

the REFORMATION *herald*

Vol. 60, No. 4



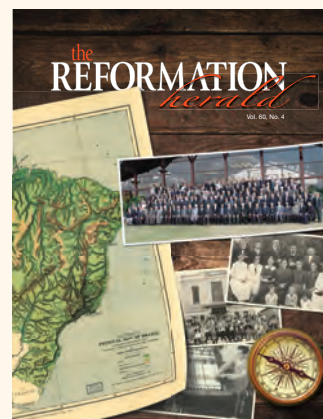
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Living in Unity

Front cover design:



From top to bottom:

1. Delegates of the 19th General Conference Session of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, São Paulo, Brazil, 2003.

2. The first group of SDA Reformers organized in Brazil, Nova Europa, São Paulo State, 1927.

The first SDA Reform Bible worker to set foot in Brazil in 1924 was A. Lavrik. Before the end of 1927, a group of reform-minded SDAs was organized in Nova Europa, state of São Paulo.

3. Convention held in our fourth chapel in Brazil, second in São Paulo (Belém), 1944. This building, dedicated in 1943, has adjoining offices in the back, where the headquarters of the South Brazilian Union were located until 1994.

4. The beginning of our printshop at Vila Matilde, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1952.

At the end of 1951, a printshop was established at Vila Matilde, and the bookbindery became part of the print shop. A much larger building was secured at Itaquaquecetuba, São Paulo State, in 1985, to cope with the growing demands of the publishing work.

At the beginning of 2019 the total number of members in Brazil was 10580. The churches organized in two Unions (North and South) having 433 worship places, 73 ministers, 46 elders, and 168 workers.

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"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."
—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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Am I Confessing Christ?

The verb “confess” has different meanings: to acknowledge, to tell one’s fault to the Lord or to another, and to declare belief or faith in something. We are going to talk about this last meaning: to declare belief or faith in Jesus Christ.

In Romans 10:9, 10, Paul affirms: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” Summarizing the words of the apostle, we need to believe in Christ with our heart, and confess with our mouth this belief, in order to be saved.

Christ went a bit further: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32, 33). Confessing here means to manifest, to reveal Christ’s character before the world.

When we recognize Christ as our personal Saviour and Lord, we commit ourselves to representing Him before the world. At the same time, Christ commits Himself to representing us before His Father in heaven.

“Jesus continues: As you confess Me before men, so I will confess you before God and the holy angels. You are to be My witnesses upon earth, channels through which My grace can flow for the healing of the world. So I will be your representative in heaven. The Father beholds not your faulty character, but He sees you as clothed

in My perfection. I am the medium through which Heaven’s blessings shall come to you. And everyone who confesses Me by sharing My sacrifice for the lost shall be confessed as a sharer in the glory and joy of the redeemed.

“He who would confess Christ must have Christ abiding in him. He cannot communicate that which he has not received. The disciples might speak fluently on doctrines, they might repeat the words of Christ Himself; but unless they possessed Christlike meekness and love, they were not confessing Him. A spirit contrary to the spirit of Christ would deny Him, whatever the profession. **Men may deny Christ by evilspeaking, by foolish talking, by words that are untruthful or unkind. They may deny Him by shunning life’s burdens, by the pursuit of sinful pleasure. They may deny Him by conforming to the world, by uncourteous behavior, by the love of their own opinions, by justifying self, by cherishing doubt, borrowing trouble, and dwelling in darkness.** In all these ways they declare that Christ is not in them. And “whosoever shall deny Me before men,” He says, “him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven.”¹

How can we fulfill these conditions? By avoiding everything that is contrary to God’s will. Do we have power to do that? Before trying to do good and shunning evil, we need to submit ourselves to Christ, and then the Holy Spirit will guide us in right paths. We need to have Christ abiding in us and be under the control of the Holy Spirit and His sacred words. (See Psalm 119:9–11.)

Where should we confess Christ?

1. In our home. Our families are the first missionary field where we need to confess Christ. Those who are Christian in their home are Christian everywhere. 2. In the school where we study. 3. In our workplace; 4. In the streets and public places; 5. Wherever we go or stay.

“Are we confessing Christ in our daily life? Do we confess Him in our dress, adorning ourselves with plain and modest apparel? Is our adorning that of the meek and quiet spirit which is of so great price in the sight of God? Are we seeking to advance the cause of the Master? . . . There is no use in telling you that you must not wear this or that, for if the love of these vain things is in your heart, your laying off your adornments will only be like cutting the foliage off a tree. The inclinations of the natural heart would again assert themselves. You must have a conscience of your own. . . .

“He who imitates Christ will show forth His self-denial and self-sacrifice. . . . Just where the conscience of the Bible Christian warns him to forbear, to deny himself, to stop, just there the worldling steps over the line to indulge his selfish propensities. On one side of the line is the self-denying follower of Jesus Christ, on the other side of the line is the self-indulgent world-lover. . . . On this side of the line the Christian cannot go. It is no place for him.

“Our life must be hid with Christ in God, that when He shall appear, we also may appear with Him in glory.”²

References

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 357. [Emphasis added.]

² *Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 292.

Organization in the Work of God's People:

It's a Bible Doctrine

From the top of a mountain, Balaam contemplated the encampment of God's chosen people. And he was amazed. While his mind was full of curses he had prepared, he was constrained to pronounce blessings. He said: "How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?" (Numbers 23:8).

"As Balaam looked upon the encampment of Israel he beheld with astonishment the evidence of their prosperity. They had been represented to him as a rude, disorganized multitude, infesting the country in roving bands that were a pest and terror to the surrounding nations; but their appearance was the reverse of all this. He saw the vast extent and perfect arrangement of their camp, everything bearing the marks of thorough discipline and order. He was shown the favor with which God regarded Israel, and their distinctive character as His chosen people. They were not to stand upon a level with

other nations, but to be exalted above them all."¹

Discipline, order, and organization constitute a distinctive character mark of God's people.

In the plan of God, we have been put together so that we may work together, feeling our dependence upon one another. This is why church organization is a must. The importance of teamwork is also emphasized in the Bible.

Among the early Christians the two-by-two method worked as an ambulatory school. An experienced worker and a younger brother formed a team of two and worked together. When the younger one had gained enough experience, he became the instructor of a new apprentice that was assigned to him. In this way, the teams kept multiplying.

It is never too late to implement this method. All those who decide to join and work together for a good purpose prove to be wise.

The apostle Paul says we should learn a lesson of unity and cooperation from the human body.

"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less

honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked" (1 Corinthians 12:14–24).

Suppose you are in the middle of an orchard, it's time to eat, and you are getting hungry. How many organs work together? First, the stomach sends a message to the mind, and the mind tells the eyes to look around for the trees laden with apples, pears, prunes, figs, and so on. Then in order to reach these fruits, the eyes will depend on the legs to take you to the trees. Then the mind directs the eyes and hands to the fruits that you choose to pick. The eyes examine the fruits to make sure they are not wormy. When the fruit reaches the mouth, the nose with its sense of smell and the tongue with its taste buds must approve or reject it. If it is accepted, then the teeth begin to work with the help of the tongue. After the food has been masticated and swallowed, the stomach is happy to receive and digest it. What would happen if suddenly these organs refused to work together, in perfect cooperation and independence? The results would be confusion, chaos, and eventually death.

The biblical teaching in 1 Corinthians 12:14–24 is reinforced in Ephesians 4:16, where we read:

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

"And [ye] are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple

in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:20–22).

Scattered stones do not form a "building"; the "holy temple" "groweth" as the stones are "builded together," "fitly framed together," for the "habitation" of God.

Unfortunately, this biblical doctrine is not understood by everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord (Matthew 7:21, 22). I have seen this on more than one or two occasions.

Wandering stars (Jude 13)

Many years ago, when I was still living in São Paulo, Brazil, my attention was attracted to the visitors who had come to our church service. Among them were a couple who seemed to be serious Christians.

I saw them for the first time. When the meeting was over, I felt it would be good to talk to them.

"Thank you for your visit and come again," I said.

They identified themselves as Christian believers. I found the door open to inquire about their religious position.

In the course of our conversation, they said that their religious beliefs were entirely based on the Bible. I was curious to know which denomination they were affiliated with, so I asked them:

"You certainly attend religious services every Sabbath."

"We certainly do," they assured me.

"So you must belong to a church."

"We certainly do."

"Then, may I ask you, which church do you belong to?"

"My wife and myself. This is our church," the man said.

How could they ignore the prayer of Christ in behalf of His followers "that they all may be one" (John 17:21)?

"There has ever been a class professing godliness, who, instead of following on to know the truth, make it their religion to seek some fault of character or error of faith in those with whom they do not agree. Such are Satan's right-hand helpers. Accusers of the brethren are not few, and they are always active when God is at work and His servants are rendering Him true homage. They will put a false coloring upon the words and acts of those who love and obey the truth. They will represent the most earnest, zealous, self-denying servants of Christ as deceived or deceivers. It is their work to misrepresent the motives of every true and noble deed, to circulate insinuations, and arouse suspicion in the minds of the inexperienced. In



every conceivable manner they will seek to cause that which is pure and righteous to be regarded as foul and deceptive.”²

Identifying the children of Abraham

“Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham” (Galatians 3:7).

The religious assurance of the Jewish people in the days of Christ was based on the thought that they had nothing to fear as far as their acceptance before God because they were the children of Abraham, to whom the Almighty had promised: “I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:2, 3).

To disabuse them from their false ideas, John the Baptist warned them:

“Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham” (Matthew 3:9).

The adopted children of Abraham were not isolated, scattered stones. They were organized as a church. Matthew 16:18, 19.

“The Sanhedrin had rejected Christ’s message and was bent upon His death; therefore Jesus departed from Jerusalem, from the priests, the temple, the religious leaders, the people who had been instructed in the law, and turned to another class to proclaim His message, and to gather out those who should carry the gospel to all nations.

“As the light and life of men was rejected by the ecclesiastical authorities in the days of Christ, so it has been rejected in every succeeding generation. Again and again the history of Christ’s withdrawal from Judea has been repeated. When the Reformers preached the word of God, they had no thought of separating themselves from the established church; but the religious leaders would

not tolerate the light, and those that bore it were forced to seek another class, who were longing for the truth.”³

“Christ foresaw that the undue assumption of authority indulged by the scribes and Pharisees would not cease with the dispersion of the Jews. He had a prophetic view of the work of exalting human authority to rule the conscience, which has been so terrible a curse to the church in all ages. And His fearful denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees, and His warnings to the people not to follow these blind leaders, were placed on record as an admonition to future generations.”⁴

“The Pharisees had declared themselves the children of Abraham. Jesus told them that this claim could be established only by doing the works of Abraham. The true children of Abraham would live, as he did, a life of obedience to God. They would not try to kill One who was speaking the truth that was given Him from God. In plotting against Christ, the rabbis were not doing the works of Abraham. A mere lineal descent from Abraham was of no value. Without a spiritual connection with him, which would be manifested in possessing the same spirit, and doing the same works, they were not his children.

“This principle bears with equal weight upon a question that has long agitated the Christian world—the question of apostolic succession. Descent from Abraham was proved, not by name and lineage, but by likeness of character. So the apostolic succession rests not upon the transmission of ecclesiastical authority, but upon spiritual relationship. A life actuated by the apostles’ spirit, the belief and teaching of the truth they taught, this is the true evidence of apostolic succession. This is what constitutes men the successors of the first teachers of the gospel.”⁵

Since Christ organized His church as a body of people identified as His true followers living in the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:20), this arrangement has been maintained, through the ages, until today. Read Romans 12:5; 2 Timothy

2:20; 1 Corinthians 12:14–24; Ephesians 2:20–22; 4:16; Romans 9:4–8; 11:1–12; 1 Peter 2:5, 9, 10.

The vine and the branches

The people, who, in accordance with God’s word, are putting forth every effort to be one, are not isolated branches; they are closely united with the “Vine,” our Saviour, who warned us:

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5).

As the branches are connected with the “Vine,” they are also connected with one another, just as the members of the human body.

“So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Romans 12:5).

Isolated dry branches (put together in a heap to be burnt) and isolated dead bones (collected for the crematorium) cannot represent the church of Christ according to the Scriptures.

“Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5).

In the “great house,” which is the church, “there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour” (2 Timothy 2:20).

Where are these “vessels”? In the home, not scattered outside.

In conclusion we may establish that among the people of God, perfect order and discipline are essential traits.

“I saw that everything in heaven was in perfect order. Said the angel, ‘Look ye; Christ is the head . . .’ ‘Behold ye, and know how perfect, how beautiful the order in heaven; follow it.’”⁶ *R*

References

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 447.

² *The Great Controversy*, p. 519.

³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 232.

⁴ *The Great Controversy*, p. 596.

⁵ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 466, 467.

⁶ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 5, p. 227.



