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Andrews University
School of Education

SPIRITUAL NURTURE IN THE LOCAL SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CONGREGATION THROUGH THE
SPIRITUAL GIFTS OF PROPHECY AND
SHEPHERDING

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

by
Francy Duran
April 1996

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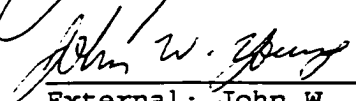
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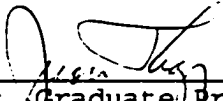
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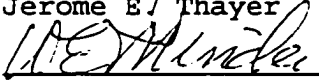

Chair: Roy C. Naden



Member: Alfonso Valenzuela


Member: George Akers


External: John W. Young


Director, Graduate Programs
Jerome E. Thayer


Dean, School of Education
Warren E. Minder


Date approved

ABSTRACT

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ADVENTIST CONGREGATION THROUGH THE
SPIRITUAL GIFTS OF PROPHECY
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by

Francy Duran

Chair: Roy C. Naden

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: SPIRITUAL NURTURE IN THE LOCAL SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTIST CONGREGATION THROUGH THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS
OF PROPHECY AND SHEPHERDING

Name of researcher: Francy Duran

Name of degree of faculty chair: Roy C. Naden, Ed.D.

Date completed: April 1996

The Purpose

The purpose of this research was to analyze the church as a nurturing entity, and the spiritual gifts that enable the church to develop a ministry of spiritual nurture.

Method

This study followed the documentary methodology. The Scripture data, in both Old and New Testaments, regarding the purpose of the church and the gifts of prophecy and shepherding were analyzed in depth. Secondary sources, including books, journal articles, and research reports,

were used where applicable.

Conclusion

The church was called to accomplish a specific ministry. This ministry is much more than the Gospel proclamation that leads to conversion and church membership; it includes the life-long process of spiritual nurture that fosters the growth of Christian character.

The biblical model of "churching" indicates that baptism is not the end but the beginning of the process of the spiritual maturation of the believer. Believers are guided and nurtured through the life span of their spiritual journey by a well-established ministry of spiritual nurture facilitated by the gifts of the Spirit.

The understanding and utilization of spiritual gifts were the keys to the New Testament church's success. According to the biblical record, the early church accomplished its mission through the Spirit's gifts; spiritual nurture was achieved in an important way through the gifts of prophecy and shepherding.

The present spiritual situation within Adventism suggests the need of a work of nurturing that must begin by understanding the nature of the church and the purpose and ministry of the gifts of prophecy and shepherding. The acceptance and utilization of these gifts will foster spiritual growth, transforming believers into Christ-likeness in preparation for His return.

To my wonderful wife, Esther,
and my two lovely children,
William and Daniel,
for their understanding
and willingness to make
sacrifices so I could finish my studies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Background	1
Spiritual Gifts	6
Definition of a Spiritual Gift	7
Importance of Spiritual Gifts	12
The Reception of Spiritual Gifts	15
Preparation	15
The process	17
The purpose	18
Statement of the Problem	21
Purpose of This Study	27
Significance of This Study	27
Methodology	28
Delimitation	29
Basic Assumptions	29
Definition of Terms	29
II. BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH AS A NURTURING ENTITY	31
Introduction	31
The Need for Spiritual Nurture	37
The Nature of the Church	40
The Origin of the Church: Old Testament	41
The Origin of the Church: New Testament	49
The Meaning of Church	54
The Mission of the Church	58
III. THE GIFT OF PROPHECY: A GIFT OF SPIRITUAL NURTURE	67
Introduction	67
The Divine Origin of the Prophecy Gift.....	74
The Purpose of the Gift of Prophecy	83
Its Communicative Purpose	83
Its Foretelling Purpose	85

Its Nurturing Purpose	86
Spheres of Functioning	90
Historic: Bible Universal Nurture	91
Church Periods	91
Ellen White: Church period nurture	93
White's view of her gift of prophecy	96
The relationship between White's writings and the Bible	97
White's sphere of functioning ...	99
Nurture: The essence of White's ministry	100
Local Congregation Nurture.....	108
 IV. THE GIFT OF SHEPHERDING: A GIFT OF SPIRITUAL NURTURE	 113
Introduction	113
Shepherding Is a Gift	115
The Shepherd Motif	119
The Shepherd's Role	123
The Shepherd's Leading Ministry	127
The Shepherd's Equipping Ministry	131
The Shepherd's Protecting Ministry ...	134
The Shepherd's Feeding Ministry	137
 V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	 143
Summary	143
Conclusion	156
Recommendations	159
For Further Study	160
 SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 162
 VITA.....	 182

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

As Scripture opens it asserts the perfection of God's creation,¹ which included not only the physical world but man and woman as well. Human beings were unique in God's creation because they bore the likeness of their Creator.² This divine likeness involved the physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions of human beings.³ Humanity as a partaker of the divine nature was the crown and ruler of all God's creation on earth. The Psalmist declared:

When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers,
The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained;
What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him?
And the son of man, that Thou care for him?
Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God,
And dost crown him with glory and majesty!
Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hand;
Thus hast put all things under his feet (Ps 8:3-6).⁴

¹Gen 1:31.

²Gen 1:27.

³Ellen G. White, Education (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 15.

⁴All biblical references are from The International Inductive Study Bible (IISB) unless otherwise noted.

God purposed to be in intimate relationship with humanity based on freedom and love. Through this relationship human beings would reflect the image and the glory of their Creator for eternity.¹

However, the fall interrupted God's original plan for humanity. It marred the image of the Creator in our first parents in all its aspects,² and affected the human race's spiritual, physical, and mental dimensions. It affected human beings' spiritual nature, producing a separation between them and God, rendering the intended relationship between heaven and earth impossible.³ Sin affected humanity physically by causing disease, pain, and death; sociologically, sin separated the members of the human family. Thus, in many cases, people began to see others as enemies. In the psychological sphere, people became disordered, depressed, and haunted by fear and guilt. Describing Jesus' feelings toward humanity's tragic state, Matthew said: "And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36).

However, human beings were not left hopeless. In spite of their sin and separation from God, the Lord showed

¹White, 15.

²George R. Knight, Philosophy and Education, 2d ed. (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1989), 189.

³Isa 59:2.

loving-kindness toward His fallen children.¹ He devised a saving plan to rescue mankind, a strategy that included a sacrificial act by God. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believe in Him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). The apostle Paul said: "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom 5:8).

Christ died for humanity as our substitute. He died not only for us, but in our stead. His death made it possible for every human being to be reinstated to the original condition of humanity. Thus, God reopened a way to eternal life for the sinful human race.

Salvation is a demonstration of God's love--a divine gift to humanity. It did not deserve to be saved, and cannot do anything to provide salvation. Paul declared:

Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ. Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed. For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law (Rom 3:24-25, 28).

Salvation, then, means that a guilty person who accepts Jesus as his or her personal Savior is acquitted of all

¹Jer 31:3.

guilt, condemnation, and punishment.¹ This act of God's forgiveness is called "justification by faith."

However, salvation includes much more than justification by faith, as foundational as that step is. In reality, salvation is an act of re-creation. It is a process of which justification is only the first step. Through justification the believer is transferred "from the authority (ἐξουσίας) of darkness, to the kingdom (βασιλείας) of His beloved Son" (Col 1:13). The believer is transferred to the kingdom of Christ to be sanctified. Thus salvation includes both justification and sanctification.²

God saves people not because they are good, but to transform them into His likeness. Thus, His will for His children goes beyond justification, He desires their sanctification. In fact, God justifies no person who is unwilling to be sanctified. He calls them from "impurity" to holiness.³ Sanctification, then, is a process in which the Holy Spirit works in the believer transforming the character into Christ-likeness.

The transformation of believers is a process that occurs in the kingdom of Jesus Christ to which they are

¹George E. Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 446.

²Rom 6:19, 22.

³1 Thess 4:3, 7.

transferred at the moment of believing.¹ In this context, the kingdom of Christ is the church, because it comprises the people of God's kingdom. The believer is brought to its bosom to be nurtured spiritually throughout his or her life span, and to become an instrument of nurture for others. Through the church, God intends to undo the effect that sin has had on humanity's spiritual dimension by drawing people into a loving relationship with Christ, and then transforming them into His likeness. Ellis stated:

God created the church in order to achieve His eternal purpose. . . . He brought it into being through the power of His Spirit. He gave it the task of making people disciples of His Son through the complementary process of evangelism and edification.²

Accordingly, the mission of the church is broader than the proclamation of the Gospel, increasing its membership, building a new temple, serving in the community, and preserving sound doctrines. Its mission includes a ministry of reconciliation. "God has placed (θέμενος) on us the word (λόγος) of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19, translation mine), which means the establishment of the original relationship between humanity and God. This is a ministry of spiritual nurture since only a spiritual person can enjoy fellowship with God.

¹Col 1:13.

²Joe S. Ellis, The Church on Purpose (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1978), 78.

Before His ascension, Jesus asked Peter, as a representative of the disciples, to "feed" (βόσκει) and "shepherd" (ποιμαίνει) His sheep. Later, Peter addressed his co-elders with the same request: "Shepherd the flock of God."¹

Accordingly, the church has a responsibility to provide a ministry of spiritual nurture to assist believers in their spiritual pilgrimage, and to facilitate the development of a distinctive Christian character in them. This ministry is accomplished through the spiritual gifts with which the Holy Spirit has gifted the church. Naden declared:

In reality, through the spiritual gifts entrusted to each believer, God will accomplish all the church has been commissioned to do. The health of each congregation of the body of Christ and their sharing of the gospel world wide are all gift based and Spirit empowered.²

Spiritual Gifts

The apostle Paul asserted that when Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave gifts (δώρα) to men "to build up the body of Christ, until we all attain the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God, [which is] a perfect (τέλειον) man [having] the fullness of the measure of Christ's stature" (Eph 4:8, 12-13, translation mine).

¹John 21:15-17; 1 Pet 5:1-4.

²Roy C. Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 1994, 1, TMs in my possession.

Although there appears to be some overlap in the functions of various spiritual gifts, each gift is given to equip an individual to function in a specific ministry. Therefore, Paul admonished believers to exercise their ministry according to their gifts;¹ and in 1 Cor 12:29, 30, he implied that not all believers have the same gifts or ministries. Thus, there is a variety of spiritual gifts to enable the church to accomplish its multifaceted ministry.

These spiritual gifts are numerous, and there are those who argue on the exact number named. It seems, however, that the New Testament did not intend to give an exhaustive catalog of spiritual gifts. It made reference only to those more obvious gifts that were functioning in the early church. It is probable, from a pragmatic perspective, that other gifts might be given during other periods of history based on need. White suggested that God granted to the Christian church more gifts than He did to Israel.²

Definition of a Spiritual Gift

In the religious literature we find many definitions of spiritual gifts. The majority of them, however, agree that gifts are given to the members of the body of Christ (the church) by the Holy Spirit. Thus, spiritual gifts have been defined by Wagner as "a special attribute given by the Holy

¹Rom 12:6.

²Ellen G. White, Counsels on Stewardship (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing Assoc., 1940), 71.

Spirit to every member of the Body of Christ according to God's grace for use within the context of the Body."¹

Marrett identified them as "divine in origin, miraculous in manifestation, and supernatural in operation."² Walvoord considered them as "divinely-given capacities to perform useful functions for God, especially in the area of service;³ Clemens as "the ability given by God for a special type of service. It is not a place of service, nor is it a ministry to a particular age group. It is, rather, the ability itself, such as teaching or pastoring,"⁴ and Edgar defined them as "an ability supernaturally given to an individual by the Holy Spirit so that the recipient may utilize that ability to minister beyond his normal human capacity."⁵

McRae wrote that "every spiritual gift embodies four features: abilities, qualification, strength, and

¹Peter C. Wagner, Your Spiritual Gifts Can Help Your Church Grow (Glendale, CA: GL Regal Books, 1980), 42.

²D. C. Marrett, "The Gifts of the Holy Spirit," in The Biblical Faith of Baptists (Des Plaines, IL: Regular Baptist Press, 1966), 172; quoted in R. E. Baxter, Gifts of the Spirit (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1983), 27.

³J. F. Walvoord, The Holy Spirit at Work Today (Chicago: Moody Press, 1973), 38.

⁴D. A. Clemens, Steps to Maturity, vol. 1 (Upper Darby, PA: Bible Club Movement, 1975), 314; quoted in Baxter, 27.

⁵Thomas R. Edgar, Miraculous Gifts (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1983), 13, 14.

responsibility."¹ Accordingly, a spiritual gift is the empowering of the Holy Spirit to believers in the body of Christ to equip them for a specific service or ministry in the church or in the community.

Three main words were used by the apostle Paul to denote spiritual gifts. In Rom 12:6 gifts are referred to as χαρίσματα (plural) and χάρισμα (singular). These terms are derived from the root χάρις, which is normally translated "grace." In Pauline epistles χάρις is related to salvation. "The linguistic starting-point is the sense of making glad by gifts, of showing free unmerited grace."² Schatzmann suggested that "χάρις denotes God's fundamental gift of salvation."³

Thayer believed that

"charismata" denotes extraordinary powers distinguishing Christians and enabling them to serve the Church of Christ, the reception of which is due to the power of divine grace (charis) operating in their souls by the Holy Spirit.⁴

¹William McRae, The Dynamics of Spiritual Gifts (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1976), 19.

²H. Conzelmann, "Χάρις," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1974), 372-402.

³Siegfried S. Schatzmann, A Pauline Theology of Charismata (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1987), 2.

⁴J. H. Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (1886), s.v. "χάρισμα."

In Rom 6:23 χάρισμα is used to denote God's free gift of salvation, and has almost the same meaning as χάρις. Thus, we may conclude that χαρίσματα are the gifts given to those who were recipients of God's χάρις.

In 1 Cor 12, in addition to χάρισμα, Paul used the word πνευματικός commonly translated "spiritual gift." This term literally means "spiritual matter, or what belongs to the spirit (πνεῦμα)." In 1 Cor 2:13-15 the apostle contrasted the πνευματικός (spiritual man) with the ψυχικός (natural man). The former has discernment about spiritual things, while the latter cannot accept the things that come from the Spirit of God.

In 1 Cor 14:1 πνευματικά is used to embrace the totality of the Spirit's gifts.¹ Vine pointed out that this was "an after Pentecost word" that "always connotes the ideas of invisibility and of power."²

The usage of πνευματικός for spiritual gifts emphasizes the fact that these gifts "are not of man, neither by man, but of God. They are produced in man by the Holy Spirit's sovereign distribution."³

¹Edward Schweizer, "πνεῦμα," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1968), 332-451.

²W. E. Vine, Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (1941), s.v. "πνευματικός."

³Baxter, 28.

Finally, the word δωρεᾶς was used by Paul to convey the idea of spiritual gift. Eph 4:7 says: "But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift." Δωρεᾶς appears in John 4:10 meaning "God's free gift to save mankind."

Vine observed that δωρεᾶς "denotes a free gift, stressing its gratuitous character";¹ and Murphy concluded that Eph 4:7 emphasizes not the gift, δωρεᾶς, but "the grace that produces the gift."²

Spiritual gifts denote the ability granted to the members of the body of Christ by which they are empowered to accomplish the mission of the church. The different terminologies used by Paul to refer to spiritual gifts seem to stress the fact that those gifts are of God's origin and not man's, and that they are bestowed freely according to God's will. The apostle Paul compared the church to the physical body to illustrate that each member has a specific function or ministry in the church.

¹J. R. Kohlenberger III, ed., The Expanded Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament (1984), s.v. "Dōrea."

²Edward F. Murphy, Spiritual Gifts and the Great Commission (South Pasadena, CA: Mandate Press, 1975), 137.

Importance of Spiritual Gifts

The effectiveness of the church's ministry is not found primarily in the professionalism of its workers, but in their openness to the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Spirit who enhances and gives continuity to the church. Only through the gifts of the Spirit can the church accomplish its mission and reach its destiny.

In Jesus' time, the church had become an institution administered by men who gave no evidence of being gifted by the Holy Spirit. Herod and his successors removed and installed the high priest to suit the purpose of Roman authority.¹ Thus, they became hired individuals who "shut off the kingdom of heaven from men."² Therefore, the mission of the Messiah was in opposition to theirs. Consequently, they concluded that it was better for the people that Jesus should die than that the whole nation should perish.³ Since they rejected the Messiah, they did not qualify to be leaders of the church. The leadership of the church was placed on men and women who were untrained in such responsibility, with little theological knowledge, but who accepted Jesus as the Messiah.

¹Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), 22.

²John 10:12; Matt 23:13 IISB.

³John 11:50.

On the other hand, Judaism, as an institution, continued with its Temple and tradition, leaving the church, in its new stage, deprived of "that corpus of precedents and experience which is passed from generation to generation."¹

To meet the needs of the church, Jesus promised the continual presence of the Holy Spirit among believers.² Thus, the Spirit enriched the church in everything, and it lacked no gift while awaiting the coming of the Lord.³ The church, then, was equipped with spiritual gifts to serve as a nurturing and evangelizing organism.⁴

Therefore, when the church develops its ministries following human ideas without the direction of the Holy Spirit, it loses its simplicity and spiritual health, and people may perform tasks for which they have not been called or equipped by the Spirit. The church need never lack gifts to fulfill God's purpose in any geographic area. We can have full confidence in both His gifting and His purposes. When Scripture says that the church is to lack no

¹Roy C. Naden, Your Spiritual Gifts: Making the Great Discovery (Berrien Springs, MI: Instructional Product Development, 1989), 38.

²John 16.

³1 Cor 1:5, 6.

⁴Naden, Your Spiritual Gifts, 39.

gift, it means that the Spirit calls and equips according to His divine wisdom.¹

The church exists primarily to accomplish the twofold ministry of spiritual nurture and outreach. This spiritual ministry cannot be achieved merely through human abilities, but through the gifts of the Spirit that operate in the church.

Unfortunately, the church has not yet grasped the full importance of spiritual gifts in its ministry. This is a doctrine that is hardly mentioned in local congregations. Therefore, most believers are not only ignorant about the theology of spiritual gifts but do not know which gifts they possess. MacArthur rightly observed: "No local congregation will be what it should be, what Jesus prayed that it should be, what the Holy Spirit gifted it and empowered it to be, until it understands spiritual gifts."²

O'Connor asserted that "when we deny our gifts, we blaspheme against the Holy Spirit whose action is to call forth gifts."³ Perhaps this declaration is based on the fact that there is no member of the body of Christ who does not have a gift. "But one and the same Spirit works all

¹Roy C. Naden, "EDRE640 Pastoral Nurture," class notes, Summer, 1993.

²John MacArthur, Jr., The Church--the Body of Christ (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1973), 136.

³Elizabeth O'Connor, Eighth Day of Creation (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1971), 17.

these things, distributing to each one individually just as He will" (1 Cor 12:7).

The Reception of Spiritual Gifts

Although some commentators argue that certain gifts mentioned in the New Testament were only for the early church, the biblical record seems to favor the perpetuity of all spiritual gifts. Would God withdraw a gift designed to assist in the accomplishment of His purposes and goals? The gifts are manifested to meet the outreach mission of the church and nurture its members in each period of history, and they are bestowed on members when they commit themselves to Jesus Christ.

Spiritual gifts for ministry are detailed in three Pauline passages: Rom 12, 1 Cor 12-14, and Eph 4. According to Naden, there are three steps in the reception of spiritual gifts: "preparation" in Romans, "process" in Corinthians, and "purpose" in Ephesians.¹

Preparation

Naden observed that while the primary focus of the book of Romans is to present righteousness by faith, the implication "of grasping and accepting the gospel is to enter into ministry through our spiritual gifts."²

¹Naden, Your Spiritual Gifts, 35-46.

²Ibid., 36.

Most scholars have divided the book of Romans in two parts, which usually are called "theology (1-11) and ethic (12-16)." These divisions also can be called Paul's indicative and imperative.

The indicative (chaps. 1-11) portrays the gracious work of God through Jesus Christ to save humanity. Because of the work of redemption, Jesus was set forth by God as the ἰλαστήριος (mercy seat) through Whom sinners are justified freely.¹ The emphasis of Paul is on what God has done in history to redeem man. Since salvation is a historical act of God, it is solely received by faith in Jesus Christ.

Based on the indicative (the mercy of God, or what God has done), the apostle presented the imperative, appealing to believers to present themselves as a living and holy sacrifice. He urged them to reject the pattern of this world, and to be transformed in newness of mind.²

Rom 12-16 is a call to Christians to live in the light of their new lives. The same concept is found in Gal 5. Paul argued there that the desires of the flesh and the spirit are in opposition to one another. Therefore, those who accept Christ are called to sacrifice the flesh with its desires and passions. Then, the Spirit will dwell in them; and, as a result, the fruit of the Spirit, which is "love,

¹Rom 3:24-26.

²Rom 12:1, 2.

joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal 5:16-25), will be reflected in their lives.

