played out in another relationship."3

This tendency to denial was documented further in a study by the University of Wisconsin. They produced one of the earliest videos to help pastors become aware of sexual misconduct issues. After watching the film, a follow-up survey was done of over 400 clergy and it was found that only 20 percent judged themselves to be at risk for a sexual fall.4

The intimacy from being close to people in situations that are unique to pastoral work seems to contribute to desire. Robert Carlson argues that ministers are particularly vulnerable to

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1 Harry W. Shaumburg, *False Intimacy* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1997), 43.

2 Thoburn and Balswick, 288.


4 Hopkins, 2.
sexual temptation. "The loneliness of clergy, the close relationships they enter, the fact that they have intimate access to people's homes and bedrooms, the privacy and isolation of their own office settings—all these . . . contribute to the temptation to act on that desire."

**Personality Issues**

The tendency for a parishioner to develop feelings for a pastor is augmented by the pastor's own people orientation. Research shows that a large number of pastors who enter the ministry are warm, empathetic, and attuned to feelings. These characteristics are the very ones that make them successful. They invite intimacy with the congregation who expect that pastors will be caring, nurturing persons. These traits, however, open the door to unhealthy relationships with parishioners.2

Certain temperaments are more vulnerable to temptation than others. Authors Oswald and Krueger, noted researchers in the area of personality, point out that those who are high on the NF scale in the Myers Briggs Inventory are the most seductive of the four temperaments.

As we said earlier, NFs are the most seductive of all four temperaments. In all seduction, the first person being seduced is the self. NF clergy first seduce themselves into thinking that sexual activity is what is best for the parishioner. Having seduced themselves first, they then begin to seduce the other.

NFs translate all relationships into either interpersonal or intrapersonal possibilities. The P function adds openness to the possibilities of the moment and the Extraversion gives an ability to act on what's going on inside. This is a perfect set up for seduction and one of the reasons ENFPs are the most seducible and most seductive. The power of their discipline and their F values will help keep them succumbing.

The ESFP is vulnerable sexually to the extent that any SP finds him or herself open to serendipitous involvement. Valuing action, s/he has a hard time putting an end to sexual involvement once it starts. An F value system may say that this is wrong, but the SP function just keep them going. Their Judging function is at cross purposes with their temperament in this case.3

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2 Grenz and Bell, *Betrayl*, 54.

Overwork, Stress, and Spiritual Burnout

The desire to be all things to all people leads many pastors down a path of overwork. Steinke observes that sexual encounters often begin with the pastor becoming overcommitted at work, substituting his relationship with his job for his relationship with his wife. This sets the scene for overinvolvement of another kind in an affair.¹

In a large study of 1,000 Baptist pastors, stress was significantly correlated with sexual misconduct. It was found that stress not only plays a critical role in the physical and mental health of ministers but also their behavioral health as well. Much of ministers' stress is self-generated when a pastor comes to believe that it is unacceptable for him to be like other human beings.² A congregant who is sympathetic and available seems to relieve the stress level and becomes a significant temptation to an overworked pastor.

Perhaps the greatest underlying factor in sexual misconduct is emotional and spiritual burnout. "The pastor who is unaware of this dynamic may easily interpret the feeling of a female congregant as an indication of romantic or sexual interest. This may especially arise if the demands of care giving have drained him to the point when he feels that a sexual encounter will yield the emotional and ego satisfaction he needs."³

Ultimately, the bottom line is spiritual. One author points out that spiritual dryness leaves a pastor most open to a sexual lapse. When a pastor's spiritual condition has deteriorated, he enters a time of spiritual coldness. "He may have lost his zeal for personal integrity as a disciple and Christian leader. Or he may have fallen into the trap of believing that he is somehow exempt from the righteous living God expects from every believer. Whatever the

¹ Steinke, 61.
² Seat, Trent, and Kim, 367.
difficulty, his willingness to contemplate inappropriate sexual activity indicates that the pastor has lost his ‘first love’.

The Moral Dilemma

If there was a specific passage of Scripture that categorically called for the restoration of a fallen leader to a position of spiritual leadership, the church would have little difficulty in sorting out this complicated issue. But no such specific command is recorded. Conversely, no prohibition is explicitly stated either. Therefore, no real unanimity exists. This necessitates looking for scriptural paradigms and patterns as clues to a solution.

Justice versus Mercy

Balancing justice and mercy is a significant challenge. One can find instances where sexual sin was dealt with very harshly. When Israel was on the borders of Caanan, many of the leaders became sexually involved with Moabite women. Phineas, the priest, was commended by God for executing those who were adulterous. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that part of the reason for their punishment was the fact that they were worshipping Baal.

On the mercy side of the picture, we find God forgiving David for having committed adultery with Bathsheba and having killed her husband. Of course, David experienced the terrible consequences of his fall. He lost three of his sons in the wake of his moral collapse. But, after his repentance, David is referred to even as a “man after God’s own heart” (Acts 13:22). It seems that the attitude of the offender was crucial in determining whether God extended forgiveness. In the case of those who were executed for their worship of Baal and their adultery with the Moabite women, there seemed to be no repentance or desire to change. Their offense

1 Bell and Grenz, Betrayal, 59.
2 Armstrong, 94.
3 Num 25:1-5.
was committed in public rebellion. Although David's act was particularly high-handed, his repentance was seminal, but many might have difficulty extending mercy and forgiveness for such terrible sin. When to extend mercy or to administer justice requires sensitivity to Divine wisdom.

Secrecy versus Confession

Several factors need to be considered when contemplating whether secrecy or confession should occur when one succumbs to the temptation of sexual sin. In the past, sex was a subject that few people talked about. Even now, what goes on between two people in privacy is usually personal, not public. So there is a tendency to keep sexual matters secret.

The risk to pastors of confessing to sexual sin is a deterrent to revealing their personal failure. The pastor’s life calling, his family, and his future are all in danger. This is perhaps one of the reasons that such a small percentage of pastors are ever found out.1

The peril of discovery for the person with whom the pastor is clandestinely involved tends to discourage confession. The possible breakup of the parishioner’s family is a realistic concern. Even if the person has been an unwilling participant, she may want to hide her identity. If the pastor is well liked by the congregation, the victim may be concerned that members will accuse her of falsely charging the minister with inappropriate behavior.

Many congregations are not prepared to be proactive and redemptive in cases of moral lapses. Some may tend to be vindictive, and others may be distant or irresponsible.

The biblical picture that “love covers a multitude of evils” may be a factor in the secret keeping. Believers are not to judge one another according to New Testament morals. In view of these factors, the tendency to keep things private is strong.

On the other hand, those who “cover their sins shall not prosper” (Ps 28:13). Sin that is

1 Muck, 13.
unconfessed tends to haunt the guilty and keeps one shame-bound. Patrick Carne, in his book on sexual addiction, points out that guilt and shame are driving forces in sexual addiction.\(^1\) It may not always be clear to whom the sin should be confessed. Some may feel a sense of urgency to confess private sin publically. But, it may not be necessary for sin that is known only between two individuals to be confessed openly. Some feel the only way the cycle can be broken and for trust to be reestablished is for truth-telling to occur.\(^2\) They believe that true repentance cannot be experienced until all who have been hurt have been informed. The church may never experience healing if a pastor is protected and moved elsewhere.

Forgiveness May Not Mean Restoration

For most Christians, forgiveness of adultery is not the issue. There are many scriptural examples of forgiveness for those whose sin was sexual. David, Solomon, and Mary Magdalene are notable examples. Theologically, few have any questions whether God can forgive, but many wonder whether God or the church should restore to office. If the church is to be an example of God’s heart in the world, surely the church must seek to redeem. Unfortunately, even though the Adventist Church recognizes that fallen pastors may be forgiven, no serious program or process is set up in the church to spiritually restore someone who has fallen.

There are those who argue that forgiveness is only partial if the possibility of restoration is not extended. They believe that the true essence of the gospel is to redeem completely. This gives evidence of the power of the gospel. The following are books that have been written by Evangelical Christians that promote this position: *Restoring Fallen Pastors* by Jack Hayford,\(^3\)

\(^1\) Carnes, 94-5.


After Shock by Ted Kitchens;\(^1\) Restoring the Fallen by Wilson, Friesen, and Paulson;\(^2\) and If Ministers Fall, Can They Be Restored by Tim LaHaye.\(^3\) Another example of support for restoration came at a symposium conducted by Leadership where several prominent Evangelicals came together to discuss the issue of restoration. The majority opinion, except for Charles Swindoll, fell on the side of the possibility of selective restoration for fallen pastors.\(^4\)

Others such as Dr. John Armstrong believe that the reputations of Christ, His church, and the fallen pastor have been so damaged that trust can never again be extended for leadership.\(^5\) Armstrong contends, “In summary, I wish to argue for a position that agrees with the general, historical interpretation of the church and traditional moral theology. The position is this: Although lust, jealousy, pride, and hatred are damming sins, and if unrepented of will justly send a person to hell, their outward physical manifestations—adultery, fornication, and murder—are much greater sins. Why? Because they (1) greatly damage the name of God and (2) the character and lives of the persons involved, and (3) bring woeful effects upon the church to which the adulterer belongs.”\(^6\)

Are Some Sins Worse Than Others?

Continuing his challenge to the recent laxity in ethical standards, Armstrong asserts that not all sins are equal. The sin of adultery is particularly heinous. Not only is it an assault on the


\(^3\) Tim LaHaye, *If Ministers Fall, Can They Be Restored?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990).


\(^5\) Armstrong, 33.

\(^6\) Ibid., 53.
very nature of love and God, it is a sin against one’s own body.¹

Conversely, one pastor who was particularly angered by the discipline he received for his adulterous affair thought he should send the church a box of rocks to “let him who is without sin cast the first stone,” but in reply to this, David Neff, editor of Christianity Today, wrote:

“Whenever a Christian leader is discovered to have carried on a clandestine affair, a self-assured voice emerges among the gasps and snickers. Let us remember, it says that all is equally heinous before God. Sexual sin is no different. We are all sinners, and in God’s eyes we are as guilty as our fallen brother or sister . . . but dalliance destroys trust.”²

Paul himself, in 1 Cor 6:18, sets fornication as being a “sin against one’s own body.” In commenting about this, Lutheran scholar Lenski notes that sexual sin bears a character all its own. “Fornication, as does no other sin, desecrates the very sanctuary of God. Referring to sexual sins, he continues: “They rot the body, fill the mind with rottenness and rapidly eliminate the sinner from this life. . . . We err also when we question or challenge Paul’s statement regarding the exceptional character of fornication by comparing the exceptional character to a sin like suicide or others that damage the body, like drunkenness, gluttony, addiction to drugs, etc. Paul is far more profound: no sinful act desecrates the body like fornication and sexual abuse. In this sense fornication is a deadly eminence.”³

Others argue differently. In a Leadership discussion between Carlson, Peterson, Swindoll, and Nja, the latter responded to Swindoll’s concern: “Sin is sin; I don’t think there is anything deeper. Christ died to atone for sin. As a result, it is very possible for someone who

¹ Ibid., 55-59.
has sinned deeply to be restored—even to ministry.”

Eugene Peterson, professor of Regent College in Vancouver, British Columbia, expressed a similar idea in this same forum: “I guess my basic feeling is that there’s nothing that disqualifies us from ministry. Everything is redeemable. Scripture brims with that. Moses was a murderer and he kept on. Abraham forced his wife into adulterous relationships—or at least was willing for that to happen. . . . I do think we have to be careful, though, when we use the word disqualification for ministry. I don’t think there is any.”

Whether sexual sin is worse than any other sin lies close to the core of whether pastors who have fallen may be reinstated. Those who believe that sexual sin is different from most other moral sins, in that it is more heinous, are more reticent to restore a fallen pastor. Those who believe that the sin of adultery is no worse than the sin of pride or selfishness, in the eyes of God, are more likely to consider the possibility of restoration.

Different Models of the Church

One’s view of the purpose and role of the church affects one’s view of the possibility of restoration. If the church is to be a showcase for saints in a fallen world, then those who do not shine like trophies for the Master should not be held up as leaders. In the “showcase” church paradigm, tarnished instruments are of questionable value when it comes to modeling leadership. However, if the church is more of a hospital where even leaders come for healing of soul and spirit, where all are in the process of regeneration, then those who are still in process may indeed be able to model the healing of heart that takes place in the one who has fallen, but rises again. Perhaps the church is more a combination of the showcase and hospital paradigms, both setting an example and being healed in the process. If this is the image of the church in a broken world,

1 Peterson et al., 12.

2 Ibid.
then we must find ways of merging the two paradigms so neither one is compromised.

**Integrity of Character versus Wounded Healer**

Some theologians speak of pastors who have fallen and were restored as wounded healers. However, not all see this issue in the same light. Armstrong reminds us that many of God's people, however, have nagging doubts about offering every repentant pastor full restoration to pastoral ministry. Arguments that fallen shepherds are “wounded healers” and thus better able to minister out of their experiential human weakness trouble those who believe that the Chief Shepherd never needed to fall morally in order to sympathize with our humanity and weakness (Hebrews 4:15). Indeed, the fact that He was tempted as a Shepherd and did not fall is the actual source of much encouragement to believers, who can, with His divine help, resist temptation and remain morally strong and sexually pure. The model and example for the under-shepherd may be compromised so easily, one must ask what will become of the human “living letters” that Paul said we should all be known as, and that all outsiders can read?

In the biblical view, there must be a purity of character in the life of one who is a leader. Paul speaks of pastors being people “above reproach.” A person who is “wild” in his morals cannot fulfill this purity. Armstrong asks this poignant question: “Could a person who is a reformed pedophile be entrusted to be the leader of children in the local church, even if he has lived above the sin for a long period of time?” He continues, “The same question regarding character could be addressed regarding those whose sin may not be as repugnant. How can someone who has violated conscience and broken the vows of love be entrusted to lead again?”

Others see the Christian life as a journey to holiness. Perfection of character is a process. If a fallen pastor repents, rises again, and lives above reproach, he may be trusted again. In this view, it is not the occasional sin but the pattern of life that determines the ultimate evaluation of character. Purity may be regained and may be even more glorious due to the victory gained.

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1 Armstrong, 44.

2 Ibid., 83.
Can a Fallen Pastor Meet the Qualifications?

In the New Testament, Paul outlines the qualifications for bishop in 1 Tim 3:1-7. The office of bishop most closely resembles the work of a pastor in the Adventist Church. Two particular qualifications apply to our discussion regarding whether a pastor may be restored. First, the bishop should be the husband of one wife. Second, the pastor must be one who “must have a good report with those without, lest he fall into reproach.” In the case of the “husband of one wife,” The New American Commentary suggests that this term means a church leader must be faithful to the woman he is married to. Quoting Lenski it asserts, “This describes a man who cannot be taken hold of by sexual immorality.” If this is the case, how can an adulterous pastor fulfill this requirement?

Some suggest that this is talking about the present life of the pastor. Though a pastor may have sinned grievously, if his present life is one of faithfulness, he could indeed fulfill this qualification. Others would question whether that trust could ever be reestablished.

In the case of the second qualification, having a good reputation among those outside the church would certainly not preclude having a good reputation within the community of faith. A pastor who has lost the trust of his congregation would be an ineffective leader. In addition, if a fallen pastor has a questionable reputation with the unsaved world, he and, with him, his entire church fall into disgrace.

Some feel it is impossible for trust to ever be restored. One who goes against a clear command of God, who violates a vow to the spouse, and damages the heart and soul of a congregation, is not worthy of the high calling of leadership. “The world will tend to evaluate all

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2 Armstrong, 86.
of us by our leaders. If their conduct discredits our corporate message, then the world scoffs with a certain measure of justice.\(^1\)

On the other hand, there are those who believe that confession and repentance allow for restoration. If the pastor has convinced the church that they are truly sorry and live above the past, while being accountable, perhaps reputation can be restored. It seems that even the world is able to forgive one who has made a terrible mistake if the offender owns up to it. If an adulterous pastor cannot regain trust, then Paul’s qualification cannot be met. But, if reputation and trust can be regained, then restoration could be an option.

**Legal Issues**

If the church could allow that the sin of adultery was not necessarily the unpardonable sin, and that one’s reputation could potentially be restored, the church would still need to deal with legal issues. Oliver Thomas, special counsel for the National Council of Churches, writes that “as long as the court is not asked to decide on doctrine, clergy may be sued for misconduct. The church that fails to investigate complaints adequately and intervene promptly in the case of misconduct can leave itself wide open to astronomical damage awards.”\(^2\)

Peter Mosgofian and George Ohlschlager both sit on the Law and Ethics Committee of the American Association of Christian Counselors. Regarding pastors who have been involved in sexual misconduct, they point out that “two of the most common actions here are inadequate hiring practices and deficient and grossly negligent supervision. . . . Likewise, poor supervisory practices have become mostly indefensible. Failing to take protective action at the reception of a complaint, and worse, transferring a known abuser to different settings that leave new service

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\(^1\) Ibid., 87.

recipients exposed to abuse are especially fatal legally."

Legal ramifications should certainly arouse the church to be careful about shuttling a pastor from one district to another without any disciplinary measures. It seems that the court is more willing to prosecute the church if it does not adequately monitor its clergy members. One can point out, however, that if the church organization has fulfilled its disciplinary role, it might be acceptable in certain situations to rehire a person who has had adequate discipline and counseling prior to reentry into ministry.

Three General Responses to a Pastoral Fall

Forgive and Let Live

In contemporary Christianity, there are three general responses regarding re-instating fallen pastors. The first position is called forgive and let live. This may not involve any particular discipline for the fallen pastor. No particular waiting period is necessary. If Christ can forgive the sin of adultery, the only reason to exclude a person from ministry would be lack of repentance and a continuation in the sin. However, if there has been confession and genuine repentance, the church need not be deprived of the leadership talents of the pastor. If God could forgive David without removing him from office, the church should be able to do the same. Other Old Testament examples such as Moses and Aaron, who were permitted to lead in spite of their downfall, can be cited in favor of this stance. Jesus forgave Peter for his three-fold denial. Certainly, the church that models Jesus’ forgiveness should extend it to one who has committed sexual sin, if the person is truly repentant. This position says that “all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” so let the pastor be forgiven like any other member and serve again.

A modern example of this can be found in the case of David Hocking, former pastor of a 6,000 member church in Southern California. After a moral fall, David resigned his pastoral

1 Peter Mosgofian and George Ohlschlager, Sexual Misconduct in Counseling and Ministry (Dallas, TX: Word, 1995), 228.
position at the church and was placed under a period of discipline. However, four months after these revelations, Pastor Chuck Smith of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California, invited David to join his staff. There was quite a furor about this in evangelical circles, but Chuck Smith defended his position, citing Gal 6:1 as a basis for his actions. Here are a few excerpts from his pastoral letter to churches affiliated with Calvary Chapel.¹

What is past is past, and what has been done has been done. Nothing can be gained by continuing to bring up old issues that are covered by the blood of Christ. In Isaiah 43:35 God promised to blot out our transgressions for His sake, and would not remember their sins. The Scripture tells us that love covers a multitude of sins. . . . To keep going back to the past and repeating David’s sin will only create division in the body of Christ. . . . The real issue is not about the past, for that has been forgiven. But what about the future? The ministry of the Word of God has been David’s life. He has been gifted by God in the teaching of the Word of God, and has blessed thousands through his exercise of this gift. Should this gift now be buried?²

Chuck continued his plea recounting that when Peter was forgiven by Jesus, only a short time later Jesus asked him “Dost thou love me?” After Peter’s repentance and humility Jesus restored him to leadership right away. The issue was whether Peter loved Jesus. “Since David Hocking loves Jesus, how can we keep him from fulfilling God’s purpose for his life?”³

**Discontinue, Disfellowship, and Debar**

The second position is *discontinue, disfellowship, and debar*. This is clearly represented by the official policies of the Adventist Church. Armstrong’s book offers a slight variation. To my knowledge, his book is the only volume in contemporary literature that challenges the advisability of restoration to ministry.⁴ Though Armstrong is not a member of the Adventist Church, he has expressed, at length, reasons that may underlie official Adventist policy. In

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¹Armstrong, 37.


³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 202.
essence, those who take this position believe that the sin of adultery so severely mars the reputation of a leader and so tarnishes the image of a church that would think to reinstate such a person, that trust can never be given this person for leadership again. Forgiveness is certainly a possibility, but no processes are allowed for reinstatement. Armstrong does not take as strong a position as the Adventist church in suggesting that disfellowshiping should occur; however, the possibility of return to ministry is basically ruled out. The Adventist position is inflexible as stated. No consideration is given for varying circumstances. Clearly, a fallen leader will lose his credentials, his ordination, be disfellowshiped, and will never be re-employed by any entity of the church (see appendix B).

It very well may be that the only thing the church needs to do is enforce the regulations. This is clearly an option and it certainly seems better than the present inconsistencies. The fact that practice within Adventism is different from policy provided a major reason to address the issue in this study. Is there any way the church can hold in balance the need to be active in discipline and accountable to the purity of the gospel, yet at the same time restore fallen pastors?

**Restore Spiritually and Reinstate Cautiously**

The third possibility is a combination of the two positions. This could bring about harmony between present practices and policies. This alternative takes seriously the sin of adultery. If it is proven that the clergy person has committed adultery, the pastor would be asked to resign for a period of time. The pastor may be censured, rather than disfellowshiped. If confession and repentance are evident, the pastor may be given an opportunity for rehabilitation. Depending on the circumstance and the length of time that the pastor has been involved in the affair, some fallen pastors may be reinstated. Those who favor this approach do not believe that restoration is automatic. The burden of restoration lies with the fallen pastor. Since the Bible teaches that a pastor must have a good reputation it is thought that time must be given for this to occur.
Jack W. Hayford, pastor of the 7,000 member Church on the Way, probably represents this position as well as anyone. He suggests three guidelines to consider before restoring a pastor. First, beware of any preoccupation with a quick return. Though Peter was restored in a moment of time, he did not offend a body of believers. The fallen pastor who wants to return quickly usually indicates an immature response. Second, beware of overlooking the severity of the fallen one’s injury. Very deep wounds expose the human psyche to significant damage. Time needs to be given to renew evidence of a “whole character,” to restore broken relationships and to verify that the deep pain has not been masked or bandaged with superficial counsel. Third, a fallen leader needs to establish a lifestyle of trust again and undergo the care and discipline of those who are appointed to assist in the restoration process.¹

Adulterous Pastors in History

This section will be divided into four eras: The Early Christian Church, The Medieval Church, The Reformation Church and The Early American Church.

The Early Christian Church (A.D. 34-325)

No specific case of a fallen pastor is presented in the New Testament. On the other hand, immorality was not even to be mentioned in the Christian community.² Those who practiced sexual sin would be excluded from the hope of eternal life.³ Christians are to be free from lustful passion. Paul stressed moral purity in his first letter to the Thessalonians. He wrote, “For this is the will of God, your sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned

² Eph 5:3.
³ Rev 21:27
you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification” (1Thess 4:2-7).

Although no specific case of adultery and discipline for pastors is discussed in the New Testament, Paul spoke of church leaders who flaunted their sexuality and idolatry. Their practice of such sins caused the apostle to be deeply concerned and to warn church members of their dangerous leadership.¹ Paul was not the only apostle to emphasize the importance of moral purity. John was concerned that the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira were idolatrous and sexually immoral. If those who were guilty of such sin did not repent, their lamp stand would be removed.²

This sin, though, was not the only one that could keep one from entering the gates into the heavenly city. Those who were fearful, or liars, and faithless would also be on the outside of the New Jerusalem.³ Any who had lost their first love and did not repent would be excluded as well.⁴

One particular case of incest provides the only specific instance of church discipline in the New Testament. A man became sexually involved with his father’s wife. In this exceptionally gross situation, the apostle Paul recommended that the man be excommunicated from the community of believers. But the purpose of this was to turn him over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit might be saved.⁵ As a result, the Corinthian church excluded him from their brotherhood. Apparently the discipline, which was more harsh than the apostle intended, produced genuine repentance and the man was forgiven and encouraged again.⁶

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¹ 1 Tim 3:5-7.
³ Rev 21:8.
⁴ Rev 2:5.
⁵ 1 Cor 5:5.
⁶ 2 Cor 2:5-8.
Because there is no indication that this individual was a leader, one could contest the implications of the situation. Leaders were to be examples to the flock and live on a higher plane of spirituality.\(^1\) Thus, what might be allowed for the average church member might be denied for a leader.

There are those who believe that an adulterous leader in the apostolic period could never be restored. Armstrong states unequivocally that “the early church held to complete disqualification from pastoral ministry when an elder had sinned sexually.”\(^2\) But, no scriptural reference is cited as evidence for this conclusion. Undoubtedly, sexual sin and false doctrine were tied together in the lives of some of the early Christian leaders, because the apostle Peter decries these false teachers.\(^3\) As noted, the continued practice of sexual sin was unforgivable unless there was repentance. But nowhere in the New Testament is the issue of whether a repentant fallen leader could or could not be restored ever addressed.

After the death of the apostles, records indicate that sexual sin brought mixed responses. In his impressive study _The History of the Christian Church_, noted church scholar J.J. Foakes Jackson stated, “Idolatry and the grosser sins of impurity were often considered as unpardonable in this world.”\(^4\) Such seemed to be the case with Tertullian and Hippolytus, both Montanists at the turn of the second century. These leaders were opposed to the rising power of the clergy. They claimed to have the prophetic gift and the leading of the Holy Spirit. They aimed at the ideal of a pure church and condemned pleasure and amusements, as well as second marriages.

\(^1\) 1 Tim 3:1-3.
\(^2\) Armstrong, 110.
\(^3\) 2 Pet 2:11-15.
They were particularly opposed to the Catholic clergy, who allowed fallen clergy to be restored.\footnote{W. H. C. Frend, \textit{The Early Church} (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 93.}

Callistus, the Bishop of Rome, was more tolerant of moral lapses. He was in favor of a mixed church, wanting to retain unworthy members in the fold and to leave the sentence of permanent exclusion to the final judgment of God. This appears to be the reason for allowing adulterous leaders to be restored.\footnote{Foakes Jackson, 258} Novation, who lived 75 years before the Council of Nicea around A. D. 250, complained about the laxness of Callistus. He felt the church dealt too lightly with adulterers by allowing second marriages.\footnote{Phillip Hughes, \textit{The Church in Crises: A History of Twenty Great Councils} (London: Burns and Oates, 1961), 23.}

However, before the end of the second century, Christians drew up a number of Canons that related to moral purity. These early Canons were called the Apostolic Canons. A Bishop, after baptism, was not allowed to be married twice or to have a concubine (XVII). A second marriage by a man who divorced his first wife was forbidden (XVIII), and marriage to a widow, divorced woman, harlot, slave, or actress disqualified one from being ordained. One could not marry even his deceased wife’s sister or niece (XVIII).\footnote{John Fulton, \textit{Index Canon, A Complete Digest of the Entire Code of Cannon Law} (London: E. and J. B. Young, 1883), 297, 345, 346.}

A person who committed fornication, perjury, or theft was to be deposed from office but if the person was a priest, they would not be excommunicated. The same was true for a deacon (XXV). Marriage after ordination was even forbidden, except for readers and singers (XXVI). Of particular note, ordination was not allowed for bishops who had committed adultery or fornication or any other forbidden act. Even if their wives had committed adultery, they could not be ordained unless they put their adulterous wives away (LXI).\footnote{Ibid., 281, 330.}
Further resolutions were made in Spain. At the Council of Elvira in A.D. 300 it was ruled that bishops, presbyters, and deacons, once installed in office, discovered to be adulterers, would not be allowed to partake of communion, even at death.¹

By the time of the Council of Neo-Caesarea in 314-315, the churches had become even more careful in their requirements for moral purity. Priests who committed adultery were to be punished, not only by deposition, but they were also to be excommunicated. Marriage was forbidden after becoming a priest and any priest who married was to be deposed (I). Even though the priest could be cast out, penance was an option (I).²

That same year, the Council of Ancyra added further clarifications. While an adulterous person was to be excommunicated, they could fulfill seven years of penance and be readmitted. One particular case of seduction required the person to do penance for ten years before readmission. Requirements for deacons were clarified. They could remarry if they let their plans be known to their superiors before they were ordained (XX).³

Around the same time period (329-379) St. Basil of Ceasarea wrote authoritative regulations for deacons. Those who committed adultery were to be removed from office. They were also reduced to the station of lay persons, but they were not debarred from communion. Basil also stated that the deposition was to be permanent.⁴

Carl Volz, a contemporary Lutheran historian, has done extensive research on the early church and its approach to ethics, especially pastoral ethics. After citing Peter’s counsel that God


² Fulton, 274, 356, 357.

³ Ibid., 275, 356-57.

⁴ Culbertson and Bradford, 106.
requires holiness in those who follow Him, Volz suggests that the specific ramifications of this demanding ethic were to be determined by each believer, following the general guidelines of the Ten Commandments. Because this general pattern needed to be worked out in terms of a culture that threatened the church with extermination on the one hand and impurity on the other, Volz notes that "by the second century this elastic but demanding view of Christian behavior had become more narrow and systematic to the point of rigidity and legalism. A considerable amount of pastoral time and energy was devoted to maintaining the discipline of holiness within the congregation."2

Volz then adds the following observation: "One area that appears to receive the most attention in the early attempts to regulate the Christian life is that of sexual ethics. Early councils appear to contain more decrees on this subject than any other, unless perhaps there may be more regulating the life of the clergy. It may be this is due to an inordinate preoccupation with sex in the minds of puritanical rigorists, but it may also be caused by the fact that Christianity was born within a Roman society in which family stability and moral discipline had given way to flagrant decadence."3

Medieval Period (A.D. 325-1500)

By the time of the Council of Chalcedon in 448, the church required deacons to be celibate. Deacons and monks and dedicated virgins could not marry (XV and XVI).4 Fulton notes that by the time of the First Lateran Council in 1123, celibacy was clearly

1 1 Pet 1:15

2 Carl A. Volz, Pastoral Life and Practice in the Early Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 74.

3 Ibid., 76-77.

4 Fulton, 345.
established, and clerics in all major orders were not allowed to marry (XXI).\(^1\)

The Second Lateran Council of 1139 became more stringent. A cleric who lived with a woman would be deprived of his office and of his benefits (VI). Moreover, the masses that were celebrated by clergy who had wives or concubines were not to be attended (VII).\(^2\)

At the Third Lateran Council in 1179, it was decided that clerics living incontinently were to be deposed and not to receive benefits; but the punishments were even greater for lay members. They were to be excommunicated (XI).\(^3\)

The Fourth Lateran Council added that clerics who were deposed for incontinency were never to be restored. Anyone who celebrated the sacred mass was to be deposed forever.\(^4\)

In 1274 at the Second Council of Lyons, further regulations were added to deprive bigamist clergy from office and to turn them over to the secular forum (XVI).\(^5\)

In summary, the Medieval Church moved further into asceticism, restricting the clergy to a celibate life. Even though the church became more rigid in its view of pastoral obligations, it struggled with implementing them. Several authors note the inconsistencies. James Brundage observes that offending priests were in fact a considerable problem for the church in the later Middle Ages. With the church reform movement, which began during the eleventh century, clerical celibacy (formerly optional) became a requirement. Needless to say, this change inspired a great deal of resistance among married clerics who simply found the policy unacceptable.\(^6\)

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1 Ibid., 192.
2 Ibid., 200.
3 Ibid., 224.
4 Ibid., 255.
5 Ibid., 344.
Not surprisingly, even once the law was firmly established, the actual behavior of the clergy did not necessarily conform to this rule. Concubinage and fornication persisted among the clergy throughout the fourteenth century, and not all church authorities made a concerted effort to discover and punish offenders, as they themselves were often engaging in similar behavior.¹

According to historian Jeffery Richards, the clergy made up about twenty percent of the clientele of private brothels and bath-houses in Dijon, France during this period, and it seems the situation was similar all throughout Europe. As a result of such behavior, the "lecherous cleric" was developed as a popular humorous figure by many medieval authors.²

Yet for every priest who visited the brothels or preyed on "decent" women, there seems to have been another living (albeit in sin) with one partner in a relatively stable and long-term relationship. They lived essentially as man and wife.³

Reformation Period (A.D. 1500-1776)

Roman Catholicism had so emphasized celibacy, with the attendant asceticism that had developed over the centuries, that by the period of the reformation marriage had come to be seen as an inferior estate. Priests were not allowed to marry, ostensibly because they were married to Christ in service to His church. The leaders of the Reformation developed an entirely different view. Returning to the Scriptures, they discovered a more exalted view of husbands and wives and they honored marriage as an institution of great profit for all, including pastors.⁴

Reformation historian Ulrich Gabler says that an emphasis on the importance of marriage led Protestants to establish courts to deal with those who found it difficult to remain faithful to

¹ Ibid., 474.


³ Brundage, 475.

⁴ Armstrong, 110.
their vows. From Protestant court rulings, we are able to obtain information that provides some idea as to how the reformers might respond to adulterous pastors. For Ulrich Zwingli, adultery was considered the primary ground for divorce. Less frequently, marriages were dissolved because of impotence, malicious desertion, or illness. Extramarital affairs could have far-reaching consequences. Conviction of adultery carried with it the penalty of loss of all public offices as well as excommunication. The guilty party was banned from attending church. Even though the loss of offices was for positions such as city guilds, it is most likely that pastoral or clergy positions were discontinued as well. Such ostracism, however, remained in force until moral improvement and a fitting period of penance had passed.1

In Zurich, the court recognized six grounds for divorce: adultery, impotence, willful desertion, grave incompatibility, sexual incapacity, illness, and deception. Adulterers were sentenced to three days in jail. The penalty was doubled for the second offense and tripled for the third. The fourth wrong would result in exile and the fifth could lead to execution.2

Another historian, Steve Ozment, records that in Basil, adulterers were fined five pounds but pastors and council members were fined double. A second offense resulted in six days in jail and ten pounds. A third wrongdoing required nine days in jail and fifteen pounds. A fourth trespass ended up in exile, and the fifth one could mean execution.3

Johannes Bugenhagen, a prominent Lutheran catechist of that era, treated adultery very seriously. He referred to sexual sin as a man committing “the most shameful act of betrayal.” He said: “A husband was no more a husband, nor a wife a wife than a virgin was a virgin after


3 Ibid., 94.
fornication. Something irretrievable left a marriage the moment one partner became unfaithful.  

Although there are no specific pastoral guidelines noted, one would assume that the guidelines for pastors would be carried out the same. Certainly, the practice of adultery was considered serious and would not only result in loss of public offices but could end in execution.

With John Calvin in Geneva, the evidence for pastors being discontinued for adultery is much clearer. Since adultery was a public offense and punishable by law, the following recommendations in The Register of the Company of Pastors, written between 1541 and 1564, would apply specifically to pastors.

In order to obviate all scandals of conduct, it will be needful to have a form of discipline . . . to which all are to submit themselves. This will help to ensure that the minister is treated with respect and the Word of God is not brought into dishonor and scorn by the evil fame of ministers. Moreover, as discipline will be imposed on him who merits it, so also there will be need to suppress slanders and false reports that may justly be uttered against those who are innocent. With regard to offenses which ought under no circumstances to be tolerated, if they are civil offenses, that is to say, those which are punishable by law, and any minister is guilty of them, the body of elders shall take the matter in hand and, over and above the ordinary punishment customarily imposed on others, shall punish him by deposing him from his office.

In conclusion, one can see that adultery was considered a serious offense during the Reformation. On the other hand, a single offense was not treated in the same manner as multiple infractions. As noted, one of the above references to that period indicates that moral improvement and a period of penance could mitigate the ostracism connected with adultery. In short, the referenced literature of that period does not seem to address the issue of whether a repentant, adulterous, pastor could be restored to pastoral responsibilities.

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1 Ibid., 85.
3 Gabler, 103-04.
Early America (A.D. 1776-1900)

The Churches of New England established a model which addressed the subject of disqualification because of a moral breakdown. Chapter 8, Article 7 of *The Cambridge Platform of Church Discipline*, reads, “If the church has power to choose their officers and pastors, then in case of manifest unworthiness and delinquency, they have the power to depose them.”

In commenting on this ruling, John Armstrong argues that “though the sin of sexual immorality is not plainly stated, we cannot doubt that this sin would have been included, based on the fact that other literature speaks plainly to this matter and Calvin’s Geneva was still the major influence upon their thought.” However, possible restoration is not specifically addressed.

Puritan ordination sermons provide a feel for some Early American attitudes to a moral lapse. Cotton Mather, an early Puritan preacher, observed that “to embrace a man who is not of the best morals merely because he agrees with us is in fact a serious compromise of the proper thinking about Christian unity.” John Callender, another preacher, did not share the modern idea that a pastor may remain in office when he sins sexually. He advocated, “They who disgrace their office should be put out of it.”

Ordination sermons often revealed a connection between disqualification in the final day and disqualification for sexual sin at the present. Samuel Cooper said in his ordination sermon, “While we are justly severe to gross and scandalous sins, which are peculiarly detestable in ministers of religion, we shall make all fair allowances for those misapprehensions and small


2 Armstrong, 110.


imperfections of our brethren, which are consistent with integrity.\(^1\)

Another pastor bluntly declared, "If his life contradicts his preaching, he had better lay down his Bible and leave the sacred desk."\(^2\) Referenced literature of the time, again, does not discuss the advisability or inadvisability of restoring repentant fallen pastors.

**Conclusion**

The patristic fathers were particularly concerned about sexual sin because of the extremely decadent culture of the time. In time, asceticism and legalism forbade marriage for clerics altogether. It is clear that moral purity was a qualification for pastoral ministry. But, whether a repentant clergy person could be reinstated was not a topic of discussion. Even secular courts, during the Reformation, banned from office and even executed those who continued in sexual sin. On the other hand, there were some records in the literature that those who did penance and improved morally could be restored to the community of faith. At times, the church even allowed those who were fallen clerics to be forgiven and returned to office, as in the case of Callistus of Rome. At other times, restoration of fallen pastors seemed untenable.

**Present Policies in Other Faith Communities**

The policies of the following churches will be reviewed: Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, and Assemblies of God. Since these churches exist in the same cultural context as Adventists do, they face the same legal and social ramifications regarding their policies.

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1 Samuel Cooper, *A Sermon Preached April 9, 1760, at the Ordination of Mr. Joseph Jackson* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1739), 34.

Roman Catholic Church

The largest church in North America is the Roman Catholic Church. To research Catholic policy, I contacted Rev. Msgr. James Barta, Vicar General in Dubuque, Iowa. Processes for disciplining and restoring priests guilty of sexual sin come from the Code of Canon Law. Book IV of that code is called “Sanctions in the Church.” These include cannons 1311-1399.

Canon 1395 #1 rules: “A cleric who lives in concubinage, other than the case mentioned in can. 1394, and a cleric who persists with scandal in another external sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is to be punished by suspension. If he persists in the delict (offense) after a warning, other penalties can gradually be added, including dismissal from the clerical state.”

Further consideration is given in Canon 1395 #2: “A cleric who in another way has committed an offense against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue, if the delict was committed by force or threats or publicly or with a minor below the age of sixteen years, it is to be punished with just penalties, not excluding dismissal from the clerical state if the case so warrants.”

This canon encompasses other scandalous, habitual clerical sexual offenses with persons of either sex, not entailing the exclusivity of concubinage. The penalty initially subscribed is ferendae sententiae (which means a trial has occurred) or suspension. Increasingly severe penalties may occur if the cleric refuses to heed official warnings to change his behavior.

Considerable latitude is given as to whether suspension is necessary. At times the church may take a more redemptive approach that is pastoral or therapeutic in nature, rather than


2 Ibid., 1599.

3 Ibid.
penal, especially if the cleric’s responsibility or guilt is notably diminished. Concerns about his
dignity and future ministerial options are key legal-pastoral considerations. The significant
damage to the ecclesiastical community must play a role in determining the extent of discipline.
In the case of civil penalties, if such remedial measures do not repair the damage done to the
church, seriously imputable (guilty) clergy may be dismissed from the clerical state.¹

Somewhat surprisingly, sexual sin may not necessarily require dismissal from the
institute or society. The superior may decide that such action is not completely necessary since
the correction of the member, the restitution of justice, and the reparation of scandal can be
achieved otherwise.²

One other canon reveals the flexibility of the church in dealing with sexual sin. Canon
1387 states: “A priest who in the act, on the occasion, or under the pretext of confession solicits
a penitent to sin against the sixth commandment of the Decalogue is to be punished, according to
the gravity of the offense, by suspension, prohibitions, and privations; in graver cases he is to be
dismissed from the clerical state.”³

In summary, Catholic Canon Law is quite flexible in determining whether dismissal from
office is necessary. The gravity of the offense, the community outrage, the implementation of
civil penalties, a repentant attitude on the part of the cleric, and the decision of his superior may
all determine whether the offending cleric is allowed to remain in office, be suspended or
dismissed. Even in the case of a pedophile, whether the priest has been repentant, how long ago
the incident occurred, and whether sufficient repair of the damage has occurred, would determine
whether the priest would be dismissed.