Not Forsaking the Assembly: *The Importance of Public Worship*

Does it really matter whether or not I go to church? Nobody seems to care whether I'm there or not. Besides, the people there are so lukewarm. As long as I'm abiding in Christ and faithful to the three angels' messages, that's all that matters. As long as I keep the Sabbath, I'll just make it a special day every week for me and my family."

Are these sentiments in harmony with Bible doctrine?

Let's consider a well-known passage from Hebrews chapter 10. As believers who understand the vital truth about the sanctuary in Heaven where our High Priest is ministering in our behalf, we are graciously invited to have "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh" (verses 19, 20). Here is depicted the direct, vertical relationship we are privileged to enjoy between our individual souls and our Creator.

In view of that, we are urged, "Having an high priest over the house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil

conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (verses 21–23).

God's wonderful faithfulness motivates the individual conscience to enjoy spiritual communion with Him—a distinct relationship with Him, that, as the famous hymn describes, "None other has ever known." What a privilege to be individually enjoyed by each one of us! Here we envision the precious opportunity every soul has in clinging to the first of the two tables of stone in the Ten Commandments.

But does it all end there? Is that all there is? No, there is a second table of stone with another set of responsibilities that we also owe to our Creator and His heritage. It depicts a horizontal relationship with our fellow human beings. The passage in Hebrews continues:

"Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (verses 24, 25).

Back in the days of the apostle Paul, just as today, it was evident that the manner of some people was to forsake the assembly, that is, to avoid meeting together with others for worship.

But instead, the apostle teaches, we are to exhort one another—and he also explains that the closer we get to the end of probationary time, the more important this becomes. Why? What is the Lord trying to show us here?

Christ and His flock

"Never entertain the thought that you can be Christians and yet withdraw within yourselves. Each one is a part of the great web of humanity, and the nature and quality of your experience will be largely determined by the experiences of those with whom you associate. Jesus says: 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst' (Matthew 18:20). Then let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhort one another; and so much the more, as we see the day approaching.

"Make the social meetings of the church as interesting as possible. Let

everyone present feel that he has a duty to perform in the meeting.”¹

“One person is not to do all the witnessing for Jesus; but everyone who loves God is to testify of the preciousness of His grace and truth. Those who receive the light of truth are to have lesson upon lesson to educate them not to keep silent, but to speak often one to another. They are to keep in mind the Sabbath meeting, when those who love and fear God, and who think upon His name, can have opportunity to express their thoughts in speaking one to another. . . .

“Let each one seek to become an intelligent Christian, bearing his responsibility, and acting his personal part to make the meeting interesting and profitable. . . .

“The Majesty of heaven identifies His interests with those of the believers, however humble may be their circumstances. And wherever they are privileged to meet together, it is appropriate that they speak often one to another, giving utterance to the gratitude and love that is a result of thinking upon the name of the Lord. Thus shall God be glorified as He hearkens and hears, and the testimony meeting will be considered the most precious of all meetings; for the words spoken are recorded in the book of remembrance.”²

But what if these people disappoint me and do not meet my expectations?

“Consider one another”

Christ gives an interesting warning about the way in which preparation for His soon coming involves the relationship between ourselves and our fellow believers:

“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods. But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming; and shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day

when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 24:45–51).

As believers in the three angels’ messages, most of us are aware of the evils of self-indulgent intemperance and the importance of avoiding “to eat and drink with the drunken.” We also are aware of the need to evangelize the unbelievers of the world. But Jesus brings out a vital point in this passage:

We cannot be “smiting” our fellow servants, either! “Fellow servants” are fellow believers who serve God, and it is not our place to gossip about their shortcomings, for such a focus reveals that an attitude that says in the heart (even if not in the outward profession), “My lord delayeth his coming.” “My Lord (yes, the Lord whom I profess) is taking longer than I expected,” so the archenemy’s temptation to criticize and backbite rises to the surface.

The prophet Jeremiah describes, “I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him” (Jeremiah 20:10).

In contrast, the Lord’s messenger in our day illustrates for us a more appropriate attitude regarding the frailty of fellow believers:

“My brethren, clear your souls before God. Cease your criticizing and fault-finding. Satan will keep you at this till the Lord comes, if he can. He knows that thus he can most effectually hinder the Lord’s work. Backbiting is cannibalism. God calls upon His people to have nothing to do with it, but to come to Him, that they may have light and life and salvation. We need the wisdom that comes from above. Pure, this wisdom is ‘peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated’ (James 3:17). If it were not, the love of the Father would not have been so constantly exercised toward us.

“Again and again God has pardoned our transgressions. Now there are steps that we must take. And what are they? Let us try to

understand. You will remember the time that the news came from Europe regarding the financial embarrassment of the publishing house in Christiania. Some in this country said that we ought to let the institution go; that the managers ought to have known better than to get so heavily in debt; that they had no right to be in such a situation. But had such advice been followed, would it have placed the workers in the publishing house in Norway on vantage ground, where they could carry on their work for the Master? Light was given me that the institution was to be placed where it could do its work. But the workers there could not do this without help. Their brethren in other lands were to help them, standing with them shoulder to shoulder, making their interests and their loss their own.”³

“Whenever you see or hear something that needs to be corrected, seek the Lord for wisdom and grace, that in trying to be faithful you may not be severe.

“It is always humiliating to have one’s errors pointed out. Do not make the experience more bitter by needless censure. Unkind criticism brings discouragement, making life sunless and unhappy.

“My brethren, prevail by love rather than by severity. When one at fault becomes conscious of his error, be careful not to destroy his self-respect. Do not seek to bruise and wound, but rather to bind up and heal. . . .

“Brethren, regard yourselves as missionaries, not among heathen, but among your fellow workers. It requires a vast amount of time and labor to convince one soul in regard to the special truths for this time. And when souls are turned from sin to righteousness, there is joy in the presence of the angels. Think you that the ministering spirits who watch over these souls are pleased to see how indifferently they are treated by many who claim to be Christians? Man’s preferences rule. Partiality is manifested. One is favored, while another is treated harshly.

“The angels look with awe and amazement upon the mission of Christ

to the world. They marvel at the love that moved Him to give Himself a sacrifice for the sins of men. But how lightly human beings regard the purchase of His blood!

“We need not begin by *trying* to love one another. The love of Christ in the heart is what is needed. When self is submerged in Christ, true love springs forth spontaneously.

“In patient forbearance we shall conquer. It is patience in service that brings rest to the soul. It is through humble, diligent, faithful toilers that the welfare of Israel is promoted. A word of love and encouragement will do more to subdue the hasty temper and willful disposition than all the faultfinding and censure that you can heap upon the erring one.”⁴

Sharpening our souls

Continuing back to the passage in Hebrews: In the next verses we are warned that “if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (10:26, 27). It’s interesting to notice that this warning about willful sin comes right after the admonition that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. Is there a connection here? Evidently it would appear that we could become more likely to commit willful sin—which is so deadly to our soul—if we are not continually in a situation in which we are held accountable to uphold Christlike behavior. When we are alone for too long, it becomes too easy to overlook our own defects of character.

“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” “The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise.” “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Proverbs 16:25; 12:15; 27:17). When we seek to avoid and escape this sharpening process, we tend to become spiritually dull.

“Those who do not feel the necessity of seeking the assembly

of the saints, with the precious assurance that the Lord will meet with them, show how lightly they value the help that God has provided for them. Satan is constantly at work to wound and poison the soul; in order to withstand his efforts we must breathe the atmosphere of heaven. We must individually get hold and keep hold of Christ.”⁵

Here again is reference to a precious individual work—yet it also reveals how important it is to assemble with others in Christ’s name. Why?

“The world in its wisdom knows not God. The world cannot see the beauty, the loveliness, the goodness, the holiness of divine truth. And in order that men may understand this, there must be a channel through which it shall come to the world. The church has been constituted that channel. Christ reveals Himself to us that we may reveal Him to others. Through His people are to be manifested the riches and glory of His unspeakable gift.

“God has committed to our hands a most sacred work, and we need to meet together to receive instruction, that we may be fitted to perform this work. We need to understand what part we shall individually be called upon to act in building up the cause of God in the earth, in vindicating God’s holy law, and in lifting up the Saviour as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world’ (John 1:29). We need to meet together and receive the divine touch, that we may understand our work in the home. Parents need to understand how they may send forth from the sanctuary of the home their sons and daughters so trained and educated that they will be fitted to shine as lights in the world. We need to understand in regard to the division of labor and how each part of the work is to be carried forward. Each one should understand the part he is to act, that there may be harmony of plan and of labor in the combined work of all.”⁶

“When difficulties arise among church members, let them be cleared away before the Sabbath comes. This

should be regarded as a Christian duty by every church member. ‘Let the peace of God rule in your hearts and be ye thankful’ (Colossians 3:15). Are you troubled and perplexed? Sweep away the rubbish that has been accumulating before the door of the heart and open the door, inviting Jesus to come in and abide as an honored Guest. Bring peace and comfort into your own hearts and the hearts of others. This is most blessed missionary work.”⁷

Shaping our life for eternity

“Many claim that it matters not what one believes, if his life is only right. But the life is molded by the faith.”⁸

And “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

“It is a serious mistake to neglect the public worship of God. The privileges of divine service should not be lightly regarded. Those who attend upon the sick are often unable to avail themselves of these privileges, but they should be careful not to absent themselves needlessly from the house of worship.”⁹

“The truth spoken by the living preacher will have greater influence than the same matter will have when published in the papers.”¹⁰

“Study the sacred Word prayerfully, for your own soul’s benefit. When you hear the word of living preachers, if they has a living connection with God, you will find that the Spirit and the word agree.”¹¹ *R*

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- ⁵ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 934.
- ⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 32, 33.
- ⁷ *Australasian Union Conference Record*, April 15, 1903.
- ⁸ *The Great Controversy*, p. 597.
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Why Do We Have General

Delegates of the 22nd General Conference Session of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, Roanoke, VA, U.S.A. 2015.

September 4–22, 2019 marks the hour of the 23rd General Conference Delegation and Spiritual Meetings of the SDA Reform Movement, held in Itu, Brazil. With this event, the question inevitably comes to mind: Why are such meetings needed? Is there a biblical principle involved here?

Order and organization

Order is the law of heaven. The holy angels are well organized and follow complete order and discipline. We read about them:

“There is perfect order and harmony in the Holy City. All the angels that are commissioned to visit the earth hold a golden card, which they present to the angels at the gates of the city as they pass in and out. Heaven is a good place.”¹

“Angels work harmoniously. Perfect order characterizes all their movements. The more closely we imitate the harmony and order of the

angelic host, the more successful will be the efforts of these heavenly agents in our behalf. If we see no necessity for harmonious action, and are disorderly, undisciplined, and disorganized in our course of action, angels, who are thoroughly organized and move in perfect order, cannot work for us successfully. They turn away in grief, for they are not authorized to bless confusion, distraction, and disorganization.”²

God desires that everything connected with His work on earth should be done properly, following the order which He has established. The Lord instituted that the representatives of His church should meet together in a general assembly to make plans for the advancement of His cause.

“God has ordained that the representatives of His church from all parts of the earth, when assembled in a General Conference, shall have authority.”³

The spirit of independence,

disorder and disorganization which is prevalent everywhere should not exist among God’s people. The idea of pulling alone, or being self-sent messengers, is not according to the plan of God. Let all be submissive, respectful, and follow system, order and organization which was established with great sacrifice, after much prayer, study and diligent effort.

“Let none entertain the thought that we can dispense with organization. It has cost us much study and many prayers for wisdom, that we know God has answered, to erect this structure. It has been built up by His direction, through much sacrifice and conflict. Let none of our brethren be so deceived as to attempt to tear it down, for you will thus bring in a condition of things that you do not dream of. In the name of the Lord I declare to you that it is to stand, strengthened, established, and settled. At God’s command, ‘Go forward,’ we advanced when the difficulties to be surmounted made the advance seem



Conference Delegations?

impossible. We know how much it has cost to work out God's plans in the past, which have made us as a people what we are. Then let everyone be exceedingly careful not to unsettle minds in regard to those things that God has ordained for our prosperity and success in advancing His cause."⁴

"Never should the mind of one man or the minds of a few men be regarded as sufficient in wisdom and power to control the work and to say what plans shall be followed. But when, in a General Conference, the judgment of the brethren assembled from all parts of the field is exercised, private independence and private judgment must not be stubbornly maintained, but surrendered."⁵

"God has not set any kingly power . . . Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church. The church chooses the officers of the state conferences. Delegates chosen by the state conferences choose the officers of the union conferences,

and delegates chosen by the union conferences choose the officers of the General Conference. By this arrangement every conference, every institution, every church, and every individual, either directly or through representatives, has a voice in the election of the men who bear the chief responsibilities in the General Conference."⁶

In obedience to this principle established by God, the representatives of our church from all parts of the world meet together every four years to consider the most advantageous ways of organizing the work, and to select the most qualified officers to carry the heaviest responsibilities.