Thus, our preparation for the reception of spiritual gifts suggests our acceptance of the Gospel, a complete surrender to Christ, the beginning of a transformation of life, and the beginning of the fruit-bearing of the Spirit. Naden rightly affirmed that God wants a dramatic transformation in us, "one that renews our minds and paves the way for us to find and follow God's perfect will which includes our entry into ministry."¹

The process

An important element, true of all spiritual gifts, is that they are of divine origin and "are given according to God's will, and not according to man's desires."² This is what Paul seems to have meant when he wrote: "But one and the same Spirit works in all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills" (1 Cor 12:11). Thus, spiritual gifts come as a result of God's loving-kindness toward His children.

1 Cor 12:4-6 asserts that the Trinity, not just the Holy Spirit, is involved in gifting the church. In addition, this text suggests that the church has many

¹Naden, Your Spiritual Gifts, 37.

²Edgar, 22, 23.

functions, or ministries; and for each ministry the church is called to accomplish, there is a corresponding spiritual gift. In other words, God both calls and equips. Naden commented:

This passage [1 Cor 12:4-6] indicates that there are many gifts with which the spirit equips the members of the church, many ministries to which we are individually called, and great energy is imparted to individual members so each can effectively minister for the Lord. In this way Paul details the main steps in the process by which we can establish a personal ministry. First, He equips us for service; second, He calls us to use our gifts in specific ministries, and third, He energizes or enthuses or motivates us for our ministries.¹

In summary, spiritual gifts are bestowed according to God's sovereign will. The Godhead, or Trinity, is actively involved in equipping, calling, and motivating each individual member of the church to accomplish a specific ministry.

The purpose

In the promise of the Holy Spirit to His disciples, Jesus stressed that the Spirit would glorify Him (Christ).² Baxter declared: "This glorification of Christ is the hallmark of all true ministry of the Spirit in our midst. So, it is with the gifts."³

¹Naden, Your Spiritual Gifts, 40.

²John 16:14.

³Baxter, 76.

Spiritual gifts are not intended to make people great or famous. "The Holy Spirit is not in the business of building great reputations for men."¹ The Holy Spirit uses individuals only as channels of God's love to glorify Jesus. Furthermore, spiritual gifts are given to edify others. The apostle Peter wrote: "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Pet 4:10).

Paul opposed the tongues-speakers of 1 Cor 14 because they did not edify their fellow believers. Thus, we may conclude that no spiritual gift is given for personal advantage or exaltation. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to equip the church as a whole to accomplish its mission. In a brief list of spiritual gifts, Paul stated that they are "for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12).

In summary, spiritual gifts are given with a threefold purpose: to glorify Jesus, to edify others, and to equip the local congregation so that it might function effectively in its ministries of nurture and outreach.

The analogy of the body (used by Paul in Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians to describe the church) suggests that each spiritual gift has a particular function in the church.

¹G. L. Stover, The Power for Christian Living (Denver: Baptist Publications, 1962), 46.

The gifts of prophecy and shepherding seem to be the gifts especially designed to equip the church for its ministry of spiritual nurture. Naden identified the gift of prophecy as a "nurture gift,"¹ and defined shepherding as "the Spirit's gift to guide, protect, nurture, and feed the members of the church."²

In the Old Testament church, the principal figures of spiritual nurture were prophets and priests. The ministry of the prophets included: restoration,³ spiritual revival and reform,⁴ intercession,⁵ and teaching.⁶ The sacerdotal office connoted three soteriological ideas: reconciliation, intercession, and sanctification.⁷ Therefore, the priestly role reached beyond the offering of sacrifices for sins. Priests were appointed by God as teachers to instruct and encourage Israel in righteous living.⁸

¹Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 2.

²Naden, Your Spiritual Gifts, 107.

³Jer 1:4-10.

⁴Neh 9, 10; 1 Kgs 18.

⁵Deut 9:25-29.

⁶Deut 5:1-5, 22-33; 6:1-3.

⁷Salim Japas, Cristo en el Santuario [Christ in the Sanctuary] (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1980), 40.

⁸Deut 33:10; Lev 10:11; 2 Chr 17:7-9; 15:3-4; 35:2-3; Ezek 44:23.

It is worth noting that, in the Old Testament, most of the prophets were also priests or belonged to the priesthood family. For example, Aaron, Moses, Samuel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel were both prophets and priests. Accordingly, the gifts of prophecy and priesthood are intimately related, both are for the purpose of spiritual nurture.

O'Connor talked about the pastor-prophet;¹ and Valenzuela suggested that "the counterpart of the New Testament pastor is found in the work and responsibility of the priest of the Old Testament."²

The ministry of Jesus integrated the prophetic, priestly, and shepherding roles. Since the shepherd is called to continue Jesus' ministry, he is also a priest¹ who ministers God's Word on behalf of humanity.

Statement of the Problem

The New Testament records that the apostolic church developed a ministry of spiritual nurture through spiritual gifts. In the epistles of Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians, Paul asserted that the Holy Spirit equipped every member of the church with spiritual gifts. Luke records a result of that gifting in that "every day, in the temple and

¹O'Connor, 34.

²Alfonso Valenzuela, "The Minister's Personal and Family Life" (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989), 9.

¹1 Pet 2:9.

from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42).

However, from the fourth century on, the church began to withdraw from an emphasis on the "priesthood of all believers" to emphasize the so-called "divine rights" of kings, princes, and prelates. It laid aside the great tradition of lay ministry, which it had received from Christ and His apostles, and took up the pomp and pride of the pagan priests.¹ The church, instead of looking for spiritual greatness, began to look for worldly greatness. Thus, its chief business became temporal power both political and ecclesiastical. As the church lost sight of its mission, it failed to provide a ministry of spiritual nurture. As a result, the church fell into apostasy. Rev 8:10, 11 predicted this development when it symbolized the church as a fallen star that became "wormwood," and contaminated the waters of truth.

"Wormwood" is a symbol of apostasy or spiritual contamination,² and the "waters" point to "the sources of spiritual life and growth"³ that were contaminated because the church ignored the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As a result, its biblical teaching, including the doctrine of

¹Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy (Mountain view, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1911), 49, 50.

²Jer 9:15, 16; Amos 5:7; Acts 8:23; Heb 12:15.

³Jon Paulien, Decoding Revelation's Trumpets (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1987), 401.

spiritual gifts, was corrupted by human philosophy and traditions and replaced by priestly preeminence.

In spite of the fall of the church, God kept a remnant (e.g., Waldenses, Lollards, Hussites) that passed on the truth and ministry of Jesus and His apostles from generation to generation and maintained the centrality of lay ministry.

Today, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has a special mission of carrying on the legacy of the truth, to proclaim the gospel, and to exercise a ministry of spiritual nurture through spiritual gifts to prepare a people for the Lord's return.

However, the Adventist Church is in danger of losing sight of the purpose of its existence. It gives evidence of being preoccupied with a global influence--to see its task primarily in terms of outward mission, neglecting its inward responsibility. Quigley said: "The church must give evangelism unquestioned priority because it has no other purpose for existence."¹ Likewise, Wilson insisted, "it is time for the church to give unquestioned priority to evangelism."² And in 1982 the leadership of the SDA Church voted

an unprecedented worldwide soul-winning thrust, placing unquestioned priority on evangelism in all forms and at all levels. The document that spelled out the plan was

¹W. B. Quigley, "A Prior Claim," Ministry, April 1982, 4-5.

²Neal C. Wilson, "Our First Business," Ministry, April 1982, 2.

entitled "Prioritizing Evangelism--One Thousand Days of Reaping."¹

Similarly, in its twenty-seven fundamental doctrines, the SDA Church leadership suggested that its mission is the proclamation of the Gospel as outlined in the prophecies of the book of Revelation, specifically, the three angels' messages of Rev 14:6-12.² In the Adult Sabbath School Lessons of January through March of 1994, Bascom stated: "The mission of Christ's remnant church is the proclamation of the gospel worldwide."³

The fact that the proclamation of the Gospel (evangelism) is a key part of the life of the church cannot be argued. Jesus expects His church to proclaim the soteriological message to the world. It is a precondition of His second coming.⁴ However, when the stress is only on proclamation at the expense of spiritual growth, the result is spiritual declension.

The SDA Church has been remarkably successful in evangelism. However, "statistics show that the church has

¹W. B. Quigley, "One Thousand Days of Reaping," Ministry, January 1982, 8-9.

²The Ministerial Association, General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, Seventh-day Adventists Believe... (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Assoc., 1988), 153-168.

³Maurice T. Bascom, Adult Sabbath School Lessons, teacher's ed. (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1993), 151.

⁴Matt 24:14.

been casting holey nets in the water."¹ Because it has not yet developed a consistent ministry of spiritual nurture, there is a mass exodus out the "back door."

Sahlin wrote, "It is estimated that there are somewhere between 1 and 2 million former and inactive Adventists in North America."² In addition, he held that "for every two members who join the Adventist Church in North America, one leaves."³

After conducting a study of 1,500 former Adventists, West declared:

There was absolutely no proof that members left the church because they no longer believed in the doctrines. . . . They left the church because of the way the church treated them. . . . People drop out of the church because the church no longer meets their needs or the church disappoints them.⁴

This is evidence that the Seventh-day Adventist Church is guilty of bringing people into its membership without adequate or, in some cases, any effective program of nurture and spiritual growth. The church cannot survive by emphasizing only its outward mission. There must be a

¹Carlos Medley, "Holey Nets," Adventist Review, July 17, 1986, 5.

²Monte Sahlin, appendix to Fordyce W. Detamore, Seeking His Lost Sheep, NAD Church Ministries Series (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1965; reprint, Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1989), 79 (page references are to reprint edition).

³Ibid.

⁴Harold K. West, quoted in Monte Sahlin, appendix to Detamore, Seeking His Lost Sheep, 85.

balance between the eschatological mission of the church and its soteriological mission. Barna and McKay commented:

Christians must be challenged to increase their commitment to spiritual growth. Perhaps too often the ministry of the church stresses evangelism at the expense of discipleship. Recent converts and mature believers alike need to continually grow in the spiritual life; stagnation brings spiritual decline. Churches need to take seriously the business of edifying the flock, just as individual believers need to reaffirm their commitment to becoming Christlike. Christian principles must be made practical, with valid applications of those principles as [a] central part of the teaching/learning process.'

Jesus' commission to the church (Matt 28:19-20) is not just evangelism but making disciples as well. The church cannot make disciples without a consistent program of spiritual nurture empowered with the Spirit's gifts.

In summary, the Scriptures clearly portray the mission of the church as a twofold ministry. On the one hand, the church has been commissioned with the proclamation of the everlasting Gospel. On the other hand, it is its responsibility to nurture those who respond to the Gospel. The ultimate success of the former depends on the implementation of the latter. The present spiritual situation of the church indicates that it has been negligent in the implementation of a consistent program of spiritual nurture. As a result, the church is facing an appalling rate of apostasy, and a lack of members' involvement in its mission.

'George Barna and W. P. McKay, Vital Signs (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1984), 146.

Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study was to analyze the biblical data about the church as a nurturing entity, and the spiritual gifts that enable the church to develop a ministry of spiritual nurture. Thus, this study explored the biblical teaching of spiritual gifts, which are given by the Holy Spirit to foster the spiritual growth of believers, and to apply these findings to the dilemma of high rates of apostasy in much of the Adventist Church worldwide.

Significance of This Study

In 1984 Valenzuela wrote in Spanish an introduction to the study of spiritual gifts. In this study he alluded to the lack of written materials in the SDA Church that, in a systematic way, deal with the topic of spiritual gifts. In an endnote he described the catalogues of the two North American SDA publishing houses, and found no title under spiritual gifts.¹ Even today the Seventh-day Adventist Church still lacks literature that deals systematically and exegetically with the issue of the Spirit's gifts in general and spiritual nurture in particular. Naden stated:

In 1980 I began to wonder why Adventism had not (and still has not) developed a theology of spiritual gifts. The situation is the more difficult to understand in the light of our firm belief that the spiritual gift of

¹Alfonso Valenzuela, Una Introducción al Estudio de los Dones Espirituales [Introduction to the Spiritual Gifts] (Glendale, CA: Departamento de Jóvenes de la Conferencia del Sur de California, 1984), 13.

prophecy is an integral part of our understanding of remnancy in the eschatological setting.¹

The lack of written materials in the SDA Church that deal with both the ministry of spiritual nurture and the theology of spiritual gifts is evident. This research has sought to make a contribution to a better understanding of spiritual nurture through spiritual gifts in the local church.

Methodology

This study followed the documentary methodology. The Scripture data in both Old Testament and New Testament regarding the purpose of the church and the spiritual gifts of prophecy and shepherding were analyzed in depth. Secondary sources, including books, journal articles and research reports, were used when their information contributed to clarify the subject.

The development of this research included three steps: (1) an analysis of the scriptural concept of the church as a nurturing entity, (2) a theological analysis of the gift of prophecy and its function as spiritual nurture, and (3) a theological study of the gift of shepherding and its function as spiritual nurture.

¹Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 1.

Delimitation

Since the terms "church" and "spiritual gifts" have a broad scope, this research confined itself to study the role of the church as an entity of spiritual nurture through spiritual gifts. Thus, only those gifts designed primarily to provide a ministry of spiritual nurture were explored.

Basic Assumptions

This research was conducted on the assumption that the Holy Spirit has always equipped the church's members with spiritual gifts.

Definition of Terms

Church: A community of believers called by God to be united in a local congregation to accomplish a specific divine purpose. In a literal sense, this term is used as a reference to the Christian church in general, and in particular, to the local congregations of the Seventh-day Adventist Church that constitute the SDA worldwide denomination.

Nurture: An educational process in the church setting that fosters spiritual growth in the believer.

Spiritual gifts: The ability given by the Holy Spirit to the believer to achieve a specific ministry in the context of the church or community.

Mission: The church's commission given by God.

Evangelism: The proclamation of the Gospel to unbelievers with the intent of bringing them to Christ and into the church.

CHAPTER II

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION FOR UNDERSTANDING THE CHURCH AS A NURTURING ENTITY

Introduction

There is no divine revelation about God's purpose for humanity's creation save that we were created for His glory.¹ Nevertheless, God must have had a special plan for human beings because they were created in His likeness.² The Scripture asserts that human beings were created perfect, in God's likeness, to live eternally. God's image in humanity suggests that we have a responsibility toward God our Father and toward humanity.

As creatures, humanity's eternal destiny depended on a relationship with God. Sin is separation from God. Therefore, the inception of sin meant the temporal destruction of God's original purpose for humankind, and the incapacitation of humans to achieve the divine plan.

The act of sinning and the subsequent separation from God transformed human beings into sinners by nature and deed. They became sinful by nature in essence. People's

¹Isa 43:7.

²Gen 1:26,27.

sin involved far more than the mere passions of sinful flesh. It weakened and degenerated their faculties. Sin is a power that controls the whole human being. It incapacitated the individual to always be spontaneously good. Isaiah described the human condition as follows:

For all of us have become like one who is unclean, And all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; And all of us wither like a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, take us away (Isa 64:6).

God's plan of salvation, therefore, comprises the whole individual. It is a process by which God is undoing the work of sin in humanity in order that human beings reflect His likeness again. Thus, humanity's redemption includes both the forgiveness and the perfecting of the individual. White wrote:

Yet the race was not left without hope. By infinite love and mercy the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized. This was to be the work of redemption.¹

In the history of Christian thought, the emphasis has often been on righteousness by faith. Sanctification, on the other hand, has not always received equal attention. As a result, there has been a tendency to misunderstand the concept of Christian perfection and a less-than-adequate emphasis on the development of a Christ-like character.

¹White, Education, 16.

However, the Scripture asserts that God calls people to develop a godly character. He said to Abraham: "I am God Almighty; walk before Me and be blameless [perfect]" (Gen 17:1). Paul affirmed that through Christ the believer has been adopted as God's son.¹ The Greek word for "adopted son" is υιοθεσία from υιός, "an adult son," and θεσία, "to put" or "to instill." This word suggests that in Christ, God is returning the sonship-right to whoever believes; He is reinstating them to the Edenic relationship. "Therefore," the apostle stated, "be imitators of God, as beloved children" (Eph 5:1).

In the very beginning of His ministry, Jesus called His followers "to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt 5:48). The verb ἔσεσθε (to be) is a future imperative of εἶμι, which suggests that Jesus' statement about perfection is a mandate to His followers. This mandate is uttered at the end of a series of Jesus' pronouncements against the legalism of the Scribes and Pharisees. His kingdom demands a new morality. Their righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees.² Schnackenburg stated:

We must emphasize that the call to "perfection" is an address to every Christian who ought to reflect in his individual and social way of life something of the glory of the eschatological union with God. The

¹Eph 1:5.

²Matt 5:20.

demands of the sermon of the mount deal after all with life in the world.¹

Christ's perfection imperative implies a personal experience of the saving love of the God of Israel and the manifestation of His sanctifying power that makes believers reflect the characteristics of God's character.²

The apostle Paul declared: "Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him, in love" (Eph 1:4). Thus, the perfecting of His people has been in God's redemptive plan since eternity.

MacArthur identified three ways in which the Scripture employs the concept of perfection. First, there is the concept of "positional perfection." In this sense, when the believer accepts Christ as his personal Savior, he is declared perfect because he receives the righteousness of Christ and his sins are removed. Paul declared that in Christ the believer is "perfected," "sanctified," and "complete."³

The second idea about perfection, according to MacArthur, is "ultimate perfection." This concept is also grounded in the Scripture. It is the last part of the

¹R. Schnackenburg, Christian Existence in the New Testament, vol. 1 (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1968), 173.

²H. K. LaRondelle, Perfection & Perfectionism (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1971), 171.

³Heb 10:14; 1 Cor 6:11; Col 2:10.

process of transformation when the believers receive sinless flesh at the second coming of Jesus. John affirms: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is" (John 3:2).

Between positional and ultimate perfection is "experiential perfection."¹ This notion of perfection is growth in Christ and in His grace. It is to allow the Holy Spirit to work a transformation of character: "Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining the full measure of perfection found in Christ" (Eph 4:13 NIV). Paul encouraged the believers to "grow up in all things in Him, who is the head" (Eph 4:15).

Likewise, Colossians 3:10 stresses "the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him." Second Corinthians 3:18 talks about a progressive transformation "into the same image [of the Lord] from glory to glory," and Romans 12:2 exhorts the believers not to be "conformed to this age, but to be transformed by the renewing of the mind." The Greek word for "transformed" is μεταμορφουῖσθε, which means a complete transformation of the old life. White declared that "the

¹John MacArthur, Jr., Body Dynamics (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1986), 84-85.

Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature."¹

It is because of this process of transformation that God has equipped the church with spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ so that each believer may reflect His likeness.²

Accordingly, God intends to portray His image in each believer. His likeness must be increasingly reproduced in the Christian's character. It is important to grasp the concept that this is a process in the Christian's life. The church was created, in part, to nurture this spiritual growth of believers, so they may grow into Christ-likeness. "God created the church in order to achieve His eternal purpose."³ Thus, the church, says Snyder, "is more than God's agent for evangelism or social change; it is, in submission to Christ, the agent of God's entire cosmic purpose."⁴ The church becomes, then, a workshop where the Holy Spirit elicits the transformation in the believer.

¹Ellen G. White, The Desire of Ages (Hall, London: Pacific Press Publishing Company, 1898; reprint, Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1940), 172 (page reference is to reprint edition).

²Eph 4:12-13.

³Ellis, The Church on Purpose, 78.

⁴H. A. Snyder, The Community of the King (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1977); quoted in R. E. Hedlund, The Mission of the Church in the World (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 200.

The Need for Spiritual Nurture

Peck and Havighurst, Erikson, Piaget, Kohlberg, and other theorists agree that growth occurs developmentally. They considered human development to be in well-defined stages of growth. Erikson in particular, in his psychosocial-development theory, suggested that development occurs through eight stages:

Stage 1. Trust versus mistrust (birth to 12-18 months). Baby develops sense of whether people can be trusted. Virtue: hope.

Stage 2. Autonomy versus shame (12-18 months to 3 years). Child develops a sense of independence rather than face shame. Virtue: will power.

Stage 3. Initiative versus guilt (3 to 6 years). Child develops initiative when trying out new things rather than be overwhelmed by failure. Virtue: purpose.

Stage 4. Industry versus inferiority (6 to 12 years). Child learns skills of the culture or faces feelings of inferiority. Virtue: competence.

Stage 5. Identity versus confusion (12 to 18 years). Adolescent develops a sense of self. Virtue: fidelity.

Stage 6. Intimacy versus isolation (18 to 30s). Person seeks to make commitments to others; if unsuccessful, may suffer from sense of isolation and self-absorption. Virtue: love.

Stage 7. Generativity versus stagnation (30s to 60s).
Mature adult is concerned with establishing and guiding the next generation or else feels personal impoverishment.
Virtue: care.

Stage 8. Ego integrity versus despair (old age).
Elderly people achieve a sense of acceptance of their own lives, allowing the acceptance of death, or else fall into despair. Virtue: wisdom.¹

The crisis that the individual faces in each one of these stages shapes personality since the person emerges with either virtue or a diminished ego.

This theory has a theological implication for the church's ministry of nurture. Since people are developmental creatures, they need to be guided and nurtured throughout their life span to develop the most noble virtues implanted by the Creator.

The apostle Peter suggested that the development of a godly character is a process. He wrote:

Seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. Now for this also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and

¹D. E. Papalia and S. W. Olds, Human Development, 5th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1992), 24, 26.

in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love (2 Pet 1:3-6).

