



Can the Church Be Relevant and Survive?

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What are the keys to vibrant Adventism in North America and other first-world areas?

Boredom usually means trouble. Bright, energetic people don't want to sit still. If something is not working, they want to find something that will. They have a point.

Whenever great moves have been made for God, the creative graces of energy, persistence and courage have always been exercised. The question for us today is not whether Adventists should be on the cutting edge, but how? Under God's guidance, these powerful graces energy, persistence, courage have damaged sin, not goodness. They built up truth, not error. They made disciples, not pew warmers. Yet wrongly used, they have compromised the church. Does the church need change today? Yes. But, what kind of change? Enthusiasm should fire our mission with holy excitement. But excitement based on error can consume that mission. When the lure of excitement is dangled by the devil, it can become irresistible. Some people tend to believe that any religious excitement is the working of the Holy Spirit. But the Bible has solemnly warned us to test the spirits.

Why So Fascinated by Mega Churches?

Many are fascinated by the great mega churches with their thousands of members. Their highly visible ministries are so well executed that everything about them seems to breathe success. Then we look at our own churches. So many of them are so small and struggling that we ask, "What's wrong with us? They must be doing something right and we need to find out what it is." So great is our hunger for "success" that we are tempted to throw caution to the wind.

Forgetful. In some respects, we Adventists are too hard on ourselves. Like Israel, we forget too easily. God's mighty acts in our church should inspire praise and thanksgiving. When we forget, we are tempted to doubt God's leading of our movement. We wonder whether God is still with us. The trouble is, if we are not careful, we may go looking for Him in wrong places. Before we rush to judgment in our comparisons of "them and us," it would be wise first to count our blessings, "the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history" (*Life Sketches*, p. 196).

Despite their flying of international flags, mega churches are only able to *dream* about having a true world church. Seventh-day Adventist penetration around the world is more than remarkable. It is absolutely astounding! Look at our humble beginnings! No one back then would have believed this global growth possible. It is not just the numbers. Consider the breadth and depth of our presence. Today we can rejoice that each year the Adventist ratio to world population continues to grow. Not only has our church growth been phenomenal, our world-wide educational system is a class act. Then there are ADRA and our Community Services.

Think of our world-wide contribution to religious liberty. What other church has a health ministry like ours? Think of our great youth camps across North America. Look at our beautiful churches and schools dotting the land. Let your eye sweep over our camp meetings, where thousands gather each year for spiritual refreshment. Think of our printing presses and their publishing ministry in hundreds of languages. Then there are Adventist World Radio and TV and other broadcast ministries. Think of the hospitals and clinics around the world. The list goes on. For our size, we Adventists are involved in a lot.

The great special truths we know bring comfort and courage to our hearts. We know the dead are simply sleeping. "We have this hope" in the second coming. What a rest from a frantic world the Sabbath gives us! If we stop and remember, we have so much for which to praise God! I know of no church that has grown as fast, world-wide, with all the various enterprises and ministries as the Adventists have. When the whole picture is put together it is awesome. One reason for this success is our unique heritage. God instilled a wonderful unselfishness in our spiritual forefathers and mothers. For this reason we are a study in church growth. This Adventist church is blessed, I believe, more than any other denomination.

Urgent Concerns. Yet I know what some are thinking. "But look at North America. While we are growing in ethnic communities, our growth in the mainstream is, at best, very slow. It is in the 'middle class' communities where these mega churches are having their greatest success. If we don't do something, we are going to lose a great deal of talent and support that is badly needed to move the world church." There is no question that these are urgent concerns. But will our creative energy be spent on change that hurts or helps? Do we opt for change believing that change alone will work? Or do we really know what the church should be like when we are done? Have we carefully considered what God wants? In our rush for change, have we left Him in charge? Or have we tried to shape Him into our own ideas? He knows what His church should look and sound and feel like. If we listen to the inspired sources, I don't think we will be misled. Have we studied carefully how the Bible and the writings of Ellen G. White define success? Is it wise to let the churches around us define success for us? Perhaps the difference between a false and a true reformation will depend on how well we answer these questions.