Working together

Let us keep in mind the inspired words of the apostle Paul, that the Lord "gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the

perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:11–16).

Jesus Christ organized His church. He established different offices, as the Bible verse reads: Some apostles, some prophets, teachers, pastors, and others. A long list of officers in the church. Why is God's church organized, and responsibilities shared among these various officers? The Bible verse is clear. The reason given in Ephesians 4:12 is:

1. "For the perfecting of the saints." The members of God's church in the Bible are often called saints. They must be perfect in order to be fitted for



the kingdom of God.

2. “For the work of the ministry.” When we speak of the ministry we should understand that not all must be ordained ministers to do Bible work. The work of a minister is to serve, and for service the church was organized. Some servants may have greater responsibilities than others, but come to “the knowledge of the Son of God.”

To know Jesus Christ is not only to know that He came from heaven to this world, to be acquainted with the history of His crucifixion, resurrection, ascension, and His intercession for us before the Father! These things are important to know; but to know Jesus Christ implies more than that. It is to have Him as our best friend, the first and the last, and the only one in whom we can trust fully. We should have a personal experience with Jesus, not simply to know who He was and what He is doing. Why is it important to “reach perfection”? Without it no one will be fitted for the kingdom.

The apostle Paul explains why these things must be followed, so that we should not be children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. If there was ever a time when new doctrines have come, it is now! This is why the church is organized, so that we may not be deceived. This was the concern of the

apostle Paul. We should be united, and speak the same things, so that there may be no divisions among us.

True unity does not mean conformity in everything. Every person has his or her own thoughts and opinions, and there is a diversity of gifts in the church, but we still can have unity in this diversity. All the members are expected to help and serve others, and to fulfill these duties faithfully.

3. For “the edifying of the body of Christ,” and the body is His church. He is the head and the church is the body with many different members as God disposed, and this body should be edified. What is the meaning of the word “edify”? It means to construct or to build up, so that the church may reach perfection.

We must continue cooperating with the body, and build it up for the perfection of the saints, until we reach unity of the faith, and we know who Jesus Christ is.

Paul was not the only one concerned that unity should exist among the believers:

“That union and love might exist among His disciples was the burden of our Saviour’s last prayer for them prior to His crucifixion. With the agony of the cross before Him, His solicitude was not for Himself, but for those whom He should leave to

carry forward His work in the earth. The severest trials awaited them, but Jesus saw that their greatest danger would be from a spirit of bitterness and division. Hence He prayed: ‘Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.’

“That prayer of Christ embraces all His followers to the close of time. Our Saviour foresaw the trials and dangers of His people; He is not unmindful of the dissensions and divisions that distract and weaken His church. He is looking upon us with deeper interest and more tender compassion than moves an earthly parent’s heart toward a wayward, afflicted child. He bids us learn of Him. He invites our confidence. He bids us open our hearts to receive His love. He has pledged Himself to be our helper.”⁷

We all know the prayer of Jesus found in John 17, especially verse 20, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for

them also which shall believe on me through their word.” Thus He included all who would believe on His name, that they may all be one.

“Union is strength; division is weakness. When those who believe present truth are united, they exert a telling influence. Satan well understands this. Never was he more determined than now to make of none effect the truth of God by causing bitterness and dissension among the Lord’s people.”⁸

Satan understands that when the people of God are united they are strong and if there is division, that constitutes weakness. For this reason he is determined to cause division. The Spirit of Prophecy continues:

“The world is against us, the popular churches are against us, the laws of the land will soon be against us. If there was ever a time when people of God should press together, it is now.”⁹

Whenever there are difficulties and differences, what should be our duty?

“Upon the occurrence of trials in the church let every member examine his own heart to see if the cause of trouble does not occur within.”⁹

Many times we have trials, and the worse meeting in any committee is to solve problems. The instruction from

the Spirit of Prophecy is: Let every one examine himself or herself if he or she is not the problem! Sometimes the very one causing problems does not realize that he or she is the cause of the problem.

“By spiritual pride, a desire to dictate, an ambitious longing for honor or position, a lack of self-control, by the indulgence of passion or prejudice, by instability or lack of judgment, the church may be disturbed and her peace sacrificed.”¹¹

What are the causes of problems in the church? The Spirit of Prophecy enumerates them:

1. “Spiritual pride!” Does this spirit exist? Yes, otherwise the Spirit of Prophecy would not have written about it!

2. “A desire to dictate.” If there is any point above all that I strove to correct in my years of administrative labor, it was to eliminate from any level of our church the spirit of dictatorship, because that can cause great problems.

3. “Ambition.” Those that aspire for positions do not understand the responsibility of holding a position. If they did, they would not have any desire to be there.

4. “Lack of self-control and indulgence of passion and prejudice,

instability, and lack of discernment.” If we want to be united and to have no problems in our church, let us avoid spiritual pride, a desire to dictate, seeking positions, lack of self-control, prejudice, instability, and lack of judgment, and let us pray that these things may be eliminated from among us.

From the same chapter, in volume 5, we read further:

“Difficulties are often caused by the vendors of gossip, whose whispered hints and suggestions poison unsuspecting minds and separate the closest friends. Mischief-makers are seconded in their evil work by the many who stand with open ears and evil heart, saying: ‘Report, . . . and we will report it.’ This sin should not be tolerated among the followers of Christ. . . .

“Christians should regard it as a religious duty to repress a spirit of envy or emulation. They should rejoice in the superior reputation or prosperity of their brethren, even when their own character or achievements seem to be cast in the shade.”¹²

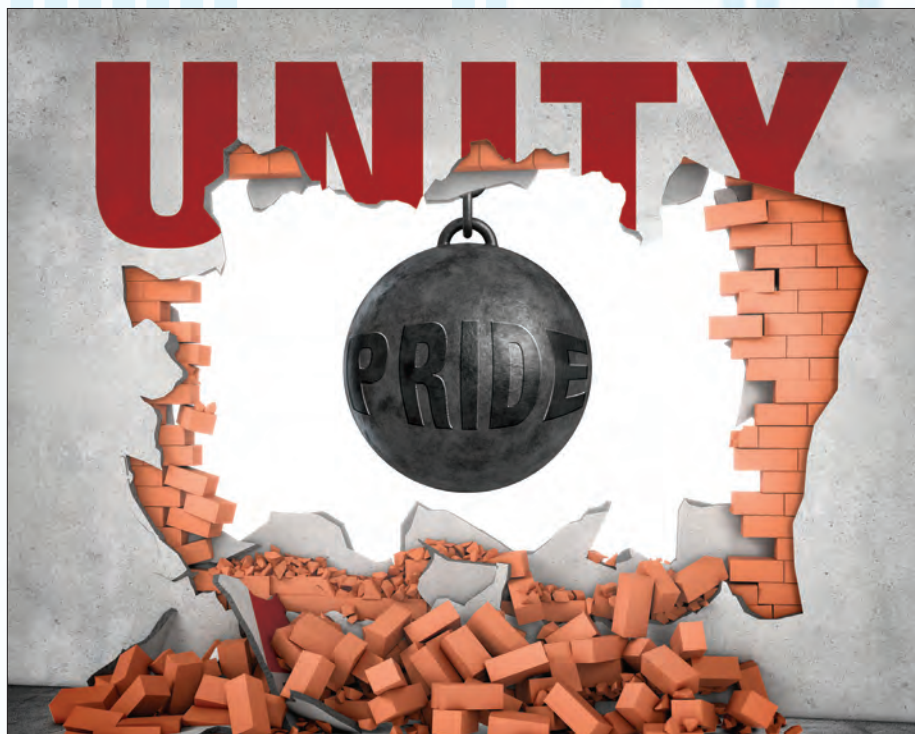
“Those who are truly converted will press together in Christian unity. Let there be no division in the church of God, no unwise authority exercised over those who accept the truth. The meekness of Christ is to appear in all that is said and done.”¹³

Let us focus on the prayer of Jesus Christ, that “we all may be one.” In spite of our varied characteristics, we still can reach unity of action.

It is my desire and prayer that the Lord may bless us all, so that the spirit of unity may prevail, that we all may be one with Christ and each other. This is my wish and prayer! *R*

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- ⁴ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 27, 28.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 260.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 8, pp. 236, 237.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 236, 237.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 236.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 241.
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Messages to

COUNCILS

Our present dangers

Brethren and sisters, I appeal to you as Seventh-day Adventists to be all that this name signifies. There is danger of departing from the spirit of the message, and adopting measures that will imperil the work of God. . . .

In your councils, how little experience many of you have in humbling the heart before God! How little you know of striving in prayer that you may enter in at the strait gate! **The question of highest importance to you is, "Do I have an experimental knowledge of God?"** Am I ready to believe what He tells me, to do what He bids, instead of following my own judgment? Am I drawing nearer to God? The Scripture says, "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." If your hearts are not fully surrendered to God, if you do not submit your will to His, you will devise and plan without the guidance of Him who is mighty in counsel. . . .

How is it when light is given to correct your errors? Do you then accept the light? . . .

"To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the word of God. The Spirit which inspired

the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.

"Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." The True Witness says of the church, after enumerating many virtues, "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love." The prevailing idolatry and iniquity have had a paralyzing, deadening influence upon piety and godliness. There is distrust, selfishness, and suspicion. A few hold fast their profession of faith. Others have been leaving the simplicity of the faith, and as the result they are now treading on the border-land of skepticism. . . .

Would that the spiritual eyesight of all the workers might be clear to distinguish the sacred from the common. Blinded by self-love, many lose sight of the claims of others, and also of the glory of God. When you see yourselves as you really are, and see God as He wants you to see Him, you will feel deeply your need of Jesus, and will seek Him with contrite hearts. Then He will be found of you. You will seek for His heavenly treasure of graces as one seeks for precious pearls; and when you find it, there will be no doubt on the minds of your brethren but that you have found the pearl of great price. You will have the mind of Christ; you will work and speak as Christ did.

The people of God are not to be guided by the opinions or practices of the world. . . .

The word of God plainly declares that His law is to be scorned,

trampled upon, by the world; there will be an extraordinary prevalence of iniquity. . . .

We have need now for more than human wisdom in reading and searching the Scriptures; and **if we come to God's word with humble hearts, He will raise up a standard for us against the lawless element. . . .**

When the world makes void the law of God, what will be the effect upon the truly obedient and righteous? Will they be carried away by the strong current of evil? Because so many rank themselves under the banner of the prince of darkness, will God's commandment keeping people swerve from their allegiance? Never! Not one who is abiding in Christ will fail or fall. His followers will bow in obedience to a higher authority than that of any earthly potentate. . . . The conflict must be met, in the spirit and meekness of Christ; the truth is to be maintained and advocated as it is in Jesus. Wealth, honor, comfort, home—everything else—is to be a secondary consideration. The truth must not be hid, it must not be denied or disguised, but fully avowed, and boldly proclaimed. . . .

There is every encouragement, in the promises of God, for those who put their trust in Him. The prospect of being brought into personal danger and distress, need not cause despondency, but should quicken the vigor and hopes of God's people; for the time of their peril is the

season for God to grant them clearer manifestations of His power. We are not to sit in calm expectancy of oppression and tribulation, and fold our hands, doing nothing to avert the evil. Let our united cries be sent up to heaven. Pray and work, and work and pray. But let none act rashly. **Learn as never before that you must be meek and lowly in heart.** . . .

There is to be no compromise with those who make void the law of God. It is not safe to rely upon them as counselors. Our testimony is not to be less decided now than formerly; our real position is not to be cloaked in order to please the world's great men. They may desire us to unite with them and accept their plans, and may make propositions in regard to our course of action which may give the enemy an advantage over us. "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy." While we should not seek for controversy, and should not needlessly offend, we must present the truth clearly and decidedly, and stand firm to what God has taught us in His word. You are not to look to the world in order to learn what you shall write and publish or what you shall speak. Let all your words and works testify, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables." "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place."

The apostle Paul tells us, "After that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." This was the carrying out of God's plan for the conviction and conversion of men, who are constantly tempted to magnify their own powers. . . .

What is needed in this, our time of danger, is fervent prayer, mingled with earnest faith, a reliance upon God when Satan casts His shadow over God's people. Let everyone bear in mind that God delights to listen to the supplications of His people; **for the prevailing iniquity calls for more earnest prayer,** and God has promised that He will avenge His own elect, who cry

day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them. . . .

When His people shall be in the greatest danger, seemingly unable to stand against the power of Satan, God will work in their behalf, Man's extremity is God's opportunity. . . .

If we place ourselves on the side of God, of Christ and the heavenly intelligences, the broad shield of Omnipotence is over us, the mighty God of Israel is our helper, and we need not fear. Those who touch the people of God, touch the apple of His eye.