Each individual confronts crises through life-long development because sin has a powerful influence on mind, body, and spirit. To succeed in these crises, the whole personhood must be affected by the power of the Gospel. Therefore, the church should have a wholistic approach to the individual. The Gospel's redemptive message must include the physical, the mental, and the spiritual dimensions of the person, bringing the individual to the fullest possible meaning and purpose of life. Fuller stated:

Religious faith operates within the emerging identity as an adaptive and integrating force. Because religion roots the meaning and purpose of life in the transcendental reality of God, it makes it possible for individuals to locate themselves and their actions within a larger frame of reference.¹

Similarly, Hurlock claimed that "when religious adjustment is satisfactory, it gives the individual a feeling of security and belonging that contributes to his adjustments."²

Accordingly, the religious teaching of the church must have relevance in the daily life of people to foster character development; it must provide a ministry of spiritual nurture focused on the transformation of the whole

¹R. C. Fuller, Religion and Life Cycle (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 38-39.

²E. B. Hurlock, Adolescent Development, 3d ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Comp., 1967), 393, 394.

person including the psychological struggles of the individual, because the psychological quest of an individual is a reflection of his spiritual quest.¹

The church is called to deal with the deepest yearnings of people's feelings, and to guide them to the source of satisfaction in life. The spiritual dimension should affect all other dimensions of people's existence. Since the effect of sin has been so devastating for humanity, only divine power can lift people from their misery. God has given that power to the church in the person and ministry of the Holy Spirit to transform the deformed character of people into Christ-likeness. The Holy Spirit exercises this power in the church through a ministry of spiritual nurture.

The Nature of the Church

Before creation God devised a salvation plan for the human race should it fall under the influence of sin. The church was chosen by God to communicate to the race His redemptive plan. Thus, the church is the divine agency to announce the good news of salvation, and to nurture those who respond.

¹J. Harold Ellens, "The Unfolding Christian Self," in Christian Perspectives on Human Development, ed. LeRoy Aden, David G. Benner, and J. Harold Ellens (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 127.

**The Origin of the Church:
Old Testament**

Graig wrote: "If we are to understand the nature of the Church we must begin with the Old Testament."¹ Some scholars suggest that the Old Testament church began either with the covenant made with Abraham or with Moses. However, the scriptural evidence seems to indicate that the church began at the very beginning with the Edenic covenant when sin was born in the human heart.²

In Gen 3:15, sometimes called *protoevangelium*, God revealed the basis plan to save mankind. The text suggests that God is the source of salvation, but that He works through human channels. The key element here is the woman's "seed." The Hebrew word זרע (lit., "her seed") is expressed in a collective sense as in Gen 12:7,³ and is intended to be the means to carry on salvation. The woman's seed is depicted as engaged in combat with the serpent's seed, which is an anti-God symbol. Therefore, the two seeds are in enmity: one represents God's people, and the other Satan's followers. Thus, the woman became the symbol of

¹Clarence Graig, The Church of the New Testament (New York: W.C.C., 1948, 32; quoted in H. A. Hanke, Christ and the Church in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1957), 110.

²Hanke, 23.

³V. P. Hamilton, The Book of Genesis (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 199.

God's people.¹ Consequently, the dialogue between God, Adam, and Eve seems to be the setting of the beginning of the church.

This church, which prevailed until the days of the patriarchs, was established in the context of a family. Through the family-church, God intended to provide a spiritual nurture that facilitated the development of a godly character.² Parents were responsible for the religious education of their children and the transmission of religious heritage. The Lord said of Abraham:

For I have chosen him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice; in order that the LORD may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him (Gen 18:19).

Abraham is portrayed in the Bible as the "altar builder." He used family worship to convey spiritual nurture. Thus, he came to exemplify "the characteristics of a nurturing father."³

The family-church was the pattern God desired His children to follow throughout the ages. However, years of slavery in Egypt, extended contact with heathenism, and the negligence of the fathers in the religious education of

¹Rev 12.

²White, Education, 33.

³John B. Youngberg, "Transmitting the Religious Heritage: A History of Religious Education," 1992, 5, TMs in my possession.

their children¹ made necessary the establishment of an assembly with a sanctuary. Thus, at Sinai, God's assembly (קָהָל) and its sanctuary emerged to provide spiritual nurture to the children of Israel who were ignorant of the knowledge of the Lord and His plan of salvation.

The Scripture suggests that God's purpose in establishing a congregation was to make a "holy nation"² through a ministry of spiritual nurture. Therefore, in the שְׁמַע (Heb. imperative, "hear!") God laid the foundation for this process.

Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!
 And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
 And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up (Deut 6:4-6).

The שְׁמַע (hear) established four fundamental elements of spiritual nurture. First, Israel was called to establish the priority of God in each life. "The LORD is one." Therefore, one's loyalty to God and a love relationship with Him are the supreme priority of one's life.³

¹White, Education, 34.

²Exod 19:6.

³Youngberg, 6.

Second, the content of spiritual nurture is found in "these words." For the Jews "these words" mean the Torah.¹ "These words" can also be applied to all God's revelation because man's spiritual life depends on "everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD" (Deut 8:3). In spiritual matters, nothing can substitute for the Word of the Lord. God called His people to live by His Word and to teach His Word.

The third element is modeling. The וְנָתַתְּ suggests that the life of the teacher must be a living illustration of God's ideal for His children. "These words . . . shall be on your heart." Christian teachers are not mere signposts along the pathway of life, saying, "this is the way." They must be going that way themselves.² Modeling sets the stage for an effective internalization of truth.

The fourth element in the process of nurturing stressed in the וְנָתַתְּ is an intensive nonformal teaching. The people of Israel had the responsibility of teaching their children diligently when they sat in their houses, when they walked by the way, when they laid down, and when they rose up. Thus, spiritual nurture was part of every aspect of the daily life of Israel. White stated:

¹Israel M. Goldman, Lifelong Learning among the Jews (New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1975), 1.

²Youngberg, 6.

A knowledge of God, fellowship with Him in study and in labor, likeness to Him in character, were to be the source, the means, and the end of Israel's education--the education imparted by God to parents, and by them to be given to their children.¹

The transmission of spirituality was one of the responsibilities of the priesthood. They were charged with the duty of teaching ordinances to Jacob, God's law to Israel, and the "difference between the holy and the profane."²

Azariah told King Asa that Israel apostatized because for many days it "was without the true God and without a teaching priest and without law" (2 Chr 15:3). The same book registers the appointment by King Jehoshaphat of a commission of princes and Levites "to teach in the cities of Judah. . . And they taught in Judah, having the book of the law with them" (2 Chr 17:7-9). It resulted in such a spiritual revival that even Israel's enemies feared the Lord.

The same spiritual revival was reached in the time of king Josiah because the priests/Levites were honoring their duty of teaching.³ Malachi stated: "For the lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the

¹White, Education, 44.

²Deut 33:10; Lev 10:11; Ezek 44:23.

³2 Chr 35.

LORD of hosts" (Mal 2:7). And Jeremiah indicated that "the law [instruction] shall not perish from the priest" (Jer 18:18).

Not only were the priests the means of teaching, but every aspect of the Jewish economy was intended to be a spiritual pedagogue. For instance, the Jewish festivals were designed to lead the people to find the joy and beauty of holiness. They also were intended "to refine and perfect man by means of tangible reminders of the ever-loving presence of an Invisible King, in whose image we have been coined, an image we must and can never efface."¹ The Jewish festive moments under the supervision of the priests were illustrations that sharpened the spiritual life of the people, and strengthened and deepened their beliefs.

The sanctuary as well was an important element in teaching the concept of sanctification. It was "the physical token of God's dwelling";² a holy place. Paul described the earthly sanctuary as a "parable" (παραβολή).³ A parable is used to teach a spiritual lesson. The earthly sanctuary portrayed the idea of holiness. The people had to

¹S. M. Lehrman, The Jewish Festivals (London: Shapiro, Vallentine & Co., 1956), 17, 18.

²Frank B. Holbrook, ed., The Sanctuary and the Atonement (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 1989), 17.

³Heb 9:9.

be holy to worship and commune with a holy God.¹ They were to be separated from sin and committed to God. Thus, everything associated with the sanctuary had to be holy. In "the holy crown" of the high priest was written, "Holiness to the LORD" (Exod 39:30). It pointed to Yahweh as the source of holiness,² and invited the people to be holy.

When Solomon's temple was destroyed (585 A.D.), the synagogue was developed as a house of prayer, assembly, and instruction. However, its chief function was a school of instruction.³ The emphasis of its pedagogy was on knowing God's Word. Without knowing the Word, the people could not truly worship God.⁴ The synagogue was the place where the writings of Moses were taught,⁵ and became the center for Jesus' and the apostles' teaching ministry.⁶

In summary, the biblical record shows that the main task of the Old Testament church (either the family-church in the patriarchal era or the assembly-church after Sinai) was the spiritual nurture of the people of Israel. Every aspect of the Jewish economy, the sanctuary and its

¹Lev 19:1-2.

²Holbrook, 19.

³Goldman, 11.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Acts 15:21; 13:27.

⁶Matt 4:23; Mark 1:21; 6:2; Luke 4:15, 16, 31; 6:6; 13:10; Acts 13:14, 42, 44.

services, their festivals, and their agricultural seasons, was intended to serve as a spiritual pedagogue. When Israel's spiritual leaders neglected their duty of teaching, the result was apostasy and finally exile.

The fact that God provided for Israel to function as an entity of spiritual nurture does not deny that it had, as the people of God, an equally important outreach mission. At the very beginning this mission was underlined when the Lord said to Abraham, "in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen 12:3). Theirs was a worldwide mission which God intended to be centripetal (Jerusalem and the temple would be the center of attraction), with the emphasis on "come." Thus, the temple was the symbol of the gathering of all people. The prophet declared:

And many people will come and say,
Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
To the House of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us concerning His ways,
And that we may walk in His paths.
For the law will go forth from Zion,
And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isa 2:3-4).¹

This centripetal mission could be achieved only if Israel became a holy nation and a royal priesthood² with a continuous ministry of spiritual nurture.

¹See also Mic 4:1-4; Jer 3:17; Isa 25:6-9; 60; Zech 8:20ff.

²Exod 19:6.

**The Origin of the Church:
New Testament**

Few scholars argue against the notion that the Christian church has a divine origin. However, there is disagreement about its beginning and nature. Leonard portrayed the church as a "linear movement of history extended from creation through the covenant with Abraham and Moses to Jesus of Nazareth,"¹ while Minear believed that the early Christians had their origin in "the covenant-making activity of God in the times of Abraham and Moses."² Goguel implied that the church was created neither by Jesus nor the apostles. Its origin was due "to the dynamic force of the personality of Jesus. In this way it is the outcome of His life."³ Scott reached a similar conclusion when he wrote that "Jesus himself laid down no directions as to how his followers were to order their society. He only gave them a task to fulfil."⁴

¹Bill J. Leonard, The Nature of the Church (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1986), 19.

²Paul S. Minear, The Images of the Church in the New Testament (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 70-71.

³M. Goguel, "Church, and Eucharist in the New Testament," in The Ministry and the Sacraments, ed. R. Dunkerley (London: Student Christian Movement Press, 1937), 325.

⁴Ernest F. Scott, The Nature of the Early Church (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1941), 6.

On the other hand, Cullman suggested Pentecost was the beginning of the church.¹ There are other scholars who believe that the church existed as the people of God prior to the Christological event in Israel. "But the coming of Christ annulled what was in the past. In Christ there is the new creation, unique and distinct from the old."²

However, Jesus did not come to organize a new church within or outside of Israel. In His humanity, He was a Jew who accepted the Old Testament, followed the Jewish practices in the sanctuary, and worshiped in the synagogue.³ He stated that His mission was concerned with the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 15:24).

After Pentecost, Christians began to be known as the ἐκκλησία (church), the title by which the Israel of the Old Testament had been known. In the Septuagint, ἐκκλησία is used to translate the Hebrew **עֲדָתָא** (assembly). The latter was commonly used in the Old Testament to refer to the congregation of God's people.⁴

¹Oscar Cullman, quoted in J. Robert Nelson, The Realm of Redemption (London: Epworth Press, 1953), 15.

²Nelson, 15.

³Ladd, 106-107.

⁴E. Clowney, "Toward a Biblical Doctrine of the Church," in The New Life: Readings in Christian Theology, vol. 2, ed. Millard J. Erickson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 258.

In Deuteronomy, לְקָהָל "stands for the people which Yahweh has summoned, which is bound by the rules he has given, and whose participation in Yahweh's Covenant is only maintained by obedience."¹ Cerfaux believed that Deuteronomy's לְקָהָל is probably the model for the concept of the church in the New Testament.²

According to Leonard, לְקָהָל "describes the community or assembly of God's faithful people."³ In the Septuagint of 1 Kgs 8:14, ἐκκλησία means those who came together in the name of the Lord. The usage of this word in the New Testament suggests that the Christian church is a continuation of the Old Testament church.⁴

Campbell, on the other hand, rejected this point of view, arguing that there is no evidence to support the notion that early Christians borrowed the term ἐκκλησία from the Old Testament to express their claim to be the true Israel of God. He suggested that this term was used simply as a name for those "meetings" of believers.⁵

¹L. Coenen, "Church, Synagogue," The New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology (1975), 1:291-307.

²L. Cerfaux, The Church in the Theology of St. Paul, trans. G. Webb and A. Walker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), 103.

³Leonard, 42.

⁴Ibid.

⁵T. Y. Campbell, "The Origin and Meaning of the

This conclusion, however, ignores both the Old Testament background for the New Testament and the wide use of the term ἐκκλησία by the apostles, meaning not just a meeting but a body of believers.¹

Doohan defended the idea of continuity between the Christian community and the community of Israel.² A similar idea was suggested by Smith when he wrote, "The Christian Community was aware of its religious continuity with the Jewish Church."³

The apostle Paul extracted the Sinai congregation and the events of the Exodus and applied them to the Christian church. After describing Israel's experience crossing through the sea, under the cloud, eating the manna, drinking the water from the rock, and their rebellions against God, he said: "Now these things happened as examples for us" (Cor 10:3). The word translated in the IISB as "examples" comes from τύπος, which means "type," "model," and "hollow form." This suggests that the church at Sinai is the pattern for the Christian community.

Christian Use of the Word Εκκλησία." The Journal of Theological Studies 49 (1948): 130-42.

¹Matt 16:18; Acts 8:1; 1 Cor 1:2; 10:32; 12:28; Phil 3:6; Eph 1:22; 3:10,21; Col 1:18,24.

²Helen Doohan, Paul's Vision of the Church (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 43, 44.

³H. Shelton Smith, Faith and Nurture (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 143.

Since Christians were the recipients of messianic salvation, they became the true Israel of God.¹ In a spiritual sense, Israelites are those who follow in Abraham's faith.² Thus, Paul applied the Old Testament term קְהַל יְהוָה, "the assembly of the Lord," to the church of the New Testament when he called it τὸν Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ Θεοῦ, "the Israel of God."³ Even the dwelling of the Lord in the Old Testament sanctuary and the temple itself are applied in the New Testament to the church and the dwelling of God among His people.⁴

Thus, the New Testament church is not a new church. Christianity is a continuation of the church of the Old Testament, the people of God.⁵ Hanke declared:

Regardless of name or title, this body of true believers in the Old Testament, as well as the new dispensation, has always had the same basic hopes, inspirations and expectations. Thus, it is seen that the Christian Church is in substance and in function a continuation of, and the successor to, the pre-Christian Jewish Mission or the Jewish Church.⁶

¹Ladd, 108.

²Rom 9:6,7; Gal 3:7.

³Gal 6:16.

⁴Exod 29:45; Lev 26:12; 2 Cor 6:16.

⁵Robert M. Brown, The Significance of the Church (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), 33.

⁶Hanke, 23.

"The newness of the church stems from the uniqueness of Jesus Christ."¹ Jesus' disciples were not just another religious group among various religious parties in Israel. They were the true Israel--a remnant that accepted the Messiah and became "the new Israel."² "That is to say, the early Christian community looked upon itself as the continuation and fulfillment of the Old Testament community."³

Consequently, this continuity implies that the mission and ministry of the Old Testament church are the mission and ministry of the Christian Church. As the former had been commissioned to prepare a people for the first coming of Jesus, the latter has been commissioned to prepare a people for the second coming of Jesus.

The Meaning of Church

The term "church," which means "the community or assembly of God's faithful people,"⁴ says little about the nature of this assembly. It is a complex organism that cannot be defined by a single term. Therefore, the New Testament employs images to describe the concept of church.

¹Roger Hedlund, The Mission of the Church in the World (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 199.

²Edward Schweizer, Church Order in the New Testament, trans. F. Clarke (Naperville, IL: Alex R. Allenson, 1959), 163.

³Brown, 34.

⁴Leonard, 42.

Several metaphors were used by the New Testament writers: the church is a family, a priesthood, a temple, a fellowship of believers, and a vineyard.

Paul referred to the church as "of God,"¹ pointing to His originator, as "of Christ,"² emphasizing its Christological foundation, and as "of the saints,"³ stressing that the church is made up of those who have experienced the soteriological message of the Gospel.⁴ Each one of these metaphors emphasizes an aspect of the nature of the church. However, it is the comparison of the church with the human body that best describes the essence of its nature. The analogy of the church as a body was developed by the apostle Paul,⁵ and it is an apt comparison because as the body has many members, so the church has many members; each member has a specific place and function, and all work together in harmony for the well being of the body, and no part thinks of itself as more important than the others.

Paul contended that "by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greek, whether slaves or free" (1 Cor 12:13). This declaration suggests that there

¹1 Cor 11:16.

²Rom 16:16.

³1 Cor 14:33.

⁴V. Norskov Olsen, Myth & Truth: Church, Priesthood & Ordination (Riverside, CA: Loma Linda Press, 1990), 20.

⁵See Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 2:16; 4:4, 12, 16; 5:23; Col 1:18.

is no place in the church for nationalism, racism, or superiority. When these "isms" come into the church, divisions follow and the church can neither accomplish its mission nor reach its destiny.

The epistle to the Galatians presents the same concept when the apostle wrote: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). The epistle to the Ephesians stresses that Jesus "broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, put to death the enmity," and made of the believers "one body to God" (Eph 2:14). Thus, the intrinsic nature of church precludes all human divisions because like the human body it operates as a functional unit.² The church is more than an institution; it is a living organism where Jesus dwells.² Therefore, the church is the body of Christ,³ and the believers as members of the body of Christ, are, individually, members one to another.⁴ As the members of a physical body have different functions, so the members of the body of Christ have different ministries.

²J. L. Breed, "The Church as the 'Body of Christ': A Pauline Analogy," Theological Review 6 (Feb. 1985): 9-32.

²J. F. Walvoord, "The Nature of the Church," Bibliotheca Sacra 116 (1959): 291-302.

³Eph 5:22.

⁴Rom 12:5.

This body also constitutes the temple of the Holy Spirit¹ where He dwells and works. By His dwelling in the church the Spirit has gifted each one of its members for the common good of the church.²

It is worth noting that, since the "essence of the body is unity,"³ spiritual gifts are given to believers in the context of the church, not independent of it. Without the church there would be no spiritual gifts, because they are only given to build up the body of Christ⁴ "that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having not spot or wrinkle or any such things; but that she should be holy and blameless" (Eph 5:27). The concept of "gifting to build" indicates a process of growth. The nature of the church, therefore, implies unity and spiritual growth.

Richards wrote:

The Bible makes it clear that the Body was formed to support the believer. One of the primary purposes of God in linking us to one another as the Church is that the Body might minister to the individual, and support the individual's growth in Christ. To make this ministry possible, each individual is equipped to minister to others. Thus the Christian community becomes a dynamic, transforming, supporting, and mutually educating whole.⁵

¹1 Cor 6:19.

²1 Cor 12: 7, 11.

³MacArthur, Body Dynamics, 12.

⁴Eph 4:12.

⁵Lawrence O. Richards, Christian Education (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 24.

Consequently, the church is a living spiritual organism, united in Christ, indwelt and gifted by the Spirit to build up each individual member to be presented at the end, as a whole, holy and blameless to the glory of God.

The Mission of the Church

The church as the body of Christ has a mission¹ to accomplish. However, its mission has not been always well understood. According to the declaration of Peter, the church was chosen by God to proclaim His virtues,² and the angel of Rev 14: 6 proclaims the everlasting Gospel to "every nation and tribe and tongue and people." Such statements give the impression that the mission of the church consists only of a worldwide proclamation of the redemptive act of God in Christ.³ In fact, the leadership of the Seventh-day Adventist Church seems to see evangelism as the only mission for which the church exists.⁴

The singular objective of this global organization, the Seventh-day Adventist Church, is to proclaim to the world the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ in the context of the three angels' messages of Revelation.⁵

¹I use the word "mission" to mean the "task," "function," or "ministry" of the church.

²1 Pet 2:9.

³Juan C. Viera, La Iglesia y el Mundo [The Church and the World] (Buenos Aires: Ediciones SALT, 1990), 51.

⁴Ibid., 66.

⁵General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventists, "Evangelism and Finishing God's Work," Annual Council, Oct. 13-21, 1976, 7.

