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ABSTRACT

THE TRANSFER OF MINISTERS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE MINISTER'S  
SERVICE AND FAMILY LIFE

by

Johannes E. Mager

Chairman: Gottfried Oosterwal

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Project Report

Andrews University

Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

Title: THE TRANSFER OF MINISTERS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH  
IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE  
MINISTER'S SERVICE AND FAMILY LIFE

Name of researcher: Johannes E. Mager

Name and degree of faculty advisor: Gottfried Oosterwal, Ph.D.,  
Litt.D., professor of world  
mission and church growth

Date completed: June 1981

Problem

Transfers from one pastoral district to another are part of the life and work of ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA) in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). Every transfer deeply affects all aspects of his life, and that of his family. It also influences his relationship with the administrators of the church and touches the respective congregations.

The aim of this study was to find out (1) whether transfers have solely a pragmatic character, or whether they also carry biblical-theological implications; (2) whether transfers do encumber interpersonal relations and, if so, what possibilities exist to

solve these tensions or indeed to prevent them from occurring; and (3) how many years a minister should work in a given district in order to serve the congregations optimally according to his particular gifts.

#### Method

The theological relevance of the transfer of ministers was developed deductively from the motif of the pilgrim people of God and the Exodus community of the Old and New Testaments. The various stages, forms, and aspects of the pilgrim people of God in salvation history had to be examined in order to discover what particular principles and characteristics of the pilgrimage are also hallmarks of the transfer of ministers.

For the investigation of the practical pastoral aspect of transfers all groups involved were sent a questionnaire. These groups included pastors and their wives, their children over eighteen, and a selection of church elders. In order to check the written answers, personal interviews were conducted in the homes of the ministers and their wives and in the homes of church elders.

In addition, each member of the executive committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the German Democratic Republic which plans and determines the transfers was also interviewed. This assured the consideration and evaluation from all viewpoints.

#### Results

As long as the church lives up to its calling as the pilgrim people of God, transfers remain necessary. They result from the

vicissitudes of life and from changes in organization thereby helping the ministers in the development of their gifts and preventing congregations from becoming one-sided. Tensions between administrators and ministers result when the brotherly co-operation and openness enjoined by Scripture is lacking. Stress in marriage and family life occurs when mutual consideration, a common sharing of burdens and a sympathetic approach to problems caused by a transfer are inadequate.

In the past, pastors and their families have generally been moved too frequently. Ordained preachers should on the average work eight years in a district so that their service can be as productive as possible in all the areas of the church's life and work.

#### Recommendations

The executive committee of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the GDR should be involved in more long-term planning of transfers, with careful consideration of the development of the minister, his family situation, and the needs of the local church. All those who are affected by the transfer should be included in the planning and should be fully informed.

The minister and his wife need to help each other, and together stand by their children in order to help them deal with potential problems resulting from a transfer. The minister should, of course, responsibly execute all the duties of his office up to the time of his transfer.

On special occasions church administrators should speak with the ministers and their wives about the many-faceted and complex-

whole of problems of a transfer, as well as about its potentials. Administrators also ought to be equally open to the legitimate concerns of individual ministers and their wives before a decision about their transfer is made. It is essential for all parties concerned to remember that transfers are a manifestation of being the pilgrim people of God.

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

THE TRANSFER OF MINISTERS IN THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST  
CHURCH OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC  
AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE MINISTER'S  
SERVICE AND FAMILY LIFE

Project Report  
Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
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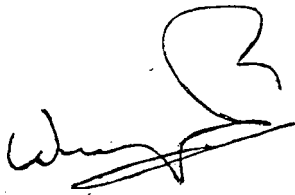
A project report  
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by

Johannes E. Mager

APPROVAL BY THE COMMITTEE:

Gottfried Oosterwal  
Gottfried Oosterwal, Chairman

  
Dean, SDA Theological Seminary

Heinz Henning, ST.D.  
Heinz Henning

Johann Heinz, Th.D.  
Johann Heinz

March 12, 1982  
Date approved



Dedicated to

All the ministers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church

Their wives and children

Who work in the congregations of the German Democratic Republic

And are always prepared

To give up ties to people and places

In order to go where their ministry

Is necessary for building up the

Community of Jesus Christ

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES . . . . . v

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS . . . . . vii

GENERAL INTRODUCTION . . . . . 1

    The Significance of the Project . . . . . 1

    The Methods of Research . . . . . 4

    Description of the Project . . . . . 7

    The Organizational Structure of the SDA Church . . . . . 9

    Closing Remarks . . . . . 10

    Personal Remarks . . . . . 10

INTRODUCTION . . . . . 12

Chapter

    I. GOD'S PILGRIM PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT . . . . . 14

        The Patriarchs as a Model of Israel's  
        Existence as a Pilgrim People . . . . . 14

        Liberated by Jahweh from Bondage  
        Israel Becomes God's People  
        Wandering in the Wilderness . . . . . 20

        God's Pilgrim People in the Promised Land . . . . . 27

    II. GOD'S PILGRIM PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT . . . . . 38

        The Life of the Incarnate Son of God  
        as a Pilgrim . . . . . 38

        The Church Called to Remain a Pilgrim People  
        Aliens and Strangers in This World . . . . . 45

        Realization of the Pilgrimage of the Church  
        through the Ages . . . . . 55

        Summary of Findings . . . . . 63

    III. THE PRACTICE OF THE TRANSFER OF MINISTERS  
    IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC . . . . . 66

        The Necessity of the Transfer  
        of Ministers . . . . . 66

        The Biblical-Theological Justification  
        of Transfers . . . . . 66

        Organizational Necessities . . . . . 67

        Transfers for the Sake of the Ministers . . . . . 69

        Transfers for the Sake of the Churches . . . . . 71

        The Organization of the Union of SDA Churches  
        in the German Democratic Republic . . . . . 73

Planning Ministers' Training . . . . .	75
Aspects That Have to be Taken into Consideration at the Transfer of Ministers . . . . .	77
Decision Making and Implementation . . . . .	83
The Frequency of Transfers . . . . .	84
Criticism of the Centralized-transfer Practice by Union Executive Committee Members . . . . .	86
IV. THE TRANSFER FROM THE MINISTERS' POINT OF VIEW . . . . .	90
Questionnaires and Interviews as the Basis of the Research . . . . .	90
Relationships between the Administration and the Minister during the Transfer . . . . .	93
The Effects of the Transfer on Marriage and Family Life . . . . .	103
The Effects of Transfers on the Ministers' Work . . . . .	107
Other Effects of Transfers on the Minister's Personal Life . . . . .	120
Ministers' Assessments and Recommendations for Improvement in the Practice of Transfers . . . . .	125
Transfers and the Congregation . . . . .	136
V. TRANSFERS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE MINISTER'S WIFE . . . . .	138
Questionnaires and Interviews as the Basis of Research . . . . .	139
Transfers and Their Effects on the Spiritual Life of the Ministers' Wives . . . . .	141
Effects of Transfers from the Vocational Aspect . . . . .	144
Effects on the Marriage and the Family . . . . .	150
Effects on the Husband's Work as a Minister . . . . .	155
Other Effects in the Lives of the Ministers' Wives . . . . .	158
Assessment of the Practice of Transfers and Recommendations for Their Improvement . . . . .	163
VI. TRANSFERS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE MINISTERS' CHILDREN . . . . .	173
Questionnaires as the Basis of Research . . . . .	173
Effects on the Child's World of Emotions . . . . .	174
Effects on School and Vocation . . . . .	177
Effects on the Family . . . . .	182
Effects on the Spiritual Life . . . . .	184
An Evaluation of the Transfers and Suggestions for Improvement . . . . .	187
VII. TRANSFERS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE HEAD ELDER . . . . .	190
Questionnaires as the Basis of the Research . . . . .	190
Effects of Transfers on the Work of the Head Elder . . . . .	192

Effects on the Congregation and Its Growth . . . .	194
An Evaluation of Transfers and Their Practice . . .	197
Suggestions for the Improvement of the Practice of Transfers . . . . .	201
Summary . . . . .	204
VIII. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS . . . . .	205
Summary of Findings . . . . .	205
Recommendations . . . . .	210
APPENDIX 1	
Letter to Ministers and Ministers' Wives . . . . .	218
APPENDIX 2	
Questionnaire I For Ministers . . . . .	220
APPENDIX 3	
Questionnaire II For Ministers' Wives . . . . .	226
APPENDIX 4	
Letter to Ministers' Children . . . . .	230
APPENDIX 5	
Questionnaire II For Ministers' Children . . . . .	231
APPENDIX 6	
Letter to Church Elders . . . . .	235
APPENDIX 7	
Questionnaire IV For Church Elders . . . . .	236
. . . . .	
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	239
VITA . . . . .	244

LIST OF TABLES

1.	The SDA Church in the GDR, According to Conferences, Churches, and Membership . . . . .	73
2.	Numerical Distribution of Church Membership . . . . .	74
3.	Employment of SDA Ministers in the GDR in 1978 . . . . .	75
4.	Church-owned and Non-church-owned Apartments . . . . .	82
5.	The Frequency of Transfers Between 1950 and 1978 . . . . .	85
6.	Number of Ministers Completing the Questionnaire . . . . .	90
7.	Manner in Which Ministers were Notified of Transfers . . . . .	94
8.	The Number and Results of Objections to Planned Transfers . . . . .	98
9.	Reasons for the Objections and Results of the Objection . . . . .	98
10.	Effects of Transfers on the Minister's Spiritual Life . . . . .	100
11.	Effects of Transfers on the Marriage and Family Life as Seen by the Ministers . . . . .	104
12.	The Development of Capabilities as a Result of Transfers as Perceived by the Ministers . . . . .	109
13.	Persons who Introduced Ministers into the New Field of Labor . . . . .	118
14.	Frequency of Human Problems in Transfers . . . . .	121
15.	Intervals of Time Between the Transfers . . . . .	131
16.	Participation of the Ministers' Wives in Answering the Questionnaires . . . . .	140
17.	Effects of Transfers on the Spiritual Lives of the Ministers' Wives . . . . .	142
18.	Professional Activities of Ministers' Wives . . . . .	147

19.	Effects of Transfer on the Marriage and the Family as Perceived by Wives . . . . .	151
20.	Effects of Transfers on the Husbands' Work as Perceived by their Wives . . . . .	156
21.	Human Problems During Transfers as Perceived by Pastors' Wives . . . . .	159
22.	Effects of Transfer on School Activities as Perceived by Young People . . . . .	177
23.	Effects of Transfers on Family Relationships as Perceived by Young People . . . . .	183
24.	Effects of Transfers on Spiritual Life as Perceived by the Young People . . . . .	185
25.	Years of Service of the Head Elders . . . . .	192
26.	Time Intervals between Transfers Recommended by Head Elders . . . . .	202

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Similarly, I would also like to thank Drs. Arnold Kurtz and Raoul Dederen, both of whom were members of the dissertation committee and who assisted me significantly with their advice and expertise.

In reflecting on the road I have travelled, I gratefully

remember the pastors, their wives and children, and the church elders who despite their many responsibilities took the time to fill out the detailed questionnaires. Their assistance constituted the basis for the practical section of the study.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### The Significance of the Project

#### The General Significance of the Project

The transfer of ministers from one congregation to another is one of the administrative characteristics of the Seventh-day Adventist church. Ever since the denomination was organized, its ministers have been transferred,<sup>1</sup> at first within the boundaries of their own country, and later when called abroad to other countries

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<sup>1</sup>The first organized transfers are reported from the year 1862, one year before the SDA Church was officially founded as an organization. The report by Uriah Smith on the Michigan Annual Conference of 1862 contains the following reference: "Resolution adopted: Resolved, That the ministers present, and the elders of the different churches, and where elders are not present, a delegate, or member of the church in good standing, constitute a committee to district the Conference and assign to ministers their respective fields of labor, and report at the next session of this Conference" (Review and Herald, 20 (October 14, 1862):157).

The General Conference Proceedings from 1855-1888, and The General Conference Bulletins of 1887 and 1888 (p. 35) report on the work of this committee: "After various remarks upon labor of ministers in this or other States, the following resolution was adopted:

"Whereas, Several States are dependent on the Michigan Conference for laborers, and, Whereas, Those going out as laborers in some instances have been too much under the dictation of inexperienced brethren, therefore Resolved, That it devolves on the Michigan Conference to direct as to how and where such missionaries shall labor. . . . Resolved, That this Conference recommended Bro. and Sister White to labor in different States, and assist in organizing conferences and churches, as the way may open before them.

Resolved, That we refer the districting of the Conference, and also the location of our ministers to the Conference committee."

and continents as well.<sup>1</sup> The principle of transferring ministers has been accepted by all the constituent parts of the Seventh-day Adventist church throughout the whole world. Its practice, however, has developed differently, depending on the cultural, sociological, and political conditions of the different regions.

Until now, no systematic investigation has been conducted within the SDA church as to the biblical-theological basis of the church's practice of transfers. Furthermore, the denomination lacks a comprehensive statement regarding the function of transfers for the minister himself and for the local church. What criteria have been followed in the planning of transfers, and what effects have they had on the work of the minister and on his family?

Many practices of a church organization in its sociological dimension have a tendency to grow beyond their service function and consequently lead to a certain "self-serving existence" of their own. Moreover, over a period of time organizational practices unconsciously become part of the life and belief system of a church. Organizational structures and practices then become a "holy tradition" that may not be questioned. The next step is to mistakenly interpret any changes in its form as an attack on the church's system of belief.

The transfer of ministers does not belong to the basic beliefs of the SDA church. However, its essence and practice should not contradict these convictions of faith. Form and content must

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<sup>1</sup>See Gottfried Oosterwal, Mission in einer Veränderten Welt [Mission: Possible] (Hamburg: Advent Verlag, 1975), chapter 2, pp. 20-38.

remain interrelated. Therefore, it is necessary, from time to time, to examine the concept of transfers and its practice in order to find out whether the transfers are in accordance with the service-character of the church and what their biblical-theological foundations are.

### The Special Significance of the Project

This investigation of the practice of the transfer of ministers is concerned specifically with the SDA Church in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which is only one of the 83 unions comprising the world-wide SDA Church in 190 countries.<sup>1</sup> For thirty years, the author has worked as a minister in different positions of the SDA Church in the GDR, a country belonging to the community of socialist states.

During his service, especially in his position as the leader of the Ministerial Association and as a member of the Union Committee of the SDA Church in the GDR, he has been asked many direct and indirect critical questions about the practice of transfers. He has been gradually and powerfully impressed that transfers have been at least partially responsible for the spiritual crises in the lives of some ministers and for tensions in their marriages and family relationships as well. These crises have weakened the effectiveness of the ministers concerned and lessened the positive influence of their families on the congregations. Relationships between individual ministers and the administrators of the church have also

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<sup>1</sup>These statistical data are taken from the Seventh-day Adventist Yearbook, 1981, and refer to the year 1979.

seemed negatively affected--which in turn weakens the minister's effectiveness and damages the authority of the administrators in the eyes of the congregations. Church members and head elders have expressed their dissatisfaction with the frequency of transfers which have caused great financial burdens and have at times prematurely broken off promising starts in the growth of the congregation.

The frequency of critical questions concerning the present practice of transfers and the suspected problems in the lives of the ministers and their families--including the tensions between the ministers and the administrators--have led to the present investigation into the motives and methods for transfers. It is sincerely hoped that such an investigation will render a service to the ministers, the administrators, and the congregations of the SDA Church in the GDR. At the same time, it is expected that information emerging from the investigation would lead to the discovery of the most favorable time and the best time interval for transfers, information which could serve the Union Committee of the SDA Church in the GDR as a guide for the planning.

#### The Methods of Research

With regard to the problem of the theological relevance of the transfer of ministers, the deductive method has been used. The point of departure for these theological reflections was the motif of God's pilgrim people which in the Old and New Testament is intimately related to salvation history. Time and again God's call intervened in the lives of individuals as well as in that of His people as a whole, liberating them from their bonds, calling them to

a pilgrimage, and leading them from one place to another. Salvation history progressively reveals that the external form of the pilgrimage is a reflection of the inner essence of being God's church in the world. God's call liberates humans from the bonds of the old Aeon and makes them guests and aliens in this perishing world. At the same time, the church is put upon a new and living road upon which its Lord--as the One Who has come already--is approaching in His parousia to lead it into its final rest and communion with God.

A characteristic of transfers is that they repeatedly call ministers and their families to follow a new path that leads them from one place to another. Men, women, and children give up interpersonal relationships, burn bridges to the world around them, and settle anew in a strange environment. Transfers contain, thereby, many characteristics of the pilgrimage, of "Being-on-the-Way," connected with "breaking camp." They are thereby a concrete expression of God's pilgrim people, as well as a sign of the fact that the congregation as a whole remains, in essence, called to a pilgrimage existence which must be realized in every area of human life and endeavor.

In order to be able to investigate the practice of the transfer of ministers and to ascertain its effects on the minister's work and his family life, the inductive method has been used. Questionnaires were prepared for all those persons involved in transfers, i.e., for ministers, their wives, their children, and for head elders of the congregations. The specific concerns of each required individualized questionnaires for each group. The questions had to include as comprehensively as possible all of those areas of

human life that are affected by transfers. All the ministers of the SDA Church in the GDR, all of their wives, a selection of forty-five ministers' children over eighteen years of age, and thirty head elders (as representatives of the congregations) received questionnaires, together with an accompanying covering letter appropriately written for each group. The head elders were selected according to the size of the congregations so that the concerns of small, medium, and large congregations could be expressed through their head elders.

Furthermore, personal interviews with twenty ministers and their wives were prepared and conducted in their homes. This procedure was to guarantee that individual questions had been correctly understood. In addition, these interviews also offered the opportunity for deepening the understanding of the whole complex of questions through personal dialogue and discussion. Two criteria stood out in the selection of ministerial couples to be interviewed: finances, and stewardship of time. It was determined that the interviews had to take place in areas of the GDR where there was the largest concentration of ministers with the widest spread of years of service.

Since the Union Committee of the SDA church in the GDR plans and decides on all transfers, it was necessary to interview every member of that committee. The primary topics of these interviews were the methods of planning, the ways of implementing transfers, and the criteria that had to be observed. Each interview was so planned and conducted as to leave room for critical examination of the current practice of transfers.

In evaluating the questionnaires it was most important to take into consideration the ministers' number of years of service. The longer a minister has served, the more experience he has gathered. Generally, the number of transfers increases with the number of years of service. Greater weight, therefore, had to be given to the written comments of those ministers and their wives who have served for more than a decade. Another point to be considered was that every transfer affected each minister's family in a different combination of place and time, the couple's maturity, the number and age of their children, the structure of the congregations, and the environmental circumstances. Finally, it has to be remembered that each transfer is a unique event which cannot be duplicated. The questionnaire responses, therefore, do not allow any unequivocal conclusions. They do, however, show trends and tendencies from which certain conclusions may be drawn.

#### Description of the Project

The first section of the theological part of the project describes the path of God's pilgrim people in Old Testament times. With God's call to Abraham to "burn all bridges behind him" and travel to an unknown country and live there as a stranger, the history of God's pilgrim people began. It continued in the lives of the patriarchs. The Exodus from Egypt put Abraham's descendants on a new road in their pilgrimage which led through the desert into the promised land. After having arrived there, it is revealed to them that not possession of the land but communion with God was the actual goal of their pilgrimage. God's people should forever



remain on the way to reach that goal. However, Israel did not carry on with this pilgrimage in its history.

The second section traces the path of God's pilgrim people in the New Testament. It reaches a new dimension with the Incarnation of the Son of God. The Son of God was continuously on the way to people, calling them to a new and living way, namely, to follow Him. Those who accepted His call became strangers in this world. But they found a new home in the Ecclesia. It remains the task of the church to continue Christ's own mission in this world. In its mission, its pilgrimage is realized. Over and over again the Church is calling its members to this Pilgrimage, which can be expressed in many different forms. One of these forms today is the transfer of ministers who are called to go from one congregation to another to remain true to their calling as God's pilgrim people on the last lap of their journey.

The practical part of the project allows all of the groups of people participating in the transfers to express their opinions, beginning with the Union Committee of the SDA church in the GDR which plans and decides the transfers. The second section presents the opinions of the ministers with reference to the various areas of their service, their families, their spiritual lives, and other aspects of their personal lives. The point of view of the ministers' wives is presented in the third section. Certain areas of life included here are similar to those discussed by the ministers' too. Also included here is the effects of the transfers on the careers of ministers' wives.

The fourth section deals with the opinions of the ministers' children who share their own experiences. Special emphasis is thereby given to the child's world of emotions. Finally, the opinions of the head elders are summed up. They also evaluate transfers, as representatives of the congregations which are directly affected. Each section concludes with a general evaluation of the practice of transfers and includes suggestions for improvements in the practice. The concluding section sums up the results and gives recommendations worked out in the hope of helping to make transfers better achieve their goals.

#### The Organizational Structure of the SDA Church

The organizational foundation of the SDA Church consists of local congregations of baptized members in a certain geographical area. These local congregations annually elect their own church leaders. A larger number of local congregations are united into an organizational unit called a conference. The administrators of the conference are elected for three years by the ministers and representatives of the congregations. Several conferences together form a union which in its geographical expanse is often identical with a country or a nation as a whole. The administrators of a union are elected for five years. The General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is the organization which unites the SDA Church in the whole world. In order to maintain the unity of the Church and to enable an effectively cooperative work, the General Conference consists at the present time of ten divisions which together encompasses the whole world. The presidents of these divisions, as

well as those of the General Conference, are elected at the General Session of the General Conference every five years. It is possible for every officer of the Church to be reelected for another term.<sup>1</sup>

#### Closing Remarks

The English-speaking reader will notice that chiefly German literature is referred to, especially in the theological part of this paper. This study was written while the author was teaching at Friedensau Theological Seminary in the GDR, where only--or nearly so--German-language literature was available. Furthermore, the work has been written for the SDA Church in the GDR which will profit most from those theological publications which are rooted in the German-language area.

Unless noted otherwise, all quotations from the Bible are taken from the New International Version. The words, phrases, and sentences in quotation marks found in the second part of this study are based upon notes taken during the interviews or are taken from the questionnaires of the various groups of participants. Some sentences are partially shortened or edited.

#### Personal Remarks

Behind the critique necessarily arising from this research into the practice of transfers stands a deep love for the ministers, their wives, and children, and for the administrators of the SDA Church. Love must view things critically if it wants to remain a

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<sup>1</sup>See, for instance, Auf einen Blick [In an Eye's Moment], (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1980), pp. 34-37, which presents 77 questions put to the SDA church.

helping love. Since the author himself has had the privilege of working for a decade or so with the Union committee and was thereby co-responsible for the planning of the transfers in the GDR, the critique touches him personally. Anyone who has personally struggled with the decisions concerning transfers can speak only with the highest regard of this work of the Union committee. Yet, in spite of the prayers for guidance by the Holy Spirit and with all the best intentions, situations frequently emerge which cause many a minister's family personal pain and problems for which the committee is co-responsible. It is the grace of God which must heal these wounds and forgive our debts.

The same high regard is expressed for the ministers and their wives and children, who have shown such a readiness for personal sacrifice in leaving their established home to go where their service in the church of Jesus Christ was needed. As long as this spirit of love and sacrifice unites the ministers of Jesus Christ, they shall remain with their congregations on the road on which the Lord Himself is rapidly approaching.

PART I

GOD'S PILGRIM PEOPLE AND THE EXODUS COMMUNITY  
AS A MOTIF OF SALVATION HISTORY IN  
THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

## INTRODUCTION

God's call to one man initiated the history of God with His people (Gen 12:1-3). This started a new phase in salvation history which in its external form is the history of a constantly repeated new exodus and beginning--God calling people out of their earthly certainties and relationships, putting them on an unchartered road, and making them aliens and strangers in this world. Initially, the people wandered together as a band of nomads. Later, they traveled as a nation from place to place. They had no knowledge as to where their path would lead them. And yet, they knew that it would take them to the very place which God had promised them, to the very end (telos) that God Himself had determined (Heb 11:9, 10, 13, 14).

This journey, which God's pilgrim people in Old Testament times had undertaken, is not just the external form of existence to which God's people have been called. It is the model for all existence by faith and, therefore, a hallmark of its very essence and inner being.

God's Son, likewise, came to this world in the form of an Alien and a Stranger. His whole life and existence reflected the pilgrim motif--He came from the Father, and again returned to Him (John 16:25). Jesus lived as One Who was "passing through" this world. But this external form of His life was a reflection of an inner necessity. He was constantly on His way to His fellow human

beings; yet, He lived as an Alien and a Stranger in this world. While on His way, Jesus called people to follow Him without condition. And those who did accept His call, He guided into the greatest exodus of their life.

Called with a holy calling (2 Tim 1:9), the church of the New Testament is on a pilgrimage with its Lord. As an Exodus-community, the church is liberated to live as aliens and strangers. It does not know when the way will end, but it does have the certainty that the Lord is going with His people and that He Himself is on His way to meet them. His parousia spells the end of their journey (Heb 13:14).

The objective of this study was to show that God's calling always liberates people for a life as pilgrims. God's pilgrim people of the Old and New Testament are our models and examples. Today, this existence as pilgrims is realized among other forms--in the calls ministers receive to serve God and His church in different locations and functions. The transfer of ministers, however, serves at the same time as a sign and a model to the church as a whole. It is a reminder of the fact that, in essence, the whole communion of faith has been called to be pilgrims and to live as aliens and strangers on earth.

## CHAPTER I

### GOD'S PILGRIM PEOPLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

#### The Patriarchs as a Model of Israel's Existence as a Pilgrim People

With God's call to Abraham the first exodus began. It laid the foundation of Israel's existence as a pilgrim people: "The Lord had said to Abram 'Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land that I will show you'" (Gen 12:1).

Abraham's country was the world of the East; "Ur of the Chaldees" and "Haran" are mentioned (Gen 11:31; 15:7; Neh 9:7; Acts 7:4). Presumably, Abraham belonged to an Aramaic people which was wandering about in the desert that bordered a powerful ancient civilization.<sup>1</sup> As nomadic herdsman, the people constantly moved about from area to area, pitching their tents, only to strike them again after a while. Their earthly existence knew no abiding place, no rest, no settled life.

Out of this wandering band of nomads, God called Abraham into a new pilgrimage. But, what was really new in Abraham's life when he responded to God's call?

1. It was not the pilgrimage per se. Abraham was already a nomadic herdsman. Nothing changed in that respect. But, his new

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Joachim Kraus, Das Volk Gottes im Alten Testament (Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1958), p. 13.



pilgrimage took him away from his own environment, out of the certainty of his tribal relations and the safety of his family and clan. He had to break all his ties and relationships and leave.

2. Abraham had to give up the land where he was used to pitching his tent and where he felt at home and move into a land that was foreign to him. To a nomadic herdsman, however, land is basic to his existence. In moving to an unknown land, Abraham took quite a risk. It was a bold and audacious adventure. He had to give up all his own plans and goals and objectives. Now the goal and direction of his pilgrimage were determined by the Lord Who had called him. Abraham was asked to give up himself and in obedience let God guide Him.

3. Abraham's pilgrimage in and through the promised land was shaped and determined solely by His obedience to the Word of God. It was not the fact that he left his country and family, nor his life as a pilgrim, which made Abraham an alien and a stranger. It was the call of God and Abraham's response in obedience.

4. The Word of God which Abraham received released powers that enabled him to live indeed as an alien and a stranger without collapsing under the strain. At the same time, that Word liberated Abraham from himself and from all bonds and securities. Abraham clung unto Jahweh.

"To believe" means in Hebrew, "to cling" or "to fasten oneself unto Jehovah" . . . Jahweh had shown to Abraham His design of history . . . ; and Abraham accepted that as reality; he "clung to it"; that was his faith.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1969), 1:183.

In response to God's call, Abraham began his journey. He left with the depressing uncertainty of not knowing either his goal or his direction. It was a step into darkness. "Abraham . . . obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going" (Heb 11:8). From the very start, however, Abraham also knew of God's promise: "Go to the land I will show you" (Gen 12:1). Every initiative on this pilgrimage came from the One Who had called him. Jahweh knew the direction and the goal of Abraham's wanderings in the darkness. For that reason, Abraham had to cling constantly to Jahweh and to His Word. Jahweh was his only Certainty on his pilgrimage.

Abraham's arrival in the promised land did not spell the end of his pilgrimage. The record tells us that Abraham passed through the land, and then stopped at Sichem (Gen 12:6). After a period of rest, he "went on towards the hills east of Bethel" and pitched his tent east of Bethel (Gen 12:8). After a while, Abraham broke camp again, which in Hebrew is expressed by a verb that means "pulling out stakes."<sup>1</sup> Thus, throughout his life, Abraham remained a wandering nomad in a land which did not belong to him. The real owners of the land were the Canaanites (Gen 12:6). The land which God had promised him remained for Abraham always "the land where he . . . was an alien" (Gen 17:8).

This expression--"the land where you are now an alien"--makes us fully aware of the tension that exists between God's promise that

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<sup>1</sup>Claus Westermann, Biblischer Kommentar Genesis (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978), I/13:183.

His people would possess the land, and the historical reality at the time of the patriarchs. They lived in the land that God had shown and promised them as an inheritance, as "legal immigrants." At the death of his wife, Abraham describes his status before the indigenous population as "an alien and a stranger" (Gen 23:4).<sup>1</sup> Notice how Abraham on one occasion describes his journey through a foreign country: "God had me wander from my father's household . . ." (Gen 20:13). In Hebrew, the verb "wander" can have the harsh meaning of "leading astray." Abraham felt as though he were being "led astray" by God.<sup>2</sup> He pursued his journey as one who was wandering in uncertainty, groping in vain,<sup>3</sup> without ever taking possession of the land, "not even a foot of ground" (Acts 7:5).

For Isaac and Jacob, too, the promised land remained the land where they lived as "aliens and strangers" (Gen 28:4; 36:7;

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<sup>1</sup>The "ger" is distinguished from the foreigner in general by the fact that he is a "resident alien," who for a period of time has settled in the land. This gives him a special status. Besides the "ger," we also hear of the tosab, the "by-dweller" (Gen 23:4; Lev 25:23, 25). His social status is comparable if not identical to that of the "ger" (R. Martin-Achard, "gur," in Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament [THAT], ed. E. Jenni and C. Westermann [Munich: Chr. Kaizer Verlag, 1971], 1:410).

In the Old Testament the "ger" holds a middle position between the native and a stranger. He lives among people who are not related to him by blood. He lacks, therefore, the protection and the privileges generally associated with blood relationship and locality of birth (D. Kellermann, "ger," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament [ThWAT], ed. Botterwech and Ringgren [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1973], 1:983).

<sup>2</sup>Walter Zimmerli, 1. Mose 12-15 Abraham, Zürcher Bibelhommentare (Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1976), p. 24.

<sup>3</sup>THAT, 2:1056.

37:1). When Pharaoh once asked, "How old are you?" Jacob answered, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty, . . . and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers" (Gen 47:7-9). In this answer, Jacob draws the attention away from his own age and focuses instead on the quality of this period of time. He characterizes it as a constant pilgrimage, without rest. This existence as pilgrims and their status as aliens and strangers to which God had called them, characterize the whole life of the patriarchs.<sup>1</sup>

Only a tiny little plot of land could the patriarchs legally call their own, namely, the burial place at Machpela, near Hebron (Gen. 23). The forefathers, who for the sake of the promise had joined Abraham on his pilgrimage, were not buried in Hittite soil. In death, they were no longer aliens.<sup>2</sup>

#### Summary

The era of the patriarchs in Israel is poignantly summarized in the possibly oldest and shortest confession of faith<sup>3</sup> in the Old Testament. It is found in Deut 26:5-9, and starts with the words: "My father was a wandering Aramean. . . ." These words, "wandering Aramean,"<sup>4</sup> refer not only to the time of Jacob, but portray the

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Das erste Buch Mose, Genesis (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1972), p. 334.

<sup>2</sup>von Rad, Theologie des Alten Testaments, 1:183.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Bormann, Das Wandernde Gottesvolk - die Exodus-Gemeinde, cited in Bäumer and Dolch, Das Volk Gottes (Freiburg: Herder Verlag, 1967), p. 537.

<sup>4</sup>The characterization of Jacob as a "wandering Aramean" is not only founded on his relationship to "Laban, the Aramean" (Gen 31:24) and on the circumstance that the people who accompanied him from Mesopotamia were Arameans, but on the very fact that the

whole era of the patriarchs. It is the era of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is that period in history in which God--through His initiatives and active involvement with the patriarchs--laid the foundations of Israel. This era, however, is the era of wandering and pilgrimage; the era in which the fathers--as aliens and strangers--were constantly on the way. It is the beginning of a journey, with many stops, to which the whole Old Testament bears testimony. Looking back to the time of Abraham, the epistle to the Hebrews acknowledges: "By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb 11:9).

#### Theological Reflection

The life of the patriarchs, as wandering shepherds constantly moving from place to place, was of course conditioned by the particular social and economic milieu of their time. But, it also transcends those particular circumstances. And in that sense, their life as pilgrims and their existence as strangers in the land which God promised them--but which they did not own--have become the model for the history of God's people as a whole. The wanderings of the patriarchs, who were constantly on the way to a new future, remain the pattern for all following generations, including the church of the New Testament.

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patriarchs of Israel belonged indeed to Aramaic tribal groups. Friedrich Nötscher, ed. Echter Bibel: Altes Testament (Würzburg: Echter Verlag, 1965, 1:527.

He (Abraham) took this status (of an alien) to set an example of humility. It would guide the whole people of God in its quest for<sup>1</sup> the meaning of its existence under the promises of God.

The experiences of Abraham and the patriarchs are prototypes of the experiences of God's people as a whole. The pilgrimage and the existence as aliens and strangers are not only an open possibility for the believer; they determine, in fact, his whole life and existence. Under the promise of God, the believer is on his way to a future which was opened by God, and to a goal which He Himself has set.

This is the basic design of salvation history. God's mighty acts and His powerful Word continue to free people from their bonds and enable them to live as pilgrims and strangers. And when God calls, there is always a people who will cling to Jahweh and begin a new exodus, a new pilgrimage, even when they do not understand His Way and are wandering in darkness. The Word of Jahweh, however, keeps them and supports them on their pilgrimage. In spite of all uncertainty, and the doubts that are part of it, they know that God is leading them. He is in control. Thus they themselves become the instruments by which God is accomplishing His work of salvation in history.

Liberated by Jahweh from Bondage  
Israel Becomes God's People  
Wandering in the Wilderness

In the wanderings of the patriarchs, the people of God found the model and the preparations for their own pilgrimage into the

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<sup>1</sup>K. L. Schmidt and M. A. Schmidt, "paroikos," Theologisches

promised land. This pilgrimage reached a new dimension when Jacob and his family, forced by famine, after the design of God, had to leave for Egypt. Deep in the heart of a foreign country, which initially offered them a place to live and a chance to survive, Jacob's descendants grew into a (new) nation. They increased so rapidly in number, that soon they seemed to become a threat to their host land. By unscrupulous oppression and an inhuman system of forced labor (Exod 1:11-14), and more still by a systematically planned genocide--all new born males were to be killed (Exod 1:16, 22)--Israel's sojourn in Egypt became a time fo boundless darkness and horrendous suffering.

Israel has always looked upon its sojourn in Egypt as a time of slavery and oppression. The Israelites lived as strangers in the homelessness of Egypt (Exod 22:20; 23:9; Lev 19:34; Deut 10:19). The shocking reality of this time of slavery, with its limitations of freedom, its contempt and disgrace, is powerfully expressed in the image of the "iron furnace" (Deut 4:20). In the heat of this fire, Israel was threatened with consumption and annihilation. "Besides being strangers in a foreign country, they were also in danger of becoming estranged from God."<sup>1</sup>

In this horrible situation, from which there seemed no escape, Jahweh brought a new rescue by His mighty Word. In Moses He elected the man under whose leadership He would lead His people out of the

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Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament (ThWNT), ed. Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1954), 5:843.

<sup>1</sup>Bormann; o.c. p. 543.