¹ Ibid., 1600.
² Ibid., 1601.
³ Ibid., 1591.
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The largest body of Lutherans in America is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Policies that are relevant to this dissertation come from the *Manual of Policies and Procedures for the Management of the Rosters of the Evangelical Church in America*. Reinstatement to pastoral ministry in the ELCA is the responsibility of the Candidacy Committee of the synod where the applicant was last an ordained minister. In every case, the process begins in the synod from which the applicant left the roster. The official removal from office may include the official disciplinary process: resignation in lieu of the disciplinary process of where the person left because of allegations that could lead to discipline. In such cases, a minimum of five consecutive years without call must lapse before application for reinstatement may be considered. If the applicant has moved to another synod, the reinstatement process may be transferred to the new synod. However the synod from which the pastor left would provide the receiving synod with all information and documentation regarding the case. The application is considered when the bishop forwards it to the Candidacy Committee. An approved candidate is eligible for a call for the period of a year after approval by the synod.1

In summary, the ELCA allows for the possibility of restoring pastors who have committed adultery. Careful consideration is given to the qualifications to restore a fallen pastor. Not all are eligible. A five-year waiting period must elapse before consideration is given for reinstatement.

Presbyterian Church

The Presbyterian Church has several degrees of discipline for pastors who are involved in some type of misconduct. The first degree is a letter of reproof. This is followed by

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intercessory prayer and the discipline is completed when the letter is received. The second
degree is a rebuke with supervised rehabilitation. The offending pastor is enjoined to be more
watchful and to avoid such an offense in the future. The description of the rehabilitation process
is clearly set forth with the period of discipline delineated. This time period is defined by the
disciplining body. Upon completion of the rehabilitation, the pastor may be re-instated.¹

The third level of censure is temporary exclusion from the exercise of ordained office or
membership and is a higher degree of censure for a more aggravated offense (which could
include sexual sin). It will be effective for a definite period of time, or for a period defined by
completion of the supervised rehabilitation imposed by the session or the permanent judicial
commission. This is to be followed by intercessory prayer. If the period of temporary exclusion
is defined by completion of supervised rehabilitation, the session or permanent judicial
commission will communicate this in a formal way to the supervising entity. At this point, the
supervisor becomes responsible for the offending pastor. During the temporary exclusion from
office, the person is to refrain from the exercise of any function of ordained office.²
They are not to participate or vote or hold any office. If a pastor is temporarily excluded from
the exercise of the office of ordained minister, the presbytery may, if no appeal from the case is
pending, declare the pastoral relationship dissolved.³

When the censure of temporary exclusion has been pronounced, the stated clerk of the
presbytery must immediately send the information of the action taken to the General Assembly,
which takes a quarterly report of this kind of information to every presbytery of the church. The

¹ Presbyterian Church in North America, *Book of Order: The Constitution of the
Presbyterian Church* (Willow Grove, PA: The Committee on Christian Education of the
Orthodox Presbyterian Church, 2000), Part II, D-11, 0403e.

² Ibid., D-11, 0403e.

³ Ibid.
following procedure is outlined for restoring pastors.¹

A person under the censure of temporary exclusion shall apply in writing to the governing body, through the clerk of session or stated clerk, for restoration upon the expiration of the time of exclusion or completion of the supervised rehabilitation pronounced. The governing body that imposed the censure shall approve the restoration when the time of exclusion has expired or when the governing body is fully satisfied that the supervised rehabilitation pronounced has been completed. A person under the censure of temporary exclusion from the exercise of ordained office or from membership may apply in writing to the governing body that imposed the censure (through its clerk) to be restored prior to the expiration of the time of exclusion or the completion of the supervised rehabilitation fixed in the censure. The governing body may approve such a restoration when it is fully satisfied that the action is justified.²

Removal from office is the highest degree of censure. This is the censure by which the ordination and election of the person found guilty are set aside, and the person is removed from all offices. Removal may be followed by dismissal from membership, which is the censure by which the membership of the person found guilty is terminated, the person is removed from all rolls, and the person’s ordination and election to all offices are set aside.

A person under the censure of removal from office or from membership may be restored by the governing body imposing censure when the governing body is fully satisfied that the action is justified and the person makes a reaffirmation of faith for membership restoration or is re-ordained for restoration to office. The restoration to office of a minister, elder, or deacon shall be announced by the moderator. A specific form designed by the governing body has been devised for the restored pastor. Thereafter, a full service of ordination shall take place and the name shall be restored to the appropriate roll.³

Few details on the specifics for being restored were given in the Presbyterian Book of Order; however, it was clear from talking with the local pastor in Cedar Rapids that restoration

¹ Ibid.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid., G-14, 0206 and G-14, 0405.
for sexual sin was possible.\textsuperscript{1} Re-ordination for more serious offenses in which the pastor lost his ordination was explicitly stated in the \textit{Book of Order}.

United Methodist Church

The United Methodist Church in Iowa conducts a seminar for their pastors on \textit{Building Healthy Ministry Relationships}. They provided me with a copy of their manual, which discusses, among other concerns, issues regarding sexual harassment, sexual abuse, and sexual exploitation by counselors or therapists. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwelcome sexual advance, verbally or otherwise. The manual opts for the Iowa State definition of sexual abuse, which includes but is not limited to any of the following: kissing; touching of the clothed or unclothed inner thigh, breast, groin, buttock, anus, pubes, or genitals; or a sex act.\textsuperscript{2}

Processes for dealing with the abuse of power by clergy persons are carefully laid out. Sexual abuse or harassment is not condoned; allegations are to be taken seriously; presumption of innocence is assumed; care for the parties involved is spelled out; inquiries regarding the process are welcome; civil penalties will not be impeded; confidentiality is not guaranteed for the clergy person or the accusing party; justice is to flow from the grace of God; forgiveness is available to all; and reconciliation is the goal of the whole process. Specific steps are outlined in making the allegations, and processes are outlined for restitution, reconciliation, and restoration.\textsuperscript{3}

The United Methodist Church publishes \textit{The Book of Discipline} that delineates more completely the Councils and Bishops that are to guide the process. Restoration is possible for the person who has committed adultery, but this is not a right. Note the following paragraph.

\textsuperscript{1} Duane Hix, pastor of the Kenwood Park Presbyterian Church, interview by author, 16 February, 2004, Cedar Rapids, IA.

\textsuperscript{2} United Methodist Church, \textit{Building Healthy Ministry Relationships: 2002 Ministry Professional Training} (DesMoines, IA: Iowa Annual Conference, 2002), 38-9.

\textsuperscript{3} Ibid., 42-43.
A formal process, planned by the bishop and the Appointive Cabinet, and designed to guide the persons who have been determined guilty of sexual abuse or harassment in a comprehensive program of spiritual growth and discernment, personal growth and development by identifying and confronting the dynamics which led to the abuse of harassment. Such a process is necessary if the clergy person or diaconal minister is to be restored to active ministry. There may be situations in which this process is deemed inappropriate or not likely to be effective. Rehabilitation is a possibility, not a right.1

Assemblies of God

The Assembly of God Church was the most explicit in their disciplinary and restoration procedures for fallen pastors. They provided me with three manuals regarding this issue. One manual was an official manual on discipline. The second was for the district supervisor to use in a rehabilitation process. The third manual was for fallen pastors and their wives who are admitted to the process of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation is not available for all pastors. Reinstatement is considered a privilege of mercy and not a right. Guidelines for consideration are given. Their material is an excellent resource for policies and processes if the Adventist Church considers adopting a more comprehensive approach. Because of this, portions of their material are included in appendix E.

Article X in The General Council of the Assembly of God Bylaws opens with the purpose of discipline. “Discipline is an exercise of scriptural authority for which the church is responsible. The aims of discipline are that God may be honored, that the purity and welfare of the ministry may be maintained, and that those under discipline may be brought to repentance and restoration.”2

The following reasons for discipline are cited: (1) Any moral failure involving sexual misconduct, (2) Any moral or ethical failure other than sexual misconduct, (3) A marriage in

1 Ibid., 38.

violation of our stand on marriage and divorce.\(^1\) The Assemblies of God Church teaches that adultery and fornication are the only bases for divorce and remarriage. Marriage that is not founded on that exception or on the death of a spouse is considered a violation of their stand on marriage and divorce.

It is the responsibility of the credentials committee to decide whether the circumstances of the case merit rehabilitation or dismissal. The credentials committees shall weigh decisions on (1) the basis of the offense itself, (2) the manner and thoroughness of repentance, (3) the attitude of the offending minister toward the discipline, and (4) the willingness manifested to cooperate with the disciplinary process. Rehabilitation is not guaranteed, but a privilege to be considered on the merits of the case.\(^2\) Certain types of sexual sin are not open to consideration for rehabilitation. Homosexuality, incest, pedophilia, and multiple infractions are outside of the rehabilitation policies.\(^3\)

The following section from their manual is particularly instructive.

Section 8. Rehabilitation:

Recognizing that the underlying principle involved in discipline is redemptive, and that man's conscience frequently brings him to judgment and confession, and that justice can sometimes be best served with mercy, an effort should be made to lead the offending minister through a program of rehabilitation, administered in brotherly love and kindness. The following provisions for rehabilitation shall apply.

a. Basis: Those found to have violated any of the Assemblies of God principles (Article X, A, Section 3) may request a program of rehabilitation as an alternative to dismissal. Rehabilitation is a privilege granted out of mercy and not a right to be expected or demanded. The primary purpose is to restore a person to God, spouse, and family with the results leading to possible restoration to ministry. Granting such request shall be at the discretion of the district and General Council credentials committees.

b. Period of time: The program for rehabilitation shall continue for not less than 1 year except when the violation involves misconduct defined in article X, A, Section 3, paragraph a, in which case it shall continue for not less than 2 years.

\(^1\) Ibid., 4.
\(^2\) Ibid.
\(^3\) Ibid.
c. Procedure and requirements: The following procedure shall be used by the district presbytery in determining the specific requirements to rehabilitation for the individual minister.

(1) Rehabilitation requirements. The specific terms and conditions of the rehabilitation program as recommended by the district credentials committee are to be forwarded to the General Council Credentials Committee for approval. After such approval they shall be given to the minister.

(a) Suspension. The minister shall be considered to be under suspension during the entire period of rehabilitation.

(b) Extent of ministry. The extent to which ministry may be permitted, if any, shall be determined by the district presbytery, subject to the approval of the General Council Credentials Committee. Certain offenses may not require complete cessation of ministerial activities, although some restrictions or limitations may be warranted.

(c) District membership. The minister shall not be permitted to transfer his membership to another district during the period of rehabilitation.

(d) Publication. While the minister’s credentials are in a state of suspension, his name shall not be removed from the ministerial roster, nor shall his disciplinary status be published in either the General Council or district council official publications.

(e) Credentials renewal. He shall renew his credentials annually in the regular manner.

(f) Supervision. In the event his ministerial activity has been terminated, the minister must become established in a local church working under the supervision of a pastor or presbyter.

(g) Reports. The minister must submit reports quarterly to the district superintendent.

(h) Ministerial benefits. During the program of rehabilitation the minister shall continue to be eligible for benefits such as the minister’s group insurance and Minister’s Benefit Association.

(i) Program administration. The approved rehabilitation program shall be administered by the district presbytery.

(2) District progress reports. The credentials committee of the district shall submit to the General Council Credentials Committee on February 1 and August 1 of each calendar year a progress report relative to the rehabilitation of ministers under discipline.

(3) Completion of rehabilitation. When the rehabilitation program has been satisfactorily completed, the suspension shall be lifted and the minister shall be restored to good standing.

(4) Transfer of information. A rehabilitation information form for district use, prepared and distributed by the general secretary, shall be completed by the district in which the rehabilitation occurred when the rehabilitated minister requests a transfer to a new district. The completed rehabilitation form shall accompany the Certificate of Transfer to another district. A disciplined minister shall, as a condition of entering a rehabilitation program, sign a Limited Disclosure Agreement approved by the General Presbytery allowing the basis of the rehabilitation program to be disclosed by the district superintendent or district secretary of a transferring district. The information shall be preserved for future reference in the files of the district in which the rehabilitation occurred and the General Council.

d. Eligibility of previous dismissal: In the event a minister who has been dismissed requests reinstatement, the district shall first obtain permission from the General Council Credentials Committee before submitting an appropriate rehabilitation program as prescribed in section 8 of this article. He shall not be eligible for reinstatement until the requirements for rehabilitation have been completed. Consideration may also be given to a minister if in the opinion of the credentials committees he has satisfactorily fulfilled the conditions.
If it is determined that restoration and rehabilitation are advisable, the pastor and his spouse must sign a covenant of restoration and enter the process, which may go on for a period of one or two years. The rehabilitation process takes place under the supervision of a church leader, who is given a manual as a guideline for the process.

At the end of the rehabilitation process, a complete history of the problem and process of restoration is documented. Those involved are required to fill in a comprehensive questionnaire in order to determine the final outcome of restoration. The questionnaire is in appendix E. Legal questions are also asked, to determine the risk factor in returning a fallen pastor to service.

In summary, the Assembly of God guidelines for considering the possibility of rehabilitation are well crafted and could prove to be a helpful model for Adventist leaders to consider as we seek to provide safeguards for the church and healing for those who have fallen.

Conclusion

All of the churches included in this section allow for the possibility of fallen pastors to be restored. Their policies could be informative for the Adventist church, not because of their theological stance but because of their pragmatic soundness. They must face legal, cultural, and social issues, even as we must.

\[1\] Ibid., 4-6.
CHAPTER 3

THE RESTORATION OF PASTORS IN THE BIBLE AND THE
WRITINGS OF ELLEN WHITE

Biblical Counsels and Precedents for Restoration

Introduction

As noted in the review of literature, history does not reveal a clear picture regarding the issue of restoring fallen pastors. Historical theology is not always a trustworthy foundation for interpreting the Bible, either. Therefore we turn to the Bible itself to discover whether there is a theological foundation for restoring fallen pastors.

Old Testament

Whether adultery or fornication is sin is not an issue. Even a casual knowledge of the Old Testament (OT) leaves no doubt regarding sexual sin. The seventh commandment forbids committing adultery.\(^1\) God hates a casual commitment to marriage.\(^2\) In view of this, the focus of our discussion is on whether someone who has committed a grievous sin was retained in leadership or restored to leadership. As an initial step to answering this important question we will examine *casuistic law*.

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\(^1\) Exod 20:14.

\(^2\) Mal 2:16.
Casuistic Law

Casuistic law was formulated to instruct the priests and judges in the administration of moral law. Adultery is sin according to the moral law, but casuistic law prescribed the discipline to be meted out. Initially, casuistic law demanded death by stoning for the adulterer.¹

Further instruction occurred, however, that seemed to limit this punishment to specific violations.

Perhaps the most comprehensive OT casuistic section relating to adultery is found in the Levitical law.

If a man commits adultery with another man's wife, both the man and the woman must be put to death. If a man has intercourse with his father's wife, both the man and the woman must die, for they are guilty of a capital offense. If a man has intercourse with his daughter-in-law, both must be put to death. They have acted contrary to nature and are guilty of a capital offense. The penalty for homosexual acts is death to both parties. They have committed a detestable act and are guilty of a capital offense. If a man has intercourse with both a woman and her mother, such an act is terribly wicked. All three of them must be burned to death to wipe out such wickedness from among you. If a man has sexual intercourse with an animal, he must be put to death, and the animal must be killed.

If a woman approaches a male animal to have intercourse with it, she and the animal must both be put to death. Both must die, for they are guilty of a capital offense. If a man has sexual intercourse with his sister, the daughter of either his father or his mother, it is a terrible disgrace. Both of them must be publicly cut off from the community. Since the man has had intercourse with his sister, he will suffer the consequences of his guilt. If a man has intercourse with a woman suffering from a hemorrhage, both of them must be cut off from the community, because he exposed the source of her flow, and she allowed him to do it. If a man has sexual intercourse with his aunt, whether his mother's sister or his father's sister, he has violated a close relative. Both parties are guilty of a capital offense.

If a man has intercourse with his uncle's wife, he has violated his uncle. Both the man and woman involved are guilty of a capital offense and will die childless.

Some rather interesting surprises are found in this section of Scripture. Although adultery with a neighbor's wife, a mother, a daughter-in-law, another man, a mother and daughter, and a beast were all punishable by death, sexual intercourse with a sister resulted only in being cut off from the community, not death. Lying with a woman during her menstrual cycle

¹ Lev 20:10; John 8:5.
brought the same punishment. But, lying with an aunt or a sister-in-law was merely punished by not having children. The OT does not seem to advocate death or exclusion from the community for lying with someone who was single or with a prostitute. In fact, raping an unmarried virgin required the mere payment of fifty shekels to the father and marriage to the violated woman.\(^1\) In contrast, a woman who voluntarily lost her virginity before marriage was to be stoned to death.\(^2\)

Other casuistic laws relating to sexuality can also be found. Polygamy was not God's ideal; however, rules governing marriage to more than one wife were plainly explained. If a woman servant married her master or his son and he became unhappy with her, he could sell her. If he took another wife, he was to care for the first wife by providing for her needs both physically and sexually. If he did not perform these duties to her she could go free without payment.\(^3\) Prostitution by one who was single seemed to be permitted without the death penalty; however, the priest was not to marry someone who had been a whore, divorcée, or a widow.\(^4\) Higher requirements applied to the priest and his family, for if his daughter played the harlot she was to be burned with fire.\(^5\) Even though God hated divorce, it was the only option presented by Ezra to those who had married heathen wives. This was necessary for Israel to be cleansed of sin.\(^6\)

Many of these case regulations may seem unusual to us today. Yet they are a part of inspired literature. It appears that God designed these laws to meet people in their sinful condition. They were given to protect those who were defenseless and to see that justice was

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3 Exod 21:7-11.
6 Ezra 10:1-16.
administered to the guilty party. The fact that some sexual sins were punishable by death and others were not may suggest that even God Himself took variables into consideration.

Another primary example of casuistic law can be seen in regulations that controlled divorce. Although divorce violated the seventh commandment, God instructed through Moses that a bill of divorce should be given to the woman. The law permitted divorce in case of "uncleanness." The exact meaning of "uncleanness" is not clear. If it referred to the loss of virginity before marriage, the woman should have been stoned for playing the harlot. It seems questionable to believe that this "uncleanness" could refer to adultery, because the one who committed adultery was to be put to death. Furthermore, the second husband could divorce the woman if he did not like her. Some believe that the "uncleanness" referred to sexual immodesty that fell short of adultery. Because the second husband could put away his wife if he "hated" her, divorce seemed to be granted for more trivial reasons. Jesus stated that Moses allowed divorce because of the "hardness of your hearts," indicating that divorce was permitted not only because of sexual sin. Harold Lindsell, editor of the Harper Study Bible, says that many believe this passage was particularly designed to protect the woman; to give her the freedom to remarry and to protect her dowry and property rights. Whatever permission Moses granted, divorce was not the ideal. This casuistic law suggests that God designed regulations to meet fallen people where they were.

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1 Deut 24:1.  
2 Deut 23:21.  
3 Lev 20:10.  
4 Deut 24:3.  
5 Matt 19:8.  
Adultery was not the only sin that resulted in the death penalty. The following sins incurred stoning to death: breaking the Sabbath,\(^1\) enticing someone to worship other gods,\(^2\) and blaspheming God's name.\(^3\) A person who was a medium or wizard was to be killed.\(^4\) When Achan stole a garment and some silver from Jericho, he and his whole family were stoned.\(^5\)

The death penalty for these other sins indicates that adultery should not be singled out as uniquely evil. These terrible punishments do not seem to continue after Israel's wilderness wanderings. The reason for this is not entirely clear, nevertheless, God's displeasure against these sins must be given serious consideration.

**Leadership Roles in the Old Testament**

If there were a passage of Scripture that dealt specifically with the issue of restoring fallen pastors, we would have less difficulty coming to a biblical conclusion. No such verse exists specifically for pastors. If this study were about restoring leaders, several references could have made the task somewhat easier. Then one could include God's dealings with kings, prophets, judges, and priests as guidelines. There are those, however, who may argue that God's dealings with kings such as David and Solomon cannot be used as examples of restoration because they were political rather than spiritual leaders. They may conclude that God's standards for pastoral leadership were higher than for those of kings. If so, what applies to political leaders may not apply to pastors. Because there are those who consider some leadership roles as spiritual and others political, a study of various roles is germane to this research.

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\(^1\) Num 35:32-5.

\(^2\) Deut 13:6-10.

\(^3\) Lev 24:14-23.

\(^4\) Lev 20:27.

\(^5\) Josh 7:24-26.
The focus of this research is primarily upon pastors, because Adventists often use the term *pastor* for those who are paid leaders of a congregation. Whatever we conclude for pastors will certainly apply to other leadership roles and to that of local church officers as well. We now turn to the role of pastor.

**Pastors**

In Scripture, the term *pastor/pastors* is used eight times in the Old Testament. The eight times are all found in Jeremiah. In Jer 2:8, three groups of leaders are mentioned. Priests, pastors and prophets are reprimanded because they transgressed against God. It is not completely clear as to the specific role pastors played during the time of Jeremiah.¹ It seems that they were the ones who provided spiritual nourishment for the nation, but it is doubtful they fulfilled the same role as do those who pastor a church today. Regardless, none of these Jeremiah occurrences shed light on whether it is permissible to restore those who have fallen. There is, however, a significant connection between the terms “pastor” and “shepherd.”

The Hebrew word for pastor is *ra’ah* and literally means to shepherd a flock. Therefore we can extend the meaning of “pastor” to “shepherd.” This broadens the term significantly. The word “shepherd” or “shepherds” is used 43 times and 37 times respectively. In many cases, it literally denotes one who cares for sheep. Other times it refers to one who protects or watches over Israel. David was called the “shepherd of Israel.”² The word is not necessarily tied to a spiritual role, but certainly has the nuance of nurturing the entire person, not to exclude the spiritual part of a person. The Lord himself is called the “Shepherd of Israel.”³ For this reason, excluding David as an example of a spiritual leader who was restored is not defensible.

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¹ Jer 2:8.
² 2 Sam 5:2.
³ Ps 23:1.
Elders

Another word that is frequently used for pastor in Adventist circles is the term elder. It may be used of one who is a lay leader in a local church or of one who is an ordained, paid clergy person. The lay leader is usually not addressed with his family name as Elder Johnson, but the paid clergy person is often referred to as Elder Johnson, using “elder” together with the family name. There is no particular biblical basis for such distinctions.

The word elder is used eight times in the OT. In each case it appears to be an older person. Elders occurs 179 times and almost always pertains to the older male leaders in a village or city. The role seems to be more political than spiritual, with little emphasis being given to specific spiritual requirements. As such, this term is of little aid in helping us to determine whether a spiritual leader may be restored.

Priests

The expression priest or priests is prolific, occurring more than eight hundred times in the OT. Of all of the roles analyzed in the OT, the office of priest demanded the highest qualifications. Dr. Miroslav Kis, in one of his articles on sexuality in the ministry, points out in his series in Ministry, “Today’s pastor can identify with priests in biblical times.”1 There are certainly some important similarities, but there are significant differences. Although the moral requirements for being a pastor are high, the following reasons indicate that the priestly role cannot be completely compared to today’s pastoral role. Only priests were allowed to serve in the temple. The high priest alone was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place. Even those who were prophets were not permitted to enter the sanctuary. Priests wore special clothing to portray their holiness unto God. A physical defect would disqualify a man from serving as a priest. He could not be blind, or deaf, have a broken bone, or even be a dwarf. Moreover a priest could not

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marry a divorcee, a prostitute, or even a widow. If his daughter became a prostitute, she was to be burned.1 A priest was from the tribe of Levi and a descendant of Aaron. All of these qualifications make it impossible to make the pastoral role synonymous with that of a priest. Those stipulations that might deny a person from serving even as a common priest should not be applied to pastors. Additionally the New Testament (NT) broadened the role of the priesthood to the entire Christian community. All Christians were considered priests and kings unto God.2 Although the moral purity of all Christians should be beyond question, to deny restoration to a fallen pastor, based on the stipulations from Scripture for a priest, is questionable.

Prophets

The Hebrew word for prophet is nabi and it means one who is a spokesperson or speaker for God. Prophets came from all walks of life and often did not fit the norm. As God's mouthpieces, one might expect that a prophet's spiritual leadership would be of greater magnitude than that of pastors. If a prophet could remain in a position of spiritual leadership or be restored to spiritual leadership, one might believe that this could be true for pastors. In most cases the lives of those who were prophets were morally impeccable; however, not all would fit this qualification. Those who were somewhat outside the norm come to mind. Abraham was a prophet,3 yet his moral journey was not without its failures. He lied and risked the purity of his wife to save his own skin, and he took Hagar as a second wife; yet he was not removed from his leadership role as "father of the faithful."4 Moses was also a prophet, but he murdered a man. Both of these godly men committed heinous sins, but they were not removed from leadership.

1 Lev 21.
3 Gen 20:7.
4 Rom 4:16.
Kings

Several kings were adulterous and have been used as arguments in favor of forgiveness and restoration. David was an adulterer, but he was never removed from being king or the spiritual leader in Israel. Even after his spiritual meltdown, and his repentance, he was still considered the “shepherd of Israel” and a man after God’s own heart.1 Others may argue against using kings as models for pastoral restoration. They may contend that a king was a political leader and that this office could not be compared to that of a spiritual leader. If a king was merely considered a political leader without any necessary spiritual qualities, one might agree with the argument that kings should not be used as examples for restoration. But, since moral qualifications were imperative for kings, it seems that eliminating kings as examples of moral leaders may be an artificial distinction. The king also represented God to the people. He was to lead the people in harmony with the law of God.2 As the king went spiritually, so went the nation. Further evidence for the importance of spiritual qualifications for a king can be found in the story of Israel’s first king. Saul was rejected as king for his failure to carry out God’s directive to destroy the entire Amalekite nation. His disobedience of this seemingly small command, resulted in his being rejected as the political and spiritual leader of the nation.3

Summary

The major leadership roles in the OT have been examined to determine whether there is evidence for restoring any of the leaders who had committed adultery. The priesthood is the only spiritual role that would not allow for restoration. This office cannot be used as a model for determining whether pastoral restoration is justifiable because many of the requirements for

1 Ps 78:71.
2 Duet 17:17-20
3 1 Sam 13:10-14.
being a priest are not comparable to pastoral qualifications. Prophets and kings stand as examples of people who were retained as spiritual leaders, even though they experienced moral lapses. The prophetic role was primarily spiritual but Abraham is an example of a leader who made a moral mistake with Hagar. God still used him to bless all nations and the Messiah was born as his descendant. Though kings were primarily considered political leaders, they were expected to be spiritually qualified for leadership. We cannot dismiss these leaders as examples of those who, though flawed, who were retained in spiritual leadership. Even though we consider kings as merely political leaders, in the Bible there was not the separation of the political and spiritual roles as there is today. Besides, Israel was under the theocratic rule of God and the entire nation was a spiritual nation. Leaders of a spiritual nation, whether they were prophets, priests or kings were expected to be morally fit. David and other kings were retained as political/spiritual leaders, even though they fell into sexual sin. For this reason, they should be considered as examples for the restoration of spiritual leaders.

Case Histories in the Old Testament

We now turn our attention to specific leaders who had moral problems but were forgiven and remained leaders even though they did not meet the ideal.

Abraham (Gen 12-22)

Abraham’s experience and God’s dealings with him may be probed a little more deeply. Perhaps no single individual has endured such a challenge to his faith as did Abraham. God asked him to sacrifice his precious son and Abraham carried out this unbelievable request. A recounting of his spiritual weakness should be viewed in the light of his incredible faith. On the other hand, we cannot avoid noticing some glaring mistakes. Abraham yielded to the cultural practices of nations that surrounded him and took Hagar as a second wife. Not only did Abraham’s compromise create problems in his immediate family, the Middle East is still
suffering from the hatred between Isaac and Ishmael's descendants. In spite of his lack of faith in taking Hagar as a second wife, the Son of God was born through Abraham's lineage. Apparently God saw more to Abraham than the mistakes he made in his life.

Jacob (Gen 27-35)

Jacob's life was not impeccable either. He failed to trust God in the matter of his birthright and deceived his father. This resulted in his exile from home and a life of many heartaches. In spite of his humanity, he became the father of all who believe. Those who trust Christ are grafted into the Israelite olive tree.

Judah (Gen 38)

The next case is Judah, the fourth son of Jacob. He visited a prostitute who turned out to be his daughter-in-law. When Judah found out that Tamar was pregnant, he was irate and planned to burn her; however, she proved to be more righteous than he. Judah's encounter with Tamar does not imply that prostitution is acceptable. Notwithstanding Judah's sin with Tamar, both she and Judah became the ancestors of the Messiah. Judah's name will also be on one of the gates of the New Jerusalem. This is not meant to glorify the sins of men who were leaders, but it does indicate that in spite of their sin, they were forgiven and remained leaders of God's people.

Esther (Esther)

Esther is a biblical hero, but her situation would certainly raise a number of eyebrows today. She became a part of a Persian harem so that she could replace the former queen. Vashti

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1 Gen 47:9.

2 Rom 11:17.

3 Matt 1:2-3.
was deposed without “biblical” grounds, but Esther married King Ahashuerus anyway. Such an act would not be acceptable in many churches today, and yet Christians consider her as a paragon of spirituality. No one can question her courage or her dedication to God. God’s ability to work in less than ideal circumstances is a lesson that can be learned from her story.

Samson (Judg 13-16)

Samson is another leader who was used by God, in spite of his sexual promiscuity. The fact that he is recorded as an example of faith in the book of Hebrews seems incredible. Today, such a character would not be considered a godly hero. Surprisingly, the Spirit of God moved in his life even during his promiscuity until the time he disregarded his promise to remain a Nazarite. His sexual indiscretions did not immediately disqualify him from being a leader. Not until Delilah cut his hair did he lose the power to be God’s man. Even after this, his past disloyalty did not preclude God from using him as a leader one more time. He was more victorious in his death than during his life. One could say that Samson was merely a political leader. This is a limited view of the role of a judge, however. A careful review of the judges from Othniel to Samuel reveals their unique role as both spiritual and political leaders, selected by God to save His chosen people. As long as the judge was alive, the people remained loyal to God. When the judge died, the people slipped into idolatry. These human judges were considered models of God as Judge. Any suggestion that spirituality was not important for these leaders is obviously fallacious. They could not be used by God to free the Israelites from bondage if they were not people of faith.

1 Heb 11:32.
2 Judg 16.
3 Judg 2:18-19.
4 Judg 11:27.
David (1 Sam 14:1-23; 2 Sam 1-2; 1 Kgs 1-2)

David was a prime figure upon whom forgiveness was bestowed. Not only did he commit adultery with Bathsheba, he had her husband Uriah murdered, after which he married Bathsheba. In spite of the enormity of his sin, God did not remove him from office. He even appointed Solomon, the offspring of that adulterous marriage, to be the next king. David suffered unavoidable pain that resulted from his sin, but repentance brought mercy.¹

Another important factor comes from comparing David’s life with that of Saul, the first king of Israel. One might conclude that Saul’s “lesser” sin of failing to kill all of the Amalekites would not be nearly as great as David’s sin of adultery and murder. From a human standpoint, it would seem that David should be excluded as a leader and Saul retained, yet God saw things differently. He knew the heart of David and accepted his repentance. Saul apparently continued in his self-justification to the point of his own demise.

It has been debated whether David could serve as a model for restoring pastors. Those who object, point out that David was not a pastor. They suggest that political leadership cannot be compared with pastoral leadership. If being king was the only role that David fulfilled, their argument would be convincing. However, David was also an inspired writer. His legacy as a spirit-filled author of the Psalms dwarfs the moral authority of most pastors. If his writings had been excluded from Holy Scripture because of his moral fall, this might allow for him to be eliminated as a model for restoring pastors. But, since God has seen fit to include David’s writings as canonical, an objection against him as an example of restoration seems unwarranted. One newer translation of the Bible even states that David was a prophet,² a high calling chosen by God and reserved for only a select few whose hearts were turned to Him.

¹ Ps 51:1.
² Ps 89:15 (NLT).
Solomon (1 Kgs 1-11; Eccl 12)

Solomon is another example of one who could be considered a model for restoration. No one would question his moral downfall. His sexual promiscuity with one thousand wives and concubines is unparalleled in history.¹ King Solomon’s harem was a violation of a direct command of Moses.² In spite of his poor moral pattern, three of his books are a part of the canon of Scripture. Christians believe his writings were inspired and we accept them as morally instructive.

Manasseh (2 Kgs 20:21-24:3; 2 Chr 33)

Manasseh reigned 55 years in Judah and was the longest reigning monarch, but he was one of the most wicked. He was the son of Hezekiah and grew up in a godly family, but he chose the rebellion of idolatry and witchcraft. He even made his own children pass through the fire. He became so corrupt that his example led to Judah’s captivity.³ Because of the evil of his ways, God allowed the Assyrians to take him captive. “When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom” (2 Chr 33:12-13). Marvelous grace of God! Despite Manasseh’s great evil, he was restored to leadership.

An Old Testament Restoration Motif

One of the major themes in the OT is that of restoration. When Adam and Eve fell, a promise was made to restore the human family. God would put enmity between the woman and

¹ 1 Kgs 11:3.
² Deut 17:17-19.
³ 1 Kgs 20:11-13.
her seed and the serpent and its seed. Though the serpent would bruise the seed, Christ would win the victory and bring the fallen race back to the Father. All that Adam lost would be restored. It would not be a partial restoration but a complete one.

When Israel became enslaved in Egypt, restoration to a land that flowed with milk and honey was their dream. While they were in Egypt, they deteriorated morally to the place that they were worshipping their captor’s gods and living an Egyptian lifestyle. By bringing them out of Egypt, it was God’s purpose to bring glory to His name by making them the leader of nations. Restoration was more than forgiveness. It meant restoration to influence as well. They were to become representatives of God in the midst of foreign nations. It is God’s glory to take that which is chaotic and bring beauty from it. Even in the story of creation, God creates light from darkness and makes a pristine world from chaos.

Several Psalms illustrate the power of God to restore. Following David’s downfall, Scripture records his prayer of repentance. In Ps 51, David pours out a broken and contrite heart to his Heavenly Parent with whom he had walked in love and harmony through all the struggles of his life. David also prayed that God would restore unto him the joy of God’s salvation. From this restoration would flow his ability to teach sinners, and they would be converted. God did not abandon David; instead He used David’s downfall and restoration as a beacon of hope for those who have failed. This fallen warrior knew the kind of God He served, and in these encouraging words he exuded hope for those who have failed: “The Lord helps the fallen and lifts up those bent beneath their loads. All eyes look to You for hope... The Lord is close to all who call on Him, to all who call on Him sincerely. He hears their cries for help and He rescues them” (Ps 145:14, 18-19 NLT). As David came to the sunset of his life, his request to God was that his life would not be in vain. He even believed that in spite of his terrible sin, God could

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1 Gen 3:15.
2 Ps 51:12-3.
bring him to greater honor than in his youth. David’s confidence in God was undaunted. “O God, you have taught me from my earliest childhood, and I have constantly told others about the wonderful things you do. Now that I am old and gray, do not abandon me, O God. Let me proclaim your power to this new generation, your mighty miracles to all who come after me. Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the highest heavens. You have done such wonderful things. Who can compare with you, O God? You have allowed me to suffer much hardship, but you will restore me to life again and lift me up from the depths of the earth. You will restore me to even greater honor and comfort me once again” (Ps 71:17-21 NLT). This seems to support the thought that though a person may fail miserably, the end of one’s life may be more glorious than the beginning.

As a concluding example of the restoration motif in the OT, Israel’s return from Babylon to Jerusalem is significant. Their unfaithfulness to God led to their captivity, but God did not leave them without hope. In the last chapters of Zechariah, Israel was promised a future. The promise was complete restoration. Israel would again become God’s pride and joy. The wealth of nations would come to Jerusalem and God’s people would be holy again. Foreigners would take the arm of a Jew and ask to be led to God. Jerusalem would become the dwelling place for God again.¹

At the heart of the matter of restoration of pastors is whether God is able to completely heal and restore a fallen leader to usefulness and strength again. Those who question restoration tend to imply that those who have sinned sexually can never overcome the past or live above the mistakes they have made. The restoration motif in Scripture speaks of a full and complete restoration and in doing so, it brings glory to God. In the OT, grace and renewal prevail, even when moral and casuistic law have been transgressed.

¹ Zech 12-14
Conclusions

John says in his Gospel that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). The foregoing examples from the OT show how God dealt with fallen leaders. In the OT adultery and divorce were not considered unpardonable. The gospel of forgiveness and renewal went beyond the absolute and casuistic requirements of the law. If there is forgiveness, grace, and restoration in the OT, surely one could expect to find these mercies in greater measure in the NT.

New Testament

Leadership Roles in the New Testament

Pastors

The word pastor occurs only one time in the NT. It is found in Eph 4:11 and is listed as one of the spiritual teaching gifts given to the early Christian church. The root word for pastor comes from ποιμήν “pasture” and is most closely associated with one who is a shepherd or overseer of a flock or congregation. Jesus used the verbal form to refer to Peter in John 21:16. It was used by Peter, alluding to other ministers1 and by Paul to the bishops or elders of Ephesus.2 The single use of pastor, however, in the NT gives no indication as to whether pastoral restoration is permissible, but its connection with the term elder offers some help.

Bishop/elder

The bishop or elder most closely resembles the role of an Adventist pastor. The underlying Greek words for “elder” (πρεσβύτερος) and “bishop” (ἐπίσκοπος) come from the same root idea, that of being an overseer. Elders and bishops served as members of the

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1 1 Pet 5:2.
Sanhedrin in Judaism. The responsibility of leading and overseeing a local congregation most closely resembles the role of an elder or bishop. Paul tied the two roles together in Titus 1:5-7. He interchanged the two words as though they referred to the same office.

The expectations for an elder and bishop were very similar. An elder was to be blameless, faithful to one wife, have a good reputation, and have his children under control. He could not be a heavy drinker, arrogant, quick tempered, greedy, or violent. He was to be hospitable, wise, devout, and disciplined. Paul listed nearly identical qualifications for a bishop in his letter to Timothy. Even though the qualifications for elders and bishops were specifically delineated, not a single case of restoring or denying restoration to a fallen elder/bishop exists in the NT. The qualifications for serving as an elder/bishop will be discussed later.

Case Histories in the New Testament
The Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11-32)

Someone has quipped that the story of the prodigal son could better be titled The Prodigal Father. This idea turns on the fact that the father had such irrational, lavish love. Few would think that a father would restore a son who had wasted his father’s wealth in wild, adulterous living. Certainly, there should be some kind of retribution!

The parable begins with the youngest son requesting that his father give him his inheritance early. If ever a father “let go” of his son, this one certainly did. Most parents would not allow their children to take their portion of family wealth and spend it on gambling, drinking, and prostitution. Most would intervene in some way. But this father allows his son to take a journey to hell and back. After wasting his share of the family wealth, the son finds himself in a...

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3 1 Tim 3:2-7.
pig pen and "comes to himself." He realizes that home is better than the mud he is in, so he wraps his rags around him and begins the dusty journey home. He does not expect the welcome he will receive, though. He rehearses his speech carefully so his father will not refuse to allow him to be one of his hired servants. To the son's great surprise, the father, forgetting his dignity, runs to meet his son and hugs him and calls for a celebration. He places the family robe around the son and slips the ring of authority on his finger. His son has repented and now there is joy and full acceptance, no probation, no questions, only full acquittal and restoration.

This is restoration at its best. Gracious forgiveness, wonderful acceptance, and complete restoration illustrate how God treats those who have fallen into sin. This kind of scandalous mercy is too much for the son who has remained faithful. How can the father allow this decadent son to return and be accepted as though he had never left? Unbelievably the Father gives him authority again. This is the message of the gospel. In this story, the son is not only forgiven, he is restored to his former position. In the same way, those who have fallen and genuinely repented may be reinstated.