Beaver expressed a similar idea when he wrote that testification is the chief function of the church. Therefore, "it was for this task and privilege that the power of the Holy Spirit was promised and given."¹

Tillich, on the other hand, denied that the mission of the church is the proclamation of the Gospel to save individual souls. He believed that its mission "is the attempt to transform the latent Church--which is present in the world religions, in paganism, Judaism, and humanism--into something new."² Thus he perceived mission in terms of transformation.

Stott suggested a wider concept of mission by describing it as "embracing everything which God sends his people into the world to do."³ Watson limited the task of the church to worshipping God as its first responsibility, and the proclamation of the Gospel or witnessing as its secondary duty.⁴ Edwards also described the mission of the church in terms of a twofold task: "edification and

¹R. P. Beaver, "The Apostolate of the Church," in The Theology of the Christian Mission, ed. G. H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961), 258.

²Paul Tillich, "Mission and World History," in The Theology of the Christian Mission, 284.

³John R. W. Stott, Christian Mission in the Modern World (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1975), 35.

⁴David Watson, I Believe in the Church (Grand Rapids: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Comp., 1979), 168.

witnessing."¹ Lindsell suggested a similar idea by affirming that the purpose of the existence of the church in the world is primarily for the benefit of those who are related to Christ, and second, it has responsibility to unbelievers.²

In White's writings, both the soteriological and the eschatological aspects of the mission are stressed. She emphasized that those who know the truth are instruments through whom "the gospel exercises its transforming power on mind and heart."³ In like manner, she defined the duty of the church in terms of preaching the gospel in a worldwide dimension, not only for the salvation of souls but to hasten the second coming of Jesus. "From the beginning," she said, "it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency."⁴

Both the Old and the New Testaments stress the mission that the church is to accomplish in the world. However, it is not a single but a twofold mission. On the one hand, the church was commissioned to make disciples,⁵ who reflect

¹Rex D. Edwards, "Ministers without Pulpits," Ministry, June 1982, 20-22.

²Harold Lindsell, "Fundamentals for a Philosophy of Christian Mission," in The Theology of the Christian Mission, 247.

³Ellen G. White, The Acts of the Apostles (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1911), 134.

⁴Ibid., 9.

⁵Matt 28:19.

Christ's likeness.¹ This task is a ministry of nurture² that fosters spiritual growth. On the other hand, the church has a mission to proclaim the gospel worldwide--not just to save the world, but to be a witness of God's redemptive love prior to the coming of the judgment,³ and offer each individual an opportunity to accept Jesus as personal Savior. This is a centrifugal mission, where emphasis is on "go" into all nations to proclaim the Gospel.

Clowney claimed that "the program of Christ's own ministry determines the program he has appointed for the ministry of the church."⁴ Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also" (John 14:12), and, praying to His Father, He declared: "As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world" (John 17:18). Leonard wrote: "Through the Holy Spirit the church lives in the light of the incarnation. The promise of the Spirit is a call to continue the work of the incarnate Lord."⁵

Accordingly, the ministry of the incarnate Lord is the ministry of the church. There cannot be a dichotomy between the two because the work of redemption is one. In addition,

¹Luke 6:40.

²Matt 5:49; Eph 4:11-16; 1 Pet 5:1-3.

³Matt 24:14; Luke 24:47, 48; Acts 1:8; Rev 14:6.

⁴Clowney, 272.

⁵Leonard, 26.

even though the Lord ascended to heaven, His presence continues in the church through the person of the Holy Spirit. Thus, He is in charge of the ministry of the church, which began with the Edenic covenant and was confirmed by Jesus on the cross. The ministry or mission of the church was not originated with Jesus after His baptism in the Jordan River, rather it is the ministry of the Old Testament church of which Jesus was the incarnation. He authenticated it and became the means of passing on this mission from one era to another. Thus, He is the Link that joined the two eras of the church.

Matthew depicted Jesus's ministry in terms of teaching and preaching through all Judea.¹ The Synoptic Gospels and the Gospel of John call Him *Ραββί* (teacher). He came from God as a *Ραββί*.² Similarly, in the family-church, the head of the family had to be a *ράββι*;³ the *ἰσθῆ* (hear), Deut 6, suggests that Israel was called by God to be a *ράββι*, and the great commission of Matt 28, in essence, is a call to the church to be a *διδάσκαλος* (teacher) because it was commissioned to make disciples, and only a teacher can be a disciple-maker.

White described the work of Jesus as follows:

¹Matt 4:23; 9:35.

²John 3:2.

³White, Education, 44.

To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized-- this was the work of redemption.¹

In like manner, the work of the church involves the whole realm of the Gospel, which Paul defined as "the power of God for salvation" (Rom 1:16). The Gospel is a message of spiritual liberation and restoration. It is designed to make people whole; to restore the inner being in them in order that they can live as humans reflecting Christ-likeness in their characters.² So the ultimate function of the church is a teaching ministry of character building.

Leonard believed that "the church's ultimate goal is to guide persons to wholeness, to become 'new creations' in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17)."³ Likewise Richards observed that "the function of the church is a nurturing one. It is to facilitate the growth of its members and itself as a community into full maturity in love."⁴ And the Bible speaks of the Christian life in terms of growth.⁵ Thus, the church is the

¹Ibid., 16.

²George W. Peters, A Biblical Theology of Missions (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), 162.

³Leonard, 61.

⁴Lawrence O. Richards, A New Face for the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), 31.

⁵Rom 5:1-5; 1 Thess 4:1.

agency through which God nurtures His children to continue in the process of spiritual growth.¹

Jesus' great commission to the church in Matt 28:19, 20 has been interpreted by some commentators as proclaiming the Gospel to all nations. Therefore, the task of the church has been considered only as an outward mission.

However, the stress of Jesus' commission is not on "go" (πορευθέντες, which is an aorist participle), but on the imperative "make disciples" (μαθητεύσατε). The way to make disciples is through διδάσκοντες (teaching). This verb is a present active participle, which means a continual action. Thus, the duty of the church toward believers does not stop when they are baptized but continues until they reach "the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Eph 4:13).

After Jesus' ascension, the apostles are described as going every day house to house, without ceasing, "teaching" (διδάσκοντες) and "preaching."² The verb "teaching" is the same present participle as is found in Matt 28:20, which suggests that they were accomplishing the great commission through continual teaching.

Accordingly, the simple going into all nations, an outward mission, does not fulfill the commission. To make

¹Leonard, 96.

²Acts 5:42.

disciples an inward mission of spiritual nurture is necessary.

In Pauline theology, the mission of the church is associated with the concept of spiritual gifts. The church is a body with many members. Each individual member is equipped with the spiritual ability to build the body of Christ.¹ The concept of spiritual nurture is expressed here in terms of "building the body of Christ." The body of Christ is built up when each individual member develops a character in the image of his Maker. White declared: "The lost image of God is to be restored in humanity."² The church has been gifted with particular spiritual gifts to achieve this ministry.

The local church has been gifted by the Holy Spirit to develop a ministry of spiritual nurture to assist the believer in his change from "a natural man" to "a spiritual man,"³ in order that he might become a disciple that reflects the likeness of his Master.⁴

The gifts of prophecy and shepherding were given to the church for its ministry of spiritual nurture. Even though all spiritual gifts, in one way or another, contribute to

¹Eph 4:12.

²Ellen G. White, Christ's Object Lessons (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Assoc., 1941), 96.

³Ellis, 36, 37.

⁴Luke 6:40.

the spiritual health of the body of believers, these two gifts seem to have a special function of fostering the spiritual growth of believers.

CHAPTER III

THE GIFT OF PROPHECY: A GIFT OF SPIRITUAL NURTURE

Introduction

Human beings were created to be in communication with God. Originally Adam and Eve spoke to God face-to-face; there was no need of divine revelation as we know it. The entrance of sin in the world, however, broke that communication separating human beings from God; so God had to devise a different way to communicate His will to humanity, and to bridge the gulf of separation. The new approach of divine communication with human beings is called in Scripture "the gift of prophecy."

The Bible asserts that shortly after Adam and Eve sinned, God came down to meet them; however, because of their sinful condition, they could only hear the voice of God.¹ Thereafter, it is through the gift of prophecy that God communicated His will and plans to His people. We might conclude that God's initial revelation of His soteriological plan to Adam and Eve marked the beginning of this special gift. Since then, the biblical record tells of an almost

¹Gen 3:8.

continual communication between God and His prophets and between the prophets and God's people.

The term "prophecy" is popularly understood as the work of foretelling the future. But an examination of Scripture indicates the highly limited way in which this gift operates in the realm of prediction. Few Bible authors have left any extended part of their writing devoted to foretelling the future. This suggests that the main purpose of the gift of prophecy is not primarily predicting.¹ Foretelling is the lesser not the greater part of that ministry, if it is included at all.

Throughout history, many have been chosen to be prophetic channels of God's revelation. Those chosen are said to have the "gift of prophecy," and are called "prophets," "speakers," or "proclaimers."² During the family-church period, the patriarchs had the gift of prophecy.³ Thus, they were the prophetic channels for God to communicate His will.

When the church was established as the assembly of God, the Lord set forth the parameters by which this gift would function. He said:

¹R. B. Y. Scott, The Revelation of the Prophets, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan Co., 1944), 2.

²F. Baumgartel, "Προφήτης," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1968), 6:781-861.

³Gen 3:9; 6:13; 19:1; 26:2; 28:12-15; 37:6-6; Jude 1:4.

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And it shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. But the prophet who shall speak a word presumptuously in my name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he shall speak in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die (Deut 18:18-20).

Accordingly, God established the gift of prophecy to communicate His words to His people. A prophet was sometimes known as a "seer"; but, by the time of Samuel, he began to be known as prophet (נְבִיא).¹ Youngberg observed that "as seer, he discerned God's will, and, as prophet, he conveyed that will to others."²

"Prophet" comes from the Greek προφήτης, which corresponds with the Hebrew נְבִיא. נְבִיא means "proclaimer" or "speaker." In a biblical sense, a prophet is a proclaimer of the divine revelation.³

The Hellenistic concept of προφήτης (prophet) denoted a person who spoke in the name of a god. He declared the will and counsel of that god. "The prophet spoke the word of another. He never was the author of his own message."⁴ The spiritual gift of prophecy enables an individual in the body

¹1 Sam 9:9.

²Youngberg, 1.

³Baumgartel, 781-861.

⁴Murphy, 237.

of Christ to receive and communicate God's revelation to His people.¹

It is of great importance in this context to note that although the person with the gift of prophecy is called "prophet," a prophet does not always receive his message through a direct revelation from God. Aaron, for example, was called a prophet, but Moses was the means of the divine revelation.² Therefore, prophecy means to communicate a divine revelation, whether or not the communicator is the original receiver. However, the message itself always originates in the mind of God.

In the book of Titus³ Paul used the word προφήτης to refer to a Cretan religious teacher. This use suggests a "proclaimer," "announcer," or "spokesman."⁴

The book of Corinthians' usage of the terms "prophet" and "to prophesy" seems to imply one that preaches or teaches by divine illumination, since the prophet was the moral and religious teacher of God's people. In Acts 15:32 we read: "And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a

¹Wagner, 228.

²Exod 7:1.

³Titus 1:12.

⁴Wayne A. Grudem, The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today (Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1988, 38.

lengthy message." The ministry of spiritual nurture, which includes edification, consolation, and exhortation, is the main function of the gift of prophecy.¹

Murphy considered the prophetic gift as having a threefold function. He regarded its first function to be God's self-revelation. The product of this revelation is the Bible. He concluded, therefore, that the book of Revelation was "the final . . . prophecy to be given during the Church age."²

The second function of prophecy, according to Murphy, is "foretelling." In most cases, he argued, the prophet does not receive much detailed information about the future from God, but receives a general vision of what will happen, and the prophet uses his own words to describe the future with the possibility of erring.³

The third function of prophecy is proclaiming. According to Murphy, proclaiming is the function of the gift of prophecy that continues throughout the entire age of the church. He rejected the possibility of this gift as God's self-revelation in the present age.⁴

Murphy's theoretical conception of the functions of the gift of prophecy seems to lack a biblical foundation. The

¹1 Cor 14:3.

²Murphy, 242-243.

³Ibid., 244, 245.

⁴Ibid.

Scripture presents this gift without a suggestion of differing degrees of functioning. Each prophet was given a specific assignment within the broad task of edifying the church, but each one received the same gift.

While it can be argued that the gift of prophecy may function in these three spheres, it is difficult to support the assertion that the book of Revelation was the final message from God. When John warned against adding to or taking from the words of prophecy, he was speaking of the prophecies of his book.¹ Furthermore, there is no ultimate evidence that the book of Revelation was the last book of the Bible written, although this is generally believed by scholars.

In addition, all messages that come from God are by divine revelation. God does not give His prophets such a vague revelation of an event that the prophets must draw their own conclusions about the meaning. God's message through the gift of prophecy usually is simple, clear, understandable, and in all cases "perfect for its purpose."

Since the gift of prophecy is God's means of revealing His will to His people, it has a perpetual function in the body of Christ. Daniells wrote:

The fundamental premise of the writer is incontrovertible--that when sin had broken direct communication between heaven and earth, God gave the prophetic gift to men, vouchsafing it to His church,

¹Rev 22:18, 19.

and that gift has never been permanently withdrawn since its bestowal.¹

However, the perpetuity of this gift does not depend on the presence of a living prophet because the Scripture is the ever-present, living, Word of God. The apostle wrote:

For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of heart (Heb 4:12).

Thus, the Bible is the written record of the voice of God to His people. It is as dynamic as a living prophet who reproves, corrects, and teaches. Naden observed that the reason why the gift of prophecy needs to be recognized as one of the most widespread gifts of the Spirit is because "it is the nurture gift, the gift that builds a church and maintains it in good spiritual health."² However, the role of this gift has not been fully understood in Christianity in general and in Adventism in particular. Naden stressed:

Despite the clarity of the "fundamental belief" about spiritual gifts, it has never been fully operationalized. Adventism has not yet recognized that the gift of prophecy is by its nature one of the most widespread of the Spirit's numerous gifts.³

Since the beginning, this gift has been granted to believers to build the body of Christ,⁴ and to prepare a

¹A. G. Daniells, The Abiding Gift of Prophecy (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1936), 11.

²Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 2.

³Ibid.

⁴Eph 4:12.

people that reflect the likeness of Jesus, and be ready for the face-to-face encounter with the Lord when He comes.

The Divine Origin of the Prophecy Gift

The prophets testified that they uttered the words of the Lord. David wrote, "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Sam 23:2); Ezekiel was a spokesman of God.¹ God placed His Spirit upon Isaiah and all the prophets.² Paul asserted, "All Scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16), and Peter declared,

But know this first of all, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God (2 Pet 1:20-21).

Dederen observed:

The gift of prophecy, granted to His servants the prophets and the apostles, seems to have been one of the most efficient ways chosen by God to disclose Himself to His people (Num. 12:6; Deut. 18:15, 18-22). These prophets, whose ministry climaxed in the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, were the instruments used by God to bring the Scriptures into existence.³

Accordingly, the origin of prophecy lies in God.⁴ The

¹Ezek 3:4.

²Isa 42:1; Zech 7:12.

³Raoul Dederen, "The Revelation-Inspiration Phenomenon According to the Bible Writers," in Issues in Revelation and Inspiration, ed. Frank Holbrook and Leo V. Dolson (Berrien Springs, MI: Adventist Theological Society Publications, 1992), 10.

⁴Gerhard F. Hasel, Understanding the Living Word of God (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1980), 56.

prophets did not speak on their own initiative. They always pointed to God as the source of their message.

The fact that individuals have had encounters with God, and that the product of this encounter is Scripture, is the basis for the development of the doctrine of revelation and inspiration. These two concepts have prompted an ongoing debate among biblical scholars. God's revelation and inspiration is one of the most important doctrines in Christianity.¹ Without revelation there is no faith because faith comes through the word of God.²

The verb "inspire" per se does not appear in the Bible. It came into the English Bible from the Latin verb *inspiro* used in the Vulgate.³ The Greek term used by Paul in 2 Tim 3:16 is "θεόπνευστος," which literally means "God-breathed."⁴ God's "breath" alludes to His almighty power, and asserts the fact that Scripture "is the product of a specifically divine operation."⁵

Biblical scholars have developed several differing theories to explain the phenomenon of revelation and

¹Ibid., 9.

²Rom 10:14, 17.

³Benjamin B. Warfield, "The Bible Idea of Inspiration," in The Living God: Readings in Christian Theology, vol. 1, ed. Millard J. Erickson (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973), 215.

⁴Ibid., 68.

⁵Ibid., 216.

inspiration. For instance, there are those who believe in "verbal inspiration." According to this theory, the prophet acts as God's pen, which is akin to dictation. It is a kind of "mechanical inspiration" where a human instrument has little or no creative participation in developing the written material.¹ The prophets would have no liberty to change anything that had been given to them. According to this theory, every word, verb, and syllable of the Bible comes direct from God.² Spurgeon declared:

We contend for every word of the Bible and believe in the verbal, literal inspiration of the Holy Scripture. Indeed, we believe there can be no other kind of inspiration.³

For Michaels, "the Bible in its totality and in all its parts comes from God, and expresses word for word what He intended to say."⁴

Hodge, however, repudiated the idea of a mechanical dictation and explained verbal inspiration as

the divine superintendence which we call inspiration extended to verbal expression of the thoughts of the

¹James Orr, "Revelation and Inspiration," in The Living God: Readings in Christian Theology, 251.

²Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works," Journal of Adventist Education 44 (October-November 1981): 17-32.

³J. H. Spurgeon, quoted in Rene Pache, The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture, trans. H. I. Needham (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), 75.

⁴J. R. Michaels, "Inerrancy or Verbal Inspiration? An Evangelical Dilemma," in Inerrancy and Common Sense, ed. Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), 67.

sacred writers, as well as to the thoughts themselves, and [the belief] that, hence, the Bible considered as a record, an utterance in words of a divine revelation, is the Word of God to us.¹

The phenomenon of revelation and inspiration is a biblical doctrine. The Scripture says that God spoke in many ways.² However, it does not portray the prophets in a passive role. Their role in writing the Bible goes beyond a mere mechanical function. For instance, Luke wrote his Gospel after conducting a careful research about Jesus' life and teachings.³ Nevertheless, his Gospel is no less inspired than the others.

Thus, the history of the Bible does not support verbal inspiration because it is a divine/human phenomenon. To understand it, we should not disengage the human element.

Another theory to explain the phenomenon of the cognitive encounter between God and man is the theory of plenary inspiration. It asserts that the thoughts of the prophets are inspired, but not their words. Thus, the truth comes to their minds and they use their own words to describe it.⁴ White wrote:

It is not the words of the Bible that are inspired, but the men that were inspired. Inspiration acts not on the man's words or his expressions but on man himself, who under the influence of the Holy Ghost,

¹C. Hodge, quoted in Pache, 74.

²Heb 1:3.

³Luke 1:3.

⁴Ibid., 25.

is imbued with thoughts. But the words receive the impress of the individual mind. The divine mind is diffused. The divine mind and will is combined with the human mind and will; thus the utterances of the man are the word of God.¹

This theory seems to indicate that the object of revelation/inspiration was the subject matter of the Bible. Thus, the prophets were free to use their own words and expressions to convey the divine thoughts.

Schleiermacher, Buber, Barth, Brunner, and others defined inspiration in terms of an encounter between God and man without cognitive revelation. According to this understanding, the prophet has a personal encounter with God, but no verbal information or knowledge is transmitted. The prophet, then, writes from his experience with God,² in what might be described as subjective inspiration. Therefore, the Bible is not the Word of God, but it contains the experience of that encounter which the prophet wrote subjectively.³

This theory is based on the philosophical idea that God is the Great Unknown. Its proponents think of God in terms of transcendence, not immanence, excluding any possibility of a cognitive encounter between Him and human beings. However, the biblical record indicates that God

¹Ellen G. White, Selected Messages, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1958), 21.

²Dederen, 11.

³Ibid., 27-30.

revealed Himself in a cognitive way. His voice was audible and understandable to Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other prophets. To accept the encounter theory one must disregard the biblical account.

Rea perceived inspiration in terms of "objective" and "subjective." The former is explained as "God's disclosure of Himself and His will to His creatures."¹ This understanding of inspiration, alleged Rea, is invested with authority. The latter is "the divine influence directly or immediately exerted upon the mind or soul of men,"² and this inspiration has no authority.

The concepts of "objectivity" and "subjectivity," as Rea presented them, suggest "degrees of inspiration." Such a concept is not found in the Scripture. The message of the prophet is fully revealed and received from God or it is not.

Robertson, on the other hand, defined inspiration as "God's activity upon, or within, the prophet, who then becomes the transmitter of that revelation to His people."³

¹Walter Rea, "Lecture on White Lies," Association of Adventist Forums, Feb. 14, 1981, 9; quoted in Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works. Part III: The Relationship Between The Ellen G. White Writings and the Bible," Journal of Adventist Education 44 (February-March 1982): 17-32.

²Ibid.

³J. J. Robertson, The White Truth (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1985), 79.

