

## LIKE THE LEAVES OF AUTUMN

A Final Word from the Editor

Leo R. Van Dolson

Fall leaves are spectacular when they turn glorious browns, yellows, and reds while still on the trees. However, they become something of a nuisance when you have to rake them off your lawn.

But there is one impressive quality of leaves on the ground. You cannot escape them. Even after you carefully rake up every leaf on your lawn, they often are replaced quickly as the swirling fall winds blow them your way from neighboring lawns and more flutter down from the trees.

I have been thinking of this again as I have been reviewing denominational history in connection with teaching a couple of Adventist Heritage classes at Southern College.

How impressive the place of literature has been in establishing our work around the world. For example, John Byington, our first General Conference president, received a single issue of the *Second Advent Review, and Sabbath Herald*. He accepted the truth that he read.

The Seventh-day Adventist work in Scandinavia developed largely from a monthly journal for Danes and Norwegians published in the United States by John G. Matteson.

A box of literature sent to Pitcairn Island in 1876 by James White and John Loughborough prepared the way for the islanders to accept the Adventist message when the mission ship *Pitcairn* would arrive.

in the Kimberley diamond mines led Wilson and several others in South Africa to decide to become Seventh-day Adventists.

Yet we are a long way still from following the instruction God gave us through His prophet that we should scatter Adventist publications "like the leaves of autumn." Our "leaves" includes books (*Testimonies for the Church*, 9: 72), as well as leaflets, and pamphlets (*ibid.*, p. 231).

We are to sow the seed and leave the results with God. "When we give ourselves wholly to God, and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 363).

It is *our* responsibility to give people the opportunity to become acquainted with the truth. What is one of the best ways to do that?

"If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the Scriptures" (*Christian Service*, p. 13).

"The world is to receive the light of truth through an evangelizing ministry of the Word in our books and periodicals. . . . We have been asleep, as it were, regarding the work that may be accomplished by the circulation of well-prepared literature. . . . Our publications should go everywhere" (*Testimonies*, 9: 61, 62).

"More than one thousand will soon be converted in one day, most of whom will trace their first convictions to the reading of our publications" (*Evangelism*, p. 693).

The "silent witness" of our publications can reach behind many closed doors to lead people to their "first convictions."

I was impressed the other day when I received a report from the *Steps to Christ* Project operating out of Western Springs, Illinois. The handful of lay people operating that project on a volunteer basis, in cooperation with the leaders of many of our conferences, have now sent *Steps to Christ*, along with a packet making Bible studies and other books available to those who receive this material in the mail, to

every home in Alaska and Wyoming and to approximately 50 percent of the homes in Vermont and Illinois.

They have sent mailings to every state in the Union. At the time of this recent report they had sent our publications to more than 4 million homes in the United States out of an estimated 82 million homes.

If we are ever to finish our work, every one of us must be engaged in effective seedsowing. We cannot expect the harvest to come before the seed has been sown.

What better way can be found to sow the seed than through scattering our truth-filled publications like the leaves of autumn?