Now the great question is, Are we Bible Christians—doers of the word? . . . The spirit of self-sufficiency and selfish independence that has for years been coming into the hearts of our people is the work of the enemy, that he may cause our feet to slide; and we cannot afford to indulge it. May God help us to put it away! Begin right in your own homes; begin there to be truly courteous, as Christ was; be kind; live not to please yourselves. Then **if you are Christians at home, you will carry the same spirit into the church. You will carry it into your councils.** . . .

Brethren, will you carry the spirit of Christ with you as you return to your homes and churches? Will you put away unbelief and criticism? We are coming to a time when, more than ever before, we shall need to press together, to labor unitedly. In union there is strength. In discord and disunion there is only weakness. . . .

What we want is the spirit of Jesus. When we have this, we shall love one another. Here are the credentials that we are to bear: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." We need to pray more; and when we have Christ abiding in the soul, His spirit in me will harmonize with His spirit in you; and He who controls our minds, controls also the heavenly intelligences, and they cooperate with us. Then in every council you will have the presence of One mighty in counsel. Jesus will be there. There will be no contention, no strife, no stirring up of the worst passions of the heart. What we want is to find refuge in Jesus.

What we want is to be converted; and O, how I have longed for the converting power of God to go through our assemblies! . . .

Shall we fall on the Rock and be broken? Jesus is soon coming in the clouds of heaven. What is He doing now?—He is testing a people here upon the earth, to see if they can live in harmony, without revolt, in heaven. . . .

Do not let any man or woman, or any council or party, lead you to suppress the precious light that God has permitted to shine from heaven in regard to the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. You need more, much more, of the Spirit of Christ, to take the coldness and iron out of your hearts. Jesus humbled Himself. His whole life was one of humiliation and suffering. He was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And all this He bore, that sinners might be redeemed. This is the spirit that must dwell in our hearts.

The object of our faith, hope, and love, should be Jesus—Jesus always, Jesus only. A mere profession of faith will not save us; we must have real faith in Christ. Then the heart will be renewed; we shall be born again. Christ takes our sins upon Himself, and imparts to us His righteousness. . . .

What does Christ say?—"Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Then let us feast upon Christ. Let us enjoy His love, and praise God for this great salvation. Then we shall come together, heart to heart. When we shall subdue our pride, when we shall pluck from the garden of the soul every fiber of the root of bitterness, our hearts will flow together as the heart of one. And the Saviour's promise is, "If any two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." Then, I ask, Where is our power?—It is in the sincere prayers going up to heaven continually that Christ will reveal himself to us. And he will do it. The light and glory of God will rest upon His people. And then the world will see, and will say, "Behold, how

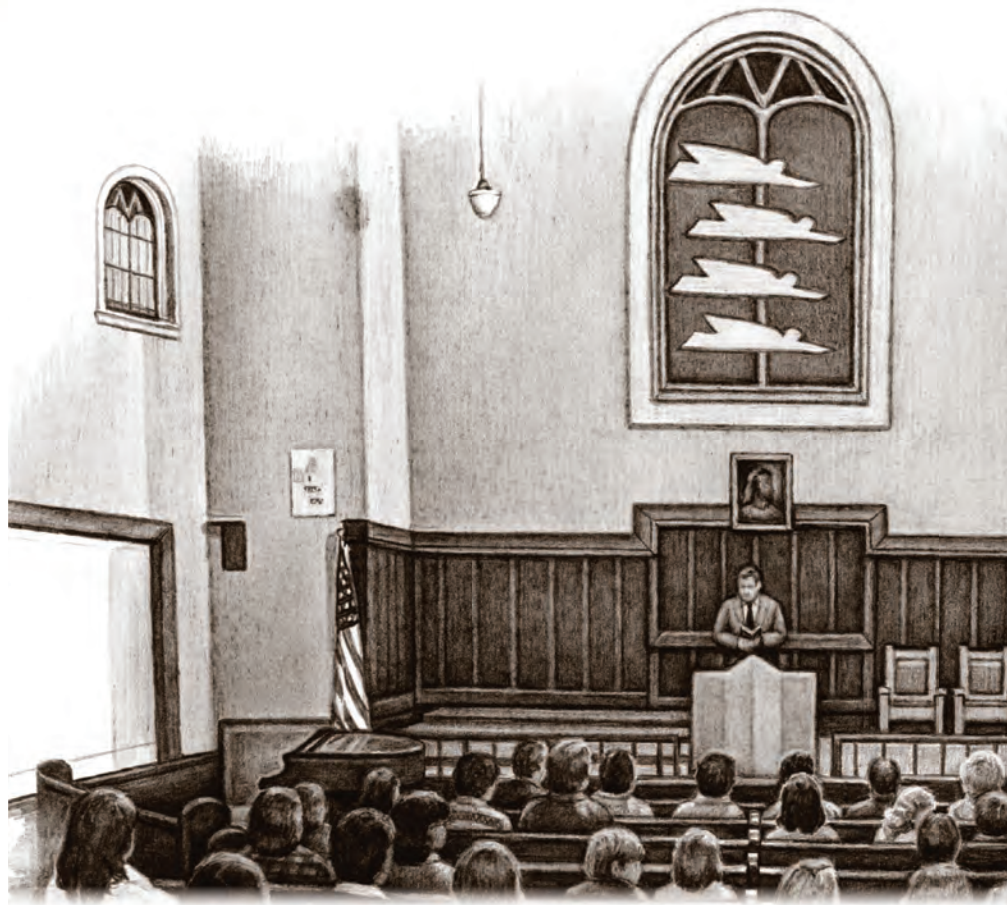
these brethren love one another." Then all this heart burning and distrust will cease, and in place of it, there will be love and union, courtesy, kindness, and tenderness. The very countenances will shine with the glory of God. We shall all see eye to eye. We shall speak the same things, and be of the same judgment. . . .

"I have somewhat against thee," says the True Witness, "because thou hast left thy first love." And he says, "Except thou repent," "I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place." Why?—Because in our separation from one another we are separated from Christ. We want to press together. O, how many times, when I have seemed to be in the presence of God and holy angels, I have heard the angel voice saying, "Press together, press together, press together. Do not let Satan cast his hellish shadow between brethren. Press together; in unity there is strength."

I repeat the message to you. As you go to your homes, be determined that you will press together; seek God with all the heart, and you will find him, and the love of Christ, that passeth understanding, will come into your hearts and lives.

I tell you, we have enough to do. There is no time to lose in doubt and darkness and inactivity. Your attention has been called to the need of missionary work in almost all parts of the world. . . .

May God help us to awake to our duty! If you have hold of the work of God, I beseech you, for Christ's sake, do not let go. If God sees that your souls are in danger, He will send reproof to you. Do not rise up against it. Say, "I will seek God, I will find Him, and will be converted." The True Witness says, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent." Yes, repent. It is not for you to be jealous of the reprover. It is not for you to dissect or discount the message that God may send you. It is for you to receive it, and reform, and be thankful that the Lord has not left you to blindness of mind and hardness of heart. May God help you to be converted.



I beseech you to take Christ with you as you go to your churches. "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears." Many are unwilling to have their way crossed. Now, it is not by following your own way that you will enter heaven; it is by choosing God's way. Will you take it? It is not your spirit that is going into heaven; it is Christ's spirit. Will you have it? Jesus says, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." Then I ask, How is it that so many of you are saying you do not know whether you are accepted of God or not; that you want to find Jesus? Don't you know whether you have opened the door? Don't you know whether you have invited Him in? If you have not, invite Him now. Don't wait a moment. Open the door, and let Jesus in.

Now let us take Christ's yoke upon us, and learn of Him. He says His yoke is easy, and I believe it. He says the burden is light, and I believe that, too. When you are wearing Christ's yoke, all your complaining and dissension will cease. When Christ's disciples fell into controversy by the way, He asked them. "What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest. . . . And he took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name, receiveth me: and I whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me, but him that sent me." Now let us be like children before God. Let us be teachable, willing to learn, and then the Spirit of God will cement our hearts together, and we shall be one in Christ Jesus. Then the Father will love us, even as He loves His Son. Let this thought fill the soul with thankfulness, and go on your way to Zion, making melody in your hearts



to God. You are called out of darkness to show forth his marvelous light. Go forward, rejoicing in the righteousness of Christ. . . .

Thank God, it is not too late, even at the eleventh hour, for wrongs to be made right. If we learn what is to be the joy of our calling, we shall praise God with heart and soul and voice. And at last we shall have a glorious triumph when our captivity shall be turned, and our mourning and tears shall be forever past. What a shout of praise will then go forth from human lips! Shall we begin it here? God grant that we may! God help you to put away every fiber of the root of bitterness that has been planted in so many hearts. May you put it away, so that it shall never bud nor blossom from this time. Let Christ kill it by His Holy Spirit in every heart. God grant that the root of bitterness may die!¹

What might have been

To the Battle Creek Church:

One day at noon I was writing of the work that might have been done at

the last General Conference if the men in positions of trust had followed the will and way of God. Those who have had great light have not walked in the light. The meeting was closed, and the break was not made. Men did not humble themselves before the Lord as they should have done, and the Holy Spirit was not imparted.

I had written thus far when I lost consciousness, and I seemed to be witnessing a scene in Battle Creek.

We were assembled in the auditorium of the Tabernacle. Prayer was offered, a hymn was sung, and prayer was again offered. Most earnest supplication was made to God. The meeting was marked by the presence of the Holy Spirit. The work went deep, and some present were weeping aloud.

One arose from his bowed position and said that in the past he had not been in union with certain ones and had felt no love for them, but that now he saw himself as he was. With great solemnity he repeated the message to the Laodicean church: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,' In my self-sufficiency this is just the way I felt," he said. "And knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' I now see that this is my condition. My eyes are opened. My spirit has been hard and unjust. I thought myself righteous, but my heart is broken, and I see my need of the precious counsel of the One who has searched me through and through. Oh, how gracious and compassionate and loving are the words, 'I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see'" (Revelation 3:17, 18).

The speaker turned to those who had been praying, and said: "We have something to do. We must confess our sins, and humble our hearts before God." He made heartbroken confessions and then stepped up to several of the brethren, one after another, and extended his hand, asking forgiveness. Those to whom he spoke sprang to their

feet, making confession and asking forgiveness, and they fell upon one another's necks, weeping. The spirit of confession spread through the entire congregation. It was a Pentecostal season. God's praises were sung, and far into the night, until nearly morning, the work was carried on.

The following words were often repeated, with clear distinctness: "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me" (Verses 19, 20).

No one seemed to be too proud to make heartfelt confession, and those who led in this work were the ones who had influence, but had not before had courage to confess their sins.

There was rejoicing such as never before had been heard in the Tabernacle.

Then I aroused from my unconsciousness, and for a while could not think where I was. My pen was still in my hand. The words were spoken to me: "*This might have been*. All this the Lord was waiting to do for His people. All heaven was waiting to be gracious." I thought of where we might have been had thorough work been done at the last General Conference, and agony of disappointment came over me as I realized that what I had witnessed was not a reality. . . .

Man is fickle, filled with self-esteem, pride, and selfishness. Let the workers doing God's service trust wholly in the Lord. Then the leaders will reveal that they are willing to be led, not by human wisdom, which is as useless to lean upon as is a broken reed, but by the wisdom of the Lord, who has said: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering" (James 1:5, 6).² *R*

¹ *General Conference Daily Bulletin*, April 13, 1891. [Emphasis added.]

² *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 104–106.



Reverence

Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:30).

This short Bible verse contains three deep messages:

1. God’s people should keep the seventh-day Sabbath,
2. They should reverence God’s sanctuary, and
3. They must recognize that the Lord is the Creator of both the Sabbath and the sanctuary.

What is the meaning of “reverence”? The dictionary explains it as a feeling or attitude of deep respect, love, awe, and esteem, as for something sacred.

In the entire Bible, the actual word “reverence” is found only a few times, yet the concept of revering the holiness of God is emphasized throughout the scriptures.

The first instance of the word, “reverence” was used to introduce this article (Leviticus 19:30). The second is a warning to Israel: “You shall not pay reverence to the gods of the Amorites,

in whose land you dwell” (Judges 6:10, DBT). In the New Testament we find the other two scriptures: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21, NIV). “But in your hearts reverence Christ as Lord” (1 Peter 3:15, RSV).

From the Bible, we find many examples as people considered God’s presence.

Moses

When Moses was feeding the flocks of his father-in-law, his attention was attracted to a strange burning bush. The Bible says that “The angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said: I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And He said, Draw not nigh hither: put off

thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:2–5).

In this Scripture, we first find mention of “the angel of the Lord.” Who was the “angel of the Lord,” and “God”? It was Christ.

“It was He who, as the Angel of the covenant, had revealed Himself to the fathers in ages past. ‘And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God.’