Similarly, Coon considered inspiration as "a process by which God enables a man or woman of His special choosing both to receive and communicate accurately, adequately and reliably God's messages for His people."¹

Thompson interpreted inspiration in terms of being "fired up." Thus, the inspired prophet "is one who is fired up to speak for God."² He posited that the message of the inspired prophet comes from three sources: "from revelation, from research, from experience."³

According to Pache, revelation is an act of God by which He makes Himself known to His children. Inspiration, on the other hand, deals with the process of writing the revelation. Thus, the Holy Spirit exerts influence on the prophets so that they might write down the exact and authentic message they received from God.⁴

A similar idea was suggested by Canale, who wrote,

Revelation involves God's action in the process of generating ideas in the mind of the prophet, whereas inspiration involves God's action in the process

¹Roger W. Coon, "Inspiration/Revelation: What It Is and How It Works. Part I: The Prophetic Gift in Operation," Journal of Adventist Education 44 (October-November 1981): 17-31.

²Alden Thompson, Inspiration (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1991), 53.

³Ibid.

⁴Pache, 45.

through which the prophets wrote down the revealed ideas and produced the Bible.¹

It is worth noting that when Paul said: "all Scripture is God-breathed [inspired]" (2 Tim 3:16), he is referring to the written Word of God. John, however, alluded to the revelation of Jesus Christ (ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) as a reference to the process of receiving the prophecy revealed to him.² The expression of Paul, "God-breathed," is not included in John's revelation because God showed, or signified, to him what must take place soon.³ Then, according to Canale, the inspiration acted only in the process of writing the revelation.

In 1 Cor 14:26, 30, where the apostle emphasized the preeminence of the gift of prophecy, he made no mention of inspiration; only revelation is noted in relation to this special gift. The gift of prophecy seems to be associated with the proclamation of God's revelation. He stated:

And let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment. But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent. For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be exhorted (1 Cor 14:29-31).

Thus 1 Cor 14 suggests that an important aspect of the essence of the gift of prophecy, at least at the local

¹Fernando Canale, "Revelation and Inspiration: The Ground for a New Approach," Andrews University Seminary Studies 2 (1993): 91-104.

²Rev 1:1.

³Ibid.

congregational level, is not inspiration, but intelligibility of God's revelation; intelligibility is what distinguished prophecy from glossolalia.¹

Therefore, we may conclude that one of the functions of a prophet is to proclaim a message that has been revealed by God to lead people into a personal relationship with the Lord. The authority of the prophet's message is based on the divine call to proclaim the good news in God's name.

The gift of prophecy does not necessarily mean that the prophet is inspired by the Holy Spirit in a direct and technical sense of the word. Luke suggests that Judas and Silas exercised their prophetic gift by preaching a message that simply encouraged and strengthened the brethren.² Paul emphasized that this gift is "for edification and exhortation and consolation" (1 Cor 14:3). And White said: "But the name [prophet] was given also to those who, though not so directly inspired, were divinely called to instruct the people in the works and ways of God."³

In summary, the gift of prophecy is always based on a divine origin. A true prophet is called by God to communicate a divinely ordained message. There are no

¹R. P. Martin, "Aspects of Worship in 1 Corinthians 14:1-25," in Charismatic Experiences in History, ed. C. M. Robeck, Jr. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1985), 72.

²Acts 15:32.

³White, Education, 46.

degrees of inspiration, and God always is the source of the message which comes through revelation.

Aaron, for instance, was a prophet whose message came from God through Moses. However, when he spoke to Pharaoh, he could say, "Thus says the Lord."¹ Therefore, the authority of prophets always rests in God Who called and commissioned them with a message to proclaim.

The Purpose of the Gift of Prophecy

The gift of prophecy has a multifaceted role as can be inferred from the Scripture. As stated above, when the harmony of the original creation was broken, a fresh revelation of God's will was necessary. "Revelation had from this point on to take on its special character of restoring this broken relationship."² In restoring human beings' relationship with God, the gift of prophecy has played a threefold role of communicating, foretelling, and nurturing.

Its Communicative Purpose

God granted the gift of prophecy to the human race as a means of self-revelation, so that human beings could know the way of life. Thus, the prophet is God's spokesperson and mediator; God's revelation flows through him. Naden

¹Exod 5:1, see also 4:14, 15; 7:1.

²William Dyrness, Themes in Old Testament Theology (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1979), 28.

declared: "All with the prophecy gift speak for God, speak forthrightly for God, speak with conviction about God's love and will."¹

God has spoken since the beginning and in many ways.² He sent His servants, and even His own Son, to disclose His will to the people.³ He has revealed Himself as a compassionate, loving, kind, and truthful God "Who forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin" (Exod 34:6-7). God's revelation is a Lamp that lights the way of life to those who are in the darkness of sin.⁴

The purpose of God's communication to human beings is to disclose the means of salvation. Consequently, His revelation contains eternal life.⁵ Therefore, Peter asserted: "We have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as the lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts" (2 Pet 1:19). And king Jehoshaphat declared: "Put your trust in the Lord your God, and you will be established. Put your trust in His prophets and succeed" (2 Chr 20:20).

¹Naden, "Ellen G. White and the Gift of Prophecy," 6.

²Heb 1:1-2.

³Matt 21:33-46.

⁴Ps 119:105.

⁵John 5:39.

Accordingly, the essence of God's communication is to establish the parameters of salvation and foster a ministry of spiritual nurture in the local church.

Its Foretelling Purpose

Amos says: "Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret counsel to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). The foretelling of events of the future has been of secondary concern in the manifestation of the gift of prophecy. The prophets primarily addressed their own people in their own day; however, their messages were never isolated from the past and the future.¹ They were contextualized to the stream of salvation history. God did not leave His people in complete darkness about the future. Jemison observed: "In the purpose of God, His plans are revealed to His people so that they might know how to cooperate with them."²

Furthermore, foretelling has a saving purpose. For example, God revealed to Abraham His plan of destroying Sodom, so he interceded before the Lord to save Lot.¹ Similarly, to Joseph was revealed the famine that was about

¹Dyrness, 223.

²T. House Jemison, A Prophet Among You (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1955), 43.

¹Gen 18:16-33.

to come to the land of Egypt, therefore, he was able to save God's people.¹

The relatively small quantity of specific forecasting of future events indicates this has usually been a minor part of the ministry of those equipped with the prophetic gift.

We find, however, in Jeremiah, Isaiah, Daniel, the Gospels, and Revelation, major sections dealing with eschatology. Nevertheless, the purpose of foretelling future events is primarily to give an outline of God's future plans to the church and to protect His children from Satan's destructive devices. The Lord said: "I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He" (John 13:19). Thus, the foretelling purpose of the gift of prophecy has to do with protection and direction, which again is to provide spiritual nurture.

Its Nurturing Purpose

Paul understood the gift of prophecy first in terms of building up the congregation²--the one who prophesies edifies, exhorts, and comforts the church.³ Consequently,

¹Gen 41.

²Martin, 73.

³1 Cor 14:3, 4.

this gift has primacy in the church because it is the gift of spiritual nurture.¹

Eph 4:13-14 states that the result of building up the congregation is "unity of faith," "knowledge of God," and Christians mature in spirituality, which strengthens them to resist the winds of false doctrine. The prophetic gift fosters the holy and blameless character of the church.²

The nurturing purpose of the prophecy gift is seen also in its teaching function. Paul said to Timothy that, by knowing the Scripture, he acquired a wisdom that leads to salvation in Christ.³ In addition, he said, the Word of God is "profitable for teaching." The Psalmist said: "Blessed is the man Thou . . . dost teach out of thy law" (Ps 94:12).

"It is for reproof." Because man's understanding is in darkness, "it takes the power of the divine Word to open his eyes and to persuade him of the truth."⁴ Thus, the Word of God brings conviction and expels error.

"It is for correction for training in righteousness." "How can a young man keep his way pure?" asked the Psalmist, "By keeping it according to Thy word. Thy word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee" (Ps 119:9, 11). Thus, the man of God may be adequate, equipped

¹1 Cor 14:1, 5.

²Eph 5:27.

³2 Tim 3:15.

⁴Pache, 48.

for every good work."¹ Therefore, through prophecy the church learns and is exhorted and perfected.²

David testified: "From thy precepts I get understanding; The unfolding of Thy words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple" (Ps 119:104). God's Word, the prophetic Word, is the light of knowledge that shines out of darkness.³ It was written for our instruction, encouragement, to have hope, and prosperity in life.⁴ The nurturing power of the prophetic gift is based on the fact that the word uttered is a living and active word⁵ that comes from the living God. Therefore, it always is pertinent to our present situation and has a trustworthy application to our spiritual need. Grudem observed:

Prophecy, then, is superior to other gifts because the revelation on which it depends allows it to be suited to the specific needs of the moment, needs which may only be known to God (cf. 1 Cor 14:25; Rom 8:26-27). In this way, prophecy is supremely qualified to be speech which edifies, speech which "fits the occasion, that it may impart grace to those who hear" (Eph 4:29, rsv).⁶

²2 Tim 3:15-17.

¹1 Cor 14:31.

³2 Cor 4:6.

⁴Rom 15:4; Deut 9, 10.

⁵Heb 4:12.

⁶Grudem, 153.

Read affirmed: "This word is power; it transforms the life."¹ And White said:

Even greater is the power of the Bible in the development of the spiritual nature. Man, created for fellowship with God, can only in such fellowship find his real life and development.²

The fall incapacitated man to do good, because there is no goodness separated from God. Sin is a power that dominates man's physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of spiritual nurture which the gift of prophecy provides, sets man free and reproduces in him a godly character; the prophetic gift embodies the power of God, which undoes the effects of sin in human beings. On Mount Carmel, Elijah, empowered by the prophetic gift, challenged 450 prophets of Baal, and made fire come down from heaven to consume, not only the soaked offering, but the wood, the stones, and the dust as well.³

The word that has come through the prophetic gift is in essence a personification of God because it functions as a divine cosmic power.⁴ In the fourth Gospel, John identified

¹W. E. Read, The Bible, the Spirit of Prophecy, and the Church (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1958), 59.

²White, Education, 124.

³1 Kgs 18.

⁴Walther Eichrodt, Theology of the Old Testament, vol. 2, trans. J. A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1967), 77.

the Word (λόγος) with God.¹ Because the Word is God in action, Paul could say that it "is living, active and sharper than any two-edged sword" (Heb 4:12).

The ultimate importance of the gift of prophecy for the local church is based on the fact that it provides spiritual nurture and newness of life in believers.²

Spheres of Functioning

The gift of prophecy is the same spiritual gift in each period of the history of God's people because it is granted by the same Spirit and for the same instructional and nurturing purposes. However, God calls His prophets to work in different spheres of influence. Naden observed that the prophetic gift ministry functions in three spheres,³ which he called historic, church periods,⁴ and local congregation.

¹John 1:1-2.

²2 Cor 5:17.

³Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 5-9.

⁴The first three chapters of the book of Revelation present seven churches. Most scholars agree that these churches represent seven periods of the Christian church. The church of the Old Testament can also be divided into periods. For example, the family-church in the patriarchal period, the Exodus, the Judges, the monarchical period, and the exile. Numerous prophets were limited in ministry to a specific period of church history.

Historic: Bible Universal Nurture

The Scripture names many prophets. All of them, during their lifetimes, acted either in that general period of church history or simply in the local congregation sphere.¹ However, God selected some of their writings to constitute the Holy Scripture. No Christian questions the authority and universality of application of the Bible. It has application to every human being in every subsequent period of history. It contains the principles of God's kingdom and the reflection of His character.

God determined that this corpus of writings become the canon of the church, for exhortation, correction, edification, reproof, teaching, and a general view of the future to the eschaton. Thus, Scripture is normative in its application and perfect for its purpose in all its subject matter to those who hear and read it.

Church Periods

The Bible mentions several prophets who were well accepted in the Old Testament church, but their ministries were limited to a specific period of church history. For example, Noah, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph were prophets during the family-church period.² Aaron and Miriam prophesied in

¹Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 10.

²Gen 6-9; 26; 28-42.

the time of the Exodus;¹ Deborah, Gideon, and Samson had the prophetic gift during periods of the Judges.² Nathan, Gad, and Micaiah were prophets during the monarchical period.³ In the apostolic church Judas, Silas, Agabus, and Timothy had the gift of prophecy.⁴

At the end of the Dark Ages, some were given the gift of prophecy. Wycliffe, like John the Baptist, was called by God "to accomplish a special mission; he was the herald of a new era."⁵ Luther was commissioned by God "to break the chains of error and superstition,"⁶ and Wesley was "urged by the Holy Spirit to preach Christ and Him crucified,"⁷ and resurrect the neglected doctrine of sanctification.

All the above-mentioned prophets were called by God to exercise a ministry during a specific period of time, not for all time as was the case with the biblical writers. If we define inspiration as the power of God that enables the prophet to write accurately the divine revelation, then we might conclude that these men were not inspired. However, "present truth" was revealed to them, and they were invested

¹Exod 7:1; 15:20.

²Judg 4; 6; 7; 13-16.

³1 Chr 29:29; 1 Kgs 22.

⁴Acts 15:32; 11:27-30; 1 Tim 1:18.

⁵White, The Great Controversy, 93.

⁶Ibid., 169.

⁷Ibid., 254.

with authority and power from the Holy Spirit to accomplish the ministry for which they were called in a specific time period for the church in the widely dispersed geographic areas. Compared with the Bible's normative witness, they are formative in their application, that is, their work and witness must be compared with, and tested by Scripture.

Ellen G. White: Church period
nurture

Probably no other denomination in the modern era has emphasized the gift of prophecy more than the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Since the beginning, it has held that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White. This belief has generated much debate and criticism from both inside and outside the church.

Canright, for example, was one of the more severe critics of White's prophetic gift. His arguments were the more destructive because they knew each other so well. He argued that Ellen White's visions were the result "of disease and religious excitement-hysteria."¹ Slattery, also a former insider, considered White a false prophet and a plagiarist.²

¹D. M. Canright, Adventism Refuted in a Nutshell, vol. 4 (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1889), 3.

²Wallace D. Slattery, Are Seventh-day Adventists False Prophets? (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publication Comp., 1990), 23-42.

The issue, however, is not so much that White's writings contradict the Bible (although this has been a criticism of some scholars with respect to the Investigative Judgment doctrine), but rather that she differed in interpretation of some Bible passages from her critics, or there was a different understanding of the doctrine of revelation/inspiration. Obviously, those who believe in verbal or inerrancy inspiration cannot accept that God can raise a modern prophet. Ford wrote:

Ultimately it dawned on me that the real answer to the criticism of Ellen White was an appeal to the real nature of inspiration as being perfect for its purpose, rather than being verbally infallible. Such a concept would also lead one to judge the work of a prophet by its centralities rather than its peripheries. But that is not the same as saying that the peripheral elements are frequently inaccurate, only that often they were more easily misunderstood through lack of understanding of the historic context and other relevant circumstances.¹

Since its inception, the Adventist Church has held that White's writings are not another Bible;² neither an addition to Scripture; nor does the church contend for universal

¹Desmond Ford, Physicians of the Soul: God's Prophets through the Ages (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1980), 122.

²William A. Spicer, The Spirit of Prophecy in the Adventist Movement (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1937), 29.

applications outside the denomination. Her ministry was particularly focused for the Seventh-day Adventist Church.¹

The church has been forced to write many apologies defending White's writings and inspiration. But the biblical record also shows that many of the Old Testament prophets were not fully accepted by their contemporaries, and rarely was one of them accepted as authoritative outside of Israel. Daniel would be a remarkable exception. The Sadducees, one of the major sects in Judaism, are believed to have accepted as inspired only the five books of Moses, rejecting all the other books commonly accepted as canonical. In the Gospels there are many examples of the prophets' writings being misused by the Jews.²

Thus, the issues are not who or how many accept White's inspiration, but whether or not she possessed the spiritual gift of prophecy and, if she did, how to define the role and sphere of her ministry.

There is no biblical evidence to indicate that the gift of prophecy ceased with the last book of the Bible; scriptural evidence strongly asserts that the prophetic gift, like the other spiritual gifts, will continue as long as the church exists. This gift is an integral part of

¹Seventh-day Adventists, Questions on Doctrine (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1957), 89.

²Mark 7:8-13.

God's church.¹ As Christians we cannot prove that the Bible is the inspired Word of God. We accept this reality by faith. Similarly, the fact that White's writings are inspired by the Holy Spirit must be accepted by faith, but evidences of the inspiration of her writings are seen in their harmony with the biblical corpus, the fruit that her writings produce in the Christian's life, and White's own testimony about the origin of her writings.

White's view of her gift
of prophecy

White was constantly questioned about whether or not she was a prophet. She responded:

I have had no claims to make, only that I am instructed that I am the Lord's messenger; that He called me in my youth to be His messenger, to receive His Word, and give a clear and decided message in the name of the Lord Jesus.²

Regarding her inspiration/revelation she spoke strongly in her own defense. She stated:

I have no special wisdom in myself; I am only an instrument in the Lord's hands to do the work He has set for me to do. The instructions that I have given by pen or voice have been an expression of the light that God has given me.³

¹Rev 12:17; 19:10.

²James White and others, The Spirit of Prophecy in the Remnant Church (Washington, DC: Review & Herald Publishing Assoc., n.d.), 40.

³Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5 (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Comp., 1948), 691.

I am presenting to you that which the Lord has presented to me. I do not write one article in the paper expressing merely my own ideas. They are what God has opened before me in vision--the precious rays of light shining from the throne.¹

Speaking about her testimonies she declared that they came either from God or Satan; they cannot be a composite work.

God is either teaching His church, reprovng their wrongs and strengthening their faith, or He is not. This work is of God, or it is not. God does nothing in partnership with Satan. My work . . . bears the stamp of God or the stamp of the enemy. There is no halfway work in the matter.²

In addition, she emphasized that her testimonies should be judged by their fruits. She said:

Let the testimonies be judged by their fruits. What is the spirit of their teaching? What has been the result of their influence? All who desire to do so can acquaint themselves with the fruits of the visions.³

The relationship between White's writings and the Bible

Ford argued that what lays "at the heart of the writings of Ellen G. White [is] exactly that which was at the center of the New Testament."⁴ Thus, he implied that Jesus Christ is the core of White's writings.

¹Ibid., 67.

²Ibid., 671.

³Ibid.

⁴Ford, 122.

Martin, who accused her of plagiarism and disagreed with her positions on the sanctuary and the investigative judgment, wrote:

Mrs. White was truly a regenerated Christian woman who loved the Lord Jesus Christ and dedicated herself unstintingly to the task of bearing witness for Him as she felt led. It should be clearly understood that some tenets of Christian theology as historically understood and the interpretation of Mrs. White do not agree; Christians of all denominations may heatedly disagree with the Seventh-day Adventist attitude toward Mrs. White, but all that she wrote on such subjects as salvation or Christian living characterizes her as a Christian in every sense of the term.¹

Christ and His cross were the focus of White's messages. She always considered the Bible to be sufficient for man's salvation. Her testimonies were never intended to take the place of the Bible. She declared that if the people of God would study God's Word as they should with the desire to reach the Bible standard, then they would not need the testimonies.²

The testimonies were intended to call the attention of God's people to the inspired Word of God, which had been neglected. They did not represent a new light, "but are to impress vividly upon the heart the truths of inspiration already revealed."³ White stated:

¹Walter R. Martin, The Truth About Seventh-day Adventism (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1960), 12-13.

²White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:663, 665.

³Ibid.

My Saviour declared me to be His messenger. "Your work," He instructed me, "is to bear My word. Strange things will arise, and in your youth I set you apart to bear the message to the erring ones, to carry the word before unbelievers, and with pen and voice to reprove from the word, actions that are not right. Exhort from the word. I will make My word open to you. It shall not be as strange language. In the true eloquence of simplicity, with voice and pen, the messages that I give shall be heard from one who has never learned in the schools. My Spirit and My power shall be with you."¹

Jemison observed that White held her writings as the fulfillment of eight roles: (1) to exalt the Bible, (2) to attract minds to the Bible, (3) to call attention to truths neglected, (4) to impress truths already revealed, (5) to awaken minds, (6) to simplify the truths, (7) to bring out principles and help apply them, and (8) to instruct in details.²

Thus, we may conclude that White did not consider her writings as an addition to the Bible. Her messages were based on the biblical principles toward which she constantly called attention.

White's sphere of functioning

White was called to exert a ministry in a church period sphere. She is the prophet of Adventism in the period of the church known as Laodicea, or the end-time. She asserted that she depended on the Holy Spirit to receive her visions as well as to report them. Thus, she claimed the operation

¹J. White and others, 40-41.

²Jemison, 367-371.

of both the revelation and the inspiration of the Spirit. However, in comparison with the Scripture, she is a lesser light. Her writings are not normative like Scripture, but formative. She gave counsel from the Lord to nurture spiritual life. God did not call her to judge or condemn, but to build His church.

Nurture: The essence of
White's ministry

Most Adventists would agree that White was called to exercise a ministry within and for the Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, her ministry has not always been placed in a right perspective. Perhaps the apologetic efforts of the church in defending White's writings have caused the church to overlook the real purpose of her ministry.