For the last ten or fifteen years some Adventist congregations have been experimenting with the growth methods of non-Adventist churches. I believe the pace of this has picked up, because many church leaders are encouraging the shift. First there was "celebration worship." According to the promoters, this charismatic face lift was going to transform the Adventist church. In the estimation of the proponents, Adventist churches were stuck in a time warp. Their message to all of us was "Change or become a dinosaur." Of course, their scariest message, the one that has always ignited our fear, was, "If we don't adopt these methods we will lose our young people."

Checking the Fruit

Now that some time has passed, perhaps it is only fair to check the fruit. Let's look first at the Adventist church that became famous for starting the "celebration" movement among us. It captured the imagination of the North American Division. At its height that church had more than a thousand members. However, with the passing of time some interesting developments took place. Its leading pastor developed an independent spirit that led to internal problems in the congregation. This, coupled with the pastor's unwillingness to take counsel from his conference leadership, led to his leaving the Adventist ministry. Today he has joined forces with those who are most bitterly attacking the Adventist church and its fundamental doctrines. Buying into the same spirit, one of his leading elders left the church and started his own Sunday-keeping church.

This first "celebration" church went from one sadness to another. The two new pastors who replaced the founding pastor were dismissed over doctrinal issues. As a result of all this turmoil the church went through several splits. Decline in attendance and membership followed. The remaining members could no longer keep up the payments on their large new facility. The conference kindly assumed the payments while the building was being sold. Finally the little group that was left merged with another congregation.

Attitudes. Of course, I know that the celebration movement among us developed a life of its own. Not every difficulty found in it can be blamed on its initiator. Yet there seem to be certain attitudes that were genetically impressed on it from the beginning. They went something like this: "We need to copy the worship of other churches in order to have their success. The Adventists need to leave the dark ages and get with it. Success is defined as a large attendance and lots of excitement. This is the way to reach the community and save the youth. Life-style values are funny, 19th-century holdovers. Justification is big; sanctification is small. Preach about grace but not about sin. If you preach about sin, make sure to be politically correct. Preach love, not doctrines. At all costs have fun. Small Adventist churches are relics without a future. Conferences and church organizations should be viewed with suspicion or, at best, with benign tolerance." At least, these are the perceptions that seem to keep ringing, even as the worship debate continues.

No Restrictions. For the last few years the new Mecca for Adventist leaders has been the independent congregation at Willow Creek near Chicago. Many Adventist ministers went there to learn how to imitate its methods. Already we are seeing the fruit of the Willow Creek approach. An Adventist church pastored by a skillful minister was featured in one of our leading denominational papers. However, in the midst of the success and attention, the pastor and the church broke away from the conference. You can guess the reasons. They didn't want the "restrictions" of the body. They wanted freedom to do their own thing. Then of course there was the money. They wanted the tithe to fund their mega-church dream. Oh yes, they were going to continue to keep the Sabbath. They would still be part of us, only at a distance. Another Adventist church, near Washington, D. C., did something similar. They were going to teach us how relevance could help us grow. They were going to reach their communities.

Guess what these "wannabe" Adventist mega churches discovered? They could not be "relevant" and also get a crowd on Sabbath. So they opted for relevance. That shouldn't surprise us.

Relevance, not truth, was driving their mission from the start. The results were predictable. Today both of these churches are teaching that Sunday is the Sabbath and have left the Adventist church completely. By the way, they were drawing young people but to where? Other Adventist churches have and are following a similar course. Besides the Sabbath, we have many other teachings the world will never buy. One does not become a Seventh-day Adventist casually. If it is any comfort, early Christians also counted the cost.

Safe? Still, many believe that we can copy these kinds of churches and be safe. Not long ago I was in a meeting where a pastor of a "fast-growing" Adventist church spoke. Because of inadequate pastoral leadership, this particular church had dwindled from nearly a thousand to fewer than a hundred. This pastor was brought in to rescue the church. She was very sincere. According to her, one of her goals has been to show that a pastor can successfully run a Willow Creek model in the Adventist church. She believes the churches which left us have given Willow Creek an undeservedly bad name. Under her leadership the attendance has risen in two years to between five and six hundred.

She told us that when she first met with the board, she told them she would come on one condition: they must dissolve the board and give her absolute power. They did. This was necessary, she reasoned, because they were in an emergency situation and needed critical care. According to her, one of the first things she did was to close the organ and substitute "contemporary" music. She fills the baptistry each Sabbath and invites people to give their hearts to the Lord. Any who respond are invited to be baptized right then. However, baptism, she assured us, does not make a person a church member. To join the church, one must attend a class where one must consent to five common points of belief with the Adventist Church. One of the points is to agree not to gossip. In order to be relevant, this church is now holding its service at five o'clock Saturday afternoon. Interestingly, this is a popular alternative worship hour even for Sunday-keeping churches.