“Humility and reverence should characterize the deportment of all who come into the presence of God. In the name of Jesus, we may come before Him with confidence, but we must not approach Him with the boldness of presumption, as though He were on a level with ourselves. There are those who address the great and all-powerful and holy God, who dwelleth in light unapproachable, as they would address an equal, or even an inferior. There are those who conduct themselves in His house as they would not presume to do in the audience chamber of an earthly ruler. These should remember that they are in His

sight whom seraphim adore, before whom angels veil their faces. God is greatly to be revered; all who truly realize His presence will bow in humility before Him, and, like Jacob beholding the vision of God, they will cry out, 'How dreadful is this place! This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.'"¹

Joshua

After crossing the Jordan River before taking the city of Jericho, Joshua went to a secluded place to have a special time of prayer and meditation. He was surprised when he met a "man over against him with his sword drawn in his hand: and Joshua went unto him, and said unto him, Art thou for us, or for our adversaries? And he said, Nay; but as captain of the host of the Lord am I now come. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship, and said unto him, What saith my Lord unto his servant? And the captain of the Lord's host said unto Joshua, Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:13–15).

Who was that "captain of the host of the Lord?" And why that place was holy? As Christ had appeared to Moses amid the burning bush, He appeared to Joshua. That place was holy because the Lord Jesus was there.

"It was Christ, the Exalted One, who stood before the leader of Israel. Awe-stricken, Joshua fell upon his face and worshiped, and heard the assurance, 'I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valor,' and he received instruction for the capture of the city."²

Manoah and his wife

In the book of Judges, chapter 13, we find another encounter with Christ in the Old Testament.

Because of their apostasy, Israel was under the control of the Philistines. Then, "the angel of the Lord appeared unto the woman [Manoah's wife], and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not; but thou shalt

conceive and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing; for, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines" (Verses 3–5).

After this encounter, the woman called her husband, Manoah, and told him her experience. Answering the request of Manoah, the "angel of the Lord" came again and repeated all the instructions given to his wife.

When Manoah asked about his name, the "angel of the Lord" told him: "Why askest thou thus after my name, seeing it is secret?" The Revised Standard Version renders this verse thus: "Why do you ask my name, seeing it is wonderful?"

In Isaiah 9:6 Jesus is called the "Wonderful Counselor."

When Manoah realized who the "angel of the Lord" actually was, he solemnly said: "We shall surely die, because we have seen God." (Verse 22).

How are we practicing reverence in the family and in the church?

In reality, our condition regarding the due reverence needs a great reform.

Actually, when the preacher, who has spent much time in prayer and in the preparation of the sermon, is presenting his message, some attendees might be whispering with one another and distracting others from hearing the message. The Holy Spirit is offended and the message loses its power. Other people are busy with their cellular phones watching something totally outside the holy environment and hindering others from hearing the message which was prepared for the purpose of saving people.

Sadly, this practice is becoming common in many places. No doubt about it, this kind of behavior is a sure cause of weak spirituality of the church. In fact, it is killing the spiritual life of many people and

causing their eternal perdition. We firmly believe that we need a thorough reformation in this regard.

As we approach the coming General Conference delegation session and public meetings, we need a deep preparation for those meetings so that we can enjoy the messages that God's servants will be inspired to present to our people.

The Spirit of Prophecy and reverence

"A precious grace that should be carefully cherished is reverence.

"The education and training of the youth should be of a character that would exalt sacred things, and encourage pure devotion for God in His house. Many who profess to be children of the heavenly King have no true appreciation of the sacredness of eternal things.

"True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen the heart of every child should be deeply impressed.

"God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.' Psalm 89:7.

"Reverence should be shown also for the name of God. Never should that name be spoken lightly or thoughtlessly. Even in prayer its frequent or needless repetition should be avoided. 'Holy and reverend is his name.' Psalm 111:9. Angels, as they speak it, veil their faces. With what reverence should we, who are fallen and sinful, take it upon our lips!

"We should reverence God's Word. For the printed volume we should show respect, never putting it to common uses or handling it carelessly. And never should Scripture be quoted in a jest or paraphrased to point a witty saying. 'Every word of God is pure'; 'as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times' (Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 12:6).

"Children should be taught to respect every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. Parents are



“From the sacredness which was attached to the earthly sanctuary, Christians may learn how they should regard the place where the Lord meets with His people. There has been a great change, not for the better, but for the worse, in the habits and customs of the people in reference to religious worship. The precious,

ever to magnify the precepts of the law of the Lord before their children, by showing obedience to that law, by themselves living under the control of God. If a sense of the sacredness of the law takes possession of the parents, it will surely transform the character by converting the soul.

“In every Christian home God should be honored by the morning and evening sacrifices of prayer and praise. Children should be taught to respect and reverence the hour of prayer.

“The hour and place of prayer and the services of public worship the child should be taught to regard as sacred because God is there. And as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened. . . .

“Jacob, after beholding the vision of the angels, exclaimed, ‘The Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. . . . This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.’ Genesis 28:16, 17.

“‘The Lord is in his holy temple: let all the earth keep silence before him.’ Habakkuk 2:20.

“Many . . . have no true appreciation of the sacredness of eternal things. Nearly all need to be taught how to conduct themselves in the house of God. Parents should not only teach, but command, their children to enter the sanctuary with sobriety and reverence.

the sacred things which connect us with God are fast losing their hold upon our minds and hearts and are being brought down to the level of the common things. The reverence which the people had anciently for the sanctuary, where they met with God in sacred service, has largely passed away. Nevertheless, God Himself gave the order of His service, exalting it high above everything of a temporal nature.

“The house of God is often desecrated, and the Sabbath violated by Sabbath-believers’ children. In some cases, they are even allowed to run about the house, play, talk, and manifest their evil tempers in the very meetings where the saints should worship God in the beauty of holiness. And the place that should be holy, and where a holy stillness should reign, and where there should be perfect order, neatness, and humility, is made to be a perfect Babylon, ‘confusion.’ This is enough to bring God’s displeasure and shut His presence from our assemblies.

“It is too true that reverence for the house of God has become almost extinct. Sacred things and places are not discerned; the holy and exalted are not appreciated. Is there not a cause for the want of fervent piety in our families? Is it not because the high standard of religion is left to trail in the dust? God gave rules of order,

perfect and exact, to His ancient people. Has His character changed? Is He not the great and mighty God who rules in the heaven of heavens? Would it not be well for us often to read the directions given by God Himself to the Hebrews, that we who have the light of the glorious truth shining upon us may imitate their reverence for the house of God? We have abundant reason . . . even to be more thoughtful and reverential in our worship than had the Jews. But an enemy has been at work to destroy our faith in the sacredness of Christian worship.

“The house is the sanctuary for the family, and the closet or the grove the most retired place for individual worship; but the church is the sanctuary for the congregation. There should be rules regarding the time, the place, and the manner of worshiping.”³

A good practice in order to promote reverence

In many of our churches, a good practice exists in order to set the tone to promote the keeping of reverence and, at the same time, prepare the mind of the worshippers to receive the word of God. At least 15 minutes before the Sabbath School meeting, a song service is held, when the worshippers suggest their favorite hymns. During this time of praise, talking to each other is avoided, and a very solemn atmosphere is felt. The same might be done in preparation for the Divine Service as well.

We recommend that this practice be introduced in all our churches around the world. For sure, our reverence in the house of God will increase. Result: The Holy Spirit will impress much more powerfully the minds of the worshippers and our spiritual life will progress, and God will be honored. *R*

Reference

¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 251, 252.

² *Ibid.*, p. 487.

³ *Child Guidance*, pp. 538–541.

A Blessed Land

Brazil, the site of the 23rd Delegation Session of the SDA Reform Movement, September 2019

Like floating carpets, they suddenly appeared, "in abundance," swaying in the transparent waters of a sea that reflected the colors of dusk. The sailors recognized them as soon as they saw them before they disappeared on the horizon: they were the famous "bottles"—the great clumps of seaweed that danced together in the rippling waves produced by the advance of the proud fleet. For seasoned sailors of that time, it was a clear sign that land was near.

At dawn the next day, the quacking of seabirds broke the silence of the seas. They were known at the time as "buggers." After almost a hundred years of navigation through the Atlantic Ocean, the appearance of this seagull was taken as a clear indication that within a few hours a sailor would shout: "Land in sight!"

On February 15, 1500, Pedro Álvares Cabral, a Portuguese nobleman of 32–33 years old, was appointed chief captain of an expedition to India. The fleet under his command departed from Lisbon on March 9, 1500, at noon.

They crossed the Equator on April 9 and sailed westward, moving as far as possible from the African continent, using a navigation

technique known as the return of the sea. On the afternoon of Wednesday, April 22, 1500, the fleet anchored near the mountain that Pedro Álvares christened "Pascoal" (since that was the Easter week). The hill is located in what is now the northeastern coast of Brazil, in the state of Bahia, about 60 km from Porto Seguro.

What was the impact of the discovery?

For the next 30 or 50 years after the "discovery" of the new land, this would represent nothing more than a refreshing break in the midst of a long and tiresome oceanic voyage to the much-dreamed-of "Indies".

If Brazil's location was not known, its existence was at least predictable. Decades before Cabral's famous voyage, the Portuguese were certain that there were islands or lands to the west of the Azores and Madeira, where the winds occasionally brought up trunks with mysterious carvings. A strong indication that the Portuguese knew much more than they divulged is in their protest against the papal bull *Inter Caetera* [or *Coetera*], issued by Pope Alexander VI in 1493. According to the document, an imaginary line (meridian) was traced to one hundred leagues (about

480 km) west of the Cape Verde Islands. The lands found east of the line would remain with Portugal. This configuration infuriated the Portuguese kingdom. In 1494, the Treaty of Tordesillas was published, extending the Portuguese dominion to the west up to 370 leagues (1,770 km) beyond the islands of Cape Verde. If the waters west of the islands were unknown, why did they feel enraged and ask for a considerable extension of their rule in that direction?

But how could we imagine that the process that was about to begin the following morning would be the beginning of Brazil's integration into the Atlantic world, the mercantile circuit and European civilization? On April 22, 1500, it was impossible to even imagine it.

From Cabral to the 21st Century

Since Cabral's epic, Brazil has gone through many historical phases, beginning with the three centuries in which it was a colony belonging Portugal until in 1822 when it declared itself independent of the Portuguese crown. At the end of the 19th century it became a republic, and over the course of the 20th century and into the 21st century, faced serious

internal problems: a civil war (1932, São Paulo), the Vargas dictatorship (1932–1954), another extreme right dictatorship (1964) and eight direct elections for president (1989, 1994, 1998, 2002, 2006, 2010, 2014 and 2018). The map of Brazil changed a lot after the Proclamation of the Republic (1889). Besides the State of Amazonas created in 1889, the novelty is the territory of Acre (bought from Bolivia in 1903). After 1960, the last changes that were made left Brazil with the face it has today—with 26 states plus the Federal District.

How do foreigners see Brazil?

According to a survey released in November 2015 by the Ministry of Tourism, the main highlight in the evaluations given by international tourists visiting this country is hospitality. The survey was conducted in partnership with the Institute of Economic Research Foundation (FIPE) and involved over 44,000 people, of whom about 10,000 were interviewed during the World Cup (2014) in 15 Brazilian airports and ten land borders. According to the study,

1. Leisure remains the main motivation of tourists, registering the highest number at the historical soccer series in 2014;

2. Tourists from Europe and the United States come twice as often as visitors from South America;
3. Rio de Janeiro remains as the top Brazilian destination;
4. Brazilian hospitality is recognized in many parts of the world. The welcoming way and the kind warmth of the people is also one of the reasons that generates a high rate of return: 95.1%.

Brazilians and the Gospel

Brazil is a typically religious country. The main religion since the 16th century has been Roman Catholicism, which was introduced by Jesuit missionaries who accompanied the Portuguese explorers and settlers on the newly discovered lands. Brazil is considered to have the largest representation of nominal Catholics in the world, with 64.6% of the Brazilian population declaring themselves Catholics, according to the 2010 census by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics.

Protestantism is the second largest religious segment in Brazil, represented mainly by evangelical churches, with about 59.8 million faithful. Among the largest traditional Protestant denominations in Brazil in the number of adherents are Baptists (3.7 million), Presbyterians (1.5 million), Seventh-day Adventists (1.5 million), Lutherans (one million) and Methodists (340,000). Among the Pentecostal and Neo-Pentecostal Protestants, the most prominent groups are the Assembly of God (12.3 million), the Christian Congregation in Brazil (2.3 million), the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (1.8 million) and Church of the Foursquare Gospel (1.8 million).