Very often the church has emphasized White's prophetic gift as an evidence of its position as God's remnant. Seldom, however, has the church realized that, as in the case of most of the apostles, she was gifted "with a cluster of gifts rather than a single gift."¹ Her many gifts enhanced her ministry and contributed to the establishment of the SDA Church. Naden commented:

One of the great injustices we do to Ellen White is to think of her in a distinctly myopic way with regard to her spiritual gifts. She most certainly had the gift of prophecy, but equally important for the Seventh-day Adventist church was the fact that she gave evidence of also having the gifts of: Administration, Apostleship,

¹Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 16.

Giving, Exhortation, Discerning, Hospitality, Pastoring and Teaching.¹

Because she was gifted with such a cluster of gifts, she was able to contribute in building up the church's institutions, developing a system of education, health, and mission. Therefore, she considered that her work, even though it embraced the work of a prophet, included much more than the word "prophet" means. "My work includes much more than this name [prophet] signifies. I regard myself as a messenger, entrusted by the Lord with messages for His people."²

A thorough study of her writings indicates that her broad ministry had little to do with proving doctrines--she left that to the church's scholars--but rather with the spiritual nurture of believers. The central motif that flows as a stream throughout White's writings is the Christ of the cross and the cross of Christ as the solution for sin. She wrote:

The sacrifice of Christ as an atonement for sin is the great truth around which all other truths cluster. In order to be rightly understood and appreciated, every truth in the word of God, from Genesis to Revelation, must be studied in the light that streams from the cross of Calvary,--the Son of God uplifted on the cross. This is to be the foundation of every discourse given by our ministers.¹

¹Ibid.

²White, Selected Messages, 1:32, 36.

¹Ellen G. White, Gospel Workers (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1915), 315.

The essence of her work can accurately be defined as a ministry of spiritual nurture. No other person has contributed more to Adventist piety and spirituality than she. In her first vision she saw a picture of the highway of holiness on which the Adventist movement must walk to the Holy City.¹ After that, White's chief burden was "to urge believers into this path, high above the world. Clear the King's highway, and let the Saviour in."²

Although White received visions from God, her ministry was clearly based on the Word of the Lord. She asserted that the Lord chose her as His messenger to bear His Word to reprove and exhort with voice and pen actions that are not in accord with the Word. "I will make My Word open to you."³ Therefore, she presented the Bible as "a perfect standard of character," and as "a perfect guide under all circumstances of life."⁴

White's emphasis on spiritual nurture is based on the biblical narrative of the origin and creation of humanity in the image of God. She believed that "when Adam came from the Creator's hand, he bore, in his physical, mental, and

¹Ellen G. White, Early Writings (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1906), 14.

²Spicer, 58.

³White, Selected Messages, 1:32.

⁴Ellen G. White, "Courtship and Marriage," Review and Herald, January 26, 1886, 49.

spiritual nature, a likeness to his Maker."¹ However, the likeness of God in humanity was marred because of sin.² Therefore, she emphasized that the work of redemption is to undo the effect of sin in humanity. She wrote:

By infinite love and mercy the plan of salvation had been devised, and a life of probation was granted. To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized-- this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life.³

In the soteriological work of Christ, White saw that, even though devastated by sin, humanity still has "great possibilities."⁴ Thus, in Christ it is possible not only to remove sin but to restore, rebeautify, and reconstruct human nature from the ruins, and to make it "fit for the presence of God."⁵

The theological concept of the restoration of God's image in humanity led White to emphasize the development of a character according to the divine likeness in the believer.⁶ Therefore, she saw in Christ the example for

¹White, Education, 15.

²Ibid.

³Ibid., 16.

⁴White, The Desire of Ages, 568.

⁵White, Testimonies for the Church, 5:537.

⁶Ellen G. White, Child Guidance (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1954), 161.

character building.¹ "The idea of Christian character is Christlikeness."² However, she recognized that

none but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory.³

For White the spiritual life is in continual growth. If it does not grow, it will die.⁴ She saw man as a wholistic entity. Therefore in her philosophy of Christian education she classed education and redemption as the same work.⁵ Thus, she developed an integrated approach to education where she suggested the "harmonious development of the physical, the mental, and the spiritual powers."⁶ Because man's powers were affected by sin; redemption must reach each dimension of human nature.⁷

White's writings stressed four main factors as means of spiritual nurture and character development. The first factor is the study of the Bible. As stated above, White's ministry was a ministry of the Word. For her the Bible

¹Ibid., 166.

²White, The Desire of Ages, 311.

³Ibid., 37-38.

⁴White, Education, 105.

⁵Ibid., 30.

⁶Ibid., 13.

⁷Ibid., 15.

contains a revelation of the character of God, the standard for Christian living, and provision for spiritual nurture.¹

She wrote:

There is nothing more calculated to strengthen the intellect than the study of the Scriptures. No other book is so potent to elevate the thoughts, to give vigor to the faculties, as the broad, ennobling truths of the Bible. If God's word were studied as it should be, men would have a breadth of mind, a nobility of character, and a stability of purpose rarely seen in these times.²

The second is meditation. White suggested that it would be beneficial for the Christian to spend one hour each day meditating on the life of Christ, allowing the "imagination to grasp each scene, especially the closing ones."³ It was her philosophy that "by beholding man is changed."⁴ She wrote:

It is by beholding that we become changed. By dwelling upon the love of God and our Saviour, by contemplating the perfection of the divine character and claiming the righteousness of Christ as ours by faith, we are to be transformed into the same image."⁵

She believed that when the mind meditates on Christ, the character is molded into Christ-likeness. By spending time beholding Jesus, His image will be constantly in the

¹See White, Christ's Object Lessons, 103-114.

²Ellen G. White, Steps to Christ (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1956), 90.

³White, The Desire of Ages, 83.

⁴Ellen G. White, Fundamentals of Christian Education (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1923), 422.

⁵Ellen G. White, Mind, Character, and Personality, vol. 1, (Nashville: Southern Publishing Assoc., 1977), 337.

eye of the soul. Thus, human nature is softened and subdued, and the character transformed.¹

The third factor is prayer. White believed that prayer was so essential for spiritual growth that she compared its effect in the Christian's life with the effect of temporal food in the physical body.² Thus, prayer was for her a vital element of the spiritual life. It contributes to the process of growing in grace;³ prayer is a source of spiritual power, and "makes men wise in the wisdom of heaven, and enables them to work in the unity of the Spirit, joined together in the bonds of peace."⁴

The fourth factor that White stressed in spiritual nurture is service. She held that service is "the connecting link which binds us to God and to our fellow men."⁵ White argued that man "cannot come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity."⁶ She wrote:

¹Ellen G. White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1923), 388-89.

²Ellen G. White, Messages to Young People (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1930), 115.

³Ellen G. White, The Sanctified Life (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1937), 93.

⁴Ellen G. White, Sons and Daughters of God (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1955), 335.

⁵White, Christ's Object Lessons, 326.

⁶Ibid., 384.

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by trying to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within--when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.¹

Undoubtedly the most comprehensive definition of White's ministry is one of spiritual nurture. Primarily it is in this sense that an ongoing ministry of her writings can be relevant for the church today. If the church would emphasize more the nurture aspect of White's ministry, then more people would realize "what a wonderful treasure of spiritual food is given to us in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy."² Her messages are Christ-centered, and Bible-based for the health and spiritual growth of believers.

Ford stated:

Certainly for me it was true I had found life, even Christ's life, through the pages of Ellen White. To read her had brought the conviction of a heavenly Father who was near and who was willing to guide one in all things, despite, and even because of, one's own personal weakness.³

White's writings were never intended to be used as a norm of conduct--that is the work of Scripture--but to instruct believers in the way of rightly living. They are

¹Ibid.

²Spicer, 59.

³Ford, 124-125.

counsels to God's people to bring them back to the living Word of the Lord, to exhort them to grow in their spiritual life, and to encourage them in their spiritual journey.

Local Congregation Nurture

Biblically, God has always worked through local congregations. Local congregations make up the universal church for the purpose of unity of beliefs and mission, but matters of spiritual nurture and church growth are ministries of local churches. Thus, we may conclude that spiritual gifts, including the gift of prophecy, are given for the ministries of local congregations. In Rom 12 Paul suggested that the recipients of the gift of prophecy are those who minister in the local church.

Following Jethro's advice,¹ Moses divided the whole church of Israel into small congregations to be shepherded by elders.² The book of Numbers registers that God granted the gift of prophecy to these elders, seventy in number, for a localized ministry of spiritual nurture. When two of them were prophesying in the camp, Joshua asked Moses to restrain them. Moses replied saying, "Would all the Lord's people were prophets" (Num 11:16-17, 26-29). This incident gives evidence of the importance of the gift of prophecy in a local congregation or among a small group of believers.

¹Exod 18.

²Exod 18:24-25.

1 Sam 10:10 makes mention of a group of prophets who undoubtedly were functioning in local congregational ministry. In several instances the Old Testament presents both a church-wide accepted prophet, like Moses, and other more localized prophets whose names are seldom mentioned. This suggests that while there was a prophet for a wider ministry in terms of a geographic territory, other prophets existed for the local ministry of spiritual nurture. For example, while Elijah's prophecies affected all Israel, other prophets served locally at the altars of the Lord.¹

The same phenomenon is portrayed in the New Testament. The church accepted the apostles as prophets for the church at large, but there were also prophets in the local church of Jerusalem,² Antioch,³ Judea,⁴ and Corinth,⁵ who exercised the prophetic gift only at the local congregational level. In the Gospel of Luke, Anna and Elizabeth are prophetesses whose ministries seem to be exercised only at the local level.⁶

The apostle Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to desire earnestly spiritual gifts, but especially the gift of

¹1 Kgs 19:14.

²Acts 11:27.

³Acts 13:1.

⁴Acts 21:10.

⁵1 Cor 14.

⁶Luke 2:36; 1:41.

prophecy.¹ He expressed the same idea as Moses when he said with hyperbole that he wished all in the church would prophesy.² This suggests that the gift of prophecy is not limited to a very small number of believers.

Paul seems to indicate that the gift of prophecy is mandatory in a local congregation because it is the gift of edification, exhortation, and consolation.³ In other words, the local church needs the gift of prophecy because this is the gift of spiritual nurture, and without nurture the church will die.

Presently, this seems to be the most difficult manifestation of the prophetic gift to accept. It is hard for some Christians to accept that the Holy Spirit can grant the prophetic gift to a local congregation through a local member for a local ministry. However, in the book of Joel it is written:

And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions (Joel 2:28).

This promise of the gift of prophecy is for the end time, not to one but to many. Joel implied the manifestation of this gift at a local level. Naden wrote,

I equally believe that today, as in every time of church history, both men and women are gifted by the

¹1 Cor 14:1.

²1 Cor 14:31.

³1 Cor 14:3, 4.

Holy Spirit to exercise the gift of prophecy/nurture at the local congregational level.¹

Accordingly, the Word of God asserts the continuity of prophecy as a nurturing gift in local congregations. Those who are called to minister God's Word are prophets because the Spirit of the prophets is upon them. It is worth noting that all Paul's gift lists written to local congregations include the gift of prophecy; it could not be otherwise because it is a primary nurture gift for believers.

The gift of prophecy in the local congregation level is basically informative (rather than normative or formative), and can be manifested in any nurture activity such as teaching, preaching, exhorting, reproof, correcting, encouraging, and building up the congregation.

However, the prophetic gift is never granted to replace Scripture. In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus,² at the end of the conversation between the rich man and Abraham, the rich man begged father Abraham to send Lazarus to witness to his brothers--that is, to prophesy. But Abraham replied, "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them" (Luke 16:29). This suggests that God expects that His people seek the universal truth in His Word; then, as necessary, He sends additional local instruction and application.

¹Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 6.

²Luke 16:19-31.

In summary, the three spheres of functioning of the gift of prophecy suggest the preeminence of this gift in the church. The biblical record shows that even when there was a prophet with church-wide acceptance, other prophets were needed for the ministry of spiritual nurture in local congregations. Thus, both the Old and New Testaments make mention of prophets functioning in specific local churches. We may conclude, then, that the gift of prophecy is an ongoing gift at the local church level for the ministry of spiritual nurture.

In conclusion, throughout history the gift of prophecy has been given to God's people to guide them on the path of life. Scriptural evidences indicate that the main purpose of this gift is to provide spiritual nurture for the church. Every prophet has testified of Christ as the source of life.¹ And because Christ is the center of the gift of prophecy's message, its role is to build up the spiritual life of the saints. Therefore, its ongoing presence in local congregations is imperative.

The Bible suggests, however, that in the ministry of spiritual nurture, prophecy and shepherding are in partnership. The prophet and the priest-teacher are presented in a complementary relationship. Therefore, the church accomplishes its ministry of spiritual nurture through the gifts of both prophecy and shepherding.

¹John 5:39.

CHAPTER IV

THE GIFT OF SHEPHERDING: A GIFT OF SPIRITUAL NURTURE

Introduction

The Bible upholds shepherding as a noble vocation with a function rooted in love. It is the only spiritual gift in the Scripture that is a metaphorical portrayal of God's loving-kindness toward humanity.¹ A spiritual shepherd is a channel through whom the Holy Spirit works to meet the numerous needs of human souls. Thus, the image of a shepherd pictures God's compassionate ministry toward mankind.

The role of shepherding seems to be misunderstood by church administrators and even by pastors themselves. Very often the pastoral ministry is understood as a professional executive position. To this end, pastoral training focuses on developing such skills as counseling, church-growth strategies, management, problem solving, and church planning. Seymour observed:

Within the last one hundred years the predominant model of ministry in American life has been that of the professional minister. This model is most clearly

¹Ps 23; John 10.

reflected in the conception of the pastor as pastoral director, one who orchestrates and balances the various functions of ministry (preaching, teaching, administration, social action, and pastoral counseling) within the church.¹

When the pastoral role is seen as a professional ministry, the gap between clergy and laity is widened, and the professional pastor tends not to delegate responsibility to lay members because they do not have equal professional skills. As a result, this may contribute to a lack of participation on the part of laity in the ministries of the church.² In addition, professional pastors can perceive themselves as managers and coordinators of the church, rather than shepherds divinely equipped to accomplish a specific nurturing task in the community of faith.

When the church ignores or does not give priority to the role of pastors, they may be expected to function with multifaceted roles with non-biblical priorities. Thus, the pastor is often required to be an administrator, evangelist, theologian, organizer, corrector, teacher, conciliator, psychologist, and counselor.³ Not only can this spread of competencies bring unrealistic expectations, it can also deprive members of their ministries.

¹Jack L. Seymour, "Teaching as Religious Leadership: Rethinking the Pastoral Role," Quarterly Review 3 (1983): 6-17.

²Ibid.

³H. C. Niles, "The Functions of the Ministry," Caribbean Journal of Religious Studies 1 (April 1982): 17-27.

Most of these roles mentioned above are inherent in specific spiritual gifts. A pastor-leader recognizes that the Holy Spirit has gifted each believer to work in the mission of the church, so the church ministry is not centered in one individual alone, but in the whole congregation working in harmony according to the gifts given to each.

Shepherding Is a Gift

The pastoral ministry is not an academic title that one can obtain. Academic training does not create the pastor; neither does ordination. The Scripture establishes that shepherding is a spiritual gift;¹ a vocation initiated by a gift granted by the Holy Spirit.

"The true minister for God is not self-called."² Even Jesus Himself was called by God to His ministry.³ Paul asserted that he was appointed a minister by God.⁴ Erdman wrote: "One who assumes spiritual oversight in a congregation of Christians should be encouraged and inspired

¹Eph 4:8, 11.

²The Ministerial Association, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Manual for Ministers (Hagerstown, MD: Review & Herald Publishing Assoc., 1976), 9.

³John 6:38.

⁴Col 1:25; 1 Tim 1:12.

by the belief that the office he fills is of divine origin."¹

The pastor is called to work in partnership with God and the members in the ongoing work of redemption, liberation, and recreation.² Therefore, this vocation is greater than any secular career because it is a response "to God's call to partnership."³

According to Scripture, the pastoral ministry is a divine call to serve. "No one takes the honor to himself, but receives it when he is called by God, even as Aaron was" (Heb 5:4). There can only be negative consequences when a person occupies the pastoral office without being called or gifted by God. Unfortunately, the church today is encountering this paradox.⁴ As a result, some pastors are frustrated in their work and their churches are unfulfilled and stagnant. On the other hand, Christian observed that

¹Charles R. Erdman, The Work of the Pastor (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1924), 1.

²James W. Fowler, Faith Development and Pastoral Care, ed. D. S. Browning (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 21.

³Ibid., 32.

⁴C. Dionisio Christian, "Developing and Implementing a Program of Instruction for Church Administrators and Ministers of Antillian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists to Enlarge Their Understanding of the Doctrine of Spiritual Gifts as It Relates to Their Roles and Functions" (D.Min. diss., Andrews University, 1984), 46.

"ministers with the gift of pastoring were found to be very successful in having a happy membership."¹

The terms "laity" and "laymen" are commonly used in contrast to professional ministers or clergy of the church. *Λαϊκός* (laity) is a derivative term of *λαός*, which means "people." The latter is used by the New Testament writers to designate all God's people (*λαός θεοῦ*). Thus, *λαός* constitutes the "royal priesthood" chosen by God to proclaim His virtues. *Κλῆρος*, on the other hand, means "lot," "possession," or "portion."² The body of believers, which comprises the church, is God's *κλῆρος*.³ Therefore, the whole congregation is both *λαϊκός* and *κλῆρος*.

The technical use of the latter term to indicate professional ministers began in the third century. Perhaps the Christian church was influenced by the secular use of these terms. *Κλῆρος* and its Latin equivalent, *ordo*, was a title assigned to Roman magistrates and dignitaries,⁴ and *λαϊκός* (Latin *plebius* or *laicus*) referred to those who were

¹Ibid., 66.

²Matt 27:25; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24; Acts 1:17, 25, 26; 8:21; 26:18; Col. 1:12; 1 Pet 5:3.

³Olsen, 47.

⁴Williston Walker, A History of the Christian Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1918), 82.

not leaders in the community, and later to those who had no clerical or cultic function.

Accordingly, the dichotomy in the church between laity and clergy has no scriptural foundation, it is a man-made division. The New Testament distribution of spiritual gifts makes no distinction between professional clergy and laity; rather it asserts the priesthood of all believers.¹ All believers are called to work in the mission of the church. White wrote: "No church can flourish unless its members are workers."²

The parable of the landowner (Matt 20) illustrates the equality of those who work in the ministries of the church. This parable suggests there can be full-time, part-time, and different degrees of workers. However, all should be treated as ministers and all receive the same wage.

Similarly, the gift of shepherding is not reserved for those who devote all their time to the mission of the church. Rather, it is equally granted to lay persons who may devote only part of their time to a nurturing ministry. Thus, the success of a church depends on the recognition of the shepherding gift in lay people, and their employment as members of a team to nurture the spiritual life of believers.

¹ 1 Pet 2:9.

² Ellen G. White, "A Working Church," Review and Herald, August 23, 1881, 129-130.

The Shepherd Motif

The Greek word ποιμήν, "shepherd," comes from ποιμαίνω and means "to feed a flock."¹ Shepherding was a common occupation in biblical times; the image comes from the rural context where most of the great heroes mentioned in the Bible were shepherds, including Moses and David, and even God is identified in the Old Testament as the Shepherd of Israel.²

In Ps 23 David plays the role of a sheep and God is portrayed as a Shepherd. From the point of view of a proud and happy sheep, he sings the Shepherd's deeds in favor of his sheep. He said, "My Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Ps 23:1). Then, he describes how the Lord provides for his needs and protects him from his enemies, and concludes asserting, "Surely goodness and loving-kindness will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Ps 23:6).

God delegated the function of shepherding to the leaders of Israel.³ Their responsibilities included: leading,⁴ feeding,⁵ keeping the flock from scattering,⁵ and

¹James M. Hoppin, Pastoral Theology (New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1901), 50.

²Ezek 34:11-31.

³2 Sam 7:7.

⁴Num 27:17; 2 Sam 5:2; Ps 78:71-72.

⁵Jer 3:15; Ezek 34:2, 23.

protecting.¹ However, they failed in their mission. Ezekiel describes the shepherds of Israel as unfaithful. Therefore, God, the Chief-Shepherd, addressed the undershepherds saying that they fed themselves and left the flock hungry; they ate the fat sheep and clothed themselves with the wool; they did not heal the sick ones, neither bound up the broken bones. The shepherds did not care to bring back the scattered sheep, nor did they seek for the lost, and they ruled over the flock with severity.²

Israel went into captivity because its shepherds failed to accomplish their duty of shepherding. God said: "My flock wandered through all the mountains and on every high hill, and My flock was scattered over all the surface of the earth; and there was no one to search or seek for them" (Ezek 34:6).³ Thus, the Lord called Cyrus, His faithful shepherd, to bring back His flock from captivity.⁴ Finally, He himself became the Shepherd to gather, care, and feed His flock.⁵

¹Jer 10:21; Zech 10:2-3; 11:16; Nah 3:18.

²Zech 11:17; Isa 56:11; Ps 23:4-5.

³Ezek 34:1-6.

⁴See also Jer 50:6.

⁵Isa 44:28.

⁶Ezek 34:11-19.