Questions. After hearing this pastor speak, I found myself confronted by several serious questions. For example, what happens if the person who was baptized that day is merely adding Jesus to the rest of his occult gods? Do we just assume the secular world really knows the difference between Jesus and the latest movie star? Doesn't the Great Commission put making disciples before baptizing? Doesn't making disciples mean teaching born-again Christians how to follow Jesus? Isn't baptism the door into the church? Can we reconcile a theology that separates baptism from the body of Christ?

In the winter, most of the Sabbath has passed by five o'clock. One cannot help but wonder if the Sabbath is not being marginalized in the name of relevance. Catering to people's desire to make Sabbath another "sleep in" doesn't sound like discipling. Then we must ask ourselves if we want church growth so badly that we are ready to give the pastor absolute power. Oh sure, it works for a while if you have a smart, talented minister. But is it biblical? Is it wise? Does such an approach make disciples of Jesus or disciples of the minister?

Gossip is always wrong. But I wondered, in this setting, if it could be translated, "Don't disagree with the pastor!" Cults are built around strong personalities that see any disagreement as a challenge to their authority. It is not unusual for mega churches to have autocratic ministers.

Sometimes it seems as if we Adventists committee too much. But I prefer that imperfection to the principles of popery.

Don't Underestimate Our Founders!

Maybe those early Adventists were right after all about church organization. There is a reason why none of these congregational mega churches can be a model for the Adventists. I didn't say we cannot learn from other churches, including Willow Creek. I said they can't be models. Here is why. We do not want to abandon our mission to carry the three angels' messages to the world. I hope I am hearing a resounding Amen! Without gospel order, neither the Gospel Commission nor Revelation 14 can be carried out.

Our system of church government spreads our human and financial resources over the entire world. This makes it possible for us to grow in many different cultures with an amazing amount of unity. Our organization is not rigid but elastic, yet not too elastic. It adapts well worldwide while providing unity and oneness.

Congregational churches, on the other hand, are rigid because they are limited by their local focus. They may see the big picture of the Gospel Commission, but their organizational vehicle is not able to carry out a world mission. Congregational churches by their very nature cannot maintain any degree of unity and cooperation beyond a very small area. In addition, they consume most of their resources on themselves or their local mission. They fail to grasp, as Adventists do, the need for an unselfish unity in order to reach all languages and people groups.

The Mission Principle. Mission will always drive resources. There is a principle here. Concepts of mission give birth to church government. The Adventist churches which have recently left are examples of how this principle works. They changed their mission and then their form of church government. If we buy into their mission, it will be only a matter of time before we abandon our "into all the world" focus for a "stay in Jerusalem" concept. For sure, we cannot have it both ways.

Therein lies the danger. Many think that somehow we can have a true world church and copy relevant congregational churches. At some point we will "cling to the one" and "abandon the other." Again, this is not to say we cannot learn from others who are not of our faith. However, any learning we do from anywhere must be carefully tested by the principles of Scripture, the Spirit of Prophecy and our mission.

Layers of Government. One speaker at a recent General Conference session criticized the Adventist church for having more layers of church government than the Roman Catholic Church. The statement resonated with many. However, the last time I checked, the United States a model of representative government has the same number of layers as the Adventist church. There are city, county, state and national governments. The Adventist church has the local church, local conference, union conference and General Conference. (The divisions are considered part of the General Conference. They are divisions of the General Conference.)

It is a known fact that representative forms of government do not succeed well unless they have building blocks starting at the grass roots. This way the power is both top down and bottom up. Yes, it is cumbersome. But if you want a representative government, multiple layers are necessary.

One reason why totalitarian governments have difficulty switching to representative governments is that they do not have the lower institutions of democracy. These lower institutions steer and provide stability throughout the whole. During the last United States presidential election, with its many constitutional crises, the country kept right on functioning. Why? The whole was made up of more than just the one representative government. So when the national election was in disarray, the institutions of democracy, courts, city, county and state, kept on going.