Mary Magdalene (Jn 8:1-11; Lk 7:36-50; Mk 16:9)

In Christian tradition, Mary Magdalene is believed to be the immoral woman who was dragged before Jesus and forgiven. While the evidence is inconclusive that Mary and this woman are the same individual, several factors seem to support this tradition. Mary Magdalene had "seven demons" cast from her (Lk 8:2); "Magdala" may refer to a woman of loose character,1 At Simon's feast, Mary was the impure woman who poured perfume on Jesus feet (compare Jn 12:1-12 with Lk 7:36-50). Mary’s many “sins were forgiven” (Lk 7:48); And Mary Magdalene was intensley devoted to Jesus, perhaps because of His forgiveness of her many sins. These factors tend to support the traditional view that the “adulterous” woman and Mary are the

same person. With this tradition in mind, we pick up Mary's story as men are dragging her to the temple, asking Jesus to stone her. She has been caught in the very act of adultery. They have exposed her just to trick Christ into conflict with the Mosaic law. After He invites anyone who is without sin to cast the first stone, He begins writing their sins in the sand. Finally, all her accusers are gone and Jesus says, "Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11). It is this same Mary out of whom He cast seven demons. It is this same Mary who spends a year's wages on expensive perfume to anoint Jesus for His death. He knows her background. He understands her shame and knows her need. He knows that she loves Him supremely. Those who are forgiven most are often those who love the most.1 Amazingly, it is this same Mary, a former prostitute, to whom Jesus appears after His resurrection.

This story can be understood only in the light of the plight of women at the time of Jesus. On the ladder of status, they were very low. But Mary was lower than low. She was a prostitute and she had been demon possessed. Those like Simon, who looked on from the sidelines, could not understand how Jesus could allow her to touch Him. But Jesus was not like that. He gloried in taking shamed and broken people and making them heroes. That is exactly what He did with Mary. Some who saw her give the perfume thought this was a despicable act. Jesus knew her heart and made sure that her example of love was told forever. It made no difference that she was a woman or that she had been immoral. He placed her story in the holy records, so all might see what can happen to a person who is touched by His love. Even though Mary was not a pastor, she is a perfect illustration of restoration. Her dignity and confidence were restored, and she was honored as the first to see the glorified Christ.

Peter (Lk 24:54-62; Jn 20)

Peter may seem to be an unlikely example of pastoral restoration for someone who has

1 Luke 7:47.
committed adultery. There is no record of his ever committing sexual sin. He did not leave any victims in the wake of his moral lapse. His was not a series of premeditated steps to a colossal downfall. As Armstrong notes, "He was, as we might say, "blindsided." Admittedly, Peter did not plan to deny Jesus. Instead, he swore that he would not disown his master. He was willing even to fight for Christ, which he demonstrated in Gethsemane by slicing off the ear of the high priest’s servant. But when it came to the critical time when Jesus needed Peter’s support the most, Peter denied three times that he knew his Master.

Yet, in spite of the tragedy of his denial, years later, his name is placed at the head of the list of the disciples. His impetuous nature is not glossed over, nor are his characteristic weaknesses. After his denials, Jesus gave him an opportunity to redeem himself. Three times He asked him “Do you love Me?” Even though Peter fell so low that he even denied that he knew Jesus, yet the Lord gave Peter an opportunity, in these three questions, to be restored and to regain the confidence of his brethren again. Later he became the primary speaker on the day of Pentecost. This denotes that he was not merely forgiven, he was reinstated. In like manner, the doctrine of God’s unfailing grace may be better served if those who have confessed their sexual sin and grievously repented should have an opportunity to be restored and regain the confidence of their colleagues.

Armstrong points out that Jesus restoration of Peter should be considered as an exception to the pattern. It is agreed that Peter’s case should not be used as an excuse for sexual sin, but to imply that restoration is not permissible when one has committed a high crime and afterward genuinely repented, seems to fly in the face of Peter’s restoration.

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1 Armstrong, 140.
2 Jn 21:15-17.
4 Armstrong, 140.
Paul

Paul, the author of fourteen books in the NT is another example of God’s grace. Even though his position as a Pharisee would give him legal right to kill Christians, he might be considered a terrorist today. We have no idea of how many people died or spent years languishing in prison as a result of his resistance to the Spirit of God. In spite of the fact that Paul opposed God’s church, God called him to a position of leadership in the church. The early church was not ready to trust him or include him as a leader; however, God not only forgave but singled him out for a special missionary role to the Gentile world. Perhaps no other follower of Christ has been more influential in the Christian church than has Paul. The church today can truly be thankful that God was not as reticent to forget Paul’s past as were those early believers.

A Calling of Grace to Holiness

God calls Christians to holiness. He invites us to “be ye holy for I am holy” (Lev 11:44). Hundreds of times throughout Scripture, we are asked to “be holy.” Paul speaks of this call to holiness in Eph 1. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love (Eph 1:3-4). There are those who would say that fallen pastors are unable to fulfill this calling. There are several reasons, however, that this may not be the case.

Holiness is not something that is inherent in any human being. Paul recognized that “in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing” (Rom 7:18). The Ephesian passage above rejoices that we were chosen “in Christ” before the foundation of the world to “be” holy. The choice occurs before our birth and has nothing to do with our inherent character. Not only this,

1 Acts 9:11-16.
the choice is “in Christ.” Therefore, our holiness is in Christ, not in the flesh. Furthermore, God’s choice for us is not based on the fact that we “are” holy but that we are to “be” holy. This is done “in love” and is completed when the reality of God’s kingdom becomes a part of human experience. Holiness, therefore, is a gift of God’s grace and not something that makes us inherently worthy. Paul states that “we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us” (2 Cor 4:7).

Holiness not only includes freedom from sexual impurity. It embraces freedom from pride, selfishness, and party spirit. It suggests purity in thought and motive. Jesus said that unless “your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, you will not even enter into the kingdom of heaven.” The Pharisees prided themselves on freedom from the riffraft of sinners, but they themselves were not pure in motive and thought. In contrast to external righteousness, Jesus radicalized the law to mean purity of heart as well as purity of action. He said, “But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matt 5:28). Very few men can say they have maintained this high level of purity. He also said, “But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment” (Matt 5:22). When one raises the standard of holiness, it becomes clear that all have “fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Those who have fallen in other areas of morality and have been restored leave the door open for restoration and forgiveness to those who have fallen sexually.

In the OT a priest was called to service because of his family of origin and because of his perfect qualification for that office. As was pointed out earlier, the priestly calling cannot be completely compared to that of a pastor or even an apostle. Those who did not serve as priests, but were called to leadership roles, such as prophets or kings, were not required to be as flawless as priests. In the NT, instead of requiring perfection, it seems that Jesus delighted in calling those who were less than desirable. God used them in spite of their brokenness and blindness.
Jesus seemed to focus on calling men who needed grace. A careful look at His disciples demonstrates His penchant for using sinners for His glory.

James and John were called “sons of thunder,” which suggests they had terrible tempers. Matthew was a tax collector and Simon was a Zealot. These two disciples would certainly make unlikely companions. Matthew had compromised with the hated Romans and used them for his own greed. Simon was ready to stab anyone who would side with Rome. Phillip and Thomas were both doubters. Andrew was shy and retiring. Peter was impetuous and outspoken. He certainly was not your typical pastor. The only one of the men who seemed disciple material was Judas, and he betrayed Jesus.

Paul was also an example of God’s calling of grace. Perhaps he should have been commended for his zeal in persecuting Christians, but he never looked at his early life of being a Pharisee as a qualification for being an apostle. He recognized that his calling was one of grace. He poured out his humble gratitude in these hopeful words: “Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ” (Eph 3:7-9).

If Paul could be chosen as an apostle, having been a murderer, and if Peter could be restored, having been a traitor, then surely those who have committed adultery could be redeemed to serve again as pastors. It must be recognized that the calling to share the gospel is, and will ever remain, a calling of grace for which no one is truly qualified.

A Restoration Motif in the New Testament

Restoring the Kingdom was one of Jesus’ main purposes in coming to our earth. By His life, death, and resurrection, He would heal the brokenhearted, set the captive free, open the
of the blind, and restore our lost dignity.\footnote{Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18.} Through Jesus, we would have authority again. He gave His disciples “authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And He sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick.”\footnote{Jn. 9:1,2.} No longer would we be of our “father the devil.” We were to be sons of God. John proclaimed this present reality in his first letter: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God” (1 Jn 3:2). As children of the heavenly king, we assume all rights and privileges as heirs to the throne. We are even called “priests and kings unto God” (Rev 1:6). This wonderful privilege is a gift from God and a glory to His name. This is not only a future hope but a present reality by faith in Christ. Paul says that we are already seated in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.\footnote{Eph. 2:7.}

Complete restoration is the hope of all who are in Christ, even for those who have been sexually impure. In the messages to the churches of Revelation, hope is given to those who repent. Those who are renewed to a “first love” experience will live in the paradise of God. Those who hang on during persecution will receive a crown of life. Those who repent of their adultery and idolatry will be given a new name. They will receive power to rule over all nations. Those who are overcomers will become pillars in the temple of God. And those who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy, who allow Jesus to come in and eat with them, will overcome and sit with Jesus on His throne (Rev 2-3). Complete restoration is the theme of Revelation. This restoration is granted to those who are repentant. No distinction is made between those who have lost their first love, been lukewarm or been adulterous. All overcomers are restored. Since sinners other than adulterers are restored, it seems that those who overcome impurity could also be restored to office. They will be in the kingdom and they are priests and kings unto God, even now.

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\footnotetext[1]{Isa 61:1; Lk 4:18.}
\footnotetext[2]{Jn. 9:1,2.}
\footnotetext[3]{Eph. 2:7}
Three NT passages of Scripture have often been used in support of the restoration of pastors. These three are now examined more carefully in a quest for a theology for restoration.

Gal 6:1

Those who argue that pastoral restoration is acceptable use this passage of Scripture as a primary source. It reads: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

The word for “fault” is παραπτώμα, which includes the idea of sin, or a lapse from moral truth. This word is used twenty-three times in the NT. Some may think that the term “fault” may refer to lesser sins, therefore excluding adultery; however, the KJV translates it as trespass nine times, offense seven times, sin three times, fall two times, and fault one time. Paul uses this word in parallel with ἁμαρτία (sin) in Rom 5:15-20. The Frieberg Greek Lexicon states that this word is “used of serious offenses against both God and man.” Therefore, nothing exegetically or contextually would suggest that this word would exclude adultery. This important verse in the NLT reads, “Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself” (Gal 6:1).

In the KJV the word overcome is translated as overtaken. The Greek suggests that this indicates the person has been taken unawares or surprised. The context of chap. 5 suggests that this sin or fault may be related to the works of the flesh, which includes adultery, heresies, witchcraft, and other sins of the flesh (Gal 5:19-20). The “flesh” cannot please God; it is only in the Spirit that sinners can find victory. This verse is addressed to those who are Christians and brothers. Nothing suggests that this verse would refer to pastors as an exclusive group, nor does the context imply that it would exclude them. “If a man is overtaken” includes anyone who sins.


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The Greek word for “restore” is καταρτίσμος, which means to repair, mend or complete. The word was used for the mending of a dislocated bone. To restore meant to put back in place again.1 Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown assert in their commentary, “Such is the tenderness with which we should treat a fallen member of the Church in restoring him to a better state.”2

One may readily understand why this Scripture could be used to teach that fallen pastors should be restored. Pastor and family therapist, Tim LaHaye, points out, “Obviously, the New Testament church believed in restoration for ‘brothers.’ It doesn’t say whether that includes ministers. On the other hand, there is no reason to believe it does not. Our Lord certainly restored Peter to ministry after he denied Him three times. And a good case could be made that denying the Lord three times and with an oath is even worse than adultery!”3

Not all would agree with LaHaye. Armstrong notes that this passage does not discuss restoring leaders to pastoral ministry. “That a man can be restored to useful service is not in question. What is seriously in question is restoration to his former ministry, from which he has now been removed due to his violation of trust established between him and the flock of Christ.”4

Although Hayford is in favor of pastoral restoration, he also admits that the text does not specifically imply a return to office or to reinstate in the former position.5 Because the passage is ambiguous regarding who the “brothers” are and the extent to which they are to be restored, it


3 Tim LaHaye, If Ministers Fall, Can They be Restored? (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990), 110.

4 Armstrong, 137-8.

5 Ibid, 27.
may be weak as proof positive in support of pastoral restoration. Contrariwise, it must be noted that the exegetical concept of the very word *restore* implies a return to former completeness or beauty. One who *restores* antique cars returns them to their former luster. This same idea is inherent in the meaning of mending a bone. To suggest that restoration could not include a return to office is therefore unwarranted. Admittedly, the term “brothers” does not refer specifically to pastors, but to exclude them from restoration seems biblically unsound, for pastors and leaders are also called “brothers” in Scripture. The passage seems to be inclusive in the use of the term, “if a man,” referring to anyone who sins. Therefore, the burden of proof to exclude leaders or pastors from this passage lies with those who suggest they cannot be included. What is encouraged for members should be true for leaders.

Rom 11:29 (NIV)

In this passage, the apostle Paul writes, “for God's gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” Some believe that this means that once a person has been ordained and chosen by God, that his calling cannot be revoked. Understanding the context and the underlying Greek words may help to clarify whether this text should be used for restoring pastors. The word “gifts” is taken from *χαρίσμα* and means gifts that come to us through the divine grace and sovereignty of God. These gifts are not meritorious. The word is used to refer to the free gift of salvation in Rom 5:15-18. It is also used with reference to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as “apostles, prophets, pastors, teachers and helps” (Rom 12:6-7; Eph 4:8-11). In light of this, the gifts in Rom 11:29 could be referring to pastors if the context supports it. The immediate context indicates that the apostle is referring to the election of salvation for Israel (Rom 11:26-28), and that this is not reversible. The wider context, however, in a few verses later in chap. 6:6 allows for a distant relationship, though it is weak.

“Calling” comes from the word *καλέω* which is the aorist passive participle of *καλέω*. It has to do with the divine invitation of God for individuals to join a select group and may refer
to changing one’s status, vocation, or station in life. God’s calling is a calling of grace, a calling to become a part of His divine family and special instruments in His hands for special service.

The term “without repentance” comes from the Greek *μεταμελητός* meaning unchangeable or inflexible. In God’s sovereignty, His calling and election are unchangeable. His calling is based on grace and His unchangeable desire to redeem us and use us for His glory. In summary, the immediate context of this passage applies the calling to Israel’s irrevocable election for salvation. The immediate context does not warrant a specific application to a particular office. To use this passage for restoration is therefore weak. The passage can be used, however, in the wider economy of God’s gracious restoration of people He has chosen. As such, it may obliquely be used in support of the biblical theme of restoration.

1 Pet 4:8

Peter admonishes, “And above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins” (NKJV). In the preceding verses Peter warns the early Christians for being lax by being involved in lust or drunkenness and the like because the end of all things is at hand. This warning is followed, however, with a stress on “above all things have fervent love for one another.” This love is the highest calling of a Christian. It is from this love that the admonition comes to “cover a multitude of sins.” Love is revealed in compassion for each other. We will seek to cover the sins of those who fail to reach the ideal; but, the question must be addressed as to whether “covering a multitude of sins” can refer to restoration to a specific office. A partial answer may be found in an exegesis of the term, “cover a multitude of sins.”

The Greek for “cover” is *καλυπτω* which means to conceal, hide, cover up, or keep

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1 Frieberg,

2 Ibid.
secret.¹ The obvious implication is that Christians should avoid exposing the sins of the brethren. Christians will seek to do their best to protect the reputation of their fellowship. The word “multitude” does not really need any exegesis. It means a large number. Perhaps Peter here remembers Jesus astounding homily on forgiveness. Not merely will we forgive once or twice but “seventy times seven” (Matt 18:22). The sins to be covered are not merely unintentional acts. The word “sins” comes from ἁμαρτία, which refers to a departure from doing right, or a failure to keep the law. In Rom 3 it means a missing of the mark. All have “fallen short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). This is radical love. It is a love that forgives and forgives and forgives again. Forgiveness is always available to the fallen. It is extended to guilty sinners, even to those who were crucifying Jesus. But does this necessarily mean we should reinstate those who have sinned to their former positions? Some would say “no.” Forgiveness is available to all, but not restoration. Admittedly, one cannot unequivocally prove that this passage supports restoration to office. Conversely, neither does this passage deny restoration. It would seem that if one’s sins are hidden, buried, and covered that they no longer should be a factor in trust being restored. If one admits that God allows for complete forgiveness and that He treats us as though we had not sinned, then restoration to trust could also occur.

This promise is given to all who repent and overcome. No one is excluded from this hope. No intimation in the NT exists for the exclusion of repentant adulterers. Jesus associated with those who were sinners. He came not to minister unto those who were righteous but to those who were sick and needed a Savior.² As noted earlier, many pastors come from a dysfunctional background. They often join the healing profession as an unconscious way of seeking healing in their own ministry. If other forgiven, repentant sinners can become leaders with Christ in His kingdom, it would seem that in the forgiving, restoring, circle of God’s grace,

¹ Idid.

fallen leaders too, should be included in God’s complete restoration.

Conclusion

Of necessity, I must agree with Armstrong when he writes, “No text makes it imperative that we must seek restoration of the fallen pastor to office and no text plainly forbids it.”1 This does not mean there is no provision for pastoral restoration. The greatest support for restoration is in the message of the gospel itself, and in how Jesus treated sinners. If Jesus could promise a condemned thief, “Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise”(Lk 23:43), it would be justifiable to conclude that Jesus could also use a fallen pastor again for His glory.

Responding to Perceived Biblical Objections

General Biblical Concerns

Throughout the history of humanity, sexual immorality has been a major factor in the downfall of society. As early as the Flood, it appears that a moral downfall occurred when the “sons of God married the daughters of men.”2 As a result, the earth became filled with violence and the “thoughts of men’s hearts were evil continually.”3 Often sexual immorality was associated with idolatry. It was Israel’s immorality combined with their idolatry that led to their downfall at Peor.4

One can recount the undoing of numerous individuals in the OT and note their tragic mistakes. Samson lost his eyesight while flirting with a prostitute. David lost four sons because of his affair with Bathsheba. Solomon’s poor example of marrying heathen women led him and the nation into idolatry. This was one of the reasons Israel and Judah went their separate ways.

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1 Armstrong, 152.
3 Ibid.
4 Num 25.
Usually God’s people rose no higher than their leaders. If those who set the example strayed from the path of obedience, the people followed suit. This pattern reached its zenith with Judah’s final downfall in their Babylonian captivity.¹ With the restoration of fallen leaders, there must also be safeguards to protect the church from moral decline.

The Jerusalem Council stressed the importance of abstaining from sexual immorality.² It was sexual immorality that led the One who walked among the candlesticks to rebuke the churches of Pergamum and Thyatira.³ Sexual immorality was at the heart of Peter’s warnings against false teachers.⁴ And Paul admonished the Ephesians that sexual sin was not even to be named in the Christian community. Plainly, those who continue to practice sexual sin will be excluded from heaven. In fact, because of these types of sin, the wrath of God came upon those who were disobedient.⁵ These strong scriptural admonitions against sexual sin again raise the issue of whether or not those who fall into such sin should be allowed to serve as leaders.

There should be no question as to the seriousness of moral depravity. To continue to practice it will exclude one from heaven. Notwithstanding Jesus said, “Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation: Because they said He hath an unclean spirit” (Mark 3:28-30). Jesus’ radical forgiveness of Mary Magdalene is evidence that sexual sin is not unpardonable. But, at the heart of the issue lies the question of whether a pastor who is repentant and living above the sin can be restored. There should be no question as to whether willful sin should exclude him

¹ Ezek 23:17.
³ Rev 2:14, 20, 21.
⁵ Eph 5:3-6.
from ministry, if it is continually practiced. On the other hand, if Pergamum and Thyatira
repented, they would not lose their place among the churches.

The question should be addressed as to whether the erring pastor has had a habitual
pattern of sexual sin or whether his was a one-time lapse from which he repented. If the life
pattern has been one of sexual sin, the advisability of restoration would be remote. But, a single
failure in a person’s life that is repented of should not be considered the final statement of his
character.

A Comparison of Adultery with Other Sins

Very few in the Adventist Church would ever say that sexual sin is the unpardonable sin.
Yet the church, in its official policies, has regarded a moral lapse as unpardonable from the
standpoint of future employment. This position may be due in part to a common belief that some
sins are worse than others. Armstrong argues that “jealousy, pride, hatred and lust are damning
sins, but their outward, physical manifestations of adultery, fornication and murder are far
greater.”1 Adultery is considered to be more damaging because it dishonors God’s name, ruins
the character of all who are involved, and wrecks the reputation of the church.”2 This may be the
reason that David Neff, of Christianity Today, contends, “When adultery takes place the
adulterer violates trust in a fundamental and public manner [and] is ipso facto no longer a
leader.”3 Neff does not, however, discuss whether a repentant person can return to leadership.

Armstrong’s view, however, begs the question as to whether other sins are not also
destructive. Gossip and bitterness can destroy a church’s reputation and character. Pride and
anger can distort Christ’s love in toxic ways. A review of how the Bible treats sin in general, and

1 Armstrong, 52.
2 Ibid., 53.
3 Neff, 20.
whether or not sin as presented in Scripture is hierarchical, may clarify the issue. To do this, representative “sin lists” in the Bible will be examined to determine if any particular sin is considered by inspired writers to be worse than another. Many such texts exist in Scripture. The following ones include most of them. They will be cited first, after which significant implications will be noted.

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man. (Mark 7:21-23)

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man. (Matt 15:18-20)

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Rom 1:18-32)

Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. (1 Cor 5:9-11)

Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, who are idol worshipers, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexuals, thieves, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and swindlers—none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor 6:9-11)

These events happened as a warning to us, so that we would not crave evil things as they did or worship idols as some of them did. For the Scriptures say, ‘The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged themselves in pagan revelry.’ And we must not engage in sexual immorality as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. Nor should we put Christ to the test, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. And don't grumble as some of them did, for that is why God sent his angel of death to destroy them. All these events happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us, who live at the time. . .(1 Cor 10:6-11 NLT)
For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed. (2 Cor 12:20-21)

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Gal 5:19-21 NLT)

But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks. For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. (Eph 5:3-5)

Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry: For which things' sake the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience: In the which ye also walked some time, when ye lived in them. But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth. Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds. (Col 3:5-9)

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. (2 Tim 3:2-7)

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. (1 Tim 1:9-10)

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Rev 21:8)

For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie. (Rev 22:15)

These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him:
a proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, an heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, a false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren. (Pro 6:16-19)

If God considers one sin more heinous than another, one would expect a specific statement to that affect or a consistent order of priority in these lists. An examination of the above texts suggests several implications regarding sin.

1. Sexual sin is not the only sin that will exclude a person from the kingdom. Fear, unbelief, lying, covetousness, envy, debate, pride, and disobedience to parents can also bring God's wrath (Rom 1:18-22; Rev 21:8; 22:15).

2. There is no consistent order or hierarchy of sin. Rev 2:8, 1 Tim 3:2-7, and 1 Tim 1:9-10 place sexual sin later in the list of sins. It appears that the authors of Scripture mixed all sin together as destructive. This suggests that all sins are offensive to a holy God.

3. Mental sins may also cause one to be lost. Sins such as “unbelief,” “fear,” “pride,” and “covetousness” are ones that are listed. (Rev 21:8; Eph 5:3-5; Gal 5:19-20; 2 Tim 3:2-7).

4. In Solomon’s list of sins that are hateful to God, he does not even mention sexual sin. One that is particularly hateful is “sowing discord among the brethren” (Pro 6:19).

5. That which makes a person unworthy of the kingdom is not sin in itself; it is the continued practice of sin.

The Corinthian Christians had been thieves, fornicators, drunkards, covetous and revilers, but they were “washed in the blood of Jesus” and justified by His grace (1 Cor 6:7-11). Those who are outside the holy city are those who “love and practice sin” (Rev 22:15). Those who are “unbelieving and fearful” are also excluded (Rev 21:8). If exclusion occurs because a person has committed these sins, no one would be saved. The issue turns on whether these sins continue to be practiced in the light of God’s grace. There is no disagreement with Armstrong about the destructiveness of sexual sin. There is a disagreement on whether a repentant sexual sinner should be excluded from serving the Lord again as a minister. The evidence that God
accepted individuals who failed sexually, but repented, suggests that God does not exclude leaders on the basis of sexual sin. Humans may rank sins from least to greatest, but these passages leave doubts as to whether God does.

Another issue needs to be addressed in connection with Christians who come from dysfunctional backgrounds, like the Corinthians. If one can come from an environment and practice of sexual promiscuity and become a Christian leader, it seems that after one becomes a Christian, and fails in this area, one could be restored, if sincere repentance and victory occurs. The implication that after one becomes a Christian, restoration to office may not take place indicates that forgiveness is more limited after becoming a Christian than before. But conversion is not an instantaneous, one-time event. Complete sanctification is a life long process. Mercy, forgiveness and restoration, should be available after conversion, not only for adultery, but for other sins as well.

A belief that sexual sin is unpardonable for restoration based on the idea that it is worse than most other sins lacks a consistent biblical witness. Other scriptural evidence suggests that other sins are exceedingly destructive to the body of Christ as well.

The church’s influence may also be damaged by a legalistic attitude toward grace. A pharisaical, prideful leader may injure the soul and reputation of a church as well. In fact, Jesus was more harsh with those who were hypocrites than with any other group of people. Nearly an entire chapter in Matthew is dedicated to His “woes” upon those who made high spiritual claims but bound heavy religious burdens upon their followers and did not lift a finger to help them. Adultery is not given as a basis for any of these woes.

Jesus’ story of the two men who came to worship at the temple is another illustration of the evil of pride and the failure to recognize spiritual need. The Pharisee bragged about his goodness, “I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even

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as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess” (Lk 18:11). He seemed to have a list of sins in his mind that were worse than others and he certainly had not committed them. But Jesus stripped away this misconception. He unveiled the truth that the Pharisees’ soul was bankrupt. It was the publican sinner, the adulterer, who went home justified before God.¹ It is a scriptural axiom that “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6).

Lukewarmness and self-sufficiency are particularly offensive to God. The Laodiceans felt they were rich and increased with goods and that they had need of nothing, but they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. If they did not allow Jesus to enter their hearts, God would spit them out.²

Scripture records a number of incidents of God’s direct judgement upon sin. In only one such incident is there a judgment for sexual sin. Nadab and Abihu were slain by the Lord for offering strange fire.³ Korah, Dathan, and Abiram and 250 princes were swallowed by the earth for rebellion against Moses and Aaron.⁴ Uzzah was slain for impetuously touching the ark.⁵ Gehazi was struck with leprosy for lying and greed.⁶ And, Ananias and Sapphira were struck down because they lied to the Holy Spirit and were greedy.⁷ These and more examples could be recounted where God summarily punished people.

As noted, one can recount an exception. Those who committed sodomy were destroyed

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² Rev 3:15-17.
⁴ Num 16:1-32.
⁵ 2 Sam 6:6-8.
⁶ 2 Kgs 5:21-27.
by fire and brimstone in the cities of the plains. Yet even this incident of God’s wrath gives no
indication that sexual sin was unforgivable or worse than all others. It was their continued
hardness to the call of God that caused those from Sodom and Gomorrah to be destroyed. If
there had been some who would have left the city with Lot and his family, they could have been
saved. If sexual sin were the single reason for the death of those living in Sodom, Lot’s wife
would not have perished. She was destroyed merely for looking with longing upon her former
home.

The Unpardonable Sin (Mk 3:20-30)

According to Jesus, there is only one sin that is unforgivable. All manner of sins and
blasphemies, even against Himself and the Father, will be forgiven except this one. This
amazing forgiveness sounds unbelievable but these are the words of Jesus Himself. What then is
this sin that cannot be forgiven? A look at the context of how Jesus identified it is in order
before consideration of other views. It may come as a surprise to some, but the unforgivable sin
was not noted as being committed by the harlots or publicans or the rabble of Jesus’ day. It was
being committed by those who were religious.

Jesus’ healing a man on the Sabbath is the background for His teaching about the sin
against the Holy Spirit. According to the Jewish traditions of His day, He did not keep the
Sabbath correctly. Apparently He was not educated in the right schools. He behaved in
unexpected ways. He chose a motley corps for His disciples. So instead of accepting Jesus’
miracles, the religious leaders quibbled over how He had accomplished them. In so doing, they
attributed His healings to another power, to that of the devil.¹ This left them without forgiveness.
In this way, Jesus said they had committed the unpardonable sin.

Part of the work of the Holy Spirit is to convince of sin, particularly the sin of unbelief in

¹ Mark 3:22.
Christ. If men reject the need for confession and the need of a Savior, and continue in this pattern, they place themselves outside the womb of God's compassion. Years ago an evangelist aptly defined the unpardonable sin in this way: "The unpardonable sin, is the only sin that we do not want to be forgiven." If this is the case, the crux lies not in a one time lapse from doing God's will but in a continued practice of known sin, a hardening of the will to the heart of God.

In summary, the church, corporately or individually, may rank certain sins as being more deserving of extreme displeasure than other sins. But these sins may not be the ones God sees as particularly heinous. Ellen White's perspective is particularly appropriate in this context:

Man's judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need.

Discipline That May Not Restore

The overall theme of the gospel is one of redemption and restoration, but this does not imply that discipline is unnecessary. "The Lord disciplines him whom He loves and chastises every son whom He receives" (Heb 12:6 RSV). In fact, "If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons" (Heb 12:8 RSV).

The purpose of discipline, nevertheless, is for our good. "But He disciplines us for our good that we may share in His holiness" (Heb 12:10 RSV). In some cases discipline may require a person to be disfellowshiped. In some situations, restoration may not be an option.

In a singular case in the NT, a man was to be expelled from the fellowship of the church. This is the only NT case of specific disciplinary action. The story is recorded in 1 Cor 5. "It is

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1 John 16:9.

actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord” (1 Cor 5:1-5 NIV).

Even in this particularly disgusting situation, the purpose of discipline was to redeem. The man was to be handed over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit might be saved. The type of discipline was separation from the body of Christ. Those who were Christians were not to associate with this man.1 This sin was not the only one that was considered eligible for such discipline. Paul wrote, “But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat” (1 Cor 5:11). It should be observed that drunkenness, greediness, and slander were also included in this list. Sexual sin was not the only one that required severe discipline. The man was to be expelled for his wickedness.2

The story does not end there, though. The Corinthians zealously obeyed Paul’s directive and later he wrote to them admonishing them that their discipline had been severe enough. They were to forgive and encourage the man, lest he be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. They were to forgive him so that “Satan would not outwit us” (2 Cor 2:11 NIV).

Several important disciplinary principles may be found in this experience.

1 1 Cor 5:9-11.
2 1 Cor 5:13.
1. Discipline is for the purpose of redemption.

2. It may be necessary to disfellowship or “cast out” a person from the fellowship of the church to awaken in them a spirit of repentance.

3. This may suggest that disfellowshiping someone may not always be necessary, particularly if repentance has occurred.

4. When repentance occurs, forgiveness and love are to be demonstrated so Satan will not overwhelm the person or the church.

5. The church should be sensitive to the grief and loss experienced by a person who is being disciplined. When repentance occurs the church should rally to redeem a person who has fallen.

6. Discipline may not need to be permanent. It may come to an end, at which point the offender is restored in love. This was true, even in this particularly offensive situation.

7. If repentance does not occur, permanent exclusion would be necessary.

8. Forgiveness is available to all who repent, and specifically for those whose sins are considered to be worse than others.

Along with the importance of repentance is the matter of confession. Solomon wrote, “He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy” (Prov 28:13 NIV). One who does not acknowledge his sin but seeks to keep it secret cannot prosper in the Lord’s work. In confession there is also healing. “Therefore confess your sins to each other, and pray for each other so that you may be healed” (Jas 5:16). In essence, healing and restoration cannot occur without a humbling of the soul before God. Not only should there be confession and a sense of humility, there should be a willingness on the part of the fallen leader to do all he can to restore and repay the damage he may have caused. In this way a pastor may begin to rebuild a damaged reputation. One who is unwilling to take these initial steps should not be reinstated to office. It is assumed that one who has been humbled in
confession and who is repentant would be willing to undergo a process of guidance and
counseling and would be willing to become accountable in order to be restored. One who would
not be willing to enter this kind of restorative process should not be considered for restoration.

Those who have been involved in criminal sexual activity or who have been involved
sexually with a child should be excluded from restoration. This may sound inconsistent since the
thesis of this paper has been that God is in the business of restoring people. Forgiveness is
available to every repentant sinner, so why should restoration be unavailable for these sins? In
many cases, those who are involved with children do not confess or repent. Dealing with those
who have been involved with children is most often disappointing for this very reason.
Furthermore, those who have been involved in criminal behavior or with children would find it
very difficult to fulfill all of the qualifications that Paul gives for elders. If they are repentant
and living a life of confidence before their brethren they may be able to fulfill the qualifications
of being blameless and faithful to their wives but to be able to restore their reputation would be
very difficult. Paul says that an elder must have a “good reputation with outsiders so that he will
not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap” (1 Tim 3:7). If trust cannot be established, one’s
ability to minister is short-circuited and their service will be ineffective. In cases where the
reputation has been so damaged that trust cannot be reestablished, restoration to ministry would
not be an option. Criminal and sexual behavior with children make it effectively impossible to
restore a person to ministry from the standpoint of building trust.

Restoration to ministry is always a matter of a calling of grace. In order for fallen
pastors to perform ministry in the sense of being pastors, they must have regained the confidence
of those who may employ them. That in itself is an act of grace. God must also impress the
minds of those in authority that a fallen pastor is ready to fulfill pastoral responsibilities. This
should not be a hurried process. Jack Hayford discusses a scriptural need to have an extended
process.
First, an accurate definition of “restore”—its meaning and tense—dictates a radically
different stance from that assumed by those demanding a leader’s quick return to office.
The verb καταρτίζω (restore) means “to mend” to fit or to thoroughly equip,” and the
tense and mood (present imperative) dictate that the action is intended to be sustained in
an ongoing, continual way. The clear command that is instructed here might
appropriately be paraphrased."When another person is overtaken in a fault or failure,
you who are spiritual people will see to it that you graciously set about the extended task
of seeing that person mended and returned to full fitness; doing it in a way that clearly
indicates you do not hold yourself as superior to them for their having fallen and all the
while remembering your own vulnerability."¹

It may be concluded from Scripture and the stories that have been presented that no
particular biblical passage exists that clearly indicates that sexual sin is worse than other sins.
This is not to say that sexual sin is to be excused. It merely implies that our ranking of sin is just
that: our ranking and not God’s. In some cases it may be necessary to discipline a brother for the
purpose of redemption, but when repentance occurs, fellowship should be renewed. When the
reputation of one is so damaged that it cannot be rebuilt, this makes it almost impossible to
restore one to the ministry. This is not because the sin is less forgivable or because one cannot
be restored spiritually. In such cases, the church should extend grace and forgiveness, but one
must be able to restore a reputation in order to minister effectively. In cases where repentance
occurs and one’s reputation can be restored, the scriptural burden of proof that sexual sin
excludes fallen leaders forever from restoration to office lies at the feet of those who would deny
such restoration. If one can be forgiven and spiritually restored, it appears untenable from
Scripture to limit restoration to forgiveness but not to allow restoration to the ministry. In doing
what the Bible does not in rating some sins as more evil than others, we may even encourage the
very behaviors that we seek to eliminate.

An Analysis of 1 Cor 6:18: A Sin against the Body

A fundamental cornerstone to the idea that sexual sin is worse than any other is the
perception that this sin, more than any other, is a sin against one’s own body. In fact, those who

¹ Hayford, 25-26.
take this position believe that no other sin, not alcoholism, not drug addiction, not even suicide is a sin against the body. Only sexual sin fits this category. Even if this were true, no specific Scripture is given to indicate that a sin against the body is unforgivable. No evidence within this singular usage in Paul's writings indicates that a sin against the body should exclude a repentant person from ministry. Nevertheless, let us deal with the text of 1 Cor 6:18-20 and determine whether sexual sin should be considered the only sin against the body. “Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins ("other" is not in the original language or in the KJV) a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Cor 6:18-20 NIV).

The text seems straightforward enough in English. It appears to classify sexual sin as the only sin against the body. R. C. H. Lenski, a prominent Lutheran scholar who has written an entire commentary on the NT, and many other Protestant writers, such as John Calvin, opt for a simple, clear meaning of the text, without questioning the logic of it. Because Lenski is a prominent example of these authors, his comment is noteworthy: "Fornication, as does no other sin, violates the body. The minor premise will follow: The Christian's body is the Spirit's sanctuary. And then the conclusion of the syllogism is plain: Fornication, as does no other sin, desecrates the very sanctuary of God."¹

This means that sexual sins bear a character all their own. Lenski continues:

They are particularly unsavory and hence entail shame and disgrace in a particular manner. They rot the body, fill the mind with rottenness, and rapidly eliminate the sinner from this life. . . . We err also when we question or challenge Paul’s statement regarding the exceptional character of fornication by referring the exceptional character to a sin like suicide or others that damage the body like drunkenness, gluttony, addiction to drugs, etc. Paul is far more profound: no sinful act desecrates the body like

¹ Lenski, 267-8.
fornication and sexual abuse. In this sense fornication has a deadly eminence.¹

Although the Bible leaves no doubt that sexual sin is evil, some biblical evidence seems to counter that sexual sin is the worst evil by not listing sins hierarchically. It does seem difficult to conceive that sexual sin could be a worse sin against the body than suicide or alcoholism, but the passage under discussion seems to support this notion. If we conclude that this verse should be understood simply as it reads, it would lend support to excluding sexual sinners from restoration to office. On the other hand, if there are exegetical reasons for questioning whether this text proves that fornication is the only sin against the body, we need to look at those arguments. In addition, if textual evidence implies that sexual sin is not the only sin against the body, a major kingpin in the argument for excluding fallen pastors from reinstatement is weakened.

At first glance, the implication that sexual sin is more of a sin against the body than drug addiction, alcoholism, or suicide seems to make very little logical sense. It does not seem sensible that fornication would be worse on the body than drug addiction. Nonetheless, logic must not be the determining factor regarding the meaning of Scripture. The question to address is whether an exegesis of the text itself suits the simple or commonly understood English interpretation.

Not all commentaries agree with Lenski and Calvin. Some authors have noted that there may be as many as 20 to 30 solutions to this textual dilemma; however, the viable options can be narrowed to only two: (1) The sin of fornication is the only sin against the body. All others are “outside the body.” (2) Paul is responding to a Corinthian slogan. The Corinthians said, “Sin has no effect on the body.” As a counter argument, Paul disagreed, “Sin does affect the body and an example of this is sexual sin.” The second opinion on this text has large support as well as the does the first opinion. For this reason they will both be analyzed more carefully.

¹ Ibid, 268.
Option 1 has logical problems, as noted, but there are other difficulties as well. Jay Smith, a noted Greek scholar, discusses the exegetical problems with opinion 1.

However, several facts argue against this interpretation. First, the wording of verse 18 does not suggest that ἐκτὸς τοῦ σωμάτου is to be understood in a relative or comparative sense. Such a view is derived solely from the supposed logical necessities of the verse. In fact the phrase ἐκτὸς τοῦ σωμάτου seems to describe an absolute distinction rather than a relative one. Second, the δὲ introducing verse 18c does not signal an exception (i.e., every sin that a man commits is outside the body, except sexual immorality), as the comparative view requires, but indicates a true contrast. That this is the case seems probable for several reasons: (a) πᾶν οὐαρτήμα with the indefinite relative is an inclusive statement ("every sin, no matter what it is"), (b) δὲ is commonly used to signal a contrast and only rarely it introduces an exception, and (c) when Paul made an exception to what otherwise looks like an absolute statement, he invariably introduced the exception with εἰ μὴ rather than δὲ. Third, in the context (vv. 9-10) Paul put sexual immorality and drunkenness in the same category with no hint that sexual immorality is in a class by itself.¹

The second choice indicates that Paul is responding to a Corinthian slogan (vs. 18b), which reads, "Every sin that a man commits is outside of the body," to which Paul replies (verse 18c), "On the contrary, the one who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body."² Smith claims that "by this slogan the Corinthians meant that the physical body had nothing to do with sin. The physical body was morally irrelevant, for sin took place on a completely different level of one’s being. Paul responded by saying that the body was not morally irrelevant and that by committing sexual immorality one sinned against his own body. Several factors favor the 'slogan' interpretation."³

The following is a partial enumeration of some of these factors. The footnote below gives the page numbers in his article for further study:

1. Paul uses this practice of responding to slogans elsewhere in 1 Cor (6:12-13; 7:1, 26; 8:1, 4, 5-6, 8; 10:23; and 11:2). Sexual immorality was a cardinal sin in Corinth, and this slogan

² 1 Cor 6:18.
³ Smith, 474.
would be a likely one that they would use.

2. The slogan interpretation would allow structural parallelism between 13-17 and 16-18 where Paul cites a slogan, rejects it, and then elaborates.

3. It fits conceptually with the slogan of 6:13 a-b ("Food for the stomach and the stomach for food—and God will destroy them both").

4. It relieves Paul from making an illogical statement that classifies all other sins as being outside the body, except sexual sin.