In the New Testament, Jesus applied the metaphor of the shepherd to Himself. He portrayed Himself as the Good Shepherd¹ in contrast with hirelings, thieves, and robbers.²

The good Shepherd motif, in John 10, must be seen against the background of the blind man of John chap. 9. This poor man, who belonged to the flock, was as a sheep without a caring pastor. He had to beg every day because no one cared for him.³ However, Jesus, the Good Shepherd, came to meet the needs of people like this man.⁴

The Pharisees, represented as hirelings, instead of rejoicing with him for the miracle that restored his sight, cast him out of the church.⁵ But Jesus found him (εὕρων αὐτόν)⁶ and brought him into the true flock.⁷

This incident portrays a striking contrast between Jesus' and the Pharisees' ministry. The latter did not even know the blind man, though he was a member of their congregation. But Jesus knows each one of His sheep by

¹John 10:11.

²R. Bultmann, The Gospel of John, trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 359.

³John 9:8.

⁴John 9:4.

⁵John 9:34.

⁶John 9:35.

⁷C. K. Barrett, The Gospel According to St. John, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955), 367.

name, and His sheep know Him.¹ A Palestinian shepherd said "that he could tell each one of his sheep by feeling its face, even if he were blindfolded."² Shepherding implies intimacy, care, and a loving-kindness relationship between the shepherd and the sheep. Miles observed:

Pastors should have hearts that can be moved, hearts that love people, that pity rather than scorn them in their all-too-human problems. There are pastors who love projects and programs, but have no love for people. Others love study yet have little love for people. Such individuals have their place in life, but they should not be pastors.³

By using the image of the shepherd, Jesus depicts the kind of affinity that the pastor should have with the flock. The hireling has no concerns for the sheep. He sees the wolf coming and leaves them and flees.⁴ Not so the good shepherd; he protects his sheep even when it could mean his own death.⁵

The center of the Good Shepherd motif is the gift of abundant life to the sheep,⁶ which is reminiscent of Ps 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." David asserted

¹John 10:3.

²Lesli D. Weatherhead, A Shepherd Remembers (New York: Abingdon Press, 1938), 23, 24.

³Norman Miles, "The Minister as a Pastor," in Adventist Minister, ed. C. Raymond Holmes and Douglas R. Kilcher (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1991), 70.

⁴John 10:12, 13.

⁵John 10:11.

⁶John 10:10.

that he had everything; he lived life abundantly. Therefore, he said: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." Jesus came to make reality the dwelling in the house of the Lord.

Thus, His ministry was life-centered. He came to meet the needs and to restore the souls of His people. Therefore, when He ascended to heaven, He gave the gift of shepherding to the church in order that His ministry, centered in the restoration of souls, could continue. Consequently, it is the ministry of God as a Shepherd that defines the role of the pastor in the church.

The Shepherd's Role

Richards rejected the idea that portrays the pastor as "the corporate executive who organizes the church and its members to accomplish a task."¹ Instead, he suggested the idea of the pastor as "the servant-leader."² According to Richards, the pastor is a leader "among" disciples not "over" those whom he leads; he ranks all other persons at the same level. Therefore, there is no room for "kingly power." His ministry is aimed at building up and transforming the body of believers. The servant-leader does not command; he sets an example for others to follow.³

¹Richards, Christian Education, 139.

²Ibid., 129-135.

³Ibid.

When the mother of James and John asked Jesus for the "left and right-hand" positions in His kingdom, the Lord used the opportunity to give a lecture about Christian leadership. He called His disciples and said:

You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matt 20:25-28).

Jesus acknowledged here the secular world's model of leadership. He did not condemn it unilaterally; but He did say that it was wrong in the church. "It is not so among you"; because the model for pastoral leadership is Jesus' ministry. His was a ministry of service. Similarly, the pastor's ministry must be reminiscent of the Lord's ministry. "He is an apostle of redemption and reconciliation, a practitioner of the art of communion with God."¹ Kilcher wrote:

The responsibility of the pastoral leadership is to establish a climate where both the congregation as a group and individual members can grow spiritually so that when Christ speaks, the congregation will be healthy and ready to respond to a dying world.²

Accordingly, the shepherd is gifted to foster a climate of spiritual growth in the congregation. He is called to

¹Wayne E. Oates, The Christian Pastor (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1952), 26, 28.

²Douglas R. Kilcher, "The Minister as an Equipper," in The Adventist Minister, ed. C. R. Holmes and D. R. Kilcher (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1991), 101.

participate in the divine process of transformation of lives. His business is to feed and care for souls. His mission is person-centered and not a statistical objective.¹ He is a minister of reconciliation.² As a shepherd, he is concerned with a genuine *μετάνοια* and the development of faith in the individual.

People who experience the change from the domain of sin to the kingdom of grace are in a time of transition and transformation. They need pastoral participation to guide them in the changes taking place in their relationship with God, the church, and the outside world. Hence the pastor works in partnership with God. Fowler stated:

Partnership with God's work of ongoing creation indeed means many things. Foundationally it means participation in the procreative and nurturing processes. It means contributing to the nurture of persons toward wholeness and richness of contribution to the common good.³

The partnership concept points to the fact that the pastor's work is not his own. He was called to enter the ministry of redemption established in eternity. Therefore, the shepherd's role cannot be determined by him or by the church, but by God Himself. Valenzuela rightly pointed out that "ministers should take their responsibilities and

¹Franklin M. Segler, "A New Understanding of Pastoral Care," Southwestern Journal of Theology 3 (1960): 53-60.

²2 Cor 5:18-20.

³Fowler, 46.

duties mainly from the Bible, where the will of the one who chose them is clearly expressed."¹

Anderson asserted that the ministry of the church is God's ministry. Therefore, it "is determined and set forth by God's own ministry of revelation and reconciliation in the world."² Similarly, Miles saw no natural characteristics that might make a pastor of an individual.³ The pastoral office is a divine vocation granted through a gift to individuals to accomplish a divinely assigned ministry.

The pastoral role might best be described as an integration of the aspects of the shepherd, priest, and prophet. As a shepherd, the pastor cares and feeds the flock; as a priest, the pastor cures the soul applying the blood flowing from Calvary, and as a prophet, the pastor is a symbol of God of whom he is an ambassador,⁴ and speaks the Word of the Lord.

Accordingly, the essence of the shepherd's role is the ministry of spiritual nurture. This ministry may be seen as

¹Alfonso Valenzuela, "The Minister's Personal and Family Life" (D.Min. diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1989), 9.

²Ray S. Anderson, "A Theology for Ministry," in Theological Foundations for Ministry, ed. R. S. Anderson (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1979), 7.

³Miles, 72.

⁴2 Cor 5:20.

a fourfold function: leading, equipping, protecting, and feeding.

The Shepherd's Leading Ministry

The presence of sin mandates the need of spiritual leadership. Snodgrass declared: "The church can never go forward without effective leaders, leaders cannot be truly effective unless they take the role of the servant."¹

Ezekiel points out that Israel was scattered for lack of a shepherd-leader.² There were shepherds in Israel prior to the exile, but they did not lead the people; they used force and coercion to lord it over them.³ The shepherd's leadership is always a role, not a status, exercised among equals.⁴

The condition of the Christian church today reveals that there is a crisis in its leadership. A crisis which, in a sense, is related to authority. On the one hand, people do not have as high a respect as they once did for the pastoral office; in many instances pastors are seen as "hired" people whose task is assigned by the church who

¹Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Your Slaves--on Account of Jesus," in Servant Leadership, vol. 1, ed. James R. Hawkinson and R. K. Johnston (Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1993), 7.

²Ezek 34:5.

³Ezek 34:4.

⁴Benjamin Schoun, "CHMN527 Church Leadership and Administration," class notes, Summer 1992.

hired them. There are even those who "question whether ordained ministers are necessary any longer and suggest that the church would be in a healthier condition without them."¹ This lay disdain for clergy is a direct result of a misunderstanding of the nature of the pastoral mission.

On the other hand, a clerical domination of the laity exists.² Some ministers exercise an authoritarian model of leadership. Their approach to leadership exhibits elements of coercion and manipulation. White wrote:

The high-handed power that has been developed, as though position has made men gods, makes me afraid, and ought to cause fear. It is a curse wherever and by whomsoever it is exercised. This lording it over God's heritage will create such a disgust of man's jurisdiction that a state of insubordination will result. The people are learning that men in high positions of responsibility cannot be trusted to mold and fashion other men's minds and characters. The result will be a loss of confidence even in the management of faithful men.³

It is unnatural for one person to rule over others because all are equal;⁴ and, because of mankind's sinful nature, we are not qualified to rule our fellows.

The concept of a leader could suggest the idea of greatness, or ruler. There are even those who believe that

¹John Stott, The Contemporary Christian (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 272.

²Ibid.

³White, Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, 361.

⁴White, The Acts of the Apostles, 238.

the pastor has power and authority over the church.¹ However, as mentioned above, in the context of the Christian church, the leader is a servant. This concept of servanthood appears often in the New Testament. The Gospels inform us that on six occasions Jesus rejected the world's concept of greatness and portrayed the idea of servanthood as the ideal style of leadership.² Jesus Himself set the example.³ His life and ministry constitute a pattern for His followers.⁴ Snodgrass believed that

servant-leadership is merely the application of the dynamic of the gospel to the task of leadership. If Christian leaders cannot model servanthood, they have little right to ask others to serve. If the church cannot recover the practice of servanthood, it has no future and does not deserve one.⁵

Jesus mandates that His church be led by servants, and the servant-leader leads by modeling and identification.⁶ He does not exercise power or authority directing others; he is a model to believers. Paul wrote: "Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith" (Heb 13:7). Padovano stated:

¹Stott, 273, 287.

²Matt 20:20-28; 23:8-11; Mark 9:35; 10:35-45; Luke 9:48; 22:24-27.

³John 13:3-15.

⁴Snodgrass, 9.

⁵Ibid., 10.

⁶Richards, Christian Education, 134.

If a leader understands the nature of the Church and the nature of the people, the character of Christ and the character of the New Testament; if the leader is sensitive to love and unafraid of faith, trusting about the future and confident with the present, such a leader will need to know no techniques in order to succeed. Every leader who cares about people is taught by them how to become the leader they need.¹

It is well-known that a sheep recognizes and follows its shepherd. Even if it intermingles around a pool of water with another flock's sheep, when the shepherd leaves, it follows him,² because a good shepherd does not drive, he leads his flock. According to John the good shepherd leads the sheep by walking in front of them.

Seymour described the pastor as a person who "guides others in their growth in faith--to experience, interpret, understand, and respond to the meaning of [the] Christian story for them to live,"³ because his ministry is a reminiscence of Jesus' ministry.

Thus, pastoral leadership is rooted in the biblical tradition, Jesus is the τύπος, or "a model or pattern that impresses [Himself] on the observer."⁴ Stott argued that

¹Anthony A. Padovano, "Leadership and Authority," New Catholic World 223-224 (July/August 1980): 222-224.

²W. Vanhetloo, "Pastor to Pastor," Calvary Baptist Theology Journal 6 (January 1990): 149-153.

³Seymour, 15.

⁴Linda L. Belleville, "Male and Female Leadership Roles in the New Testament," in Servant Leadership, 22.

"all Christian ministry is derived from Christ."¹
 Therefore, the pastor-leader follows Jesus' example. He has an integrated and wholistic approach to individual personal development, and in leading others, the shepherd is flexible, with "an attitude of service, caring, and willingness to share power and responsibility."²

The Shepherd's Equipping Ministry

Paul mentioned that one of the purposes of the gift of shepherd-teacher is to equip the saints for the work of service;³ and Peter suggested that each believer has a ministry.⁴ The New Testament seems to indicate the involvement of the whole body of believers working as a team in the distinct ministries of the church.⁵ George and Logan wrote:

Team leadership has a crucial role in the church. Because no pastor or leader can work effectively in every area of ministry, good leadership requires the support and help of a team.⁵

However, if we undertake a study to find out the percentage of church members actively involved in

¹Stott, Contemporary Christian, 280.

²Doohan, 14.

³Eph 4:12.

⁴1 Pet 2:9.

⁵Luke 10:1-12.

⁶Carl F. George and Robert E. Logan, Leading & Managing Your Church (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1987), 98.

accomplishing the church's mission, we would probably find a very low percentage of involvement. In fact, Kilcher observed that "in many churches 20 percent of the members are doing 80 percent of the work."¹ This lack of participation could be due to a "one man show" (a pastor-centered church), the pastor's failure to equip the body, and/or a lack of motivation. Equipping and motivating have a direct relationship with nurturing.

Church growth is a very important issue in today's ecclesiology. Scholars have developed numerous strategies to transform small churches into large churches. However, the biblical approach to church growth is not based on human strategies; it is based on spiritual gifts. The epistle to the Corinthians asserts that the Holy Spirit granted spiritual gifts to all believers in the church,² which means that they have been divinely equipped for the work of the church. Hebrews states that God Himself equips the believers to work in that which is important to Him.³

The growth of the church depends on the spiritual health of the body of believers. People come to the church because of their spiritual needs. When those needs are met, it will result in a healthy church. And consequently, the church will accomplish its divine mission.

¹Kilcher, 99.

²1 Cor 12:7, 11.

³Heb 13:21, 22.

In other words, before an individual enters into ministry through spiritual gifts, there must be a spiritual preparation because only one who lives the Gospel can effectively preach the Gospel, and only a person on the road to holiness can properly represent a holy God. Therefore, when believers are correctly nurtured, they will be motivated and equipped by the Holy Spirit.

Notwithstanding, this does not mean that there is no need for teaching. Equipping presupposes a process of teaching. George and Logan suggested there are four steps in the process of equipping disciples:

- a. I do, you watch (modeling and observation).
- b. I do, you help (modeling and participation).
- c. You do, I help (assisting and evaluation).
- d. You do, I watch (encouragement).¹

Many believers do not get involved in the mission of the church because they do not know how to accomplish a given task. They lack experience in church business, and in many cases, they are not aware of their spiritual gifts. The wise pastor-leader multiplies himself by affirming in believers their spiritual gifts and equipping them with the experience that he has. Luke declares that a well-trained disciple will be like his teacher.² Such an education includes modeling. Modeling is the very essence of the process of equipping the believers.

¹George and Logan, 110.

²Luke 6:40.

The Shepherd's Protecting Ministry

The shepherd's task includes the protection of the sheep because they are defenseless. In a pictorial way, David described his role of protection by saying: "When a lion or a bear came and took a lamb from the flock, I went out after him and attacked him, and rescued it from his mouth; and when he rose up against me, I seized him by his beard and struck him and killed him" (1 Sam 17:34-36). However, the hireling, Jesus said, sees the wolf coming and leaves the flock without protection.¹

The Psalmist said: "I fear no evil; for Thou art with me" (Ps 23:4). Peter asserted that Jesus, the Shepherd, is the guardian of our souls,² and Heb 13:17 describes the pastor-leader as one who is watching over the believers' souls. In his farewell speech, Paul addressed the elders of the church at Ephesus, saying:

Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseer, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them (Acts 20:28-30).

This ministry of protection cannot be accomplished from a distance. He must be "with" the sheep in order to protect them. Consequently, we suggest that it is by visiting the

¹John 10:12-13.

²1 Pet 2:25.

family or individual members of the church that a pastor is best able to accomplish his ministry of protecting the flock. In fact, the essence of shepherding is personal acquaintance.

Some pastors believe that pastoral visitation is a phenomenon of the past.¹ Jones argued, however, that the idea of home visitation is biblical.² The Scripture portrays God visiting His people.³ The New Testament described Jesus visiting people in their homes.⁴ White wrote:

Our Saviour went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the disconsolate. He took the little children in His arms and blessed them and spoke words of hope and comfort to the weary mothers.⁵

It was the practice of the early church to visit every day, from house to house, teaching the way of salvation;⁶ some of the most beautiful teachings of Jesus came as a result of personal contact with one individual.⁷

¹R. Clifford Jones, "Pastoral Visitation: In Person or by . . . ?" Ministry, August 1994, 7-9.

²Ibid.

³Gen 3:8, 9; 18:1-16; Exod 3:6-10.

⁴Mark 1:29-34; 5:35-43; Luke 19:5; John 11.

⁵White, Gospel Workers, 188.

⁶Acts 5:42.

⁷See John 3; 4; 9 and 10.

Perhaps the idea of home visitation is unpopular today among most ministers because there seems to be an inclination to play the role of C.E.O. in the church. This could be the reason why the gap between ministers and laity has widened. Jones said:

To be effective, pastors cannot afford to remain apart from their members. We must come down from our ivory towers, our stations of apartness, and meet with our people where they are. Then our ministry will become more vibrant and successful.¹

White declared:

When a minister has presented the gospel message from the pulpit, his work is only begun. There is personal work for him to do. He should visit the people in their homes, talking and praying with them in earnestness and humility. There are families who will never be reached by the truths of God's word unless the stewards of His grace enter their homes and point them to the higher way.²

When the pastor talks with his parishioners, he has the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with them--to know their physical, mental, and spiritual needs; their struggles, fears, hopes, and beliefs.

It is this knowledge that enables the pastor to develop a strategic ministry to protect the body of believers by meeting their needs. Furthermore, his preaching and teaching will have a relevant application in the congregation. Thus, he will exert a direct influence upon the spiritual life of the believers, and, to some important

¹Jones, 8.

²White, Gospel Workers, 187.

degree, he will be able to say, I know my sheep and my sheep know me.¹

The Shepherd's Feeding Ministry

The Psalmist asserted that the Word of the Lord is sweeter than the honey that drips from the honeycomb,² and Jeremiah said that he found the words of the Lord and he ate them, and God's words became for him the joy and delight of his heart.³ The Pharisees studied the Scriptures because they knew that in them they could find eternal life.⁴

John depicts Jesus as the λόγος (Word). Some scholars suggest that the Johannine concept of λόγος was derived from the usage in the Targums of the Aramaic word *memra*.⁵ *Memra* was used to translate the Hebrew word מִבְּרַךְ, "the Word of the Lord." In the Targums, *memra*, "the Lord's Word," plays an active role in creating and saving. It personifies the divine presence with men.⁶ So Jesus is λόγος because of His

¹John 10:14.

²Ps 19:10.

³Jer 15:16.

⁴John 5:39.

⁵Robert Hayward, "The *Memra* of YHWH and the Development of Its Use in the Targums Neofiti I," Journal of Jewish Studies 25 (Feb. 1975): 412-418.

⁶Ibid.

ministry of nurturing, saving, and recreating, which is the function of the active Word of God.

Jesus also depicted Himself as "the bread of life"¹ who satisfies both the hungry and the thirsty.² He said:

He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life. . . . For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks my blood abides in Me, and I in him (John 6:54-56).

This assertion conveys the idea that in Jesus there is complete satisfaction. It goes back to Ps 23, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." He is the bread that came from heaven and satisfies the ultimate needs of humanity.

Jesus made it clear to Satan that the Word is the source of life.³ According to Paul, the Word (the Gospel) "is the power of God for salvation" (Rom 1:16), and Peter stated: "For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God" (Pet 1:23). Luther wrote:

I put forward God's word; I preached and wrote-- this was all I did. And yet while I was asleep, . . . the word that I had preached overthrew popery, so that neither prince nor emperor has done it so much harm. And yet I did nothing; the word alone did all.⁴

¹John 6:35, 48.

²John 6:35.

³Matt 4:4.

⁴Martin Luther, quoted in White, The Great Controversy, 190.

The Word provides the nourishment for nurturing.

Therefore, the pastor needs to handle the Word correctly.¹

Paul said:

I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season (2 Tim 4:1-2).

After Jesus finished His earthly ministry, He approached Peter, asking him, "Do you love me?" (John 21:16, translation mine). The Greek word employed here for love is ἀγαπᾶς from ἀγάπη, which means to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, and mind.² Only this kind of love toward the Lord qualifies an individual to be a shepherd. Therefore, when Peter asserted his love for the Lord, Jesus charged him with the responsibility of feeding and shepherding the lambs and the sheep.³ Lambs and sheep constitute the whole flock. The pastoral ministry of feeding has no room for favoritism. Every member of the congregation has to be nourished appropriately.

Accordingly, we may conclude that the goal of the pastor's ministry is to provide spiritual nurture for the congregation. He is the teacher of the Word. The Word, which has the power to build,⁴ should flow through him to

¹2 Tim 2:15.

²Deut 6:5.

³John 21:15-17.

⁴Acts 20:32.

the congregation. The Lord asks, "Should not the shepherds feed the flock?" (Ezek 34:2).

The ministry of feeding, or spiritual nurture, cannot be achieved by preaching alone. Preaching stands alongside teaching. Paul said that he was appointed preacher, apostle, and teacher,¹ and he asked Timothy to preach and teach.² Titus also was admonished to be an example in deeds and teaching.³ Thus, the Christian minister is one who is able to teach.⁴

Although pastors tend to rate their role as Christian educators as a low priority,⁵ the majority of scholars agree that the gift of shepherding, in Eph 4:11, is a compound gift, that of pastor-teacher. It is so because a pastor-teacher is divinely equipped to nourish the flock with the Word, so that it may grow and mature spiritually. The shepherd has the responsibility "of teaching faith in such a way that persons can live vital Christian lives and a community of faith can be a vital presence in human society."⁶ Marshall observed that "a major emphasis in the

¹2 Tim 1:11.