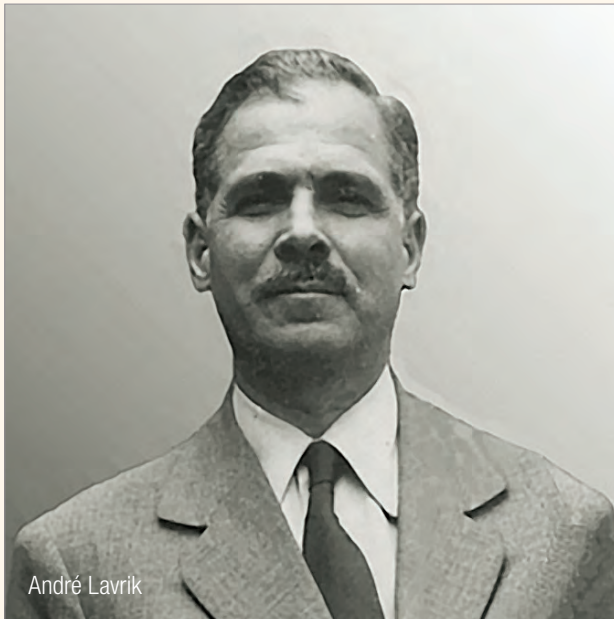
The SDA Reform Movement in Brazil

Besides the various denominations mentioned above, our country also houses the world's largest concentration of SDA Reformers. According to the report of the Secretariat of the SDA Reform Movement in Brazil (consulted on March 31, 2019), there are 10,543 members of the Reform Movement in Brazil, distributed among the North and South Unions (5,506 and 5,037 respectively).

The first reform Bible worker to arrive in Brazil was André Lavrik. Shortly after his arrival in December 1924, he began to work as a volunteer for God. Before the end of 1927, a group was organized in Nova Europa (“New Europe”), in the state of São Paulo. In November of the same year, a small meeting of Reformers was held in Vila Anastácio, a suburb of the capital of São Paulo. This was the first SDARM conference in Brazil. Approximately 20 people were present. It was November 5, 1927. Carlos Kozel, a minister from San Nicolás, Argentina, celebrated the baptism of the first two reformers: André Cekan and his father. A small group of nine members was organized in São Paulo.

Brother André Cekan informed us: “In those days, we had no minister in Brazil. Lay people led our meetings. But there was the serious language barrier. Some spoke Romanian and Hungarian. Others, only Hungarian. Some spoke Russian and Romanian. Others, only Russian. Some, just German. When a brother was invited to present a study, the most he could do was announce the biblical texts one after the other. Even so, the message was not always understood by everyone. Sometimes it was necessary to write the verses on the chalkboard. And in the meeting, everyone examined the passages in the Bible itself. When the hymn was announced, everyone sang, each in his own language.

“In our first conference, in São Paulo in November 1927, Brother Kozel spoke in German. We had no



André Lavrik

interpreter. A Hungarian, Catholic lady was invited to translate from German to Hungarian. Then the translation was made for the Romanian, and the Romanian for the Russian.

“Though we could not easily understand each other, we felt that we were united by the unbreakable power of Christ’s love in our hearts. No one was bothered by the barriers of communication. No one was in a hurry to go home.”

The work continued to expand at great strides, largely thanks to the work of publications—the canvassing ministry. Let us allow the testimony of professor and pastor Alfons Balbach give us a more precise idea:

“Here are a few figures to give . . . an idea of how the colporteur work in Brazil grew slowly but steadily: In the late thirties, during a period of a little over two years (September 1938 through November 1940) our colporteurs (there were about 25 at that time) sold over 10,000 books. In 1986, 700 colporteurs sold over 600,000 books.”¹

By 1995, we had 169 churches, 47 church-owned houses of prayer, and 43 rented meeting halls in Brazil.

Overview of the work in Brazil

Until 1986 there was only one union in Brazil. In November of that year, the Brazilian Union was divided in two. The North Union was established in Brasília (DF), and the South Union in São Paulo. Nine years later, the headquarters of the South Union was transferred to Chácara Ebenézer in Itú (SP), about 80 km from the capital where it has remained until now.

The North Union

With its headquarters in Brasília, Federal District, the North Union is currently the largest in the world, with more than 5,000 members. Under its jurisdiction there are seven Fields and two Missions.

At present, this Union has 188 chapels, 33 rented facilities, and 14 other meeting places where there

are worship services held along with regular church events. The wide network of this Union consists of 14,519 interested persons and 5,506 members.

It also maintains a fundamental education network called Renaissance, with a growing number of students, based in Asa Norte (DF). In November 2014, a branch office was opened in the city of São Domingos do Araguaia, in the state of Pará, which also educates high school students.

The North Union maintains a nursing home for the elderly in the municipality of Padre Bernardo (GO), serving 43 senior citizens. In the same complex is the headquarters of the NGO CRAS - “The Good Samaritan” of the North Brazilian Union.

The South Union

In Chácara Ebenézer, in the city of Itú (SP), the South Union is the second largest in the world, formed by four Fields and three Missions. The headquarters have a good physical infrastructure, with accommodations, an auditorium and administrative offices. The project for the completion of new housing is expected to be completed and will accommodate all the Union officers still living outside the Ebenézer property.

Currently, the South Union has 136 chapels, 32 hired halls, and 19 other meeting places where worship services and regular church events are held.

In addition, this Union maintains a network of six schools from nursery school to high school.

Institutions in Brazil:

The **Oásis Paranaense** Clinic is a health institution using alternative medicine treatments, with a doctor, nutritionist, and other health professionals. Headquartered in Almirante Tamandaré (PR), this clinic has treated many Brazilians and foreigners with alternative medicine since the early 1980s;

CRAS (Reform Center for Social Assistance “The Good Samaritan”) — Focuses on meeting the needs of the population, with the supreme objective of spreading the present truth. CRAS (reform centers for social assistance provided

by non-governmental organization) carries out on effective humanitarian ministry.

Media Studio — This is an integrated project between the General Conference and the Brazilian Unions, located on the Ebenézer property. Here they have an audio and video recording studio for the production of audio-visual materials containing the present truth.

The Ebenézer Missionary School, an institution for the training and preparation of new evangelists, located near the Oásis Clinic in Paraná, has been operating since the 1950s and prepares new workers and evangelists. The school began in São Paulo in the 1950s, then it was moved to Brasília (DF); later on it was transferred to Almirante Tamandaré (PR) in the 1980s where it continues to operate until today.

A publishing house and editorial department, known as **Edições Vida Plena**, currently based in Itaquaquecetuba (SP) since 1985, has a bookstore and has been printing religious books, leaflets, magazines, pamphlets, posters and hymnals for several decades. *Edições Vida Plena* had a humble beginning in the church of Belenzinho in the late 1940s.

The **Connected with God** portal is an online platform that provides dozens of Bible courses and secular knowledge through audio, video, and text, always seeking to draw people to the gospel. This online course covers a wide range of subjects, ranging from nutrition to gastronomy, personal finances, world history, and culture, biblical doctrines and prophecies. Their extensive network of contacts covers more than 500,000 people today, and has accumulated a powerful database to be used in spreading of the threefold angels’ messages.

We trust that this brief overview will enhance the experience of those from faraway countries to attend the 23rd General Conference meetings in this blessed land of Brazil. *R*

References

¹ *The History of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement*, by A. Balbach, p. 438.

That They May Be One

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are” (John 17:11).

The church has been entrusted with the mission of constantly enlarging the Lord’s work by reaching all corners of the world and enlisting in His army, all honest souls who are willing to give themselves to the service of Christ.

Preaching the gospel to the whole world is a great task and we cannot hope to fulfill it unless we are united by the bonds of Christian love, and thus reveal to the world that Christ is real and that we are one with Him:

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:21).

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Only by union with Christ we can

hope to have the power and guidance of the Holy Spirit and cooperation of the heavenly angels.

When united with Christ, the members of the church are united among themselves, families are united and new churches are established as centers of light in new places, with new converts accepting the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The golden chain of love makes the followers of Christ one body.

By God’s grace, during these last four years the present truth has reached seven new countries: Cuba, Jamaica, Madagascar, Thailand, Oman, East Timor, and Togo.

Madagascar

In every nation, tribe, language, people, and in the islands of the sea, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will shine in the midst of the darkness of this world. Madagascar in the Indian Ocean is one of these islands of the Lord.

The Reform Movement arrived in Madagascar when a family, interested

in living a reformed life, came across the SDARM website and contacted the GC Secretary who after a brief time of online communication with the interested brethren, asked Brother John Bosco, the Regional Secretary of Northern Africa, to visit these interested souls. Brother Bosco promptly arranged to visit Madagascar and, after the necessary preparation, organized the work there.

In just four years, the brethren have 130 baptized members, and they have organized 12 small groups; they have five part-time workers. The brethren are very happy, united, and fervent in the work of God’s vineyard.

Togo

This West African nation is also growing fast. In the report prepared for the delegation session up to December of 2018, it shows 14 members, now at the time of writing this article. I received the report showing that 24 more souls have joined the church of God during these

last six months therefore, we currently have 38 members in Togo and more souls are being prepared for baptism.

Young people, adults, and elderly brethren have joined their efforts with faithful missionaries. Evangelistic meetings were held in different countries around the world, thus helping to establish the work in missions recently formed. Souls are being added to the flock of God by the work of missionaries who are willing to sacrifice all for the cause of Christ.

“To everyone who offers himself to the Lord for service, withholding nothing, is given power for the attainment of measureless results. For these God will do great things.

“To young men and young women, as well as to those who are older, God will give power from above. With converted minds, converted hands, converted feet, and converted tongues, their lips touched with a living coal from the divine altar, they will go forth into the Master’s service, moving steadily onward and upward, carrying the work forward to completion.”¹

Youth called to take the burdens

“The facts are before us. The burden bearers among us are dropping off into the silent grave. The active members of the church, the true workers in all reforms, are mostly past the meridian of life, and are declining in physical and mental strength. We should anxiously contemplate who are to rise up and fill their places. To whom are to be committed the vital interests of the church? The question may be asked by us with the deepest concern, Who will bear the responsibilities of the cause of God when a few more standard-bearers fall? We can but look anxiously upon the youth of today as those who must take these burdens, and upon whom responsibilities must fall. They must take the work where others leave it; and their course will determine whether morality, religion, and vital godliness shall prevail, or whether immorality and infidelity shall corrupt and blight all that is valuable. It is the way the standard is carried now that

will determine the future.”²

Are you willing to answer the call and go wherever God leads you? The work needs to go forward and God is calling those who are willing to serve. Are you willing to say: “Here I am, send me”?

United for the great task

“The solemn, sacred message of warning must be proclaimed in the most difficult fields and in the most sinful cities, in every place where the light of the great threefold gospel message has not yet dawned. Everyone is to hear the last call to the marriage supper of the Lamb. . . .

“Countries hitherto closed to the gospel are opening their doors, and are pleading for the Word of God to be explained to them. Kings and princes are opening their long-closed gates, inviting the heralds of the cross to enter. The harvest truly is great. Eternity alone will reveal the results of well-directed efforts put forth now.”³

In some of the countries not yet reached, we have already interested souls who are looking forward to receiving further studies. Means are needed to send missionaries to attend these souls, so please remember these souls in your prayers and when giving your offerings to new missions. A great task is still before us to continue spreading the work in the countries already reached and in countries still missing.

“And it is necessary that the best kind of labor be given. The time has come, the important time, when, through God’s messengers, the scroll is being unrolled to the world. The truth comprised in the first, second, and third angels’ messages must go to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people; it must lighten the darkness of every continent and extend to the islands of the sea.”⁴

“Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin. The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only



object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard. The world is a workshop in which, through the cooperation of human and divine agencies, Jesus is making experiments by His grace and divine mercy upon human hearts.

“God has a distinct people, a church on earth, second to none, but superior to all in their facilities to teach the truth, to vindicate the law of God. God has divinely appointed agencies—men whom He is leading, who have borne the heat and burden of the day, who are cooperating with heavenly instrumentalities to advance the kingdom of Christ in our world. Let all unite with these chosen agents, and be found at last among those who have the patience of the saints, who keep the commandments of God, and have the faith of Jesus.”⁵

May the prayer of Jesus be answered in our lives, uniting us for the great task before us, and thus in many souls will see and know that we are one in Christ and will have the desire to be part of this great family.

“I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:23). *R*

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¹ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 247.

² *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 128.

³ *Evangelism*, p. 22.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵ *Counsels for the Church*, p. 240.

He that oppressteth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor” (Proverbs 14:31).

Around 1974, Jacinto Pereira, then a young man of 27 years, was invited to become a colporteur. Until that moment, he had never sold anything in his life, but he understood that the call to literature evangelism

countryside for several months, and because of heavy rains the manager had not been there for many, many days. Now this unfortunate man had contracted malaria, and the disease had progressed to an almost terminal stage. He was at the brink of death. His colleagues, who worked on the farm, had taken him to the small hospital in the city, which was private. The clinic did not want to

gave it to that man as an infusion with hot water. In addition, the man drank bitter teas throughout the day.

A few days later, the sufferer realized that the attacks of heat and cold were becoming less and less frequent, until he felt nothing else. After a few more days, he told Brother Jacinto:

“Look, I thank you very much for the treatments; these juices have

As a land blessed by the gospel, Brazil stands out with unusual missionary and spiritual experiences

Experiences with God in Brazil

was divine, so he worked in several locations as a missionary of the printed page.