My point is this: We can eliminate several layers of our representative church government. But if we do, we will replace them with either Congregationalism or, worse, some form of popery. It can be argued that the papacy is a successful form of church government for a worldwide mission. But despotism is alien to our biblical principles. Either Congregationalism or a religious monarchy would confuse and destroy "who we are." We have already had some bitter lessons in consolidating power in a few hands. Remember those fires in Battle Creek?

Doing Better. Nevertheless, with the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy as our map, it is always appropriate to think about doing church government better. We must remember that this is the church, not General Motors or the United States government. It does not have a corporate or a secular political blueprint. It has a biblical die cast. Authority is shared and balanced. That is the way it was in the book of Acts. For example, the local conference does not choose from its central headquarters where church schools will be built and where they won't. Here the local decision is primary.

One must ever remember that the conference is given life by local church delegates at a constituency meeting. Those combined delegate votes give the conference its authority to oversee and guide the operation and expansion of churches, schools and other ministries. Representing the whole, it serves as a shepherd to the churches to keep them focused on their mission while abiding by the common policies. It exists to foster local initiative and self-determination within the whole. That is why the local conferences are what I call field focused.

Policy, Not Charisma

The local conferences in turn form the union conferences. Please understand. The Adventist church is not held together by charismatic personalities. It is policy that keeps the organization working together, like the blood in the body. The union conferences represent their part of the world field to the General Conference. They are vital to the policy-making process, just as the bone marrow is vital to the blood-making process. Either we have good policy that we all adhere to, or we die as an organization. The devil knows this, and it is no surprise that our ability to make and maintain policy is being severely challenged. Union conferences also serve as a check and balance on local conferences, making sure policy is followed.

The General Conference is the vision maker and final authority on the policy that drives the church. Each of these parts, local church, local conference, union conference and General Conference, wield real power but in different spheres. We all depend on each others doing well.

Holy Spirit. Like the wheels within wheels in Ezekiel's vision, we need the Holy Spirit to constantly pour His oil over the machinery. We are very different from secular politics. Our process is set up to be a spiritual process, not a political one. I worry when I see people trying to work our spiritual process the way politicians work the secular process. The two don't mix. Space does not permit an analysis of this issue. I will leave the subject by simply saying that whether we are members at a church board or ministers at a conference committee, we are not politicians but servants seeking the will of God.

"Relevant" methods are sometimes given opportunity because too many churches fall into cold formalism. Great hymns are sung without enthusiasm. Scripture reading is mumbled. Praise and thanksgiving seem more scarce than "hens teeth." The sound of fervent prayer has been replaced with the "same old prayer." Spirit-filled biblical preaching has been changed for story time. Evangelistic passions are reserved for nominating committees, conference constituency meetings, or when there is a pastoral change. Sentimental indulgence has replaced principled love. Any born-again saints that somehow survive become instant curiosities. Reverence is lost because faith in an awesome God has been lost. People go through the motions of Sabbath observance hoping the sun will go down quickly so they can pop in the latest video and get on with their lives. There is no burden for worship to be carried out with excellence before a glorious God. In such a setting, the impact on the lives of the members is little or none. Soon the members look and act no different from the world.

Earnest Worship. Our simple worship should be fervent and earnest. The praying, praising, preaching, speaking, singing and giving should be our very best. We must visualize that we are in the courtyard of the heavenly temple with its tens of thousands of holy, intelligent beings. Our worship services should be power-packed because the saints come with the latest acts of God on their lips. True faith always creates that burden for souls that translates into soul winning.

All week we should be the light of God to a dying world. Worship then becomes the affirming act that Christ lives in us corporately because He lives in us personally. We need more than a revival. We need a reformation. Cold formalism or worldly entertainment and emotionalism reign where churches are unconverted.

The worship we inherited from our spiritual forefathers and mothers may not have been perfect, but it was warm and vibrant. The three angels' messages are just as powerful today as they were then. The truth has lost none of its energy. Yet, when we love the world with most of our hearts, when too many of our theologians and preachers mock the past and ignore the present successes in order to make a name for themselves, when we as church leaders turn God's church into a social club or our little political playground, when we play fast and loose with the Scriptures, when our own opinion is more important than what the Bible says, we will turn the worship of God into something He cannot and will not accept.