5. It eliminates an unusual correspondence between εκτός “outside,” and εἰς “against.” This Greek structure would be unusual for Paul. He would have used εν, “in,” rather than εἰς, “against,” which he does in a parallel passage in 2 Cor 12:2.

6. It explains the use of αἵματιμμα which appears to be a non-Pauline word.

7. It lets ἀνθρώπος, a regular term appropriate for slogans, to parallel the use of the term in other slogans in 1 Corinthians (7:1, 26).¹

There are three main objections to the “slogan” view. First, the slogan seems to be introduced abruptly. However, other recognized slogans are also introduced abruptly. Second, Paul’s reply seems to accept the general Corinthian proposal that all sin is outside the body, providing only a single exception. This objection is not really persuasive, because Paul’s reply seems to be formulated specifically for the issue at hand, without concern for other possibilities. Third, it is argued that Paul’s reply in 18c is an inadequate response to the slogan. Since the slogan argues that sin has nothing to do with the body, it is felt that Paul did not respond adequately in 18c. This contention, also, is not compelling because Paul challenges the argument more fully in the next two verses in 19-20.² He declares that a person’s body is not his own. It is

¹ Ibid., 476-77.
² Ibid.
the temple of the Holy Spirit. It is important to note that the main reasons those who favor the first interpretation center on logical English conclusions rather than on Paul's Greek syntax and structure. For this reason it seems we must take Smith seriously when he concludes: "The evidence favors the slogan interpretation. Paul was not arguing that sexual immorality is a sin of unparalleled evil. Rather, sexual immorality is one of several sins against the body, and as such it is not afforded a special place that automatically warrants an elder's permanent disqualification. Even if Paul were singling out sexual immorality as a sin in a class by itself, it still remains to be shown that sexual immorality automatically demands the permanent disqualification of an elder."

Fallen Pastors Cannot Fulfill the Qualifications

Two major passages in Paul's writings focus on qualifications for elders. They are found in Titus 1 and 1 Tim 3. Those who disapprove of fallen leaders being restored contend that three of these qualifications cannot be met by those who are tarnished by sexual sin. Fallen leaders cannot be above reproach; they cannot fulfill the requirement of being the husband of one wife; nor can they re-establish a good reputation in the community. The following challenges to these three objections reflect Smith's contentions as well.

The first objection raises the question as to whether a fallen person can be blameless or above reproach. Blamelessness seems to be listed first because Paul was presenting an all-embracing moral requirement. This requirement heads both lists in Titus and Timothy. The term ανέγκλητος has legal implications suggesting that there must be an objective moral standard by which to measure candidates for office. The qualifications that follow spell out the standard.3

11 Cor 6:19-20.
2 Smith, 477.
3 Ibid., 462.
The standards include qualifications other than sexual purity, any one of which violated could exclude an elder from service.

It was not adequate that a man was blameless or that he will be blameless. He was to be blameless at the time he was appointed to office. This could only be demonstrated over a period of time. That is why deacons were to be tested first. Smith’s following argument is particularly significant:

More specifically, does past sexual sin permanently prevent a person from meeting the requirement of being blameless? While past sins can affect one’s present status, this effect need not be permanent, for one’s character is not fixed and immutable but changes as one either matures or regresses. Thus there seems to be little reason to assume that past sins must permanently render one blameworthy. In fact to subscribe to such a position ignores the possibility of genuine repentance, forgiveness, and spiritual growth, and assumes the questionable position of “once blameworthy, always blameworthy.” This would seem to disqualify all potential candidates, for no believer lives perfectly above reproach. In short, such a position denies progressive sanctification to potential candidates, for one must live a blameless life from the moment of conversion or else forever forfeit the opportunity to become an elder. So there seems to be no reason why the sexual offender, who confesses his sin, repents, and then consistently shows evidence of a blameless character, cannot meet the requirement of being blameless or above reproach. The past violation of the standard does not automatically preclude its future attainment.¹

In addition, the term blameless includes a purity of character that implies freedom from selfishness, deceitfulness, pride, and all other moral deficiencies. Considering the inclusive nature of the word “blameless,” it does not appear to logically follow that sexual sin, or any other sin, should be a single disqualifier among all others.² Even so, those who have not sinned in a sexual way may find it easy to identify fornication as the one that excludes those who have fallen from being reinstated.

The second objection raises the question as to whether it is permissible for those who have fallen sexually to fulfill the qualification of being the husband of one wife. The phrase husband of one wife has generated several alternative interpretations which deserve attention.

¹ Ibid., 463.
² Ibid.
1. An elder must not be a polygamist.

2. An elder must be married. Therefore, a single person could not be an elder.

3. An elder must be a man because a woman cannot be a husband.

4. An elder cannot be someone who has remarried.

5. An elder must be a “one woman man” or faithful to the wife to whom he is married.

None of the first four interpretations bear on whether a fallen pastor could be reinstated unless the person has been divorced and remarried. Even the last interpretation would not of necessity exclude a fallen leader, because he may have repented and progressed in his Christian life so that he is now a model husband. Such a model man would be “the husband of one wife.”

The third objection questions whether a fallen leader can ever be respected again. Having a good reputation is important for several reasons.

1. A poor reputation could cause a person to be snared by the devil.

2. Paul stresses the importance of a good reputation in several other writings.

3. A poor reputation could cause a leader to fall into disgrace. A good reputation is important to the integrity of the gospel message. Again, Smith’s comments are of value.

This evaluation by the world clearly brings into play the past quality of a man’s life, because past sins, including sexual immorality, clearly affect one’s current reputation. Again, it must be noted, however, that past failure to meet the standard does not automatically prevent its future attainment. A word of caution is necessary, though, for the sexual offender’s reputation is not necessarily rehabilitated in the eyes of the world by repentance and consistent spiritual growth. To a certain degree the rehabilitation of his reputation is beyond his control and is subject to the discretion of society as a whole.

This qualification, then, unlike that of being blameless, depends on the subjective standards and views of others, rather than on conformity to an objective standard. The difference here is significant. Simply being thought blameworthy does not make one such. For such an assessment to be valid, there must be a basis: the failure to measure up to an objective standard. On the other hand, even if a bad reputation is not deserved, it continues to hound its owner. . . . In short, a single slip may destroy one’s reputation permanently.

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1 Ibid., 463-64.

2 Ibid., 465.
One other question needs to be considered regarding the importance of the qualification of reputation. Suppose a pastor's moral lapse is not known, or suppose he moves to another part of the country or world. If his move is far enough away, reputation may not be an issue. If the evaluation of the church or society becomes the determining factor for restoration, it seems that a fallen pastor could move to another part of the country or world and fulfill this qualification. If a pastor moves to another area of labor, this is not a substitute for dealing with the sin. There needs to be repentance, restitution where possible, and healing from the brokenness.

An Analysis of *Can Fallen Pastors Be Restored?*

Part of my interest in writing about this subject came from my exposure to John Armstrong’s book, *Can Fallen Pastors Be Restored?* In reviewing the literature for this study, this is the only book that was found, written by an Evangelical, that views the restoration of pastors negatively. A number of Christian authors and Evangelicals have written in favor of selective restoration. Armstrong admits that he is not of the majority opinion in Christian circles.¹

There were other reasons for an analysis of his book. He expresses many of the spiritual concerns that may underlie Adventist policies. He bases these objections to restoration on particular interpretations of Scripture, therefore his arguments must be given serious consideration.

Rather than analyzing each chapter, discussion will focus on the broad scope of his book and his specific objections to restoring pastors. This will be followed by responses to his chapter on “The Heart of the Matter.”

Armstrong begins by expressing his distress over scandal in the church. He recounts the tragic statistics regarding adulterous pastors that were presented in chap. 1. He is not alone in his anguish over how this affects the ability of the church to be a light in a dark world. Authors who

¹ Armstrong, 44.
support another view regarding restoration share his deep concern. Though Christian leaders may differ in their attitudes regarding the restoration of adulterous pastors, they share in a common grief over the tragic results of sexual sin.

After his introduction, Armstrong discusses three general responses to sexual sin, immediate restoration to ministry, restoration to office after a period of time, and the belief he espouses in his book. He contends that in almost every circumstance, restoration to the ministry is not an option.¹ There should be spiritual restoration but lifetime disqualification from holding pastoral office.²

Some of Armstrong’s major concerns have already been discussed in the foregoing three sections: “A Comparison of Adultery with Other Sins,” “An Analysis of 1 Cor 6:18,” and “Pastors Cannot Fulfill the Qualifications.” They have been treated separately because of their importance, because of the need to consider them more completely, and because they are foundational to the reasons some do not want to restore fallen pastors. The following two sections cover in a general way his other objections.

**Historical Theology Seems to Weigh Heavily on the Side of Permanent Disqualification**

The limited historical references as discussed in chapter 2 suggest that history does not provide clear-cut answers to the problem of pastoral restoration. Cultural changes have affected the church to a great extent. For example, the Roman church during the time of Callistus was likely to restore fallen pastors. But during the church’s ascetic history, priests and nuns were not to be married. On the other hand, during some periods of church history, lecherous priests and nuns were disciplined, but not necessarily permanently disqualified. During early American history, the church was deeply influenced by its Puritan roots and sexual sin was considered

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¹ Ibid., 202.

² Ibid., 92.
nearly unpardonable. In contrast, present culture has swung to the opposite extreme. Currently, the Roman Catholic Church and most Protestant churches permit restoration. One might conclude that the church has caved in to muddy immoral waters. That may not necessarily be true. Perhaps there is a new note of grace and a plea for balance and accountability and conceivably a recognition that making stricter rules does not necessarily eliminate problems.

In the final analysis, biblical theology is not always in harmony with historical theology. Additionally, Adventists, and many other Protestants and Evangelicals, tend to discredit any theology that is not biblically based. For that reason, Scripture, rather than history is the model for the concerns of this study.

The Church Would Be Better Off Without Fallen Leaders in Office

The proposal that the church would be better off without fallen leaders seems to be a powerful argument for excluding adulterers. One must note that Armstrong's definition of "fallen" is limited to sexual sinners, and not to other sins of the flesh. For the purpose of this dissertation, the term "fallen" has been confined to those who have committed adultery. This was done because that is how the Adventist church has defined "fallen" and how Armstrong uses the term. Several have questioned this usage of the word. Does not "fallen" apply to other sins of the flesh as well, they enquired? Hopefully none would read the position of this paper with the idea that sexual sin is acceptable. Admittedly, though, one should question whether "fallen" should be limited to sexual sin. If leaders should be excluded because they are "fallen," that would apply to all pastors for all are fallen, in the broader sense of the word. If we excluded fallen leaders from serving in the church, the church would have no leaders. To imply that those who have not sinned sexually are more worthy tends to base the call of being a pastor not on grace but on selective character perfection or sanctification. It seems highly unlikely that Paul would point to his character perfection as the basis for his call to ministry. Moreover, reading
Ps 51 and Exod 3 strongly suggests that neither David nor Moses gained or retained their spiritual leadership based on a sense of their own worthiness in comparison to others. If the biblical leaders rendered their devoted service in the circle of God’s grace alone, perhaps we in the twenty-first century should do so as well.

It could also be said that the church would be much better off without those who gossip, or without those who are greedy, those who are proud, those who are selfish, those who are bitter, angry, or jealous. Being a leader in the church is not a matter of being better than someone else, but of being humble, teachable and usable.

The Heart of the Matter

After concluding that no text can prove that pastoral restoration should be excluded or permitted, Armstrong asks the question: “So what’s the answer? Can we argue with confidence for one position over another? Yes, for a variety of reasons.” Armstrong states that chapter 9 summarizes his book by presenting six reasons for maintaining permanent disqualification as the norm for fallen pastors. These reasons are entitled, “The Heart of the Matter.” After each of his reasons is elicited, a brief response will follow. In some cases another section will be referred to that discusses the issue in more detail.

Reason 1: The pastor’s high calling. In 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1 Paul declares that an elder must be above reproach or blameless. This is so because his office is that of an under-shepherd. He needs to be consistent both in character and in sound doctrine.

Response: Not only is the pastor/elder to be blameless or above reproach, the entire

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1 Ibid., 142.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid., 147.
Christian community is called to be blameless. The church will be presented blameless before Christ without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. It is to God’s glory to restore us to Himself.

The suggestion that a fallen leader can never be blameless again is without biblical foundation. It flies in the face of God’s ability to rescue and completely restore those who have fallen. It isolates sexual sin as the single sin that disallows a person from becoming blameless. Furthermore, this assertion implies that purity is never attainable for one who has been sexually immoral.

Reason 2: The pastor is a public figure. As such the pastor’s life must be an example for all to see and follow. When his public example is destroyed by sexual sin, his life will never be the same regarding his public persona.

Response: This intimates that one’s victorious living, after a moral lapse, cannot be considered as an example. David fell sexually and was permitted to remain as a leader. Admittedly, his leadership was weakened by his blatant sin; however, he stands as a sentinel of hope for those who have committed heinous sin. The messages to the churches of Revelation encourage all to be overcomers. Even those who were sexually immoral could be victorious. In gaining victory over the sins which so easily beset humans the adulterer can be positioned as an example of God’s amazing love and power to save. The church should be at the forefront of proclaiming that God can save to the uttermost all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. The final word on a person’s reputation need not necessarily be tied to one mistake. Perhaps, for those who have not fallen in a public way, reputation for the fallen may be difficult to come by;

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1 Eph 1:4.
2 Eph 5:27.
3 Armstrong, 147.
4 Rev 1-3.
5 Heb 7:25.
however, the church of today is composed of many Christians who have failed sexually and in marriage. They are likely to understand and be supportive of someone who is a “wounded healer.”

Reason 3: A possible relapse: A fallen pastor may fall again. Patterns of sexual sin are not easily broken and in many cases, those who have fallen, have fallen more than once. Furthermore, pastors usually do not confess; they are caught or exposed. All of this tends to underscore the devious nature of this sin.1

Response: No one would deny that a relapse could occur, nor would one debate whether sexual sin is devious. All sin is deceptive by its very nature. In chapter 1 it was noted that pastors and churches tend to hide sexual sin. Accordingly, the root cause for keeping sins secret or for relapses should not be overlooked. When policies are limiting, such as Armstrong suggests, rather than resolving the problems, these regulations tend to encourage fallen pastors to go underground. The stakes are so high in confession that pastors and churches often sweep their sins under the carpet of secrecy, for fear of exposure and loss.

Armstrong also overlooks the numerous cases of those pastors who have gone through rehabilitation and whose marriages and ministries are far stronger than before the moral lapse occurred. When confession and repentance occur, along with rehabilitation and accountability, the incidents of relapse are greatly minimized. In fact, a fallen pastor may be less likely to fall into sexual sin than one who is currently free of known sexual sin, but completely unaware of his vulnerability. It is true there are many fallen pastors whose families are never healed and divorces are a common result of unfaithfulness. On the other hand, many stories of healing and greater love and strength between wounded couples can be told. Often, in therapy, the underlying issues that erupted into marital discontent and finally into adultery are dealt with.

Regarding relapses, one Adventist administrator who has restored more than twenty

1 Armstrong, 147.
fallen pastors confided to me, "I’ve never had such a person fail me yet." This administrator’s experience seems to indicate that “once burnt” may be a sufficient deterrent for many fallen leaders not to repeat their mistake. Furthermore, if colleagues and those skilled in restoration surround a struggling brother, victory can be achieved. This may be the very reason *Promise Keepers* has such a powerful impact among men. According to the Scriptures, confession and support bring healing.\(^2\)

**Reason 4: The pastor as a model.** A pastor who has not lived a consistent life cannot rule the church of God well. Some sins irreparably shatter a man’s life and thus disqualify him from being a consistent model for the church. Once purity is sacrificed and trust is forfeited, the ability to lead by example is gone forever. Integrity is essential to the ministry of a pastor.\(^3\)

Response: This is very similar to Reason 1. Again, the implication that a person who has sinned sexually can never again be trusted is without biblical precedent. Those in Scripture who have failed miserably have been forgiven and trusted again. Moses, David, and Solomon are all examples of leaders who fell and whose writings we trust. It may even be that a fallen leader who demonstrates a repentant heart could become more trustworthy than one who touts his own goodness. The intimation that trust is forever gone because of a single mistake supposes that a life of integrity and honesty can never be rebuilt. This does not square with factual evidence. It may be that some Christians can never trust a fallen person again. On the other hand, many wives of those who have fallen come to have confidence again. If the one who is closest to the sin and most hurt by it can forgive and believe again, it should follow that those who represent the body of Christ should be able to provide an environment for future trust for a fallen individual. A church that represents Christ should extend grace and encouragement for fallen

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\(^1\) SDA Administrator to author, (email), July 5, 2001.

\(^2\) Jas 5:16.

\(^3\) Ibid., 148.
leaders to live a life of integrity in the future.¹

Even if the model is broken, it could be possible for fallen pastors to serve in another part of the world. If reputation is the major issue, such pastors could fulfill God’s plan for their lives in reaching out to people who do not know them.

Furthermore, there are those Christians who see fallen leaders as wounded healers. Apparently, they do not have the same limitations as those who would restrict adulterous pastors from ever serving the church again.

Armstrong cautions those churches who pursue fallen pastors to shy away from the “wounded healer” idea. He warns that we are in danger of creating a new kind of “care-giver,” namely a “fallen brother” who supposedly can help adulterers and the sexually immoral precisely because he has been there. He asks the question, “Does such a care-giver really understand this sin better than a pastor who has never been personally involved?”²

To answer his own question, he upholds Jesus as a model of one who was able to sympathize with our weaknesses without having sinned.³ There seems to be inherent weaknesses to his argument. While Jesus is a model for us to follow, no human has ever perfectly modeled Jesus example to others. It is true that we should seek to follow Jesus’ example. That should include offering forgiveness and full restoration to wounded sinners. In addition, the incarnation of Christ to earth to become a human being and to become “sin for us” occurred so that He could sympathize with our weaknesses. If He had remained in the perfection of heaven, He would never have been able to serve as a merciful high priest.⁴ Though He never partook of our sins through disobedience, He experienced our pain and suffering. Even though sexual sin does not

¹ Gal 6:1.
² Armstrong, 149.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Heb 2:17-18.
specifically qualify a man for pastoral ministry, it is naive to suggest that one who has been through a moral fall is not more sensitive to the pain and suffering of that kind of traumatic experience. Though one who has never experienced the loss of a loved one can certainly minister to one who has, the sense of having walked in a similar trauma certainly aids the comforter and comforted in healing. That is why Paul stresses the concept that those who have gone through trials are able to comfort those who are going through them.¹

Reason 5: A lack of judgment. A man who has allowed himself to slip into sexual sin demonstrates poor judgment.²

Response: No one could seriously challenge the thought that a person who has sinned sexually has demonstrated a lapse in judgment. This, however, could hardly be called the only evidence of poor judgment. Someone has said that pastors who lack common sense can never be trusted. Poor judgment can be revealed in more ways than in falling into sexual sin. One must also ask the question as to whether a single act of poor judgment should forever close the door to further ministry. It would seem a sad commentary on forgiveness and grace if a pastor who has exercised poor judgment (for one of many reasons) could never again regain the confidence of his colleagues or members.

Reason 6: A stricter judgment.³ As evidence for his position, Armstrong cites Jas 3:1 and Luke 12:48b as references. He also notes that Paul encouraged the church to judge the Corinthian man who committed incest with his father’s wife. The church was faithful to Paul’s counsel and expelled the man from its midst.⁴ Accordingly, that church’s example should serve

¹ 2 Cor 1:3.
² Armstrong, 149.
³ Ibid., 150.
⁴ Armstrong, 149
as a model for churches today.¹

Response: It is true from the biblical record that leaders will be judged and punished more harshly than those who are not. A careful examination, however, of the context of Jas 1:3 cited by Armstrong as evidence for stricter judgment reveals that James was speaking of Christians in general, not only those who are leaders. The Lukan passage refers also to Christians in general, rather than specifically to pastors. The Bible teaches that God’s “anger lasts for a moment, but His favor lasts for a life time” (Psalms 30:5 NLT). “Mercy rejoiceth against judgment” (James 2:13). The Psalmist writes, “The LORD is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He has not punished us for all our sins, nor does he deal with us as we deserve. For his unfailing love toward those who fear him is as great as the height of the heavens above the earth. He has removed our rebellious acts as far away from us as the east is from the west. The LORD is like a father to his children, tender and compassionate to those who fear him” (Ps 103:8-13 NLT).

It is a mistake to imply that judgment never passes away from one who has committed sexual sin—that they should remain under condemnation and distrust, even though repentance has occurred. Even the man who committed incest was readmitted to fellowship in the church again. Paul also taught that there is “no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1). If grace and restoration may be extended to members, it follows that grace should also be extended to leaders. That should include full restoration, not just a partial work.

Conclusion

A review of biblical passages in this study reveals no absolute specific argument for restoring pastors. Neither does it prohibit their restoration. What the passages do reveal is a

¹ Ibid.
continuing theme, running as a golden thread throughout: the restoration of fallen people from all walks of life, and their acceptance into spiritual avenues of service. It appears that God’s grace, forgiveness, and restoration envision complete healing and wholeness.

Numerous stories of broken people being retained or reinstated as leaders have been cited. Samson, David, Peter, the Prodigal Son, and Mary Magdalene are all examples of God’s forgiveness and ability to work through wounded, imperfect people. God is glorified in His ability to restore fallen people to worth and usefulness. To say it is inadvisable to reinstate repentant leaders seems to imply that God is able to do only a partial work.

Since there is no command in the Bible to restore a fallen pastor, and no prohibition against doing so, the evidence is inconclusive one way or the other. The weight of biblical evidence seems to favor restoration. The issue is as challenging as determining when to give grace or administer justice. On the human level, restoration of pastors has little to do with God’s forgiveness or healing power, but everything to do with the limited ability of God’s people to trust again. On the Divine level, the all-seeing eye of God looks through the image of a man upon a cross and sees the restored pastor in the white robe of Christ’s righteousness. At the foot of the cross, justice and mercy are harmonized forever.

Counsels and Precedents from Ellen White

Adventists recognize the writings of Ellen White as authoritative in matters of practical spirituality. Her writings do not establish doctrinal truth because they are viewed as a “lesser light,” leading to the greater light of Scripture. But, her writings do make a difference in how the Adventist church practices biblical theology. For this reason, we turn to her writings to see if we can find practical clarification on how to carry out scriptural principles. Pertinent to this study will be the search for evidence for pastoral restoration in her works. Also of interest is her response to sexual sin. First, her overall view of sexual sin will be examined. Then we will ascertain how she carried out these concerns in practical situations.
General Counsels

Two documents will form the basis of this research. Both of them are available through the Ellen G. White Estate and both deal with issues regarding sexual sin. The first is Manuscript Release 448. The title is “The Spirit of Prophecy and Adultery, Divorce, Remarriage, and Church Membership.” The second is Manuscript Release 449 and is titled, “Dealing With Ministers and Workers Who Have Violated the Seventh Commandment.” These documents have never been used as a source for guidance in instituting policies and processes regarding fallen minister even though the White Estate suggests that they could be beneficial for that purpose. The reason is unclear as to why these documents were not released until 1975. They could form a core basis for guiding principles in restoring fallen pastors. The historical background and study of each individual case could reveal further information for future research.

Ellen White had a deep concern for the purity of the church. She was appalled when leaders were high-handed in their immorality. She wrote these strong words: “Cleanse the camp of this moral corruption, if it takes the highest men in the highest positions. God will not be trifled with. Fornication is in our ranks; I know it, for it has been shown me to be strengthening and extending its pollutions. There is much we will never know; but that which is revealed makes the church responsible and guilty unless they show a determined effort to eradicate the evil. Cleanse the camp, for there is an accursed thing in it.”¹

She compared the sin of adultery to the sin of Achan. When the church discovers sin in the camp, it becomes responsible. It should destroy the accursed thing from its midst.² She expressed further grief over the state of some who were practicing fornication. She said, “I have


² Ibid.
no real ground of hope for those who have stood as shepherds of the flock, and have for years been borne with by the merciful God, following them with reproof, with warnings, with entreaties, but who have hid their evil ways, and continued in them, thus defying the laws of the God of heaven by practicing fornication. We may leave them to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, after all has been done to reform them; but in no case entrust to them the guardianship of souls. False shepherds!"1

It is important to observe that the above remarks were addressed to those who were practicing fornication. In the light of God's mercy and His reproofs and entreaties these "false shepherds" have hidden their evil ways and continued in them. It must be understood that she was referring to a high-handed, continued practice of sin. Recognizing this will help in comparing these strong reproofs with her attitude of mercy and forgiveness.

Lest anyone think Ellen White was soft on sin, we look at one more scathing rebuke regarding men who have indulged their wicked passions. "God has not altered nor changed. He is a jealous God, and will not look upon sin now with any more allowance than He did among ancient Israel. Sin is sin. Sins have not been held forth in their sinfulness, but it has been made to appear as though sins have been lightly regarded by God."2

In view of these forceful comments, one cannot trifle with sexual sin and believe that God will have a case of amnesia. In Ellen White's view, any sin purposefully practiced places the church and the individual at great risk. Sexual sin leaves a wake of pain in the experience of those who are victims, and it cripples the church in its work.

Ellen White rebuked other sins, though, with a similar kind of intensity. Even those sins


which are unnoticed were portrayed as God sees them. This statement from *Steps to Christ* is noteworthy:

God does not regard all sins as of equal magnitude; there are degrees of guilt in His estimation, as well as in that of man; but however trifling this or that wrong act may seem in the eyes of men, no sin is small in the sight of God. Man's judgment is partial, imperfect; but God estimates all things as they really are. The drunkard is despised and is told that his sin will exclude him from heaven; while pride, selfishness, and covetousness too often go unrebuked. But these are sins that are especially offensive to God; for they are contrary to the benevolence of His character, to that unselfish love which is the very atmosphere of the unfallen universe. He who falls into some of the grosser sins may feel a sense of his shame and poverty and his need of the grace of Christ; but pride feels no need, and so it closes the heart against Christ and the infinite blessings He came to give.¹

There is no question that Ellen White held the standard of righteousness high. But, she demonstrated an unusual, gracious compassion toward those who had sinned, particularly to those who had succumbed to sexual sin. If the church will consider the counsels that will follow, perhaps it will be among those in the forefront of designing processes and policies that restore pastors.

In general, Ellen White advised disfellowshipping individuals who had flagrantly violated the seventh commandment. For those who felt that this was not so great a sin, she compared it to removing the ark of God from the camp. She said, "Those who break the seventh commandment should be suspended from the church and not have its fellowship or the privileges of the house of God."² "The church should cleanse the camp of known offenders lest it becomes responsible for the crimes itself."³ Ministers or missionaries who continued to engage in improper familiarity were to be disconnected from the work and censured by the church.⁴ In one particular case of revolting incest, a standing rebuke from the church was necessary. If the man was to go to

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⁴ White, “Dealing with Ministers,” 5.

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heaven, he must go alone without ever regaining the fellowship of the church. At one time, Ellen White refused to employ a couple who had remarried without biblical grounds.

At first we might conclude that those who had fallen were to be severely disciplined, never to be forgiven or accepted again by the church. This is evidently not so, for in studying case histories, one finds incredible compassion and flexibility. Repentance, faith, and baptism were steps available to even the most guilty. Some were restored to church fellowship after unqualified confession and a period of sincere repentance. To a man who had divorced his first wife without biblical grounds and had a checkered history of adultery, Mrs. White wrote, "God's mercy to those who sincerely repent and come to Him through Christ knows no limit. He will pardon the most guilty, and purify the most polluted."

Counsels Not to Be Considered as Rules

Ellen White never intended that her counsels regarding divorce, remarriage and adultery be used as a law or rule. She felt that "the different cases where the devil had led men into serious entanglement were so varied and so serious, that should she write anything that could be considered as a rule for settling such cases, it would be misunderstood and misused." She expressed her heartfelt perplexity in a letter to Elder G. I. Butler, who was then president of the General Conference.


“My mind is greatly perplexed over these things, because I cannot harmonize them with the course that is being pursued. I am fearful to sanction sin, and I am fearful to let go of the sinner and make no effort to restore him. I think if our hearts were more fully imbued with the Spirit of Christ, we should have His melting love, and should work with spiritual power to restore the erring and not leave them under Satan’s control.”

Sister White felt disappointed that our publications did not address marriage subjects more often. In 1902, she wrote, “Much more should appear in our publication on the subject of marriage. Although I have not published much on this point, I have done a great deal of personal labor along this line.” She did not want her personal counsels to be considered as law; however, as we read these practical counsels, we may discover principles that may guide us in dealing compassionately with those who have fallen. The White Estate has released these manuscripts with the thought that they may serve “not as hard and fast rules, but that which may be useful in developing guidelines.”

General Guiding Principles

The information in Manuscripts 448 and 449 contains counsels and letters dealing with specific cases of adultery and counsels regarding individual members or ministers. Our first task will be to look for some general principles.

Principle 1: Private Sin Should Remain Private

In the case of an illicit lover, Ellen White kept his case to herself, hoping that a time would come when he would change his heart. She encouraged a Bible instructor to avoid

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1 White, *Counsels*, 15.
2 Pereyra, 27.
sharing his problem with those in the conference because they would not have allowed him to engage in any branch of the work. She did not want to expose him but would leave him to develop character. The matter was to remain between him and God. In referring to a brother M, who felt obliged to publically confess his indiscretion, she wrote, “I thought the letter would prevent any such movement, and keep the matter as private as possible. I do not in any way favor his reading the matter to your mother. She has an abundance of sorrows, to carry. I did not sanction any public exposure.” Again she wrote, “I am in great perplexity at times, and have about come to the conclusion when a case of error and grievous sin is presented before me, to say nothing to my ministering brethren if they do not know the matter themselves, but labor earnestly for the erring one, and encourage him to hope in God’s mercy.”

It seems quite surprising that Ellen White refused to let the brethren know about those who were committing adultery. This raises the question as to whether the church should accept her reticence to reveal the sins of an adulterous pastor as a pattern to follow. Such a policy could be rather risky. One might ask why she felt compelled to hide the sins of these adulterers. It seems that it was because she was concerned that they would not receive grace and mercy from their colleagues. Her compassion is unparalleled today.

How can we harmonize Ellen White’s practice of keeping sexual sin private with the need to be transparent? Her counsel needs to be understood in the light of her personal relationship to the offending person. She was attempting to work with each person on an individual basis. Her counsel implies that persons involved in sexual sin could, if they overcame the sin, be retained in ministry. If the sin was dealt with and the victim and the congregation were protected, wide exposure need not occur. Each case must be understood in its own context.

1 White, “Dealing with Ministers,” 25.
2 Ibid., 23.
3 Ibid.
Principle 2: The Unrepentant and Those Who Flaunt God’s Mercy Should Be Disciplined

I saw that the seventh commandment has been violated by some who are now held in fellowship by the church. This has brought God’s frown upon them. This sin is awful in these last days, but the church has brought God’s frown and curse upon them by regarding the sin so lightly. I saw it was an enormous sin and there have not been as vigilant efforts made as there should have been to satisfy the displeasure of God and remove His frown by taking a strict, thorough course with the offender. It has had an awful, corrupting influence upon the young. They see how lightly the sin of breaking the seventh commandment is regarded, and the one who commits this horrid sin thinks that all he has to do is to confess that he was wrong and is sorry, and he is then to have all the privileges of the house of God and be held in embrace or fellowship of the church. They have thought it was not so great a sin, but have lightly esteemed the breaking of the seventh commandment. This has been sufficient to remove the ark of God from the camp, if there were no other sins to cause the ark to be taken away and weaken Israel. Those who break the seventh commandment should be suspended from the church and not have its fellowship or the privileges of the house of God.¹

All too often adultery is excused or minimized. The above quotation indicates that sexual sin should not be considered lightly. In situations where the sin is flagrant and known to the public, some type of discipline is necessary. We must consider the last sentence, however, because it leaves the door open for forgiveness. Suspension is not necessarily permanent. Ellen White rejected excusing sin and the continuous practice of it, but allowed for a return to fellowship and in some cases to leadership.

Principle 3: Adultery Is Not the Unpardonable Sin and Return to Active Service is Possible

In speaking about the sin of adultery, Ellen White wrote, “When I know that there are those who have fallen into great sin, but we have labored with and for them, and God has afterwards accepted their labors, when these have pleaded for me to let them go and not to burden myself for them I have said; ‘I will not give you up; you must gather strength to overcome.’ These men are now in active service.”²

¹ White, “The Spirit of Prophecy and Adultery,” 2.

Several key points regarding restoration are salient in this brief paragraph.

1. Ellen White sought to actively restore those who had committed sexual sin, even though they felt like they were hopeless.

2. She took the initiative to labor for them.

3. She refused to let them go.

4. After their repentance, God accepted their labor and they were in active service. This paragraph leaves no doubt as to whether Ellen White considered restoration for fallen pastors permissible. Many of the men were in active service.

Ellen White’s compassion for the fallen is graphically portrayed in her letters to brother D. While he was married, brother D had a mistress for many years. The letters that were addressed to him and his mistress “E” fill thirteen pages of MS 448. Over and over, Mrs. White plead with him to give up this adulterous relationship. She offered the imputed righteousness of Jesus and she encouraged him to hope in Jesus. She admonished him, “Jesus is amply able to save the very hardest and the most wicked and defiled sinner. . . . Now, year after year is gone, and God gives you through his delegated servant another chance. Will you repent? . . . I cannot give you up to be lost. Your conscience has become hardened in sin and transgression and unbelief but you may, if you will, fall on the Rock Christ Jesus and be broken before it is utterly too late, crying to Jesus of Nazareth, have mercy on me. If you do this God will not leave you to perish.”

Specific Counsels, Case Studies, and Precedents

The above counsels of Ellen White have offered some general principles. Now a careful review of several case studies should help shed more light on a practical theology of restoration. Several of the cases involve those who were workers for the church. Some men were ordained

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1 White, “The Spirit of Prophecy and Adultery,” 4-17.
ministers. One should not endeavor to make rules from these specific situations. Many are exceptions to the rule. And yet one cannot avoid the implications of how these fallen leaders were handled. It appears that Ellen White manifested an unexpected flexibility toward some ordained ministers who had committed adultery. In some cases, their credentials were removed. But, in other instances, they were permitted a second chance. These will be presented case by case. After the selected examples are presented, some tentative practical conclusions will be offered.

The Case of Professor G

Professor G had been an administrator, college president, and secretary of the General Conference. After twelve years of marriage, he offered no resistance to his wife, who obtained a divorce because of her personality problems. Later he became involved with his secretary and married her. His first wife had not committed adultery and was still single, so he did not have a biblical right to remarry. Because of his “divorced marriage” (a second marriage that has occurred without biblical grounds, or where no fornication or adultery has occurred), he surrendered his credentials as a worker. As far as we know he never was ordained. Five years after his marriage, Ellen White wrote a leading administrator to find a teacher for Australia. She wished she could hire Professor G but was reticent to do so. She wrote from Australia: “If only G had kept himself straight, he would be just the one to come. But the question is whether his record will not follow him. We scarcely dare venture the matter and run the risk. That the man has sincerely repented, I have no doubt, and I believe the Lord has forgiven him.”

Her compassion for him and her desire that he be useful were evident as she continued: “So, what shall we do with G? Leave him where he is, a prey to remorse, and to be useless the remainder of his life? I cannot see what can be done. Oh, for wisdom from on high! Oh, for the

1 White, “Dealing with Ministers, 30.
counsel of One who reads the heart as an open book!" Apparent time, or changed circumstances, made a difference because two years later she wrote another letter and invited him to come anyway.

Dear Bro. G: I have had my mind drawn out for you time and again. Had I felt at liberty to exercise my judgment, I should have given my counsel a long time ago for you to change your location. I had hoped my brethren would have had wisdom from above to give counsel to you that you should not be where you are today. If you have anything to do, it must be soon. Were you in this country I fully believe you would see doors opening where you could be at work to be a light bearer to those who are in the darkness of error.

How would it be should you come to this country? Like Abraham, going out not knowing whither he went, and humbly seeking guidance, I plead that you make a break. Come here to Australia, while we are here. Come on your own responsibility. You will have means, if you sell your farm, to bring you here. Then I believe the way will open for you to work, and may the Lord direct you is my earnest wish, and sincere prayer.

There is work in abundance for you to do in the great harvest field. Here are fields all ripe for the harvest; work to be entered upon in Sydney, a city of about a million people, and Melbourne numbering still more. There is Queensland to be entered. There are thirty Sabbath keepers in one place in Queensland that have never seen or heard the living preacher, and others are scattered all through that region, waiting for the message of truth.

Will you please consider this matter, and write us what you think? What are your finances? What are you thinking of doing? How is the Lord leading your mind? Please consider the matter and may the Lord give you wisdom to move somewhere at once.

Several interesting facts may be observed from this letter.

1. Ellen White had a deep concern for this man's spiritual welfare and usefulness.

2. Initially, her reticence for his coming to Australia was the possibility that his reputation would cause him problems.

3. In spite of her concern for this, two years later she invited him to come anyway.

4. She suggested that if he moved to a different place, he could be of service in the church again.

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1 Ibid., 31.
2 Ibid., 31-32.
The Case of Will Wales

Information regarding Will Wales is covered in Manuscript Release #448. The counsels and letters that were written to leaders regarding his case occupy a full ten pages in the manuscript.¹ In summary, Will Wales was given credentials and served as a minister during the years 1890 and 1891. He was married at the time, but when he went to Battle Creek, he became infatuated with another woman by the name of Myrtle Stebbins. He then deserted his former wife and married Myrtle on October 17, 1892. At that time, he lost his credentials. Two years later, Ellen White wrote to Will as a “Brother in Christ.” She pointed out the need for him to continue caring for Myrtle. During the ensuing years of his marriage, Will’s experience was checkered with infidelity. Ellen White’s second letter regarding his case was addressed to one of our workers. On November 4, 1901, she considered the actions of Will’s father and brother to be cruel and wicked. They had been attempting to force him to leave Myrtle. They believed that as long as he lived with this second wife, he was continuing to live in sin. This concept was held by many, but rejected by Ellen White.² She said that Will’s case could not be improved by leaving his second wife.

Later, Brother Wales settled in the South and labored with much success. Between 1902 and 1903 he was granted ministerial credentials. Furthermore, against the judgment of the Southern Union Conference president, G. I. Butler, but with strong support from others, Will was reordained. Later, for a time he left his wife Myrtle and moved up North, where he became adulterously involved again. His conduct was such that his credentials were removed again.

Again he moved South and reunited with his wife Myrtle. His apparently sanguine personality brought him large success in winning converts to the church. Continuing an active ministry, he became an elder in the local Birmingham Church. He was an indefatigable worker,

² Ibid., 35.
and because his present experience had been clean, the conference committee voted to pay him
eight dollars a week to care for the church. Elder C. F. McVagh wrote to W. C. White, on behalf
of the conference committee, wondering what to do. “Shall we advise him to quit preaching, or
shall the conference accept his labor and pay him for it? If he labors he must be paid and then
what about his credentials?” Elder White’s reply is included here in full.

Dear Brother McVagh: It is two or three weeks since I received your letter of August
15, regarding the perplexity which has arisen in the Alabama Conference over the case of
W. C. Wales.

Since our return from Southern California, Mother has been weak and weary, and I did
not place this letter in her hands until yesterday. Then she read it all through, and when
she recalled the sad experiences through which Brother Wales has passed, she felt very
sorry for him and for our brethren whose hearts have been made sad through the past
years by his weak and wicked course.

Mother says that those who have dealt with the perplexities arising from his many
transgressions in the past should take the responsibility of advising regarding our present
duty toward him. Mother does not wish to take large responsibility in this matter; but she
says regarding Elder Wales as she has said regarding other men in a somewhat similar
position, if they have thoroughly repented, if they are living such lives as convince their
brethren that they are thoroughly in earnest, do not cut them off from fellowship, do not
forbid their working for Christ in a humble capacity, but do not elevate them to positions
of responsibility. From this I would understand that it would be unwise to renew his
credentials and send him from place to place among the people; but if he has by a faithful
Christian life won the confidence of the church where he lives, do not stand in the way of
his doing such work as that church may be responsible for. In fact, it may be the duty of
his brethren to go farther and to pay him for faithful labor. In fact, I do not see how you
could withhold from him a proper remuneration for faithful and judicious labor; but this
would not be placing before him the same temptation as to give him credentials and send
him forth in the conference as a traveling minister.

And I would say, as Mother has said, this is a question which should be submitted to
those who have had to deal with his case in the past. Please consider the opinions I have
expressed only as suggestive.

Ellen White agreed with his counsel and gave this endorsement, “This is correct advice
in such cases. Let him walk humbly before God. I see no light in giving him responsibilities.”