"misery of Egypt" (Exod 3:17). By this mighty act of liberation, God reminded His people of the promise which He under oath had made to the fathers--"to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens" (Exod 6:4). Judgment upon judgment was poured out over Pharaoh and his kingdom. Then came the unforgettable night of liberation from the "house of bondage" in Egypt. With His mighty hand,<sup>1</sup> and with great "signs and wonders,"<sup>2</sup> Jahweh opened the gates to freedom. This freedom, however, was the call to a new pilgrimage. Like the patriarchs once in their obedience responded to God's call and left their home and family, so was Israel expected to be ready for its departure in the passover night: "With your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste . . ." (Exod 12:11). Their new pilgrimage started by leaving Egypt "in haste." The liberation from the house of bondage in Egypt did not spell the end of their pilgrimage and status as aliens. These, rather, entered into a new phase.

Their path first led them to Sinai, the mountain of God, where they were gripped again by a creative word of God. It is there that Jahweh made a covenant with them (Exod 19:1-6). The nation God had liberated from bondage was now pronounced the "people of God," "God's own possession": "Be silent, O Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the Lord your God" (Deut 27:9). This creative Word of Jahweh elicited a new response on the part of

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<sup>1</sup>Exod 13:3, 9, 14, 16; Num 33:3; Deut 7:8; Ps 136:12; Dan 9:15.

<sup>2</sup>Deut 7:19; 26:8; Acts 7:36.



Israel. "And the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised" (Deut 26:18).

This mighty act of God introduced a new reality into history, a reality which had its seeds already in God's call to Abraham to leave his home and family and to go to a land which the Lord would show him. It is the reality of God's pilgrim people. From the first moment of its existence, the people of God appear as a people that is liberated by God from bondage to become a people of pilgrims. The goal of their pilgrimage was Canaan, the promised land,<sup>1</sup> where the patriarchs only passed through as strangers (Exod 6:4).

However, Jahweh did not send His people on their way to face the dangers and hazards of the desert by themselves. He went with His people. Were they not His own possession? Furthermore, God not only wanted to guide them through the wilderness (Exod 33:12 ff), He wanted to live among them (Exod 25:6) to reveal Himself anew in their midst (Exod 25:22). Therefore, He had a sanctuary built which in its external structure reflected the historical-cultural situation of Israel as a nomad people. The sanctuary was made of a tent which could easily be pitched and striken again. It was of such a size and weight that it could be carried along.<sup>2</sup> The tabernacle reflected in its external form the notion that God's people should always understand itself as a pilgrim people, constantly

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<sup>1</sup>Exod 3:8; 13:5; 33:3; Num 14:8; Deut 6:3; 11:9 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Notice the repeated instructions that the different parts of the sanctuary had to be made in such a way that they could be "carried": Exod 25:14, 27, 28; 27:7; 30:4; 37:5, 14, 27; 38:7.

living in the presence of God. This is true not only for God's people wandering in the wilderness; it applies also with the same force to God's people in the promised land.

After nearly a year's sojourn at Sinai,<sup>1</sup> the people broke camp again. They went straight to Kadesh at the southern border of the promised land. From there, spies were sent into Canaan (Num 13 ff; Deut 1:19 ff). But, because of a rebellion, Israel's pilgrimage came to a halt. And when Israel, against the will of Jahweh, tried to enter the promised land on its own, it suffered the defeat of Hormah (Num 14:39 ff; Deut 1:42 ff). Thirty-eight years of criss-crossing through the wilderness followed. It was a terrible time. The whole generation of rebels had to die first. Only then in the fortieth year did the Israelites finally reach their original point of departure in Kadesh again (Num 20:1; 33:36-38). A second time now they departed for the promised land which they entered, step-by-step, via the Transjordan region.<sup>2</sup>

#### Summary

The time of wandering in the wilderness is remembered in Israel in a two-fold way:

1. In retrospect, it is the time of the most intimate relationship between God and His people. In the inhospitable desert, without food and water, Israel totally depended upon Jahweh. It existed only by His care and support. God not only took care of His

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<sup>1</sup>Exod 19:1; Num 10:11.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. von Rad, p. 293 ff.

people's food and water, but even of their shoes and clothes (Deut 8:31 29:41 32:10-14). The prophets speak of this time of wandering in the wilderness as the "happy days of Israel's youth." Willingly the people followed their God (Hos 2:17) and obeyed His voice (Hos 11:1). Jeremiah speaks of this time as a time of first love between Jahweh and Israel: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown" (Jer 2:2).

2. At the same time, Israel's pilgrimage through the desert also stands out as a time of failure, of murmuring and of rebellion against God. Israel had to experience the difficulty of the journey through the desert in all its harshness. It almost succumbed. After only three days of journeying, "the people murmured against Moses" (Exod 15:24) because there was no drinking water. Later, in the desert of Zin, the people craved for the "flesh pots of Egypt." Death in Egypt appeared to them more desirable than the hardships of the wilderness journey (Num 20:1 ff). Even though God gave them their daily rations of manna, they craved other food. They wailed for the meat and the fish and the cucumbers, the melons and leeks and onions and garlic of Egypt (Num 11:5). This, too, is part of the experience of God's pilgrim people. They are the "memoirs of the stomach under the shining cloud of God."<sup>1</sup> In the end, the people even wanted to nullify the whole redeeming act of God and return voluntarily to Egypt (Num 14:1-4). The prophets of later generations

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<sup>1</sup>Fridolin Stier, Geschichte Gottes mit dem Menschen (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1966), p. 28.

kept these experiences in the desert as a deterrent example of rebellion and unbelief constantly before them (Hos 11:3-5; Ezek 20:5-17; Ps 95:8-11). F. Stier pointedly summarizes this aspect of the wilderness journey:

Led into the desert, called to follow Abraham's Way of trust, time and time again overcome by their fear of existence, failing in the expectations raised by these experiences: that is Israel. Yesterday and today. The 78th psalm, the most succinct description of the events in the wilderness, and their authentic commentary, says of the fathers that they "did not trust in God." (See verses 22, 32)<sup>1</sup>

#### Theological Reflection

With the exodus from Egypt, a new dimension was added to the experience of God's pilgrim people. To the hallmark of wandering and the status of alien and stranger, which characterized the life and existence of the patriarchs, now was added the pilgrimage through the wilderness. In the desert, Israel experienced Jahweh as the guiding "Shepherd of Israel."<sup>2</sup> He carried them, even when He had to punish them. He guided them, even when they left Him. He kept them alive, even when they did not "cling to Jahweh." Israel should thereby forever "remember all these experiences in the desert"<sup>3</sup> (Deut 8:2; 9:7).

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<sup>1</sup>Stier, p. 30.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Zimmerli has pointed out that the notion of the "Shepherd of Israel" can be explained by its "nomadic past." But he also emphasizes rightly that the sociological notion by itself is insufficient for its theological understanding. Walter Zimmerli, Grundriss der alttestamentlichen Theologie (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1975), p. 19.

<sup>3</sup>The book Deuteronomy reflects clearly a "Theology of remembrance." See, for instance ThWNT, 4:678, 679, and ThWAT, 2:575.

This part of the pilgrimage of the people of God through the desert, too, has typological characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Some prophets foretell the return of the wilderness experience and the special, intimate leading of God.<sup>2</sup> Even the incarnate Son of God had to go into the desert (Mark 1:12, 13). His confrontation with the power of darkness in the desert reveals that He understood His whole life as a "journey through the wilderness<sup>3</sup> in the light of Israel's own wanderings in the desert."<sup>4</sup> The book of Revelation also views the Way of the New Testament church as a life and pilgrimage in the desert (Rev 12:6, 14), 14), both with its positive and its negative experiences of God's pilgrim people. Is not the great goal of salvation history also illustrated by pictures that are reminiscent of Israel's journey through the desert? "The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water" (Rev 7:17). And, "To him who is thirsty I will give drink without cost from the spring of the water of life" (Rev 21:6).

#### God's Pilgrim People in the Promised Land

After forty years of wandering in the desert, Israel finally reached the border of the promised land. With a command, based on a

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Eichrodt, "Ist die typologische Exegese sachgemässe Exegese?" Theologische Literaturzeitung 81.11 (November 1956):647.

<sup>2</sup>Hos 2:5, 16, 17; Ezek 20:35 ff; Isa 41:17-20; 43:19; 48:21.

<sup>3</sup>Hellmuth Frey, Das Buch der Heimsuchung und des Auszugs (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag, 1957), p. 211.

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Matt 4:4, 7, 10; Deut 5:9; 6:13, 16; 8:3.

promise, Jahweh then called His people to a new phase of its earthly pilgrimage: "See, the Lord your God has given you the land. Go up and take possession of it as the Lord, the God of your fathers, told you" (Deut 1:21; 3:18).<sup>1</sup> In full assurance that God had already given them the land, they were to "go up and take possession of it." Step by step they conquered the promised land, in spite of the odds of facing a numerically superior, well-trained and well-equipped enemy. Israel conquered the land, because God had already given it to them. They fought, sure of their victory. Israel's conquest actually was Jahweh's bequest.<sup>2</sup> Joshua, who had led Israel in this part of their journey, gave this account at the end of his life: "So the Lord gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give to their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there" (Josh 21:43).

With the conquest of Canaan, the long period of Israel's wandering with its hardships and miseries had finally ended. Israel now shared in the rest of God (Deut 12:9; 25:19). This "rest of God" stands both for peace with its enemies, and rest for a weary people. It was, however, a direct gift from God.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Seventy-four times we find in the book of Deuteronomy the promise, "I shall give you the land." See also Joshua, with about thirty promises and assurances of God's gift, and about thirty commands. Alfred Kuehn, Ihr müsst von neuem geboren werden (Wuppertal: Brockhaus Verlag, 1969), p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> Bormann, p. 540 n. 8.

<sup>3</sup> Gerhard von Rad, "Es ist noch eine Ruhe vorhanden dem Volke Gottes," in Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 8:99, 100.

Did the conquest of the promised land and the entrance into the rest of God spell the end of God's people as a pilgrim people? Gerhard von Rad has rightly called out attention to the fact that promises, which in history have been fulfilled, thereby do not lose their actuality. They remain active, but on a new level and in (partially) new form.<sup>1</sup>

It is true that Israel now did possess the land. Yet it belonged to God: "because the land is mine" (Lev 25:23; Jer 2:7; 16:18; 50:11). No longer were God's people "bydwellers and strangers." And yet, before God, they did remain aliens and tenants: "We are aliens and strangers in thy sight, as were all our forefathers" (1 Chr 29:15; Ps 39:13; Lev 25:23).

Israel had, indeed, entered into the rest of God (Josh 21:43 ff; 1 Kgs 8:56). And yet, the final rest which God had envisaged for His people had not come yet (Ps 95). And if Israel, in spite of its conquest and the God-given peace, still remained an alien and stranger before God without having entered into the rest, then it also retained its status as a pilgrim people.

Israel was never to forget that in spite of its possession of the land, its settled existence, and its external peace, it would remain God's pilgrim people, wandering through the ages. It had its origin in the acts of God in the past. But it had always to cling anew to Him in the present and to go with Him into the future, from where He always meets His people in a new way. Through the ages,

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<sup>1</sup>Gerhard von Rad, "Verheissenes Land und Jahwes Land," in Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament (Munich: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1971), 8:99, 100.

several tangible symbols reminded Israel of the fact that it was a people, liberated by God, and called to an existence of pilgrims and strangers. These symbols signify at the same time that Israel was a people of hope and of the future (Jer 29:11).

1. The three great annual festivals in Israel were symbolic re-enactments of the salvific events of the exodus and the journey through the desert. The passover and the feast of the unleavened bread became a constant reminder of the great act of liberation from the prison house of Egypt. Israel, however, experienced this activity not only as an event of the past. Through Word<sup>1</sup> and Symbol<sup>2</sup> it was to realize that it remained in every generation<sup>3</sup> the people which

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<sup>1</sup>The young Israelite, who for the first time participated in the Passover festival, received upon God's command the following instruction from his father: "And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, what mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses . . ." (Exod 12:25-27). The same applied to the eating of the unleavened bread: "And though shalt shew they son in that day, saying, This is done because of that which the Lord did unto me when I came forth out of Egypt" (Exod 13:8).

<sup>2</sup>At every passover the Israelites had to put on the dress of the pilgrimage and re-enact the hurry of leaving and the whole pilgrimage: "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord's passover" (Exod 12:11). The Israelites did not just in thought transpose themselves from the present to the past to put up some kind of cultic dramatic play. Rather, by re-enacting the event of the past, that event itself became a present reality (Deut 16:2). See also J. J. von Allmen, Worship: Its Theology and Practice (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 34, 35.

<sup>3</sup>The Jewish interpretation offers the following instruction: "In every generation one should behave in such a way as if one had left Egypt oneself" (Strack, Pesachim, p. 44, cited in H. Frey, p. 142).



God had brought out of Egypt. "To remember"<sup>1</sup> denotes in Hebrew more than merely to bring back to memory. It means to be formed and guided by the events of the past as if they were present-day realities.

The Harvest Festival (Exod 23:16), also called the Feast of Weeks (Deut 16:16), was likewise an activity related to the exodus. Israel was thereby to remember that it had been a slave in Egypt (Deut 16:9-12).

The third great festival, the Feast of Ingathering,<sup>2</sup> or the Feast of Tabernacles, had a living relationship to the exodus and Israel's wanderings in the wilderness (Lev 23:42, 43). During the whole week of festivities, Israel lived in booths made of branches. It was a re-enactment of Israel's life in booths when God brought them out of Egypt.

Through these great festivals every Israelite was to remember that he himself also had been liberated from slavery, liberated for an existence as pilgrim through the desert, and to a status of alien and stranger. In this connection it is important to note that after Israel's conquest of Canaan, every man actually had to go on a pilgrimage in order to participate in these three great festivals. They had to leave their family and their work and travel to the sanctuary to appear there before the Lord (Exod 23:14; 34:23; Deut 16:16). The objective of their pilgrimages was not just to re-enact God's great acts of salvation in the midst of His people but to appear in the presence of God.

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<sup>1</sup> See ThWAT, 2:591, 592.

<sup>2</sup> Exod 16:23; 34:22; Lev 23:15 ff; Num 29:12 ff; Deut 26:13-15.

These pilgrimages of God's covenant people in the Old Testament are very impressively portrayed in the Book of Psalms (see Ps 122:2 ff).<sup>1</sup> Gladly do people accept all the hardships of the pilgrimage to appear before God in Zion (Ps 84:7, 8). What fulfillment, joy, and happiness is theirs when the pilgrims reach the gates of Jerusalem! Now they can really all become the one community of Jahweh, praising His name (Ps 122:2; 84:3).<sup>2</sup>

These three annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem were a living demonstration of the fact that Jahweh Himself, and the communion with Him, were the real aim of the pilgrimage of God's covenant people.

2. In the promised land, a special, holy area was marked off to remind the people that in spite of their possession of the land, they did indeed remain a pilgrim people. The tabernacle of Israel's wanderings in the wilderness remained for centuries the center of worship. It pointed constantly to the time of God's gracious guidance through the desert. Even the temple which Solomon built kept the basic design of the tabernacle. That tabernacle

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<sup>1</sup>From the time of Hellenistic Judaism we have some vivid descriptions of the pilgrimages to Jerusalem in Philo (De mon. II. 1, M.II.223), Josephus (Jos. A. XIV. 337 f, XVII 312. 214. 254), and in the letter of Aristeas (paragraph 89). Based on the (original) sources, Bousset has concluded: "Every time at the annual festivals uncountable crowds of people moved to the temple. The Jewish localities appeared them empty and abandoned. From all the districts of Palestine, from Judea and Idumea, from Galilee and the districts of Transjordan, the pilgrims moved in crowds to the temple. Especially the Jews from the Dispersion crowded together in Jerusalem on the occasion of these festivals" (Wilhelm Bousset, Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter, Handbuch zum Neuen Testament (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1926), 21:111.

<sup>2</sup>See H. J. Kraus, Psalmen, Biblischer Kommentar 15/1 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1961), 51/1:lxiv, Zur Theologie der Psalmen.

clearly formed the pattern of the temple, and the model of its ordinances and activities. The temple community and God's pilgrim people of the wilderness are one and the same people. "Israel became the temple community, and yet it remained God's pilgrim people gathered around the tabernacle."<sup>1</sup> The ark of the covenant, which was carried before the people through the wilderness to point out the direction and their places of rest (Num 10:33 ff), and which played such an important role in the conquest of the land Canaan (Josh 3:14 ff; 4:16 ff; 6:7 ff), was by Solomon placed in the temple (1 Kgs 8). For more than 850 years the ark of the covenant was the visible sign of the presence of the Lord in the vicissitudes of the history of Israel.

3. The only tribe of Israel which after the conquest received no inheritance was the tribe of Levi.<sup>2</sup> Like their forefathers, the Levites lived dispersed in the promised land without sharing in its possession. Their inheritance did not consist of a piece of land. Jahweh, who Himself had excluded them from this land ownership, offered them Himself as an inheritance (Deut 10:9). "To those who own no land, God Himself is the true inheritance."<sup>3</sup> In the midst of Israel, now settled in the promised land, this scattered group of people was a warning sign to all that it is not the possession of the

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<sup>1</sup>Nils Aistrup Dahl, Das Volk Gottes (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Deut 12:12; Num 18:20; Josh 13:14, 33.

<sup>3</sup>Schmidt-Delling, Wörterbuch zur Bibel (Berlin: Evangelische Haupt-Bibelgesellschaft, 1972), p. 98.

the land but the personal relationship with God that is the goal of all of God's ways with men. And to reach that goal, Israel called to a continuous life of pilgrimage. The land was only a partial fulfillment of the promised inheritance. It pointed beyond itself to Jahweh, who alone should be their Lord and their whole inheritance. After all, the land could be taken away from them, but not their God! In this sense, then, the Levites "represented the perfect model of an alien tribe amidst the community of Israel,"<sup>1</sup> clearly demonstrating thereby that all of Israel was called to remain an alien and a stranger in its own land, and always a pilgrim.

#### Summary

The great annual festivals in Israel were instituted to keep Israel aware of its calling as a pilgrim people, even in the promised land. This pilgrimage was not determined by some temporary economic or social condition. It was the very essence of their existence as a people. However, after the conquest, Israel as a whole lost this self-understanding as a pilgrim people. It became not only settled on the land, but looked upon the land as the very guarantee of its existence. Israel no longer wanted to be an alien and a stranger. It wanted to be like the other nations and live within "secure borders" as a religious, ethnic, and political unit.

It was against this kind of apostasy that the prophets time and again raised their voices. They foretold the loss of the land and a new exodus that would lead Israel into exile. Beyond that,

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<sup>1</sup>Dahl, p. 19.

however, the prophets also promised the people a new liberation from bondage,<sup>1</sup> accompanied by a new salvific wilderness experience.<sup>2</sup> To the prophets, too, therefore, the people wandering in the desert remained the "arch-type of the true Israel,"<sup>3</sup> the prototype of Israel in every generation. They used the salvation historical events of the past as a model<sup>4</sup> to show that Israel was on its way to a new future, namely, the final recreation of God which would forever make an end to the pilgrimage and bring in the eternal Sabbath rest.

### Theological Reflection

The conquest of Canaan created for God's covenant people a new salvation-historical situation which they failed to bring under control. They had indeed taken possession of the promised land. But, they had not yet reached the goal of their pilgrimage. In time, Israel was unable to live with that tension between the now-already and the not-yet. Rather, it was settled in the promised land, externally and internally. It abandoned, in fact, the not-yet and, thereby, its pilgrimage and mission.

In his speech (Acts 7), Stephen gave a historical-theological analysis of the historical way of his people from the calling of the

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<sup>1</sup> Jer 23:7, 8; Isa 43:16, 17; 52:12.

<sup>2</sup> Hos 2:16, 17; Isa 40:3; 41:17 ff; 42:16; 48:21; 49:10, 11; Jer 31:2, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Dahl, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> In the proclamation of the prophets, the salvation historical events of the past have a typological character. The glory of the Antitype surpasses thereby the existence of the type (Eichrodt, p. 647).

patriarchs to his day. He characterized the life of the patriarchs as an existence as pilgrims and strangers (7:2 ff) in obedience to their call. Yet already in the desert Israel wanted to abandon its pilgrimage and turn back to Egypt (7:39 ff). The building of a temple made of stone was another attempt to give up the pilgrimage. But only the tabernacle, as a copy of the heavenly reality, truly reflected their calling as pilgrims and strangers (7:44). "It was Solomon, however, who built the house for him (7:47). The construction of a localized temple meant another denial of the pilgrimage to which Israel had been called. To Stephen, that was "the real sin of Israel."<sup>1</sup>

The salvation-historical tension between the now-already and the not-yet, which caused Israel's downfall, is also an eschatological dimension of the New Testament church through the ages. It has its origin in the redemption in Christ (Eph 1:7). And yet, its final salvation has not come yet (Rom 8:23). The new age has already begun in Christ; yet, it is still to come. In Christ, the church has already received its heritage (Eph 1:11); yet, it is still waiting to receive it in the future (1 Pet 1:4; Col 3:24). The church is separated from the world (John 17:14); yet, it has to use the things of the world, but "as if not engrossed in them" (1 Cor 7:31).<sup>2</sup>

The church with every believer experiences, therefore, the

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<sup>1</sup>Dahl, p. 195.

<sup>2</sup>Johannes Mager, "Im Spannungsfeld der Rechtfertigung aus Glauben," in Studien über Offenbarung 14:6-13 (Berlin: Betriebsschule Rudi Arndt, 1971), pp. 15-22.

tension between that which in Christ has already begun and that which is still future. Mentally and existentially, we must continually come to grips with this tension. For, the New Testament church also stands in danger of becoming settled in this world and of betraying its existence as a pilgrim people. Jerusalem, God's pilgrim people, then becomes Babylon, the prostitute who sits on many waters (Rev 17:1, 15). The epistle to the Hebrews warns against this danger. It exhorts the church to strengthen its weakness and to stay solidly on the road (Heb 12:12, 13). "For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come" (Heb 13:14).

## CHAPTER II

### GOD'S PILGRIM PEOPLE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

#### The Life of the Incarnate Son of God as a Pilgrim

Israel did not accomplish its calling and mission as God's pilgrim people. But, when the time had fully come, a new exodus occurred which shattered the dimensions of all previous exodus-experiences. Qualitatively, it was a completely new beginning in the history of humanity. It has no analogies. This exodus did not lead out of captivity into freedom. It rather brought the Son of God out of the freedom of God's existence into the relationships and dependencies of our human condition, i.e., "under the law" (Gal 4:4). The Incarnation is the voluntary exodus of the Son of God out of the invisible world into the world of our human existence.

The New Testament tries to express the unexpressable aspect of this event through images and parables. The apostle Paul speaks of a "mystery of godliness": "He appeared in a body" (1 Tim 3:16). "He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant; . . . he humbled himself" (Phil 2:7, 8). The apostle John says with awe, "The Word became flesh and lived<sup>1</sup> for a while among us" (John 1:14).

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<sup>1</sup>The greek verb skeenein means "he puts up his tent among us." Is it John's intention to point out at the very beginning of his gospel that the life of the Son of God was a continuous pilgrimage? That He would only temporarily remain on earth and then break camp to return to his true home country?



In expectation of this coming of the Son of God into the world, Israel had to remain a pilgrim people. It had to be ready and prepared for this coming. Israel was called to open the gates for the Messiah and to go out and meet Him. Yet, when the Son of God came to His own, "His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). The sons of Abraham--as the Jews proudly called themselves in Jesus' days<sup>1</sup>--missed the day in which Abraham had taken delight when he set out on his pilgrimage (John 8:56). Settled in religious traditions and tied to rather rigid notions of salvation, they expected a messianic king who would liberate them from the yoke of the Roman occupation and return the land to them. Israel, which had its call to live as pilgrims, did not recognize the One who, poor and lowly, had come to them in the form of an alien and a stranger.

The Gospel of John depicts the life of the incarnate Son of God as the One who came from the Father and was sent into the world. On various occasions Jesus referred to that Himself: "I know from where I came" (8:42), "for I came from God" (8:42). "I am from him, and he sent me" (7:29).<sup>2</sup> Clearer still is Jesus' word: "I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father" (16:28).<sup>3</sup> The Son of God saw His earthly life as a Way from the Father to the Father. He had not come to

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<sup>1</sup>Strack-Billerbeck, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1926), 1:116, 117.

<sup>2</sup>See also, John 3:17, 34; 5:36, 39; 6:29, 57; 7:29; 10:36; 11:42; 17:3, 8, 18, 21, 23, 25; 20:21.

<sup>3</sup>See further; John 14:2, 3; 16:7; 14:12, 28.

settle in this world but to save it.<sup>1</sup> To reach this goal the Son of God remained a pilgrim all His life. His whole existence was characterized by this status as a pilgrim and a stranger who was "passing through"<sup>2</sup> this world. Jesus' whole life and existence on earth can be expressed and summarized in two words--"coming" and "going."

This essence of Jesus' life is clearly reflected in the events of His earthly existence. Jesus was constantly on the move. Shortly after His birth, His parents had to leave in a hurry and flee to Egypt (Matt 2:13, 14). After a stay of yet undetermined length in the land where the forefathers lived as aliens and strangers, the exodus came which the New Testament interprets as a fulfillment of prophecy: "Out of Egypt have I called my Son" (Matt 2:15). Immediately after His baptism, "the Spirit sent"<sup>3</sup> Him out into the desert" (Mark 1:12).

Luke, especially, portrays Jesus as a pilgrim who first travels through Galilee.<sup>4</sup> Then he follows through with his so-called "Travelogue"<sup>5</sup> (9:51-19:27) in which Jesus reaches the very goal of

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<sup>1</sup>One of the temptations in the wilderness clearly aimed at that point. Satan showed the Son of God all the kingdoms of the world and promised to give them to Him. The power of darkness wanted to turn Jesus away from the path of obedience and tie Him to this earth (Matt 4:8-10).

<sup>2</sup>Romano Guardini, Jesus Christus (Leipzig: St. Benno Verlag, 1957), p. 15.

<sup>3</sup>The Greek verb ekballein implies force. Literally it means "to throw out."

<sup>4</sup>Luke 5:12; 6:1, 2, 17; 7:1, 11; 8:1.

<sup>5</sup>In this connection, see the literature given by Walter

His pilgrimage: His suffering death in Jerusalem. Time and again we encounter Jesus on His way as a pilgrim, both as a guest who enters<sup>1</sup> and as One for Whom there is no room. In the same way as Jesus at the beginning of His pilgrimage through Galilea was rejected in Nazareth (4:20 ff), so also does His way to Jerusalem begin with a rejection (9:51 ff). His way, finally, ends in the total rejection by both friends and enemies in the utter loneliness at the cross. On His way from the Father to the Father, Jesus experiences that there is no room for Him in this world (Luke 7:8). Says Jesus Himself about His life as a pilgrim: "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head" (Matt 8:20). "In contrast with the animals which have their shelters Jesus is the pilgrim without a home."<sup>2</sup>

The incarnation of the Son of God did not occur for His own sake but for humanity. For that reason the incarnation basically implies that Jesus lived for others. This existence for others was accomplished in Jesus' pilgrimage. It was "while He was on His way" that those decisive encounters took place between the people and Jesus. As an itinerant teacher, He traveled from place to place where He met with people in the streets and at the market place. His journey led Him through Judea and Galilea, to Samaria and into the

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Grundmann in Das Evangelium nach Lukas: Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1978), pp. 197-200.

<sup>1</sup>Luke 9:56 ff; 10:1, 38; 11:37; 14:1; 15:1 ff; 19:5, 11.

<sup>2</sup>Bormann, p. 56; see also Walter Nigg, Des Pilgers Wiederkehr, Stundenbücher series no. 64 (Hamburg: Furche-Verlag, 1966), p. 6.

regions of the Gentiles where no Jew without compelling reasons would enter (Mark 7:24 ff). On the way He spoke to the sick and healed them. While "passing through," Jesus called people to follow Him. It was on the way, also where Jesus taught His disciples and where He confronted His enemies. Not only single individuals did Jesus meet on the road. Whole crowds of people followed Him to see Him and to hear Him. And the incarnate Son of God cared for all of them. Only as a pilgrim was Jesus able to accomplish His mission "to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 9:10).

Every encounter with the incarnate Son of God compelled men to make a decision regarding their own pilgrimage. For in the Person of Jesus, people experienced in human form an encounter with that creative Word which had liberated the patriarchs and forefathers for their pilgrimage. Jesus' call had the same aim: to free men from conscious or subconscious human relationships and dependencies which kept them in bondage, be they of a religious (Luke 11:37 ff), social (Matt 19:29), or economic nature (Matt 19:16 ff). For those whose life had become shipwrecked, Jesus opened the gates into a new future. And people encountered this future in the Person of Jesus Christ.

The call of the incarnate Son of God liberated people for the greatest new departure of their life, namely, to step out of their present life and to follow the Master as His disciple. This call to discipleship<sup>1</sup> was nothing new. Jewish rabbis and John the Baptist<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Rengstorf, "Matheetes," ThWNT, 5:428-443.

<sup>2</sup>Matt 11:2; Mark 2:18; John 3:25; Mark 6:29.

had their disciples, too. But, there is something unique and qualitatively different in becoming a disciple of Jesus. The person who wanted to become a disciple of a rabbi chose his own master who could instruct him in the Torah. The aim of this discipleship was to become a master himself, independent of his teacher. But one could become a disciple of Jesus only if He Himself would call that person. It was not the free choice of the individual that qualified him to become a disciple of Jesus', only the sovereign decision of Jesus and His call. That is evident from all the stories about the calling of the disciples in the Gospels.<sup>1</sup> Above all, however, Christian discipleship was not a transitory state that ultimately would lead to an independence from the Master. Once a disciple of Jesus, always a disciple. Jesus always remains Lord and Master (Matt 10:24 ff; 23:8).

Discipleship means decision: Jesus' decision over certain people, but no less also their decision for Him. It expresses itself most concretely in the determination to forsake everything and--initially in a literal sense--to go with Jesus from place to place, and to accept the toilsome life of a pilgrim.<sup>2</sup>

Jesus' call to discipleship had its antecedents in the historical situation of His time. However, He also gave discipleship a whole new meaning. As Lord and Master, Jesus has united people to Himself and urged them to forsake everything so that they could, indeed, unencumbered follow Him. The creative Word: "Come, and follow me!" released powers which enabled persons to enter boldly into the pilgrimage with Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup>Mark 1:16 ff; 2:14; Luke 5:1 ff; John 1:1-35 ff.

<sup>2</sup>Günther Bornkamm, Jesus von Nazareth (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960), p. 135.

## Theological Reflection

From the beginning of His Incarnation until His return to the Father, the Son of God was in essence on a pilgrimage. In every respect He became truly one with humanity, but without becoming mentally or materially settled in this world. He belonged to this world. Yet, He remained unmistakably a stranger. He was tied to the (natural) laws of life, and yet free from all earthly relations and securities. In contrast to the covenant people of the Old Testament, Jesus was totally committed to do the will of His Father; He firmly stuck to His mission. For that reason His whole life on earth became a wandering through the wilderness. Constantly set upon by His opponents, rejected by His own family (John 7:2 ff; March 3:20, 21), often misunderstood even by His own disciples (Luke 9:45; Mark 7:17, 18; 8:14 ff), Jesus suffered the path of utter loneliness. Though His heart was overflowing with love towards humanity, He Himself found no acceptance among men. As One Who was despised and rejected by men, He hung upon the cross, taking upon Himself the guilt and the sins of all men (2 Cor 5:21; John 1:29).

Jesus accomplished still more: He broke open the gate to the freedom of a new life with God (Rom 6:18-20; 8:21) and broke the fetters which tie human beings to themselves and to this earth. Through obedience, the incarnate Son of God accomplished what had been foreshadowed in every exodus of the past: the liberation from slavery and the freedom for a new life.

The door which has been thrown open by the Son of God is still open for the whole world! In order to find this door that enables people to enter upon the new Way, Jesus has called men to follow Him. For, Jesus' mission in the world is continued in His disciples (John 17:18; 20:21; Matt 9:38). Liberated by Jesus for a new life, they are called to offer that new life to others. As Christ was sent into the world, so are also His disciples called to continue the missio Dei. God's work in this world is accomplished through mission. Every call to mission leads people into a new pilgrimage. But every pilgrimage makes people aliens and strangers in this world. It puts them on a way that ends in the coming of Christ, Who is the Head of the Church.

The Church Called to Remain a Pilgrim People  
Aliens and Strangers in This World

The church in the New Testament understood itself from the beginning as the new Israel (Gal 6:15) and thereby as God's own people (Rom 9:24, 25; 1 Pet 2:9, 10), rooted and grafted in the Israel of the Old Testament (Rom 11:17-24).<sup>1</sup> That is evident from the terms these early Christians used to express their self-understanding.<sup>2</sup> To explain the nature of their existence in this world, they adopted, among others, the word Ekklesia--"called out." Called with a holy calling (2 Tim 1:9), the church has been put on the way of the faith of Abraham. Called out of the dependencies and

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<sup>1</sup>Kraus, Volk Gottes, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup>Herman Ridderbos, Paulus, Ein Entwurf Seiner Theologie (Wuppertal: Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus, 1970), pp. 229-240.

certainties of the old era, the church of God is now on "a new and living way" (Heb 10:20). The members of the ekklesia are no longer aliens and strangers before God, "but fellow citizens with God's people and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19). On the other hand, however, they do remain what they no longer are, namely, "aliens"<sup>1</sup> and "strangers"<sup>2</sup> in this world (1 Pet 2:11).<sup>3</sup> They are not foreigners, however, because the world has rejected them or because they despise the world. For that reason the apostle Peter addresses the church as "God's elect strangers in the dispersion" (1 Pet 1:1). Election is always an act of grace, so also it is the election of the church to live in the dispersion, as pilgrims scattered abroad. To them, the dispersion is the whole world into which God has sent them (Matt 28:18 ff). At the same time, however, life in the dispersion also means "homelessness" in both time and space, and therefore a life of wandering in the wilderness.

The epistle to the Hebrews especially shows this intimate relationship between God's pilgrim people of the Old and that of the

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<sup>1</sup>The Greek word "paroikos" means a person who for some time is living in a foreign place. He does not thereby give up his citizenship of his home country; neither does he accept the citizenship of his protection-granting guest country. William Barclay, Aus dem Wortschatz des Neuen Testaments (Augsburg: Verlagsverein Lebendiges Wort, 1966), p. 123.

<sup>2</sup>The Greek word "parepideemos" means a person who for some time remains in a foreign place without settling there. He is passing through (in transit); he does not have a home there. Barclay, pp. 122, 123.

<sup>3</sup>The intimate relationship between the pilgrim people of God in the Old and that in the New Testament becomes especially clear from a lexicological observation: the notions of "guest" and "stranger" are used in the New Testament in those passages that are either a citation from the Old Testament or a reference to it.



New Testament. Ernst Käsemann has called this pilgrimage the "basic motif" of the epistle to the Hebrews, and therefore rightly made it the central theme of his study.<sup>1</sup> Hans Küng speaks of a "magnificent fresco"<sup>2</sup> which the epistle to the Hebrews has designed to picture God's pilgrim people of the old and the new covenant.<sup>3</sup> Israel's wandering through the wilderness remains the typological model and counterpart of the new covenant people (Heb 3:7-4:3). Like Israel of old, so also did the church receive the Word of God (4:12). This Word sustains and strengthens the church which on its pilgrimage is constantly threatened by weariness, loss of faith, and hopelessness (vss. 11, 12, 13). The church is called to remain on the way towards the eternal Sabbath rest and is warned not to settle prematurely for an earthly rest (4:1, 11). Not one individual is to separate himself from the pilgrim people of God as a whole. He may otherwise lose his way in the wilderness of this world and stay behind (10:25). The church is to advance in the faith that characterized Abraham and the forefathers (11:8 ff). The church of the new covenant absorbs the history of the pilgrim people of God (in the Old Testament) and continues it, likewise as aliens and strangers (11:13), surrounded by a cloud of witnesses (12:1). All are looking together for the better

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<sup>1</sup>Ernst Käsemann, Das Wandernde Gottesvolk: Eine Untersuchung zum Hebräerbrief (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1957).

<sup>2</sup>Hans Küng, Die Kirche (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), p. 150.

<sup>3</sup>Some have suggested that the address itself already is pointing in that direction: "Hebrews" are all those who as "refugees" are moving about the earth; all those pious believers who are looking for a heavenly home.

and enduring home (13:14). It is a pilgrimage of hope which ends on that day when "what can be shaken will be removed, and what cannot be shaken may remain" (12:27). At that moment the church forever enters into the promised rest of God (Heb 4:9-11).