²1 Tim 5:17, 4:11, 13.

³Titus 2:7.

⁴2 Tim 2:24.

⁵Seymour, 7.

⁶Ibid., 6.

New Testament gathering of Christians lies on teaching and instruction in the faith as a means of spiritual nurture."¹

The mission of the Old Testament church was one of teaching.² Jesus came from God as a Teacher,³ and the great commission to the church cannot be accomplished without the ministry of teaching.⁴ Miller commented: "The great commission is that we should teach all nations. The minister is to teach and . . . to feed and provide for the Lord's family. He is to instruct the people."⁵

Hosea suggests that Israel was destroyed for lack of knowledge because the priests forgot the Word of the Lord and did not teach the people.⁶ Therefore, in the New Testament stage, the church was again entrusted with the mission of feeding the flock through the gift of shepherding-teaching; it is to build up the body of Christ, to reach spiritual maturity, so that when the Lord comes He

¹I. H. Marshall, "Ministry," in Ministry in the Local Church, ed. Howard Belben (Westminster, London: Epworth Press, 1986), 22.

²Deut 6:6-7.

³John 3:2.

⁴Matt 28:19-20.

⁵Randolph C. Miller, Christian Nurture and the Church (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), 32.

⁶Hos 4:6.

might present to Himself a glorious church, having no spot or wrinkle, but a holy and blameless people.¹

In conclusion, a pastor's effectiveness is determined by his capacity to lead people to understand God's will for a particular congregation in terms of mission, nurture, and worship. He is not called to "lord it over," or exercise authority over, the church. His mission is to nurture the flock of God. He avoids the attraction of power and prestige because he is a servant-leader of God's people. Colson wrote:

The lure of power can separate the most resolute of Christians from the true nature of Christian leadership, which is service to others. It's difficult to stand on a pedestal and wash the feet of those below. Power has been one of Satan's most effective tools from the beginning, perhaps because he lusts for it so himself.²

Since the status of pastors in society has declined, there could be a temptation to compensate for it by pursuing power and honor in the church.³ However, what makes the pastor's leadership great is not authority, but humility; it is not rulership, but servitude;⁴ and "the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor 10:1).

¹Eph 4:11-13; 5:27.

²Charles W. Colson, Kingdoms in Conflict (Grand Rapids: William Morrow-Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 272.

³Stott, The Contemporary Christian, 291.

⁴Ibid.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Summary

The Scripture asserts that God created human beings in His image and likeness. Although it does not give all the details of God's plan for humanity, the Bible suggests that the Lord intended to maintain an intimate relationship with the human family. However, sin interrupted the God-human relationship and destroyed God's original plan.

The Scripture also talks about God's loving-kindness toward humanity and His soteriological plan to save the human race. Through the redemption of Jesus Christ, God has made provision for a complete restoration of the human family.

Because of the entrance of sin into the world, God created the church in order to achieve His eternal purpose. Through the church He intends to undo the effect of sin in human beings by drawing people into a loving relationship with Him and transforming them into His likeness. Therefore, the mission of the church is broader than the proclamation of the Gospel. Its mission includes a ministry of reconciliation and of spiritual nurture. Thus, God

gifted the church with spiritual gifts to enable it to accomplish His purpose.

In chapter 2, the biblical foundation for the church as a nurturing entity was discussed. It was asserted that the origin of the church goes back to the encounter between God and Adam and Eve shortly after the fall when God established the parameters to save humankind.

The Old Testament describes the original church in the context of the family. Through the family church, God intended to provide spiritual nurture that facilitated the development of a godly character in those who pursued redemption. Parents were responsible for the religious education of their children and the transmission of religious heritage. Abraham became a model of the characteristics of a nurturing father.

It seems that the family church that prevailed through the Patriarchal age was the pattern God desired His children to follow through the ages. However, years of slavery in Egypt, extended contact with heathenism, and the negligence of the fathers in the religious education of their children created the need for the establishment of an assembly with a sanctuary. Thus, at Sinai this assembly emerged with the purpose of making a holy nation through a ministry of spiritual nurture. In the מִצֵּיט God laid the foundation for this process of nurture through intensive non-formal teaching.

Spiritual nurture was one of the chief responsibilities of the priesthood. The priests were charged with teaching God's ordinances to Israel and pointing out the difference between the holy and the profane.

However, not only were the priests the means of the religious education, every aspect of the Jewish economy was intended to be a spiritual pedagogue. Jewish festivals were designed to lead the people to find joy and the beauty of holiness, the sanctuary was an important element in teaching the concept of holiness, and the synagogue emphasized the importance of knowing the Word of the Lord.

Thus, the biblical record shows that the main task of the Old Testament church, both the family church and the assembly church, was spiritual nurture of the people.

This study maintains that there is continuity between the Christian community and the community of Israel. Jesus did not come to organize a new church within or outside of Israel. He came to His people, and those who accepted Him became the true Israel. Christianity is a continuation of the Old Testament church, the people of God in the setting of the accomplishment of the purpose of the substitutionary death of the Messiah.

A continuation implies that the mission and ministry of the Old Testament church are the mission and ministry of the Christian church. As the former was commissioned to prepare

a people for the coming of Jesus, the latter also has to prepare a people for the coming of Jesus.

In Pauline theology, the human body is a metaphor of the nature of the church. As the body has many members, so the church has many members--each one of them with a specific place and function, and all working together in harmony for the well-being of the body.

Further, Paul asserted that each member of the church was gifted by the Holy Spirit to build the spiritual body. Consequently, the church is a living spiritual organism, united in Christ, indwelt and gifted by the Spirit to build up each individual member to be presented at the end--as a whole--holy and blameless to the glory of God.

The church has a mission to accomplish in this world. Traditionally the Seventh-day Adventist Church has interpreted this mission in terms of a world wide proclamation of the Gospel. However, since the church was commissioned to make disciples, its mission is not limited to or primarily proclamation; it includes the dynamic ministry of spiritual nurture for all its members during the entire life span.

It was the mission of the incarnate Lord that laid the foundation for the ministry of the church. Jesus' mission was to restore in man the image of his Maker. Similarly, the work of the church is to make man whole; to restore the inner spiritual being and reflect Christ-likeness.

Since man is a developmental creature, he can be guided to develop the noble virtues implanted by the Creator. And since through redemption God intends to restore man to his original state, the ministry of spiritual nurture in the church is a necessity. The church is called to deal with the deepest yearning of people's feelings and guide them to the source of satisfaction in life.

The church is more than a means to accomplish the divine mission of proclaiming the Gospel to all nations; it is, in submission to Christ, the agent of God to guide and foster the process of transformation in believers. Therefore, God gifted the church with specific spiritual gifts to build up the body of Christ until each believer reflects His likeness.

This study focused on the gifts of prophecy and shepherding as the two primary gifts granted to the church to accomplish its ministry of spiritual nurture to prepare a people for the second coming of our Lord.

The gift of prophecy has been the means of God to communicate His will to His people since the fall. The biblical record tells of a continual communication between God and His people. Those who have been chosen to be channels of God's revelation are said to have the "gift of prophecy," and are called "prophets." Since the beginning, the church has always been guided by the gift of prophecy. It is a perpetual gift in the body of Christ because it is

one of the main gifts of spiritual nurture. This gift enables a member of the Christian church to receive, understand, and communicate God's revelation to His people.

Despite the denial by some scholars that God encounters His people through the prophets, the fact is that the prophets consistently testified that they uttered the words of the Lord. Therefore, Paul could say "All scripture is inspired by God" (2 Tim 3:16). Peter declared, "For no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God" (2 Pet 1:20-21). Thus, the origin of prophecy lies in God. The prophets did not speak on their own initiative. They always point to God as the source of their message.

Throughout the history of Christian thought, there has been an ongoing debate about the meaning of revelation and inspiration. As a result, several theories have been developed to explain the phenomenon of God's communication with humanity. This study suggested that revelation is an act of God by which He makes Himself known to His children, and inspiration is the process of writing the revelation. Thus, inspiration implies the influence that the Holy Spirit exerted on the prophets so that they might write down the authentic message they received from God.

Throughout the Scripture the gift of prophecy is presented having a threefold purpose:

1. It communicates God's will to His people. Thus, the prophet is God's spokesperson who speaks about God's love and will.

2. It nurtures the church. Paul understood the gift of prophecy as a means of building up the congregation. Therefore, "one who prophesies edifies the church" (1 Cor 14:4). The prophetic gift fosters the holy and blameless character of the church. The nurture power of this gift is based on the fact that the word uttered is a living and active word coming from a living God.

3. Occasionally the gift of prophecy is employed to foretell future events. Amos says that the Lord does nothing without revealing His secrets to His prophets.¹ Although foretelling of future events is of secondary concern in the exercise of the gift of prophecy, God decided not to leave His people in darkness about the future. Thus, He protects His people from Satan's destructive devices by speaking of his wiles to lure believers.

Through the history of God's people, the gift of prophecy has functioned in three spheres. The Bible makes mention of many prophets. However, God selected the writings of those He wished to constitute the Holy Scripture. This corpus of writings became the normative canon of the church for exhortation, correction, reproof, teaching, and a general view of the eschaton. Thus, this

¹Amos 3:7.

study saw the Bible functioning in this historic sphere because it transcends time and has a universal application.

Many other prophets exerted a great influence in building up the church, even though they were not part of the biblical canon. Their ministry was limited to a specific period, which in this study is called a "church period." Thus, Noah, Isaac, and Jacob were prophets during the family-church period. Aaron and Mariam prophesied in time of the Exodus; Deborah, Gideon, and Samson had the prophetic gift during periods of the Judges; and Nathan, Gad, and Micaiah were prophets during the monarchical period. All these prophets were called by God to exercise a ministry for the church at large during a specific period of time, not for all time, as was the case of the biblical writers. Compared with the Bible's normative witness, they can be described as "lesser lights."

Probably no other denomination in modern times has emphasized the gift of prophecy more than the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It holds that this gift was manifested in the life and ministry of Ellen G. White. This belief has prompted questions and criticism from both inside and outside of the church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has consistently held that White's writings are not another Bible; neither are they an addition to Scripture. Nor does the church contend for universal applications of her counsels outside the

denomination. However, it claims the same phenomenon of revelation and inspiration for her ministry as is the case with the Bible writers. Even White herself claimed to depend on the Holy Spirit to receive and write her visions. Nevertheless, she emphasized that her testimonies were not intended to take the place of the Bible, but to bring people back to the Bible, which is so often neglected. She acknowledged that in relation to the Scripture her writings represent a lesser light.

In this study, White's sphere of functioning is classified as being for a specific church period. She is a prophet in the period of time described in Rev 3 under the symbol of Laodicea, or the end-time. She is the prophet of Sabbatarian Adventists. Her writings are seen as constituting a formative role. It was not her work to generate norm, rules, and prohibitions, but simply to offer nurture from the Lord. God did not call her to judge or condemn, but to build His church.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has rarely emphasized, as it should, the primary role of White's writings as a means of spiritual nurture. But in reality, this is the essence of her ministry. The central motif that flows as a stream throughout her writings is Christ of the cross and the cross of Christ as the solution for sin. No other person has contributed more to Adventist piety and spirituality than she has.

If the church were to emphasize more her ministry of spiritual nurture, people would be led to realize "what a wonderful treasure of spiritual food is given to us in the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy."

Furthermore, this study also suggested that there will always be believers to whom is granted the gift of prophecy to exercise a ministry exclusively in the sphere of the local congregation. It seems hard for some to accept that the Holy Spirit can grant the prophetic gift to a local congregation for such a local ministry. However, there is ample scriptural evidence that supports the gift of prophecy just for a local ministry. Even for the end-time, the manifestation of this gift is described at a local congregation level.¹

Paul's lists of spiritual gifts for local congregations always include the gift of prophecy because it is the primary nurture gift. Therefore, it is indispensable for the local church. We may conclude, then, that the gift of prophecy is an ongoing gift at the local church level for the ministry of spiritual nurture.

Moreover, this study suggested that the mission of spiritual nurture is not accomplished by the gift of prophecy alone. The Bible indicates that in the ministry of spiritual nurture, the gift of prophecy is combined with the gift of shepherding.

¹Joel 2:28.

In the Bible, shepherding is a noble vocation with function related to love. It is the only spiritual gift that describes God's loving-kindness toward humanity in the Scripture. The image of the shepherd depicts what the incarnate God came to do.

The spiritual shepherd is the channel through whom the Holy Spirit works to meet the numerous needs of human souls. However, the role of shepherding seems to be misunderstood in the modern church. On one hand, pastoral ministry is understood as a professional executive position. On the other, there is a tendency to require the pastor to be primarily an evangelist.

We do not deny that the pastor may have a cluster of spiritual gifts including shepherding and evangelism. However, the Bible suggests that the shepherd has the primary role of caring and feeding. In the Old Testament, God is the Shepherd who cares and feeds the flock, and the same idea is presented in the New Testament; Jesus is the Good Shepherd who cares and gives life abundantly to His sheep. This ministry is portrayed in contrast with hirelings, thieves, and robbers.

It is the ministry of God as a Shepherd that determines the role of the pastor in the local church. In other words, the model for pastoral leadership is Jesus' ministry. The shepherd is called to work in partnership with God in the ongoing work of redemption, liberation, and recreation.

Thus, the essence of the shepherd's role is the ministry of spiritual nurture. This ministry may be seen as a fourfold function: feeding, leading, protecting (caring), and equipping.

When Jesus finished His earthly ministry, He approached Peter, asking him to feed and shepherd His lambs and sheep.¹ Thus, the pastor, who also is a teacher, has the responsibility to nourish the flock with the Word, so it may mature spiritually.

Because of the presence of sin, people need to be led. Therefore, leadership is part of the pastor's ministry. However, the shepherd's leadership is always a role, not a status, that is exercised among equals. Thus, the pastor does not exercise power or authority over others; he leads by modeling and identification.

Another important element of the pastor's ministry is the protection of the flock. Heb 13:17 describes the pastor-leader as one who is watching over souls, and Paul advised the elders of the church at Ephesus to be on guard for all the flock.²

The ministry of protecting is accomplished when the pastor is "with" the sheep. Therefore, it is by visiting families and individual members of the church that the pastor protects the flock. When the pastor talks with his

¹John 21:15-17.

²Acts 20:28-30.

parishioners he has the opportunity to develop a personal relationship with them--to know their physical, mental and spiritual needs, and their struggles, fears, hopes, and beliefs. It is this knowledge that helps the pastor to develop a strategic ministry, oriented to protect the body of believers by meeting their needs.

Finally, the pastoral role includes a ministry of equipping. The mission of the church is accomplished by the whole body of believers. Many members do not participate in this mission because they do not know how to accomplish a given task. They lack experience in church business, and in many cases, they are not aware of their spiritual gifts. The pastor-leader multiplies himself by affirming in believers their spiritual gifts and equipping them with the experience that he has. Luke 6:40 declares that a well-trained disciple will be like his teacher. Such an education includes a process of modeling, which is the essence of equipping.

The ministry of the pastor is determined by the ministry of Jesus the good Shepherd. He is not called to exercise authority over the church but to nurture it. The greatness of his leadership is not authority, but humility; it is not rulership, but servitude; and the meekness and gentleness of Jesus.

Conclusion

The apostle Paul advised Timothy saying: "Fulfill your ministry" (2 Tim 4:5). "Fulfill your ministry" is God's imperative to the church. However, the church ministry is much more than proclamation. It must emphasize spiritual nurture as well.

The biblical model of "churching" suggests that baptism is not the end but the beginning of the process of spiritual maturity of the believer. Believers are guided and nurtured through the life span of their spiritual journey through a well-established ministry of spiritual nurture through the gifts of the Spirit.

The understanding and implementation of spiritual gifts were the keys to the success of the New Testament church. According to the biblical record, the church accomplished its mission through the Spirit's gifts, especially the gifts of spiritual nurture: prophecy and shepherding.

Statistics show that the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been remarkably successful in public evangelism (proclamation). However, it also shows a discouraging apostasy rate. For example, in 1994 for every two members who were baptized in the Adventist Church, in the North American Division, one left. This suggests that spiritual nurture is being seriously neglected.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has not yet developed a theology of spiritual gifts, and this topic is seldom

addressed in the local congregation, or included in the curriculum for training ministers. We may therefore conclude that to accomplish its mission the church will continue to depend more on professionally trained ministers than on the men and women who occupy the pews and are gifted by the Spirit to do God's work.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit must be the ministry of the church. "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord" (Zech 4:6). Therefore, Jesus promised the outpouring of the Holy Spirit;¹ and the Spirit continues to gift the church in such a way that it lacks no gift while it awaits the second coming of the Lord.²

The experience of the early church must serve as an admonition to Laodicea, the last church. When the former laid aside the pattern of ministry set forth by Jesus and His apostles, apostasy followed.

Few have left the Adventist Church because of its doctrines, but many have left because the church no longer meets their spiritual needs. The church can meet the needs of its members only when it implements a consistent ministry of spiritual nurture.

Since its inception, the Adventist Church has believed in spiritual gifts. However, the emphasis has tended to be only on the gift of prophecy and almost exclusively the

¹John 16:6-15.

²1 Cor 1:6.

prophetic gift of Ellen White. But even this important gift has not always been placed in a proper perspective. Thus, the nature of this gift, which is spiritual nurture, has been overlooked. Perhaps this is why many Adventists today do not see the relevancy of White's writings in their lives.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been called to prepare a people for the Lord's return. The Bible talks of this preparation in terms of "building up the body of Christ" (Eph 4:12), or the formation of a holy and blameless church.¹ Preparation for the coming of the Lord suggests the implementation of a ministry of spiritual nurture to foster a spiritual growth and develop a Christ-like character in the believer. Naden declared: "This is the time to nurture the body of Jesus Christ scattered throughout the world, to ensure that nurture can seek to save the fruit of all evangelism."²

The present spiritual situation within Adventism suggests the need of a work of nurturing that must begin by understanding the nature of the church and the purpose and ministry of the gifts of prophecy and shepherding. Then the church will be able to provide an environment that fosters spiritual growth, transforming the believer into Christ-likeness in preparation for His return.

¹Eph 6:27.

²Naden, "Ellen White and the Gift of Prophecy," 16.

Recommendations

Biblically, the church cannot properly function without the implementation of spiritual gifts. Therefore, the first step that a local congregation must take is a systematic study of the Spirit's gifts, and their presence in the local congregation.

Second, the church must recognize that all believers have been gifted with spiritual gifts, and that the church has the responsibility to help members to discover, develop, and use their gifts to minister in the local church and community.

Third, the church must be in itself an entity of spiritual nurture, and recognize that God has granted the gifts of prophecy and shepherding to enable it to accomplish this ministry.

Fourth, the church must recognize that the primary function of White's gift of prophecy is that of nurturing, and at the same time to affirm the presence of this gift in members of the local congregation, the place where the process of nurturing is implemented.

Fifth, the church must revive the concept of shepherding among ministers, so that only those who have this gift enter into the work of pastoring. Because it is not the Seminary training that makes a pastor, but the Holy Spirit who grants the gift of shepherding for the ministry of spiritual nurture, the church must develop criteria to

ensure that those seeking entrance into the pastoral ministry have the gift of shepherding.

Sixth, the local church must develop and implement a ministry of spiritual nurture through the gifts of prophecy and shepherding to develop a healthy growing church. This ministry must include a consistent program to study the church's history, beliefs, eschatology, and mission.

Seventh, each conference, with the cooperation of the department of theology of its union college, should develop a personal ministries program oriented to equip local church members with a ministry education so that they may serve as lay pastors and contribute more effectively in the leadership services of the local congregation.

For Further Study

1. A research project should be pursued that contributes to a theology of spiritual gifts, including a thorough study of the gifts mentioned in the New Testament, proofs of their discovery, and implementation in the local church.

2. A curriculum should be constructed for the implementation of a ministry of spiritual nurture in the local congregation. This curriculum should consider the stages of faith development, ages, and the needs of the different groups in the congregation.

3. A historical study of the development of the hierarchical distinction between clergy and laity should be

developed. What were the factors that contributed to laying aside the biblical teaching of the priesthood of all believers? Since the clergy hierarchy was one of the walls that Luther's reform destroyed, why did the Protestant churches follow the medieval pattern of distinction between clergy and laity instead of Luther's teaching?

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VITA

Personal Data

Name: Francy Duran
Address: P. O. Box 1371
So. Lancaster, MA 01571
Birth: Oct. 18, 1954
Spouse: Isis Esther Christian
Children: William Alexander and Francy Daniel

Schools Attended

Andrews University
Antillian College

Degrees Awarded

1996 Doctor of Philosophy, (Religious Education)
Andrews University
1992 Master of Divinity
Andrews University
1983 Master of Arts (Religion)
Andrews University
1980 Bachelor of Arts (Theology)
Antillian College

Professional Experiences

1994-	Asst. Prof. of theology	Atlantic Union College
1989-90	Asst. Prof. of theology	Universidad Adventista Dominicana (UNAD)
1983-85	Asst. Prof. of theology	UNAD
1983-85	Asst. Pastor	UNAD
1980-81	Asst. Dir. Publishing Department	West Puerto Conference