Worship God Rejects

The same General Conference speaker mentioned earlier also said, "There is no 'right' way to worship God. And the only wrong way to worship is any way that bores or shows little forethought or preparation." Really? God doesn't care about the way we worship? He cares only about preparation?

Surely preparation is important, but to discount the way we worship ignores sacred history. Someone should check with Cain and Abel. Ask Nadab and Abihu. See whether Elijah on Mt. Carmel has any wisdom. Ask Moses and Aaron about the golden calf. How did Jesus respond to the devil's offer in the wilderness?

End-Time Issue. The book of Revelation is clear. Worship will be the end-time issue. As Adventists we have something to say about the *day* of worship. We also must say something about the *way* of worship. False and worldly ways of worship should not be brought into our churches. Neither should we settle for anything less than fervent, reverent worship filled with praise, prayer and solid biblical preaching.

Relevance as a priority can take churches into strange places. Today the great Reformation churches have made their peace with evolution and higher-critical scholarship. Philosophy and consensus have replaced the authority of the Word. Popular culture is the church culture. Their moral voice in the nation has been reduced to a prayerful yawn in moments of crisis.

Charismatics. In the vacuum has appeared the charismatic movement. Charismatics talk about the Bible a lot. But the wisdom, grace, and power of early Protestantism are absent. Charismatics have embraced "success" fueled with Hollywood and Fifth Avenue. Entertainment, emotion, rock music and spiritual thrills are the name of the game. Oh yes, they do get a crowd. They are having fun. Just don't ask how they justify all this with the New Testament.

All kinds of strange worship is being experimented with. In some charismatic churches people jerk like chickens for hours and bark and howl like animals. They get "slain in the Spirit" by the thousands. They get so "drunk on the Spirit" they have to have taxies take them home. *Time* magazine, commenting on some of these types of movements, said that some of these churches look more like "rock concerts" and "rugby matches" than Christian worship. But it is not just the charismatics that are offering strange fire on the altar of worship.

Drama. Some of these non-denominational mega churches have become famous for their quality drama. Many of them, by design, are housed in outstanding theatrical performing facilities. However, the early church is still the most successful example of church growth. The apostles were not into drama. From some quarters I hear groans. That doesn't mean there is something wrong with an innocent skit occasionally. We are not talking here about the church school Christmas pageant. But when drama becomes the main communicator of the gospel, it is alien. The theater, while a very effective entertainment medium, doesn't switch over very well to serious logical thought. As a medium, it tends to overwork the emotions and bypass the thinking process.

Some argue earnestly that drama is more effective for advancing the gospel than preaching and teaching. If that is true, why didn't Jesus use it? Please don't say it is a new, modern method.

Drama and theater are ancient media. One only has to stand in the ruins of the magnificent theater at Caesarea to realize that drama was popular stuff in the days of Jesus. The Romans built fine theaters all over the place, including one in Jerusalem. Jesus had to be very familiar with the medium. He could easily have built a drama team of bright, handsome young men and women. He could have packaged truth in that medium so powerfully that people's emotions would have been putty in His hands. But He didn't. Somehow, "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 4:17) doesn't quite fit the theater circuit.

Jesus used very simple but clear communication methods. He depended on the Spirit of truth to change and impress the hearts of His hearers. Interestingly, large numbers of those who followed him were young people. Those young people stayed, and He used them to help launch His church. It is worthy of note that the Holy Spirit, when He gave gifts and talents to the early church, left out acting.

Theology-driven Methods

What is driving all these demands for exciting changes? Contrary to some popular opinion, theology does drive our methodology. I used to believe you could separate methodology from theology. But Jesus is clear about this. We cannot serve Him and the world. Is there a shift in our conviction of our theology?

Subtle Changes. Shifts do not happen all at once. Usually they are subtle. Change is often well entrenched before someone notices that profession and practice are no longer synonymous. Can we admit that we cannot use the manipulative methods of rock concerts, Hollywood, circuses, magic, occultism, and Fifth Avenue to prepare a people to meet Jesus in the clouds of glory? We loudly sing "We Have This Hope," but do we really believe it? We Adventists confess a holy and awesome faith. That is why the Church must be into truth, not entertainment. Into repentance, not manipulation. Into building Christian character, not emotionalism. We must not underestimate God's power to use simple means. All He gave Moses was a shepherd's rod. The apostle Paul said, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom 10:17).