In summary, W. C. White’s counsel allowed fellowship and encouraged him to work in a humble

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1 Ibid., 26.
2 Ibid., 27.
3 Ibid., 28.
capacity with pay. He was not to be elevated to positions of responsibility to be sent forth as a traveling minister with credentials. Later, the question of whether he should be a local elder/pastor was addressed. Because it could not be resolved by the church, Ellen White was consulted. In her aged condition, she did not feel that these matters should be brought to her. She felt the stress might even take her life.

In reply to Elder Miller, who had met with the Birmingham Church, W. C. White did not feel that "elevating him to positions of responsibility" applied to the leadership of the local church. They were not to stand in his way of doing such work as the Birmingham Church may be responsible for.\(^1\) It is evident that W. C. White felt that he should not be restricted from serving as a local leader where he was trusted.

The Case of Elder J

Elder J had been a trusted minister who had transgressed the seventh commandment. His credentials had not been renewed. However, Ellen White did not want to discourage him. She hoped he would quietly retire, realizing that his credentials could not be renewed. She could not use her influence to support him. His repentance was not sincere. In vision, she dreamed that he was wholly unworthy, but that God would give him a second chance. In opposition to leading brethren he was placed in the work again. She took the responsibility upon herself and pled with him to be a success this time. It was his day of opportunity. He was given an excellent field and a beautiful home with wonderful privileges. He was given every advantage but became envious. The second chance could have developed strength had he overcome self. His spirit of self-esteem and independence and a habit of licentiousness made his work unacceptable to God. If he could be saved it would be through penitence and contrition. He was counseled, "God is

\(^1\) Ibid., 29-31.
merciful, but you should not attempt to teach others.”¹

This is a rather amazing story. Even though Brother J was not repentant, God gave him a second chance. Ellen White encouraged him to make the best of it and to develop strength of character. Even though he squandered this opportunity, God would still be merciful to Him but he was not to teach others. Like Hezekiah of old, God allows us to continue, even when it may not be best. In doing so, He gives another opportunity to be successful.

**The Case of Elder N**

Brother N was a repentant minister who had broken the seventh commandment. He wrote to Ellen White, apparently asking if a move would be appropriate. In reply she encouraged him that there would be plenty of room to work in another place. Ellen White encouraged him that God would accept him if he would labor in humility and redeem the past errors. She wrote, “Should you come to ________, you will certainly find work enough to do, and God is merciful; He pities our weakness, He forgives our transgressions, and if we will only live humbly and penitent, if we will cease from evil and do well, the Lord will approve. May the Lord teach you and work for you.”²

In Brother N’s case, a move could be of value. If he was humble and penitent the Lord would approve of his ministry. This leaves heartening possibilities for those who have fallen.

**The Case of Elder F**

Elder F was more guilty than Elder J because in the face of great light he continued to commit adultery. He wanted to move to California but Ellen White told him that moving to California would not solve his problem. Only by humbling his soul before God could he be saved. He needed to take the first steps of repentance, faith, and baptism. Because of his

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continuous involvement with L, and because of his lack of repentance, Ellen White could not recommend that he be given credentials at the present time. If he would be overcome again, the Conference would become guilty.\(^1\) Ellen White wrote to Elder Butler that the camp was to be cleansed. Two further concepts emerge from Elder F’s situation:

1. He should not be given credentials at the present time. This suggests that if, at some time, he would get his life in order, credentials might be given again.

2. He was also counseled to take the first steps of faith, repentance and baptism. This indicates that baptism could be a step to getting right with God.

Even though his case was worse than that of Elder J, according Ellen White, later he repented and wished to go to Europe as a self-supporting worker. Elder Butler, who was then the General Conference president, discouraged him. Ellen White did not feel that Butler had handled Elder F’s case and that of others wisely. Elder Butler would have permitted him to forever remain in spiritual darkness. However, Ellen White counseled, “He should have another chance for his life.”\(^2\) With great pathos, she wrote of her concern for the salvation of souls. Her advice to Elder Butler summarizes the attitude the church should take toward fallen leaders.

In regard to Brother F, I do not think your management the wisest. I think he should have a chance for his life. If the man is willing and desirous of coming to Europe on his own responsibility, perhaps that would be wisdom. He will never recover himself where he is under present circumstances. I did have a dream many months ago, which showed him restored with the blessing of God resting upon him; but he was not brought to this position by the help of yourself or Elder Haskell, but would have as far as you both were concerned, with the attitude you assumed toward him have ever remained in the dark, and his light would have gone out in darkness.

We shall not urge anything more in his case, but shall do the uttermost in our power to save his soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. I am in great perplexity at times, and have about come to the conclusion when a case of error and grievous sin is presented before me, to say nothing to my ministering brethren if they do not know the matter themselves, but labor earnestly for the erring one, and encourage him to hope in God’s mercy, and cling to the merits of a crucified and risen Savior, look to the Lamb of God in repentance and contrition and live in His strength.

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\(^1\) Ibid., 15-23.

\(^2\) Ibid., 27.
“Come and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as white as wool though they are as crimson, I will make them as snow.” There is not the mingling of the elements of character that brings justice and mercy and the love of God into beautiful harmony. There is altogether too much talking, too many strong words and strong feelings that the Lord has nothing to do with, and these strong feelings influence our good brethren.

I am compelled to deal plainly and rebuke sin, and then I have it in my heart, placed there by the Spirit of Christ, to labor in faith, in tender sympathy and compassion for the erring. I will not let them alone, I will not leave them to become the sport of Satan’s temptations. I will not myself act the part of the adversary of souls as is represented by Joshua and the Angel. Souls cost the price of my Redeemer’s blood.

When men, themselves liable to temptation, erring mortals, shall be free to pronounce upon another’s case, who is humbled in the dust, and shall take it on themselves to decide by their own feelings or the feelings of their brethren just how much feeling the erring one should manifest to be pardoned, (they are) taking on themselves that which God has not required of them.

When I know that there are those who have fallen into great sin, but we have labored with and for them, and God has afterwards accepted their labors, when these have pleaded for me to let them go and to not burden myself for them, I have said, “I will not give you up; you must find strength to overcome.” These men are now in active service.

My mind is greatly perplexed over these things, because I cannot harmonize them with the course that is being pursued. I am fearful to sanction sin, and I am fearful to let go of the sinner and make no effort to restore him. I think if our hearts were more fully imbued with the spirit of Christ, we should have His melting love, and should work with spiritual power to restore the erring and not leave them under Satan’s control.

We need good heart religion that we shall not only reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, but we shall take the erring in our arms of faith and bear them to the cross of Christ. We must bring them in contact with the sin-pardoning Savior. I am more pained than I can express to see too little aptitude and skill to save souls that are ensnared by Satan. I see such a cold Pharisaism, holding off at arm’s length the one who has been deluded by the adversary of souls, and then I think what if Jesus treated us in this way? Is this spirit to grow among us? If so, my brethren must excuse me, I cannot labor with them. I will not be a party to this kind of labor.

I call to mind the shepherd hunting the lost sheep and the prodigal son. I want those parables to have their influence upon my heart and my mind. I think of Jesus, what love and tenderness He manifested for erring, fallen man, and then I think of the severe judgment one pronounces upon his brother that has fallen under temptation, and my heart becomes sick. I see the iron in hearts, and think we should pray for hearts of flesh...

I wish that we had much more of the spirit of Christ and great deal less self and less of human opinions. If we err, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing.1

A Particularly Revolting Case

In one case, thought by W. C. White and Arthur White to be a “particularly revolting

1 Ibid., 27-30.
case of incest," Ellen White excluded the possibility of restoration to office as well as membership. She said:

It is impossible for E to be fellowshipped by the church of God. He has placed himself where he cannot be helped by the church, where he can have no communion with, nor voice in, the church. He has placed himself there in the face of light and truth. He has stubbornly chosen his own course, and refused to listen to reproof. He has followed the inclinations of his corrupt heart, has violated the holy law of God, and has disgraced the cause of present truth. If he repents ever so heartily, the church must let his case alone. If he goes to heaven, it must be alone, without the fellowship of the church. A standing rebuke from God and the church must ever rest upon him that the standard of morality be not lowered to the very dust.¹

Several important concepts need to be considered regarding this situation.

1. The person stubbornly chose his own course and refused to listen to reproof.
2. It could be possible for him to go to heaven if he would repent.
3. A standing rebuke from the church must rest on him in order to protect the church’s reputation and to maintain a standard of purity. It appears therefore, that this case was most problematic for restoration because of its revolting nature, and because of the refusal to repent.

Conclusions Regarding Ellen White Counsels

1. Ellen White taught that the practice of sexual sin was of such a serious nature that it could keep the church from fulfilling its mission. Those who continued to practice it could lose their salvation. Where fornication was lightly regarded, and where individuals did not repent, sin should be severely dealt with. In cases of flagrant violation of the seventh commandment, where the influence of the church was damaged, censure or disfellowshiping was recommended to avoid further reproach on the church. In instances where repentance was not apparent, restoration should not be considered. In more extreme cases such as incest, a permanent rebuke may be necessary. In a particularly notable case, thought by W. C. White to be incest, she said,

¹ Ellen G. White, Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce (Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, 1989), 250.
“If he repents ever so heartily, the church must let his case alone. If he goes to heaven, it must be alone, without the fellowship of the church. A standing rebuke from God and the church must ever rest upon him that the standard of morality be not lowered to the very dust.”

2. Ellen White’s compassion for one who had fallen into sin was remarkable. Her desire to save adulterous pastors for ministry at times led her to keep their sin hidden from administrators who might deal with fallen leaders in a harsh manner. We may conclude from this that some who have committed adultery may be retained in ministry if they are repentant and if they are willing to deal with their issues. It should be understood that the fallen pastor should become accountable to someone. The hiding of the sin was not to avoid it or minimize it but to deal with it quietly. In situations where it becomes known publically, the sin should be confessed publically.

3. Efforts should be made to reach out to those who have sinned in order to put them in touch with Jesus again. They should be encouraged, treated with love, and respect. Even if the church never adopts a more flexible policy of restoration, it must develop a more active, compassionate process of reaching out to fallen leaders.

4. Some fallen pastors may be restored, depending upon whether they repent and respond to counsel. Ellen White spoke of giving a second chance to some fallen ministers. It should be noted that many fallen pastors, with whom she and others worked, were in active service and did acceptable work. Some of these never left the ministry.

5. Time is a factor in restoring fallen pastors. In the case of Brother G, Ellen White contacted him, feeling that the time might not be right for him to come to Australia. However, two years later, she invited him to come.

6. Some who have fallen should be rebaptized as a step toward re-admittance and reinstatement.

7. The ability of a fallen pastor to regain the respect and confidence of the church should
be a factor in whether he can be restored. In the case of Elder Wales, Ellen White counseled that
if his life was commendable in the eyes of those who knew him that he could become the
spiritual leader in the Birmingham church.

8. In certain cases, where a pattern of sin has been well known, the person may never be
able to become effective in a large way. They may need to confine their services to a local
church. Such was the case of Will Wales.

9. Moving a fallen pastor to another place may make it possible for him to be of service,
but this involves some risks because his reputation may follow him. Moving a pastor should be
done with caution. A carefully planned move may permit a fallen pastor to be in a place of
service where his previous moral failure will not negatively impact his otherwise effective
ministry.

10. Individuals who have wisdom, who are in positions of leadership and are acquainted
with the circumstances of each situation, should be the ones who evaluate each case to determine
whether restoration is advisable.

Conclusions in the Light of the Bible and Ellen White's Writings

Although no specific passage of Scripture can be found to support granting restoration to
fallen pastors or excluding them from restoration, there are many biblical examples of God's
restoring leaders. The overriding theme of God's grace and the motif of complete restoration
seem to support it. In harmony with God's unfailing love and compassion, Ellen White's
writings lend strong practical credence to and precedence for restoring and healing those who
have failed their Lord. The foregoing principles gleaned from her writings could be used as
guidelines in formulating policies and processes for reinstating fallen pastors. The gospel of a
second chance, balanced with accountability, needs to be more prominent in the church. Paul
spoke of his call to leadership as a gift of God's grace. He said, "To me, though I am the very
least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of
Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ” (Eph 3:8 RSV).
CHAPTER 4

THE RESTORATION OF PASTORS IN THE ADVENTIST CHURCH

A Historical Survey of Policies and Practices

As early as the 1880s Ellen White and her son W. C. White, under her direction, set a precedent for restoring adulterous pastors. At times she refused to reveal to conference leaders that certain pastors were committing adultery. Instead she worked with these men to help them overcome their lust. They were retained in ministry. As long as she was alive, the denominational leadership often sought her advice, and many men were given a second chance in ministry.

B. L. House was an example of a pastor who was restored. House moved from the Ohio Conference to become the pastor of the headquarters church, the Memorial Church, in Washington, D. C. House held a very successful series of meetings there, but shortly after the evangelistic outreach, he was accused of having committed adultery with a former church member in Ohio. He was guilty of the offense. GC President A.G. Daniels then wrote to W.C. White for advice regarding his situation. Here is a portion of White's letter dated September 29, 1907:

It is a sad thought that we shall have to deal with many men in the ministry, in our institutions, and in the canvassing work, who've been ensnared by the devil and have broken the Seventh Commandment. Yet we shall find it so... When Sabbath breaking, adultery, profanity or stealing is found in a Gospel Worker, we cannot pass it over lightly. A mild acknowledgement in the face of evidence is not enough. When hearty confession is made, and repentance is manifested, rebaptism is appropriate and fitting. When a minister must leave the field of former labors because of sin, it is fair to him and the people where he goes that the officers of the conference where he goes shall know the facts. Then if he is willing to take up the humbler work of

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house to house labor and wins the confidence of the people, let him resume the ministry in the pulpit.

These are only suggestions, and are very brief. Circumstances will lead to various ways of working out correct principles. Publicity is to be dreaded, but it is not so bad as the covering up of unconfessed sin.1

In harmony with White’s counsel, House returned his credentials to the conference and retired from the ministry. He took up the canvassing work and continued to work for the Columbia Conference. Daniels wrote back to White, concluding that when House had repented and gained the victory he could be called back into the ministry. He did not want to punish the young man too severely. By giving him an opportunity to canvass, like all other frail men, he could show his calling to the work. Apparently House proved himself, because in the 1909 yearbook he is listed as an ordained minister. Later he became head of the Bible Department at Union College. Unfortunately, twenty-three years later, he had to surrender his credentials again for a violation of the seventh commandment. He divorced his wife, remarried another woman, and left the message for a period of time. He later returned to the church, although he faced tremendous opposition from his new wife, who was not a member of the church.2

J. Robert Spangler, former ministerial director for the Adventist Church, commented about those early days and the changes that have occurred, “The concept of giving ministers another chance after a moral fall gradually changed to a hard-line position.” Spangler presumed that too many fallen preachers had violated the seventh commandment repeatedly until the church came to treat a moral fall as the “unpardonable sin” when it came to carrying credentials.3

It is difficult to trace the shift from compassion for fallen pastors to their permanent exclusion from ministry. The earliest official record of denominational policies regarding those


3 Spangler, 20.
who had a moral lapse appears in the 1942 *Church Manual*. It is difficult to know for sure how this policy came about. Perhaps it was an extension of an initial decision on divorce and remarriage that was also defined in 1942. Up until this time, no official church policies existed for either issue. The 1942 divorce policy stated that a person who was divorced and remarried without biblical grounds (unless the spouse had violated the seventh commandment) was to be disfellowshiped. Remarriage under these circumstances was called a “divorced marriage.” The policy further declared that such a person could never become a member again or be forgiven until they either gave up their second unbiblical marriage and lived a celibate life or returned to the first wife. A person who was living in a divorced marriage was considered to be living in continuous sin.\(^1\) This tough policy was short-lived, however. Under the influence of A. V. Olsen, who was Vice President of the GC, and others, a change was made in the early 1950s. Olsen argued that a person who had committed adultery had broken the marriage bond. Thus the first marriage was no longer binding. Therefore, if circumstances in a second marriage presented insuperable problems and if the person was repentant, the individual could regain fellowship with the church through rebaptism without leaving the second marriage partner. In some cases, in counsel with the conference, such a person might even be able to become a leader in the church again. This position was adopted in 1954 in the *Church Manual*.\(^2\)

Apparently, the more uncompromising position regarding fallen ministers never went through a similar revision. Since 1942 (for sixty years), the church has maintained the same policy, which has little regard for healing the victims of an offending pastor, or restoring the church and pastoral family itself. Perhaps the fervor of the message of Jesus’ soon coming

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\(^1\) Seventh-day Adventist Church, *Constitution and By Laws and Working Policy of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists*, revised at the 44th Session in San Francisco CA: 1942), 96.

minimized the need to look at this issue realistically. Conceivably, we may be ready to revisit it.

In 1975 Ellen White’s counsels on dealing with fallen pastors were released in Manuscript Releases 448 and 449. Later in 1989 some of these concepts were published in a book entitled Testimonies on Sexual Behavior, Adultery and Divorce. Although the church has not inculcated these counsels into any working policies, or made any official changes to the disciplinary regulations for pastors, several prominent Adventist administrators have bent the denominational regulations in order to salvage some who have fallen. In discussions with denominational leaders, it has come to my attention that over the years, at least one NAD leader, one union leader, and two conferences and their administrators have purposefully given pastors a second chance. The Pacific Union Conference (PUC) began to give careful study to the issue in the 1990s.

During the fall of 1992, the PUC, comprising the states of California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, and Hawaii, decided to ask a group of biblical scholars and church leaders to form a committee to study issues regarding divorce and remarriage. A part of this group presented a theology for pastoral restoration. Elder Thomas Mostert was president of the union at the time. Dr. Gerald Winslow (Loma Linda University professor of ethics) was the chairman of the committee. Dr. Ivan Blazen (NT scholar), Dr. Larry Richards (NT scholar), Louis Venden (then senior pastor of the Loma Linda Church), Marit Balk (Family Ministries staff member), and Dr. Bruce Anderson, psychiatrist, were also members. The committee produced a document that covered three concerns: (1) an explanation of proposed changes to the NAD policies regarding fallen pastors, (2) a theological rationale for the changes, and (3) the actual wording of the proposed changes in NAD policy statements. The committee met on October 22, 1992, the anniversary of the great Advent Disappointment. One scholar suggested that it might have been prophetic regarding the results of their work, however minor portions of the committee’s findings were inculcated into the divorce and remarriage decisions of the larger committee.
For about ten years no significant decisions from any official group resulted from the work of the smaller restoration committee, and some members thought their work may have been in vain. In January of 2001, in connection with my research, Dr. Gerald Winslow sent me a copy of the document they had worked on. Perhaps providentially, events later that year would transpire in the Canadian Union Conference (CUC) that would resurrect and further the work that the PUC committee had accomplished.

One committee member from the Alberta Conference of Seventh-day Adventists had heard of my research about this subject, and he wrote to me requesting information. A copy of the document that had been done by the PUC committee was sent to him. In addition, materials from the White Estate were included, along with the article by Jay Smith that was quoted earlier. The Alberta Conference made some small revisions to the PUC document and voted to adopt it as a conference restoration policy (see appendix C). This is the initial statement of their revision.

"This document was originally proposed by a Divorce and Remarriage Committee at PUC in 1990. A 'Restoration Committee' was elected by the Alberta Executive Committee to use this document and fine-tune it. This was done by Frank Tochterman, Ian Hartley, Doris Hubbard, Horst Hoffman, John Adams, Carmen Manweiler, Errol Lawrence and Warren Kay, and it was presented to the Executive Committee on April 29, 2001. The Executive Committee recommended the above to the SDACC [Seventh-day Adventist Church in Canada] at their April Meeting." Specific revisions are included in the next chapter.

The PUC and the Alberta Conference are not the only organizations within Adventism that have initiated restoration processes. The Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-day Adventists (SECC) and the Kettering Clergy Care Center (KCCC) in Ohio have developed policies and programs for restoring broken pastors.

The KCCC is affiliated with the Kettering Memorial Hospital, a Seventh-day Adventist

1 Alberta Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 9.
institution in Ohio. Dr. Bob Peach is founder and director of KCCC, which he organized in 1988. This is an independent organization of the Adventist Church but provides counseling services to member pastors. Peach states, "Our task is to provide counseling and support services to church professionals and others who give leadership and ministry through churches and organizations of many denominations and faith traditions."

In his master's thesis for Loma Linda University, Saul Silva did a study of the Kettering program. The following is his brief summary:

KCCC welcomes referrals for counseling from all clergy hiring institutions. Unlike Grace Works where the church body surrounds the offender and restoration is sought amid the parishioners where one once ministered, Kettering requires privacy. The offender and spouse must come to Kettering, Ohio for the entire program. Peach assures all concerned that no one will be turned away. Candidates for restoration are to subject themselves to the program and must be willing to follow the guidelines and complete the entire process.

It is KCCC's desire to provide such care to church professionals and their families in a competent, confidential manner. They will also provide outpatient counseling for sexual adjustment and family relationship problems.

Non-restorable cases are those offenders who are not repentant, submissive, or remorseful to the point of brokenness. Additionally, non-restorable cases are ones that refuse to get help. However, KCCC is available to all who would take advantage of its programs.

The Restoration Program at KCCC consists of a private Christ-centered 12-step counseling plan. It is important for couples to personally attend all sessions at Kettering, Ohio. There will be a daily two-hour session with the director. This will aid in focusing therapeutically on what changes are necessary. Towards the latter part of the program, attendance and participation are required in a seminar called "The Third Sex". Its main topic is, "Handling one's sexuality in the ministry." The 12-day program, including lodging, costs approximately $2,000.1

The Southeastern California Conference (SECC) has been working on a restoration program for several years. Ernest Furness, the ministerial secretary for the conference, described the policy this way.

SECC has a restoration policy. Better yet, we have a restoration form that allows latitude to adapt to the needs of the participating clergy person. We lead them through a five year process that involves counseling, mentors, placement in a church, with regular

reports to the conference personnel committee. We have one pastor who has nearly completed the process. There is another who would like to enter the restoration process but we prefer working with someone coming from another conference, rather than someone who would be returning to the conference where the issue occurred. Because of this, several of us in the Pacific Union would like to see a broader based union wide restoration program.¹

A copy of the SECC form is in appendix C. These initial steps to policy changes and programs for restoring pastors suggest that the church may be ready to revisit the church’s regulations.

Surveys of North American Division Leaders

To determine whether the church may be ready to update the present regulations, a small number of leaders in the NAD were surveyed. A questionnaire was sent to leaders across North America in September of 2003. They were asked to return it anonymously through the mail. The participants returned their surveys in October and November of 2003. The cover letter, questionnaire, and other pertinent information are in appendix A.

The Participants

The Adventist Year Book 2003 was used to select the participants. One hundred leaders from across North America were chosen from the following groups: administrators, pastors, departmental directors, professors/teachers, chaplains, counselors, and lay elders. Each person was asked to complete a twenty-three-question survey (question 13 was divided into a and b). The number of surveys sent to each group of respondents was evenly distributed among the seven groups. Fifty-seven people returned their questionnaires. The following is a report of their responses. It should be noted that some of the percentages in the illustrative graphs total more or less than 100 percent because the numbers were rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

On occasion the percentages in the text differ slightly from those in the figures because the percentages in the graphs are based on the number of responses to a questionnaire item

¹ Ernest Furness to author, (email), February 7, 2001.
whereas the percentages in the text are based on the number of respondents.

One of the purposes of the survey was to discover if there were any differences between the respondents based on the positions they had held. It was understood that some participants held more than one position, so they were given an opportunity to mark several leadership responsibilities. Because some had served in two or more positions, and nearly half did not mark their current vocation, the comparative findings were not as definitive as expected. For that reason no important inferences in comparing groups will be discussed.

*Question 1—Figure 1:* Question 1 asked the participants to mark the position they held currently and all the ones that they had held in the past. Twenty-four respondents had served in two or more positions; one respondent marked as many as six. That is the reason the number of responses is 101, rather than 57. Twenty-two of those who replied had served as pastors, 16 as administrators, 14 as departmental leaders, 17 as professors/teachers, 12 as chaplains, 4 as counselors, 9 as lay leaders, and 7 did not respond to the question (fig. 1).

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses by positions previously held.](image)

**Fig. 1.** Number and percentage of responses by positions previously held.

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A closer look at the breakdown of participants is important. Even though a number of respondents checked multiple positions, 22 had served as pastors, and 5 more were currently serving as pastors, bringing the total to 27 who stated they were pastors. Sixteen had served as administrators, and 7 more were currently serving in that position, bringing the total to 23. Often those who serve as chaplains, professors/teachers, and departmental leaders come from a pastoral background as well. Therefore, it is safe to say that a large majority of the leaders had some pastoral experience, and nearly half were serving or had served as administrators.

Question 1—Figure 2: Question 1 also asked the leaders to report their present position by marking it with an “N.” Apparently many of them did not understand the request because about 47 percent did not provide any data regarding their present work, and 3 reported more than one current responsibility. Of those who responded, 7 were administrators, 3 departmental directors, 8 professors/teachers, 5 pastors, 3 chaplains, 2 counselors, and 4 lay leaders. The large number of missing responses (no data) makes it difficult to know the breakdown of participants by present position (see fig. 2).

Question 2—Figure 3: Regarding current employment (question 2), about 5 percent worked for the NAD, the same percentage for various unions, 31 percent for conferences, about 26 percent for educational institutions, nearly 15 percent for hospitals, and about 13 percent for local churches. The largest group worked for a conference. The second largest group worked for educational institutions (see fig. 3).
Fig. 2. Number and percentage of respondents by current position held.

Fig. 3. Number and percentage of responses by current employer.
Question 3—Figure 4: Based on their length of service, the largest percentage of respondents, nearly half (about 46 percent), served for 16 to 30 years. About 26 percent had served the longest (31 to 55 years), and the smallest group (about 18 percent) had served from 1 to 15 years. The average number of years of service was about 26 (25.9) years, so the participants were mostly experienced leaders. Ten-and-one-half percent did not report anything regarding their number of years of service (fig. 4).

![Pie chart showing years of service with data](image)

Average years of service per respondent = 25.88
N = 57

Fig. 4. Number and percentage of respondents by years of service in church.

Responses Regarding Fallen Pastors

Questions 4 to 7—Figures 5 to 11: These questions focused on relationships and contacts between the participants and fallen pastors. About 84 percent indicated that they had a friend who had fallen (question 4, fig. 5). Sixty-seven percent said they had been in contact with their former colleagues (question 4a, fig. 6).
Fig. 5. Number and percentage of respondents who have lost friends from the ministry.

Fig. 6. Respondents who have been in contact with former ministers.
Sixty-seven percent of the participants said they had been in contact with their fallen friends, while 18 percent said they did not have any contact. Based on sentiments expressed by some who were concerned about this issue, it was expected that fewer leaders would have contacted their fallen colleague. As shown in figure 7, however, the actual report of the number of contacts, though still somewhat higher than expected, is closer to what might be anticipated.

*Question 4b—Figure 7:* This question asked the participants to list the number of contacts that they had with their former colleagues. About 33 percent did not answer the question, while 10.5 percent indicated that they had never been in contact with their fallen friend. About 10.5 percent reported 11 to 20 contacts. Twelve percent had contacted their friend between 6 to 10 times, and 33 percent said they had been in touch from 1 to 5 times. The total number (56 percent) who reported contacting their fallen colleagues is closer to the estimated results.

Average number of contacts per respondent = 5.63
N = 57

Fig. 7. Respondents who have contacted former ministers and number of contacts.
Question 4c—Figure 8: This item addressed the question as to whether the fallen colleague was still a church member. Slightly more than 61 percent reported that their friend continued to be a part of the church. This was quite a high estimate compared to the research in Australia that was cited in chapter 1. More than a quarter (26.3 percent) of the leaders did not respond. Just over 12 percent indicated that their friend had dropped out of the church.

![Pie Chart](image)

Fig. 8. Number and percentage of fallen pastors who have remained church members.

Question 5—Figure 9: This question sought to determine whether the respondents had advised someone to resign because of adultery. Thirty-five percent of the participants had recommended that a pastor resign. The fact that 63 percent did not recommend that a pastor resign does not necessarily indicate that they were lax in their moral responsibilities. The research did not reveal reasons as to why they did not recommend resignation.
Question 6—Figure 10: This item asked respondents whether a minister friend had ever confided to them that they had committed adultery. About 37 percent of the leaders had a friend confide in them regarding their moral failure. It is interesting to note that the percentage of those in the previous figure (fig. 9) who had recommended that a fallen pastor resign is similar to the percentage in figure 10, regarding respondents who had had someone confide in them that they had committed adultery. Upon carefully examining each numbered survey, it was noted there was an overlap between figures 9 and 10 (questions 5 and 6). Fourteen of the respondents (or nearly 67 percent), to whom a minister had confided his infidelity (question 6), had advised that the erring pastor resign (question 5).
Fig. 10. Respondents to whom a minister has admitted marital infidelity.

Question 7—Figure 11: This inquiry sought to discover what legal involvement leaders have had with sexual misconduct cases. Participants were asked if they had ever had to testify in court regarding a pastor’s malfeasance. Not very many respondents, only 3, had had to testify in court regarding moral accusations against a pastor. One can be thankful that this is not a larger number.
Yes
3 / 5%

No
54 / 95%

N = 57

Fig. 11. Participants who have had to testify about a pastor’s sexual indiscretion.

Attitudes toward Policies, Processes, and Restoration

*Questions 8 to 10—Figures 12 to 15:* The first three attitude questions, numbers 8 through 10 (illustrated in figs. 12 to 15), dealt in a general way with the heart of the issue. Responses to the following questions lend support to the idea that church policies may need to be revised.

*Question 8—Figure 12:* More than a third (36.8 percent) of the participants felt that there may be circumstances that might allow an adulterous pastor to remain in ministry without losing their credentials. On the other hand, 61 percent were opposed to retaining a fallen pastor (question 8, fig. 12). One person did not respond to the question. The responses of a significant number of leaders (36.8 percent) suggest that they held views that are inconsistent with the stated policies of the church. These participants reflect the thought presented in chapter 2 that the church can forgive and allow a repentant adulterous pastor to remain in ministry. If someone were involved in ministering to a fallen colleague, and seeking to restore them spiritually,
while at the same time holding the adulterer accountable, a case could be made for this perspective. There were precedents for this in the Ellen White documents cited in chapter 3.

Fig. 12. Respondents who believe an adulterous pastor could be retained.

**Question 9—Figure 13:** Rather than dealing with the advisability of retaining an adulterous pastor in ministry, this question focused on whether the leaders thought a discontinued pastor could be reinstated. Only 17.5 percent felt that a fallen pastor should never be reinstated. A dramatic increase in the level of agreement occurred in the responses to this question. Instead of 37 percent agreeing, now 81 percent agree. The term adultery was used in questions 8 and 9 to eliminate possible confusion as to whether indiscretion or adultery was being discussed. The large percentage of leaders (81 percent) who believe there are circumstances under which an adulterous pastor could be reinstated suggests that there may be considerable tension between the
policies and processes of the church and present commitment to those policies. The guidelines do not allow for reinstatement. This level of agreement (81 percent) is similar to the level of agreement with the final question on the survey that proposed a process that would allow for reinstatement.

**Fig. 13.** Respondents who believe an adulterous pastor could be reinstated.

*Question 10 (first part)—Figure 14:* About 72 percent of the leaders knew of a pastor who had been retained or restored to ministry (see fig. 14).

*Question 10 (second part)—Figure 15:* When asked whether they agreed with the decision to retain or reinstate, more than a third (nearly 37 percent) did not respond to the question. Only 35 percent were in favor of the decision to retain or reinstate the fallen leader. A possible reason for this could be that the question made no differentiation between restoration and retention. In questions 8 and 9, a clear distinction was made between retaining or reinstating...
Fig. 14. Respondents who are aware of an adulterous pastor being retained/reinstated.

N = 57

No
15 / 26%

Yes
41 / 72%

No Data
1 / 2%

Fig. 15. Respondents who agreed with the decision to retain/reinstate.

N = 57

No
16 / 28%

Yes
20 / 35%

No Data
21 / 37%
an adulterous pastor. The percentage of those willing to retain or reinstate a fallen pastor in figure 15 is similar to that in figure 12 of those who felt that there might be circumstances under which an adulterous pastor could be retained (at 35 and 37 percent respectively). Conversely, if one compares the percentage of those who were opposed to the decision to retain/reinstate (fig. 15) with the percentage of those who were opposed to the decision to reinstate an adulterous pastor (fig. 13), the percentage opposed to the decision to reinstate is considerably smaller (at 28 and 18 percent respectively). Finally, a comparison of figures 12 and 13 indicates that a significant majority (81 percent) of the leaders may be open to the possibility of reinstating a fallen colleague, while a significant majority (61 percent) are not in favor of retaining a fallen pastor in ministry.

The final portion of the survey (13 questions) was a set of “agree/disagree” options. Participants were asked to respond to statements, using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with (1) being “Strongly Agree,” (2) “Agree,” (3) “Neutral,” (4) “Disagree,” and (5) “Strongly Disagree.”

**Question 11--Figure 16:** This item dealt with addiction to pornography. The purpose was to discover whether there might be differences in thinking regarding treatment of someone addicted to pornography compared to someone who had committed adultery. Even though pornography may not rise to the level of adultery in some minds, slightly more than 19 percent of the respondents felt that a pastor who struggles with this problem should resign. On the other hand, 53 percent would not recommend that a pastor struggling with pornography resign (fig. 16). The responses to this question were somewhat mixed. Fourteen people (25 percent) were neutral regarding this issue. Compared with those individuals (61 percent) who felt an adulterous pastor could not be retained, there was greater support for retaining one who struggles with pornography.
Fig. 16. Level of agreement that a pastor with addiction to pornography resign.

*Question 12—Figure 17:* This question addressed the issue of whether the participants felt the church adequately trained and provided support to help leaders avoid falling into sexual temptation. Nearly three-fourths (72 percent) of the leaders recognized a need for further training and help for pastors to stave off sexual temptations. Nearly 25 percent felt strongly about this issue. The average response (mean = 3.754) was close to neutral (mean = 3.49), and suggests only a slight concern for some kind of educational experience that will strengthen leaders and help them resist the temptation to misuse their sexuality.
Fig. 17. Agreement on sufficient support and training for pastors who fall into sexual sin.

Question 13a—Figure 18: This item dealt with whether the leadership perceived that there are adequate safeguards to help employers to avoid hiring those who may be more likely to succumb to sexual temptation. Of all the items in the survey, the highest level of agreement among respondents occurred regarding this question. Barely 9 percent of those reporting believe that the church has established adequate safeguards against hiring those who are prone to having sexual problems. Eighty-four percent saw this as a potential problem. This suggests a need for some type of process or test that could help employers and pastors become aware of pastoral vulnerability to a sexual fall.
Fig. 18. Agreement on safeguards for the church in hiring pastors prone to sexual temptation.

Questions 13b to 21—Figures 19 to 27: This series of questions focused specifically on how the respondents perceive the adequacy of present policies. In each case, the majority of those leaders who were surveyed seemed to feel that the present policies are inadequate.

Questions 13b to 16—Figures 19 to 22: Questions 13b through 16 repeat the same question regarding the effectiveness of church policies in healing fallen pastors, their victims, congregations, and families. For this reason the figures for these questions will be placed together.

Almost 70 percent of the leaders think that the present policies do not aid fallen pastors in healing their brokenness from a pastoral fall (questions 13b, fig. 19).
Fig. 19. Agreement that NAD policies/processes assist in the healing of fallen pastors.

Average = 3.804  
N = 57

Fig. 20. Agreement that NAD policies/processes assist in healing victims of a pastoral fall.

Average = 3.821  
N = 57

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Fig. 21. Agreement that NAD policies help congregations heal.

Average = 3.795
N = 57

Fig. 22. Agreement that NAD policies/processes help wives/families heal.

Average = 3.929
N = 57
A somewhat smaller percentage (66.7 percent) believe our policies do not aid victims of a pastoral fall, with more than 26 percent having serious doubts about the process (question 14, fig. 20). Close to 65 (64.9) percent think our policies fail to help the healing process for the local congregation (question 15, fig. 21), and almost 70 percent of the leaders question whether our policies are helpful in restoring the pastor's family (question 16, fig. 22).

Question 17—Figure 23: This item sought to discover the respondents' perception of whether the practices and policies of the church are in harmony. Nearly 66 percent of the surveyed leaders believed there is a discrepancy between the policies of the church and how these are implemented. About 16 percent were neutral and just over 12 percent thought the policies and practices were in harmony. The findings shown in this figure indicate that a majority of the leaders see disharmony between the policies and practices of the church (fig. 23).

![Pie Chart]

- No Data: 3 / 5%
- Strongly disagree: 15 / 26%
- Disagree: 23 / 40%
- Agree: 6 / 11%
- Neutral: 9 / 16%

Average = 3.833  
N = 57

Fig. 23. Agreement that there is no discrepancy between NAD policies and their implementation.
Questions 18 and 19—Figures 24 and 25: The intent of these two queries focused on whether the leaders felt the policies, in general, were adequate as they are or whether they need to be changed. Question 18 asked whether the policies were adequate, with no need to review them. Question 19 added the thought of whether the participants felt the policies should be updated as well as reviewed. The findings from these two questions are seminal to an underlying suggestion that perhaps the church may be ready for a change. Since the two questions are related, the figures that report their results are placed together on the next page for easy comparison. If only a few of the leaders believe that the policies need review and updating then one could safely say that this is a dead issue and need not be considered. On the other hand, if a large majority of leaders believe the policies should be reviewed and updated, one could conclude that significant consideration should be given to such a recommendation.

As one compares the results of the two questions, it is clear that a significant majority believe that the policies need to be reviewed as well as updated. About 9 percent believe the NAD policies are adequate, while 78.9 percent believe they are inadequate (question 18, fig. 24). Of this 78.9 percent, about 40 percent “strongly agree” that the policies need review and 38.9 percent “agree.” Regarding those who believe the policies should be reviewed and updated, the percentage decreases to just under 70 percent, and yet more than two-thirds of the leaders believe the policies should be updated. In summary, a larger percentage of the leaders believe the policies are inadequate, and a significant majority also believes the policies need updating.
Fig. 24. Agreement that NAD policies are adequate and do not need review.

Average = 4.070
N = 57

Fig. 25. Agreement that NAD policies regarding restoring fallen pastors need to be reviewed and updated.

Average = 2.080
N = 57
Question 20 and 21—Figures 26 and 27: These items attempted to discern whether the leaders felt the church ministered adequately to fallen leaders. Item 20 questioned whether the church ministered well in general, and item 21 queried as to whether we should do more to redeem leaders spiritually. These two items are comparable so they will follow one after the other.

Question 20—Figure 26: The majority of leaders tended to feel that the church is not doing well at ministering to fallen pastors. About 61 percent thought we could do better, while about a quarter (26.3 percent) were neutral. Only 10.5 percent felt the church is adequately ministering to fallen pastors.

Fig. 26. Agreement that the church does well in ministering to fallen pastors.

Question 21—Figure 27: Nearly four-fifths (78.9 percent) of the surveyed Adventist leaders sensed that we should do more to reach out to those who have had a moral lapse. It seems that these leaders may believe that the church should look through the eyes of grace at those who fall.
If the church were to act upon the suggested trends shown in this study, it would surely review its policies and practices so that fallen ministers might be restored spiritually. Perhaps some could also be reinstated.

Question 22—Figure 28: The final item on the questionnaire described parameters for a possible restoration policy (question 22, fig. 28). The guidelines were more inclusive than present regulations, with several conditions and safeguards for the church and for pastors. For the sake of clarity in discussing responses to this question, the question is included here. "If a restoration process could be designed that would be biblically based, restore the church’s reputation, encourage healing of pastors, victims and congregations, safeguard against litigation, require accountability from fallen pastors, and selectively reinstate those pastors who have
repented and regained the confidence of church members, family and peers, I would be in favor of such a process.” Only 1 person did not respond to the proposal. Nearly 81 (80.7) percent of the 57 NAD leaders were in favor of a policy and process that would allow for restoration, with 57.9 percent “strongly agreeing” and about 23 percent “agreeing.” Considerably fewer, only one in seven, of the respondents (14 percent) did not see any merit in the suggested proposal.