The pilgrimage of the New Testament Church, however, is in no way merely a direct continuation of the pilgrimage of the people of God in the Old Testament. The line is interrupted by the coming of the Son of God, His death, and His resurrection. The incarnate Son of God stands at the center of salvation history.<sup>1</sup> It was He Who brought about the decisive turn of events in God's plan of salvation. The pilgrimage of the Church is therefore taking place in a new phase of salvation history. The Christ-event gives their pilgrimage a whole new quality with many unique dimensions.

Three aspects--each rooted in the Christ-event--have shaped this new quality in particular: an eschatological, a pneumatological, and an ecclesiological aspect.

1. The church owes its existence to the work of the incarnate Son of God. With His coming into the world and His victory over sin, death and devil, the "Eschaton" has begun. The church has its origin in Christ's act of salvation and is on its way to the return of Christ. The church exists, therefore, "in between the times," between the first and the last revelation of God's accomplished work in Christ.<sup>2</sup> This salvation-historical understanding of the

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<sup>1</sup>See, Oscar Cullman, Christus und die Zeit (Zurich: KVZ-Verlag, 1962).

<sup>2</sup>Karl Barth, Kirchliche Dogmatik, vol. 4/2 (Zurich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1965), p. 703.

time (kairos) determines the church's existence as a pilgrim people of God. This pilgrimage is not merely a component of its earthly existence. The pilgrim structure belongs to the church's very essence and is its basic foundation.<sup>1</sup> On its way in the wilderness the church lives by the victory of the One Who has come already, and by the hope in the One Who is still to come. At the beginning of its pilgrimage stands what God has already accomplished in Christ. At the end, what God in Christ will still accomplish for them. Looking back at its beginning, the church knows that the end of all times has already begun (1 Cor 10:11). Yet, that beginning is not its goal! Looking ahead towards the end, the church knows that it is only on its way towards the consummation of all things. The church's pilgrimage, therefore, is only "a tentative experience, provisional and temporary, which only at the second coming of Christ in glory will turn into a definite certainty of life eternal."<sup>2</sup> In its pilgrimage the church lives already in communion with its Lord. And yet, it is still (far) away from Him (2 Cor 5:6). Out of this inner dynamics the prayer is born: "Amen, yes come Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). The church knows that this time of pilgrimage is the "time of the end."<sup>3</sup> As the eschatological people of God, the church

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<sup>1</sup>Max Keller, "Volk Gottes" als Kirchenbegriff (Zurich: Benziger Verlag, 1965), p. 288.

<sup>2</sup>Emil Brunner, Das Missverständnis der Kirche (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1951), p. 57.

<sup>3</sup>Acts 2:17; 1 Pet 1:20; 1 John 2:18; Heb 1:1.

is--in salvation-historical perspective--on the last stretch of its pilgrimage.

2. In Old Testament times, single individuals were imbued with the Spirit of God. Among them were especially the leaders of the nation<sup>1</sup> and the prophets, who conveyed to the pilgrim people of God messages relevant to real-life situations.<sup>2</sup> A hallmark of the church of the new covenant is, in contrast, that every believer has received the gift of the Spirit.<sup>3</sup> Every disciple of Christ has been seized by the Spirit and is thereby a "pneumatic." In its pilgrimage, the church can totally depend on the help of the Holy Spirit. It is He Who has called the ekklesia out of the world (ek-kaleo) and put it on its way. In its pilgrimage the church can therefore always call upon the Spirit and count on Him. Jesus Himself spoke of the Holy Spirit as "Parakletos"<sup>4</sup> (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), Who guides the church and leads it on its way<sup>5</sup> (John 16:13). Those who are led by the

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<sup>1</sup>Gen 41:38; Num 11:16, 17; 27:18; Judg 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 1 Sam 11:6.

<sup>2</sup>Num 24:2; 1 Sam 10:10; 2 Sam 23:1; Isa 48:16; Micah 3:8; Zech 7:2.

<sup>3</sup>Compare my studies on this theme, Mager, Geistesgaben-geistesfrucht (Berlin: Union Publishers, 1974), pp. 50-52 ff.

<sup>4</sup>On the breadth of meaning of the word "parakletos," see William Barclay, Er wird euch einen Beistand geben; das Biblische Zeugnis vom Heiligen Geist (Berlin: Evangelische Versandbuchhandlung, 1973), pp. 37-39.

<sup>5</sup>The verb hodeegein is composed of hodos (path) and agein (to lead; to guide.) It means, therefore, "to guide (lead) someone on the road"; to show him the way. It can also mean to instruct someone; to teach. Michaelis, "hodos," ThWNT, 5:101.

Spirit of God are the children of God (Rom 8:14). In the same way as Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit and then "went around" (Acts 10:38), so is the Spirit also leading individuals<sup>1</sup> and the whole people of God.<sup>2</sup>

Very evident is this guidance of the Holy Spirit in the missionary activities of the apostle Paul, even in the planning and preparation for his itineraries (Acts 16:6, 7; 19:21; 20:22). As an eschatological gift (Acts 2:16 ff), the Spirit of God enables and equips the church to travel through the wilderness of the old aeon with the powers of the new age. He Himself is the guarantee that the Church will reach the destination of its pilgrimage. Indeed, in the Spirit the church has already attained its destiny. The apostle Paul, therefore, speaks of the Spirit as a "deposit," a "guarantee," a "seal" of eternal life (Eph 1:14; 2 Cor 1:22; 5:5). As an eschatological gift the Holy Spirit works in every member of the church and stays with it until the end of its pilgrimage (John 14:16; Acts 2:39).

3. The pilgrim people of God under the old covenant were called to be a witness for Jahweh among the nations. To that end God had called it into existence and cared for it by His mighty acts of salvation (Isa 43:10; 44:8; 55:4). Israel was not commissioned to go out to the nations. It rather was to act like a magnet: the nations would come to Israel and worship Jahweh among His people.

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<sup>1</sup>For example, Philip (Acts 8:26, 29); Peter (Acts 10:19, 20; 11:12); Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1-3).

<sup>2</sup>The weighty decision at the apostolic council was made under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:28, 29). This agreement opened forever the door to the mission to the nations.

Because of the mighty acts of God in Israel, the way of the nations led to the nation of God.<sup>1</sup> In the mission of the incarnate Son of God, which continues in His disciples, this centripetal concept of mission has ended. In Him every national and ethnic and religious wall of partition has been broken down. In this last phase of salvation-history, the New Testament Church has been sent to all nations (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). Its exodus really means a new pilgrimage into every place and dimension of this world. The Son of God died for the whole world. The whole world is, therefore, the church's field of service.

Two aspects in particular characterize this last and greatest of all pilgrimages: the church has been called out of the world; it has been liberated from all godless bonds and relationships and brought into the Kingdom of the Son of God (Col 1:13; Phil 3:20). It is this experience of redemption that liberates the church for its service to the world. Jesus is calling people out of the world to become His disciples. Then He sends them back into the world again as His apostles and ambassadors (Mark 3:14; 2 Cor 5:20). The more distinctly the church is separated from the world, the better it will also be able to accomplish its task. For, only in its separation from the world can the church as the "salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13) mingle with the world without becoming unfaithful to its calling. From among every nation God calls a special people and then sends it to every nation. This double exodus--coming out of the world and

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<sup>1</sup>Compare, Ferdinand Hahn, Das Verständnis der Mission im Neuen Testament (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1965), pp. 12-14; see also Hahn bibliography on this topic.

going back into the world--is the abiding mission of the pilgrim people of God of the new covenant, until the objective has been accomplished and the end will come (Matt 24:14).

### Theological Reflection

The continuity between the covenant people of the Old and the church of the New Testament consists, among other things, of the fact that the latter remains the pilgrim people of God. The discontinuity manifests itself--in the perspective of salvation-history--in the fact that the church arose in the era of the end, and therefore exists in the last phase of its pilgrimage. In Christ, "the day of salvation" has already dawned. And yet, the church lives also in anticipation of the full realization of that redemption (Eph 4:30; 2 Tim 4:8). Through the work of the Holy Spirit, the church is already experiencing the new creation (2 Cor 5:17). And yet, by faith, it is still waiting in hope for the revelation of the sons and daughters of God (2 Pet 3:13; Acts 21:1 ff). God's promise given to Abraham that in Him all the nations on earth would be blessed is being fulfilled in Christ's sending of the church. Through its exodus, the message of salvation is carried to all the nations until the end of the world.

The church can fulfill its mission in the world only if it remains fully aware of its origin and its goal. Only if it firmly clings in its life and faith to the work of the incarnate Son of God, and to the hope of His return, will it remain God's pilgrim people. Should it give up the living hope in His soon coming, the church would unavoidably become settled in this world. If, on the

other hand, the church were to lose its vision of the great salvation-historical events already accomplished in Christ's life and death and resurrection, which initiated the beginning of the time of the end, the length of time of its pilgrimage would become an unbearable burden. It would then be constantly tempted to rekindle the expectation of the soon coming end of fictitious calculations of the date of the parousia.<sup>1</sup>

The church, therefore, must learn also to live with the tension between the call to come out of the world and to go back into the world. If it obeys only the first, then the church becomes isolated from the world and spends its time and energies in triumphalistic self-edification. This is a betrayal of its pilgrimage. On the other hand, if the church dedicates itself wholly to the world and becomes absorbed by its needs and problems without clinging firmly to the Lord in true discipleship, then it cannot become a blessing to the world either. The world will erode it from within. Neither isolation from the world, nor accommodation to the world are in accordance with the church's calling and mission, The Holy Spirit is the Power and the Guide to keep the church on the middle of the road and to protect it from the dangers which threaten it on the left and on the right.

Only as a pilgrim people is the church the church of Jesus Christ. "The renewal of the church depends upon its willingness to

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<sup>1</sup>Oscar Cullmann, Heil als Geschichte (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1967), pp. 223-225.



become a pilgrim people."<sup>1</sup> The believer who affirms the pilgrim nature of the church and who personally accepts the status of an alien and a stranger is the one who again and again dares to step boldly from today into tomorrow. He cannot sit quietly, he has to go out to meet people in their needs and problems. "The Christian pilgrim does not yield to his desire to rest. He moves steadily forward. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Only the person who consciously accepts his pilgrimage every day can be used by God to lead others into a communion with Christ. It is this communion with Christ which in the end leads into the eternal Sabbath rest, the ultimate goal of the pilgrimage.

Realization of the Pilgrimage of the Church  
through the Ages

It is important to keep in mind that it is the New Testament Church as a whole that is called to follow Christ in pilgrimage. Every member of the people of God is as a pilgrim called into the service of Christ. "You are a chosen people . . . , a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out. . . ." (1 Pet 2:9). All have been endowed with the Holy Spirit. And each member has his own particular function, according to his or her specific gift(s). From the perspective of salvation-history, the pilgrimage is an essential part of the inner

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Jochen Margull, Theologie der missionarischen Verkündigung (Stuttgart: Evangelisches Verlagswerk, 1959), p. 83.

<sup>2</sup>Ellen G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View: Pacific Publishing Association, 1948), 8:18.

life of the church. But because of the church's mission into the world, the pilgrimage cannot and should not remain hidden or invisible. The pilgrimage must become realized in concrete historical situations whereby it time and again must take on new forms. Otherwise, our whole profession of faith to belong to the pilgrim people of God shrivels into a mere verbal declaration.

The pilgrimage of the church is realized in a number of ways: called out of the world, the church is also summoned by its Lord to gather together to hear His Word. The church that lives in the world is constantly on the move to appear in worship in the presence of God. In every worship service the gathered members hear the call of God to go back into the world to tell the people lost in sin that in Christ they have been reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20). This service of the church in the setting of our everyday life is called a "reasonable worship" by the apostle Paul (Rom 12:1). The church actually exists by this double movement: as a gathered communion it appears in the presence of God (Heb 10:25); as scattered believers it accomplishes its mission in the world (James 1:1; 1 Pet 1:1). In the worship service of the gathered members of the household of God, the church experiences the koinonia. In the "spiritual service" of the scattered believers the church's diakonia is realized.

The God-given day of rest (Exod 20:8-11; 31:17) signifies, likewise, the pilgrim character of the church. After six days of wandering, the church receives a day of rest and relaxation. God invites His people to leave the dispersion of the world and to abide with Him. Out of the homelessness in the world He calls His church

to find a home with Him. At the end of every six-day pilgrimage through the wilderness of the world stands always the Sabbath. But the Sabbath stands also at the beginning of each pilgrimage. Every week the church moves forward to the Sabbath. It is also returning from the Sabbath. The pilgrim church on its way to its destination is experiencing in every Sabbath a foretaste of that very destination. The Sabbath is therefore a living sign that the church remains a pilgrim people until that day when it will enter into the eternal Sabbath rest (Heb 4:9-11).

The pilgrimage of the church is also realized in baptism and in the celebration of the Lord's supper preceded by the footwashing. In his baptism, the convert professes that he has heard the call of God and has accepted it. He affirms his liberation in Christ and promises to follow Him all the way (Matt 18:18-20). With every baptism shared by the believers, the church confirms its calling as a pilgrim people of God.<sup>1</sup>

In the Lord's Supper the church remembers what Christ has done for it at the cross. At the same time, it is also anticipating the day when it will celebrate the Great Supper together with its Lord. Every celebration of the Lord's Supper is a new reminder to the church that it is a pilgrim people: coming from the accomplished

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<sup>1</sup>The apostle Paul interprets the guidance by the cloud and the crossing of the Red Sea in the light of baptism, and the miraculous feeding in the desert in light of the Lord's Supper. The destiny of the Israelite pilgrims is held up as a warning example to the Church to avoid idolatry and disobedience. To that end, too, were the sacraments given. Jürgen Henkys, Das Kirchenlied in seiner Zeit: Besungener Exodus (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1980), p. 12.

state of God's salvation and going towards the full revelation of His glory (1 Cor 11:24).

The church affirms and professes the same in the footwashing. In Jesus' days, the footwashing was a service which a host owed to his guest who after a journey on dusty roads entered into his house (Luke 7:44). By washing each others' feet--after the example and command of Christ (John 13:1-17)--the members of the church profess that they accept their pilgrimage and receive their fellow pilgrims in love.

In Jesus' days the pilgrimage manifested itself particularly by the fact that people left occupation and family to follow the Master wherever He went (Matt 19:27 ff). On another occasion, after Jesus had healed a person, He sent him back to his home to bear witness of the acts of Jesus. That was the particular form in which that person's pilgrimage was realized (Luke 8:39). Once Jesus sent His disciples from place to place to announce in word and deed the arrival of the kingdom of God (Matt 10:1 ff). Another time, He appointed seventy people and sent them on their way (Luke 10:1). Mark tells us that "so many people" were "coming and going" that they did not even have a chance to eat (Mark 6:31).

The book of Acts attests to the large variety of ways in which the church, after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, practiced its pilgrimage. A persecution in Jerusalem caused the church to be scattered. But the believers who were "scattered abroad" carried the joyful message of Jesus into the areas of Judea and Samaria, and all the way to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch (Acts 8:1-4;

11:19 ff). This started the era of Christian world mission.

The Holy Spirit not only accompanied and guided these scattered believers, but at times also worked directly, as when He called Philip away from a fruitful evangelistic mission and put him on a lonely road in the desert (Acts 8:26-40). The ekklesia itself also called people to the service of Jesus Christ and then sent them on their way (Acts 13:1-3). And wherever the apostles traveled, they urged people to take up their pilgrimage and to join them or to move on their own from place to place.<sup>1</sup>

The apostle Paul embodies par excellence the person who was moved by Christ to take up his pilgrimage. On three extensive mission journeys, Paul rushed through the then-known world. In a relatively short time, he had "from Jerusalem all the way around Illyricum fully proclaimed the Gospel of Christ" (Rom 15:19). He had carried the torch of the Gospel throughout the eastern part of the Roman empire. After that, he turned his eyes toward the West. His new direction drove him into the capital of the world, the city of Rome, and from there on to Spain (Rom 15:24, 28).

But Paul was not the only apostle moving about. In the city of Rome a church had arisen without the direct assistance of any known apostle. No doubt, people who had been moved by Christ had carried the Gospel into this large metropolis. We find Apollos, a native of Alexandria, in Ephesus and later in Corinth and other places.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 15:39, 40; 16: 1-3; 18:18; 19:22.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 18:24 ff; 19:1; 1 Cor 16:12; Titus 3:13.

Aquila and Priscilla, a craftsman couple from Rome, settled in Corinth (Acts 18:2) where they founded a church in their home (1 Cor 16:19). Later we find them at work in Ephesus (Acts 18:18, 19), and later yet in Rome (Rom 16:3). Many well-known--as well as numerous unknown--members of churches were moving about for the sake of the Gospel.

The epistles of the New Testament contain numerous indications, albeit merely made as references in margin, as to how the joyful message of the Gospel had moved people to initiate their pilgrimage in the world. The church in Corinth sent a delegation to the apostle Paul to report on the conditions in the church and to find an answer to certain unsolved problems (1 Cor 16:17). From Colosse, Epaphras kept up contact with the churches in Laodicea and Hierapolis (Col 4:13). The Church also sent him to Rome to inform the apostle Paul about the situation in the church (Col 1:7, 8). These journeys led Epaphras to share the lot of an apostle. He was arrested and sent to jail with the apostle Paul (Phlm 23). The church in Philippi sent Epaphroditus to Rome to take care of Paul's needs during his imprisonment (Phil 2:25-27). There he became seriously ill himself and almost died. Paul speaks of him as a "fellow worker" and a "fellow soldier" who had laid his life on the line for the service of Christ. After his recovery, he was sent back to Philippi (Phil 2:28-30). Many "brothers and sisters," whose names are known only to God, undertook the journey--to which the church had commissioned them--to aid the apostle Paul in his (material) needs and afflictions (Phil 4:15, 16; 2 Cor 11:9).

It was especially the apostle Paul who moved many people to accept the call to become a pilgrim. On his journeys time and again he stepped into the lives of others and urged them to start their journey for the sake of the Gospel.<sup>1</sup> The letters he wrote to individuals and churches had to be delivered by trusted intermediaries.<sup>2</sup> This caused many people to be constantly on the move. He sent Tychicus to Ephesus (Eph 6:21), and together with Onesimus to Colosse (Col 4:7 ff). These men were not mere "errand boys." Paul calls Tychicus his "dear brother and loyal servant in the Lord." He sent Timothy from Athens to Thessalonica to comfort and encourage the church and to learn how it had stood the trials and the persecutions (1 Thess 3:1, 2, 6). In newly established churches, Paul left behind qualified men to strengthen the new members (Titus 1:5; 1 Tim 1:3). Whenever necessary, he called them to him for counsel and instruction (2 Tim 4:9). And he urged the churches to recognize those who had taken upon themselves the burdens and difficulties of traveling and "to honor" them (Phil 2:29).

Paul also experienced the problem of fellow workers who could no longer stand the rigors and burdens of this constant traveling, and who went their own way (Acts 13:13; 2 Tim 1:17; 4:10). Others used their travels to seek their own benefit (Phil 2:21). Traveling, going-and-coming per se, are no guarantee that people had indeed understood that living by faith means

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<sup>1</sup>Acts 15:40; 16:1-3; 18:18; 20:4.

<sup>2</sup>Rom. 16:1 ff; Col 4:9, 16; Eph 6:21-23; Phil 2:28; 1 Pet 5:12.

pilgrimage. But Paul could give his fellow worker Timothy these impeccable credentials: "I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare" (Phil 2:20). Others may be looking for their own interests (vs. 21), but Timothy had proved himself in the service of Christ (vs. 22). He, therefore, was a real pilgrim.

The New Testament epistles convey a rather uniform picture concerning the actual forms of the early Christians' life as pilgrims. Many men and women were moving about (1) to plant churches, (2) to strengthen the existing churches and enable and equip them for their ministry in the world, and (3) to keep up the contact with the pilgrim people of God in every part of the inhabited world.

#### Theological Reflection

The whole church has been called to follow Abraham on his way of faith. Until the second coming of Christ, the church will remain a pilgrim people. Among them are those who in a special way have been called to travel and to move about.<sup>1</sup> God's call to mission will always move people to go out as ambassadors for Christ to advance the Gospel into all parts of the world. At the same time, the churches in the dispersion are in constant need of guidance and instruction to enable and equip them for their task in this world.

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<sup>1</sup>It is rather revealing to note that Uriah Smith introduced his report of the Michigan Annual Conference of 1862, where for the first time decisions were made (see General Introduction, p. 1) on the orderly transfer of ministers, with the following words: "While it is true, as a general rule, that our pilgrimage heavenward lies through a pathway that is rough and thorny, the Psalmist assures us that we shall sometimes be led in green pastures and beside the still waters. . . . There are refreshing oases, as well as parching sands in the desert of time . . ." (Review and Herald, October 14, 1862), p. 156.



God is calling for men who are willing to leave their farms, their business, if need be their families, to become missionaries for Him. And the call will be answered. In the past there have been men who, stirred by the love of Christ and the needs of the lost, have left the comforts of home and the society of friends, even that of wife and children, to go into foreign lands, among idolaters and savages, to proclaim the message of mercy. Many in the attempt have lost their lives, but others have been raised up to carry on the work.<sup>1</sup>

The persons who are sent out have different spiritual gifts. To one has been given the gift of planting, while another has the gift of watering (1 Cor 3:6-8). Since the gifts are many (1 Cor 12:7-11); Rom 12:4-8), churches will profit a great deal from a (regular) change of workers (Eph 4:11-16). Not every preacher of the Word can be all things to every church and every person in their respective needs. The large variety of gifts can only then be fully utilized to build and to equip the church for its ministry in the world when those endowed with these gifts can work in different churches and locations and on different assignments. The whole church shares in the responsibility to see to it that workers are called to serve in such a way--or in such a location--that brings the greatest spiritual gain to the (local) churches. This transfer of workers and change of functions and assignment should be planned together, however, and implemented in "good order."

#### Summary of Findings

1. Under the Old and the New Covenant, the pilgrimage is the permanent form of existence for the people of God. By accepting that call of God, the members of the church also become aliens and

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<sup>1</sup>Ellen G. White, Aus dem Leben und Wirken der Apostel [Acts of the Apostles, p. 370] (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1974), p. 166.

strangers in this world. That same call, however, also demands that they care for this world because God, in Christ, has also cared for this world.

2. The form and meaning of the pilgrimage are not always the same. They depend on the phase and situation of the people of God in salvation history. The patriarchs moved about in the promised land in hope. They never possessed the land. After the conquest of Canaan, Israel was called to remain a pilgrim people to prepare the way of the promised Messiah. The church exists in the last phase of this pilgrimage to proclaim to all the nations the salvation in Christ Jesus. They stand at the very end and destiny of their journey.

3. In every generation, the people of God must consciously accept their pilgrimage without shying away from the consequences. The way of the church is and remains a way through the wilderness. It has to face the trials from outside and the dangers from within. The greatest of these dangers is to get tired of the pilgrimage, to abandon it, and to settle in the world out of which God has called them.

4. The church is only able to remain a pilgrim people as long as it clings to God Who has called it. The firmer the church holds onto the Word of God, the easier it is for it to move through the ages, and with confidence take the step from today into tomorrow.

5. Every pilgrimage takes place in a particular historical situation and is shaped and formed by the social and cultural conditions of its time and location. In our day, the technical

possibilities also play a very important role. For these reasons, the pilgrimage of the people of God has through the ages taken on different shapes and forms. The church should not cling to forms and traditions which have become irrelevant and outdated. It must keep in step with God and remain open to the needs and changes of its own time (kairos).

6. Throughout the ages there have always been members of the people of God who have been especially chosen to translate the inner calling of the church as pilgrimage into the practice of their daily life and existence. The Levites in the Old Testament, the disciples who followed Jesus, and the apostles and their fellow workers are models of this special election, which should be reflected in the life and work of ministers today. The transfer of these ministers from one area of pastoral care to another, and the change of location that is usually connected with it, are practical examples of their calling as pilgrims.

7. This group of people, which has been specially chosen by the church to move about, constitutes at the same time a sign to the people of God that in essence the whole church has been called to an existence of pilgrims. In the lives of these men and women, the church should recognize the meaning of the life of a pilgrim. To accomplish that role as model and example to the whole church, ministers and their families must daily affirm and renew their special calling that has liberated them to become pilgrims on earth.

PART II

THE PRACTICE OF THE TRANSFER OF SDA MINISTERS  
IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC AND  
ITS EFFECTS ON THE MINISTER'S  
SERVICE AND FAMILY LIFE

## CHAPTER III

### THE PRACTICE OF THE TRANSFER OF MINISTERS IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

#### The Necessity of the Transfer of Ministers

Transfer of ministers and their families from one parish to another constitute an integral part of the life and ministry of a Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) pastor in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The changeover from one field or from one aspect of ministry to another in almost every case goes hand in hand with a change of apartment and place of residence. That is why transfers interfere not only with the minister's life but also affect his family as a whole, his wife and his children. Occasionally, other relatives are affected as well.

Transfers are neither an end in themselves nor are they maintained for traditional reasons. As a matter of fact, they are the result of concrete needs: (1) they stem from the Lord's missionary commission, (2) they serve organizational needs, (3) they occur for the benefit of the minister, and (4) they are needed because of the churches.

#### The Biblical-Theological Justification of Transfers

By the call to be an ambassador of Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:20), a minister and his entire existence are subject to the Lord's great

commission to go into all the world (Matt 28:18-20; John 20:21). Jesus' words commission him to move time and again to new fields to proclaim His last message of warning and salvation (Rev 14:6-13) through word and life. As the commissioning word of Jesus is of a creative nature (Heb 11:3; 4:12), the pastor is liberated by this word to take gladly upon himself all the sacrifices that go with it. What may seem undue sacrifice to the "outsider" can become a secret source of strength and a new experience of blessings for the minister and his family. Thus the call to discipleship (Luke 9:23-25) finds its specific realization in the transfer of a minister and his family.

#### Organizational Necessities

The church of Jesus, living in this world, has a vertical and a horizontal dimension, i.e., a divine aspect and a human one. Both aspects must be clearly distinguished, but by no means may they be separated from or played off against each other. Part of the horizontal--human--aspect is constituted by the forms of administration<sup>1</sup> which the Church has imposed upon itself as a sociological entity. These organizational structures are to be of a serving nature.<sup>2</sup> They are to help the Church as effectively as possible to continue the ministry of Jesus to this world through

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<sup>1</sup>For the organization of the SDA Church, see: Church Manual, [Gemeindehandbuch] (Hamburg, Adventverlag, 1973), chap. 4 "The Organization of the SDA Church," pp. 35-39.

<sup>2</sup>In its choice of organizational structures the Church is free to create the most efficient forms appropriate to its time and environment. In the manner of fulfilling its tasks within these structures, the Church is bound to the fundamental principle of

the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ministers' transfers are part and parcel of the organizational responsibilities of the SDA church in the GDR. The following organizational necessities make transfers unavoidable:

1. The appointment of ministers to administrative or other special services (presidents, evangelists, departmental directors, teachers, treasurers, deans) (The newly commissioned pastor and his family must move to the new location and his colleague, called to take over his ministry, must move to his parish.)

2. The retirement of ministers from active service when they have reached the required age limit<sup>1</sup> (The vacancy thus created must be refilled by another minister.)

3. The call into the ministry of young pastors who have completed their four years of studies at the Friedensau Seminary<sup>2</sup> and who have successfully completed their one year of practical work in one of the pastoral districts.

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being of service. Organizational structures tend to become self-reliant. As long as every member entrusted with organizational and/or administrative tasks feels subject to the law of serving, the structures cannot become self-reliant and face the Church as impersonal factors.

<sup>1</sup>Pension Ordinance for Ministers of the SDA Church in the GDR, V B, leaf 1,1. 1(2): "The transfer into the state of retirement is effected when male ministers have completed their 65th and female ones their 60th year of age respectively. On application of the employing department and decree of the Executive Committee of the Church exceptions can be made beyond these appointed age limits."

<sup>2</sup>The Ministerial Seminary of Friedensau is the central training school for ministers of the Union of SDA Churches in the GDR. This seminary (formerly called Friedensau Missionary Seminary) was founded in 1899 and is the oldest Adventist educational institution of Europe. During World War II (i.e., between 1943-1947) the rooms of the seminary were used as a military hospital. In 1947

4. Special situations like deaths of ministers or resignations for personal reasons (Among these also are changes in the family, for instance, when families increase in number and need larger apartments, etc.).<sup>1</sup>

Each one of the above situations entails transfers of ministers and their families. Often one organizational necessity brings about a whole series of transfers which include several ministers and their families.

#### Transfers for the Sake of the Ministers

As a human being, every minister is unique in his personality and his peculiar character. By his creation, birth, and upbringing every minister has developed a set of diverse gifts and talents. These natural gifts are handed over to Jesus Christ at the surrender of the minister's life in baptism (1 Cor 3:22,23). This, then, qualifies them as charismatic gifts. In addition, there are those gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to each one as ministerial gifts "to edify the church" (1 Cor 12:11). The minister's God-given, unique individuality, with all its gifts, must be allowed to unfold to an ever greater degree in his ministry. Transfers can make an essential contribution to this end.

1. Younger ministers who are still in the first years of their ministry ought to be given the chance to work in a number of

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the seminary was reopened. Since then the training of SDA ministers in the GDR has been possible without interruption. (Ein Zeugnis des Glaubens - 75 Jahre Friedensau, Berlin: SDA Church, 1974).

<sup>1</sup>On the housing situation in the GDR, see pp. 79-82.



different churches with regard to size, age distribution, and regional mentality. Every congregation consists of a variety of human characters, possesses its distinct spiritually gifted members, has its own climate, and suffers its own specific problems and conflicts. Transfers enable the young pastor to widen his horizons and his knowledge of human nature, to learn to adapt to new situations and people, and to get acquainted with the many-sidedness of church life. Diverse and multiple demands and burdens enable him to recognize his own gifts and abilities better and, therefore, more consciously. In addition, cooperation with several ministers who, due to their many years of experience, are capable of giving precious advice to the young pastor, provides him with a broader vision of the work. Through this close cooperation with more mature ministers, a healthy and well-proportioned model for his own ministry can take shape in the young pastor.

2. Transfers are also of importance for pastors who have been in the ministry for longer periods of time. After several years of work in a pastoral district, signs of wear and fatigue may show. Naturally, energy reserves also dwindle in the course of the years. A transfer, however, creates the pre-requisites for a new beginning. This is of special relevance in cases where an exhausting ministry has weakened the minister's spiritual strength or physical health. If a pastor works in an area which has only a small number of church members, where great distances have to be covered, and where only little fruit is borne despite hard toil and great zeal, a change of the minister's working place, after a certain time, becomes necessary for his own sake. The spiritual

strength and physical constitution of the minister, of course, are important factors too. Occasionally, situations develop in a church which make the transfer of the minister advisable both for his own sake and for that of the church. In such a case, it is of secondary importance whether the pastor and his family are themselves responsible for the development of the problematic situation. A new place opens doors for a new beginning. A new beginning brings new life and new joy for the ministry.

If a minister worked in only one pastoral district for his whole lifetime, many gifts would remain undiscovered and his entire development would be one-sided. The work of a pastor in various churches in different places contributes to a better recognition and development of his evangelistic, pastoral, administrative, and/or other abilities. The growth and development of his abilities and gifts also help in the decision-making process to find out if a minister is suitable for a larger area of responsibility (president, evangelist, departmental director, lecturer, etc.).

#### Transfers for the Sake of the Churches

A brief look at the New Testament epistles reveals that every church, independent of its geographical position, had its own characteristic features. This has remained so until today. Every congregation has its own history, its special degree of spiritual maturity with a corresponding atmosphere, and its specific problems with doctrines and church life. Thus every church has also its own concrete needs which must be taken into consideration in preaching, pastoral care, and administration. Not fulfilling the spiritual

needs of a church sooner or later gives rise to deficiency diseases which make the church weak in doctrine and life. A minister must be able to diagnose the spiritual needs of his church and try (his best) to overcome them in cooperation with all its members.

Not every minister can be everything to every church and to every member. Because the Holy Spirit distributes His gifts in different measures, every minister has his strong and weak sides. There are ministers whose strength lies in the proclamation of the gospel rather than in pastoral care. The reverse can also be true. The one is talented--independent of his age--to reach young people with their problems, and the other, to win souls for Christ through counseling. The one proclaims the gospel in a revivalist, warm-hearted manner, while the other does so in a more instructive and learned way. With his gifts, every pastor can reach only certain circles of his congregation, but never to cure the symptoms of deficiency that may have become apparent in a church. This change then revives those aspects of church life which a predecessor may have neglected due to his given nature. For that matter, transfers are necessary for a healthy development of church life.

#### Summary

Transfers of ministers are implied in Jesus' missionary commission and prove to be mandatory for organizational reasons, for the sake of the pastors and the churches in order to fill concrete needs, and to make the churches, together with their ministers, "grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph 4:15).

The Organization of the Union of SDA Churches  
in the German Democratic Republic

Within the Euro-Africa Division, the SDA church in the GDR<sup>1</sup> forms its own union. By the end of 1978, this Union comprised of 10,807 members organized in 307 churches. Table 1 offers an overview of the six Conferences within the Union and includes their churches and membership. Table 2 gives an overview of the sizes of the individual churches within the SDA Church in the GDR.

TABLE 1

THE SDA CHURCH IN THE GDR, ACCORDING TO  
CONFERENCES, CHURCHES, AND MEMBERSHIP

Conference	Number of Churches	Membership
Berlin-Markish	50	1,937
Mecklenburg	33	876
North-East Saxonian	66	2,548
Saxon-Anhalt	43	1,481
Thuringian	38	1,212
West Saxonian	77	2,753
Totals	307	10,807

<sup>1</sup>After the foundation of the German Democratic Republic in 1949, the Union of Seventh-day Adventist Churches in the German Democratic Republic took over the tasks of the former East German Union within the new state boundaries of the GDR. Until 1961, the West Berlin Conference was still part of the administrative and pastoral domain of the Union of SDA Churches in the GDR.

TABLE 2

## NUMERICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Membership	No. of Churches	Membership	No. of Churches
1-10	44	71-80	5
11-20	90	81-91	7
21-30	58	91-100	2
31-40	35	101-150	11
41-50	22	151-300	5
51-60	15	345	1
61-70	12		

The survey conducted to provide statistical information for this project-report, indicates that among the 307 congregations of the SDA Church in the GDR, 74 percent are small and very small churches (1-40 members), 20.5 percent are middle-sized churches (41-100 members), and 5.5 percent are larger churches of more than 100 members. The average size congregation is 35 members.

The number of ordained (117) and licensed (30) ministers who worked within the SDA Church of the GDR in 1978 totaled 147. Table 3 shows in which field of responsibility these ministers were employed.

TABLE 3

## EMPLOYMENT OF SDA MINISTERS IN THE GDR IN 1978

No. of Ministers	Type of Ministry
111	ministers served as pastors and evangelists
7	ministers served as presidents (Union and Conferences)
11	as departmental directors (Union and Conferences)
5	as treasurers
7	as teachers at the Friedensau Seminary
4	female ministers served as pastors and evangelists
1	minister was director of the Friedensau Institutions
1	minister was director of the Senior Citizens' Home at Friedensau

Planning Ministers' Transfers

The transfers of ministers from one pastoral district to another as an integral part of an SDA pastor's life and ministry are planned and determined by the Executive Committee of the GDR Union.<sup>1</sup> Annually, this committee decides which ministers are to be transferred and where they are to serve.

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<sup>1</sup>In late 1978, the Executive Committee of the Union comprised eighteen members. Thirteen were employed by the SDA Church, five were experienced church elders and deacons (Gemeindehelfer) (among them one sister). In addition, two ordained ministers, exchanged annually, take part in the Committee's sessions. They have the right to vote but they are not members of the Executive Committee.

In spite of the directions given in the Church Manual,<sup>1</sup> it is not the Executive Committees of the Conferences that determine the transfers but the Executive Committee of the Union in which all Conference presidents are members.