Have we redefined success by redefining worship? Have we moved from a God-centered worship to a man-centered worship? I once heard two Sunday preachers discussing their Sunday services. Their focus was bragging to each other about their crowds. I heard no talk of the faithfulness and virtue of their congregations. In fact, among us, I have heard plenty of church-growth talk but virtually nothing about New Testament holiness. Did not Jesus declare to the devil that worship and obedience are inseparable? A God-centered worship demands faithfulness in behavior. In our lust to draw great crowds, have we forgotten all the New Testament counsel about character development?

Lifestyle. One cannot separate worship from Christian lifestyle. Lifestyle should include all Christian behavior. Being kind to my spouse and being modest in dress are both part of the same New Testament call to Christlikeness. The world is certainly sending its messages about what to wear, how to act, what to look at and listen to. Self-control is out and self-indulgence is in.

Unfortunately, we have preached and published too many sermons, books and articles endeavoring to make Christian standards comfy with our carnal hearts. The result has been to disown the standards, or at least make them insignificant. The usual thrust of these articles is to say: "Don't be a legalist. Don't be unkind. Don't be judgmental." Of course, we should be none of the above. But neither should we abandon the New Testament's calls to holiness in favor of modern sentimentalism.

If we ever needed our members to be building Christian character, it is now. We know we are saved by faith alone. But do we know we are not saved by faithlessness? If we are saved by faith in God, surely we are going to be more concerned about being Christlike than how big our crowds are. This is not to diminish the importance of numbers. They counted at Pentecost. But if we get them out of proper order we will be driven to worship and serve someone else besides the Creator.

Appeasement? The devil has never before launched against the Christian faith such powerful forces, all of them focused on destroying Christian character. In the midst of this carnage we seem to be seeking appeasement. The Churchills among us are being crowded out by the Chamberlains. The Apostles' greatest joy was not in learning the latest attendance figures. Their joy was in finding that their converts were faithful to their teachings.

No matter how comfy we feel, it doesn't change the fact that the devil's tanks are rolling over the fertile fields of Christian character. May God help us! We need a new militancy, not harsh, not mean, but certainly fervent and supportive in helping our people develop character. As darkness settles over the world, the world needs, as never before, to see the light of Jesus in our members.

Please understand. There is much to be said for being creative and relevant. But unless creativity and relevance are mothered by Inspiration, there is no progressive movement in the church. The Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy must direct our creativity. Anything else will return us to worldliness.

Confronting Culture. In today's climate, Christianity in general has failed to confront a culture that is more pagan than Christian. Neither has the Seventh-day Adventist church in North America confronted it with a solid front. Yes, there are bright spots. But there should be light everywhere. This movement to accommodate the world is an admission that the power of biblical Christianity is scarce. In addition, our satisfaction with cold formalism is an admission that we are fast asleep with no oil in our flasks. The results of both conditions are going to be disastrous. The only solution is a Spirit-filled reformation.

When the apostles preached, their gospel sword cut and saved across all cultures. As a result, persecution was a constant threat. People do not take kindly to having their idols superseded by Christ. They don't like having their economics interrupted. Just ask the silversmith worshipers of Diana who started the rioting in Ephesus.

Growth. True Christianity does not grow by pandering to Constantines. It grows by solid biblical preaching that calls people to repentance and change. It grows in holy fellowship. It grows when it gives glorious worship to its Creator and Redeemer. It grows when it uplifts a

Christ that not only justifies but sanctifies. It grows when it is fearless in the face of sin. It grows when it pours unselfish love into a hurting world. It grows when it embraces the pains and sorrows of the downtrodden of our society. It grows when spiritual values are more important than politics. It grows when virtue in its members is more important than crowds in its pews. It grows when it seeks the kingdom of heaven first. It grows when it trusts the Lord no matter what. It grows when it pours rivers of grace and energy into saving the lives of wretched sinners. It grows when it moves more by faith than by money.

Call to Worship. Jesus opened and closed His ministry with "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." That word *repent* is the beginning and heart of all true worship. If ever repentance wasn't relevant, it certainly is relevant now. Eternal life is relevant. Between repentance and eternal life stands the Adventist call to worship the One who made us all. That call must go to the entire world, pure, undiluted and without compromise. Like John the Baptist, we must spare nothing in getting the message out. Only then will the end come.