Looking at the entire survey, the last question was the most complete. It attempted to discern whether a broader, positive solution to the problem of sexual misconduct might be acceptable to the leaders of the church. When one looks at the other questions as they relate to this question, they all support the suggestion that the surveyed leaders of the church may be open to a more comprehensive process regarding fallen pastors. Although there were only 57 respondents to the questionnaire, this small study was statistically indicative of a possible support for changing Adventist policies and processes regarding fallen pastors in a way that will make them more redemptive.
Table 1 on the following page summarizes and presents key information about the last 13 questions. The questions are arranged in order by the size of their means or average scores. The means for each question are based on the number of respondents who answered that question. Means that fell between 1.501 and 2.500 may be interpreted as “agree”; those that fell between 2.501 and 3.500 may be interpreted as “neutral”; and those that fell between 3.501 and 4.500 may be interpreted as “disagree.”
Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for Questions 11 Through 22
Arranged by Size of Means

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question Number</th>
<th>Question Topic</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Agreement Level</th>
<th>N*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13a</td>
<td>Sufficient safeguards to protect church from hiring pastors who may be prone to sexual sin</td>
<td>4.125</td>
<td>0.935</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Adequacy of NAD disciplinary policies</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.033</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Extent to which NAD policies/procedures aid in healing wives/families after a pastoral fall</td>
<td>3.929</td>
<td>1.006</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Discrepancies between NAD disciplinary policies and their implementation</td>
<td>3.833</td>
<td>1.023</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Extent to which NAD policies/procedures aid in healing victims of a pastoral fall</td>
<td>3.821</td>
<td>0.993</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13b</td>
<td>Extent to which NAD policies/procedures aid in healing fallen pastors</td>
<td>3.804</td>
<td>0.923</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Extent to which NAD policies/procedures aid in healing congregations</td>
<td>3.795</td>
<td>1.052</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sufficient support and training to help pastors avoid falling into sexual sin</td>
<td>3.754</td>
<td>1.106</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Church ministry for fallen pastors</td>
<td>3.723</td>
<td>1.078</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Addiction to pornography</td>
<td>3.327</td>
<td>1.171</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>NAD policies regarding restoring fallen pastors need review/updated</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Church’s responsibility to redeem fallen pastors</td>
<td>1.906</td>
<td>1.097</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Restoration process for fallen pastors</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.312</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*N = Number of respondents.

Respondents as a whole disagreed with nine of the thirteen statements. They disagreed most strongly that there are sufficient safeguards to protect the church from hiring pastors who may be likely to succumb to sexual temptation (question 13a) and that NAD disciplinary procedures/policies regarding fallen pastors are adequate as they are and do not need review (question 18). They also disagreed that NAD policies/procedures aid in protecting all four...
groups who are affected by a pastoral fall: pastors themselves (question 13b), victims (question 14), wives and families of the fallen pastor (question 15), and congregations (question 16).

Respondents as a whole disagreed with the statement “I don’t see any discrepancy between NAD policies regarding disciplinary measures for fallen pastors and how those policies are implemented” (question 17). They disagreed that there is sufficient support and training to help pastors avoid falling into sexual sin (question 12). Finally, they disagreed with the statement that “the church does well in ministering to fallen pastors” (question 20).

As a whole, respondents were uncertain about recommending that a pastor who confessed to an addiction to pornography should resign (question 11). The average responses for this item fell within the “neutral” range.

Average responses for three items fell within the “agree” range. Respondents agreed most strongly that they would favor a restoration process that met the criteria outlined in question 22. They also agreed that the church should do more to redeem fallen pastors spiritually (question 21) and that NAD policies regarding the possibility of restoring fallen pastors must be reviewed and updated (question 19).

The standard deviations in table 1 indicate the spread in opinion among respondents. They represent the range above or below the mean within which about two-thirds (68.26 percent) of the responses lie. A small standard deviation shows that most responses fall within a fairly narrow range above or below the average; a large standard deviation shows a much greater spread in respondent opinions. There was least spread in opinion regarding the extent to which NAD policies/procedures aid in the healing process for fallen pastors (question 13b). There was the most spread in opinion regarding the restoration process outlined in question 22.

Individual Comments

Of the 57 participants in the questionnaire, 39 wrote individual comments. Five of these wrote an entire page of comments. The 34 who wrote briefly did so mostly in response to
question 10 of the survey. Questions 8 and 9 asked whether the participants thought there were circumstances that might allow an adulterous pastor to be retained or reinstated. In question 10 they were invited to make comments regarding their answers to questions 8 and 9.

Three people believed that reinstatement or restoration to ministry was not possible. Two felt that ministry was too high a calling for a fallen pastor. One indicated that a moral fall would permanently damage a pastor’s influence.

Several who agreed that restoration might be possible expressed concern for the victims of pastoral indiscretion. One person wrote, “What world do you live in? Victims are treated like they don’t exist!” One distraught leader sensed that the only motivation that would cause the church to correct some of the damage done by some offending pastors would be litigation. This same person pointed out that the church is in denominational denial regarding the overwhelming percentage of sexual, pornographic, voyeuristic, electronic escapism that is inter-related and now going on in our pastors’ and workers’ lives. This person, along with several others, believes that our leaders should be trained on how to prevent these kinds of problems. Many expressed that the ultimate purpose for discipline was healing, most importantly for the victims, but not to exclude healing for the pastor and his family.

Most leaders felt that circumstances should play an important part in determining whether a pastor could be restored. They thought the following factors should be considered:

1. If the victim of pastoral sexual misconduct was a child or youth, they felt the offending pastor should not be reinstated.

2. Was it a one-time affair or was it an ongoing life pattern? One person expressed that if sexual immorality was a pattern that this would reveal a character flaw, and the person should not be retained or restored.

3. Some believed that if the wife could forgive, and if the person with whom the pastor was involved could forgive, it might be possible for him to be retained.
4. Another indicated that if the pastor was repentant, and the victim was agreeable, and no one knew about the incident, the pastor could remain in ministry.

5. One person noted that there should be a difference between a one-time lapsed pastor and a pastor who is a predator. One leader who emphasized the importance of evaluating each case on its own expressed his idea this way: “Situation, Situation, Situation.” One person expressed it another way: “We have to judge very carefully each case but no iron clad rule excludes mercy and forgiveness.”

Several important concepts regarding disciplinary measures were suggested. One person proposed that a person be out of the ministry for a period of time, until he was victorious and could regain the confidence of the church. Then he could apply for reinstatement. Another proposed that the offending pastor could remain employed without pastoral duties until a plan of rehabilitation could be set in place. On a different note, one person thought that conferences, in consultation with unions, should determine how to respond to each case. Several voiced the need for fallen pastors to be accountable to someone. Another observed that he had heard of a church who formed supportive accountability groups and guided a recovery plan for the pastor.

In summary, of the 34 who gave short responses, only 3 were negative toward a possible restoration policy. One person was skeptical as to whether such a process could be designed. The other 31 were hopeful that each case would be evaluated individually and that processes could be designed that would protect the victims and provide healing for all.

Five people wrote an entire reaction page. These are summarized briefly. One lay leader was heartbroken over the loss of three of his pastors because of their moral falls. He said his church did not gossip about these people, they were only sad. The last part of his response was noteworthy. “Therefore, I don’t know what happened to them other than there were 3 very talented men who spoke and stood for Christ that are now working in very mundane jobs with their voices silenced. Two are very young. They are working or have worked their marriages
out. They were so dynamic. I’m sure they could be used by the church again. This whole issue is sad!”

Another professor responded by talking about individual cases. He mentioned a recent notorious situation, and he felt that the people involved could never overcome the stigma and be able to minister effectively. Perhaps if they were not very well known they might be restored in a new conference.

This participant also referred to a classmate who fell early in his ministry. But the classmate confessed his sin, rebuilt his marriage, and stayed in the church as a layman. Five to ten years later, he regained the confidence of the local congregation and is now the head elder. This leader believed that such a person who did not run from his mistake, who convinced the church that he had wounded of his repentance, and who re-earned their respect, should be reconsidered for employment. His last comment was of particular import: “We must work with the local body.”

Another leader stated, “It is hard to state absolutely that there are NO circumstances which would allow reinstatement. It seems to me that any situation would be quite uncommon and would require clear distinction as to whose situation qualifies and whose doesn’t.” This same leader noted that his conference had not had to deal with sexual problems with staff or pastors in the last thirteen years. However he thought that the societal stigma placed upon sexual sin would make it difficult for a fallen pastor to regain trust and be restored.

Another respondent proposed, “Sinners need to accept responsibility for their misdeeds, but administrators should deal with them in a kind and caring manner. All discipline should be of a redemptive nature.” He also agreed with the suggested restoration policy that was proposed in question 22.

We turn now to the most detailed response, which is quoted here in part:

It is heartening to learn that this issue is being addressed. We have hidden our heads in the sand far too long. Just as we should have known, denial does not solve the problem.
A pastor who is cherishing sin is endangering himself and his parishioners. Just as with substance addictions, the sexual addict is never safe claiming that he is no longer an addict, but as long as he recognizes how desperately he needs God's grace to maintain sobriety, he can safely minister to others. The secret addict is much more dangerous to his flock than is the penitent, confessing pastor who lives every day in the consciousness of his dependence upon God.

This same leader stressed the importance of a support system, mentioning a fallen leader who is helping many addicts and has a ministry to fallen pastors. He closed his remarks with these thoughts, "What a blessing it would be if our pastors and teachers who now struggle with secret temptations and sins could feel safe in seeking healing within the church."

Interviews with Fallen Pastors, Trends and Suggestions

Three fallen pastors were interviewed to ascertain their perceptions regarding the adequacy of their training, and the effectiveness of church policies and processes concerning their situation. Two of them have been reinstated officially as pastors. One was asked to serve as a lay pastor and has done so for two years. There were ten general questions, but considerable latitude occurred as we discussed them. The interviews were about an hour and a half in length. Individual questions and answers are in appendix D. The responses have been mingled together so as to protect the respondents' identity. For the most part these interviews were done by phone and detailed notes were taken. The interviewees have given their permission to include their answers in this document. They have also read their responses to ensure that this report adequately reflects their answers. The following is a summary of these interviews.

Those who were interviewed were asked about what it was like to leave the ministry, how long they had been out of the ministry, and whether they lost their credentials. For all three, leaving the ministry was one of the saddest days of their lives. One pastor said, "As I packed my office, it felt like I was packing my life, not knowing whether I would ever return." Another noted that not only was there a crisis with his leaving the church, there was a crisis not knowing whether he and his wife would stay together. All three pastors lost their credentials, and the two
who were ordained lost their ordination. One pastor who had not been caught but had been seeking help and accountability was helped out of the ministry. The irony of the whole situation for him was that the senior pastor where he had been an associate encouraged the congregation to disfellowship him. It was difficult for him to fathom the church’s response because he had been wanting help.

Regarding their knowledge of the policies and whether they were given any hope of being able to return, one pastor knew that the policies were strict, but he did not know the details until his exit from the ministry. No particular hope was given to any of the pastors that they could return to ministry. Two noted that there was a hint of hope if they were out of the ministry for a period of time. However, none of the pastors had assurance that they would be able to return to ministry, unless God worked a miracle. One pastor learned about the policies after he was reinstated and he said that the policies became a discouragement at that time. He nearly resigned because he felt that since the denominational policies stated that he should never be reemployed that perhaps he should not remain in the ministry.

Each of the pastors was asked whether the administration or anyone in the church gave him support after he left the ministry. All three felt abandoned by the leadership of the church. One pastor said that he was treated as though he had leprosy. Another said he felt the administration treated him with kindness, but it was as though it was a duty. All three pastors wished that their former colleagues and administrators would have contacted them to see how their wives and families were doing. One pastor noted that his son was in the hospital and no one came to visit him or his son. He was still living in the area, and the conference leaders knew his son was in the hospital because he had reported it to them for insurance purposes. Two leaders asked that their brethren keep in touch with them, but no one called. One administrator had prayed with one of the pastors initially, and promised to keep in touch but never did. Another felt he had been put at arm’s length from his former colleagues and administrators. One pastor
had a lot of encouragement from the local church. Even though the conference leadership was distant, there were those in the local church who were supportive.

The pastors were asked if they had any suggestions for helping to prevent a moral fall. All of the pastors wished that there was more training. One said that being in the ministry was a lonely experience. He was a workaholic and needed to realize how this affected his family and his ministry. Another thought that the training he received as a pastor was somewhat cursory. He thought we need more in-depth training. He felt we need to learn how to be more real and more aware of our vulnerability. Another suggested that we might consider *Promise Keepers* as a model for helping pastors remain pure. Another suggested that free, anonymous counseling should be an option for pastors. He mentioned an Adventist program at Kettering that is available over the phone but expressed some concern that the program needs more consistency.

The pastors were asked about how they had decided to return to the ministry and whether it was difficult, or if they had any doubts. None felt there were any difficulties with their local churches or administrators. Two were especially appreciative of the encouragement from the administrators who hired them. All expressed some personal doubts and struggles with returning to the ministry. One said, “I’ve come to the conclusion, however, that God calls people who have foibles.” Another received significant encouragement from his former conference president. That same pastor thought that the church is becoming more grace-oriented.

Finally, the pastors were asked, “If you were in a position to influence the church to change its policies, practices, or processes regarding sexual temptation, or the discipline and the advisability of restoring fallen pastors, what would you suggest?” The following is a list of their suggestions:

1. There needs to be a comprehensive restoration policy. Those who are pedophiles or involved with teenagers and those who repeat their adulterous behavior should not be considered candidates for restoration. They felt the attitude of the fallen pastor was extremely important.
The policy should be well crafted and carried through by skilled professionals.

2. Fallen pastors need counseling from competent professional therapists, who can evaluate their progress. One pastor suggested the possibility of going to a retreat center.

3. There should be a restoration team to work with the fallen pastor. Pastors should not be rushed back into ministry, and careful consideration needs to be given as to the placement of a restored pastor.

4. A system of accountability should be a part of the restoration process. One concerned pastor said, “Right now, guys are going back into the ministry outside of policy with no accountability. This is unfortunate.” All three pastors were aware of their continued vulnerability. None said they could never fall again. However, all of the pastors felt they were much less likely to fall again because their marriages and personal lives were much stronger than before they had committed adultery. They felt their risks to have a moral fall were far less now than when they were serving as pastors and hiding their problems.

5. Somewhat related to the need for accountability was the need for a support system. One pastor expressed that the ministry was a lonely place and that he needed to be able to have deeper and more honest relationships with his colleagues. He felt it would be good to be able to address the issue of how we can maintain moral purity.

6. One pastor expressed a deep concern that the churches should be protected from pastors who have adulterous tendencies. He felt that the church should be a safe place. He was very concerned that a restored pastor be placed in a situation that would not be too stressful.
CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Conference and NAD Recommendations

As noted in chapter 4, in 1992 a small committee in the Pacific Union Conference (PUC) studied the issue of restoring pastors and recommended a change in the denominational policy.

The suggested policy change was never approved officially by the PUC. However, the Alberta Conference adopted the PUC draft with minor revisions in April of 2001. Since the Alberta Conference made only minor revisions, and these have been officially adopted, this version will be the focus of our attention. The following is a portion from the Alberta document. It quotes the NAD policy and is followed by changes or additions, which are underlined. The parts of the NAD policy that are deleted are within parentheses and in italics.

L 70 Safeguarding Credentials — the Integrity of the Ministry

L 70 05 Union Responsibility - Union and local conferences share the responsibility for safeguarding the integrity of the ministry and are required by denominational action and practice to assure that credentials issued within their respective territories shall indeed certify that the holders are in good and unquestioned standing, properly subject to invitation to any other field of service.

L 7010 Integrity of the Ministry - If the standing of any holder of credentials is brought into uncertainty, it is the duty of the union conference to join the local conference in conferring, with a purpose to clear away any uncertainty, in order that no reproach or shadow may be left to rest upon all the credentials held by the ministry. Where the matters involved are of such a character that the union and local conference committees are unable to resolve the difficulty and announce to all a clear record for the ministry, the matter must of necessity be appealed to the General Conference, by action of both local and union committees together, or by action of one body separately, inasmuch as any uncertainty in the matter of what ministerial credentials stand for in one field casts a shadow upon all credentials and is a matter of general denominational concern.

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L 70 15 Reasons for Discipline of Ministers — Discipline shall be administered to an ordained/licensed/commissioned minister in the following circumstances:

1. Moral Fall — In the case of a moral fall in violation of the seventh commandment, including those violations involving sexual perversions, he/she has, by that transgression, *(made void)* invalidated his/her (calling and, where applicable), ordination/commission to the sacred office of the ministry.

L 70 20 Steps in Discipline of Ministers - When discipline must be administered in the case of a minister, four aspects of his/her relationship to the church may be affected: his/her credential/license, his/her ordination, his/her church membership and his/her denominational employment. The discipline and corresponding procedure for administering such discipline in relation to each of these aspects is as follows:

1. Credential/license — The credential/license of a minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes shall be withdrawn *(permanently)* by the employing committee, after consultation with the next higher organization. His/her credential/license may also be withdrawn in the case of dissidence as defined in L 70 15-2 above, after consultation with the next higher organization, but in either case, such withdrawal shall be reviewed by the committee after a stipulated period(s) which shall be determined at the time of withdrawal.

2. Ordination and Denominational Employment. - It is recognized that a minister who has experienced a moral fall or has apostatized has access to the mercy and pardoning grace of God. Such an individual must be assured of the love and goodwill of the church. However, for the sake of the good name of the church and the upholding of moral standards:

   a. A minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes has *(made void)* invalidated his/her ordination. This changed relationship shall be recognized and recorded by his employing organization with the approval of the respective union committee (General Conference or Division Committee in the case of a General Conference/division institution). He/she shall be ineligible for future employment as a Seventh-day Adventist minister until and unless repentance and reformation have been established by the restoration committee whose recommendations are decided upon by the employing organization. Thus the high standards of the church will be safeguarded and the redeeming and purifying effects of the gospel will be fostered.

   b. A licensed/commissioned minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes shall be ineligible for future ordination and/or employment as a Seventh-day Adventist minister until and unless repentance and reformation have been established by the errant individual and the restoration committee whose recommendations are decided upon by the employing organization.

3. Church Membership - The organization which has withdrawn a credential/license *(permanently)* and, in the case of an ordained minister has recorded the *(voiding)* invalidating of his/her ordination, shall inform the local church of which the offending minister is a member. It shall be the duty of the church to administer discipline as provided for in the *Church Manual* in the section, "Reasons for Which Members Shall Be Disciplined."
4. (Denominational Employment — It is recognized that a minister who has experienced a moral fall or has apostatized has access to the mercy and pardoning grace of God and may desire to return to the church. Such an individual must be assured of the love and goodwill of God's people. However, for the sake of the good name of the Church and the maintaining of moral standards, he/she must plan to devote his/her life to employment other than that of the gospel ministry, the teaching ministry, or denominational leadership.)

L 70 22 Counselling and Career Guidance — The organization shall provide, or refer to, a professional program of counselling for the minister and family to assist them in transition. The minister who desires to participate in possible restoration will write a letter to the employing organization in which the minister (1) requests participation, (2) agrees to submit entirely to the counsel of the restoration committee, (3) agrees to relocate, if necessary, to a different community during the restoration period, and (4) agrees not to serve in a spiritual leadership role, including no preaching or teaching, during the time of restoration.

The time period for the restoration will vary from case to case, but will generally be no less than two years. A restoration program does not indicate or guarantee future church employment.

The Restoration Committee: The committee should consist of persons who have the best interest of the individual in mind. Its makeup should include the ordained minister who pastors the church in the community where the restoration is occurring, three lay persons, at least one of whom should be a woman, and when possible, a person who is a mental health professional. The responsibilities of the committee include establishing guidelines that are fitting to the specific case, making recommendations as to how the guidelines can best be carried out, monitoring the progress on a monthly basis, and reporting this to a designated church leader, and at the end of the restoration process, indicating the level of success and whether or not the former minister could be considered for reinstatement into church employment. If reinstatement is recommended, the local conference has the responsibility of acting upon the committee's recommendation. Should the conference accept the recommendation, the conference will delineate the procedures that are to be followed.

L 70 25 Rebaptism — A minister who has been disfellowshiped from the church because of a moral fall or apostasy, but who subsequently gives evidence of repentance, conversion and reformation of life, shall be rebaptized before rejoining the church.

The NAD has also been working on a policy revision that would allow for pastors to be restored. The document is in its initial phases and has not been voted by the NAD yet, but hopefully it will be approved by the fall of 2005. The entire draft with its covenants and reports is included in appendix C. Below is the initial page regarding the applicability and intent of the proposed restoration policy.
Applicability: These guidelines are intended for those workers who have violated the boundaries of sexual conduct causing suspension or removal of their denominational credentials and who wish to be restored. No restoration may be done without going through the protocols as outlined. However, accomplishing these protocols does not in and of itself guarantee restoration or employment at the end of the process. Some infractions are so serious that they disqualify a person from consideration for restoration. They are any criminal act of a sexual nature, such as rape, statutory rape, lewd and lascivious conduct, sodomy, contributing to the delinquency of a minor (where a sexual act was included) or other similar criminal acts, breach of a counselor/counselee relationship, assault and battery or other similar acts of a sexual nature, multiple infractions, predatory behavior, long-standing, ongoing activities that constitute an established pattern, or a medical diagnosis of a mental disorder which leads to inappropriate sexual misconduct until the disorder is medically resolved.

Intent of the Policy

This policy and protocol is intended to be (1) redemptive to the individual, (2) protective to the community and church, (3) restorative when possible, clearing the way for the potential continued service and credentials of the individual, and (4) restrictive, when needed.

The draft includes process covenants between the prospective candidate for restoration and the employing organization, a therapist’s report form, a therapist’s release request form, and a form for follow-up plans after the worker reenters the ministry.

The suggested changes to the disciplinary processes in the PUC document and in the Alberta revision allow for restoration, based upon a pastor’s repentance and reformation, his submission of a request for reinstatement, his commitment to a restoration process that is guided by a restoration committee, his agreement not to perform pastoral duties during the period of time out (which would be no less than two years), and his willingness to relocate. Rather than voiding his ordination, a fallen pastor has invalidated his ordination, which allows for a possible return to ministry, subject to the conditions outlined.

The NAD draft proposal allows for restoration, provided the suggested protocols are followed. It does not guarantee that individuals will be reinstated. In serious cases such as those of a criminal nature, those involving children, or situations where there is a pattern of sexual promiscuity, those individuals would be disqualified from restoration.
These policy revisions suggest that the Adventist Church in North America may be ready to move toward making procedural revisions that would allow for restoring fallen pastors.

**Recommendations and Suggested Processes**

**Recommendations from Surveys, Interviews, Theology, and Suggested Policy Changes**

The results of the questionnaire that was sent to one hundred NAD leaders indicate that four out of five of Adventist leaders who responded believe that disciplinary guidelines for fallen pastors need to be reviewed and updated. Nearly 81 percent of the leaders felt that there might be some circumstances that would allow for a fallen pastor to be restored (figure 13). It was particularly interesting to note how those who were administrators responded to this question. Of the 7 who were currently administrators, 2 felt there were no circumstances that would allow an adulterous pastor to be reinstated. Fifteen of the 16 respondents who had served as administrators reported that they felt there might be some circumstances in which an adulterous pastor could be restored. The collective percentage of all administrators (87 percent) who felt there might be some circumstances under which a fallen pastor might be restored was higher than for the entire group of respondents. Nearly three-fourths of all the respondents (72 percent) believe that our leaders need more training to help them resist the temptation to a moral fall (figure 17). Eighty-six percent were concerned that the church does not have adequate safeguards to protect the church from hiring those who have a predisposition to having a moral fall (figure 18). Between 65 and 75 percent think that the church does not adequately minister to fallen pastors, their wives and families, victims, or churches that have been wounded by the pastoral fall (figures 19 to 22). Sixty-seven percent noticed a discrepancy between the disciplinary policies and practices of the church (figure 23). Nearly four-fifths (79 percent) of the respondents sensed we should do more to reach out to those who have had a moral fall (figure 27). Finally, 81 percent of all those who responded felt that a more comprehensive policy (one
that that would allow for selective restoration of fallen pastors, heal the victims, families and congregations of those injured by a pastoral fall, and safeguard the church) might be admissible. In view of the results of the surveys, interviews, and the suggested policy changes by the Pacific Union Conference, the Alberta Conference and the NAD, the following suggestions are made:

Recommendation 1: That the NAD develop and vote a comprehensive restoration policy that allows for fallen pastors to be selectively reinstated, that seeks to heal their families, victims and churches that they have wounded. This policy could be a combination of the PUC/Alberta policy revision and the NAD draft or a completely new policy. The policies that have been developed by the Assemblies of God would be worth consideration. The restoration policy should limit re-employment to those who are willing to participate in a restoration process, to those who are not involved in a pattern of sexual impurity, and to who have not been involved in criminal sexual activity or with a child. Those who apply for reinstatement must be willing to be reassigned and to move from their present district to another area if necessary. Before being reinstated, they must complete the required protocols and receive a positive evaluation from an appropriate health professional.

Recommendation 2: That the NAD, in conjunction with Andrews University, develop a training course on ethics and sexuality. All seminary students and pastors in the field should be required to take the course. The following elements should be a part of the course: (1) the minister as a sexual person, (2) dealing with your woundedness and family-of-origin issues, (3) personality and vulnerability testing, (4) safeguarding your home, (5) power issues in the ministry, (6) how to avoid ministerial burnout, (7) mentoring and ministry, (8) peacemaking strategies, and (9) legal issues related to a moral fall. The course should be intensely practical and allow for personal disclosure in a safe environment, either one-on-one or in small groups. An environment of openness and confidentiality needs to be created and maintained.
Recommendation 3: That the NAD develop processes that will allow for the selective restoration of fallen pastors. The procedures should seek to create an environment that will allow those who struggle with stress, aloneness, and sexual temptation to seek help without endangering their calling to ministry. Circumstances should determine the type of discipline, with the recognition that the purpose of discipline is restoration and healing, not punitive. Pastors involved in criminal offenses, offenses with children, or who have a pattern of adulterous affairs should not be considered for restoration. Those who are repentant, willing to seek counseling, committed to be under the guidance of a restoration committee, and willing to be accountable should be given an opportunity to apply for return to ministry. Wherever possible, in cases where the church or the public is likely to become aware of the offense, public confession should be made. This will give congregations and individuals the opportunity for honesty and prayerful ministry to all concerned. When an environment of healing rather than condemnation is encouraged, individuals will be more likely to benefit from openness. In some cases, privacy may be maintained when no one but the pastor, the victim, and a church leader knows of the situation. Great caution should be taken regarding the advisability of keeping an adulterous affair secret. If a pastor falls and this is kept secret with no appropriate discipline, the church becomes more vulnerable to lawsuits because of poor supervision. Keeping a sexual fall secret also leaves a pastor who has not confessed or dealt with his sin more vulnerable to repeating his offense. A period of time out of the ministry may be necessary for those who have fallen. Some have suggested a period of no less than two years. This would allow sufficient time for a pastor to rebuild his relationships and his reputation. It would also give time to deal with the issues that precipitated his moral lapse. In some cases the pastor may be able to stay in the local church, but in most cases he needs to be willing to move to another area.

Recommendation 4: That free, anonymous counseling should be made available to all pastors. Those who do the counseling should be professional and have a track record of success.
in helping pastors sort through family-of-origin issues, woundedness, and sexual issues. It is important that the program be a consistent one. The Ministry Care Line at the Kettering Clergy Care Center is an example of an initial counseling program. Further one-on-one counseling needs to occur in most cases.

Recommendation 5: That the NAD develop a mentoring/life coaching system. This should include life coaching and mentor training for every union and conference ministerial secretary. Each ministerial secretary should become certified and should train selected pastors to become certified mentor/coaches for the entire conference pastoral staff. This system would include a built-in accountability process and support system. It could become a model for training church members as well. The following four sites are representative sources that are available on line: (1)www.drtrathen.com/PCS.asp, (2)http://lifetrekcoaching.com, (3)www.lifecoaching.com, (4)www.transformationalcoaching.com.

Recommendation 6: That unions and the larger conferences should choose qualified individuals to form a pastoral restoration committee. Such a committee could be composed of the conference ministerial secretary, a person who is knowledgeable in legal issues, two or three lay persons, and another pastor (preferably one who is close to the offending pastor). In general, those who are in positions of administration would not be the best to serve on this committee. It would probably be more difficult in most situations for a fallen pastor to be able to trust the person who is responsible for his employment. It would be helpful for one of these to be qualified as a peacemaker. At least one of these individuals should be a woman. The committee should be trained and be able to help heal the entire situation. Strategies should be developed that focus on ministering to the victim, as well as to the congregation, and to the fallen pastor and his family.

Recommendation 7: That the NAD should establish a retreat center for pastors. The retreat center needs to be staffed by experienced, qualified people who have success in restoring
pastors. If the NAD is unable to establish such a center, funding could be provided to send pastors to one of several centers. The following four centers are ones that could be considered:

1. Kettering Clergy Care Center. KCCC is an extensive of Kettering Medical Center, a Seventh-day Adventist Hospital in Kettering, Ohio. The center is run by Robert Peach, D.Min., and serves pastors from the Seventh-day Adventist Church, as well as those of other faith communities. Their website is www.kmcnetwork.org/kecc/KCCC2.cfm. More complete information can be found at this website: www.kmcnetwork.org/clergycare. Their phone number is 800 324-8618.

2. The Filioia Meadows Retreat Center, which is run by Dr. Alan Nelson, an Adventist psychiatrist. The center is specifically for pastors or leaders who have experienced moral failure or burnout. Dr. Nelson can be contacted at Alan_Nelson@hotmail.com or at 970-963-9158.

3. The Marble Retreat Center in Marble, Colorado. The center is run by Melissa and Louis McBurney, MD., and is specifically for pastors. It is an interdenominational center and recommended by Focus on the Family. Their website is www.marbleretreat.org, and their phone number is 888-216-2725.

4. The Barnabas Center, run by Mark Hisey. The center seeks to develop the spiritual and leadership skills of pastors. It is located in Creston, North Carolina. Their webpage is www.barnabascenter.org and their phone number is 877-860-0688.

Recommendation 8: That every pastor and leader should be required to take a survey that predicts possible patterns of pastoral infidelity. The test should be mandatory but the results should remain private to the individual, unless they chose to share the results. An example of an unscientific test that has been used to determine vulnerability to sexual temptation is available in the book Ethical Dilemmas in Church Leadership: Studies in Biblical Decision Making by
Pastors who find themselves to be vulnerable should be encouraged to seek free anonymous counseling or go to a retreat center.

One might enquire as to how the denomination could afford such an outlay of funding for these various recommendations. If the denomination could stem the tide of lawsuits by working on preventive measures, a portion of the funds could come from the savings that would result. With the denomination spending approximately 1.3 million dollars per pastor in salaries and life-long educational and medical insurance costs, saving a pastor for continued ministry could also recoup financial losses resulting from pastoral attrition. This could help fund some of the needed changes as well.

Recommendation 9: That the practical guidelines from the Ellen White Manuscript Releases as outlined in chapter 3 be used as over-all principles to establishment policies and processes for restoration.

Recommendation 10: That local elders and leaders in the Adventist Church be supplied with copies of Manuscript Releases 448 and 449 and Jay Smith’s article “Can Fallen Leaders Be Restored to Leadership?” These documents should be recommended reading so that local boards may be informed regarding the issues, and be able to make enlightened, educated decisions. This could help local churches become more redemptive in their approach to helping congregations heal. It could also help in how they respond to local leaders who fall.

Recommendation 11: Encourage writing books and materials that deal with the many sides of this issue. Further research needs to be done on this important topic.

Recommendations for Further Study

Greater study could be given to the following issues. A more in-depth study of original

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Hebrew and Greek texts could provide greater understanding from Scripture on this controversial subject. An attempt has been made to cover the overall, scriptural themes and supporting evidence, but a specific exegetical focus could provide greater clarity.

Further study needs to be given to the actual implementation process. One could design a pilot program and test the results.

More study could be given to the legal ramifications for pastoral restoration. Such a study could help safeguard the church from exorbitant lawsuits.

Further research regarding victims of pastoral sexual misconduct as well as research regarding fallen pastor’s spouses could provide further insight on how to minister to those who have been damaged by pastoral indiscretion. In general, in the Adventist community, male pastors are the ones who commit the sexual offense, so understanding a feminine perspective could be very beneficial in designing policies that would safeguard their concerns.

Recommended Literature

A number of books, articles, programs, and manuals have been written for the purpose of restoring pastors. The following is a brief list of a some of the literature available. These books, articles and manuals are in the bibliography: Creating a Restoration Process: A Leadership Forum, by William Frey, Louis Burney, Richard Exeley and Jim DeVries; Restoring the Fallen, by Wilson, Friesen and Paulson; Aftershock, by Ted Kitchens; Rebuilding Your Broken World, by Gordon McDonald; Is Nothing Sacred, by Marie Fortune; If Ministers Fall, Can They Be Restored, by Tim LaHaye; Restoring Fallen Leaders, by Jack Hayford, A Restoration Manual by Thomas Pedigo and 3 manuals by the Assemblies of God including the District Office Manual, Manual for the Minister in Rehabilitation, and the Supervising Pastor’s Manual. The most comprehensive program is the last one designed by the Assemblies of God. A few pertinent pages from their district manual are included in appendix E.
Summary

The ten recommendations above, along with the suggested books and articles could serve as a springboard for devising comprehensive restoration policies and procedures. Further study could be given on how to implement an extensive system to restore not only those leaders who have had a moral fall but also those leaders who are burned out or struggling in ministry.

Conclusion

Statistics show that about 12 percent of pastors have been or are involved in adulterous relationships. Approximately 20 percent struggle with the issue of purity and pornography. As high as 37 percent have had some type of inappropriate relationship with someone who is not their spouse. These numbers do not show the brokenness or heart cries of those who wish they had never become involved in inappropriate sexual relationships. They do not portray the shattered dreams, the shame, or the destruction of families and church; but they do reveal a huge need to stem the tide of heartache.

At present, the Adventist Church has a policy that denies restoration to fallen pastors. One who has committed adultery is to resign, lose his credentials and ordination, and never be re-employed by any church entity. In practice the church is inconsistent in following the policy. Some pastors are dropped, and others are transferred to another church without missing a beat in their service record. This leaves a sense of confusion and cynicism and opens the church up for lawsuits.

Some may feel that the solution to this dilemma lies in following the policies more carefully. In reality, this does not solve the issue. Instead, rigid policies tend to be a breeding ground for the very sins these policies seek to eliminate. The stakes for confession and repentance are so high that few pastors will confess they have a problem. Furthermore, many
leaders feel that the present policies do not reflect the implications of the gospel message. Many feel it is time for the church to reevaluate the policies and to set in motion procedures and processes that will be more redemptive and comprehensive.

As one evaluates the results of the surveys of Adventist leadership in North America, the following conclusions can be drawn. The fact that 81 percent of the respondents felt that there could be circumstances that would allow for an adulterous pastor to be restored (see figure 13, page 175) indicates that a large majority of leaders are open to policies that would allow for pastoral restoration. The large percentage of leaders (65 to 75 percent) who feel that the church is not dealing adequately with healing pastors, their families, victims or churches, implies a dissatisfaction with the present situation (figures 19 to 22, pages 181-182). With 81 percent of the leaders being in favor of a policy that would be "biblically based, restore the church’s reputation, encourage healing of pastors, victims, and congregations, require accountability from fallen pastors, and selectively reinstate those pastors who have repented and regained the confidence of church members, family, and peers," it is hopeful that such a policy could be approved by the NAD (figure 28, page 188). If these suggested policy parameters were isolated from the other questions, one might wonder about the feasibility of implementing such a revision; but the results of the entire survey suggest that the church may have come to a time of grace, the intent of which is to restore and heal and to become more accountable.

One of the purposes of this dissertation has been to discover whether there is a solid foundation from the Bible and the writings of Ellen White for restoring fallen pastors. In the stories of many spiritual leaders, as referred to in this paper, we can find evidence that God forgives and restores and at times even retains fallen spiritual leaders in their positions of trust. Examples of leaders who have been given a second chance can be found in the stories of Abraham, Moses, Samson, David, Mannaseh, Peter, Paul, and others. Some have said that David and Solomon cannot be considered examples of pastoral restoration because they were political...
leaders, not pastors. This may appear justifiable on the surface; however, Scripture confirms that David and Solomon were expected to be spiritual leaders, as well as political leaders. Kings who did not obey God were at times removed from office if they did not fulfill their spiritual mandate. Such was the case of Saul, the first king of Israel. It is also of special significance that David and Solomon are authors of inspired writings that have profoundly and richly blessed the entire Christian world for centuries. As such, they are more spiritually authoritative than pastors. Therefore, they can be said to be models of God's forgiving grace and restoration for pastors.

It has been said that Peter could not be used as an example of restoration because he did not premeditate his sin. Neither did he sin against someone else. It may be true that some pastors wantonly violate their consciences, and without remorse plan to abuse their victims, but few are that crass. Most pastors plan to remain pure and true to their calling, and the majority of those who fall, like Peter, are unaware of the weakness of the flesh. Most pastors believe they are invulnerable to sexual sin. This is one of the very reasons some are so susceptible.

Although Peter's sin was not planned and it was not against another human being, it was a high crime. When Jesus needed him the most, he denied that he even knew Him. His was an act of disloyalty against his Maker and Savior. One might ask if sins against the Lord are less serious than sins against people. To classify Peter's sin as a lesser sin than adultery appears to be without exegetical or biblical foundation.

The motif of restoration that flows through Scripture provides further testament that God is one who glories in taking sinners and turning them into saints. He can take those who are hopeless and change their lives into examples of His incomprehensible love and grace. The Pauline counsel in Gal 6:1 is a primary example of the Christian's responsibility to restore those who are fallen. It has been said that this passage cannot be used to support restoration. However, the burden of proof lies at the door of those who would argue that this passage should exclude pastors or leaders from restoration.
The objection that sexual sin is the only sin against the body (1 Cor 6:18), and therefore should exclude fallen pastors from restoration, lacks conclusive exegetical support. Furthermore, even if it were conceded that sexual sin is the only sin against the body, no scriptural support can be cited that this sin is one that must exclude fallen leaders from restoration. It has been argued that those who have fallen morally cannot fulfill the qualifications for serving as church leaders. Nonetheless, all who serve in the church have fallen morally, because a moral fall is not only related to sexual sin. Fallen individuals who repent, and are victorious, who regain the confidence of fellow church members and colleagues can fulfill the qualifications for elders. The issue turns on whether the person is repentant and living a godly life, not on whether he/she has sinned. No passage of Scripture can be cited that proves that sexual sin is one that excludes pastors from restoration, therefore no conclusive scriptural witness bars pastors from being restored spiritually or to office. Without scriptural authority, those who would not allow for restoration for those whose sin is sexual, limit the grace of God and His power to restore.

Conversely, no conclusive evidence exists from Scripture that pastors must be restored, either. The weight of evidence, however, seems overwhelmingly in favor of a gracious God who transforms and restores—a God of the second chance.

Even though no decisive evidence exists within Scripture to restore fallen pastors, examination of the materials presented from the Ellen White Estate reveal conclusively that Mrs. White treated fallen pastors with love and compassion. Although she abhorred sexual sin, many a fallen leader was given a “second chance” because of her influence. They were still in “active service.” Her counsel gives the church a mandate to redeem and restore fallen pastors.

When I know that there are those who have fallen into great sin, but we have labored with and for them, and God has afterwards accepted their labors, when these have pleaded for me to let them go and to not burden myself for them, I have said, “I will not give you up; you must find strength to overcome.” These men are now in active service.

My mind is greatly perplexed over these things, because I cannot harmonize them with the course that is being pursued. I am fearful to sanction sin, and I am fearful to let go of the sinner and make no effort to restore him. I think if our hearts were more fully imbued
with the spirit of Christ, we should have His melting love, and should work with spiritual power to restore the erring and not leave them under Satan’s control.

We need good heart religion that we shall not only reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, but we shall take the erring in our arms of faith and bear them to the cross of Christ. We must bring them in contact with the sin-pardoning Savior.

I am more pained than I can express to see too little aptitude and skill to save souls that are ensnared by Satan. I see such a cold Pharisaism, holding off at arm’s length the one who has been deluded by the adversary of souls, and then I think what if Jesus treated us in this way? Is this spirit to grow among us? If so, my brethren must excuse me, I cannot labor with them. I will not be a party to this kind of labor.

I call to mind the shepherd hunting the lost sheep and the prodigal son. I want those parables to have their influence upon my heart and my mind. I think of Jesus, what love and tenderness He manifested for erring, fallen man, and then I think of the severe judgment one pronounces upon his brother that has fallen under temptation, and my heart becomes sick. I see the iron in hearts, and think we should pray for hearts of flesh... I wish that we had much more of the spirit of Christ and a great deal less self and less of human opinions. If we err, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing.
Dear Church Leader,

As a leader, your heart has probably ached or been angered at the loss of a friend or employee in the ministry because of their sexual infidelity. Perhaps you have had to listen to the agonizing complaint of church members who have been injured or you may have wept with a friend and colleague as you silently bore the pain of the downfall. Maybe you have experienced the onslaught of a lawsuit because of clergy sexual indiscretion or perhaps you have had to spend time with a spouse, trying to help put the tangled pieces of a pastoral tragedy back together.