Near the end of 1975, young Jacinto arrived at the city that was chosen to be one of his fields of labor—Mozarlândia, in the state of Goiás.

It was a very rainy season. There was no way to work because of incessant precipitations. In the course of the day, there were two or three hours of dry weather available, in which Bro. Jacinto used to work in commercial or residential areas as the case may be. When the rain returned, he would return to a small hostel in the center of the city where he had rented a room.

One afternoon, upon leaving for work, the young colporteur found a gentleman sitting near the door of the hostel, weeping. Brother Jacinto approached him and asked:

“Good afternoon, my good man ... What is happening to you? How can I help you?”

The gentleman explained that he had been working on a farm in the

admit him because he did not have the money to pay for the treatment. So the companions left him in front of the hostel and returned to the farm. Finally he sobbed:

“I’m going to die here! I have nowhere to go and there is no one for me in this city!”

“Not so!” declared Brother Jacinto. “I may not have a doctor here to look after you, but in heaven above there is a God who heals everything!”

At that moment, the young colporteur took the man into the hostel and treated him. When malaria manifests itself, first comes a very strong heat (a symptom of high fever). Then the brother applied a cold shower over a basin where there was ice water. Then, when the cold arrived—as is characteristic of the disease—Brother Jacinto would give him a hot bath.

So the days went by. Along with this shock treatment, Brother Jacinto removed all solid food and began to give him juices of various types of vegetables. He toasted lemon peel, from which he made a powder and

helped me a lot. But I cannot take them anymore. I am very hungry; I need more substantial food.

“How wonderful,” said our brother. “But I cannot give you solid food yet. You have spent many days without eating anything substantial. It may be dangerous to do so abruptly. Let’s reintroduce the food slowly, okay?”

Then our brother began to prepare potatoes and other tubers, into a thin broth on the first day. On the third day he gave him mashed potatoes and in four or five days, that man was eating normally, without any more fever attacks.

The following week, the day he was to leave the boarding house, the man pulled a watch from his bag and handed it to our brother, saying,

“Dear Jacinto, I cannot afford to pay you for everything that I have received from you, but I would very much like to give you this watch; it’s all I have in this life. My gratitude is too great, but I know I can never repay it.

“No, I’ll never accept that!” answered our brother. “You will need

this watch in the future. I did this from the heart and I will not accept such a gift. What is your plan now, my good man?"

"I have to go back to my hometown in the Northeast, but I cannot."

Brother Jacinto sought the owner of the boarding house, explained the situation of the man, and they gathered donations. Brother Jacinto got what the man needed to pay for the ticket and took him to the bus terminal and the man was pleased to board the bus that would take him back to his beloved family. But before having him embark, our missionary brother presented him with Spirit of Prophecy books compiled in Portuguese with subjects such as *"The Future Unveiled," "The Ideal Home,"* and other missionary materials containing the present truth. At the time of farewell, that gentleman said:

"I do not know if we'll see each other again, but I promise you that if I will find your church there, I'm going to see you, because this church is what God left on this earth. No other person, however well-intentioned and sincere, could do for me what you did for me."

Our brother, moved, replied:

"If we do not meet here on this earth, we will surely meet again in the heavenly mansions. Tell your family the wonders that the Lord God worked for you."

After that man left, some soldiers of the Military Police went to the hostel, looking for Brother Jacinto. They asked the owner of the hostel:

"Is this where a young man who medicated and cured a man who was dying of malaria is staying?"

Our brother was very scared, thinking that he would be arrested for having cared for a patient without the authorization of the Medical Council. They explained to Jacinto in more details the reason for their coming:

"Look, we have received orders from the sheriff to buy eight sets of these books that you sell: one for the sheriff and one for each one of us. He wants you to come to the police station this afternoon for some instructions."

When Jacinto appeared before the sheriff, he was informed that he would receive full support from the police in his work in that city. There

was a loudspeaker in the town's central square which played music all day long. The sheriff pledged to pick up the microphone every afternoon and announce the name of our brother, asking all the families to receive him and buy the set of books.

Thereafter, Brother Jacinto never needed to canvass in that city. People came to meet him in the streets, in the alleyways, in the square, in the hostel, begging to place their order in time for the next delivery.

Brother Jacinto was preparing to marry at that time, and with the money raised on that wonderful occasion, he was able to buy all the furniture and arrange everything necessary to establish his new home with his future wife.

Here are some words from our brother, referring to his life in canvassing:

"I am grateful to God for having the privilege of participating in this great mission. I am sure that it was the Lord who called me to the canvassing and accompanied me through all these experiences. Later, my wife was working with me in the canvassing after we got married. Then I sent my brother José Henrique to do canvassing. He eventually attended missionary school and today he is retired as minister of the gospel. My dear mother also began to canvass. She stopped only when the hand of death snatched her away. I am very grateful to God for this and other experiences."

The Angel of the Lord Can Be You!

"So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

My name is Zenildo Alves de Barros, I am a colporteur, I live and work in the state of Mato Grosso do Sul. One time I was impressed to labor in a city called Glória de Dourados. Near this city is a small town called Deodápolis, where we have a group of brethren in the house in which I stayed

for a while, and from where I set up my operational base.

On a Friday, around 11:30 am, I had already canvassed several homes and had sufficient sales for that day. I had decided to stop working because the colporteurs usually set aside the afternoon to prepare to receive the Lord's day. As Deodápolis is several kilometers from Glória de Dourados, I started toward the bus station to take the bus.

However, on a certain street, I felt strongly that I should do one more canvass at a certain house, trusting that I would still not be too late to receive the Sabbath. Two houses before this certain residence, I canvassed and sold a book, and the tenant there advised me to go to the house next door. So, I went, and the landlady also bought the book and advised me to go to still another neighbor. It was this house that the voice of conscience insisted for me to approach. When I reached the gate, there was an older lady sweeping the yard. When she saw me, she looked ecstatic and amazed, and stared at me for a few seconds. When I gave the usual "good morning," she dropped the broom and came toward me, running. She opened the gate, so I introduced myself, stating my name and my purpose there. She greeted me cordially, inviting me into her living room and we started a lively conversation. She politely listened to my canvass, but said she was not in a position to acquire the canvassing materials at that time. Then she said:

"My name is Rosa Trindade. Are you an evangelical? Do you belong to any church?"

"Yes, I serve God in the Seventh-day Adventist Church—Reform Movement."

"Wow," she answered in amazement. "So you're the person I dreamed about last night. In that dream, an angel told me, 'Prepare! Tomorrow you will receive in your house a person who will present you with all the truth for which you have groaned and yearned, and never could understand. This man will speak about the complete doctrines, including the Sabbath. You can no longer continue as

you are. You need to progress; and the knowledge necessary to your progress I will send by the hand of this man that you will receive tomorrow. Get ready!"

"What do I have to do with this angel?" I asked.

"I do not know, but you were introduced to me by the angel, in that suit, well-dressed, smiling—and he told me that you have all the truth I need to know. It will be revealed to me through you, according to what the angel told me."

At that moment I asked her to which church she belonged. She said she had been in the Assembly of God for 40 years, but then she explained further:

"Before I came to the Assembly church, I was a spiritist for many years, where I served Satan; but God set me free by bringing me to the Assembly church. However, I am not satisfied with the degree of commitment of this church. I cannot say well, but there are truths that my church is not following; I feel it, unfortunately. But, Brother Zenildo, tell me a little about your church's doctrine, please. Why is it called the 'Reform Movement'?"

At that time I explained to her that the term "reform" is linked to a reformation in health, clothing, marriage, family and especially the Sabbath. The seventh day was forgotten by humanity, and our purpose is to reinstate it as the true day of rest instituted in Eden and confirmed by Jesus Christ and the apostles in the New Testament.

"That's true, my brother," she replied. "I was in the traditional church, and I realized that everything is half-done. The Sabbath is badly kept; the sanctity of the family is being violated. I realize that the SDA church has accepted remarriage after divorce. That does not seem right. I have a friend who is an Adventist who divorced her husband and married another man, and the church willingly accepted her situation. I cannot agree with that. If it is for me to learn to serve God, let it be in a more suitable environment. The Word is very clear about divorce. We must follow it

faithfully. Now, I am even more certain that you are the angel that God sent to my house, according to the dream I received last night. Brother Zenildo, I am a very distressed person; I have not been sleeping lately as I should. I am very concerned about my salvation. It's been a while since I've asked God to reveal greater truths to me, even if I have to leave my beloved church."

At that moment, her voice tightened, and my eyes filled with tears as I realized how important this visit was to her, according to the grace of God. From that moment on, I forgot that I had to go to Deodópolis for lunch and prepare for the Sabbath. Time seemed to have stopped, and I did not want to leave; it seemed to me that everything around me had lost its importance and I continued the conversation. However, I realized that she was a very anxious person, eager to know the truth; so I had to weigh each explanation well. "I have yet many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now" (John 16:12), were the words of Christ to the disciples, which could be perfectly applicable to this lady's situation.

As our conversation developed, I realized how Sister Rosa's facial expression was changing for the better. Her face reflected complete fulfillment. It was as if lightning had illuminated the darkest corners of her mind. She begged me not to hide anything of the truth; then, at her request, I revealed to her what could be revealed. After more than an hour of conversation, I announced that I needed to leave. She begged me to come back and I promised to return. At that moment she hugged me tightly and wept aloud, saying that I was her angel who appeared at the right time in an hour of darkness and distress, to reveal to her the way of salvation. It was an inspiring moment for me.

That visit made me ponder very deeply: I am a sinner, full of serious defects and problems. Why was I assigned to find a soul so keen to know the truth? Why did not God choose a person better prepared? Why did I get to receive such a great privilege without deserving it? These doubts hovered over my head and left

me wondering for a long time. The conclusion I came to is that a lottery prize could not have made me happier. The feeling of accomplishment and usefulness that took hold of me had no match. It was the confirmation of all those many years knocking on doors day after day, faithfully, in the houses of the people, making sales. For me, it was clear: God confirmed my ministry, indicating that my personal work was not without usefulness, that my work was not in vain in the Lord.

Later I gave this lady's name and address to pastor Durval Bishop, a servant of God who lives in Dourados, the local worker, Brother Vanderson Rosa, and pastor Renato Konrath, president of the Field, and they all came to visit her. They made friends with her husband and she received a full range of studies. He made a special friendship with the sisters of the town of Deodópolis, and on most Sabbaths she attended Sabbath school with them there. As this lady got to know our people, she soon attended a conference and marveled at our sisters' clothing, our food, and the deep knowledge demonstrated by our keynote speakers.

A few months later, I was working in a city called Novo Horizonte do Sul. The baptism of Sister Rosa Trindade was already scheduled. On a Friday, the day before the baptism, her relatives called me telling me that she had been hospitalized and wanted to see me urgently. I left work and took a bus to Glória de Dourados. When I arrived at the hospital, they led me into her room. Sister Rosa could not speak, but she took my hand and I could feel the vibrant energy of a grateful lady, renewed by the grace of God, as if her eyes told me: "Thank you, Brother Zenildo! Today I am a new creature in Christ, thanks for your visit!" On the dawn of the Sabbath, on the very day of her scheduled baptism, she died.

At the time of the funeral service, the pastor of the Assembly church was present. Soon after, pastor Renato Konrath arrived from the capital and sought out the Assembly minister present. The spiritual leader offered our pastor the opportunity to speak for a few minutes, and then he would

complement the funeral service with the last words. Hundreds of people were present. As our pastor Renato spoke, the atmosphere was amazing; it was as if some great monumental declaration was being made. The result of the speaking was so positive that the Assembly church leader did not want to close the event with the last words. He simply stated:

“All that God has sent through Brother Renato is more than enough. Nothing I say will improve what has already been said. God bless you all.”

I would like to leave these last words with you, dear reader:

The moment I saw her in the coffin, I was sure that it was God who orchestrated all this. However, on the day of the resurrection I also want to be prepared, for I am sure this sister will be there.

Man's Extremity is God's Opportunity

“And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews” (Acts 12:11).

My name is Marcelo da Silva Santos, I am a missionary evangelist and am currently working as a canvassing director. The following experience occurred while I was working in Rio Grande do Norte a few years ago.

I was giving Bible studies in a family home—that of Luciano and Maria do Carmo, his wife. The study was about to begin when suddenly the house was surrounded by four robbers armed with guns. As the neighborhood was apparently a quiet place, the door had been open with free access to the street. The bandits were already on the run from another occurrence and caught us by surprise. Eduarda, the daughter of the couple, and their mother, Maria do Carmo, both began to cry a lot. The man and I were very calm. In the assault, they took our cell phones, my car, money, and Luciano's motorbike. We were held hostage for almost an hour. One of the bandits stayed with

us, weapon in hand, while another was searching the house; the other two stood near the door, watching.