The method of transferring SDA ministers as practised in the GDR can appropriately be called a centralized practice of transfers.<sup>2</sup> This centralized planning of transfers has grown out of the special circumstances and difficult situations in the years after the Second World War. Today, three decades later, it has become an established practice. Because of this centralized planning, the ministers themselves and their families have practically no influence on the planning as to the time and place of their transfers.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Handbook of the Church: "Ordained and licensed ministers are not suggested or elected for their ministry by the churches. Their connection with the churches rests upon the nomination of the Executive Committees of the Conferences" (Church Manual, p. 182). "The churches may ask the Conference President for the ministry and help of ministers of the Conferences, but the decision about their call rests with the Executive Committee of the Conference in every case. Ministers can be commissioned to serve in certain churches; but if according to the assessment of the Executive Committee of the Conference, a change is necessary, it may make it" (pp. 185, 186).

<sup>2</sup>The centralized transfer policy includes all six conferences of the SDA Church in the GDR. It guarantees that eventually all the ministers in the entire GDR are to be transferred, thus restricting local patriotism of certain individuals. The transfer policy therefore demonstrates that the SDA church in the GDR takes into consideration the good of all congregations and the needs of every conference.

<sup>3</sup>The ministers have the right to veto (see pp. 97 and 98). In recent years, sporadic beginnings have been made to consult the ministers' families, by way of the Conference president, to find out which year would be appropriate or not for a transfer with regard to the family situation--especially with regard to the education of the children. This change would include opinions of the ministers and their families in the planning of the transfers.

Aspects That Have to be Taken into Consideration  
at the Transfer of Ministers

Every year the Executive Committee of the Union faces the task of planning and coordinating the transfers necessary for the sake of the ministers and the churches. Among the factors triggering these transfers are calls to administrative assignments, retirements, and new appointments of young pastors who have completed their studies. In addition, there are such considerations as whether certain pastors have exhausted themselves through their long and trying work in their particular parishes and therefore need a change of place and parish. Sometimes special requests and concerns of ministers and their families must be taken into consideration. Every transfer automatically entails further transfers. The pastoral district that loses its minister through transfer need a new pastor who, in his turn, also has to move and leave a congregation behind, which again needs a new minister. Thus the centralized planning of transfers by the Executive Committee of the Union is a complex and complicated procedure which requires much time in committee sessions as the many aspects are taken into consideration.

The great variety of these factors can be summarized under three aspects: (1) the local church and its particular needs; (2) the pastor's personality and his diverse gifts and talents; and (3) the minister's family and its particular needs.

1. As transfers are made for the sake of the churches, the committee must consider the following questions: What are the congregational structures of the pastoral districts that are affected by the minister's transfer? What is the age distribution in



the churches? What are the churches' needs with regard to child and youth ministry? What are the spiritual levels of the churches? What are the problems that affect the churches in doctrine and church life? What are the relationships between church leadership and the members? What evangelistic and missionary activities have the churches developed?

2. As transfers are made for the sake of the minister, the following aspects have to be considered with regard to him: How many years has he been working in his pastoral district? What kind of spiritual gifts have become apparent during his ministry? Which special abilities has the minister developed consciously? In which spheres of his ministry have his limitations and shortcomings become obvious? What has been his relationship to the church leaders? Has he been able to tackle and solve problems and conflicts or has he avoided them? What are the structures of the churches where the minister has worked in the past? What is the condition of his health?

From these lists of questions the Executive Committee of the Union is faced with the task of considering which pastor is best suited for which parish. At the same time, consideration must be given to the question: Which churches offer the best opportunities for further developing of the minister's special gifts and faculties? Two instances may serve to illustrate the point: A. A district that has been pastored for the last seven years by a minister whose strength is his doctrinal preaching rather than his pastoral care should get a new pastor whose strength is his pastoral care and concern. B. A minister who in the past ten years of his ministry

has had little to do with children and young people in his small and very small churches should be given the opportunity to work in congregations where children and youth are more numerous in order to recognize and develop his gifts for the benefit of the churches.

3. As every transfer concerns not only the respective minister but his entire family, the needs of these family members have to be heeded and taken seriously. Among the issues to be considered are: What are the ages of the minister's children?<sup>1</sup> Will the transfer cause a separation of the family?<sup>2</sup> Are there any other family considerations<sup>3</sup> which may be obstacles to a transfer? What is the health of the minister's wife? What is the wife's relation to the churches and the ministry of her husband? What is the size of the apartment at the new location? Does it offer enough space for (the respective size of) the family?

4. The housing situation in the GDR does pose one of the major problems in the Executive Committee's planning of transfers.

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<sup>1</sup>As early as at the beginning of the 9th grade of the GDR's Polytechnical High School, the young people have to make their choice of the trade they want to learn. At the same time they have to look for a place to get their vocational training which they must take up after completing the 10th grade. For that reason many a minister desires a transfer before his child reaches the 9th grade so that he/she can take up a vocational training and complete it at the new place. Others prefer their child's graduation from Polytechnical High School at the former location because an apprenticeship is transferable from one place of residence to the other, provided there are vacancies in the child's chosen trade at the new location.

<sup>2</sup>Sometimes the transferred minister's children who are starting on a vocational career or who are already in the process of learning a trade have to go and live in a boarding house because they cannot move with their parents to the new residence.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., pregnancy, sickness of a child, caretaking obligations of the minister's or his wife's parents.

As a consequence of the destruction of numerous apartments during the Second World War and in spite of great efforts to create new<sup>1</sup> and renovate old housing,<sup>2</sup> the demand for housing is still much greater than the supply.

In a transfer, only the apartment of the minister who is leaving becomes available to his successor. Thus the size of the available apartment limits the Executive Committee's scope of decision to no small degree. The size of a minister's apartment determines the size of a possible successor's family.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, when planning transfers, the Executive Committee of the Union has to take into account that the allocation of housing in the GDR, as well as the exchange of apartments which is regulated by law.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Law Gazette of the German Democratic Republic (Berlin: 17 December, 1976), part I, No. 46. The law about the five-year plan for the development of the economy of the GDR between 1976-1980, as of 15 December, 1976, states: "To raise the material and cultural living standard of the people, the following tasks are to be carried out: To further improve housing conditions, especially for workers' families and large families as well as young couples, 550,000 new apartments are to be built and 200,000 apartments are to be modernized . . ." (p. 528).

<sup>2</sup>Law Gazette of the German Democratic Republic, 1976, part I, No. 46, states: "For the repairs and maintenance of housing, building work to the value of more than 15 billion marks is to be done. . . . The means allocated by the administration to modernize housing are to substantially improve the living conditions of large sections of the population, especially of the working class, mostly in the cities with old but modernizable residential areas" (p. 528).

<sup>3</sup>It is possible to exchange apartments with a family that is looking for a smaller apartment and yields a larger one in return, but such a project is only very rarely successful.

<sup>4</sup>Law Gazette of the German Democratic Republic (Berlin: 15 November, 1967), part II, No. 105, states in excerpt: "To ensure housing for their citizens, the councils of the cities, boroughs, and villages are responsible to properly utilize all the housing

This means that transfers can only be made if the state housing administration permits the required exchange of apartments. If the size of the apartments concerned corresponds to the number of members in both families, such permits are readily granted.

For apartments that are the property of the SDA Church--which are often connected with a church building--the following government rules apply: The use of an apartment in buildings that serve state purposes is permitted only if the responsible authority has been previously consulted. This also applies to buildings that are owned or administered by political parties, mass organizations, as well as denominational bodies and institutions.<sup>1</sup> This means, in practice, that the Church can usually freely dispose of these apartments, independent of family size. Only a formal allocation of the local housing authorities is needed. Table 4 illustrates the numerical relations between the Church-owned apartments of ministers and rented apartments that are under the auspices of the state-housing authorities. The 147 ministers of the SDA Church in the GDR live in fifty church-owned buildings and in ninety-seven rented

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facilities available and to distribute them justly. . . . The councils of the cities, boroughs, and villages will make their decisions in accordance with their responsibilities on the basis of the perspective and economic plans with regard to the local conditions to provide the citizen with housing and take all other necessary measures to that end. . . . An exchange of apartments requires previous permission of the respective authorities responsible for housing distribution . . ." (pp. 733-734, 1, 6 & 12).

<sup>1</sup>Law Gazette of the German Democratic Republic, 1967, part II, No. 105, p. 739: First Enforcement Provision of the Decree about Housing Control of 24 October, 1967.

apartments that belong either to the Housing Councils<sup>1</sup> or private owners and are subject to state-housing distribution.

TABLE 4  
CHURCH-OWNED AND NON-CHURCH-OWNED APARTMENTS

Conferences and Union	Church-owned Ministers' Apartments	Rented Apartments Subject to State Housing Control
Berlin-Markish	5	17
Mecklenburg	9	9
North-East Saxonian	8	19
Saxon-Anhalt	5	15
Thuringian	7	10
West Saxonian	5	23
Union and Friedensau	11	4
Totals	50	97

#### Summary

Every transfer has its spiritual and its organizational aspects. When planning transfers, the spiritual matters of the churches and of the ministers should be given priority. However, organizational questions or environmental factors often overshadow those of a spiritual nature. Thus it can happen that a carefully

<sup>1</sup>The state-owned Housing Councils are commissioned to "administer developed and undeveloped nationally owned real estate (especially housing estate), to administer developed and undeveloped private real estate held in trust (on the basis of legal provisions or of contracts), and to carry out or arrange for repair, maintenance, and modernization of the administered real estate under the greatest possible inclusion of the population" (Meyers Universal Lexicon, Leipzig: VEB Bibliographisches Institut, 1979), vol. 2:95.

considered transfer decision by the Union Executive Committee would be doomed to failure if the apartment happens to be too small or too big for the minister's family. Even more complex situations may arise. A minister who has only recently started his work in his pastoral district, who is not the best suited for his new district, or who may not reap optimum spiritual growth and development from the church to which he is to be transferred may have to be included in the transfer. This stopgap solution in transfers satisfies neither the Executive Committee nor the churches; and least of all, of course, the affected minister himself.

#### Decision Making and Implementation

After the transfers have been decided in the annual December session of the Executive Committee of the Union, the Conference presidents notify the ministers affected. If no valid objections are offered, every minister is expected to accept his transfer to another pastoral district. This readiness constitutes part of a minister's professional ethics. If a minister's objection is seen as justified, another one must make the transfer in his place. This leads then to an undeserved "stopgap role."

After the ministers have agreed to their transfers the Executive Committee takes final action. As a rule this is done at the time of its first session in the new calendar year. The Executive Committees of the Conferences are then informed of the transfers by the Conference presidents. No decisions on transfers are therefore made by the conference committees. Ministers even receive their written transfer information from the Union president.

Upon this information they can start taking all the necessary steps such as inspecting the apartment, making arrangements with a moving company, getting the exchange permits from local housing authorities, etc.

The actual transfers are usually carried out during the two summer months of July and August. This time has proven to be the most suitable for the pastors' wives and families for three reasons:

1. These two months are the principle vacation months in the GDR. For that reason, continuous missionary work (evangelisms, home Bible classes, children's Bible classes, etc.) is not possible during that time.

2. The school year of the Polytechnical High Schools always begins in the first days of September. It ends in late June of the following year. Therefore the months of July and August offer the best opportunities for transfers so that the children's school transfers can be made as smoothly as possible.

3. After graduation from the Polytechnical High School, the young people's apprenticeships everywhere in the GDR, begin in early September. Therefore, the ministers' transfers should be completed by the end of August.

#### The Frequency of Transfers

Questionnaire I (see Appendix) provided information illustrated in table 5 concerning ministers--subdivided into years in the ministry--were transferred between 1950 and 1978.

Table 5 reveals that the average number of years a pastor worked in a pastoral district increases with the number of his

years in the ministry. These figures are an expression of a healthy trend. Within the given period of time, the statistical average between transfers of all 103 ministers who completed the questionnaire amounts to 4.3 years.

TABLE 5  
THE FREQUENCY OF TRANSFERS BETWEEN 1950 AND 1978

Number of Ministers	Years in the Ministry	Number of Transfers	Average Number of Transfers per Minister	Average Years between Transfers per Minister
19	30-26	94	4.95	5.66
27	25-21	115	4.26	5.40
20	20-16	85	4.25	4.24
13	15-11	36	2.77	4.69
10	10-6	22	2.20	3.64
14	5-1	19	1.36	2.21

It is very revealing to compare the mobility of the population in the GDR beyond the state district boundaries with the transfers of SDA ministers from one pastoral district to another. With regard to distance, inland migration beyond the political district areas corresponds to the ministers' transfers which always cross the boundaries of a state district. For 1976, the Statistical Yearbook of the German Democratic Republic<sup>1</sup> reports that 292,298 persons have moved out of a local population of 16,786,057. This

<sup>1</sup>Statistical Yearbook of the German Democratic Republic of 1978, 23rd ed. [published by the State Administration of Statistics] (Berlin: Staatsverlag der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 1978) p. 348.



means that in one year 1.74 percent of the inhabitants moved across the boundaries of one district or another. Between 1970 and 1976 this average was 1.63 percent.<sup>1</sup> Thus every citizen of the GDR lives about sixty years<sup>2</sup> in one place before he changes his place of residence across district boundaries. This contrasts sharply with SDA minister's average stay in one place of 4.3 years in the GDR.

Criticism of the Centralized-transfer Practice  
by Union Executive Committee Members

This criticism based on separate interviews with the members of the Union Executive Committee reveals three problem areas more or less dominating every interview:

1. All the interviewees were agreed that it is too late to start planning the transfers for the following calendar year at the December session. Besides transfers, a great many other points have to be put on the agenda and discussed. This results in a lack of time necessary to weigh all the essential factors of the impending transfers. In turn, this may lead to a certain negligence of the spiritual aspects of the churches and the ministers concerned. And socio-organizational factors, then, to a large extent determine the transfers. Short-term planning and difficulties that in many cases cannot be predicted call for deadline-pressure solutions which more or less bear the character of makeshift

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<sup>1</sup> Calculated on the basis of the Statistical Yearbook of the German Democratic Republic of 1978, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> Among other things, this figure points to the special static nature of local ties and firm-rootedness of the country's population with their different regional and vernacular backgrounds.

solutions. Because of this short-term transfer planning, a number of avoidable mishaps have occurred in the past. As ministers' transfers in the GDR are dependent on many factors, they require much more long-term planning.

2. In general, ministers are still transferred too often. An ordained minister who holds the position of district leader should be allowed to work in his field for a minimum of eight to a maximum of ten years. Only well-grounded exceptions should break this rule. It is, however, recommendable to transfer younger colleagues after three to four years to such churches that offer favorable conditions for their development. As table 5 demonstrates, the average number of years between transfers for pastors with 10 to 30<sup>1</sup> years in the ministry is about five years; for ministers with 1 to 10 years of service, three years. According to statements of local church elders who are members of the Union Executive Committee, frequent transfers create bewilderment in the churches. Some have raised the question whether too frequent transfers are in harmony with responsible handling of the entrusted money.

3. It is a drawback that the Executive Committees of the Conferences are practically never included in the transfer planning. As they have better insight into the needs and requirements of their churches than the Union Executive Committee, they really

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<sup>1</sup>One notices immediately that none of the ministers active in the GDR in 1978 had more than 30 years of service. The reason for this is that no ministers were trained between 1941-1947, and after World War II the first ministers to enter the work did so in 1949. Furthermore, a large number of ministers, especially of the younger generation, lost their lives in the war. This makes a gap of about ten years. The last of the ministers from the previous generation retired in the summer of 1978.

should have a responsible share in the decision-making process. In particular, the Executive Committees of the Conferences ought to weigh carefully the spiritual needs of the churches and of the ministers concerned, and these should be reported to the sessions of the Union Executive Committee by the Conference presidents. Only those ministers who have been cleared by the Executive Committees of the Conferences, ought to be transferred. This would limit the number of spontaneous transfer suggestions, though, of course, this can never be totally avoided. By including the Conferences in the decision-making process on transfers, the centralized practice of transfers would be placed on a wider basis.

The members of the Union Executive Committee not only gave their critical opinion on the practice of transfers but also made proposals as to how to improve the whole process of planning to the benefit of all.

1. The Executive Committees of the Conferences should meet annually in the first half-year to consider which ministers should be included in the transfers of the following year. All the reasons must be carefully weighed. It is essential that the Conference president will have done his best to promote the growth and development of his fellow ministers by keeping in close contact with his ministers and their families. He should be able to assess their needs and requirements. He also should, for that matter, be informed about their wishes and requests concerning their transfers. On the basis of this information, the consensus of the above-mentioned meeting, and a clear view of the spiritual needs of the churches and ministers, the conference presidents would then submit

their Executive Committees' proposals to the Union Executive Committee.

2. As the Executive Committee of the Union with its eighteen members is too large an administrative body to discuss sensibly all the details of the transfers, a subcommittee consisting of the Conference presidents and the responsible officers of the Union should be formed. Its task would be to work out and arrange the transfers for the following year--taking into account all the circumstances to the common benefit--and discuss them with all the ministers, and their families, affected. This would require a number of meetings. The subcommittee's proposals should be submitted to the Union Executive Committee in its December session where they can be discussed and actions can be taken.

3. In such a procedure every affected minister and his family would know at the beginning of the year when and where they will be transferred. With this knowledge, they can jointly set out to make all the necessary arrangements for the transfers without being rushed. Simultaneously, the minister would be able to plan his ministry to the churches and for those interested in the faith. He would be able to complete certain projects before his transfer and could hand over everything to his successor in an orderly fashion.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE TRANSFER FROM THE MINISTERS' POINT OF VIEW

#### Questionnaires and Interviews as the Basis of the Research

Of the 147 ministers<sup>1</sup> active in 1978, 136 received the questionnaire prepared for this study.<sup>2</sup> Excluded were four single Bible workers who are not affected in the transfer of ministers' families and therefore have worked in one area over a much longer period of time. Also, those ministers who entered the work in the summer of 1978, received no questionnaires. Table 6 shows the number of ministers, according to years of service, who filled out and returned the questionnaire.

TABLE 6

#### NUMBER OF MINISTERS COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Years of Service	Number of Ministers	Questionnaires Completed	Percentage
30-26	27	19	70.3
25-27	36	27	75.0
20-16	28	20	71.4
15-11	15	13	86.6
10-6	15	10	66.6
5-1	15	14	93.3

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Table 3.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Appendix, p. 220.

Since 103 of the 147 eligible ministers, i.e., 76 percent, answered the questionnaires, it is assumed that the questions and problems posed created great interest. After all, the ministers and their families are the ones who repeatedly bear the burden and side effects which accompany transfers.

A personal follow-up was conducted to ascertain why 24 percent of the questionnaires were not completed and returned. Several reasons were given:

1. Since transfers are part of the ministry, they should be taken for granted without probing deeper why they are made. The difficulties accompanying transfers should be overcome through faith. Some who have positive attitudes towards the transfers did not think it necessary to respond to the questionnaire.<sup>1</sup>

2. One non-respondent could see no sense in the poll. Why should one invest so much time and effort in such a probe? This minister felt that nothing could change the policy of transfers in the SDA church in the GDR. Since decisions are made by the Union Committee anyway, this kind of opinion poll would not change the "tried and proven" policy of transfers. Apparently this person has a feeling of resignation for which there may be many different reasons.

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<sup>1</sup>Two ministers posed the question as to whether the whole topic was not a sign of our becoming a church and of our apostasy. In a true movement, such as the SDA movement undoubtedly has been for several decades, there is no time for such problems. They wondered if the messenger should consider himself somewhat more important than the message entrusted him? Should self-denial, boldness, and devotion be ignored?

3. Some workers worried that any freely expressed criticism would not be handled confidentially and that some particulars given on the questionnaires could be divulged to the leading brethren of the church. This may reveal a past betrayal of trust which may be extremely difficult to restore.

4. Some admitted freely that the reason they did not apply themselves to such a comprehensive list of questions was simply lethargy. Interviews with twenty ministers provided opportunity to discuss certain problems which can be discussed personally better than formulated in writing. Among these were the relationships between the administration and the minister, and, possible marriage or family problems which could be by-products of a transfer.

It must be remembered that it is not "just a minister" who is transferred; it is a human being with positive and negative feelings. Thus, the human aspects of the transfer were also discussed: the uncertainty of how the wife and children would cope with the necessary external and internal adjustments, the fear of not being able to cope with responsibilities in the new congregation, the pain in parting with friends and breaking off personal contacts already made; the frustration over the avoidable mistakes committed through the thoughtlessness of his predecessor, the joy of gratitude experienced directly before, during, and after the transfer, and finally, the experience of God's help in special situations. To gain those insights, the interviews convey a deeper understanding of the human aspects of the transfer.

Relationships between the Administration  
and the Minister during the Transfer

Because of the centralized transfer policy, activities such as planning, decisions, and notification of the ministers and their families involved in the transfers are handled by the Union Committee. It is the responsibility of the Conference presidents to inform the ministers of the places and times of planned transfers.

The Method of Notification of Transfers

Notification of transfers has been made in a number of different ways (see table 7).<sup>1</sup>

The accuracy of the information in table 7 is not absolute. Not every minister could remember the method of notification for every transfer. What is important, however, is the recognizable tendency in the data. The more impersonal form of notification by letter, telephone, or in the conference offices outweighs personal visits in the minister's home.

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<sup>1</sup>A basic rule for all of the tables is that the statistics are the results of the sum of the data in the questionnaires. Since most of the ministers' families have been transferred several times, they have checked some areas several times as well. In addition they could no longer remember the particulars asked for, so that the statistics contain no absolute numbers except for the data regarding persons.



TABLE 7

MANNER IN WHICH MINISTERS WERE  
NOTIFIED OF TRANSFERS

Number of Ministers	Years of Service	Method of Notification					
		Letter	Tele- phone	Confer- ence Office	Minis- terial Meetings	Home Contact	Other*
19	30-26	12	2	22	8	16	9
27	25-27	18	8	45	3	23	14
20	20-16	18	3	23	6	20	6
13	15-11	6	4	5	4	11	4
10	10-6	5	2	6	2	6	2
14	5-1	5	1	1	3	5	3
103		64	20	102	27	87	38

\*Some of the methods in "other methods" category are: notification by the conference president at a railway station, in a train, in a car during an official visit, at a church construction, at the president's home, publicly at ministerial meetings, through district ministers or other better-informed ministers, through the indiscretion of members of the Union Board or conference committee, or during meetings of the Union Board (involving only members of this board).

The Importance to the Minister of the  
Method of Notification

Of the 103 ministers, seventy-three stated that the method of notification was a contributing factor as to whether the transfer was willingly or reluctantly accepted. Nine ministers attached little value to it, seventeen stated that the method played no role at all for them, and four offered no opinions.

The ministers for whom the manner of notification is more than a formality gave various reasons for their attitude. They

consider their transfer a new call to service and pray for months, some of them for years, for the right place at the right time. The manner in which they are notified should therefore, correspond to the spiritual meaning of the transfer and not "befall" them in the form of an "impersonal, official notification." Notifications should fully coincide with the content. It must be made absolutely clear that the decision made by the brethren of the Union Committee has been made in the presence of God and is now to be discussed with the concerned brother in the presence of God as well.

Since transfers constitute a disruption of the minister's personal and family life, ministers wholeheartedly recommend a personal visit by the conference president at their homes so the transfer can be discussed together with their wives and without any pressure of time or immediate compulsion to decide. Where this practice has been followed, ministers have been very thankful. It is only through such a personal exchange of ideas that the president would be able to make clear the conditions which have lead to the transfer. This way also makes it possible for the minister and his wife to express certain questions or worries. Misunderstandings can be avoided and those already existing can be cleared up. Both sides must listen to the other and be honest with each other. Only through such a brotherly discussion can the minister and his wife recognize that they are really considered co-workers. A visit to the home of the minister's family is not only a question of etiquette and tact, it is part of the president's responsibility as a pastor to the minister and his family.

The Importance of the Information Giving the  
Reasons for the Transfers

Question 5 on the questionnaire asked whether the ministers had been given reasons for their transfers. This was answered positively eighty-one times and negatively nineteen times. Only a partial answer was given for twenty-three transfers.<sup>1</sup> Without exception the ministers expressed the attitude that it is very helpful and necessary to know the particular reasons for the transfer.

As the ministers consider themselves part of the whole Seventh-day Adventist church in the GDR, they are interested in receiving insights into the totality of its program. When they are made aware of the whole preface and the totality of problems, they are also far more willing and ready to accept the transfer, even if burdens and hardships are connected with it. One minister stated: "An insight into the necessity leads to freedom to accept the transfer." When the reasons are openly explained, the trust between the administration and the minister grows. The minister feels himself respected as a person and not handled as a "chess-piece," as "baggage," or as a "marionette."<sup>2</sup> It is therefore critical that reasons are truthfully and comprehensively explained and that they are not one-sided and utilitarian. The more brotherly and openly the transfer is discussed, the more willingly it is also accepted by the minister as a call of God.

In some situations the reasons for the transfer are not only

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<sup>1</sup>Valid for these data is what has already been stated about table 7 on page 93.

<sup>2</sup>These expressions occur in the ministers' answers quite often.

helpful but absolutely necessary. Whenever ministers are included in a new series of transfers after only a short period of time, they must know why they have to break off the work which they have only just begun. If that does not take place, it awakens doubts about the carefulness of the planning as well as the spiritual authority of the Union Committee. Whenever a minister is transferred because of personal failure, he expects to be told the reason openly and honestly, no matter how painful it may be. The opportunity for a new beginning can be used to better advantage when the co-worker is given the chance, through brotherly openness, to consider and rectify his mistakes and weaknesses. Should he eventually learn the real reason for some other source, he would feel deceived. In this way, trust in the administration which is so necessary for an effective cooperation, can be damaged irreparably.

On the other hand, there are those situations in which a minister may not be completely informed of the reasons in order to protect and not unnecessarily expose other ministers. Every minister understands this motive.

#### The Possibility of Objections to a Planned Transfer

Every minister has the right to object to a transfer in writing. The Union Committee evaluates the reasons and then informs the co-worker whether his objection has been accepted or rejected. Table 8 gives the frequency of objections and their results. Table 9 lists the reasons leading to the objections, shows which reasons have or have not been accepted, and how frequently the objections have been accepted or refused.

TABLE 8

## THE NUMBER AND RESULTS OF OBJECTIONS TO PLANNED TRANSFERS

Years of Service	Number of Objections	No. of Times Accepted	No. of Times Refused	No. of Times Problems Seemingly Resolved Themselves <sup>1</sup>
30-26	9	5	4	-
25-21	17	8	7	2
20-16	8	4	4	-
15-11	3	1	1	1
10-6	4	2	2	-
5-1	1	1	-	-
Totals	42	20	19	3

<sup>1</sup>The problems solved themselves in that the planned transfers could not be implemented.

TABLE 9

## REASONS FOR THE OBJECTIONS AND RESULTS OF THE OBJECTION

Objections	No. of Objections	No. of Acceptances	No. of Rejections	No. of Times Problems Seemingly Solved Themselves <sup>1</sup>
Housing problems (too small or inadequate)	21	13	5	3
Transferred too frequently	5	-	5	-
Reasons of health	6	3	3	-
Family reasons (children's school or vocational problems)	6	3	3	-
Personal reasons (concern about the suitability of new position)	2	1	1	-
	42	20	19	3

<sup>1</sup>The problems solved themselves in that the planned transfers could not be implemented.

In a few cases ministers have not been able to accept their transfer for internal or external reasons; nevertheless they have received the notification of their transfer, and complied with it, though unwillingly. Such transfers have left scars such as bitterness, betrayed trust, loss of the joy in service, inner aversion of the minister's wife to his service as a minister, on the ministers as well as on their families. This leads to the question as to whether a minister and his family should be forced to accept a transfer. The distress mentioned by some in the questionnaire and the visible effects in the minister's life and his service in the congregation show that it may not be advisable to proceed with the planned transfer in such cases. Over time, the damage can be greater than the present organizational utility of the transfer would warrant. A conflict between the administration and a minister should never be considered or handled as a contest of wills. Concern for the minister's person<sup>1</sup> and his family's dignity as well

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<sup>1</sup>Noteworthy on this point is what E. G. White wrote in a letter October 16, 1901, even though it was concerning a completely different situation. Elder S. N. Haskell was directing very promising work in New York and received a certain Brother Brunson as a gifted co-worker for the service in the metropolis. Shortly thereafter plans were made to transfer Brunson from New York to a school. Mrs. White wrote: "Brother Brunson is needed in New York, and I am somewhat surprised to see that now, just as he is getting hold of the work there, plans are being made to call him away. I hope that the Lord will give Elder Brunson clear light in regard to his post of duty. It is a man's privilege to know for himself whether he is in the place, without depending on any other man's preferences or decision as to where he shall devote his energies. . . . To take him from the field just as he is getting acquainted with the work and put him where there are already several workers of talent and ability, is not in the order of the Lord. Let Brother Brunson remain where he is, and if you need someone else on the school faculty, ask the Lord to provide for your necessity" (Letter 142, pp. 1; 2, 3: Manuscript Release, 236, p. 3).

as their fragility should be seriously considered in such situations.

The transfer of ministers intervenes in and changes many areas of human life. The familiar home with its security, the neighborhood with its beloved paths and singular landscape have to be given up. Meaningful interpersonal relationships must be broken off. Positive and negative feelings arise and disturb the emotional balance. The manifold external and internal changes can affect the minister's spiritual life. Table 10 shows how transfers and the events connected with them have affected the minister's spiritual life.

TABLE 10  
EFFECTS OF TRANSFERS ON THE MINISTER'S  
SPIRITUAL LIFE

Area of Spiritual Life	Effects		
	Positive	Negative	None
Relationship to prayer	21	5	82
Relationship to God's word	20	8	79
Relationship to his work as a minister	39	13	57
Relationship to his fellow workers (especially the president)	14	12	84

The data from table 10 shows that the majority of the transfers have not affected the minister's spiritual life, suggesting that one's personal relationship to Christ is actually the only

foundation of a spiritual life, independent of changing circumstances. Only 43 percent of the ministers expressed an opinion on this series of questions beyond merely indicating whether their spiritual lives had been affected positively, negatively, or not at all. One can easily recognize how difficult it is to evaluate one's own spiritual life.

The positive answers draw one's attention to the fact that the occurring external difficulties, internal conflicts, and inquiring after God's will intensify prayer life and the study of God's word. Even strained relations with the administration sometimes serve to bind ministers more firmly to God and to free them from the opinions of human beings. Gratifying is the confirmation that the certainty of the calling and the recognition of the Gospel commission have been strengthened in thirty-nine instances.

Even though the number of ministers who have noticed negative effects in their spiritual lives is very small, the distress experienced by them is nevertheless not to be underestimated. The strained relations between the ministers and the administration were caused partly when the ministers were not told the reasons for their transfers or when the same reasons were not given to others involved in the transfer. Further negative effects resulted when the Union Committee refused to accept reasons for objection to the transfer and the ministers could not understand the reasons for the rejection of their objections. Through this lack of communication they became alienated from the leaders of the Church.<sup>1</sup> A lack of

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<sup>1</sup>One minister wrote about his experience which had taken place 15 years earlier: "Of course this experience and way of being



openness and certain experiences which these ministers considered "intriguing" were likewise causes for tensions among co-workers. Strained interpersonal relationships always put a strain on the emotional powers and weaken the spiritual life. Many of the inner reservations against fellow-workers could be resolved and eliminated through discussions over a period of time; others, however, still persist and remain as painful scars.

Of course, during the days of moving, most of the ministers lacked the time and the quietness to pray and to study God's Word as usual. These experiences are, however, no expression of a disturbed<sup>1</sup> spiritual life. After the normalization of the external circumstances, the order of the personal meditation became regular once more.

It is difficult to determine whether the positive and negative effects had been caused exclusively by the transfer every time. The positive answers could be the results of a normal process of growth accelerated by the new circumstances occasioned by the situation. Even the problems in the spiritual life could have been latently present over a longer period of time. Certain experiences releasing

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handled has left a deep inner scar in me. I still have a question today as to where was the working of the Spirit of God which is prayed for at the beginning of every Union Board meeting. This experience was a powerful blow to my life of faith. . . . That's why I have distanced myself as a messenger of the Advent Message from the mother-organization and pray that God will keep me joyful in proclaiming this message and capable of bearing this cleft which has arisen over the course of years."

<sup>1</sup>One minister pointed out that during his first transfer a certain disinclination for reading in the Bible or for praying arose which he never before had experienced. Only after a pastoral discussion two months later did this condition change.

negative feelings may have merely triggered the crisis.

The Effects of the Transfer on  
Marriage and Family Life

Each and every marriage is just as individual as the personalities of the minister and his wife forming it. Just as no two persons are alike in their outward and inner characteristics, so no two marriages can be duplicated. There is always only "my marriage" which is singular and non-reproduceable. Theodor Bovet<sup>1</sup> has even characterized the marriage as a "marriage-personality" in order to better comprehend the essence of the marriage. Just as the personality is a unity manifesting itself bodily, emotionally, and spiritually, so is the marriage-personality a total whole, expressing itself in the aspects of gender, sexual love (eros), and Godly love (agape). The Bible uses other expressions for marriage. It speaks of man and woman "being one flesh" (Gen 2:24); "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Matt 19:6). The expression "one flesh" indicates wholeness. Together they become a new living being, a new creature of God, more precisely, a "marriage-personality."

Every marriage depends in its essence on its relationship to the child. And the individuality of the child, in turn, challenges the marriage as a personality.

No child bears its plan of development within . . . itself. It needs the counsel, the leading, and personal association with its father and mother over many years. Marriage . . . is precisely the prerequisite for the correct development of a

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<sup>1</sup>Theodor Bovet, Ehekunde, I. Allgemeiner Teil (Tubingen: Katzmann Verlag, 1963); p. 27.

human being. "Outside of marriage there is no human being."<sup>1</sup>

The child lives from the love of the marriage-personality, matures in its security, and is born by its faith. Therefore, it is right and essential to ask whether, and in what way, the transfer has affected the minister's marriage and family life.

Table 11 shows how the ministers have evaluated the effects of transfers on their marriages and family lives from their point of view. The question asked was, "What effects did the transfers have on your relationship to your family?--on the children, and the whole family? Left unanswered here is the question of how the ministers' wives evaluate the effects in these areas as wives and mothers,<sup>2</sup> and also in what way the children's relationships to their parents and siblings have been influenced by the transfers."<sup>3</sup>

TABLE 11

EFFECTS OF TRANSFERS ON THE MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE  
AS SEEN BY THE MINISTERS

Areas	Positive	Negative	None
Marriage	8	14	85
Children	6	11	77
Family Life	9	10	77

<sup>1</sup>Theodor Bovet, Ehekunde, II. Spezieller Teil (Tubingen: Katzmann Verlag, 1962), p. 210.

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 150-155.

<sup>3</sup>See pp. 182-184.

Since most of the workers have answered each of the areas only once without considering each and every transfer separately, table 11 provides no detailed information as to what influence each transfer had in the different areas each time. The tabulation is, however, informative in so far as it shows that transfers, with a few exceptions, have produced no lasting convulsions in the marriage or the family. With some certainty one can conclude that the marriages and family lives of the ministers in the SDA church in the GDR have remained relatively healthy and stable. The transfers with their burdensome symptoms and emotional convulsions have been parried and assimilated in the security of the marriage and the family.

Several workers emphasized both in writing and in the interviews that all members of the family have been drawn closer together because they had discussed all the upcoming assignments and difficulties involved in the transfers. Common joys and shared tears have brought the couples closer together and deepened relationships between the parents and the children. A couple of comments made by respondents are: "A healthy family becomes stronger and matures through the solving of common problems." "I estimate that my family has only gained in the experiences of life by the transfers."

In considering the negative effects, one must distinguish between short-term strains and longer-lasting disturbances of the marriage and family life. Every transfer brings stress. If the problems just before, during, or after the transfer increase exponentially, a vexing atmosphere can build up among the members of the family. Only minor disturbances can cause unpleasant "discharges"

which are released partly through frayed nerves and partly through the temperaments of those concerned. That during this time generally no intimate marital intercourse<sup>1</sup> takes place is natural and not really a sign of a disturbed marital life. The strained atmosphere usually relaxes shortly after the stress-situation is passed. When looking back one often feels ashamed of one's outburst, forgives one another, and humorously laughs at one's own weaknesses. Each and every member of the minister's family is only a human being without a halo and needing the sanctifying power of God's Spirit.