Sexual indiscretion is not a new problem. According to research done by Leonard McMillen and published in *Ministry* in 1994, approximately one of nine pastors has committed adultery. (*Ministry,* November, 1994) McMillen’s findings differ little from a study about clergy indiscretion done by Fuller Theological Seminary and published in *Leadership.* When one pushes the boundaries of sexual infidelity to include any type of inappropriate behavior with a church member, the figure approaches one third (*Leadership,* 1988). Extending the findings even further, the Adventist survey indicated that 65 percent of SDA pastors have admitted to struggling, at times, with sexual temptation. (*Ministry,* 1994)

We can be happy that the greater majority of pastors do not succumb to these temptations and yet we cannot avoid the crying need to stem the tide and deal with this issue. In an article in *Ministry,* a few years ago, James Cress, NAD Ministerial Secretary, decried the inconsistencies of how the church at large has handled this issue. He noted that sometimes an offending pastor has been transferred to another church without even so much as a lapse in service record. (*Ministry,* November, 1994)

How is it that we have strayed so far from the firm policy of the North American Division? Is it possible there are those who in their hearts believe a fallen pastor should have a second chance? Could it be that this is why practices are not in harmony with policies? James suggests that if “current policy needs revision to allow for employment restoration for clergy involved in sexual misconduct, an appropriate process exists for debating and amending policy in which every viewpoint can be discussed and evaluated”. (*Ministry,* 1994) Is it possible that the church could take a more redemptive approach that could speak to the needs of those who have been injured, to the legal and moral issues and to those pastors who have fallen? Some have suggested re-entry to the ministry could occur after a period of heartfelt repentance, rebuilding of trust and sufficient personal victory and appropriate accountability. Some feel this would fulfill the essence of the gospel. Others decry the thought, believing that such a policy shift would destroy the sanctity and purity of the Adventist message.

In an attempt to stare the inconsistencies straight in the face and to create a climate for redemptive debate, regarding this issue, I’ve decided to do my doctoral project at Andrews University on the topic, of Restoring Fallen Pastors.” *Ministry* has offered a small stipend to publish the results of the research and Dr. Doug Kilcher, Vice President of the Texas Conference has agreed to be my advisor. As a part of this quest we are asking that you fill out the enclosed confidential survey.

As a thought leader in the Adventist church, you, together with every NAD president, are being asked to fill out the enclosed questionnaire. The purpose of the survey is to discover current attitudes toward present policies regarding the discipline of fallen pastors and whether sufficient interest exists to amend these policies. As a participant your input may have an impact on possible consideration of policy changes. If you desire, you will be informed of the results of the survey. You can receive a copy of the results by requesting one via email, fax or regular mail. Your anonymity will be protected by the following method. Upon receiving your survey, I will place it in a sealed container, without reading your responses, until such time as I receive all return surveys. At that time I will read the surveys together and compile the data. Since the surveys are anonymous, there is little risk to you as a participant. The deadline for returning your response is February 1, 2005.

In working on this project, a careful analysis of Biblical literature and the writings of Ellen White will be brought to bear in determining whether restoration is advisable. In particular, two unpublished Ellen White Manuscript Releases, #448 and #449, on dealing with adultery issues and fallen pastors will be analyzed. In addition a historical and contemporary survey of policies from other denominations will be presented. These policies from other organizations will serve as possible models to consider. Several fallen pastors will also be interviewed. Dr. Doug Kilcher and Paul Richardson of Creative Ministries are requesting that the results of the research be published in a book, to be made available to every North American Administrator. Thank you for your prayerful participation in this research.

Regards,

David Bissell

David Bissell, pastor
254 C Street SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404
Phone 319-265-8613 Fax 775-796-8613 Email: bissell7@yahoo.com

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Dear Church Administrator,

The enclosed questionnaire will take a few minutes of your time and will be of great value to the researcher and to those who may want to consider this survey in evaluating the need to change present NAD policies and procedures regarding fallen pastors. This document is being sent to every North American Conference and Union Conference President.

Elder Don Schneider, NAD president has given me permission to contact our NAD leadership to participate in this survey in harmony with human research policies at Andrews University. Ministry magazine has offered a small stipend to the researcher with first rights for publication of an article.

Since the surveys are anonymous, you will incur very little risk, as a respondent. To protect your anonymity, your returned questionnaire will be placed in a sealed container and will not be read until all questionnaires are received, at which time the researcher will read the surveys together and calculate the data.

Specific directions are included within the survey and are self-explanatory. Please respond to all of the questions.

Upon completion of the enclosed survey, please return it in the stamped, self addressed envelope. The final deadline for all surveys to be received is November 1, 2003. If you have any questions, please contact me. Thank you.

Regards,

David L. Bissell

2334 C Street SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404
Phone: 319-265-8619
Fax: 204-888-4408
Email: bissell7@yahoo.com
QUESTIONNAIRE REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF RESTORING FALLEN PASTORS

Note: I have been informed in writing of the benefits and risks of taking this questionnaire and I understand that by filling this in, I am granting permission to be surveyed.

1. Place a check (✓) to the left of each position you have held. Place an (X) to the left of the position you now hold.
   _ Pastor _ Administrator _ Departmental Director _ Teacher/Professor _ Chaplain _ Counselor
   _ Lay Leader

2. My current work is for: _ GC _ NAD _ Union _ Conference _ Educational _ Hospital _ Local Church

3. Years of service in the church? __ years

Please circle yes or no, where applicable.

4. Have you lost a friend in the ministry because of his/her infidelity? yes no
   a. If so, have you been in contact with this person since he/she was discontinued? yes no
   b. If you answered yes to (a), how many times have you had contact with this person in the past 5 years? __ times
   c. Is this person currently a member of the Seventh day Adventist church? yes no

5. Have you at some time recommended that a pastor resign because of a sexual problem? yes no

6. Has a pastor ever confided to you that he/she has committed adultery while in the practice of ministry? yes no

7. Have you ever had to testify in court regarding claims of a pastor’s sexual malfeasance? yes no

8. Do you think there are any circumstances under which a pastor who has committed adultery could be _ retained _ in the ministry without losing his/her credentials? yes no

9. Do you think there are any circumstances under which a pastor who has committed adultery could be _ reinstated _ in the ministry? yes no

10. Are you personally aware of a pastor who has been retained or reinstated after a moral lapse? yes no

   • If your answer is yes, did you agree with the decision to retain or reinstate? yes no

If you answered questions 8, 9 or 10 with a “yes”, please feel free to comment: Use the back side of this questionnaire if needed.

Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements. 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree
   3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree Please circle your choice.

11. If a pastor confessed that he/she was addicted to pornography, I would always recommend that he/she resign? 1 2 3 4 5

12. I believe there is sufficient support and training to help pastors avoid falling into sexual sin. 1 2 3 4 5

13. I think there are sufficient safeguards to protect the church from hiring pastors who may be likely to succumb to sexual temptation. 1 2 3 4 5

Questions 14-21 are designed to assess your evaluation of the policies and processes regarding those pastors who have been involved in a moral fall. Please circle your level of agreement or disagreement. 1=Strongly Agree, 2=Agree, 3=Neutral, 4=Disagree, 5=Strongly Disagree Please circle your choice.

14. In general, NAD policies/processes assist in the healing process for fallen pastors. 1 2 3 4 5

15. In general, NAD policies/processes are adequate in helping congregations heal. 1 2 3 4 5

16. In general, NAD policies/processes assist in helping wives/families heal. 1 2 3 4 5

17. I don’t see any discrepancy between NAD policies regarding disciplinary measures for fallen pastors and how those policies are implemented. 1 2 3 4 5

18. I think the NAD disciplinary procedures/policies regarding fallen pastors are adequate as they are and do not need to be reviewed. 1 2 3 4 5

19. I think NAD policies regarding the possibility of restoring fallen pastors must be reviewed and updated. 1 2 3 4 5

20. In general, I think the church does well in ministering to fallen pastors. 1 2 3 4 5

21. I think the church should do more to redeem fallen pastors spiritually. 1 2 3 4 5

22. If a restoration process could be designed that would be biblically based, restore the church’s reputation, encourage healing of pastors, victims and congregations, safeguard against litigation, require accountability from fallen pastors, and selectively reinstate those pastors who have repented and regained the confidence of church members, family and peers, I would be in favor of such a process.

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROCESS

You are one of several pastors who have been chosen to participate in a doctoral research project being done by me through Andrews University. The interview will take place over the phone. The interview is voluntary and your privacy will be protected. The title of my dissertation is on restoring fallen pastors. The interview relates to your experience and treatment by denominational leaders resulting from a moral fall. This interview is done in cooperation with Andrews and the NAD. Your information will be strictly confidential, and you will be able to read whatever I put in my dissertation and make any changes before I submit it. The dissertation will not be submitted until this process is complete. I will mix the responses so that no one will be able to identify you as the person I am interviewing. Finally, your participation may benefit the church by encouraging possible change in denominational policies and processes.

1. After your fall, were you out of the ministry for a time? If so, how long?
   a. What was it like leaving the ministry?
   b. At first, did you think you would ever return to the ministry?

2. Did you lose your credentials, ordination or membership? If you lost your ordination, were you re-ordained?

3. Initially, did the brethren give you any hope of returning to the ministry after a period of time?

4. How do you feel the administration handled your particular situation? You? Your family? The person you were involved with? The church?

5. Were you aware of denominational policies regarding your situation? Did these have any impact upon you?

6. Do you think the church could establish any processes that could save pastors from a fall? Do you think your training was sufficient to help you avoid the mistake? Were you aware that the very qualities that make a pastor successful are the ones that may make him more vulnerable to a moral fall? What could the church do differently to help pastors avoid a moral lapse? Do you think you could have survived in the ministry without leaving?

7. Did the brethren, or church members minister to you in any way after your fall? Did you feel loved and accepted or were you isolated?

8. Did you leave the church? If not, what kept you as a part of it?

9. How did you happen to decide to return to the ministry? Did you struggle with any doubts about that? Did you have any difficulties with administration or church members over your return to ministry? How have you resolved these?

10. If you were in a position to influence the church to change its policies, practices, or processes regarding sexual temptation, or the discipline and possible restoration of pastors, what would you suggest?

By participating in this phone interview and the subsequent review of my participation I grant the researcher, David Bissell, to use my interview in his doctoral research project.

Signed__________________________________________

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April 30, 2003

David Bissell, Pastor
2334 C. Street SW
Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

Dear Dave:

You have requested permission for research of North American Division personnel as you study on the topic of pastors who have become involved with sexual infidelity. You have my permission to do this kind of research among our leadership people.

We would be very eager to use what you learn to strengthen the Adventist Church.

Sincerely,

Don C. Schneider
President
North American Division

DCS:jda

COPY
APPENDIX B

NAD POLICY
NAD WORKING POLICIES REGARDING PASTORS WHO HAVE HAD A MORAL FALL

(* portions have been bolded and underlined for ease of reading the main points)

L 6015 Reasons for Discipline of Ministers—Discipline shall be administered to an ordained/licensed/commissioned minister in the following circumstances:

1. **Moral Fall**—In the case of a moral fall in violation of the seventh commandment, including those violations involving sexual perversions, the minister has, by that transgression, made void his/her calling and, where applicable, ordination to the sacred office of the ministry.

2. **Apostasy**—In the case of apostasy whereby the minister falls away to the world, or identifies with, or gives continuing support to, any activity subversive to the denomination, and/or persistently refuses to recognize properly constituted church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the church, he/she has, by such disloyalty, proven unworthy of a place or part in the gospel ministry of this Church.

3. **Dissidence**—Discipline may also be administered in the case of a minister who openly expresses significant dissidence regarding the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Continued and unrepentant dissidence may eventually be seen by the Church to be apostasy and identified as such by the ministers administrative organization after counseling with the next higher organization.

4. **Embezzlement or Theft**—Embezzlement or theft of funds or property to which the minister has no lawful right, or the willful misappropriation of the same.

5. **Other Reasons**—Any other conduct which is inconsistent with the high standards of the Christian ethic, and which casts a shadow over the integrity of the ministry, such as violence or other questionable activity, and which demonstrates that the individual is unworthy as a leader in the Church.

L 6020 Steps in Discipline of Ministers—When discipline must be administered in the case of a minister, four aspects of the ministers relationship to the Church may be affected: his/her credential/license, his ordination, his/her church membership and his/her denominational employment. The discipline and corresponding procedure for administering such discipline in relation to each of these aspects is as follows:

1. **Credential/License**—The credential/license of a minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes shall be withdrawn permanently by his/her employing committee, after consultation with the next higher organization. His/Her credential/license may also be withdrawn in the case of dissidence as defined in L 6015, paragraph 2. above, after consultation with the next higher organization, but such withdrawal shall be reviewed by the committee after a stipulated period/periods which shall be determined at the time of withdrawal.

2. **Ordination**—
   a. A minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes has made void his ordination. This changed relationship shall be recognized and recorded by his employing organization with the approval of the respective union committee (General Conference or Division Committee in the case of a General Conference/division institution). He shall be ineligible for future employment as a Seventh-day Adventist minister.
   b. A licensed minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes shall be ineligible for future ordination or employment as a Seventh-day Adventist minister.

3. **Church Membership**—The organization which has withdrawn a credential/license permanently and, in the case of an ordained minister has recorded the voiding of his ordination, shall inform the local church of which the offending minister is a member. It shall be the duty of the church to administer discipline as provided for in the Church Manual in the section Reasons for Which Members Shall Be Disciplined.

4. **Denominational Employment**—It is recognized that a minister who has experienced a moral fall or has apostatized has access to the mercy and pardoning grace of God and may desire to return to the Church. Such an individual must be assured of the love and goodwill of his/her fellow
believers. However, for the sake of the good name of the Church and the maintaining of moral standards, he/she must plan to devote his/her life to employment other than that of the gospel ministry, the teaching ministry, or denominational leadership.

L. 60 22 Counseling and Career Guidance—Where practical the organization involved shall provide a professional program of counseling and career guidance for the minister and family to assist them in transition.

L. 60 25 Rebaptism—A minister who has been disfellowshipped from the Church because of a moral fall or apostasy, but who subsequently gives evidence of repentance, conversion and reformation of life, shall be rebaptized before rejoining the Church.
APPENDIX C

POLICY REVISIONS AND PROCEDURES
(PUC/Alberta Revision, SECC Policy and NAD Draft Policy)
THEOLOGICAL PREAMBLE

to

Proposed Changes

in

Adventist Policies Regarding "Fallen" Ministers

by Alberta Conference/Revised PUC Document

In the Bible there is a blend of justice and mercy. Both are affirmed; neither is surrendered to the other; both act in concert. God's justice is merciful, for true justice seeks to put people right; and God's mercy is just, for true mercy maintains high standards of morality. The justice and mercy of God show both that He takes sin seriously and that He wishes to redeem and restore sinners.

The justice of God, while it allows consequences, has as its purpose the sinner's recognition of his wrong so that he will be disposed toward, and turn to, God's rehabilitating grace. The law, not only as standard but as judgment against sinners, is meant to lead people to Christ (Gal. 3:22, 24). The prophetic proclamation of God's wrath in the Day of the Lord has a moral purpose. By the jarring portrayals of judgment to come the prophets seek to lead people to repentance. In the day that God restores his repentant people they will no longer be ashamed, but will be a people of renown. (Zeph. 3:19-20).

The mercy of God not only brings forgiveness but seeks, as does the announcement of judgment, to bring people to repentance. God restrains His judgment and manifests His long-suffering in order to make time for renewal (Rom. 2:4, 2 Peter 3:9). The very purpose of the death of Christ was that the righteous requirement of God's law might henceforth be fulfilled in those who no longer walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4). Indeed, Christ died for all in order that those who thereby live might live no longer for themselves but for Him who died for them (2Cor. 5:15). It is in the womb of forgiveness that newness of life is conceived and nurtured.

Jesus declares to all who have been caught in the adulterous ways of this world and long for release from debilitating sins and lifestyle, "I do not condemn you; go and sin no more" (John 8:11). And Scripture calls those who are spiritual, that is, who manifest the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), to seek to restore and knit together the broken fragments of the life of every person caught in "any transgression" (Gal. 6:1). Not merely some sins, such as sins of neglect or unwittingly committed sins, but "any" sin, even those that can only be termed "transgression," that is, conscious violations of God's will. People who have done these things are to be mended in the spirit of gentleness, and the Church, which is to do the mending, is to be mindful of its own weakness and temptability (Gal. 6:1). When this divinely ordained work of bearing one another's burdens has been done, "the law of Christ" will have been fulfilled (Gal. 6:2). The church's healing ministry is done in the name of Jesus, who came to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21). Notwithstanding instances of continued weakness, the church of Jesus Christ, composed of those who have been overtaken in many transgressions, but who in repentance and faith have returned to Him who saves, has been commissioned to worldwide proclamation and service. Salvation for service is the theme of Scripture.

Stories in the Bible illustrate this point. A Samaritan woman, who after four husbands, was living with a man who was not her husband becomes, through encounter with the saving Christ, a powerful gospel witness. "Many Samaritans from that city believed in Him because of the woman's testimony...." (John 4:39). King David wrote Psalm 51 "after his great sin" with Bathsheba (Education, p. 165), whose husband was killed at the instigation of David. The poem gives evidence of David's deep, heart-felt repentance. God in His
graciousness forgave him, though justice still manifested itself in the loss of "the child of his sin" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 722). "Though David repented of his sin, and was forgiven and accepted by the Lord, he reaped the baleful harvest of the seed he himself had sown. The judgments upon him and upon his house testify to God's abhorrence of sin" (ibid., p. 723).

As with David, so with us. All who have fallen, whether laity or ministry, face loss of one kind or another. Nevertheless, God does not cast off His people who have sinned. Because of repentance David was not removed from his service to the people despite adultery and murder. He remained king, and his experience of restoration from sin strengthened him. "Though David had fallen the Lord lifted him up. He was now more fully in harmony with God and in sympathy with his fellowman than before he fell" (ibid., p. 725). In fact David becomes the prototype of Christ, who will be called "the Son of David." Unlike Saul, David was spared because he "humbled himself and confessed his sin, while Saul despised reproof, and hardened his heart in impenitence" (ibid., p. 726).

When Aaron, the High Priest, joined in the apostasy at Sinai he was rebuked by Moses (Ex. 32:21) for leading the people into apostasy. There is no recorded punishment for Aaron. Perhaps because he joined the Lord's side when rebuked for his sin. This example is instructive since Aaron was the spiritual leader of Israel at that time.

King Manasseh, a king who led Israel into the deepest apostasy (2 Kings 21:1-16), is a wonderful example of restoration. When this king was carried off to Assyria he came to his senses and prayed to God and God restored him to his kingdom where he was faithful to God for the rest of his life (2 Chron. 33:11-18).

The experiences of the Samaritan woman, David, Aaron & Manasseh give powerful evidence that not only lay people but also leaders of God's people can be forgiven and restored to gospel service and leadership.

Never has the spirit of Scripture (God's just mercy and merciful justice) in dealing with those who have "fallen into great sin" been better described than in Ellen White's Letter 16, April 21, 1887 (Testimonies on Sexual Behaviour, p. 241, 242, Manuscript Release, #449). This letter was written from Basel, Switzerland to the president of the General Conference, George I. Butler. Ellen White deals with the cases of a number of ministers who had broken the seventh commandment.

She says.

"I am in great perplexity at times, and have about come to the conclusion when a case of error and grievous sin is presented before me, to say nothing to my ministering brethren if they do not know the matter themselves, but labour earnestly for the erring one, and encourage him to hope in God's mercy, and cling to the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, look to the Lamb of God in repentance and contrition and live in His strength.

"Come and let us reason together, though your sins be as scarlet I will make them as white as wool, though they are as crimson, I will make them as snow."

Justice. Mercy and the Love of God

There is not the mingling of the elements of character that brings justice and mercy and the love of God into beautiful harmony. There is altogether too much talking, too many strong words and strong feelings that the Lord has nothing to do with, and these strong feelings influence our good brethren.

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I am compelled to deal plainly and rebuke sin, and then I have it in my heart, placed there by the Spirit of Christ, to labour in faith, in tender sympathy and compassion for the erring. I will not let them alone, I will not leave them to become the sport of Satan's temptations. I will not myself act the part of the adversary of souls. . . . Souls cost the price of my Redeemer's blood.

When men, themselves liable to temptation, erring mortals, shall be free to pronounce upon another's case, who is humbled in the dust, and shall take it on themselves to decide by their own feelings or the feelings of their brethren just how much feeling the erring one should manifest to be pardoned, [they are] taking on themselves that which God has not required of them.

When I know that there are those who have fallen into great sin, but we have laboured with and for them, and God has afterwards accepted their labours, when these have pleaded for me to let them go and to not burden myself for them, I have said, "I will not give you up; you must gather strength to overcome.' These men are now in active service . . .

My mind is greatly perplexed over these things, because I cannot harmonize them with the course that is being pursued. I am fearful to sanction sin, and I am fearful to let go of the sinner and make no effort to restore him. I think if our hearts were more fully imbued with the spirit of Christ, we should have His melting love, and should work with spiritual power to restore the erring and not leave them under Satan's control.

We need good heart religion that we shall not only reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine, but we shall take the erring in our arms of faith and bear them to the cross of Christ. We must bring them in contact with the sin-pardoning Saviour.

So little Aptitude to Save Souls

I am more pained than I can express to see so little aptitude and skill to save souls that are ensnared by Satan. I see such cold Pharisaism, holding off at arm's length the one who has been deluded by the adversary of souls, and then I think what if Jesus treated us in this way. Is this spirit to grow among us? If so, my brethren must excuse me, I cannot labour with them. I will not be a party to this kind of labour.

I call to mind the shepherd hunting the lost sheep and the prodigal son. I want those parables to have their influence upon my heart and mind. I think of Jesus, what love and tenderness He manifested for erring, fallen man, and then I think of the severe judgment one pronounces upon his brother that has fallen under temptation, and my heart becomes sick. I see the iron in hearts, and think we should pray for hearts of flesh . . .

I wish that we had much more of the spirit of Christ and a great less self and less of human opinions. If we err, let it be on the side of mercy rather than on the side of condemnation and harsh dealing."

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L 70 Safeguarding Credentials — the Integrity of the Ministry

L 70 05 Union Responsibility - Union and local conferences share the responsibility for safeguarding the integrity of the ministry and are required by denominational action and practice to assure that credentials issued within their respective territories shall indeed certify that the holders are in good and unquestioned standing, properly subject to invitation to any other field of service.

L 7010 Integrity of the Ministry - If the standing of any holder of credentials is brought into uncertainty, it is the duty of the union conference to join the local conference in conferring, with a purpose to clear away any uncertainty, in order that no reproach or shadow may be left to rest upon all the credentials held by the ministry. Where the matters involved are of such a character that the union and local conference committees are unable to resolve the difficulty and announce to all a clear record for the ministry, the matter must of necessity be appealed to the General Conference, by action of both local and union committees together, or by action of one body separately, inasmuch as any uncertainty in the matter of what ministerial credentials stand for in one field casts a shadow upon all credentials and is a matter of general denominational concern.

L 7015 Reasons for Discipline of Ministers — Discipline shall be administered to an ordained / licensed / commissioned minister in the following circumstances:

1. Moral Fall — In the case of a moral fall in violation of the seventh commandment, including those violations involving sexual perversions, he / she has, by that transgression, (made void) invalidated his / her (calling and, where applicable), ordination/commission to the sacred office of the ministry.

2. Apostasy — In the case of apostasy whereby he / she falls away to the world, or identifies himself/ herself with, or gives continuing support to, any activity subversive to the denomination, and / or persistently refuses to recognize properly constituted Church authority or to submit to the order and discipline of the Church, he / she has, by such disloyalty, proven himself/ herself unworthy of a place or part in the gospel ministry of this Church.

3. Dissidence — Discipline may also be administered in the case of a minister who openly expresses significant dissidence regarding the fundamental beliefs of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Continued and unrepentant dissidence may eventually be seen by the Church to be apostasy and identified as such by the minister's administrative organization after counselling with the next higher organization.

4. Other Reasons - Any other conduct which is inconsistent with the high standards of the Christian ethic, and which casts a shadow over the integrity of the ministry, and which demonstrates that the individual is unworthy as a leader in the Church.

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L 70 20 Steps in Discipline of Ministers - When discipline must be administered in the case of a minister, four aspects of his/her relationship to the Church may be affected: his/her credential/license, his/her ordination, his/her church membership and his/her denominational employment. The discipline and corresponding procedure for administering such discipline in relation to each of these aspects is as follows:

1. Credential/license — The credential/license of a minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes shall be withdrawn (permanently) by the employing committee, after consultation with the next higher organization. His/her credential/license may also be withdrawn in the case of dissidence as defined in L 70 15-2 above, after consultation with the next higher organization, but in either case, such withdrawal shall be reviewed by the committee after a stipulated period(s) which shall be determined at the time of withdrawal.

2. Ordination and Denominational Employment. - It is recognized that a minister who has experienced a moral fall or has apostatized has access to the mercy and pardoning grace of God. Such an individual must be assured of the love and goodwill of the church. However, for the sake of the good name of the Church and the upholding of moral standards:

   a. A minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes has (made void) invalidated his/her ordination. This changed relationship shall be recognized and recorded by his employing organization with the approval of the respective union committee (General Conference or Division Committee in the case of a General Conference/division institution). He/she shall be ineligible for future employment as a Seventh-day Adventist minister until and unless repentance and reformation have been established by the restoration committee whose recommendations are decided upon by the employing organization. Thus the high standards of the Church will be safeguarded and the redeeming and purifying effects of the gospel will be fostered.

   b. A licensed/commissioned minister who experiences a moral fall or apostatizes shall be ineligible for future ordination and/or employment as a Seventh-day Adventist minister until and unless repentance and reformation have been established by the errant individual and the restoration committee whose recommendations are decided upon by the employing organization.

3. Church Membership - The organization which has withdrawn a credential/license (permanently) and, in the case of an ordained minister has recorded the (voiding) invalidating of his/her ordination, shall inform the local church of which the offending minister is a member. It shall be the duty of the Church to administer discipline as provided for in the Church Manual in the section "Reasons for Which Members Shall Be Disciplined."

4. (Denominational Employment — It is recognized that a minister who has experienced a moral fall or has apostatized has access to the mercy and pardoning grace of God and may desire to return to the Church. Such an individual must be assured of the love and goodwill of God's people. However, for the sake of the good name of the Church and the maintaining of moral standards, he/she must plan to devote his/her life to employment other than that of the gospel ministry, the teaching ministry, or denominational leadership.)

L 70 22 Counselling and Career Guidance — The organization shall provide, or refer to, a professional program of counselling for the minister and family to assist them in transition. The minister who desires to participate in possible restoration will write a letter to the employing organization in which the minister (1) requests participation, (2) agrees to submit entirely to the counsel of the restoration committee, (3) agrees to relocate, if necessary, to a different community during the restoration period, and (4) agrees not to serve in a spiritual leadership role, including no preaching or teaching, during the time of restoration.
The time period for the restoration will vary from case to case, but will generally be no less than two years. A restoration program does not indicate or guarantee future church employment.

The Restoration Committee The committee should consist of persons who have the best interest of the individual in mind. It's makeup should include the ordained minister who pastors the church in the community where the restoration is occurring, three lay persons, at least one of whom should be a woman, and when possible, a person who is a mental health professional. The responsibilities of the committee include: establishing guidelines that are fitting to the specific case, making recommendations as to how the guidelines can best be carried out monitoring the progress on a monthly basis and reporting this to a designated church leader, and at the end of the restoration process, indicating the level of success and whether or not the former minister could be considered for reinstatement into Church employment. If reinstatement is recommended, the local conference has the responsibility of acting upon the committee's recommendation. Should the conference accept the recommendation, the conference will delineate the procedures that are to be followed.

L 70 25 Rebaptism — A minister who has been disfellowshipped from the Church because of a moral fall or apostasy, but who subsequently gives evidence of repentance, conversion and reformation of life, shall be rebaptized before rejoining the Church.

NOTE: Changes in this document are underlined. Deletions are in (parentheses and italics).

This document was originally proposed by a Divorce and Remarriage Committee at PUC in 1990. A "Restoration Committee" was elected by the Alberta Executive Committee to use this document and fine-tune it. This was done by Frank Tochterman, Ian Hartley, Doris Hubbard, Horst Hoffinan, John Adams, Carmen Manweiler, Errol Lawrence and Warren Kay, and presented to the Executive Committee on April 29, 2001. The Executive Committee recommended the above to the SDACC at their April Meeting.
Southeastern California Conference of Seventh-Day-Adventists
Ministerial Restoration Process
(Used by permission)

Galatians 6:1 Ye which are spiritual restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

I _________________________ agree to the terms and conditions of the Ministerial Restoration Process offered to me by Southeastern California Conference (SECC) beginning
____________________________________

The process is as follows:

I. Counseling - Professional/Pastoral

A. Professional - Marriage & Family Therapy

* I agree to participate in Marriage & Family Therapy counseling. The therapist must be chosen from the list provided under the Anonymous Counseling Program, or pre-approved by Conference Administration.

* I must request from the therapist a report that confirms the numbers of sessions I am attending and submit this report as per the requirements of Section II. B. of this document or until the therapist confirms conclusion of counseling.

B. Pastoral/Minister Mentors

* I agree to meet with the assigned mentor(s) as required by Section II of this document.

* I agree that the assigned mentors will monitor my pastoral functions, i.e., visitations, boundary setting, interaction with people, etc. and will assist in the growth of my ministry. The mentor(s) will submit reports as per the requirements of Section II of this document.

* I agree to work with my assigned mentor(s) in all areas of ministry.

* Mentor(s) assigned:

1. Senior Pastor

2. Minister/Mentor

C. Clinical Pastoral Evaluation (CPE)

* I understand that as a condition of employment I must participate and finish _____ quarters of CPE. Proof of successful completion of CPE must be submitted to Conference Administration.
Ministerial Restoration Process

II. Employment Status/Reports/Evaluation

A. I agree not to take any calls out of the conference during the Ministerial Restoration Process.

B. I agree to the following employment status/reports/evaluations:

First year - under probation status

* Reports due
* Yearly evaluation

Second year - under probation status

* Reports due quarterly
* Yearly evaluation

Third year - under probation

* Reports due bi-yearly
* Yearly evaluation

Fourth year - moved to regular status

* No reports
* Yearly evaluation

Fifth year - continue on regular status

* Has completed process
* Open for consideration for promotions and calls

(Promotions do not refer to horizontal move, to another equal position in conference).

III. Spouse Support (Optional)

A. The conference encourages the spouse of the employee to accept the counseling provided by the Marriage and Family Therapist plan provided in Section I. A.
B. Mentor(s): The following are assigned mentor(s) to assist the spouse:

1. ______________________________________________________

2. ______________________________________________________

IV. Conclusion

I understand and agree that Southeastern California Conference reserves the right to make any changes deemed necessary to the success of the process, or terminate the process, or person at any stage for any reason.

Employee Signature _______________ Date _______________

Senior Pastor Signature _______________ Date _______________

Human Resources Director Signature _______________ Date _______________

Conference Officer Signature _______________ Date _______________
Restoration Policy

Applicability
These guidelines are intended for those workers who have violated the boundaries of sexual conduct causing suspension or removal of their denominational credentials and who wish to be restored.

No restoration may be done without going through the protocols as outlined. However, accomplishing these protocols does not in and of itself guarantee restoration or employment at the end of the process.

Some infractions are so serious that they disqualify a person from consideration for restoration. They are: any criminal act of a sexual nature, such as rape, statutory rape, lewd and lascivious conduct, sodomy, contributing to the delinquency of a minor (where a sexual act was included) or other similar criminal acts, breach of a counselor/counselee relationship, assault and battery or other similar acts of a sexual nature, multiple infractions, predatory behavior, long-standing, ongoing activities that constitute an established pattern, or a medical diagnosis of a mental disorder which leads to inappropriate sexual misconduct until the disorder is medically resolved.

Intent of the Policy

- This policy and protocol is intended to be redemptive to the individual.

- Protective to the community and church

- Restorative when possible, clearing the way for the potential continued service and credentials of the individual

- Restrictive, when needed.
Restoration Process Covenant

I, ____________________, recognizing and confessing the seriousness of my sin, agree to the following terms of the stated restorative process. I do so with the full understanding that this does not guarantee credentialing or future employment, but understand that the process may open these options for me.

I understand and agree to the terms as listed:

1. Therapy sessions within the next months.

2. Quarterly reports by the therapists to the evaluating committee.

3. Active and supportive participation as a lay member in a local Seventh-day Adventist congregation.

4. Final review and decision on my potential restoration by ____________________

5. A specific follow-up plan after re-entry (to be drawn up at re-entry)

6. Restitution to those wronged by means of __________________________* 

7. (Other items as determined by the committee)

* Items 6 and 7 are optional depending on the observations of the committee.

I have received, read, and understand the treatment plan guidelines. I also agree that violation or non-completion of this covenant and treatment guideline will terminate the process and potential of my restoration.

Signed __________________________ Date
Witness __________________________ Date
Restoration Process Covenant
(Conference, Division, etc. — the employing agency)

Recognizing both the seriousness of sin and the possibility of restoration, the ________________ committee agrees to be fair and faithful to the terms listed on the other side of this document. We, further, agree to treat all information as sensitive to the extent possible, however, information will be released to at least the following:

- Committee members and consultants.
- The individual involved
- Designated therapist/s
- Potential employers (when they make a formal written request for information)
- Others as specifically designated by the individual involved

While records will be kept, they will be separated from other personnel data.

We pledge to prayerfully and carefully work toward individual redemption as well as reasonable and proper protection of the community and the church.

Committee Chairman

Date
Therapist Release Request

I, ____________________________, request my professional therapist,
_________________________________ of _______________________________________

__________________________

...to release progress notes and/or other information on therapy issues surrounding my
potential restoration to ministry as per my restoration covenant. Information may be
released to the following individuals or their designees:

Name ________________________
Address ________________________

Signed ________________________
Patient/Client

Date _________________________

(A notarized original of this document shall be filed with the committee chairman)
Therapist Report

To: ________________________________

From: ______________________________

Regarding counseling for: ________________________________

During the period from ______________________ to ______________________, I have had __________ therapy sessions of _________________ minutes each with the above named individual/s.

Based on these sessions, my evaluation is that the client is ______ is not _____ making progress leading toward restoration as a professional who will be working with vulnerable people in crisis situations. Comments illustrating my evaluation follow:

(Please comment on specifics and other issues that are salient to this individual's situation. Additional sheets may be used.)

Signature
AFTER RE-ENTERING THE WORK FORCE THE FOLLOW-UP PLAN IS:

1. A ____________ month period of time when the individual will meet with an accountability group at the frequency of _____________. This group will assist in evaluating and monitoring the on-going progress of the individual. Reports will be sent to the __________________ committee on a frequency of _______________. These reports will be maintained in a file separate from the personnel file.

2. Ongoing counseling with a professional counselor as determined by the ________________ committee.**

3. Specific mentoring by a seasoned individual or individuals to assist in both professional and spiritual growth. **

4. Other items as designated.**

**NOTED: These items will need to be determined at the end of the process. They can not be defined at the beginning because they will self suggest as part of the process and completion. Other items may be deemed necessary as well. The above are not intended to be all inclusive, but they are, at least in part, to be part of the consideration and restoration matrix. The committee empowered to direct the process is to approve all therapists and mentors.

The items as listed above are part of the overall treatment plan and are considered a part of the contract/covenant to bring restoration. Non-compliance with the "after restoration" items will void the contract just as much as non-completion of any of her part of the process and contract/covenant.
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEWS WITH FALLEN PASTORS
Interviews with Fallen Pastors

Question 1: After your fall, were you out of the ministry for a time? If so, how long? What was it like leaving the ministry? At first, did you think you would ever return to the ministry?

(a) I was out of the ministry for 9 years. Leaving the ministry was one of the saddest days of my life. I felt empty and isolated. Not only was there the crisis with the church, there was a crisis with my wife and family. For several weeks I could not separate the action of the brethren from Christ. One time I was attending another Adventist church and the speaker spoke of Jesus’ forgiveness for Mary Magdalene and I went to the restroom and wept, hoping He could forgive me. Even though I had been seeking help from my church leaders, I was helped out of the ministry. At the time I handed in my credentials, I did not know if I would ever return. I didn’t even know if my family would survive.

(b) I was out of the ministry for 6 years. It really tore me apart. I didn’t know if I would ever return to the ministry and I had some difficulty keeping my family together.

(c) At the time of this interview I have been out of the ministry for four and a half years. My membership was returned to regular status after the restoration process and I have been invited to pastor a church as a lay pastor, which I did for a couple of years, but no official call has been extended to me. Leaving the ministry was traumatic. My life was ministry. I was a pastor from the inside out. I lived my work and loved it. As I packed my office, it felt like I was packing my life, not knowing whether I would ever return. I hoped I could return, but there was no assurance from the church that this would ever happen. I did hear a sermon about Jesus dying the second death for us and that God raised him from the dead. I felt like the same God who raised Jesus could do anything he wanted. If God wanted me in the ministry, he could open the way, despite policies.

Question 2: Did you lose your credentials, ordination or membership? If you lost your ordination, were you re-ordained?

(a) I handed in my credentials to the conference president. I was not ordained at the time so I didn’t lose my ordination. We moved from the district where we were and soon after, I requested that our membership be transferred. If they had dropped my membership, I probably would have never returned to the church or been restored to the ministry.

(b) Yes, I lost my ordination. It was so fast that it was stunning. But, I didn’t lose my membership. I offered to have my membership withdrawn but the local church refused to accept the offer. Rather than disfellowship me, they placed me under censure for a year and offered to help me return to full membership if I went through a process which they called intensive care. The church also involved my wife and children in this “intensive care” process and ministered in a meaningful way to all of us.

(c) I lost both my credentials and my ordination. Since there is no process for restoration, I have never been re-ordained. I have the credentials and that’s all the matters. Sometimes I think it would be nice to be re-ordained. The conference leaders told me that I would not lose my membership, however, the senior pastor of the church where I had been an associate, sought to have me disfellowshiped. The irony of it was the fact that I was not caught. No one, other than conference leaders, knew of my problem. I had gone to the conference for help, and here this pastor was seeking to
disfellowship me. I was deeply concerned for my kids and wanted to remain a part of the church. Fortunately, I had begun attending another Adventist church and I had confided in the pastor about my situation. We decided the best thing to do was for me to ask for my membership to be dropped and then I was re-baptized in the new church in a private ceremony. Had it not been for my family and some good friends I would have chucked the church at the time.

Question 3: Initially, did the brethren give you any hope of returning to the ministry?

(a) The brethren didn’t give me any specific hope. I begged one administrator to find a way to use me. I asked him not to trash me. I pleaded that he would not throw me away like a bone or a crumb. He said he realized that the policies were not fair. He told me he would get back to me, but he has never contacted me since. Another administrator did give me some hope that after 3 to 5 years, there might be an opportunity to pastor in another conference, but no real hope was extended. The fact that my conference formed a restoration process to look at my situation did make a statement of support, even though the process did not guarantee any certain outcome.

(b) The conference president gave me no hope but one of the other leaders intimated that perhaps I could return after a period of time out for 5 years.

(c) Yes, there was some suggestion that perhaps after a period of 5 years that I might be able to return to the ministry. No promises were made, however. I wasn’t even sure I would be interested, even if the opportunity had been assured.

Question 4: How do you feel the administration handled your particular situation? You? Your family? The person you were involved with? The church?

(a) The conference president wept with me, but was very firm in his decision that I was out of the ministry. After I was dropped there was no effort on his part to make contact. One of the other leaders in the conference did attempt to keep in touch a couple of times. One of the pastors where we moved was helpful to me and my wife. It was a difficult time. I didn’t have anyone I could really trust. As far as the church, the problem was kept hush, hush from the members so little was known about the reason for my leaving. The person with whom I was involved was ostracized, basically dumped. Later she came back to the church but people were not friendly and as far as I know, she is no longer a member.

(b) I can understand why the conference handled the situation the way they did. Since my difficulty was not known to anyone but the leaders in the conference, I felt I could have remained a pastor and not have had to leave the ministry. Though the brethren were kind, I did not agree with their decision. I believe there should be some kind of process for restoration, particularly when the situation is not known and the pastor is repentant and willing to seek help and be accountable. There are many pastors who hide their guilt and shame, refusing to share it with anyone for fear of losing their families, their vocational commitment to God and their livelihood. No support was given to my wife, other than the possibility of counseling. The church was not informed as to why I left, other than I had done something for which I was losing my ordination. They were
counseled to remove my name from the church membership list.