As soon as the action was completed, they asked the reason for my visit; I explained that I was going to start a Bible study with the family. They asked if I was an evangelical, and I confirmed. When they were leaving, I said that I would pray for them so that God could get them out of this dangerous lifestyle, for the Lord could do for them something they could scarcely imagine if they only would trust in Him.

As soon as the bandits were out, carrying all our belongings, we said a prayer and went to the police to record the incident.

The next morning, the leader of the church of Natal (RN), Brother Nailson Santos de Sá, called my phone, which now was in possession of the thieves, and the wife of one of them answered. She told our brother that the husband would give me back the car because he could not sleep because my image—a missionary who blessed them at the end of the robbery—was engraved in his soul and heart. She scheduled a set day, hour, and place to return the vehicle. Brother Nailson informed me of the details and I went to the place to rescue the vehicle. The audio system and laptop inside were missing, but the vehicle was intact. I drove home and thanked God very much.

On the same day, at 3:00 p.m., the woman again called brother Nailson and informed him that they intended to return the laptop and the audio system of his car. They arranged the next appointment in a community called Mosquito Favela. On the call, she explained that she could not return Luciano's motorbike because the vehicle had stayed with the other assailants who had no intention of repaying the loss.

Before going to the meeting place, Brother Nailson had informed me that her family was in great need. Her husband was a fugitive from the penitentiary, so he could not get a job. This brother, who was head of the church, organized a collection of the church welfare department in Natal and raised a lot of food. We

gathered all these perishable goods along with more than \$100 worth of nonperishable items such as rice, beans, diapers, oil, etc., and we went to the meeting place. There, the lady came with a small child and another woman who accompanied her. As soon as I got the laptop and audio system, I gave some important advice about trusting God and about giving up the dangerous life in which they were engaged. I also gave them lots of missionary literature, along with the food and goods we had collected—and finally asked permission to pay a visit to her house. She said she would tell her husband about our intention and we went home. While we were still on the way the bandit called and spoke with Nailson, thanking him, thrilled for everything we had done for him and his family, and said he was willing to receive our visit.

It was a Wednesday afternoon, and I went to worship. After the meeting, I got a call from a police officer saying that he had found the motorbike.

The thugs had apprehended another boy and taken his motorbike. Since Luciano's bike had a flat tire, they had left it with the key and everything. Then, Luciano was able to go to the police station and recover his bike, intact, except for the repair of the tire. God gave us back everything we had lost. It was a blessing!

Unfortunately, we lost contact with the assailant's family. A week after that, he went on to another theft and was arrested by the police in broad daylight. He might have left this lifestyle, but he did not take advantage of the opportunity that God had given him. Since he was sent to a remote penitentiary, we do not know if he's dead or alive. His wife no longer had the number we had called, and everything was apparently lost.

In all this, we perceive the divine hand guiding all events. By the grace of God we were delivered from this emergency situation; we had been coerced, but we did not suffer physical or moral violence, and everything ended well. I acknowledge that God acted in an unimaginable way so that we could rely more and more on His strong and powerful arm. May He be praised! *R*



FRIENDS OF

We read in Scripture that king Uzziah “built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen also, and vine dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry” (2 Chronicles 26:10).

As a General Conference, we are developing a global plan to provide education on the subject of country living, organic farming and related subjects. Seminars on organic agriculture are being promoted in various countries for our leaders, so that they can pass on this knowledge to each church, small group and family of the Reform Movement in their locality. This initiative is coordinated by the GC Stewardship and Welfare Department through seminars consistently held by a person who specializes in the area.

Seminar in Colombia

June 26–July 1, 2018. The first seminar on Organic Farming at the Eben-ezer Camp was hosted by the Colombian Union with the presence of three members of the GC Stewardship and Welfare Department. The seminar was taught by John Lausevic from Australia. All the workers of the Colombian Union participated in this experience, as well as around 400 laypeople.

Seminar in the Dominican Republic

In the third week of February 2019, Elías Rivera Hernández held

the first Organic Farming Seminar in the Dominican Republic in Santiago, at the farm of Aguilar Tineo. On this occasion, the original plan had been to carry out an extensive work in Haiti for 20 days, with the plan to give practical theoretical training and implementation. However, due to the political and social conditions existing, it was not possible to enter that country to carry out the work.

We thank God for the good level of encouragement that exists in Colombia and the Dominican Republic, where country living, organic agriculture, and the work of education in the families of our people are being followed in harmony with God’s plan in this respect.

Seminar in Peru

From May 12–16, 2019, the first Seminar on Organic Agriculture was held in the Peruvian Union. This

event was given by Bro. Elías Rivera Hernández and was held at the Union facility in Puente Piedra, Lima, Peru. There were 100 people that attended, including missionaries, pastors, ministers and some lay members. The seminar was held in a practical theoretical manner. The event was a great blessing because it awakened strong interest in the subject in this country.

The knowledge that was received is being transmitted to the public





AGRICULTURE

through training, and different activities have been planned for it, so that we can educate others in this area as part of our work.

“Families and institutions should learn to do more in the cultivation and improvement of land. If people only knew the value of the products of the ground, which the earth brings forth in their season, more diligent efforts would be made to cultivate the soil. All should be acquainted with the special value of fruit and vegetables fresh from the orchard and garden. As the number of patients and students increase, more land will be needed. Grape vines should be planted, thus making it possible for the institution to produce its grapes. The orange orchard that is on the place would be an advantage.”¹

“God has been giving me instruction that He will give men in various countries ability to produce healthful foods, so that the human machinery can be kept in good order without the use of any food which contains injurious properties. By His Holy Spirit the Lord will guide His workers in the preparation of foods.”²

The goal of these seminars is to make our people aware and become empowered with sufficient tools and knowledge so that each family can produce their own fruits and vegetables without damaging the soil and polluting their food with poisons typically used in commercial agricultural production—as well as to avoid the

use of genetically modified seeds and petrochemicals that demineralize the environment, rendering it incapable of sustaining life.

If we follow God’s plan to live in the country and develop a character like His, our days will be easier.

Country living and organic farming are part of God’s plan for His people.

“In God’s plan for Israel every family had a home on the land with sufficient ground for tilling. Thus were provided both the means and the incentive for a useful, industrious, and self-supporting life. And no devising of men has ever improved upon that plan. To the world’s departure from it is owing, to a large degree, the poverty and wretchedness that exist today.”³

“The Lord desires His people to move into the country, where they can settle on the land, and raise their own fruit and vegetables.”⁴

To work the land and teach the appropriate methods of cultivation is a ministry that we must undertake with passion.

“There is much mourning over unproductive soil, when, if people would read the Old Testament Scriptures, they would see that the Lord knew much better than they in regard to the proper treatment of land. After being cultivated for several years, and giving its treasures to the possession of humankind, portions of the land should be allowed to rest, and then the crops should be changed. . . .

“Ignorance is doing its baleful work. Slothful servants are increasing the evil by their lazy habits. . . .

“Who will be missionaries to do this work, to teach proper methods to the youth and to all who feel willing and humble enough to learn?”⁵

“We should work the soil cheerfully, hopefully, gratefully, believing that the earth holds in its bosom rich stores for the faithful worker to garner, richer than gold or silver. . . . With proper, intelligent cultivation the earth will yield its treasures for the benefit of humanity.”⁶

Country living provides the best lifestyle. “Fathers and mothers who possess a piece of land and a comfortable home are kings and queens.”⁷

We invite each Missionary Field, each Union, and each Association, to encourage their leaders to promote the work of true education among the families of our people—and on our part, we are ready and willing to serve those units interested in receiving instruction to help manage and program the seminars.

For project coordination in South America, Central America and the Caribbean, the contact person for the Welfare Department is Elías Rivera Hernández.

May the Lord bless efforts in this regard. *R*

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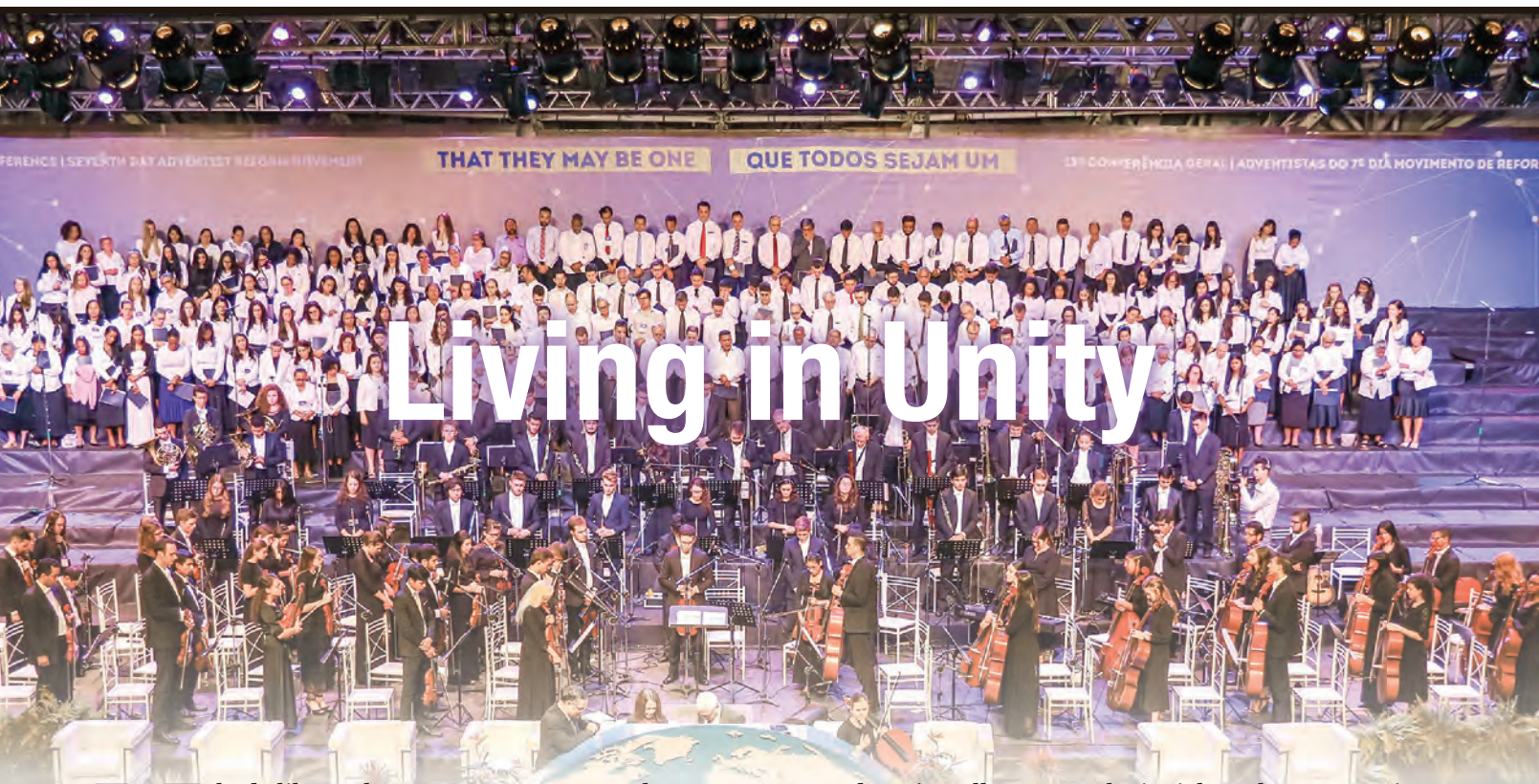
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MOVING? Please let us know.



Nobody likes to hear an argument—or at least they shouldn't like to hear one! Arguments start wars and wars kill people. How much better it is to get along peacefully with others and to work and play together in harmony!

Jesus really wants His people to be able to work together. He knows this is the only way for them to be happy.

The Bible says: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1). It's good and it's pleasant when we are in unity—which means being as one. The apostle Paul taught the believers in the city of Corinth: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

That means when we go to church in one place, what is taught and preached there will not be the opposite of what is taught and preached in another church. We will all agree about what is truth.

But how can we know what is truth? You have your ideas and I have mine. So what is the only way we can find out who is right?

It doesn't really matter who is right. What matters is **WHAT** is right. Then if you were right first or I was right first, we can forget about that part to just focus on what is right once we find out the truth really is. But how can we know the truth?

Jesus prayed to His Father that His children might be sanctified—set aside, purified, made right, made holy. How only does this happen? It happens through the Word of God, the Bible. So Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17).

The words of Jesus are the Word of God, so that is why He explains, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

Therefore, for people to know the way to eternal life, we need to know the truth, we need to know Jesus. And as we all learn more of the Lord and His ways, we will agree with each other more and more.

That's why the church has General Conference meetings. It's to come together to pray and ask God for His true will and His real way, instead of our own. Then we are able to come closer to God, closer to each other, and we are able to help still others become closer to Him, too. And this sweet harmony makes greater happiness!

—By Barbara Montrose