The longer-lasting tensions between the couples are to be taken seriously even though these have been mentioned in only five cases. These ruptures usually occurred when the wife was not able to accept inwardly a transfer as had her husband or when the husband had to serve for as much as one year in a remote and isolated area--mostly separated from his wife and children. Such transfers have indeed caused breaks in the marriage and family relations. Some have been healed after a long period of time. Others, however, have never been healed. The wounds have remained open, and since an indifferent, cool, inharmonious married life does not fit the role of a minister as perceived by the layity, these tensions, needs, and problems are suppressed and concealed.

Some ministers mentioned that their children could not comprehend why they had to leave the school, recreation, and home of which they had grown so fond. Some ugly scenes between the children

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<sup>1</sup>All of the personally interviewed ministers mentioned that they felt free to name any occurring disturbances in their sexual lives. Only one worker was a bit hesitant about it.

and the parents have occurred which poisoned the family climate for a while. One pastor reported that his four-year-old child had developed speech defects after a transfer and that so far the defects have not been eliminated though the child is now six years old.

Transfers then create disturbances in people's emotional life. Since the closest human bonds are between husband and wife and between parents and children, positive and negative feelings are continually being transmitted both consciously and unconsciously. It would be well, then, for parents first to compose themselves and clear their minds in order to be able to discuss an upcoming transfer with their children in a composed and factual manner. Even if the minister and his wife are justifiedly upset over the mistakes and failures of the administration, they should not forget their responsibilities as parents. The child suffers when it has to bear the parents' uncontrolled anger. In this way, an aversion to the transfer can be produced in the child it had not been aware of before. A responsible and wise attitude of the parents towards their children is much needed with regard to the transfer. Of course, the child's age also must be taken into consideration.

#### The Effects of Transfers on the Ministers' Work

The minister's duties are varied and many-sided. He is specially entrusted with the evangelistic-missionary task of proclaiming the Gospel through which human beings in a continually changing world can avail themselves of salvation in Christ (2 Cor 5:18; Rom 10:14-17). He should feel and care for the flocks entrusted him as a shepherd so that they may mature into the

"measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph 4:13; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2), so that every member may be prepared also for the "work of ministry" (Eph 4:12). That means that a minister must know the spiritual needs of the children, the youth, the adults, and the elderly in order to lead them safely through the hazards of every age. He must serve as a watchman unto the congregation so that they are protected against false teachings and wayward lives (Ezek 3:17; 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 4:2-5). The prerequisite for this service as a watchman is that the minister be well-founded in the Word of God and recognize any dangers threatening from within and from without. It requires the prayerful study of God's Word and the utilization of full mental powers. Furthermore, he must coordinate the work of the local congregations and simultaneously involve his congregations in the work of the world-wide church.

#### What is the Influence of Transfers on His Professional Capabilities?

Transfers should never be ends in themselves. Therefore they should be investigated critically to learn what influence they have on the manifold work of the ministers. Do transfers promote the ministers' usefulness in the various areas of work, or are they more a hindrance? Table 12 shows how the ministers themselves evaluate transfers: whether their evangelistic and pastoral capabilities could be developed and their theological education advanced through the transfers.

TABLE 12

THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPABILITIES AS A RESULT OF TRANSFERS  
AS PERCEIVED BY THE MINISTERS

Areas of Service	Years of Service													
	30-26		25-21		20-16		15-11		10-6		5-1		Total	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Evangelism	16	3	16	11	11	9	6	7	5	5	7	7	61	42
Pastoral	14	5	18	9	14	6	6	7	6	4	10	4	68	35
Theological Development	7	12	10	17	5	15	5	8	3	7	4	10	34	69
Others*	7	12	3	24	4	16	3	10	3	7	2	12	22	81

\*NOTE: Among those named are the development of: administrative capabilities, musical talents, practical gifts (through church-building), including relations with state officers.

More than two-thirds of the workers with sixteen to thirty years of service confirm that transfers have had a positive influence on the development of their evangelistic and pastoral capabilities. Among the ministers with one to fifteen years of service, however, the positive influence of transfers is not so clearly discerned. Probably only a long-time experience with the possibility of retrospect over a longer period of service facilitates the insight into the correlation between transfers and the development of certain capabilities resulting from them. It must be taken into consideration also that for workers with fifteen years or fewer of service, the intervals between the transfers have been shorter than for the ministers with more than fifteen years of service (cf. table 5).



The explanatory comments made by the ministers themselves confirm the data of table 12. Workers with sixteen or more years of service emphasize the positive effects of transfers into new areas of work for the development of their personalities. They mention at the same time that the development of certain capabilities is not dependent upon transfers alone but is part of the maturing process of the minister's personality. On the other hand, ministers with fifteen or fewer years of service strongly emphasize that the development of the minister's personality is not dependent on his locale of service. One can grow and mature anywhere. Essential to them is the length of time a minister can work, and thus develop, in one locale. Some speak in this connection of direct influence. Others, however, reject any correlation between transfers and the development of their capabilities, or even speak of a negative effect--that the probationary period in a local congregation is too short.

The statement by both groups are to be taken seriously. Too frequent transfers disturb and disrupt the continuous maturing process and can stand in the way of a healthy development of the minister's capabilities. Whoever supposes that transfers have no influence whatsoever on the formation of the minister's personality underestimates the role that locale, time, external and internal structures in the congregation, and even the environment<sup>1</sup> play in the development of the minister. For the growth of a plant the condition of the

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<sup>1</sup>The influence of the environment on the congregation and its growth is treated by A. J. Lindgren and Norman Shawchuck, Management for Your Church (Nashville: Abingdon, 1977), pp. 60-78.

soil and of the environment is certainly not unimportant.

The indication in table 12 with regard to the relationship between further theological development is worthy of consideration. Only one-third of the workers indicate a gain in their biblical-theological development through a change to another field of labor. They took advantage of the educational opportunities in the larger cities, received stimulation through working together with other ministers, or had to come to terms with various theological currents which compelled them to intensive study. Have the other two-thirds of the ministers then not consciously perceived the possibilities for further personal development offered in the new locale?<sup>1</sup>

The degree to which transfers contribute to the growth of the minister's personality depends, to a great extent, on how the minister assimilates transfers. Transfers do not automatically effect positive changes in his capabilities. Whoever views them merely as a "change of place" or a "necessary evil" fails to recognize the latent opportunities concealed in every transfer. Transfers become positively effective for the complete development of a minister only when he consciously recognizes them as new opportunities and challenges to be grasped.

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<sup>1</sup>Table 12 seems to point out weak spots among the ministers of the SDA Church in the GDR. When two-thirds of the ministers attribute very little importance to their further biblical-theological development, sooner or later this will have a negative effect on the various areas of their service. Each and every minister should be encouraged to systematically work on further professional development either through self-study or any other available opportunities. The Union Board of the SDA Church in the GDR should seriously consider how ministerial conferences or retreats could be utilized more effectively to further the professional development of the ministers.

How Transfers Effect the Inward and Outward  
Growth of the Church

Of 103 ministers, eighty-two expressed their opinion on the question of church growth.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-five of these answers were expressed in such a general way that no conclusions could be drawn from them (for example: "Transfers can effect the inward and outward growth positively as well as negatively."). The essential answers with regard to the inward growth of the congregation may be summed up under the following five points:

1. The factor of time plays an essential role in the inward growth of the congregation. Each and every growth is dependent on the right kind of care. Too frequent a change of ministers hinders the maturation growth of the congregation. An obvious danger is that it merely becomes a "laboratory" for the minister to test his methods.

2. A healthy atmosphere of trust between the minister and his congregation is absolutely necessary for the spiritual growth of the congregation. Trust grows only over a period of time and is not automatically passed on from one minister to another by the congregation. Each minister must win anew for himself this trust which is so important for spiritual counseling. Mature trust can fully benefit the pastoral care of the congregation when there is sufficient time for it, and when no premature rupture ensues through frequent transfers.

3. After a suitable time of service, transfers basically effect the inward growth positively. Every minister brings different

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix p. 224, "Questionnaire for Ministers," Question III, 6.

talents and new riches of experience to the congregation, and this creates new impulses in various areas of ministry. If a minister remains too long in one congregation, fatigue, sluggishness, and stagnation can set in.

4. An approaching transfer compels the minister to reflect on his work. In order to leave his successor no unregulated situations in the congregation and as few problems as possible, he devotes himself more intensively to those members of the congregation whose spiritual lives need special care. Tasks which the minister and the congregation have postponed, sometimes for years, are consciously taken up. These good intentions can then be realized, however, only if the period of time between the notification of the transfer and its realization is not too short. On the other hand, ministers are also acquainted with the temptation of leaving to their successor unpleasant but necessary decisions in the life of the congregation. The approaching transfer can become a welcome inducement to avoid certain problems and conflicts.

5. Decisive for the internal growth of the congregation is the basic spiritual attitude of the minister and his family, his faithfulness, devotion, and joy of service. A minister hinders, even harms, the spiritual growth of the congregation when he or members of his family express dissatisfaction and anger about the transfer and pass these feelings on to the congregation. In this way, they involuntarily put obstacles in the way of their successor and make the new reciprocal building of trust with the congregation more difficult.

The ministers' answers to the question about the correlation

between transfers and the outward growth of the congregation present the following picture:

1. An approaching transfer strengthens the desire to lead interested souls into the church--the desire, metaphorically speaking, to be able to still bring in the harvest oneself. Since the hearers of God's Word often desire to be baptized by the minister who has told them about the saving message of God's love, the minister consciously strives to lead them to a decision for baptism. Because of this, baptisms frequently occur in the congregations just before transfers and thus further the outward growth.

2. After the transfer, in some congregations, people could be baptized who had not before experienced the breakthrough to walk in Jesus' footsteps because of the former minister and/or his manner of proclaiming the Gospel. The new minister, with his special gifts, may be able to preach God's Word in such a way that the final decision to be baptized matured quickly. The one planted, the other one watered and harvested; but God gave the increase (1 Cor 3:6).

3. Faced with a transfer, the minister is prone not to seek any new, personal missionary contacts. Why should one develop any new evangelistic initiatives when one has to prematurely break off the service to the hearers of the Word anyway? Every transfer breaks off newly formed contacts, especially when a successor fails to continue the human and missionary contacts started by his predecessor. This attitude before transfers is rather wide-spread and has a detrimental effect on the numerical growth of the congregation.

4. Since a minister's missionary activities before transfer

have come to an end through consciously induced decisions for baptism and, at the same time, no new contacts have been formed, there often exists a certain lull in the minister's soul-winning activity in the first two years after a transfer. The minister usually needs more than a year to cultivate new missionary contacts. Since most people in the GDR have grown up in an atheistic environment and have been formed by it, they lack any connection to the Word of God. It generally takes one to two years of Bible study before people are ready to become disciples of Christ. In order to lead souls to baptism, the minister needs a long breathing space.

5. Problems often arise with members of the congregation who have been baptized shortly before a minister is transferred. As one pastor remarked, "Fruits of the moment seldom remain long in the church," especially when there has been a close human relationship between the minister and the newly baptized member which has been broken off because of the transfer. It is, therefore, advisable not to carry out a baptism just before the transfer if the decision to follow Christ has not yet fully matured in the person. No one should be rushed into baptism under the pressure of time before a transfer.

6. Responsible behavior of a minister requires that he not leave any fruits of the moment to his successor, that he continues in his search for new missionary contacts before his transfer, and leaves them to his successor. The latter must form as quickly as possible a personal relationship with the new contacts in order to lead them deeper into the study of God's Word. Some ministers commented that before a transfer a minister must "work as if he will

not be transferred," and after his transfer he should plan as if he will remain in the congregation forever. To do so, however, requires a "spiritually mature character as a minister."

#### Summary

The opinions returned by the ministers concerning the impact of transfers on the external growth of the congregation pose some basic questions: Do the ministers have a clear concept of their duties? Does an ominous misunderstanding reveal itself in the various opinions? Do the ministers understand themselves too narrowly as specialists in Bible studies and soul-winning? Is there not the danger that the minister considers the congregation an organization which has to serve him as a supply house for soul-winning? Does not the New Testament rather describe the church as the bearer of all evangelistic work and the minister as the one chosen to prepare the individual members "for the work of the ministry" (Eph 4:12)? Must not a fundamental change in the way of thinking take place in the lives and work of the ministers?<sup>1</sup> According to the original model in the New Testament, the minister alone is not the evangelist, but the church as a whole (1 Pet 2:9). Of the many ministers responding to the questionnaire, only one drew attention to the fact that the church is called "to fulfill the perennial, enduring, lasting work of evangelism." He posed the justifiable question

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<sup>1</sup>This series of questions opens the door to further questions: How did this one-sided concept of the minister come about? What share of this concept can be attributed to the stress the SDA church organization puts on numerical church growth? To what extent can this concept be reversed through ministerial training? What ecclesiology stands behind these concepts?

whether the transfers could not serve the church in giving it a better understanding of its God-given responsibilities.

#### Who Introduces the Minister to His New Field of Service?

A minister, to catch on to his comprehensive responsibilities in his new field of labor as quickly and easily as possible after his transfer, should be given an extensive introduction into all the affairs of the church. Table 13, again divided according to the years of service, gives an overview of how the ministers were introduced into their responsibilities in the new locale. The data give the impression that a good introduction took place in most cases. However, from the written explanations, it appears that much is lacking in this regard. The following phrases recur several times and signal a critical situation: "The introduction by the predecessor was very incomplete." "Everything was more or less left to run by itself." "The motto always was, 'Help yourself'." "Only some months later did I receive the church membership list." "An introduction on the day one takes a look at the apartment or on moving-day is no introduction at all and has to remain superficial and unsatisfying."



TABLE 13

PERSONS WHO INTRODUCED MINISTERS  
INTO THE NEW FIELD OF LABOR

Person who Introduced Minister	Years of Service													
	30-26		25-21		20-16		15-11		10-6		5-1		Sum	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Predecessor	29	8	43	11	35	9	21	2	15	3	13	0	156	41
Conference President	15	11	18	12	13	10	5	4	1	3	3	7	55	47
Church officer	8	11	12	12	5	9	4	2	2	1	3	5	34	46

Only a very few ministers praised the manner in which their predecessors had made them acquainted with their new assignments:

"It was very helpful that my predecessor had left me comprehensive, written information with important instructions and recommendations."

"I spent two days with my predecessor while he was still there. He introduced me to the Bible study participants and the most important church officers in their homes, showed me the city, and introduced me to all of the specific affairs of the area."

Surprisingly, only one worker mentioned the District File folders<sup>1</sup> as an introductory help, with the remark that they had been partly well kept and partly very inadequate. Fraternal ethics

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Board of the SDA Church in the GDR, 1966, Motion 113: "In order to facilitate a better continuation in a transfer of the work already started, it is moved to keep a District File Notebook in every district from now on. The respective Head Elders of the districts are responsible for it. . . . The Conference presidents are requested to instruct the Head Elders in the keeping of these notebooks. . . ."

demands that every part of the District File Folder be carefully kept and continually updated so it can serve as a means of orientation to the successor.

Every minister should introduce his successor to all the aspects of church life and work as carefully and comprehensively as he would expect his predecessor to do for him. In addition to seeing the apartment together with his wife, the minister should be afforded the opportunity of a thorough, on-the-spot introduction to the new responsibilities by his predecessor. The advantages of this type of introduction greatly outweigh the expenditures of time and money involved. To a large extent, it takes away the burdensome uncertainties and perplexities which arise when the minister is left in the dark as to what to expect. If the minister has a basic idea of the responsibilities that await him, he will look forward to the transfer with greater confidence and be more relaxed. A word of encouragement from one minister to another at this moment is priceless.

An introduction by the president, in most cases, is limited to a public introduction of the new minister during the worship service at the annual district meeting. Ministers do not expect an elaborate introduction into the details of church life and work by the conference president. He is hardly able to do this. Since the transfers have been planned and decided by the Union Committee of the SDA Church, the ministers do expect, however, that the conference president will introduce them officially to the new congregations. Ministers resent having to do this themselves. In the case of a young intern, the district minister could perform the introduction.

As is obvious from table 13, ministers have taken very little advantage of the possibility of seeking advice from the experienced members of the church after the transfer. Whoever listens to the advice of mature church officers and seeks their support wins new co-workers for future tasks and often receives insights into relationships which neither the District File Folder nor the predecessor could give. No minister begins his work at point zero after his transfer. Rather, each and every church has its own history. Well-advised is the minister who listens to the responsible church officers about the victories and defeats, the highs and lows, the tensions and conflicts in the congregation--without thereby allowing himself to be unduly influenced. Many a disappointment can be avoided and much time and energy saved if he consciously seeks the advice of experienced and mature church members.

#### Other Effects of Transfers on the Minister's Personal Life

Transfers touch the minister in every way. They affect his relationship with the administration. They affect his spiritual life and his relationship with his wife and his children. They influence his life and his work and eventually affect his whole being. A transfer is more than a change of location or position. All the members of the family are affected as well. The minister has to understand how his wife feels to give up her former home, her interpersonal relationships, and those confidences built between persons. He has to see the tears of his children who have to separate from friends and familiar surroundings which have meant so

much to them. A transfer disturbs the entire spectrum of human experiences, and the resultant emotions affect the mental condition of the individual worker. This human aspect should not be shoved aside with pious words as something of secondary importance. It belongs to the minister's humanity. In spite of experienced justification and sanctification, indeed as a child of God, the minister remains completely human in his total mental and emotional experience.

Table 14 refers to this human aspect. The question<sup>1</sup> asked is: "Did every transfer cause problems for you?"

TABLE 14  
FREQUENCY OF HUMAN PROBLEMS IN TRANSFERS

Frequency of Resultant Problems	Years of Service						Total
	30-26	25-21	20-16	15-11	10-6	5-1	
Regularly	0	3	4	5	4	1	17
Sometimes	15	17	8	5	3	3	51
Never	6	8	8	3	2	5	32

A number of ministers have gone through mental stress or shock during each transfer. The causes can be found in external conditions and in a whole complex of circumstances. At the same time, the individual minister's frame of mind plays an essential role. This is also true of those few ministers who never seem to

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix, p. 224, "Questionnaire for Ministers," Question III, 8.

have experienced problems during transfers. This is not a value judgment. A person's frame of mind has been formed by the interaction of heredity, education, and experience. It is interesting to note that ministers with twenty to thirty years of service who experienced difficult times during and just after the war have not been as strongly affected by the human problems of the transfers as have younger ministers. The heavy response to "sometimes" indicates that the majority of the ministers have had to solve some human problems in at least one transfer.

In identifying the causes for transfer problems, one finds family circumstances and situations holding first place. The wife's pregnancy, nursing babies, and small children are frequently listed. Repeated changes of residence and school for the children may be accompanied by strong emotional outbursts by the children, and these leave their marks on the minister. From the minister's position as a father, he is sensitive to how difficult it is for the children<sup>1</sup> to separate themselves from the familiar circle of friends and to make new friends. The ministers feel that because of difficulties in making contacts and in adjusting to new situations, children of school age are most affected. Additional stress is brought about when the children have difficulties obtaining Sabbaths free from school demands. Feelings of guilt are experienced by the workers when the children slaken their school-work, their vocational hopes are dashed, or the family is torn apart. Tensions increase whenever a member of the family finds it difficult to accept the transfer or

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<sup>1</sup>Compare in this connection the way the children, in looking back, evaluate their experiences themselves, pp. 173-176.

the housing and living conditions are inferior in the new location. Another burden is the greater geographical distances to relatives, especially aged and frail parents.<sup>1</sup>

Along with these causes within the family, there is that rich and intricate web of relationships in human life which offers an abundance of occasions for causing wounds and pain in transfers. The minister who loves his congregation, who has shared its joys and pains for many years, and who has witnessed experiences in faith with it, goes through a process like that of severing the umbilical cord. Naturally, this causes pain. Taking leave of friends, of familiar ways and favorite places, of beautiful landscapes and convenient shopping facilities, all of which have become part of one's daily life, causes hurt and requires many adjustments.

The best help for dealing with these small and big concerns and burdens and pains and losses is not to suppress one's feelings but rather to admit them freely and to share them with one's spouse and, when justified, with one's children and to lay them before God in prayer.

The minister, too, must be candid about his feelings. . . . Talking it out is helpful. . . . If you feel like a skunk in reference to your family's reluctance to move, say so. . . . The critical word is S h a r e. Share the decision to move. Share the grief at leaving. Share the gifts that are given. Share the adventure of the new experience.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The following statement is found in the General Conference Daily Bulletin, Number 6, Nov. 20, 1887: On the second recommendation, Sister White remarked that she thought there should be consultation before laborers are removed to distant fields, especially when they have aged parents. She said that Brethren Lane and Goldmark are the only sons of an aged mother, and she thought that in such cases the wishes of the parents should be consulted.

<sup>2</sup>Robert G. Kemper, Beginning a New Pastorate (Nashville:

Furthermore, it is helpful to remember that many of these emotional feelings are only an interlude. They fade away over the weeks or months. New experiences and new human contacts allow the experienced stress and distress to be quickly forgotten in a new environment. Man has been created so that the human emotional system not only allows stress and concerns and anxieties to develop but also that any problems can be mastered and the human being can grow through them. This process produces joy in a person and this leads to gratitude.

The question: "Have the transfers become more difficult for you over the years?"<sup>1</sup> was answered affirmatively by 46 percent of the ministers and negatively by 54 percent. The workers with more than twenty years of service emphasize that with increasing age, physical strength declines, the memory grows weaker, flexibility and adaptability lessen, and therefore it becomes more and more difficult to cope with transfers. The workers with ten to twenty years of service emphasize as encumbering factors family increase and the growing household. Some pointed out that the process of moving has become more difficult over the years. Yet, in spite of the numerous burdens arising from a change of place, home, school, and congregation, it is noteworthy that 54 percent of the ministers state that transfers have not become more difficult for them in the course of their years of service.

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Abingdon, 1978), pp. 84, 85, 88.

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix, p. 224, "Questionnaire for Ministers," Question III, 9.

Ministers' Assessments and Recommendations for  
Improvement in the Practice of Transfers

Without exception, all ministers agree that transfers are necessary and useful for the minister as well as for the congregation. No minister would like to eliminate transfers from his service, even though they demand personal sacrifices and create physical and mental burdens that have to be borne by the minister and his family.

Advantages and Disadvantages of Transfers

The following key phrases sum up the advantages as seen by the ministers themselves: a better character development, a widening of the circle of friends and experiences, an all-round development of gifts and talents, new opportunities for further education and study, flexibility in getting along with people, adjustment to various circumstances in the church, the opportunity of a new start from situations which had come to a standstill, enrichment through the collaboration with ministers of varying abilities, and a deepening of the spiritual life through new experiences. There are easier and more difficult positions. After an energy-consuming work in small and even tiny widely scattered and isolated congregations or in congregations without any children or youth, transfers offer new opportunities for work in pastoral districts with other structures.

The ministers' assessment of the transfers is just as positive with regard to their effects on the life of the church. Through their contact with different gifts and talents, churches are protected from theological one-sidedness and a single-track methodology. The exchange between younger and older ministers



stimulates different interest groups and age groups in the congregation. Unhealthy ties of church members to the minister and his family are avoided or broken off. The change helps the congregation to become more self-reliant, mature, and independent of the minister.<sup>1</sup> Ministers come and go, but the congregation remains. "Both the minister and the congregation remain young through transfers."

The disadvantages of transfers for the minister were listed as: unfinished work must be broken off--frequently to the detriment of the church and the persons still seeking the way to Jesus. Flight from responsibility is no small temptation. One sits back and waits for a change instead of continuing to bear concrete burdens in the church. Usually, a transfer solves the problem for the minister but not for the congregation. The danger exists of viewing oneself as merely an "actor" in the church without identifying with it, since one must sooner or later break camp again and move on. Most of the disadvantages, however, are in the personal lives of the minister and his family. Among these are the financial burdens for moving which frequently exceed the moving subsidies<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Some ministers express the opinion that it is advantageous for the congregation "to have to adjust to a new minister, his methods and his plans." Should a "concentration of forces in the church work corresponding to the capabilities, ideas and methods of the minister" really result? Isn't there the danger that the minister might himself become the standard for the church? Shouldn't he adapt all of his plans and methods rather to the needs and necessities of the respective church? Of course, this process also leads the church to adapt and accept new ways and methods. In our opinion, the ministers' definitions given above reveal a one-sided and, therefore, false picture the minister has of his work--as already pointed out in the section: "How do transfers effect the inward and outward growth of the church?" (See pp. 114-117 above).

<sup>2</sup>Financial Policies of the SDA Church in the GDR, III Q, "Moving-Subsidies," p. 1: 1. Church ministers are transferred to

granted by the SDA church in the GDR. If a minister is transferred several times in a relatively short time, the disadvantages increase exponentially.

Transfers can also affect the church negatively, especially when transfers of ministers occur in rapid succession. The smaller churches suffer more from this, because they are often served by younger ministers who are transferred more frequently (see table 5). The work among the youth in the formative years greatly depends upon interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the transfer of the interns, which nearly always takes place after one year, or the exchange of young ministers after only two years of service, negatively affects the whole area of the work for children and youth. The ministers complain, moreover, that the congregation cannot realize any long-term goals because the successor does not continue the plans begun by his predecessor and, therefore, much invested energy is wasted.<sup>1</sup>

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other fields at certain intervals. In order to cover the additional costs arising from the furnishing of a new home as well as the increased wear and tear on the furniture caused by the moving, a moving-subsidy will be granted them. The prerequisite for such a subsidy is an office resolution for the move. . . .

2. The moving-subsidy for active, married ministers amounts to 11%, for single ones 6%; for retired, married ones 8%, for single ones 4% of the annual basic salary or retirement respectively. . . . Of this 10% of the monthly gross income (the basic salary plus the children's subsidy from the church) is to be handled tax-free (paragraph 21 [4] of the Directive for Travel-expenses of March 20, 1956).

<sup>1</sup> Here we meet the same phenomena we have already met twice before (see pp. 114-117 above and p. 126 n. 2). If a minister molds his work in the congregation too strongly according to his concept instead of adjusting his work to the potential in the congregation, then each and every transfer must affect the congregation negatively. The only plans proven practical for the congregation, especially

Most of the ministers merely list the advantages and disadvantages without evaluating them. Those who did weigh one against the other have come to the conclusion that the advantages outweigh all of the disadvantages mentioned. In principle, no minister is willing to dispense with transfers in his work. In this respect the basic rule of procedure should be: "As little as possible and only as often as absolutely necessary."

In conclusion it must be pointed out that the advantages mentioned by the ministers are neither automatically nor inevitably a result of the transfers. There is an essential difference between a minister's merely transferring his accumulated experiences to the new congregation or his consciously opening himself up to the new opportunities which every congregation potentially offers him.

James Glasse remarked that "if a minister says he has had fifteen years' experience, what he probably has had is three years' experience five times over." That is partly true. It is possible for ministers to learn the techniques of their craft and to go on applying them for the rest of their lives. . . . To be a minister of a particular church is to shape a style of ministry appropriate to that particular church. . . . If you jump right in and do what you have been doing, you will not change; you will merely perpetuate what you have done. . . . When you move, you must change your ministry. Knowing what must be changed requires a process of discernment.<sup>1</sup>

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beyond a transfer, are those which have been worked out by the minister together with the congregation and which can be carried out by the congregation. Every minister should assign the individual members only as many tasks as they are capable of so that the work begun can be continued uninterrupted, even after a transfer, without any breaches or reversals impairing the missionary activities of the church.

<sup>1</sup>Kemper, pp. 118, 119.

## Criticism of the Practice of Transfers

Even though all the ministers affirm the principle of transfers, not all of them basically accept the current practice of transfers. Their criticism concerns above all the frequency and the short-term planning of transfers. In this respect, the ministers' criticism corresponds closely to that of the members of the Union Committee Board (see pp. 86 and 87 above). The ministers consider the period of service in a congregation generally too short to be able to exhaust all of the possibilities of the ministerial activity, evangelistic service, and the educational duties to the congregation. The short-term planning of transfers causes undue time pressures. The minister lacks the time necessary to finish the tasks which he and the congregation have set for themselves and to guarantee a smooth transition. Short-term planning also causes all kinds of other difficulties (moving vans, workmen, approval for an exchange of ministers' apartments, apprenticeships for the children) which could be avoided by long-term planning.

Other objections were made: "Some ministers are seldom transferred, whereas others are moved too frequently." "There are some ministers who wander from one large city to another, while others, in contrast, are being transferred from one small district to another, often with unsatisfactory living-conditions as well." "One would expect greater fairness." "Transfers are still too much dictated from the top down." "In my opinion, transfers occur too arbitrarily and with too much respect for persons." "The fields of labor should be more calibrated to the individual workers." "A more far-sighted personnel policy is needed." The administration

should show "more sympathetic understanding, consideration, and respect for form" with regard to the transfers. "All secretiveness should be eliminated once and for all." These voices echo the observations and experiences of individual ministers which should be heard, but not generalized.

Besides these critical remarks, other observations were carefully noted: "Recently legitimate concerns for the minister and his family are being taken more and more into consideration." "In the last few years a more positive transfer practice has developed, even to the point of a beneficial brotherliness." "The needs of the congregation and the legitimate wishes of the minister and his family are being tuned to one another more than in the past."

#### How Long Should a Minister Serve in the Same District?

The ministers mentioned that the period of service between transfers, in their experience, has generally been too short for their work to bear fruit. They have also made rather concrete suggestions regarding these periods of service. These are shown in table 15. The first two columns list the years which the minister (divided into ordained and not ordained) consider necessary for an optimal service in the various aspects of their ministry. The second two columns list the number of years after which a transfer should take place for the benefit of the minister and the congregation.

TABLE 15

## INTERVALS OF TIME BETWEEN THE TRANSFERS

Years of Service	Years for Maximum Service in the Congregation		Number of Years after Which a Transfer is Necessary	
	Not ordained	Ordained	Not ordained	Ordained
30-26	3.5	7.5	4.6	9.6
25-21	3.8	9.0	4.1	9.7
20-16	3.6	8.4	3.9	9.0
15-11	4.4	8.9	5.1	9.9
10-6	4.7	9.3	*	*
5-1	4.0	8.2	5.0	9.7
Total	4.0	8.6	4.5	9.5

\*The data on this age-group are too incomplete to allow for an evaluation.

Some ministers justly drew attention to the fact that the numbers given are not to be understood and applied schematically. How long a minister works effectively in a congregation depends upon him, his gifts, and his health and vigor as well as on the congregation. "Can it not be that one minister has preached himself empty after five years while another can continue to pass on new life even after ten years?" There are congregations in which an active and circumspect minister can serve for more than ten years. On the other hand, a minister can be so worn out in a congregation that a transfer is necessary after only five years.

The data in table 15 clearly indicate that ministers should serve in a congregation longer than they do now (see table 5). The

eight to ten years for district elders and three to four years for unordained ministers mentioned by the members of the Union Committee Board (see pp. 86-89 above) coincide with the average number of years stated by the ministers. These data can be taken, therefore, as valid criteria and must be taken seriously by all who are involved in the planning and deciding of transfers.

#### Recommendations for Improvement in the Transfer Practice

One-third of the ministers did not respond to the question: "What reasoned recommendations do you have to implement the transfers in such a way that tensions and stress can be avoided where possible and maximum benefit be gained for all persons involved?"<sup>1</sup> Another third mentioned only one aspect which should be considered in transfers. The last third submitted some, at times, detailed recommendations which would extensively take into account the complexities of transfers in the GDR. The following points are the result of these comprehensive statements:

1. Transfers are, to be sure, an essential aspect of the SDA Church. They are concretized, however, in the GDR and are, therefore, closely linked to the realities of that particular environment. All areas of the social, political, and economic life of the GDR are regulated through long-term planning. The planning of transfers in the SDA Church must take this fact into account and, therefore, must also take place on a long-term basis. Short-term planning produces unavoidable problems and conflicts when it

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix, p.225, "Questionnaire for Ministers," Question IV, 5.

collides with the long-term planning in society (i.e., transportation of goods, workmen, apprenticeships, housing, etc.).

2. The planning of transfers should not begin in the Union Committee. It absolutely needs a preparatory stage. It is the responsibility of the Conference president as the minister's pastor to visit the minister and his family regularly. In this way he becomes better acquainted with the minister and his gifts and capabilities, as well as his weaknesses and limitations. At the same time he gets an insight into the family situation (ages and grades of the children, their vocational plans and prospects). Through dialogue he should be open to the needs and desires of the minister and his wife with regard to transfer. In this way the Conference president may also gain a clear picture of the most favorable time of transfer for the family.

To this preparatory stage of planning also belongs a discussion in the Conference committee with regard to the specific needs of the various districts and to the time a transfer would be most profitable to them.

3. After the planning in the Union Committee has been made in light of all of these aspects, the transfer should be discussed by the Conference president with the minister and his wife in their home. The reasons which have led to the transfer and to the choice of the new field should be honestly and openly expressed.

"Illusions, self-deceptions, as well as misconceptions can be broken down in an open and brotherly manner," wrote one respondent. The new field of labor and the housing situation must be described realistically and without any embellishments. No false concepts and



hopes should be awakened with the intention of making the worker more agreeable to the transfer. The concerns and objections of the minister and his wife should "not be rebuffed with a wave of the hand." "One should cultivate the pastoral conversation with tact" and listen to one another. By a friendly exchange of thoughts, an understanding of the necessity of the transfer and of the new field of labor can be created in the minister and his wife. And the president may gain thereby new insights into the needs and concerns of the minister's family. "One should not only speak with another, but also pray together" in order to better know God's will together.

4. If transfers are discussed in this way with the minister and his wife, they will lose their "administrative after-taste." And in the weeks following, the Union Committee's recommendation for a transfer can become a clearly recognizable call of God for the minister and his family. This call will then be more willingly accepted, even though all personal wishes and ideas could not be considered. Concerning these personal wishes, the minister and his family must keep "the church of Jesus as a whole and the wellbeing of God's Work" in mind. In the case of an objection to the planned transfer, the minister and his family should honestly search their souls as to whether their arguments are truly free of selfish motives.<sup>1</sup> A transfer should only then be officially decided when the minister and his wife have accepted it and a legitimate

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<sup>1</sup>An interesting remark occurred on one questionnaire: "Workers who are continually dissatisfied should once be placed in a leading position for a period of time so that they could experience themselves how difficult it is to be fair to each and every one."

prospect exists of its being realized.

5. In order to improve the transfer practice in the GDR, the following suggestions are worth mentioning: "Too large a circle of exchange should be avoided. They usually involve too many difficulties." Smaller districts are more favorable for ministers who have passed the peak of their performance because of their age. "Good ministers, the real 'soul-winners' are mostly sent to the most fruitful areas, whereas ministers with less success are usually sent from one weak congregation to another. That practice works to the disadvantage for both the congregation and the minister. Successful ministers should be transferred to unsuccessful congregations." "We have congregations which because of their location, the size of the apartment, or sheer tradition seem to be condemned to receive only young ministers. These congregations have to come to terms then with a continuous, short-term exchange of ministers. It takes, however, very strong congregations to cope with such a situation for a long period of time. One should also send middle-aged ministers of average performance to such congregations."

6. The ministers themselves can also see to it that problems are avoided in transfers. They should keep their apartments in good order and see to it that all necessary repairs are cared for continually. Every transfer involves extensive renovation. The minister must make the necessary arrangements with the appropriate workmen so that renovations can be planned ideally immediately after he has learned of the approaching transfer. He owes this service to his successor. The introduction to the new district can be made easier if addresses of all business connections, service

companies and tradesmen, authorities, and otherwise important contacts be given in writing to the successor.

### Transfers and the Congregation

It has already been established several times over that transfers are not practiced as an end in themselves but should serve the all-round development of the minister's gifts and capabilities. The development of the minister's personality, however, is also not an end in itself. It aims ultimately at building up the church to the glory of God. If transfers, therefore, are to serve the welfare and growth of the congregation, then the latter definitely must be included in the consideration and planning of the transfer. Next to the minister and his family, the congregations are most strongly affected by the transfers. They too have to give up ties to the minister and his family; they too must receive and accept a new minister with all of his strengths and weaknesses, his peculiarities and habits.

During the interviews in the ministers' homes and from various questions in the questionnaire, it has become clear that the practice of transfers up to now has widely ignored the congregations. "They are not consulted, but are mostly confronted with the accomplished fact," wrote a respondent. They have no say in the matter and as good as no influence on the transfer. They endure transfers patiently because they have grown accustomed to them. Many church members know "that ministers are transferred, but they don't know why they are transferred." Newly baptized members often are left with the feeling that the minister has deserted them. At

times, the congregations have not even been officially notified of the transfer of their ministers.