(c) The local church dealt with me with grace, compassion and support, but the administration seemed to be more concerned about policy than my person. They were firm and cut and dried. There was no sustained follow up. No one called to ask, “how are you, or how is your wife?” Whatever contact the administrators had with me seemed to be done out of duty. I did not feel like I was a human being or that they even remembered I had been their colleague only a few days before. My ordination was taken with no warning or communication. I felt like I was held at arm’s length. One administrator talked with me briefly and promised to get back to me but never did. I talked with him about feeling abandoned and that in a way I felt like Uriah the Hittite going up against the wall and then having the army withdraw while he was being destroyed. I found myself fighting cynicism. This was not because I wanted to justify myself. I knew I had committed a serious sin. The sad thing about this is that we preach grace and forgiveness but some of us don’t live it. I think the devil wins every time he keeps people like me out of the ministry. We really need a breakthrough in the church. On the other hand, the local church really ministered to my wife and me. As far as the other party was concerned, the local church was equally concerned in their ministry to her too, but that process was not particularly successful in the end.

Question 5: Were you aware of denominational policies regarding your situation? Did these have any impact upon you?

(a) I’m still not aware of them, what are they? (I explained them to him)

(b) No, I wasn’t aware of them. As we were discussing my resignation, the brethren suggested that I might return after 5 years. After I resigned, one of them said I could never return to employment in the church. I really didn’t know what the policies were. I’m not sure they would have made any difference in keeping me pure. If the policies are to be used as a deterrent to keep men pure, they should be emphasized. When I returned to the ministry I discovered what the regulations were, and at that time they became a discouraging factor. I almost resigned because I believe in church discipline and felt perhaps I should not be in the ministry, since the guidelines do not allow for restoration.

(c) I knew what the policy was. At least I knew that it was a strong policy, but I didn’t know the details until after the fact.

Question 6: Do you think the church could establish any processes that could save pastors from a fall? Do you think your training was sufficient to help you avoid the mistake? Were you aware that the very qualities that make a pastor successful are the ones that may make him more vulnerable to a moral fall? What could the church do differently to help pastors avoid a moral lapse? Do you think you could have survived in the ministry without leaving?

(a) It seems to me that the church gives a clinical approach to helping pastors avoid a moral fall. We have family life coordinators come in and tell us to be careful and they warn against the dangers of sexual sin, but it’s more of a cursory discussion. It would be far more beneficial if we could sit down and talk about this stuff. I’m not suggesting we
ask real personal questions. I think we should discuss some real deep questions, such as “how do you deal with the ongoing sexual temptations that bombard all of us these days?” What I’m really trying to say is that if I were to ask a pastor “Are you failing sexually, the automatic answer is going to be “of course not!” However, a question that asks, “how are you dealing with sexual temptation?” already acknowledges the reality of temptation in a pastor’s life and says, now let’s get down and talk about it in a meaningful and empowering way. We need to be able to be real and confront our own vulnerability. Perhaps we could have a retreat that would deal specifically with sexuality in the ministry.

(b) Let me answer the last question first. Yes, I think I could have remained in the ministry and been successful in overcoming, however, I think we need some type of free, anonymous counseling made available for pastors and their wives. I don’t think the conference should have any record whatsoever of the counseling needed. I know there is a ministerial hotline now and that would have been good in my case. There needs to be some consistency, however, so a pastor can talk to the same therapist. I think there needs to be some type of restoration process in place so a pastor can avail himself of that even while in ministry. We need to develop support structures within the pastoral ministry. Most of us are isolated in our districts with very little fellowship and we wonder why there is such a turn over in ministry! We need some safeguards and teaching on methods in ministry. I for one am kind of a workaholic. I would leave home at 10 AM and wouldn’t return until 11 PM. Many of us have several churches and a lot of these late hours are in meetings. There is huge pressure to produce and this drives many of us to be doing the Lord’s work while the family is dying. We should have some training before ministry and some personal accountability. Regarding the qualities of a successful pastor making them vulnerable to a moral fall, I had no knowledge of that.

(c) At this point, I’m not sure whether I could have survived in the ministry if I had not been out of it for a while. At the time I left, I felt that if I had been able to be accountable to someone and if I had had some counseling, I could have made it. I was isolated and didn’t have a close friend. Ministry in Adventism is often about numbers and looking good, not about fellowship and inner healing. I think if there had been some type of system in the church like Promise Keepers that I might have been able to survive. Being out of the ministry was a good place to heal. However, I still have some of the same traits that I had when I left the ministry. I have learned to deal with them, but anxiety and a drive for success has often been the trigger for me to find satisfaction in some other way. I don’t think there is sufficient training for pastors in the area of ethics, bonding, transference and counter-transference in counseling and so forth. I wasn’t aware of why I might be vulnerable to a fall.

Question 7: Did the brethren, or church members minister to you in any way after your fall? Did you feel loved and accepted or were you isolated?

(a) The brethren didn’t help. I felt the administration felt sorry for me, but they did not make any effort to keep in touch with me. I think one of the administrators thought I had leprosy. In my opinion, he was totally unprepared to be of any assistance to anyone in this kind of situation. None of my bosses called and no colleagues inquired about how I was doing. It was as though I had dropped off the face of the earth. I stayed in the same
area for about six months. My son was even hospitalized and no one showed up to care. I think this is one of the greatest tragedies in ministry. Had it not been for my family and if I not had strong convictions about the truth of this message, I would never have remained an Adventist. Can we say we really have the truth if we really don’t care about what happens to those who serve and make a mistake?

(b) One or two of the brethren talked to me but I felt really abandoned. Those who did talk to me promised to get back with me but I never heard from them a second time. Those who did talk to me seemed to do so out of a sense of duty, not out of compassion. It shocks me that we can forget a colleague so easily. It’s like we are worth nothing unless we are performing well. My local church family for the most part was very supportive of me. There was a huge difference in the way the local church supported us compared to the administration of the church.

(c) One person did try to keep in touch. One pastor did encourage our family. There was very little help though, and one of the leaders in my former church spread the rumor of what had happened. I felt the main attitude of the leaders was to get out of their hair. We desperately need a restoration process. We have no resources in place. We should have a psychologist on the payroll and have some kind of process in place for aiding pastors.

Question 8: Did you leave the church? If not, what kept you as a part of it?

(a) No, I didn’t leave the church. I probably would have left if I had not stayed with my wife and family. I knew I had made a major mistake and I knew I needed forgiveness. I didn’t want to give up on Jesus and I didn’t want Him to give up on me. I had serious doubts about whether He had, though. At first, my emotions were careening all over the place. I seriously considered ending everything and leaving the church. I wish I could say that I had some friends who cared and tried to stay in touch but that was not the case. I remained in the church primarily because of my family and a conviction that this is God’s church. I didn’t really blame the leaders for what happened but how wonderful it would have been if they had tried to encourage me. I feel I was dropped like a hot potato.

(b) No, I didn’t leave the church. I believe the message and my wife and I have stayed together. I have some really neat children too.

(c) No, I haven’t left the church. I believe in what the church stands for, in Jesus Christ and everything the church is about. I failed sexually. Others fail with greed and money issues. We are all broken people and the church is about helping to heal.

Question 9: How did you happen to decide to return to the ministry? Did you struggle with any doubts about that? Did you have any difficulties with administration or church members over your return to ministry? How have you resolved any of these?

(a) It’s a miracle that I returned to the ministry. It’s a miracle of grace. I didn’t have any problems with administration or church members over my return to ministry. I have had some doubts about being back. I haven’t resolved all those yet. However, I’ve come to the conclusion that God calls people who have foibles. There are still some ongoing battles that I face. I tend to push myself to achieve and this causes me to get burned out sometimes.
(b) I didn’t have any problems with administration or church members. I did not hide my story from those who hired me. They knew the details and I gave them the names of people who knew my past. They were free to check out anything. My former conference president gave a wonderful recommendation and he felt that my wife and I could be wounded healers. It was quite a miracle how I decided to return to the ministry. My wife and I visited one of our former churches and the people were looking for a pastor. They expressed that they wished we could be their pastoral family. Many of the members were people we had worked with and they were still faithful to the church. This inspired us to reconsider. I had planned to go a different direction but when I remembered the joy of leading people to Christ and talking about God, I felt I didn’t want to do anything else. If the Lord would open the door, we would walk through it. At the same time we were being drawn to consider returning, there was a possibility that my job would require me to work on Sabbath. There was an opening in one of our schools and I let them know about my background and interest and they hired me. From there I returned to pastoral ministry. I believe it is a miracle of God’s grace. The church is changing and far more grace oriented. Sometimes I have self-doubts about whether I can hang in there. I have to spend a lot of time in prayer. Looking back on things, I am thankful I was out of the ministry. I may never have dealt with the things that caused me to leave had I not left. Ultimately, God is the one who opens and closes doors.

(c) I struggled a lot with doubts. I wondered whether my desire to return to ministry was based on trying to prove that I am valuable. My discussions with the counselor that I went to has helped me realize that some of the reasons I was a pastor in the first place had to do with trying to prove things. We worked that through and I realize that I will always have to be careful about that.

Question 10: If you were in a position to influence the church to change its policies, practices, or processes regarding sexual temptation, or the discipline and possible restoration of pastors, what would you suggest?

(a) I really believe we need a change. We need a solid selective restoration policy. I don’t think we should restore pedophiles and it would probably be difficult to reinstate those whose marriages fail. Repentance needs to be observable and a restoration committee needs to be in place. It is important that the prospective pastor respond positively to counseling as well. Right now, guys are going back into ministry outside of policy with no accountability. This is really unfortunate. As any other human, I know we are always vulnerable, but I believe I am in a better situation [more secure in our marriage] now than I was before. I think the attitude of the pastor is huge. I don’t want someone to hire me because they feel they owe it to me. I want someone to hire me because they see I have something to offer and they need my talents.

(b) I feel strongly that a person who has fallen needs an intense therapeutic restoration process. If this does not take place, they may not be safe for ministry. Checks and balances need to be in place. There should be a period of evaluation by a competent psychologist. This needs to be done with the pastor and spouse. Some things that caused the fall will surface again. I’m glad I have been able to talk to a psychologist. It’s been my salvation because I was able to recognize some of the symptoms as they recurred. When a pastor is restored, care needs to be taken where he is placed. If he is placed in a more stressful situation without any tools, he may have difficulty surviving. I think he needs to be placed in a less demanding church setting. Most of all, a restoration
system needs to be in place. We need to have accountability structures as well. I'm concerned about the care and protection of the church. A return to ministry should not be too quick. Without a process of restoration, keeping a man in ministry or returning a man to ministry could be damaging to the church.

(c) I think the church needs to consider several factors. At this time I think what goes on doesn't help anyone. Pastors are afraid to confide in anyone. With no hope of restoration or help, most ministers keep it inside. The church should develop a support system and accountability for pastors. Each pastor needs someone they can confide in without worrying whether they will lose their jobs. I think the church should have a restoration team or group that is skilled in understanding whether a person should be considered for rehabilitation and if so, how to carry that process through from beginning to end. Victims should be treated with respect and cared for. Fallen pastors should not be shuttled to another place to fall into the same sin again. An opportunity for confession and healing needs to be provided. If the congregation is a healthy one, they may be able to minister effectively to all involved. Skilled people should be able to walk the church and the pastor and his family through a healing process. Another important factor in considering whether to return to ministry is the feeling of the partner. It is crucial that the partner be comfortable with the decision to return to ministry. If this is not given sufficient attention, their team ministry could be derailed again.
APPENDIX E

ASSEMBLIES OF GOD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
(used by permission)
DISTRICT OFFICE MANUAL

ARTICLE X. DISCIPLINE

THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF THE ASSEMBLIES OF GOD BYLAWS

A. District Action

Section 1. The Nature and Purposes of Discipline (page 1)

Discipline is an exercise of scriptural authority for which the church is responsible. The aims of discipline are that God may be honored, that the purity and welfare of the ministry may be maintained, and that those under discipline may be brought to repentance and restoration.

Section 3. Causes of Disciplinary Action

Violations of assemblies of God principles as stated in these Constitution and Bylaws may give cause for disciplinary action by the credentials committees. Among such causes for action shall be:

a. Any moral failure involving sexual misconduct.
b. Any moral or ethical failure other than sexual misconduct.
c. A marriage in violation of our stand on marriage and divorce. (See Article IX, B, Section 5, paragraphs d and e.)

Section 7. District Hearing and Discipline (page 3)

a. District hearing. In the event the reports or complaints cannot be dealt with privately to the satisfaction of all concerned the superintendent of the district in which the alleged offense is said to have occurred, or the superintendent of the district with which the minister is affiliated, shall arrange for a hearing by the district credentials committee for the accused minister. The minister shall be required to appear at the hearing in the hope the matter can be resolved.

b. Forfeiture of rights of accused. A hearing shall not be considered as final disposition of the case until the accused be present and be allowed all rights and privileges granted herein. However, an accused member may be found guilty of charges and disciplined if he refuses to appear at the hearing, or if proof is found of willful neglect on his part to take advantage of his rights and privileges.

c. Discipline (page 4)

(1) Cause of discipline. A minister who has been found guilty of violating any of the Assemblies of God principles set forth in Article X, A, Section 3, either by a confession of the minister involved or by deliberation of the district presbytery, shall be subject to disciplinary action.

(2) Determination of discipline. It shall be the responsibility of the credentials committees to determine whether the circumstances of the case merit rehabilitation or dismissal. The credentials committees shall weigh decisions on: (a) the basis of the offense itself, (b) the manner and thoroughness of repentance, (c) the attitude of the offending minister toward the discipline, and (d) the willingness manifested to cooperate.
Administering discipline redemptively. If the district determines that guilt has been established, discipline shall be administered prayerfully and in the fear of God, in accordance with the Scriptures, and as set forth in the constitution and bylaws of this ecclesiastical body (Bylaw Article X, A, Section 8 and 9)

d. Surrender of credentials. The disciplined minister shall be required to surrender his ministerial credentials and his current fellowship card to the district office. In the event of rehabilitation the credentials shall be held in the district office. In the event of dismissal the district shall forward the credentials to the general secretary of The General Council of the Assemblies of God. Refusal to surrender his ministerial credentials and current fellowship card may result in placing an additional charge against the minister.

Section 8. Rehabilitation

Recognizing that the underlying principle involved in discipline is redemptive, and that man’s conscience frequently brings him to judgment and confession, and that justice can sometimes be best served with mercy, an effort should be made to lead the offending minister through a program of rehabilitation, administered in brotherly love and kindness. The following provisions for rehabilitation shall apply.

a. Basis. Those found to have violated any of the Assemblies of God principles (Article X, A, Section 3) may request a program of rehabilitation as an alternative to dismissal. Rehabilitation is a privilege granted out of mercy and not a right to be expected or demanded: The primary purpose is to restore a person to God, spouse, and family; with the results leading to possible restoration to ministry. Granting such request shall be at the discretion of the district and General Council credentials committees.

b. Period of time. The program for rehabilitation shall continue for not less than 1 year except when the violation involves misconduct defined in /article X, A, Section 3, paragraph a, in which case it shall continue for not less than 2 years.

c. Procedure and requirements. The following procedure shall be used by the district presbytery in determining the specific requirements to rehabilitation for the individual minister.

(1) Rehabilitation requirements. The specific terms and conditions of the rehabilitation program as recommended by the district credentials committee are to be forwarded to the General Council Credentials Committee for approval. After such approval they shall be given to the minister.

(a) Suspension. The minister shall be considered to be under suspension during the entire period of rehabilitation. (page 5)

(b) Extent of ministry. The extent to which ministry may be permitted, if any, shall be determined by the district presbytery, subject to the approval of the General Council Credentials Committee. Certain offenses may not require complete cessation of ministerial activities, although some restrictions or limitations may be warranted.

(c) District membership. The minister shall not be permitted to transfer his membership to another district during the period of rehabilitation.

(d) Publication. While the minister’s credentials are in a state of suspension, his name shall not be removed from the ministerial roster, nor shall his disciplinary status be published in either the General Council or district council official publications.

(e) Credentials renewal. He shall renew his credentials annually in the regular manner.

(f) Supervision. In the event his ministerial activity has been terminated, the minister must become established in a local church working under the supervision of a pastor or presbyter.
(g) Reports. The minister must submit reports quarterly to the district superintendent.
(h) Ministerial benefits. During the program of rehabilitation the minister shall continue to be eligible for benefits such as the ministers group insurance and Ministers Benefit Association.
(i) Program administration. The approved rehabilitation program shall be administered by the district presbytery.

(2) District progress reports. The credentials committee of the district shall submit to the General Council Credentials Committee on February 1 and August 1 of each calendar year a progress report relative to the rehabilitation of ministers under discipline.

(3) Completion of rehabilitation. When the rehabilitation program has been satisfactorily completed the suspension shall be lifted and the minister shall be restored to good standing.

(4) Transfer of information. A rehabilitation information form for district use, prepared and distributed by the general secretary, shall be completed by the district in which the rehabilitation occurred when the rehabilitated minister requests a transfer to a new district. The completed rehabilitation form shall accompany the Certificate of Transfer to another district. A disciplined minister shall, as a condition of entering a rehabilitation program, sign a Limited Disclosure Agreement approved by the General Presbytery allowing the basis of his rehabilitation program to be disclosed by the district superintendent or district secretary of a transferring district. The information shall be preserved for future reference in the files of the district in which the rehabilitation occurred and the General Council.

d. Eligibility of previous dismissal. In the event a minister who has been dismissed requests reinstatement, the district shall first obtain permission from the General Council Credentials Committee before submitting an appropriate rehabilitation program as prescribed in section 8 of this article. He shall not be eligible for reinstatement until the requirements for rehabilitation have been completed. Consideration may also be given to a minister if in the opinion of the credentials committees he has satisfactorily fulfilled the remedial requirements of such rehabilitation.

Section 9. Referral for Action to the General Council Credentials Committee

a. District recommendation

(1) Rehabilitation. When a minister is to be placed in a rehabilitation program in accordance with Section 8 of this article, the district shall forward to the General Council Credentials Committee the specific charges and recommended terms of rehabilitation. The district shall inform the minister involved of its action and, where applicable, the superintendent of the minister’s district of affiliation.

(2) Dismissal. When a minister has been found guilty of violation any of the Assemblies of God principles as set forth in Article X, A, Section 3, and it is determined that rehabilitation is not feasible or fails, a minister’s credentials are to be terminated by dismissal. The district shall forward to the General Council Credentials Committee the specific charges and its recommendation for dismissal. The district shall inform the minister involved of its action and, where applicable, the superintendent of the minister’s district of affiliation.

b. General Council Credentials Committee action. The General Council Credentials Committee shall consider the recommendation of the district and shall concur if in its judgment the district was justified in the action taken. If the General Council Credentials Committee does not concur, it may remand the case, together with its recommendations, back to the district for review and reconsideration. The district shall report the results of its recommendation to the General Council Credentials Committee for final disposition.
c. **General Council to hold information.** All pertinent information relation to the disciplinary action taken against a minister shall be preserved for future reference in the office of the General Council Credentials Committee.

d. **Final disposition.** The general secretary shall notify the minister and the district(s) involved of the final disposition of the case.

**Section 10. Right of Appeal for a Trial**

The right of appeal applies to all actions of discipline and termination of credentials other than lapsing or resigning on the initiative of the minister. An accused minister shall have 30 days from the date of notification of the General Council Credentials Committee decision was received to request a trial. He shall be apprised officially of this right at the time of the decision of the General Council Credentials Committee. The appeal is to be sent to the office of the general superintendent, with copies sent to the superintendent of the minister’s district of affiliation and any other districts involved. The procedure to follow in appeals for and the granting of a trial are outlined in Bylaws Article X, B, Section 1.

**Section 11. Publication of Dismissal**

No publication of a dismissed minister’s name shall be made until the district has been advised by the office of the general secretary that such has been authorized by the General Council

**Section 12. Reinstatement of Credentials**

a. **Authorization.** Application for reinstatement may be made through the district council within which territory the applicant resides. The application shall be considered subject to the approval of the district in which the termination was made.

b. **Minimal time-lapse for dismissed ministers.** The minimal time-lapse required before a minister who has been dismissed is eligible for reinstatement shall be 1 year, except it shall be 2 years for a minister who has been dismissed because of charges as stated in Article X, A, Section 3. Paragraph a. The time-lapse shall be computed from the date of the district presbytery action as it appears on the ministerial status report filed with the General Council Credentials Committee. (See Bylaw Article VII, Section 10, for other renewals and reinstatements.)

c. **Rehabilitation obligatory.** When a minister has been dismissed from our Fellowship and applies for reinstatement, he shall comply with the procedures for rehabilitation outlined in Section 8, paragraph d, of this article.

d. **Option to refer to General Presbytery.** The General Council Credentials Committee may also old the reinstatement of a minister’s credentials in abeyance until the next session of the General Presbytery in order that the General Presbytery may have the opportunity to review the case, in which event the matter of reinstatement of such minister may be left entirely with that body.

e. **Reinstatement fee.** When applying for reinstatement the minister must include a $50 reinstatement fee with his application which shall be divided equally between the district council and the General Council.
Among the basic qualifications required for a minister (General Council Bylaw Article VII, Section 2) is the following:


Such a qualification places high expectations on the ministry and also indicates that those in leadership are required to have a higher standard than others in the congregation.

"The word here used [blameless] does not mean that, as a necessary qualification for office, a bishop should be perfect; but that he should be a man against whom no charge of immorality, or of holding false doctrine, is alleged. Undoubtedly it means that if any charge could be brought against him implying moral obliquity, he is not fit for the office, He should be a man of irreproachable character for truth, honesty, chastity, and general uprightness."

(Barnes Commentary)

Obviously, this does not mean the minister is sinless or perfect. First John 1:8 (Amplified) states: "If we say we have no sin--refusing to admit that we are sinners--we delude and lead ourselves astray, and the Truth . . . is not in us."

Titus 1:7 implies and emphasizes that the focus is on remaining "unaccused." This means that an individual does not have significant accusations of impropriety, immorality, or unethical behavior which would be in violation of various civil and spiritual laws. This admonition intimates something more weighty than mere differences of opinion, style, management, methods, preferences, or dislikes. First Timothy implies the same interpretation of one who has not been convicted, disgraced, nor defamed due to inconsistencies in lifestyle which contradict the Word of God.

How can a minister who has experienced failure be declared "blameless"? What is the test? By whom is the test applied? Is there a point or place at which a man can be restored to ministry and declared "blameless" and "above reproach"?

The Scriptures call for a good reputation. This would seem to come back to the matter of "community" opinion. A "community" could be defined as the body of believers to which an individual belongs or to the physical location in which he lives. Rehabilitation to the level of being considered blameless–above reproach within these "communities" may mean taking whatever time is necessary for these "communities" to declare the man presently "trustworthy" or "blameless and above reproach." Otherwise, who has the authority to declare him "above reproach"?

Rehabilitation programs must deal with not only forgiveness, but the restoration of trust—trust that is established over time and which reestablishes the individual’s character and reputation.

The burden of restoring trust is on the fallen minister, not the General Council, district church, spouse, or family.
SCREENING PROCESS (page 9)

Who will be considered for rehabilitation? Should everyone be rehabilitated or restored to ministry? There is no question that all need restoration and rehabilitating to God, family and the community.

First, the General Presbytery has determined that no rehabilitation should be considered in the following cases: (1) homosexuality; (2) pedophilia; (3) incest; (4) "second offense."

Second, before rehabilitation is determined suitable, the following questions and concerns need to be addressed:

1. When did the misconduct occur? How long ago did the offense occur?
2. What was the duration of misconduct? The longer the duration, the less likely rehabilitation will be effective.
3. What was the number of victims? Were there multiple persons involved? The more victims there have been, the less likely the rehabilitation will be effective.
4. What is the attitude of the offending minister? Does the individual express genuine remorse and repentance over his or her behavior, or simply remorse at "being caught"? What is his or her attitude toward the victim(s) and toward the district or others in authority?
5. How was the offense discovered? Did the minister confess voluntarily or was the individual "caught"? If there is a confession is it complete?
6. What was the prognosis of professional counselor? In many cases, this prognosis should be secured.
7. Has the minister demonstrated a willingness to make restitution to the victim(s) of his or her impropriety?
8. Has there existed any deception or "half-truths" during the course of discovery? District leaders are encouraged to seek and exercise spiritual discernment in these cases.
9. Is a support structure in place? Does the minister, upon entering rehabilitation have a support network of friends and family to walk with him during this time?
10. Has legal liability been addressed? Before selecting rehabilitation, district officers must understand that if the minister is returned to pastoral ministry and commits the same offense again, the district could be held legally accountable for the second offense, unless it is deemed to have acted with prudence and care in rehabilitation the minister. This is a very difficult stand to satisfy, particularly in cases of sexual misconduct. Jurors' natural reaction is to be shocked that a known sex offender was given a second chance. Particularly when the offender is a minister.

Dr. Richard Dobbins has stated: "We ave come to the point where we cannot provide a democratic approach to rehabilitation. It is not a right but a privilege. It is necessary that we be come more restrictive in who becomes a part of the rehabilitation program."
In conjunction with the above screening process, adequate testing should be done. (page 10)

These tests could determine the type of help needed:

1. Physical testing or checkups

2. Psychological testing

The district superintendent is requested to review with the district presbytery Exhibits A and B as part of the process for evaluating whether or not a minister should be recommended for rehabilitation.

Exhibit A provides “A Suggested Approach To Evaluating the Fallen Minister for Placement in a Program of Rehabilitation.”

Exhibit B, “Personality Characteristic Rating Scale for Admission to Ministerial Rehabilitation Program,” developed by Dr. Richard Dobbins, elaborates Section IV, F, of Exhibit A. This scale is designed to help determine the type of person who would be a potential candidate for rehabilitation or someone who should not be considered. This, or a similar rating system, should be put in place, done by an outside agency which can be objective and not influenced by friendship of peer relationships.

THE DECISION: TO DISMISS OR REHABILITATE?

At some point in the district proceedings a decision must be made, if the minister has been found guilty of a cause for disciplinary action (Bylaw Article X, A, Section 3), whether to recommend to the General Council Credentials Committee that the minister either be rehabilitated or dismissed.

If the district recommendation is to dismiss, the district superintendent is asked to carefully follow the dismissal checklist which is given on the next page. The district superintendent is asked also, in the case of a minister recommended for dismissal, to note Sections V and VI in Exhibit D, “A Suggested Ministry to the Fallen Minister and His Family.

If the district recommendation is to rehabilitate, the district superintendent is asked to review with the district presbytery and the minister the following exhibits:

Exhibit C  “A Biblical Theology for the Rehabilitation of Ministers”
Exhibit D  A Suggested Ministry to the Fallen Minister and His Family” (page 17)
REHABILITATION CHECKLIST

Minister’s name _________________________________

___ 1. Ways ministerial discipline originates:
   a. District superintendent hears the minister’s confession, or
   b. District superintendent receives accusation from complainant(s).
   c. District superintendent evaluates complaint.

___ 2. In the event the minister does not confess to any wrongdoing, the district superintendent will notify the minister of any complaints and set a date for meeting with the minister and spouse (Bylaw Article X, A, Section 5,a).

___ 3. District superintendent considers credential restrictions within the guidelines of the Bylaws (Bylaw Article X, A, Section5, a, (4)).

___ 4. At some point, in order for rehabilitation to be offered: guilt must be established and the minister must confess.

___ 5. In the event of sexual misconduct, the district superintendent will generally talk with “the other party.” Helpful guidelines for such contact are given in Exhibit E.

___ 6. District superintendent meets with the minister and spouse:
   a. District superintendent reviews with minister and spouse relevant materials from Exhibits C and D.
   b. Minister signs confession (use form on Exhibit I).
   c. Minister and spouse sign Rehabilitation Request Agreement (use form on Exhibit J).
   d. Minister signs Limited Disclosure Agreement (use form on Exhibit K).
   e. Minister is informed that if rehabilitation to ministry is desired, a psychiatric and/or psychological evaluation will be required.
   f. Minister is informed about the evaluation process and his status in the meantime.
      (1) Information is given about Ministers Benefit Association, IRS tax status, and health insurance.
      (2) If the minister is likely to be dismissed, he may be anxious about the impact the dismissal will have on his insurance coverage and MBA.
   g. If the failure is of a moral nature, the minister is given a copy of “Manual for the Minister in rehabilitation.” (page 18)

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7. The district superintendent notifies the minister’s presbyter to give him relevant information regarding the minister and to encourage spiritual support for the minister and his family.

8. If the minister is considering relocation in another district, the district superintendent shall first consult with the district in which the minister seeks relocation and receive approval from the district of relocation both for the suspended minister to locate within its district, and for the pastor who will serve as the approved counseling pastor.

9. The district superintendent contacts the potential supervising pastor and informs him about the minister.
   a. If the failure involves sexual misconduct, the pastor is given a copy of “The Supervising Pastor’s Manual for the Minister in Rehabilitation” and a copy of the “Manual for the Minister in Rehabilitation.”
   b. If the failure does not involve sexual misconduct, the pastor is given guidelines as determined by the district presbytery, district superintendent, and/or the General Council Credentials Committee.
   c. Plans are made to assist the minister in finding employment and relocating.
   d. Date for initial session with the minister and spouse is set.

10. District superintendent, at discretion in the sequence of events, informs the minister’s church. Helpful guidelines for such contact are given in Exhibit F. A public confession and Communion service may be advisable - if so, helpful guidelines are given in Exhibit G.

11. District superintendent requests in writing that the accused meet with the Executive Presbytery/Presbytery hears the complaints and interviews the minister.

12. Executive Presbytery/Presbytery hears the complaints and interviews the minister.

13. District presbytery (credentials committee) receives the initial report of charges.

14. A thorough inquiry into the present problem and past ministerial history of the person is launched.

15. Results of the inquiry and psychiatric and/or psychological evaluation are presented to the Executive Presbytery/Presbytery at the earliest possible meeting.

16. The Executive Presbytery/Presbytery recommends to the district presbytery (credentials committee) appropriate placement in the restoration and rehabilitation program - restoration of the:
   a. Person, or (page 19)
   b. Person and his marriage/family, or
   c. Person, marriage/family, and rehabilitation to the ministry.

17. The Executive Presbytery/Presbytery makes final recommendations to the district presbytery, including the conditions of rehabilitation (Exhibit L).

18. The district presbytery makes final recommendation to the General Council Credentials
Committee and adopts the conditions of rehabilitation (Exhibit L).

19. The minister signs the conditions of rehabilitation (Exhibit L).

20. The district superintendent or secretary forwards to the General Council Credentials Committee on a Ministerial Status Report (MSR) form the recommendation of the district credentials committee, along with the minister's disciplinary file (all written material in the file-including charges, correspondence, evidence of any kind, and copies of the following signed exhibits:

   Exhibit I. Confession  
   Exhibit J. Release of Information  
   Exhibit K. Limited Disclosure Statement  
   Exhibit L. Conditions of Rehabilitation

21. The General Council Credentials Committee acts on the recommendation and the general secretary notifies the minister and district in writing.

22. The supervising pastor is available for restoring those ministers who are not being returned to ministry, as well as those who have been approved for suspension with rehabilitation.

23. The supervising pastor submits to the district superintendent reports (monthly for the first 6 months, quarterly thereafter) on the progress of the minister being rehabilitated to the ministry (Exhibit M).

24. The minister in rehabilitation submits monthly reports to the district superintendent, supervising pastor, and local presbyter (Exhibit N).

25. The district superintendent gives the district Executive Presbytery/Presbytery regular reports of the minister's progress.

26. The district superintendent or secretary reports on February 1 and August 1 to the General Council Credentials Committee regarding the minister's progress (Bylaw) Article X, A, Section 8, c, (2).

27. In consultation with the supervising pastor, the district superintendent recommends to the Executive Presbytery/Presbytery a date for the rehabilitation to be completed. Such a recommendation is then forwarded to the General Council Credentials Committee for final action. The recommendation must be accompanied by a copy of every item in the rehabilitation file (correspondence, reports, evaluations, etc.). (page 20)

28. When the General Council Credentials Committee has approved a date for the completion of rehabilitation, the district superintendent may set a date for the minister's rehabilitation celebration either in the presence of the district presbytery and/or an appropriate local celebration of the minister's rehabilitation completion. Helpful guidelines for planning a service of celebration are found in Exhibit H.

29. The general Secretary notifies the minister in writing of the date approved by the
General Council Credentials Committee for the completion of the rehabilitation program, the lifting of the suspension, and the minister’s restoration to good standing.

30. A Transfer of Information Form (Exhibit O) is completed and kept in the minister’s district file for use in the event of a subsequent transfer to another district (Bylaw Article X, A, Section 8, c, (4)).

II. FORGIVENESS AND RESTORATION OF TRUST ARE SEPARATE ISSUES (page 21)

A. Nevertheless, in the rehabilitation of a fallen minister, one must distinguish clearly the difference between:
   1. Forgiving the fallen minister of his sins.
   2. Trusting him to enter public ministry again.

B. Many believers mistakenly assume the immediate restoration of trust is biblically necessary to show that forgiveness has been extended.

F. Forgiving someone of sin and trusting that person again are two very different issues. (page 22)

1. Paul and John both unmistakably illustrate this in their epistles.
2. Even though Paul had already forgiven Alexander (in 2 Timothy 4:14), the reader clearly sees Paul’s continued distrust of the man: “Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done.”
3. Failing to forgive Diotrephes would have been totally out of character for John, but his continued distrust of the man is obvious from 3 John 9,19: “I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.”

G. The clarification of these issues is important.

1. From the very beginning, those in charge of these distinctly different issues unmistakably clear to the minister, his spouse, and any church they have served.
2. Forgiveness of the fallen minister’s sin should be extended and acknowledged immediately upon evidence of repentance and confession.
3. But, the minister and his spouse must know that rehabilitation to public ministry is a step leadership must not take routinely.
4. The minister must understand:
   a. That he has deliberately and deceptively broken the trust placed in him by the body of Christ and, in most cases, the person with whom he has become sexually involved.
   b. That the body of Christ should not feel guilty for losing their trust in him.

H. First Timothy 3:7 declares trustworthiness is an obligation every minister assumes as a qualification for entering public ministry: He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”

1. This requirement should be even more understandable for one hoping to reenter the ministry after falling into sexual sin.

J. Therefore, accepting primary responsibility for rebuilding broken trust rests upon him—not on the body of Christ. (page 23)

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and displays clear evidence of godly changes in his attitudes and behavior, should the minister be
declared trustworthy for public ministry again.

2. Until then the privileges and responsibilities of ministry should and must be withheld.

III. SHOULD ALL FALLEN MINISTERS BE REHABILITATED TO PUBLIC
MINISTRY?

A. History and experience teach us that restoring to the ministry all ministers who fall into
sexual sin is not a practical goal.

1. In some cases, because of the nature and/or history of a minister’s sin, it may not be
possible or advisable to rehabilitate him to the ministry (1 Cor 9:25-27; 1 Tim 1:18)

2. However, every effort should be made to restore the minister to :
   a. Fellowship with Christ.
   b. The local church.
   c. The minister’s marriage.

B. Before attempting to rehabilitate a minister to public ministry, a thorough inquiry into the
present problem, the person’s past ministerial history, the person’s character, and mental
status should be launched.

1. This will require the minister and his spouse to sign a Rehabilitation Request
   Agreement that will allow any professional evaluations to be shared with the
   Presbytery.

2. The results of the inquiry and psychiatric or psychological evaluation should be
   presented to the Executive Presbytery/Presbytery at the earliest opportunity.

3. Those charged with the investigation should be instructed to look for the kinds of
critical factors mentioned in the following section.

IV. WHAT ARE SOME CRITICAL FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED IN
REHABILITATING MINISTERS TO PUBLIC MINISTRY?

A. Is the minister still able to give clear evidence of a call into the ministry?

1. The minister should be asked to submit in writing an account of his call into the
   ministry.

2. Those interviewing the minister should give strong consideration to this review of his
divine call to ministry.

B. What is the nature of his sin? (page 24)

1. Is it perverse?
   a. Pedophilia (children and minors preferred as sexual partners).
   b. Child molestation (sexual involvement of adults with adolescents or children).
   c. Homosexuality (same sex preferred as sexual partner).
   d. Sexual masochism (experiencing pain essential to orgasm).
   e. Sexual sadism (inflicting pain essential to orgasm).
   f. Menage a trois (sexual involvement of three people).
   g. Transvestic fetishism (cross dressing)
   h. Exhibitionism (imposing genital display on others).
   i. Voyeurism (sexual excitement through viewing others disrobing or in sexual
      activity).
   j. Frotteurism (sexual excitement by pinching others’ buttocks).
   k. Fetishism (sexual excitement through the use of objects, panties, bras, shoes,
      feather, etc.).
2. When did it begin?
3. How long has it gone on?
4. How many people are involved?

C. When there is no perversity, no previous history of sexual sin, the time frame of the offense is confined to a year or less, and only one other person is involved, the chances for a successful return to ministry are optimal.

D. Has there been previous discipline?
1. Any history of a failed disciplinary process should be viewed with grave concern.
2. The credentialing body could assume considerable legal risk if it chooses to return to ministry some with this kind of history.

E. How does the spouse feel about the minister returning to ministry?

F. Ministers exhibiting eight or more of the following character traits (*) should be considered high risks for being successfully restored to public ministry:
1. Lacking in remorse.
2. Repeatedly failing to honor financial obligations.
3. Failing to honor financial obligations.
4. Protesting, without justification, that others make unreasonable demands on him.
5. Avoiding obligations by claiming to have “forgotten.”
6. Believing that he is doing a much better job than others think is being done.
7. Resenting useful suggestions from others concerning how he could be more productive.
8. Unreasonably criticizing or scorning people in positions of authority.
9. Taking advantage of others to achieve his own ends.
10. Having a grandiose sense of self-importance; e.g., exaggerating achievements and talents.
11. Believing that his problems are unique and can be understood only by other special people.
12. Being preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, power, and brilliance. (page 25)
14. Requiring constant attention and admiration.
15. Being preoccupied with feelings of envy.
16. Expecting, without sufficient basis, to be exploited or harmed by others.
17. Questioning, without justification, the loyalty or trustworthiness of friends or associates.
18. Reading hidden demeaning or threatening meaning into benign remarks or events.
19. Bearing grudges or being unforgiving of insults or slights.
20. Being reluctant to confide in others because of unwarranted fear that the information will be used against him.
21. Being easily slighted and quick to react with anger or to counterattack.
22. Becoming sullen, irritable, or argumentative when asked to do something he does not want to do.
23. Putting things off that need to be done so that deadlines are not met.
24. Being uncomfortable in situations in which he or she is not the center of attention.
25. Being self-centered with actions directed toward obtaining immediate gratification, with no tolerance for the frustration of delayed gratification.
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VITA
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EDUCATION

DIPLOMA/CERTIFICATES/DEGREES

Berne University 99 Masters in Education/TESL Emphasis
Seattle University 95 TESOL certificate
Texas Women's University 84 Counselor Education
Pacific Union College 77 Secondary Teaching Certificate
Andrews University 69 Master of Divinity
66 Bachelor of Arts in Theology

EXPERIENCE

ACCOMPLISHMENTS/ACTIVITIES

PASTOR - SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

01-05 Cedar Rapids Seventh-day Adventist Church

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR/PRESIDENT

99-01 Hong Kong Adventist College
  • Teaching English, and Bible - chairing the Arts and PR Dept - Interim President

93-99 Pusan University of Foreign Studies (In Pusan, South Korea)
  • Teaching English conversation to university students, teachers and business professionals - teaching TOEIC, composition, culture and audio-visual classes as well

PASTOR - SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES

85-92 Minnesota and Oregon
  • Sharing the gospel - pastoring, preaching and consulting
  • Counseling families - recruiting members
  • Leading small groups - building a new church

TEACHER/PRINCIPAL/DEAN/COUNSELOR/CORPORATION PRESIDENT

84-85 Chisholm Trail Academy in Keene, Texas
  • Teaching and counseling and developing a career guidance program
79-84 Alpine Springs Academy in Wisconsin (also pastor in Minnesota)
  • Teaching Bible to high school seniors and juniors
  • Guiding and counseling students - administering the high school - supervising industries - hiring and coordinating staff members - recruiting students
  • Doubling the school enrollment and tripling the school income - directing drama groups

76-79 Fresno Adventist Academy in California - Teaching Bible

PASTOR - SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST CHURCHES

66-76 Wisconsin and Indiana
  • Interning in Wisconsin - pastoring churches and doing singing evangelism
  • Sharing the gospel - pastoring and leading churches in Indiana

INTERESTS

Working with youth and drama groups
Music - I sing, play the saxophone, guitar and piano (my wife and I are a musical team)
Computers (particularly developing websites) and sports

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