All of the persons and committees planning and deciding on the transfers of ministers should consider the following questions: Is the transfer practice of the SDA Church in the GDR in accordance with the concept of the church in the New Testament? How can the congregation be helped to better understand the significance of the transfers and to recognize their value? By whom and how should the congregations responsibly be included in the planning for transfers? What process of education is necessary so that the minister has the conviction after a transfer: not an institution, but the ecclesia itself has called me for service in this place?

## CHAPTER V

### TRANSFERS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW

#### OF THE MINISTER'S WIFE

The term "minister's wife" shows that the minister's wife has a very special relationship to her husband's profession. A woman married to an artist is not especially called an "artist's wife," and the wife of a judge is not titled the "judge's wife." However, being married to a minister, a wife is more closely connected with her husband's profession than in the case of any other profession. A minister's service impinges upon all areas of his wife's life. The minister is not only dependent on her collaboration but on her as a person as well. Without her and her devotion he can hardly fulfill the manifold tasks in the church and in the world. After having recognized this responsibility, a minister's wife can multiply her husband's influence. Through an unsanctified, egotistical life she can also hinder and destroy his effectiveness. A minister's wife then is only capable of realizing her life's calling when she has a personal and living communion with Jesus and her own soul "is preserved in God's love."<sup>1</sup>

The wife of one of Christ's ministers carries a responsibility which she cannot and should not take lightly. . . .

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<sup>1</sup>E. G. White, Diener des Evangeliums (Hamburg: International Tract Society, n.d.), p. 180.

She must never put her own wishes first, never demonstrate a lack of interest in her husband's work, nor ever give way to homesickness or dissatisfaction; all of these natural feelings must be overcome. She should have a purpose in life which must be steadfastly pursued even if her feelings, her comfort and her natural inclinations rebel against it. . . . The wives of God's messengers should lead a life of devotion and prayer.<sup>1</sup>

Questionnaires and Interviews as the  
Basis of Research

Just as all the ministers of the SDA Church in the GDR received questionnaires (cf. p. 90), so did all of the ministers' wives.<sup>2</sup> The wives were requested to answer all the questions independently, without consulting their husbands.<sup>3</sup> Of 136 ministers' wives, ninety-one (67 percent) filled out and returned the questionnaire. Table 16 discloses the participation of the ministers' wives, according to their husbands' years of service. It is interesting to note that the wives of ministers with fifteen to thirty years of service are noticeably more reticent to answer the questions than the wives of the younger ministers.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

Cf. E. G. White, Testimonies for the Church, 9 vols. (Mountain View: Pacific Press Publishing Assoc., 1948)1:137-140, 449-454; 2:565-569; 3:304-329; Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 1946), pp. 676, 677.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Appendix, Letter to pastors and their families.

TABLE 16

PARTICIPATION OF THE MINISTERS' WIVES  
IN ANSWERING THE QUESTIONNAIRES

Husband's Years of Service	Number of Ministers' Wives	Questionnaires Returned	Percentage
30-26	27	12	44.4
25-21	36	24	66.6
20-16	28	19	67.9
15-11	15	11	73.3
10-6	15	12	80.0
5-1	15	13	86.7

Further inquiries during the interviews revealed that some of the ministers' wives had not filled out the questionnaire because they had assumed from the beginning that transfers were part of a life with a minister. One does not fill out a lengthy questionnaire about self-evident things. For others, it was merely a matter of time. The spirit was, to be sure, willing, but the "flesh" lacked the energy to reflect on everything and to formulate it in writing. The strength of many ministers' wives consists more of tackling and mastering the practical tasks of daily life than of filling out questionnaires. Therefore, a few did not bother to participate in the questionnaire-poll.

Very lively discussions have occurred between many ministers and their wives regardless of whether the questionnaires were filled out or not. Responses were compared and discussed, and some couples have grown closer together and developed a better understanding of and for one another as a result of the study. Not to be

overlooked is the fact that some of the very specific questions caused some of the old scars to bleed again with some ministers' wives. When asked how transfers have affected marital relations and family life, and in discussing the relationship between the administration and the ministers' families, many wives mentioned again some of the painful experiences of the past. However, joyful memories were also recalled eliciting feeling of gratitude.

Transfers and Their Effects on the Spiritual  
Life of the Ministers' Wives

What has been said above about the ministers' spiritual lives is just as valid for the ministers' wives. Basically, spiritual growth is dependent on a personal relationship with Christ. But, since Christ's followers live in this world, external conditions can strengthen or weaken their spirituality. Table 17 makes clear how transfers have influenced the spiritual lives of the ministers' wives. When comparing table 17 with table 10, we find that neither the spiritual lives of the ministers nor of the ministers' wives have been shaken by transfers, except in a few special cases. Only some insignificant variations in the different areas between the two tables are noted. Some comments in writing to the complex of questions were added by 43 percent of the wives. These explained the positive as well as negative results. Surprisingly, the same percentage is recorded with the ministers.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>There were forty-four of the 103 ministers (43 percent) who further explained the areas of spiritual life checked by them by means of written comments.



TABLE 17

EFFECTS OF TRANSFERS ON THE SPIRITUAL LIVES  
OF THE MINISTERS' WIVES

Area of Spiritual Life	Effects on Wives		
	Positive	Negative	None at All
Personal prayer	24	7	60
Faith	19	7	64
Family worship	6	9	78
Attitude to husband's work	13	7	74
Relationship with the administration	5	17	69

Two facts are to be noted in table 17, and they are also corroborated in the written comments.

In twenty-four cases, the transfer had a positive effect on personal prayer; in nineteen cases on faith. There are times in every minister's family for fervent and unceasing prayer (for instance, the children's choice of vocation, illness, difficulties in the church, school on Sabbath, etc.). Included also are transfers, which affect the life of all the members of the family in one way or another. Writers comment: "Each transfer was a subject of earnest prayer for me." "The numerous uncertainties facing us as a family furthered our prayer-life." "My personal prayer-life became more intensive before the transfers in order to recognize God's will." "Every transfer brings its problems with it; that forces us to our knees." "A change in responsibilities and a change

of place strengthen our life of prayer and faith." "Every transfer helps to mature my character." Many small and great deeds of assistance, leading us to God's helping hand, often lead to "inner thankfulness."

Seventeen ministers' wives emphasized that their relationship with the leaders of the Church had been negatively affected by the transfers. On the other hand, five reported that their relations had positively been affected.<sup>1</sup> Only seven of the ministers' wives could give concrete causes for tension with individuals in the administration. Among these causes were "lack of honesty in the reason for the transfer," "no understanding for the request to postpone moving for three weeks shortly before a birth," "conference president deemed it unnecessary to discuss any arising tensions," "illness and housing problems were not taken into consideration," "sometimes human beings are handled like material things."<sup>2</sup>

Those indicating that their relations with the administration had been negatively affected did so without giving any specific reason. This raises the following questions: Is not failure to state the reasons an expression of the fact that the ministers' wives have in the past been taken into consideration as wives and mothers far too little? Has the concern been too much with the organizational and technical aspects of transfers and too little with the ministers'

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<sup>1</sup>The ministers reported 12 negative and 14 positive effects.

<sup>2</sup>The following comment reveals a situation which no one would desire, but which, nevertheless, had to be borne by the minister's family: "In the 21 years of our marriage we have had to build in eleven different places. To do this we have sacrificed our health and vacations . . ."

wives as persons? The justification for these questions lies in the fact that of the 244 reported transfers, the ministers' wives almost always learned of the impending transfer through their husbands (191 times). Moreover, there were only fifty-three visits to the ministers' families by the president where the wives had also been included in the discussions.<sup>1</sup>

The conference president should consider it his duty as spiritual leader to discuss each planned transfer with the minister and his wife in their home whenever possible. In this way the tensions between the minister's wife and the leading brethren which hinder a reciprocal relationship can be greatly avoided. Administrators are often too little aware of the reproach and mistrust present in the hearts of the ministers' wives. Bitterness and resentment always undermine spiritual life and block a fruitful cooperation. Therefore, the ministers' wives should themselves seek ways of eliminating all obstacles for the sake of the leading brethren as well as for their own. Unforgiven guilt prevents the Holy Spirit from working through us. The relationship between the ministers' wives and the administrators is sustained by reciprocal forgiveness (Eph 4:31; Col 3:13).

#### Effects of Transfers from the Vocational Aspect

Before marrying, almost every minister's wife of the SDA Church in the GDR had completed a vocational education and practiced

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<sup>1</sup>After having received insight into the complexities of transfers, one minister's wife wrote: "I now comprehend how much effort, deliberation, etc., on the part of the leading brothers is necessary until everything works out. My esteem for many of them has increased in this way."

a profession. The Constitution of the GDR guarantees every citizen,<sup>1</sup> regardless of sex, the right to work. The Employment Code defines that women are to receive equal positions in employment.<sup>2</sup> All the youth are assured that the socialist state "is systematically improving their working, learning and living conditions."<sup>3</sup>

After marrying a minister, a wife must give up her job when her husband is assigned to another area. That is usually the case. She thereby loses the position and prestige won through her achievement as a person and Christian at her place of employment. In the first few years of her married life, the minister's wife accustoms herself to the new tasks step by step, and this required a basic restructuring of her life up to that time. She must consciously accept her new service as a minister's wife. The freer she is for the responsibilities of the church, the more quickly she will succeed in adapting herself psychologically and practically.

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<sup>1</sup>The Constitution of the German Democratic Republic (Berlin: State Publishers of the GDR, 1975) Article 24 (excerpts): "Each and every citizen of the GDR has the right to work. . . . Men and women, adults and youth have the right of equal wages for equal tasks. . . . The right to work and the obligation of working are one and the same thing. . . ."

<sup>2</sup>Employment Code of the GDR, of June 16, 1977 (Berlin: State Publishers of the GDR, 1980), p. 15, 3: "The socialist state guarantees that such conditions be created which enable women to continually better themselves and take their equal place at work and in their professional development and to more successfully coordinate their vocational activities with duties as mothers in the family. . . ."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., 4: The socialist right to work "assures the employment of the youth according to their knowledge and capabilities, their vocational development and further education in conjunction with the social exigencies as well as their participation in the planning and supervision in the shop. . . ."

The SDA church in the GDR knows what a blessing a close collaboration between a minister and his wife can be for the church and the neighborhood. That is why provision is made for ministers' wives to be appointed church assistants. Their capabilities and energy should be directed to the welfare of the church. According to their gifts, they should remain free for the following services in collaboration with their husbands: home care for the sick, elderly and needy; practical and spiritual help at meetings and at retreats for the youth and the children; Bible instruction for children and music lessons; work on the church premises and in the conference offices. The guidelines for the employment of church assistants reads (excerpts):

The possibility of employment as church assistants is open to all ministers' wives as long as they are not otherwise employed. The work should result in light of the existent needs within the SDA Church, the district, or the resident congregation as well as in light of the personal capability. . . . Church assistants are to receive 100 marks a month in recognition of their work. This is subject to social security taxes since they are to receive their own social security insurance and retirement through the social security system. . . . Employment is given after approval of the church assistant's application by the office and after the (existing) contract of labor has been ended. The duties to be fulfilled are to be listed in the contract.

Table 18 shows that of ninety-one ministers' wives, 37 percent are employed as church assistants by the SDA Church, 43 percent are not working at all, 18 percent are working part-time, and 2 percent are working full-time. Moreover, the table reflects the family, sociological, and psychological data.

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<sup>1</sup>Minutes of the Union Board of the SDA Church in the GDR, 1979, Motion 55.

TABLE 18

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF MINISTERS' WIVES

Years of Service (No.)	Working		Full-time	Part-time	In Their Profession	With the SDA Church	Average Number of Children
	Yes	No					
30-26 (12)	1	3	-	1	-	8	2.8
25-21 (24)	7	5	-	7	6	12	3.2
20-16 (19)	4	8	1	3	3	7	3.0
15-11 (11)	-	8	-	-	-	3	2.6
10-6 (12)	2	8	1	1	2	2	2.2
5-1 (13)	4	7	-	4	2	2	1.0
Total (91)	18	39	2	16	13	34	

Figure 1 illustrates that the percentage of ministers' wives employed outside of the church (solid line) is higher between the first and fifth years of service than between the sixth and fifteenth years of service. The percentage increases again in columns 4 and 5 and decreases again in column 6. The development of the ministers' wives working as church assistants (broken line) is quite different. The percentage is very small in the first years of marriage, but continually increases after ten years of service and reaches its highest point in the last column.

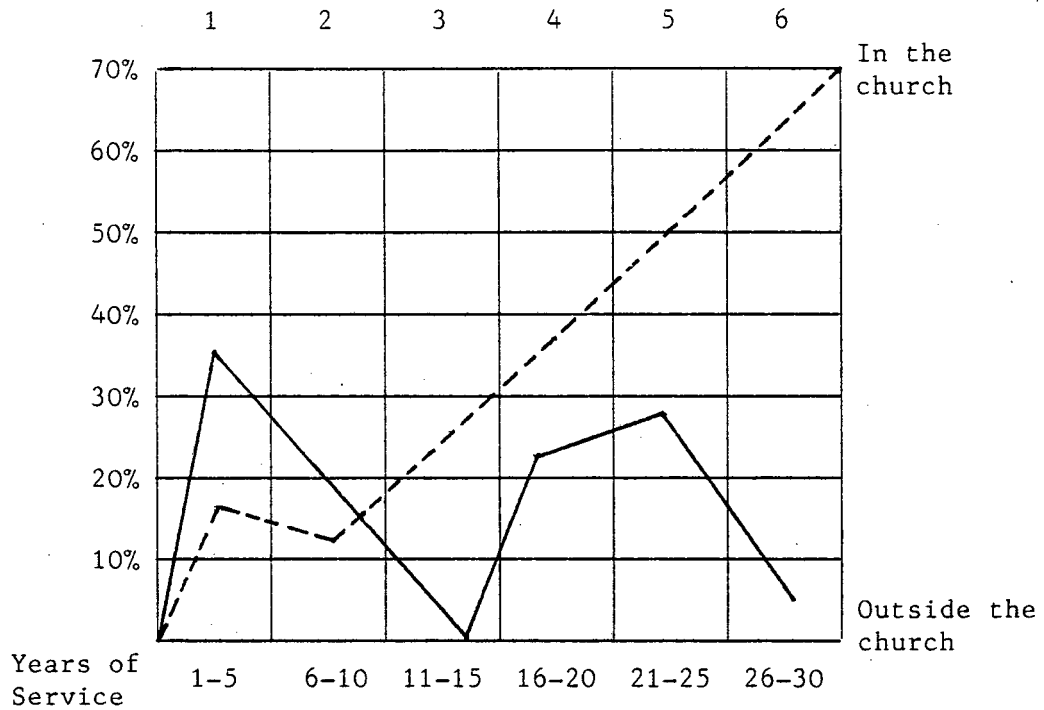


Fig. 1. Percentage of ministers' wives working within and outside the church

After the wedding, the transition from a vocational life to the new duties as a minister's wife gradually takes place. As long as she is not tied down at home as a mother, the wife's connections to her former profession and field of work partly remain. Moreover, the expenses at the beginning of a marriage are not small; any financial help through the wife's part-time work is extremely welcome. Columns 2 and 3 of figure 1 clearly reflect family situations. Small children and school children greatly require the mother's care. Almost all of the ministers' wives take their calling as mothers seriously. Columns 4 and 5 show that the ministers' wives devote themselves more intensively to their duties in the church after their children have grown up and become more independent. At the same time, some of them return to their

former vocations or accept some other work outside of the church.<sup>1</sup>

In answer to the question: "What difficulties have arisen for your vocational work through transfers?"<sup>2</sup> 76 percent of the ministers' wives understandably said nothing. If a minister's wife is employed by the SDA Church, there are just as few vocational difficulties that occur through those transfers as with those who are not working. Both groups together make up 80 percent of the response.

In the written opinions, vocational problems are discussed, and the conviction that a minister's wife cannot simultaneously be a wife, mother, housewife, minister's wife and still hold a profession is often expressed. Some comments point out that it is often difficult "to find a suitable part-time job," "further professional education and qualification is hardly possible." The difficulties of employed ministers' wives can be thus summed up: "Looking for new jobs, learning the job again, always starting at the bottom." The other conviction is expressed in the following comments: "If you ask me, no minister's wife can be fully employed in another job." "Since being a minister's wife and helpmate is the most important thing, a job doesn't come into question or doesn't fit in." Finally, the experience of a minister's wife active as a church assistant is expressed thus: "My responsibilities have become greater and lovelier (than in the profession I learned). I see my

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<sup>1</sup>Since the data are based on only 67 percent of the ministers' wives, they have only a relative value and merely show a certain tendency.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, II, 6.



main work in making visits as a deaconess and administering practical help."

The closer a minister and his wife work hand in hand, the fewer difficulties will crop up through a transfer in respect to a profession. The more she identifies with her husband's profession, the greater the profit for the church, her family, and her own marriage. If she is prepared to give up her personal professional goals, to forego all prestige and public recognition, which sometimes demands considerable self-denial, then the blessing she bequeaths to her service will be even greater. Her husband as well as the SDA Church should continually recognize and esteem her work.

#### Effects on the Marriage and the Family

Generally speaking, the home constitutes the center of the lives of the ministers' wives. Every home radiates its own atmosphere, created mainly by the woman of the house. Her joy is in furnishing her home in such a way that every member of the family feels comfortable. Furniture, accessories, pictures, and flowers have their own definite places and together form that world in which the family is safe and secure. As a mother, the minister's wife is glad when her children happily remain at home. As a wife, she is happy when her husband can work and relax in a homey atmosphere. This has nothing to do with obsolete, priggish ideas but is an essential part of the character she assumes as a mother and wife.

Transfers not only disturb the rhythm of family life and relationships nurtured outside of the home, but the home, each individually unique in itself, is thrown into turmoil. Figuratively

speaking, a warm, comfortable nest must be dismantled and newly erected at another place. Because of this, the family is uprooted and homeless for a certain period of time. This is what taxes the minister's wife the most, both mentally and physically.

Table 19 shows the effects of transfers, according to the minister's wife, on (1) her relations to her husband; (2) her relations to her children; (3) her relations to her family as a whole; and (4) the children's relations to their parents.<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 19  
EFFECTS OF TRANSFER ON THE MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY  
AS PERCEIVED BY WIVES

Area	Positive	Negative	No Effect at All
1. Marriage	8	7	79
2. Children	8	3	71
3. Family	6	8	72
4. Parents	7	8	69

As noted earlier in table 11, it is likewise demonstrated in table 19 that transfers have generally left no permanent negative traces behind. Except for minor variations, the wives' data coincide with those of their husbands. However, the written expressions provide us a deeper insight into the painful as well as joyful experiences caused in families by transfers. It is significant how different, even contrary, are the experiences of individual families,

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, II, 5.

depending on the children's ages, the place of the transfer, and the size of the apartment.

Foremost among the concerns of the ministers' wives as mothers is the wellbeing of their children. Mothers are much more sensitive than fathers to the little and big problems experienced by their children during transfers. Because of this they tend to suffer with their children. Two problem areas need special mention: the uprooting of the children from their secure environment and the problems involved in a change of schools. "Each transfer means mental stress for our children. They are torn out of the familiar environment, their circle of friends, and the school, and are constantly beginning anew." In the case of smaller children, bed-wetting often occurred. Because of moving preparations "a separation from the small children was necessary, which led to various problems in child raising."<sup>1</sup> It is often difficult for school-age children to find a place in the social structure of their new classes. "The children suffered greatly from the change of schools." "Each transfer involves problems at school for the children. This is a burden of the whole family." Also mentioned were the difficulties

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<sup>1</sup>One mother pictured the following serious situation: "Our son, almost eight years old during our last transfer, reacted with depression and aggression. This went as far as suicidal thoughts, which he expressed to me. I believe this was caused by the most unfavorable time of moving (Sept. 1). Because of this there was no time for getting adjusted and, in addition, there was no order in the home because of renovations. For about six weeks, regularity and order were lacking everywhere. Added to this were the problems of adjusting to the new school (he was beat up on the way home) and the question of the Sabbath. . . . Torn out of a protected, orderly atmosphere, our boy was overtaxed with burdens which he could not fully cope with at his age. We pray to God that he has not suffered any life-long damage."

in getting Sabbath privileges for the children, which either had not been a problem in the previous place or had already been solved.

Adolescents go through other phases, depending again on the place of residence and year of school. "They do not understand the necessity of transfers and are angry with their father's profession." They worry about graduating from the tenth grade and about their future vocational training. "With the last transfer our son didn't want to move with us. He already perceived the coming difficulties with respect to his choice of vocation." "Our son was fifteen years old during our last transfer and moved with us unwillingly. He reproached us continually."

Nineteen of the ministers' wives cite difficulties connected with the change in apartments. They see a close connection between the apartment expected with a transfer and the climate arising in the marriage and the family. Seven times "housing-problems" are merely mentioned without being more closely defined. Others speak of "unreasonable" or "too small" apartments so that "the children at times feel more at home elsewhere than at home." "We do have an apartment, but not a home." "The living conditions (2½ rooms for five persons) mainly affect my husband's studies and his spiritual counseling which have to be done in the living-room. The children often have to be sent away or to bed." "There are often problems connected with the living conditions. But who can change that?" These voices partly reflect the tight housing situation in the GDR. Of course, ministers' families also experience at times the gratification of being able to move from unfavorable living conditions into roomy dwellings, a fact which is cited with gratitude.

Balancing the various negative effects are an equal number of positive ones (table 19). Surprisingly, these positive experiences are generally rooted in the same problems as the negative ones. Nine wives unanimously declare that their relations with their children have been deepened and their marriages have been enriched by the difficulties. All of them express the determining motto: "Bear everything together; share everything together." Other comments were: "Problems arising from moving or in the school were worked out together with the children. That led to closer family contact and strengthened the faith of every member of the family." "We have borne joy and pain together. In this way, we have come to know each other better and have learned to appreciate one another better." "Together we planned every move. Together we discussed the problems. Our shared endeavors brought us joy." "Every transfer was agreed to by me. Our children were soon of the same opinion and found the newness of it interesting." "We discussed all the problems as a whole family and prayed together about the individual details. Every solution of a problem was a joyful event for the whole family."

In times of change, when parents and children have to give up treasured relations to people, places, and things, families are often brought closer together. Interfamilial relationships are strengthened. The one is dependent on the other. Each member of the family needs the other more than usual, more of his understanding and love. Families discover that it is not the apartment or people or places which are transportable, but rather the family as a unit. The identity of the family is not dependent on place or dwelling, but is sustained by other values. In the midst of external uprootings

families find themselves, their greatness and their strength. Every person needs a home; home is where the family is together. Therefore, a new home develops quickly for the children in the security of the family in the new place.<sup>1</sup> That does not happen automatically, but is dependent on the character of the parents and children and on the quality of the marriage and the family.

In summing up the negative and positive effects of the transfer as seen by the ministers' wives, it can be said that the closer the relations of a family, the more secure the children feel in their parents' love, and the more harmonious is the marriage, and the better able is the whole family to bear the inevitable stress. Even difficulties can then have a positive effect. That does not exclude, of course, unforeseen circumstances which in individual cases lead to negative consequences for the marriage as well as for the individual children or the family as a whole.

#### Effects on the Husband's Work as a Minister

How do the wives view their husbands as ministers? Every minister's wife is glad when her husband has a good reputation and enjoys the trust of the congregation and the respect of the community. Since she largely identifies with his work, it is a helpful confirmation of self when her husband grows in preaching and pastoral care and matures as a minister-personality. His joys are her joys: his disappointments, her disappointments. Table 20 answers the

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 184 below.

question: "How do you perceive the effect of transfers on your husband's work?"<sup>1</sup>

TABLE 20  
EFFECTS OF TRANSFERS ON THE HUSBANDS' WORK  
AS PERCEIVED BY THEIR WIVES

Years of Service	30-26	25-21	20-16	15-11	10-6	5-1	Total
Positive	6	14	11	5	7	5	48
Negative	-	2	1	2	1	2	8
None at All	5	8	7	5	3	7	35

Wives of thirty-eight ministers merely checked the areas requested and did not bother to put their perceptions into words. The remaining fifty-three answers were kept short and general, except for a few special cases. A summary allows us to draw some tentative conclusions from these written comments. During transfers, ministers' wives are so busy with their many chores, their own feelings, the cares and anxieties of the children, etc., that they hardly have time to consciously be aware of the effects of the transfer on their husbands' work. In addition it must be remembered that usually the wife is not with her husband when he begins his work in the new position. She is completely preoccupied with her own responsibilities. Only when she herself starts to put down roots, the home is established, and the children re-establish a sense of security is she able to turn her attention to her husband's work.

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, II, 11.

The wives of ministers with fifteen or more years of service mention that transfers release "creative powers" and increase the "spiritual flexibility" of their husbands. This is reflected in such comments as: "My husband developed capabilities in the new position which I had never noticed in him before." "His powers and talents also grew with the new experiences." Different congregations with their different demands "activated talents which had remained latent up to then." Theological currents in the new position necessitated "intensive study of the Bible." The wives of younger ministers observed that "the husband's composure was surer in the new position" and "mistakes committed before were avoided." Because of his adjustment to other people, "my husband developed more understanding, patience, and sensitivity." More comprehensive tasks "caused growth in his sense of responsibility." Furthermore, some ministers' wives correctly recognize that growth and maturity are not dependent on transfers, but, in fact, can be either furthered or hampered by transfers.

Except in two cases, all of the ministers' wives checking the negative category mentioned the same cause: "My husband's whole work as well as his development as a minister have suffered from too much work in building chapels." "Because of chapel-building over a long period of time, no systematic study was possible, which greatly affected the contents of his sermons." "Because of his work as a builder, the time necessary for study was lacking." Because of the building of new chapels, or the renovation of old ones, over months and sometimes years, ministers are tied up in handy-men's work and the procuring of materials. Because of the tight building



situation, there appears hardly any change possible in the foreseeable future. The SDA Church in the GDR is dependent on the good will of its workers to spend much time and energy on tasks which really lie outside of the area of a minister's work and responsibility. It is essential, however, to see that transferred ministers are not continually burdened with one building activity after another. The danger is not imaginary that their growth and maturity as ministers can be seriously impaired.

Other Effects in the Lives  
of the Ministers' Wives

The human problems which arise during transfers are as manifold and complex as life and human characters themselves. One wife wrote: "There are a thousand little problems which cannot be statistically grasped." Their causes are just as manifold and multi-layered. They can lie in external circumstances beyond our control, in short-term planning, or in a sudden change in the circle of transfers. They can arise through family circumstances, the ages of the children, or the atmosphere in the family. Of great significance, therefore, is the attitude of the minister's wife to the transfer itself, as well as her age and her health.

Table 21 indicates answers to the question: "Has every transfer caused you problems?"<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, II, 8.

TABLE 21

HUMAN PROBLEMS DURING TRANSFERS AS  
PERCEIVED BY PASTORS' WIVES

Years of Service	30- 26	25- 21	20- 16	15- 11	10- 6	5- 1	Total	Percentage of Ministers' Wives	Percentage of Ministers
Regularly	2	5	2	1	3	2	15	18	17
Sometimes	5	14	12	7	4	2	44	52	51
Never	5	5	6	3	4	3	26	30	32

The percentages in the last two columns compares responses of wives (table 21) with those of the ministers (table 14). They clearly indicate that transfers cause ministers and their wives problems equally. The percentages themselves give no information as to the cause of the problems. Informative in this respect is the comparison of the answers by ministers and their wives to the question: "Did you find the transfers becoming more difficult over the years?"<sup>1</sup> Fifty-six percent of the wives answered yes, while only 46 percent of the ministers answered in the affirmative. This comparison indicates that ministers' wives are generally more burdened by transfers than their husbands.

The personal difficulties expressed by the ministers' wives have their course mostly in interpersonal relationships. Because of their womanly nature they experience changes or disturbances in interpersonal relationships more consciously and intensely. Three

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, II, 9.

areas are clearly recognizable: treasured ties with church members, her relationship to her own parents, and concerns about her children's well-being.

When a minister's wife works closely with her husband, she develops spiritual and personal ties with many persons. Through spiritual counseling, the exchange of ideas, praying together, and common experiences of faith, the minister's wife has shared and assimilated the pains and joys of others. Some comments enlarge on this: "One takes a package of concerns and problems along from every congregation." "The longer one works in one congregation, the more one loves it, and the more difficult it is to transfer." "When one has worked in a congregation for a longer period of time and has made many personal contacts, one finds the transfer especially difficult." "With increasing age one finds it more and more difficult to break off personal contacts and to make new ones."<sup>1</sup>

Every difficult farewell is a testimony to how much the minister's wife loves the congregation. This pain is part of our continuing experience as believers as long as we remain pilgrims on earth. One minister's wife appropriately put this thought into words:

When one has worked in a congregation for a few years and loves it, then it is very natural that the farewell will be difficult. What has been one's heart's concern over several years, one cannot "leave" without the pain of parting. However, the love to the new congregation with its new responsibilities also grows quickly.

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<sup>1</sup>What the minister prefers for his work, namely to be able to work in one position over a longer period of time, can make a transfer even more difficult for his wife.

Wives more often than the ministers themselves mention their concern for elderly and frail parents as a serious problem. They feel they are not able to assist their needy parents as they really should. "The distance to my mother became greater with every transfer." "Separated by too great a distance, I cannot care for my 82-year-old mother as much as I would like to." "It is a great burden when one cannot care for one's elderly and needy parents." Of course, transfers can also lead to a lessening of the distance to the parents thus making more effective care possible. When discussing a transfer with the conference president, the minister's wife should feel free to express her burden on this matter. As much as possible, justified concerns must be taken into consideration in the planning of transfers.<sup>1</sup>

Although a special complex of questions has already been devoted to the family, worries about the children frequently arise in the written comments about transfer problems.<sup>2</sup> From the various comments one recognizes how strongly the wives as mothers are burdened by their children's anxieties, large and small, during transfers. In fact, one almost has the impression that motherly love has the tendency to multiply the children's worries in the mother's own thoughts and feelings. "The children are the ones who experience the greatest problems, not we as parents." "The children suffer the most during transfers." "The children need a long time in order to learn to cope with the new situation." "Special

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<sup>1</sup>See p. 122 n. 1 above.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, II, 8-10.

hardships arise for the children during transfers." Although these comments may be justified in individual instances, they should not be generalized. Children often loudly express their feelings of the moment, but the lasting impressions are made upon their mother's feelings. However, most children have the ability to adjust quickly to new situations. In this way, the children's experiences can leave traces on the mother's emotional system, while the children themselves think little more about them at all. It is worth noting what R. G. Kemper writes about this:

People, even little people, have an incredible ability to cope, and you are likely to underestimate your children's ability to cope with new situations. When you actually do move, they will adjust to the new reality quicker and better than you will.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the interpersonal relationships which are affected more or less strongly by transfers, another burdensome circumstance must be mentioned. From year to year one's age increases, and from a certain point on, one's energy diminishes. No one can turn back the number of years. With increasing age "the inclination for a peaceful and sedentary life" becomes stronger, all the more so as infirmities often set in. At this time in life, transfers require "the last reserves of physical and mental powers" which the ministers' wives still possess. Difficulties of health, influenced by climatic conditions are also mentioned. These unavoidable burdens can be lessened through kindness and human understanding on the part of the administration and practical assistance by the congregation.

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<sup>1</sup>Kemper, p. 85.

One may sum up by saying that ministers' wives generally have more to bear in transfers than their husbands. Therefore, the minister must remain open to his wife's problems, in spite of his own burdens. She requires his loving devotion more than ever during the time of a transfer. The leaders of the church must maintain a close relationship to the ministers' families. Ministers' wives need the assurance that they are recognized as individuals, that their concerns are taken seriously, and that their feelings are taken into consideration in the planning of transfers. The ministers' wife, however, must realize that the causes of the problems can also be within herself. If she cannot bring herself to accept a transfer eventually, the danger is great that her problems will multiply. Through openness and human understanding on the part of all involved in transfers, the Bible text can be realized: "Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2).

Assessment of the Practice of Transfers and  
Recommendations for Their Improvement

Eighty percent of the ministers' wives participated in answering the question: "Please give your opinion about the positive and/or negative aspects of pastors' transfers."<sup>1</sup> It is striking that they evaluate less the policy itself but speak rather to the positive and negative aspects of the practice. An assessment of the practice indirectly resulted in the answers to the question: "What are your recommendations on how to implement ministers' transfers in such a way that tensions and problems can possibly be avoided

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, III, 1.

and the maximum benefit by gained for all persons involved?"<sup>1</sup> This question was discussed by 70 percent of the ministers' wives.

#### Assessment of Transfers by the Ministers' Wives

None of the ministers' wives were of the opinion that transfers are obsolete and superfluous. They rather ponder the positive and negative aspects which have resulted from transfers on their husbands' work, the development of their own personalities, the effect on their children, and the inward and outward growth of the congregations.

Transfers require the minister "to reflect on his work" and to consciously make corrections. New congregations set new requirements. In this way, latent talents are awakened and developed. Transfers "enliven and activate capabilities, give new impetus and prevent paralysis" in service. Every transfer offers the chance of a new, unencumbered beginning.

Twelve of the ministers' wives emphasized that transfers have positively influenced the development of their own characters and the unfolding of their personalities. "One becomes acquainted with new congregations and people, with their strengths and weaknesses." That necessitates "changing one's attitudes and making new adaptations." "I must learn to get along with all kinds of possible and impossible people." That keeps one flexible and serves character development. Changes in residences and congregations bring about "perspective and human understanding." One becomes more tolerant of other behavioral patterns and customs.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Wives, III, 2.

Whether transfers have a positive or negative effect, is also dependent on how the ministers' wives accept the challenges made by the new environment.<sup>1</sup> Adaptation from one congregation to another, and from one mentality to another, does not take place automatically and painlessly. After moving, one is at first "a stranger to whom everything is strange." To be sure, one is living in a new environment spatially, but one has not yet detached oneself from the old one. The emotional situation at this stage was summed up by one minister's wife with the two words: "homeless and alien." During this time, one "often draws comparisons to what was better before," and then becomes dissatisfied and depressed. But this is not the time to give in to one's emotions, rather it is a time to build new bridges. This task must be begun consciously; it is like a voyage of discovery. He who is open to the new environment and the different field soon discovers their beauties. He who devotes himself to people inside and outside of the congregation, soon experiences that they will devote themselves to him. He who loves, is loved in return.

Surprisingly, the ministers' wives scarcely recognize that transfers offer the same change for their children as for themselves. With one exception, they all negatively evaluate the change of of places and schools with regard to their children. Transfers "do not have a good effect on the total development of the children."

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<sup>1</sup>How much the breadth of experience is dependent upon each wife's type of character can be exemplified by two contrasting attitudes: "Each and every transfer brings me joy, since I like to move around the become acquainted with something new." "Each and every transfer brings me problems, carries me to the extremities of my physical and mental capacity."



However, whether changes in residence and schools have only a negative effect remains an open question.<sup>1</sup>

The ministers' wives evaluate transfers as positive for the life of the congregation: "On the basis of his talents and nature a minister cannot reach and satisfy all of the members." "Each and every minister contributes to the building up of the particular congregation with his gifts and capabilities." "Transfers prevent congregations from becoming one-sided." Church members are protected from "becoming too attached to human beings." The danger of forming cliques is minimized. Too frequent transfers, however, never further the winning of souls, nor "the building up of the church; they only cause mistrust and anger." The personal missionary contacts made by the former minister and his family cannot be simply transferred to the following minister and his family. On the other hand, through transfers "some souls are lead to decisions for Christ who had not been reached by the predecessor."

Ten ministers' wives put the financial expenditure during transfers on the debit side of their evaluations. Their concerns are about the money spent by the SDA Church for moving as well as their own costs. The latter exceed "immensely the granted moving allowance," not to mention that "the furniture suffers greatly during each move." The administration should "consider transfers also from the principle of economy." "Often the question has embarrassed me whether the money spent for moving could not have better been used for other services." Questions of this kind

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<sup>1</sup>See pp. 175-178 below.

presumably arise in ministers' families and congregations when the reasons for a transfer have not been fully explained and the necessary insight is lacking. On the other hand, the allusion to managing church money more responsibly is fully justified.

The different evaluations of the transfer practice at times seem contradictory, depending upon the experiences and nature of each minister's wife: "The policy as practiced is acceptable." "The leaders make an effort to accommodate the personal wishes of the ministers' families." Transfers occur "too frequently, too spontaneously, and too haphazardly." "I agree that the decision of place is not left up to us." "Transfers should not be planned as a one-way street, namely, coming only from the administration." One minister's wife summed up the positive and negative sides of transfers in the following sentence: "Transfers repeatedly make it clear to us that we are only guests here on earth."

#### Recommendations for the Improvement of the Transfer Practice

In contrast to the ministers, the wives do not emphasize the technical aspects of the planning and the implementation of the transfers. Rather, their thoughts concentrate more on the interpersonal relationships of all the persons concerned. The majority of the wives would like a much closer relationship between the administration and the ministers' families, and a more careful consideration for the justified wishes and needs of the members of the family. They frequently expressed the desire that more attention be devoted to the housing situation. During transfers, all of those involved should mutually aid and assist one another so that the

family quickly has a home again. Nowhere are the answers so identical for ministers' wives as in this part of the Questionnaire.

1. With one accord they emphasize the importance of the conference president maintaining close contact with the minister's family in order to be informed of the important circumstances in the family (i.e., the children's ages, the school situation, vocational choices, and the condition of health of the various members of the family). An approaching transfers must "be discussed with the minister's family sufficiently in advance." No place is more suitable to do so than the minister's home. This meeting must not take place under any pressure of time so "all of the views can be openly discussed with one another."<sup>1</sup> The facts about the new field must also be discussed "so that disappointments or overtaxing demands may be avoided." "A transfer whereby the family is not consulted but only assigned is unloving and not in accordance with the Spirit of the Gospel." The principle which is so decisive for family relations is also valid for the relationship between the administration and the minister's family, namely, "to speak with one another, to support one another, and to share all the problems."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The following impression was rendered by the wife of a minister who has been serving over twenty-five years: "I find the secrecy surrounding transfers to be not very clever. Should one not be able to discuss openly all the problems and anxieties with those concerned? Unfortunately one often has the impression the decision is made for the ministers' families and they are expected to merely comply. A lot of tension results from this rather unbrotherly attitude. Perhaps the lack of time plays a role with the Church leaders, however, that is no excuse for it. Whenever I am convinced of the necessity of moving, then I also take sacrifices for granted and remain joyful in my work."

<sup>2</sup>The wife of one minister of over ten years of service wrote

2. In this discussion the president should "explain the circumstances leading to the concrete plans for a transfer as far as it is possible for him to do so." "All cards should be laid open on the table at this time." Ministers' families consider themselves part of God's work and would therefore appreciate participating in the needs and concerns of the Church as a whole.<sup>1</sup> Ministers' wives must have the opportunity of expressing their thoughts and ideas. "Please, listen to personal requests and take them seriously." Plans for transfer should not originate only in the Union Committee. "Is not a veteran minister better able to assess his own capabilities than a committee most of whose members do not even know him personally?" Therefore, ministers' families should also have the freedom of applying for a transfer themselves. Requests for transfer from ministers' families deserve to be taken just as seriously by the Union Committee<sup>2</sup> as transfer plans that originate in the Union Committee deserve to be prayerfully considered by the ministers' families.

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the following: "Perhaps my attitude to our present position would be more positive if only once I had been asked what I thought of a certain area and whether I was ready to go there. To whom should a minister's wife express her doubt and cares when it is not possible to do this through the proper channels?"

<sup>1</sup>Another minister's wife repeats a department leader's parable: "The ministry is like the crew of a ship. The president is the captain and supervises all of the others. The ministers are the stokers in the ship; they only notice when the ship rolls, but do not know the reason why. Only the captain and his officers know that. I consider this attitude to be false. True, we are all in one boat, but it is a rowboat." This picture of the steamship is badly chosen and doesn't correspond to the concept of the church in the New Testament.

<sup>2</sup>The wife of a younger minister has made a suggestion worthy of note: "On the Union Board there should also be a minister's wife who has already moved with children several times."

3. Transfers should not "result systematically according to the number of years" in which a minister has already served in one position.<sup>1</sup> More important than the number of years are "the needs and necessities of the congregation as well as the aptitudes of the ministers." Talents are not developed when ministers are merely transferred from one district to another of the same size and structure. The change from small congregations to larger ones and vice versa benefits both the ministers and the congregations. Even without being asked, eleven wives ventured to mention the number of years they considered suitable for an effective work in the congregation. It corresponds closely to the number of years suggested by the administrators and the ministers,<sup>2</sup> namely, an average of eight to ten years for ordained ministers.

4. Individually certain requests are mentioned which are completely understandable. Moving should not take place during pregnancies. Whenever possible, no transfer should occur with a baby still being breast-fed. A change after the first grade is also detrimental. Transfers should not take place as long as children are attending the eighth through tenth grades. Children should be able to complete the vocational course already started without any further interrupting it. Each of these wishes is justified; but only very few can be realized everytime. The wife of one minister stated realistically: "All of the wishes can never be fulfilled." In

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<sup>1</sup>The wife of one minister quoted the remark of one "authoritative brother" of the Union Board: "You are being transferred merely because the time for it has arrived."

<sup>2</sup>See pp. 87 and 132 above.

difficult family situations, however, a comforting word, brotherly understanding, and sincere sympathy should never be lacking.

5. Over and over again the ministers' wives make the request that necessary improvements be undertaken in the apartments. Where constructive renovations are possible, means should be invested in order to bring the apartment up to the level of present housing standards. "I have never dared to request something for our apartment," confessed the wife of one minister. Further hardships arise when after moving, one room after another has to be renovated and everything is topsy-turvy for weeks, sometimes for months, because of it. "It would be ideal if one could move into a finished apartment. Only the hardship of moving would remain then." Refreshing is the suggestion of the wife of one young minister. During his four-year course of study at Friedensau Theological Seminary, every student should also learn house-painting and wall-papering as part of his practical vocational work. This should also include plumbing and other handy-man trades. "I would view it as a great help, if members of the 'building brigades' could be put into action in the renovation of ministers' dwellings." Most ministers' wives are gifted with practicality. They have submitted, therefore, a whole series of practical suggestions. In individual cases much could probably be changed in order to make moving easier. But that requires some new ideas and new approaches to the practice of transfers.

In order to reduce the hardships of transfers as much as possible, the administration and the ministers' families must each contribute their share. If the Union Committee would keep the

concern for the well-being of the congregations and that of the ministers' families equally in mind, and the ministers' families would prayerfully examine whether their wishes really correspond to God's will or arise merely from selfish motives, then transfers could become a blessing to the congregations and the ministers' families alike. It is crucial that God's will is done in the lives of the ministers' families, even in transfers.

## CHAPTER VI

### TRANSFERS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE MINISTERS' CHILDREN

#### Questionnaires as the Basis of Research

The responses of the ministers and their wives clearly show that transfers interfere with the lives of their children in many ways. Still to be answered, therefore, is the question, How do the children themselves experience these transfers? In order to answer this question, questionnaires<sup>1</sup> were sent to forty-five ministers' children, eighteen years of age or older, and of both sexes. Thirty-four of these children (76 percent) participated by answering the questionnaires. The children's written responses are, with few exceptions, uncomplicated, natural, and candid.

The evaluation of the questionnaire is somewhat difficult as the children experienced the transfers at different ages. At different stages in their development children react differently to changes in and interference with the routine in their lives. Another mitigating factor is that persons over eighteen are looking at experiences which go back into the earlier stages of their development which they have already left behind. The opinions reflect emotional experiences in childhood and puberty which have more or

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Children.



less been worked out according to the maturity of each individual.

How transfers affect the child's life and development is greatly dependent on the child's mental condition, on the climate in the family, on the child's role in the family, and on the child's bonds with teachers, friends, and other persons who influence and form part of his/her life. There are many factors not included here which yet are decisive in determining how children experience and cope with transfers. In spite of these limitations, it is possible to gain various insights by use of the questionnaires.

#### Effects on the Child's World of Emotions

One question asked: "Were transfers happy or depressing events for you?" This was answered positively twenty times and negatively twenty-one times. These data have been further differentiated in the written explanations. Nine children mention only stressful experiences, eight others talk only about enjoyable experiences, whereas seventeen admit both aspects.

The enjoyable impressions occur briefly before puberty. Foremost is the expectation of something new, "the joyful anticipation of the unknown." To many children transfers are "great events" which are like "adventures": packing the furniture, moving-day with its confusion, unpacking in the new apartment, the journeys of exploration in the new neighborhood, everything "exerts an extraordinary stimulus." To be sure, parting from friends, things, and places is very difficult. But the joy of being able to experience something new outweighs all that. "A child easily finds new friends in the new neighborhood."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Children, II, 1-3.

What brought joy to some caused anxieties in other children. The confusion of moving, fear of the unknown and the strange new neighborhood awakened new anxieties. When, in addition, the child also has to go through the experience of acceptance in the school and in the neighborhood, inner tensions and emotional conflicts arise.

Children between thirteen and sixteen years of age experience transfers quite differently. At this stage emotional relationships with friends in the peer group often develop. In search for his/her own identity, the adolescent develops friendships which are very meaningful. The loss of this circle of friends and the uncertainty with regard to school and vocational problems in the new neighborhood cause transfers to become depressing experiences in this age group especially. This can go so far that children turn against the transfer. The relationship to their parents becomes severely strained and some begin to reject the father's profession. Decisive for children at this point is the parents own positive attitude toward a transfer in order to help them to cope with their worries and anxieties. "Whenever my parents joyfully looked forward to a transfer I was infected by their joy." This attitude starts with the manner in which the parents inform their children of the notice of transfer. When they "incidentally hear about an impending transfer from their mother" and "father never explains" to them "why ministers are transferred," they feel that there is no point of departure for them to cope with their distress, large or small.

The parents' love for their children has made many of them quite creative in preparing their children for the impending

transfer. Some comments are: "When we were all sitting together in the evening, our father told us where we were being transferred. We were as full of anticipation as on Christmas Eve." "Father asked us children where we would like to be transferred." "My father always made it exciting. He had us guess the towns where he would be transferred." "Together we studied the atlas, the plan of the new apartment, and then placed our furniture in our own rooms on the plan." Such hours bring the family firmly together. Parents should be open to the questions and hidden anxieties of their children. An encouraging word can do so much to help to overcome the difficulties which arise through transfers.

Eight children mentioned a problem that is characteristic of certain areas of the German-speaking countries and which adults easily overlook. In the GDR, like in many other countries, different dialects are spoken. Children in the neighborhood or in school often accept only those who speak the native dialect. The children of some ministers have been rejected by the other children in the new neighborhood because of their dialects, which leads to emotional distress. One voice speaks for all of those who have suffered this kind of distress:

I had great difficulty with my language. I had learned to speak in the Erz Mountains and therefore spoke the Erz Mountain dialect. I was naturally made fun of in the school in Thuringia because of this, and so became quite inhibited. It was simply too difficult to adjust to the slang of the children of Thuringia. When we later moved to Leipzig in Saxony, I had many advantages, however, because of my speech. Later I was told that they first thought that I had wanted to be superior because I spoke such correct German.

Effects on School and Vocation

## Effects on School Activities

The uniform educational system of the GDR guarantees that the same curriculum is binding on all classes of the polytechnic high schools. In this way, students can rather smoothly fit in after a change of schools. That, however, does not exclude the fact that the achievement level of individual schools and classes can be quite different. Table 22 indicates that ministers' children do face problems in school as a result of transfers in spite of this favorable educational condition.

TABLE 22

EFFECTS OF TRANSFER ON SCHOOL ACTIVITIES  
AS PERCEIVED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

	Positive	Negative	No Effect at All
Relationship to fellow students	7	9	17
Academic achievement	5	9	21

Every change of school means that the child has to leave the fellowship of one class and integrate into a new one. How quickly this process takes place depends on the teacher and the class as a whole, as well as on the child's ability to make new contacts. According to some ministers' children, the change of schools was "the most problematic part of the transfers." A shy and inhibited child has difficulties in "being accepted into an already established group." "I felt like a stranger in the new class." "I needed over

a year in order to adjust to the new teachers and students." "I was continually laughed at because of my philosophy of life and my father's profession." "My classmates had already beaten me up in the first week and made fun of me in a very mean way." The reported loss of academic achievement for this group was between 0.3 and 1.0 grade points.

In contrast with these negative experiences were just as many positive ones. These, too, depend very much on the conditions in the new class and on the child's own character. Some commented: "I never had any difficulties making new contacts." "I was pleasantly surprised by the behavior of my new classmates." "The teachers made my start in the new class very easy for me." "I came into a class with a good atmosphere. I was readily accepted." None of these minister's children reported any loss in academic achievement. Some of them even experienced a stimulating influence on their studies as a result of the change. "As a newcomer in the class, I exerted myself more and achieved better grades than I had in the other school."

Besides these two groups there is a larger number of children who were able to adjust themselves to the new situation quite readily after solving different kinds of problems and difficulties at the beginning, and who were accepted by the class without suffering any changes in academic achievement.

#### Effects on the Childrens' Keeping the Sabbath

The Educational Law of the GDR<sup>1</sup> states that instruction at the polytechnic high school is to take place six days a week (Monday

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<sup>1</sup>Law-code of the GDR, Berlin, Nov. 27, 1967, Part II, No. 111,

through Saturday). For SDAs the biblical Sabbath is the seventh day of the week, the day of rest established by God.<sup>1</sup> They are obligated by the word of God and His Commanement in their consciences to keep this day holy. On Sabbath, Adventist parents wish to worship their Creator and Redeemer in church together with their children. The constitution of the GDR guarantees the freedom of religion and conscience to every citizen.<sup>2</sup> Since compulsory education also includes every Saturday, Adventist parents have to make special arrangements with each school principal individually. They ask for his understanding when they cannot allow their child to attend school on Saturdays for conscientious reasons in order to live out their faith.

The children's school education is based on the Marxist-Leninist (i.e., atheistic) philosophy of life. This leads, of course, to confrontations and, in fact, to conflicts between the school and the Adventist home.

Seventeen children answered "no" to the question whether they had encountered any difficulties concerning the Sabbath through

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Regulation for the establishment of order in the General Education Schools; School Regulation of October 20, 1967 8: "(1) The schedule of classes requires the distribution of the instruction periods of the different grades on six days a week."

<sup>1</sup>Gen 2:1-3; Exod 20:8-11; Matt 24:20; Mark 2:27, 28.

<sup>2</sup>Constitution of the GDR, April 6, 1968, in the Revised and Extended Version of the constitution of the GDR, Oct. 7, 1974, Article 39: "(1) Every citizen of the GDR has the right to confess a religious belief and to practice its activities. (2) The churches and other religious groups order their affairs, and practice their activities in compliance with the constitution and the laws of the GDR. Particulars can be arranged by mutual agreement."

transfers,<sup>1</sup> fourteen answered "yes," while nine pointed out that a change of schools had actually helped to solve their problem.

The children's answers reflect these actual situations brought about by the transfers:

1. Where an agreement concerning the Sabbath had been possible in the former school, tension developed in the new school, causing parents to send their children to school on Sabbath. In some cases, a compromise was found, allowing the child to attend church on special occasions or once a month. In both situations parents were burdened with guilt which weighed heavily on their conscience.

2. Sabbath difficulties that had led to considerable tensions in the previous school were solved by a transfer. "In the new school we had no difficulties at all. The administration was very accommodating."

3. The agreement between the former school and the parents granting the child exemption from attending school on Sabbath was also accepted by the new school. "In the new school, Adventist children were known as good students. Therefore, the way had been made easier for me." Several times, the ministers' children emphasized this tolerant attitude on the part of the principal and the teachers concerning this issue of the Adventist conscience.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Children, II, 5.

## Effects on the Children's Vocational Plans

In answer to the question, "Did transfers hamper the realization of a possible vocational career?"<sup>1</sup> Four children answered "yes" and thirty answered "no." However, it must be mentioned here that fourteen children experienced transfers at an age which was still unimportant for vocational decisions. However, a total of twenty children were involved in transfers when they were in the eighth to tenth grades, a time when decisions must be made about their professional career. Because of the transfers at this time, four children were not able to follow their vocational choices. However, new possibilities were offered in the new locale. Interestingly enough, sixteen children were able to follow their vocational intentions in spite of transfers at a time unfavorable for vocational planning.<sup>2</sup>

Comments written by children concerning their experiences show how positive solutions to the vocational problems can be handled: "When I started the tenth grade my father fortunately learned about his transfer one year in advance. We immediately drove to the new town and found a position as apprentice for me."

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Children, II, 6.

<sup>2</sup>In the eighth grade a child must begin to decide which vocation he or she wants to pursue. State vocational counseling centers help the parents and children with this decision. The vocational plans of the children can be limited by the economical-industrial structure of each area concerned and the need for trained workers in the different vocational groups as planned and directed by the State. At the beginning of the ninth grade the decision must be made and a position for the child as apprentice must be sought and agreed upon with the company in the course of the school-year. In this way the child is assured that it can begin its vocational education at the end of the tenth grade.



"I had to choose my vocation and accept a position as apprentice already in the ninth grade. We would be transferred at the end of the tenth grade. My parents consulted with the department of Vocational Education in the new town and asked about the available openings as apprentice and the possible educational facilities there. My application was accepted, even though we still lived in the first town." "The transfer came just as I was ending my first year of apprenticeship. A change in the vocational school and apprenticeship was possible."

#### Effects on the Family

Nothing is more necessary for children than "nest warmth" and security. The parents' loving devotion and the knowledge of being unconditionally accepted by them are prerequisites for developing a well-balanced personality. A harmonious family life, based on a healthy and God-fearing marriage, gives a child an inner wealth which nourishes it throughout its whole life. Especially in extraordinary circumstances does the sustaining power of a happy family life prove itself.

Table 23 provides us with an unambiguous picture that as perceived by the children transfers have not negatively influenced the family relationships. The difficulties the children experienced because of transfers have been absorbed by a healthy atmosphere in the family.

TABLE 23

EFFECTS OF TRANSFERS ON FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS  
AS PERCEIVED BY YOUNG PEOPLE

Relationship	Positive	Negative	No Effect at All
To the father	2	4	29
To the mother	2	1	31
To siblings	6	-	26

The children's data corroborate those of their fathers and mothers.<sup>1</sup> Since the majority of the children have experienced no negative effect in their relationships to their parents and siblings, one can hardly expect any further written explanation about this matter. Only ten children, therefore, supplied comments on the statistical data. Foremost among the negative effects was the alienation between father and son because of the father's new responsibilities and the fact that "the family life increasingly took place without him." "Tensions increased after the transfer. Father was seldom at home. He gradually lost his influence on me." A positive effect was that the bonds among siblings became stronger. "We understand each other better since the last move." "I developed a splendid relationship with my brother after the transfer." "A real feeling of togetherness has grown between us."

The responses to the question whether the climate in the family had changed for some time<sup>2</sup> are as follows: seven positive,

<sup>1</sup>See tables 11 and 19 above.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaires for Pastors' Children, II, 8.

fifteen negative, and eighteen no change at all. The written comments show which experiences have impressed the children the most. Things parents quickly forget often produce long after-effects in the child's life. Consider these comments: "My parents were often upset. They scolded us a lot and were unjust in their punishment." "A good atmosphere was often lacking." A strained atmosphere and nervous tensions at times led to "sparks" in the form of "differences of opinion and quarrels." When one girl wrote concerning family tensions that she would not like to marry a minister because of the transfers, it should give all parents food for thought and make them conscious of their responsibilities to their children.

Positive experiences have also left their lasting impressions. Among these, above all, are "the joint planning, furnishing, and arranging of the new home." "Just when everything was topsy-turvy we especially stuck together." "Everyone was involved and helped with everything." "We stick together as a family. Difficulties are overcome together." Genuine joy and a just pride of the identity and integrity of the families concerned are reflected in such comments.<sup>1</sup>

#### Effects on the Spiritual Life

The personal relationship which a father and a mother have with Christ decisively influences the spiritual development of the child. The parents' living faith provides the nourishment for the prospering of a child's spiritual life. Just as the child grows in its mother's womb, so does also a spiritual life first grow in

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<sup>1</sup> Compare with wives comments pp. 155 and 156 above.

secret and as part of the parents' life of faith. During puberty, then, the child becomes aware of his or her own spiritual life. It separates itself from its parents' spiritual life, becomes independent, and makes its first decision for Christ.

Table 24 offers us an overview of the assessment of the effects of transfers on their spiritual lives in childhood as perceived by the young people. Twenty of them expressed themselves rather freely about the effects of a change in place and congregation.<sup>1</sup> The comments are mainly from children who experienced transfers during puberty.<sup>2</sup>

TABLE 24

EFFECTS OF TRANSFERS ON SPIRITUAL LIFE  
AS PERCEIVED BY THE YOUNG PEOPLE

Area of Spiritual Life	Positive	Negative	No Effect at All
Personal prayer	8	7	23
God's Word	70	7	27
Family worship	3	3	25
Attitude to father's work	3	5	23
Attitude to the SDA Church	6	5	20

Ten children mentioned that the change from one congregation to another had really strengthened their spiritual growth. The good

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Children, II, 10.

<sup>2</sup>When twenty young people discuss their spiritual lives openly and candidly, we can conclude that it is easier for them to talk about their own spiritual lives than for adults. Only 43 percent of the fathers and mothers expressed themselves openly about their spiritual lives (cf. p. 181).

influence of the new congregation, the new youth group, new friendships, new responsibilities in the church, the open exchange of ideas about questions of faith, all of these furthered prayer-life and joy in God's Word. The worries and burdens in transfers led to a more personal prayer-life and strengthened family worship. "We were continually experiencing how God heard and answered our prayers." The change of place also helped them in living out their faith more consistently.<sup>1</sup>

The attitude toward the father's work and the SDA church has indeed been negatively influenced through transfers with some of the children. The reasons for this are conflicts in the new school, not being able to follow the chosen vocation in the new town, and the fact that transfers "had been planned too quickly and we were informed too late."<sup>2</sup> "The numerous transfers have prevented me from seriously considering becoming a minister up to now."

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<sup>1</sup>One youth mentions here: "The last transfer separated me from a class which was influenced by a few spoiled students. My fellowship with them prevented me from living out my faith consistently (tobacco, dirty jokes, etc.). The class I entered after the transfer was, to be sure, no better, but I was better able to witness to my faith and remain true to my convictions from the beginning."

<sup>2</sup>One youth judged from his perspective: "A factory does not first plan in March what should be produced in July, but at least one year in advance. I think the administrators of the Church take the easy way out. A minister is not the only one who has to change his apartment, congregation, and place of labor. The other members of his family have to look for new job positions as well, and companies must plan for replacements for the positions left vacant because of transfers."

An Evaluation of the Transfers and  
Suggestions for Improvement

How Ministers' Children Evaluate  
Transfers in Retrospect

Eighty-five percent of the ministers' children expressed an opinion to the question: "How do you evaluate today the experiences and events caused by your father's transfers?"<sup>1</sup> Fifteen of them responded positively; three of them totally negatively, while eleven weighed both sides.

Emphasized in the positive opinions is the fact that transfers widen horizons. One becomes acquainted with different cities, different geographical areas with their beauties, and different peoples with their ways of life. The interpersonal relationships in the different location enrich one's life and leave lasting impressions. One has an advantage over other children of the same age, in that one learns to overcome difficulties and to adjust oneself, to become independent more quickly and more careful in passing judgment. One also learns to cope with the world, to succeed in school and one's vocation, and thus to acquire the capability of separating oneself from those of which one has grown fond. The life of faith is enriched and deepened by experiences of announced prayer. "In looking back now, I can only say transfers have had a positive effect on my whole development."

In contrast, others emphasize that transfers at decisive moments have interrupted their spiritual growth and have hindered their development. "One cannot develop any feeling of security."

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Pastors' Children, III, 1.

He who has always lived in one place "is better off." "For me, the transfer with all its adjustments was a bitter experience."

Those weighing both the advantages and disadvantages came to the conclusion that transfers help one's own personal development and are also necessary for the father's profession as well as for the congregation. "In spite of the burdens of moving, my childhood and youth were very nice." "Transfers were profitable both in a positive and a negative sense." "I owe it to my parents' solid faith that transfers have had no negative results for me. They accepted every transfer from the Hand of God, even when it didn't appear very promising."

#### Suggestions Made by the Ministers' Children for Improving the Practice of Transfers

Understandably, the children's suggestions can only be based on the experiences they have had in their childhood and youth in relation to moving, school, and vocation. Their reflections concentrated on the question as to at which age transfers should be avoided at all costs. They all agree on the ninth and tenth grades and during the time of their vocational education. Some consider consecutive attendance at the same school necessary during the first three years as well.

It was also suggested that transfers be planned and discussed with the ministers' wives "as they also serve in the congregation." Some suggested older children should also be included in the discussions of transfers, so that they, too, would be able to express their concerns and ideas. After all, they too, belong to the family, which is being transferred as a whole. One new thought is "that the

children should also receive a letter from the conference president" encouraging them to cheerfully move and help. They should also be thanked for willingly accepting the burdens and disadvantages of the transfer.

Many express their desire to so organize the moving that one "doesn't have to sit on and live out of packing crates for weeks or even months on end" because the whole apartment still has to be renovated after the move. They feel that many family tensions could be reduced in this way. In conclusion, one minister's child formulated it this way: "One wishes many things could be done better. But I know that this is not always possible."

The parents and the administrators of the SDA Church should work hand in hand so that the children do not suffer any damage to the development of their personalities and their faith. They must take the children's worries and concerns seriously, consider their needs, and help them to cope with them. God's word tells us about the responsibility of adults to children (Matt 18:5, 6) as well as about God's special care over them: "For I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt 18:10). Parents may hold fast to this promise in times of their children's crises.



## CHAPTER VII

### TRANSFERS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE HEAD ELDER

#### Questionnaires as the Basis of the Research

The minister and his family are actively involved in the process of transfers; the congregation experiences the transfers passively. Ministers go from one congregation to another; the congregation itself remains where it is. Ministers are able to leave their problems behind them when they are transferred; the congregation, however, must continue to deal with them. Again and again the congregation has to break off the developed relations with the minister and his family and adjust to the new minister. The same is true for the leaders in the congregation and especially for the head elder. Transfers are therefore no internal matter which can be dealt with by ministers only. The voice of the congregation<sup>1</sup> as the Body of Christ must be heard. Transfers are only meaningful as long as they serve the congregation and its internal and external growth.

In order to learn what the congregation has to say about transfers, questionnaires were sent to thirty head elders as the

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<sup>1</sup>By congregation is meant the local church which in its particular geographical area represents the whole Church of Christ.

as the representatives of the congregations.<sup>1</sup> The choice of head elders was made according to the size of the congregations so that the voice of small, medium, and large congregations could be heard. Twenty-nine head elders (97 percent) filled out and returned the questionnaires. This very high rate of participation is very remarkable, and so is the fact that most of them responded with elaborate detail even, at times, attaching supplementary sheets.

Some head elders rightly pointed out that the questions could only be answered subjectively. There are not objective criteria for "spiritual growth," "pastoral care," and "adjustment to the new challenges."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, each minister is different, with different talents and gifts; each ministers' family forms a unique organism; each congregation has its own structure and atmosphere; and the head elder himself, is also influenced by his own individual character traits.

Table 25 shows how long the head elders have been serving in their congregations and how many of them are ordained.<sup>3</sup> The average of their years of service is fourteen. Most of the head elders have therefore carried their responsibilities in their congregations considerably longer than the ministers serve in one congregation (see pp. 84-87 above). Therefore, the opinions of

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Church Elders.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Church Elders, II, 2, 3.

<sup>3</sup>The relatively large number of unordained elders would seem to indicate that conference presidents should encourage ministers and congregations to ordain trustworthy elders regardless of the size of the congregation.

experienced head elders give a representative cross-section.

TABLE 25  
YEARS OF SERVICE OF THE HEAD ELDERS

Years of Service	Number of Head Elders	Ordained	
		Yes	No
1-5	4	1	3
6-10	8	3	5
11-15	6	2	4
16-20	4	2	2
21-25	3	3	-
26-30	4	2	2
	29	13	16

Effects of Transfers on the Work  
of the Head Elder

Half of the head elders emphasize that transfers themselves do not have any influence on their service. They serve the congregation regardless of who the minister is at any given time. Of course, the minister and his family can make the head elder's work easier or more difficult.

Each transfer starts with a process of adjustment between the head elder and the minister. How quickly this is achieved depends on the capabilities of both to adjust. When the minister and the head elder work together, their individual traits of character, their character development, mentality, spiritual conviction, and maturity mutually influence one another.

Transfers usually mean that the head elder has to invest

more of his time. Extra dialogue, counseling, and discussion are necessary to fill in the minister on the life of the congregation. This personal exchange of ideas between the minister and the head elder promotes the process of getting acquainted and enables the head elder to gain "new aspects and insights" which then help to make his service more fruitful. It is very important for the head elder that the minister together with his family is spiritually effective, serves the congregation unselfishly, and is fully devoted to the winning of souls to Christ. Trust, openness, and brotherly love should characterize their relationship.

Additional burdens are laid upon the shoulders of the head elders of small congregations when young and inexperienced ministers are transferred at short intervals. These young men usually come with "new plans and strong ideas" which often are not suitable to the life and circumstances in the congregation. Tensions arise when the ministers disregard the head elder's advice or when differences in the understanding of the Word and in opinions with regard to the mission of the SDA church become evident. The "polarity of personalities" can also lead to misunderstandings and tensions.

Twenty of the head elders praise the fact that all of the ministers have sought a close working relationship with them after their transfers, knowing full well "that congregations can only grow by working closely together." "Nothing can be accomplished by each one going his own way," whether it is the head elder or the minister. Nine of the head elders testified, though, that ministers have cultivated this working relationship only "more or less." In some cases no wholesome working relationship has been achieved; only

a fruitless co-existence which took away much of the joy in service.

Effects on the Congregation and Its Growth

The head elders' responses to the question as to how transfers have effected the pastoral and missionary activities<sup>1</sup> reflect various and different experiences. In the smaller congregations, transfers in general have a positive effect on the pastoral care aspect of ministry. Shortly after his transfer, the minister personally visits all the members in their homes. These visits in the home help to establish a relationship of trust necessary to effective pastoral care. In the larger congregations, however, evangelism is usually the first order of business, leaving the minister very little time for pastoral care. Some in the larger congregations complain, therefore, about a lack of pastoral care after transfers. Very important in this regard is the value the minister himself places on the pastoral care of the congregation.

According to the head elders, transfers at first lead to a period of stagnation in the winning of souls. In the first phase of his service, the new minister is concerned with "building new bridges," "seeking and establishing new contacts," and picking up the existing missionary contacts of his predecessor. The elders complain that this process of the "handing over" contacts is not done carefully enough. How long this first phase lasts depends "to a large extent on the minister's personality," "on his interest and his ability to identify." In the second phase, new decisions for baptism begin to develop. Since each minister has different gifts

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Head Elders, II, 2.

and abilities, each is also able to reach different groups of people. This can have a positive as well as a negative effect.

The head elders' comments corroborate to a large extent the self-understanding of ministers themselves (see pp. 113-117). The members of the congregation consider the minister to be the official expert in the winning of souls. Only one head elder stated that the congregation as a whole is responsible for the missionary commission.<sup>1</sup>

Some of the head elders saw no relationship between spiritual growth in the congregation and transfers. Others emphasize that a transfer is positively effective only when the new minister possesses the ability to preach God's Word in a living and practical way. They also stressed that the spiritual growth of the congregation is closely interwoven with the spiritual attitude of the minister and his family. "If the minister himself has any difficulties with the basic Biblical beliefs, he will not be in a position to lead the congregation to obedience and surrender." Finally, only the minister can promote the spiritual life in his sphere of influence who is himself preaching and living the unabridged message of our time.

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<sup>1</sup>A congregation which understands its mission to the world and acts in accordance with its spiritual gifts can itself build bridges, make new contacts and seek to draw souls into the sphere of influence of Jesus' Love. The more a congregation realizes and implements its missionary calling, the more independent it becomes of the minister in the saving of souls. Then the negative effects of transfers on the missionary activities of the church are eliminated. Transfers would then give the church new impulses for a better fulfillment of its mission. A lack of talents can be overcome, "but not a lack of dedicated and of a positive attitude to the Advent Message."

Since the gifts of pastoral counseling, preaching, and making missionary contacts are distinctly different from minister to minister, each transfer affects congregations in a different way. "Among the ministers there are good preachers and organizers, talented pastoral counselors and theoreticians, outgoing persons as well as shy individualists. And congregations, too consist of a sum of distinctly different individuals." Depending on the conditions and combinations of relationships in a particular congregation, and on the capabilities and peculiarities of the minister, transfers can effectively either further or hinder the pastoral counseling, soulwinning, and spiritual growth of the congregation in comparison with the service of the preceding minister.

Ten head elders have noticed no change in the work of the minister in the months before a transfer.<sup>1</sup> "All of the ministers have worked consistently in all areas of church activities up to shortly before their transfer." "The necessary preparation for handing over the work to the successor had been taken care of." Eighteen of the head elders recorded, however, that the impending transfer did cast its shadow on the minister's service. Orientation into the new field of labor influenced the work of the minister consciously as well as unconsciously. That which had to be done in the congregation was done, for sure, but no new initiatives were taken. Concern for the future work caused a "braking," "restricting," and "laming" effect on the life of the congregation, especially when the minister's family problems overshadowed the transfer or "an

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Head Elders, II, 4.

improvement in the family's own living conditions came to the fore."

An Evaluation of Transfers and Their Practice

The Basic Attitude to Transfers

All of the head elders agree in principle that the congregations should change ministers from time to time. "Transfers are absolutely necessary." The congregation's gain is greater than the price it has to pay for them (the loss of missionary and pastoral continuity). A congregation would be in bad shape if it were influenced by only one minister for decades. No minister would like to work in only one church after his ordination. Transfers are to be "compared with the pruning of trees. Superficially seen, they appear to bring disadvantages, but in the course of time they have an extremely advantageous effect, when they are expertly handled." The advantages and disadvantages cited by the head elders corroborate those listed by the ministers (see pp. 126-128 above).

The head elders express their great appreciation for the ministers' families who are always ready to pull up stakes again and again in order to pitch their tent at another site. The "itinerant preachers" bring about a "strong feeling of togetherness" in the congregations. The ministers' families become acquainted with a lot of church members, and the congregations get to know a whole series of ministers' families. In this way, a "sense of community" is established and a consciousness created that the small and large congregations scattered all over the GDR really do form the Church of Christ together.



## Criticism of the Practice of Transfers

The criticism of the head elders is directed at the ministers' families as well as at the administration. If a transfer was connected with unpleasant experiences and caused discontentment, the minister's family should not allow their dissatisfaction to interfere with their service in the new congregation. The members of a church clearly sense when a minister is satisfied with his congregation and loves it. He should accept the congregation as it is, even when it falls short of his ideal. The congregation, too, must learn again and again to accept the minister for what he is, even when he does not quite fulfill its expectations. The minister should never use the congregation as a "guinea pig." Rather, he should recognize its needs and potentials and help it to mature "into a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph 4:73). The head elders know how much time is needed for renovating and furnishing the new home. They regret, however, that "some ministers invest too much time in this work and allow their service in the new congregation to suffer because of it."

Half of the head elders assess the practice of transfers positively. The administrators of the Church "make careful plans," attempt "to avoid hardships," and "try to comply with the wishes of the minister's family." Naturally, one cannot satisfy every minister even with the best of intentions. Transfers are based on years of experience. They take into account the characteristics of a particular congregation. The practice has proven to be beneficial and is therefore acceptable. However, it should be re-examined from time to time to find out whether it is relevant to the present

needs and necessities of the congregations and to the ministers' families.

The other half of the head elders mention that transfers are not free of "the appearance of irrationality and spontaneity." "They are all too often left to chance." Transfers are planned too short in advance and are often reactions to momentary difficulties. The rule of order followed by the Union Committee however, must include more long-term planning. Moreover, transfers occur "too administratively and centralized." They are planned and directed by too small a group of people. A "more discrete handling" could prevent "rumors and speculations" in the congregations. The practice of transfers has elicited "more discontentment than satisfaction" in the congregations in the past.

#### The Lack of Cooperation between the Administration and the Congregation

While personal experiences and opinions of the head elders were expressed in the evaluation of the practice of transfers, their more objective criticism centered on the relationship between the administration and the congregation. Fifteen head elders in particular elaborated on that issue. They mentioned that the congregations hardly know why ministers are being transferred. They have more or less adjusted themselves to the fact, but without knowing the reasons. The result is that those church members who have a close, warm relationship with their minister react rather emotionally when he is transferred. Since the Union Committee decides and plans the transfers, the people suspect the committee of making decisions in an "authoritarian manner."

In addition, quite often neither the head elder nor the church board have been officially informed of the transfer. Sometimes the head elder has been "incidentally" informed by the minister himself that he is to be transferred. The elders and church board also receive no information, neither by letter nor in a personal discussion, as to which minister they are to receive. One elder comments, "I nevertheless worry about who the new minister is, about his service, and his family, etc."

In presenting their point of view, the elders go one step further. They feel that it is not only good for the congregation to receive "proper" information [concerning a transfer], but that it is very "desirable"--some even saying it is "necessary." They believe that "the church board, or at least the elders, should be asked "whether the transfer is desirable for that congregation and that particular time." The transfer policies until the present neglect the voice of the congregation. One respondent admits that "surely listening to the board or to the elders would not make transfers any easier," but it would assure a "broader judgment from everyone's point of view."

These comments by the head elders disclose a lack of cooperation between the administration and the congregations. The objections raise the question as to whether the practice of transfers really corresponds to the biblical understanding of the Church. If the local church represents the Church of Christ at any given time, then its voice should be heard.<sup>1</sup> It is true that the SDA Church

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<sup>1</sup>One minister's wife reports on a discussion about transfers

Manual delegates to the conference committees the power to call and also to transfer ministers.<sup>1</sup> However, that should not infringe upon the responsibility of the congregation and its ability to judge. If the responsible executive committee would listen to the head elder's counsel and would include the opinion of the congregation, the mutual trust between the administration and the congregation could be strengthened and the responsibility for transfers would then be shared by the congregation. Many of the tensions and misunderstandings now caused by a lack of cooperation could be reduced. It is only when the practice of transfer is based on a truly biblical ecclesiology that God's blessing will come to all of the participants: the congregation, the minister and his family, and the administration.

Suggestions for the Improvement of the  
Practice of Transfers

Head elders and ministers<sup>2</sup> were asked the question how long they thought ordained and non-ordained ministers should work in one congregation to allow the minister to optimally fulfill his evangelistic activities and pastoral duties. The head elders were also requested to state the number of years after which a transfer should occur to the advantage of the congregation and of the

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with a church official. A congregation had expressed in writing its objections to an impending transfer. The official remarked, "What would become of us if we had to ask them [the congregation] too?"

<sup>1</sup>See p. 76 n. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Head Elders, III, 3; Questionnaire for Pastors, IV, 3.

minister.<sup>1</sup> Table 26 gives the average number of years.

TABLE 26

TIME INTERVALS BETWEEN TRANSFERS  
RECOMMENDED BY HEAD ELDERS

Number of Years Yielding Optimal Service Benefitting Congregation		Number of Years after Which a Transfer Is Recommended	
Head Elders Non-ordained	Head Elders Ordained	Head Elders Non-ordained	Head Elders Ordained
3.7	8.0	3.9	8.4

A comparison table 26 with table 15 indicates that the time periods given by the head elders are a little shorter than those given by the ministers. However, they greatly exceed the averages of the past decades (see table 5) and corresponds to the suggestions made by the members of the Union Committee (see p. 86 above).

Many of the head elders further explained their suggestions. They stressed that the number of years should be taken as averages and not be used "schematically." While the time factor should not be primary in determining transfers, they become necessary when a minister "has spent himself in the service to his congregation" and when "his capabilities and limitations no longer allow him to stimulate the growth of the congregation." For one minister this may happen after six years; for another, after twelve years. Preconditions for a longer period of service in one congregation are

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Appendix, Questionnaire for Head Elders, III, 4.

"being on good terms with the congregation and having a relationship of trust based on mutual love." If this basis is lacking, then a change after a shorter period of time is necessary for the minister's own good as well as that of the congregation.

Some of the head elders in whose congregations a minister had remained ten years indicate that "the minister's friendship with a few church members" and "the formation of cliques" became burdensome to the congregation. They also feel that two pastors from the same pastoral district should not be transferred at the same time. Ministers with special gifts should be utilized in their "specialities," especially in youth work. Ministers should never be "persuaded" or "forced" to transfer. The consent of the minister and his wife should always be a precondition of a transfer, for if the minister changes congregations unwillingly how can he be a blessing in his work.

Several of the head elders cautiously but clearly make a suggestion which, while it was not specifically requested does relate to the whole idea of transfers: after three or four terms of service, it might be good for church administrators to be called back to serve the congregation as ministers again. Some comments in this vein are: "From year to year they withdraw too far from the concerns and needs of the congregations." "Their work tends to isolate them from the basics." "There should be a straight and 'honorable' way for 'tried and proven' presidents to return to the service of a minister." He who views such a change as "degrading" is imposing "worldly thinking" upon the Church. There should be

no "up" and "down" in the Church of Christ, but only service in various areas of endeavour.

#### Summary

The counsels and suggestions given by the head elders should be considered seriously by the Union Committee in its deliberations on transfers. The Holy Ghost is working through elders just as effectively as through the administrators of the Church. The broader the basis upon which decisions with regard to transfers are made, the more aspects and view points can be considered in order to avoid many worrisome decisions. Should a mistake be made, all involved can help bear the consequences in Christ. Such cooperation exemplifies the living unity of the Church of Christ.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary of Findings

The data gleaned from the four questionnaires designed for this study and several subsequent interviews with participants reveal several findings.

1. Jesus' Gospel Commission charges the whole church to pass on the Love of God it has experienced to all people everywhere. The Church can only fulfill this commission when it understands itself as the pilgrim people of God. It must break camp in each new generation in order to reach people to fulfill its commission as effectively as possible. The church calls men and women for special tasks in the world and in the church. Among these tasks is the service of the minister.

2. The task of the minister is to help the church members to realize their calling as pilgrims and to lead souls to follow in the footsteps of Christ. His particular call requires the minister to break camp again and again and to go where he is needed. The transfer of ministers represents a concrete form of the church's own pilgrimage. It is also a sign to the church that as a whole it is called to an existence in this world until the Lord's return.

3. The church, in this pilgrimage, is faced with many situations which make the transfer of ministers a necessity. These



situations arise from changes inherent in life itself--such as death, leaving the work, or retirement. In addition, many organizational exigencies of the SDA Church result in the call of people to other fields of service. Without transfers, open ministerial positions could not be filled, and problems in the congregations could hardly be solved. Insight into the theological relevance of transfers should prevent both ministers and congregations from seeing transfers from only the obvious pragmatic point of view.

4. Changing from congregation to congregation enables a minister to gain new insights into the diversity of the Ecclesia in various places. It allows him to become acquainted with its riches in Christ as well as with the poverty of its pilgrim existence. The minister experiences the church's failures and murmurings as well as the grace and compassion of the Lord, whose possession it is. As a member of the Church, the minister himself is included in this experience. New assignments to new tasks and places further the development of his gifts, and new challenges awaken within him new gifts which the Holy Spirit entrusts to him. Transfers help the minister to develop an all-round personality as a disciple of Christ.

5. Through transfers, the Ecclesia becomes acquainted with and learns to appreciate the various gifts which the Holy Spirit has given each minister. Every gift serves to meet the concrete needs in the congregations. Since all ministers have different gifts, transfers serve the healthy development of the life of the church and prevent one-sidedness. At the same time, "itinerant" ministers give the church a sense of community fellowship and unity. Through

transfers, ministers and congregations alike learn to accept one another again and again in order to fulfill the Lord's commission together.

6. The transfers of ministers of the SDA Church considered in this study take place within the national boundaries of the GDR, i.e., in a socialist society with its specific political, economical, and cultural characteristics. The SDA Church recognizes its obligation of service to the people of this socialist society. The planning and implementation of transfers, therefore, must take into account the concrete circumstances of the socialist society.

7. The transfer of ministers in the SDA Church in the GDR constitutes a peculiarly complex and complicated process which requires the central planning of transfers. To be taken into account, therefore, are the different congregations with their specific needs, the ministers' personalities with their various talents and characteristics, the ministers' families with their needs and concerns, the tight housing situation, and the arrangements and regulations governing moving.

8. The complexity of the transfers demands that the Union Committee have as much objective information at its disposal as possible. This information has to be gathered from those individuals who are affected by a transfer. Among these are the head elders and their church boards, the ministers with their wives and children, and the conference committees. The broader the basis upon which the decisions for transfers develop, the greater also the certainty that these decisions are appropriate for all involved. Moreover, open

discussion concerning all those involved in a transfer strengthens mutual trust and is a sign that all church members need to depend on each other on their pilgrimage.

9. If a minister and his family cannot in their hearts accept a recommended transfer, the Union Committee should carefully weigh the facts. In reaching its decision, it should keep in mind the good of the minister's family involved, of the ministry as a whole, and of the good of the congregations. It is important to consider whether a minister's family moved against its will can really become a blessing in another congregation. Experience from past decades seems to counsel against forcing a minister to accept a transfer against his will. But the minister and his wife should also honestly ask themselves whether their refusal could stand in the light of Eternity. He who puts personal advantage and selfish motives above the good of the Ecclesia stands in danger of giving up his status as a guest and stranger.

10. Unforeseen circumstances again and again make transfers necessary on short notice. As a rule, however, transfers require ample time for planning, i.e., planning should begin a year before it actually has to take place. Transfers change not only the minister's place and sphere of labor but also affect the lives of his wife and children--with their vocational and school obligations. These families already live in a world which, to a great extent, is laid out for them through long-term planning. It is essential then that, besides the current middle-range form of planning, the church lay long-term plans so that the preparation of ministers for special

assignments can be taken into account. A church which is rooted in the prophetic Word needs also in its pilgrimage a prophetic farsightedness. It must recognize in the present what is decisive for the future of the church.

11. According to all involved in this study, a non-ordained minister should be allowed to work in one place for at least three years. To help young workers gain experience, transfers should be used to let them work in as large a variety of congregations as possible. Older and more experienced ministers, by their example and good working relationship can contribute much to the development of young ministers.

12. All participants agreed that ordained ministers should remain in one pastoral district for at least eight years. Longer periods of service than heretofore are necessary so that long-term planning can be initiated and implemented with the congregations. The minister's service should help the congregation to recognize and carry out its Gospel Commission again and again during its pilgrimage through the ages. The transfer of minister cannot have a negative effect on a mature congregation, because being moved by the Holy Spirit regardless of who the minister is, the congregation will fulfill its obligation of love to all humanity.

13. Transfers have both their organizational and spiritual dimensions. These must be clearly distinguished; but they should never be separated from each other or the one played off against the other. Transfers are based upon the fact that the church finds itself on a pilgrimage which takes place in time and space.

Therefore, transfers are bound up with the everchanging structures of the world and demand careful organization preparation. The spiritual dimensions is a result of the Church's call to live as guests and strangers in this world. The call to service produces new calls in its midst that leads to transfers and the transplanting of ministers with their families. Congregations, head elders, ministers' families, and administrators should all seek to recognize God's will through prayer so that the ministers' calls may receive the approval of the Lord of the Church.

14. Transfers have reached their goal when they help the congregations to remain on the middle of the road and to keep their eyes firmly on the goal of their pilgrimage. Only in this way will there be an increase in the number of souls who have been called as fellow-travelers in communion of the pilgrim people of God. At the end of the pilgrimage, the shepherds will lay down their staffs and together with the flock enter into the final rest of God.

#### Recommendations

##### For Administrators of the SDA Church in the GDR

In order to be able to implement transfers in such a way that they reflect the biblical notion of ministry, satisfy the workers' families, and help the congregations in their growth, it is recommended:

1. That the conference president cultivate a close contact with each minister's family to know the particular circumstances and to be able to assess the minister's work, his gifts, talents and

limitations. These insights and impressions would help him to recognize just when a transfer is most advantageous to a minister and his family.

2. That the conference committee should annually consider the needs of the congregations and the necessity of transfers of ministers and then submit their recommendations to the Union Committee. Only those ministers who have been released by the conference committee should be included in the planning. Exceptions in the case of unforeseen difficulties only confirm this rule.

3. That the mid-range planning should be prepared by a special subcommittee which meets every September to carefully consider any necessary transfers for the following year, to determine the circle of transfers, and to submit its recommendations to the Union Committee.

4. That a recommended transfer should be discussed openly with the minister, his wife, and, when necessary, with the children in the minister's home. At that time, the reasons for the transfer should be stated honestly and the objections and considerations of the family should be noted.

5. That the conference president should speak with and seek the counsel of the head elders and, if necessary, the church boards of the congregations involved. The fundamental importance of transfers should be explained to the congregations that they may recognize the necessity of transfers for ministers and congregations.

6. That the final decision for the transfer by the Union Committee should be made when the minister and his wife have agreed

to the place and the time of the transfer. Objections should be amply considered and the consequences of accepting or rejecting a transfer should be carefully weighed by all.

7. That the conference president should officially inform the congregations involved about the transfers. The minister and his family should be bidden farewell on an appropriate occasion (i.e., a district convocation) and the new minister should be introduced to the congregations at the same time. In case of nonordained workers, the district pastor could assume this responsibility.

8. That an ordained minister should serve for no less than eight years in one location so that he could exercise to the optimum his evangelistic and pastoral capabilities. It should be kept in mind that the factor of time alone should not determine transfers, but that the needs and necessities of the congregations and the ministers are always to be considered.

9. That a long-term plan should be drawn up by the Union Committee so qualified ministers could prepare themselves for specialized ministries in specific congregations and in the general organization of the SDA church. It is very important at this point that the administrators take into account the spiritual gifts of the ministers and recognize and make use of the opportunities presented for fruitful work.

10. That the importance and theological relevance of transfers should be discussed at workers meetings. At those occasions the ministers should be introduced to the complex aspects of problems which the Union Committee has to master in planning

transfers. The administrators of the Church should thus be open to and thankful for any suggestions for improvement in the practice of transfers.

11. That in spite of the many detailed and organizational problems, the spiritual character of transfers should be maintained. Should any unavoidable hardships arise for the ministers' families, the families should be helped by word and deed and spiritual encouragement. All questions of transfers should be handled in the spirit of Christ's love and the problems that occur should be solved after the example of Jesus.

For the Ministers as Co-workers,  
Husbands, and Fathers

To permit transfers to take place with as little friction as possible and to help ministers' wives and children to overcome the problems without any lasting harm, it is recommended:

1. That every minister should conscientiously fulfill his service in the congregation in all areas of endeavor to the time of transfer. Before the transfers, missionary activities should not be neglected and persons still lacking spiritual maturity should not be persuaded to be baptized. Problem situations in the congregation should be solved whenever possible..

2. That the successor should be carefully and comprehensively introduced to the new field of labor. This means that the district file folders should be up to date, the church membership list should be complete, the church officers should be visited together, and missionary contacts should be handed over personally.



3. That the ministers should consciously prepare the congregations to recognize and accept their commission as soul-winners. Plans should be made together with the congregation which will enable the congregation to carry on soul-winning programs which are not tied to any one minister and which can be continued by the successor without any interruptions.

4. That the minister should make use of the transfer as an opportunity for growth in the service of God. Past experience should not be simply transferred to the new congregation. The minister should develop his methods and style of work in accordance with the new circumstances and be able to adjust himself flexibly.

5. That the minister as a husband should support his wife so that she inwardly and outwardly can cope with the change in congregation, apartment, location, and occupation. In spite of the profusion of his own burdens, he should devote his complete attention and love to her and share and bear all burdens with her.

6. That the minister as a father should be open to the needs and worries of his children in order to give them the understanding and support they need. His behavior in tense situations leaves lasting influences in the lives of his children. Through experiences of faithful obedience on the part of the whole family, and also with regard to the fourth commandment, he should help his children in the practice of their faith as Seventh-day Adventists.

7. That in spite of the disquiet and increased work due to the transfer, the minister should take time for personal communion with God and give special attention to family worship. Unresolved

questions and unforeseen difficulties are God's opportunities to strengthen the faith of the individual as well as the family as a whole through experiences of his guidance and care.

For the Minister's Wives as Co-workers,  
Wives, and Mothers

Since the minister's wife is such an essential member of the family and is so involved in any transfers, it is recommended:

1. That the minister's wife should support her husband as his helpmate and co-worker so that they can better depend upon each other in times of special stress. They should help each other to accept the transfer and plan together for the new task and location. Joy and pain should be shared.

2. That one should assist the other in accepting the transfer as a call from God, even when the new locale and congregation do not meet their expectations and ideals. Christ has purchased every congregation with His own precious blood.

3. That the minister's wife, together with her husband, should prayerfully seek to discern God's will if she is unable to accept a transfer. Transfers should be refused only when sound, valid reasons are present that can stand the test of the ministry as a whole, the congregations, and God.

4. That the minister's wife, together with her husband, should include the children the children in the joint planning and mastery of all the tasks. Together with them she should discuss her problems and together lay them before God. Children should be able to experience the supporting power of a harmonious family life at this time.

5. That the minister's wife as a mother should have a finely tuned ear for the hidden anxieties of her children before, during, and after transfers. The children should feel secure continually in their mother's love, in spite of being uprooted externally.

6. That each minister's wife should search her soul as to whether her occupational activity outside the SDA church impairs her willingness to be transferred. She should always be willing to give up her job out of love to Christ and for the sake of His church. The more she identifies herself with her husband's service, the fewer problems transfers will cause her.

7. That the minister's wife should talk openly with her husband about the temptations arising from transfers. Should tension, bitterness, reproach, and mistrust arise because of a wrong handling by the administrators, the minister and his wife should remove all obstacles by discussing them with those concerned. No undealt with problems should exist between the minister's family and the administrators.

#### For the Congregations and Their Head Elders

To make the arrival in the new congregation easier for the minister and his family, it is recommended:

1. That the congregation support the leaving as well as arriving of ministers' families in word and deed. The newly arriving family is especially dependent upon the congregation and its assistance. Tokens of love help the uprooted family to adjust itself more quickly to the new surroundings.

2. That the church members should accept and love the new minister and his family, even though there is still a close contact with the predecessor. The congregation should receive the new family with open arms so that it might find a spiritual home in their midst.

3. That the head elder should cooperate closely with the minister and acquaint him with all the affairs of the congregation. The minister and the head elder should pray together regularly so that their service together might be blessed. In their prayers they should also include the committee responsible for the planning of transfers.

4. That the church members should always be conscious of the fact that their minister is a human being with human feelings and weaknesses who also has to grow in sanctification. As pastor, he himself needs the pastoral care of the congregation. Every congregation owes this service to its minister and his family.

APPENDICES

LETTERS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Predigerseminar Friedensau  
3271 Friedensau  
August 29, 1978

Dear Brother/Dear Sister \_\_\_\_\_

In connection with my studies at Andrews University I was given the commission to make a study on "The practice of the transfer of ministers of the SDA Church in the GDR and the effects on the minister's service and family life." This study is part of a scientific research program of the University to carry out an investigation in an area of the church's life and work in the world that had not been done before.

The following reasons may indicate why this study is of importance to the families of our pastors and to the church administrators who decide on the transfers:

1. Transfers are part of a pastor's life and ministry and they constitute a factor that may well enhance the development of his gifts and the growth of our churches.
2. Every transfer affects the family as a whole and influences the life of the pastor, his wife, and children, as well as the mutual relations between all family members.
3. Occasionally, pastors' transfers have resulted in spiritual, marital, and family crises and thus impaired the efficiency of the pastor and the influence of his family on the respective congregation as a whole.
4. The relations between pastors and church administrators may be burdened by these transfers. Such tensions, however, hamper the efficiency of the pastor and the authority of the church administrators and may have adverse effects on the church and its growth.

In order to be able to thoroughly and comprehensively fulfill my task I need the cooperation of persons affected by these transfers. The basis of the practical part of this investigation consists of questionnaires which are sent to every pastor and his wife, a number of pastors' children above the age of eighteen, and a number of church elders.

I hereby kindly request you to take your time and think through all the questions carefully and to answer them exhaustively. I want to stress that all answers and suggestions will be handled with absolute confidentiality. Everyone (pastor, pastor's wife, children) should answer all questions totally on his own. Only if every person cooperates to the best of his knowledge and ability, can this study achieve its goal, namely:

1. To work out recommendations on how transfers should be planned and carried out so that they correspond to the essence of the pastor's and the administrator's work.
2. To gather data with regard to the optimal length of time between transfers. These data may serve as guidelines for the Union Committee of the SDA Church in the GDR.
3. Should certain symptoms of crises be found to be more or less connected with every transfer, it will be necessary to inform pastors and their wives about the results of this study at ministerial retreats as preventive aid.

To be able to evaluate all the answers and recommendations before my next stay at Andrews University, I kindly request you to fill out the questionnaire by the end of September 1978 at the latest and send it in a sealed envelope to your conference office.

Thanking you in advance for your kind cooperation, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

Johannes Mager

Enclosure: A six-page questionnaire.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaire I

(For Pastors)

I. Personal Data

1. Pastor's age \_\_\_\_\_ (years old)
2. Married since \_\_\_\_\_ (year)
3. Number of children \_\_\_\_\_
4. Sex and age of children: 1st child \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd child \_\_\_\_\_  
3rd child \_\_\_\_\_  
4th child \_\_\_\_\_  
5th child \_\_\_\_\_
5. Religious background  
a. non-Adventist<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_  
b. Adventist \_\_\_\_\_ 2  
c. pastor's child \_\_\_\_\_
6. How long have you been in the ministry?  
(number of years) \_\_\_\_\_
7. Are you ordained? Yes/No  
Year of ordination: \_\_\_\_\_

II. Transfers

1. How many times have you been transferred up to now?  
a. Before your ordination \_\_\_\_\_  
b. After your ordination \_\_\_\_\_
2. Mention the number of years between your different transfers.  
a. Before your ordination \_\_\_\_\_  
b. After your ordination \_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>1</sup>State if Catholic, Protestant, atheistic, etc.

<sup>2</sup>Check as applicable.



3. In which way were you informed about your transfer?

- a. By letter \_\_\_\_\_
- b. By telephone \_\_\_\_\_
- c. By a talk in the conference office \_\_\_\_\_
- d. By a visit of the local conference president at home \_\_\_\_\_
- e. In other ways (state which) \_\_\_\_\_

If the notification on transfers has been different from case to case, please state the way in which you were informed consecutively (e.g., 1st transfer: by letter; 2nd transfer: visit of local president at home; etc.)

4. Please explain if in your opinion the way of notification of a transfer is a factor that (essentially) contributes to your willingly or unwillingly agreeing to the transfer.

5. Have you been informed about the reasons for the transfer?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ partly \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

If you have had different experiences in your transfers, please state them consecutively (e.g., 1st transfer: yes; 2nd transfer: partly; etc.).

6. Please explain whether you would find it helpful and necessary to be informed about the reasons for your transfer. If so, why? If not, why not?

7. Have you ever been in a position in which you had strong arguments against a transfer? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Please state reasons, procedure, and results of your objections to the transfer.

8. Where have you been mainly transferred?

- a. Between smaller churches (up to about 40 members)? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Town and city churches (more than 40 members)? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Have both types of churches been relatively balanced? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Did you have any transfers for reasons of new calls? \_\_\_\_\_

### III. Effects of transfers

1. What effects did your transfers and their consequences have upon your spiritual life?

	positive	negative	no changes
a. On your prayer life	_____	_____	_____
b. On your personal relationship to the Word of God	_____	_____	_____
c. On your relations to your task as a minister	_____	_____	_____
d. On your relations to your fellow worker (president)	_____	_____	_____

Please think through questions a. through d. with regard to every transfer and explain in detail its consequences and give the answers in a consecutive way (according to the sequence of transfers).

2. Are you convinced that by your transfers to other churches your abilities have developed?

a. Pastorally	_____
b. Evangelistically	_____
c. Theologically	_____
d. In other ways (please state concretely)	_____

Wherein do you see the causes for a growth or standstill of the abovementioned abilities in connection with your transfers?

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As some questions, especially in part III, are not easy to answer, reflect upon them in prayer. Examine yourself and make sure that your answers to III, 1, 3, and 5 pertain to effects due to transfers only or if there were other factors that played a part and were only triggered by the transfers.

3. What effects did the transfers have on your relationship to your family?

	positive	negative	no change
a. On the relations to your wife--marital life*	_____	_____	_____
b. On the relations to your children	_____	_____	_____
c. On the relations to the family as a whole	_____	_____	_____

Please explain for each transfer the kind of problems and their development. Please take into account the sequence of your transfers.

4. Who introduced you to your new field of labor?

a. Your predecessor	yes _____	no _____
b. The conference president	yes _____	no _____
c. Church elders and/or deacons	yes _____	no _____

In which way were you introduced? Again, take into consideration the exact sequence of transfers (e.g., 1st transfer: by president at a district meeting; 2nd transfer: by predecessor in personal dialogue and discussion, etc.)

5. How long did it take to establish yourself in the new location?

- To get a firm footing in your new working area
- Until possible tensions in your family and marital life had subsided
- Until possible tensions between church administrators and yourself had been settled
- Until your spiritual life had come back to normal

Please explain with reference to points a. through d. and by what means the process of adjustment and normalization was brought about. State your experience in the sequence of transfers.

---

\*Marital life includes various aspects (physical, emotional, mental). Take all of them into consideration. Do not exclude disturbances in your sexual life.

6. What are, in your opinion, the effects of transfers on the internal and external growth of the local churches?

7. What effects did the knowledge about an impending transfer have on your ministry?

	positive	negative	no changes
a. In the local churches	_____	_____	_____
b. In soulwinning	_____	_____	_____
c. In personal studies	_____	_____	_____

If necessary, consider the causes for possible changes in your attitudes during the months prior to transfer and formulate them.

8. Did every transfer cause problems for you?

regularly \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ never \_\_\_\_\_

What are, in your opinion, the causes of the problems that arose?

9. Did you find transfers becoming more difficult over the years?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

10. Which further problems and difficulties not mentioned so far were caused by your transfers?

IV. Assessment and Recommendations for Transfers

1. How do you basically assess the procedure of transfers in the SDA Church in the GDR?
  
2. Which advantages and disadvantages do you see in the transfers of pastors?
  
3. What length of time in one place do you consider advantageous for a pastor to make maximum use of his evangelistic task (soulwinning), his pastoral activities (ministry), and his preaching (sermon) commission?
  - a. For a non-ordained pastor \_\_\_\_\_ years
  - b. For an ordained pastor \_\_\_\_\_ years
  
4. After how many years of service in the area of preaching and ministry do you think a transfer would be beneficial for the pastor as well as for the local church?
  - a. For a non-ordained pastor \_\_\_\_\_ years
  - b. For an ordained pastor \_\_\_\_\_ years
  
5. What reasonable recommendations do you have to implement transfers in such a way that tensions and stress can be avoided if possible and maximum benefit be gained for all persons involved (pastor, pastor's wife and children, church and administration)?

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In case the blanks do not have sufficient space for your answers and proposals, please use the reverse side of this questionnaire or add extra sheets.

(For internal use only within the SDA Church)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaire II

(For Pastors' Wives)

I. Personal Data

1. Year of birth \_\_\_\_\_
2. Married since \_\_\_\_\_ (year)
3. Number of children \_\_\_\_\_
4. Sex and age of children: 1st child \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd child \_\_\_\_\_  
3rd child \_\_\_\_\_  
4th child \_\_\_\_\_  
5th child \_\_\_\_\_
5. Religious background
  - a. Non-Adventist<sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Adventist \_\_\_\_\_ 2
  - c. pastor's child \_\_\_\_\_
6. Are you employed? yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_ since when \_\_\_\_\_ (year)
  - a. In the profession you learned yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. Full-time yes \_\_\_ part-time \_\_\_
  - c. Outside your home yes \_\_\_ homework \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. Employed by SDA Church yes \_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

II. Transfers and Their Effect on Pastors' Wives

1. How often did you have to move due to your husband's profession \_\_\_\_\_  
How many times for other reasons \_\_\_\_\_
2. State the number of years between different transfers

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<sup>1</sup>State if Catholic, Protestant, atheistic, etc.

<sup>2</sup>Check as applicable.

3. By whom were you informed about the transfer?
- a. Your husband \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. A letter addressed to your husband and you \_\_\_\_\_
  - c. A visit of the conference (union) president at home \_\_\_\_\_
  - d. On other occasions (name them, please) \_\_\_\_\_

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Should the notification on transfers have been different from case to case, please state consecutively the way in which you were informed (e.g., 1st transfer: by my husband; 2nd transfer: visit of the president at home; etc.)

4. What were the effects of the transfers and their consequences on your spiritual life?
- |  | positive | negative | no changes |
|--|----------|----------|------------|
| a. On your personal prayer-life                | _____    | _____    | _____      |
| b. On your religious life in general           | _____    | _____    | _____      |
| c. On family worship                           | _____    | _____    | _____      |
| d. On your attitude toward your husband's work | _____    | _____    | _____      |
| e. On your relations to church administrators  | _____    | _____    | _____      |

Please think through questions a. through d. with reference to each transfer and explain the consequences in detail. Give your answers in a consecutive way to the sequence of transfers.

---

As some questions (especially part II, 4, 5, and 7) are not easy to answer, reflect upon them in prayer. Examine yourself and make sure that your answers pertain to effects due to transfers only, or if there were other factors that played a part and were only triggered by the transfers.

5. What were the effects of your husband's transfers on your relations to the other members of your family?

positive    negative    no changes

- |  |       |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| a. On the relations to your husband--marital life*           | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| b. On the relations to your children                         | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| c. On the relations to the family as a whole                 | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| d. On the relations of your children to you and your husband | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Please explain for each transfer the kind of problem and their development. Please take into account the sequence of the transfers.

6. What difficulties arose in connection with your occupational activities as a result of your husband's transfers?
7. How long did it take you to establish yourself in the new location?
- a. To get a firm footing in your husband's new working area
  - b. Until possible tensions in your marital life had subsided
  - c. Until possible disturbances of your family life were overcome
  - d. Until your spiritual life, if necessary, had consolidated again
  - e. Until possible tensions between church administrators had been settled

Please explain with reference to points a. through e. how and by what means the process of adjustment and healing was brought about. State your experiences in the sequence of transfers.

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\*Marital life includes various aspects (physical, emotional, mental). Take all of them into consideration. Do not exclude disturbances in your sexual life.



8. Has every transfer caused you problems?  
 regularly \_\_\_\_\_ sometimes \_\_\_\_\_ never \_\_\_\_\_  
 What are, in your opinion, the causes of the problems  
 that arose?
9. Did you find the transfers becoming more difficult over the  
 years? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please state the reasons for this development.
10. What other problems and difficulties not mentioned so far  
 arose from the transfers?
11. In your observation, how have transfers affected your  
 husband's ministry (with regard to pastoral activities,  
 preaching, studies, etc.)?  
 positive \_\_\_\_\_ negative \_\_\_\_\_ no changes \_\_\_\_\_  
 Please explain your observations.

### III. Assessment and Recommendations for Transfers

1. Please give your opinion about the positive and/or  
 negative aspects of pastors' transfers.
  
2. What are your recommendations on how to implement ministers'  
 transfers in such a way that tensions and problems can  
 possibly be avoided and maximum benefit be gained for all  
 persons involved (i.e., local church, pastor, pastor's wife  
 and children, and the administration)

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In case the blanks do not have sufficient space of your answers and  
 proposals, please use the reverse side of this questionnaire or add  
 extra sheets.

(For internal use only within the SDA Church)

Predigerseminar Friedensau  
3271 Friedensau  
August 29, 1978

Dear Brother/Dear Sister \_\_\_\_\_

I am writing to you because of a special burden. In connection with my studies at Andrews University I was given the commission of making a study on "The practice of transfers of ministers of the SDA Church in the GDR and their effects on the work and family life of the Pastor." The basis for my investigation consists of questionnaires which will be sent to every pastor, his wife, and a number of pastors' children above the age of eighteen.

From your own experience you know that a transfer affects all members of the family. Transfers can have positive effects on the pastor's family and his ministry, but they can also give rise to tensions and crises.

The objective of this study is to investigate the practice of transfers in the light of mutual brotherly love, and to work out, if necessary, recommendations on how transfers can be planned and carried out so that tensions can possibly be avoided for all those involved and a maximum benefit can be achieved.

I kindly request you to take time to carefully think through all the questions and to answer them elaborately. Perhaps you will be able to differentiate in your answers between effects of transfers in your childhood and adolescence, respectively. I want to stress that all answers and proposals will be handled strictly confidentially.

In order to be able to evaluate all the answers and recommendations by the end of this year, I would like to ask you to fill out the questionnaire by the end of September 1978 at the latest and send it (possibly via your father), sealed in the enclosed envelope, to your conference office.

Thanking you in advance for your kind cooperation, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

Johannes Mager

Enclosure

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaire III

(For Pastors' Children)

I. Personal Data

1. Age \_\_\_\_\_ (years) Sex: Male \_\_\_\_\_ Female \_\_\_\_\_\*
2. Married \_\_\_\_\_ Unmarried \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many brothers and sisters do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In which order were you born in your family?  
1st child \_\_\_\_\_  
2nd child \_\_\_\_\_  
3rd child \_\_\_\_\_  
4th child \_\_\_\_\_  
5th child \_\_\_\_\_
5. Occupation \_\_\_\_\_
6. Baptized: yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_ Year of baptism \_\_\_\_\_

II. Transfers and Their Effects

1. How many transfers did you experience in your family? \_\_\_\_\_  
How many of those did you experience consciously? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Were transfers happy events for you? \_\_\_\_\_  
or depressing events? \_\_\_\_\_  
Please explain in which way they made you happy or unhappy.
3. Who informed you about transfers and in which way was this done?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*Check as applicable

4. What were the effects of changing from one school to another?

positive    negative    no changes

- |  |       |       |       |
|--|-------|-------|-------|
| a. On your relations to your fellow students | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| b. On your school achievements               | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Please explain your experiences.

5. Did transfers result in difficulties with getting the Sabbath off?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Could the arising problems be solved? yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Please explain the situation after each transfer.

6. Did transfers hamper the realization of a possible vocational career?

yes \_\_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\_

Please write down your experiences.

7. Did transfers influence your relationships to the family?

positive    negative    no changes

- |                                    |       |       |       |
|------------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| a. To your father                  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| b. To your mother                  | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| c. To your brothers and/or sisters | _____ | _____ | _____ |

Please explain how these changes became apparent.

8. Did transfers change the family climate for a certain time?

positive \_\_\_\_\_ negative \_\_\_\_\_ no changes \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the symptoms.

9. Did transfers result in changes in the relations between your father and mother? (Mark only, please)

positive \_\_\_\_\_ negative \_\_\_\_\_ no changes \_\_\_\_\_

10. How did the change of place and church affect your spiritual life?

positive    negative    no changes

a. Your prayer-life	_____	_____	_____
b. Your personal relationship to the Word of God	_____	_____	_____
c. Family worship	_____	_____	_____
d. Your attitude toward your father's work	_____	_____	_____
e. Your attitude toward the SDA church	_____	_____	_____

Please explain with reference to points a. through e. how these changes manifested themselves and which transfers had special affects.

11. Which other difficulties arose for you from transfers during your childhood and adolescence?

Please elaborate.



Predigerseminar Friedensau  
3271 Friedensau  
August 29, 1978

Dear Brother \_\_\_\_\_

In connection with my studies at Andrews University I was given the commission to make a study on "The practice of transfers of Pastors of the SDA Church in the GDR and their effects on the work and family life of the Pastor." The basis for my investigation consists of questionnaires which are sent to all pastors and various church elders. Every transfer not only interferes with the life of the pastor and his family, it also affects the whole local church.

I am requesting you, an experienced elder, to take time and think through all the questions carefully and to answer them elaborately. I would like to stress that all answers and proposals will be handled strictly confidentially.

The objective of this study is to investigate the practice of transfers in the light of mutual brotherly love and to work out, if necessary, recommendations on how transfers can be planned and implemented so that they correspond to the essence of the pastors' and the administrators ministry. For all those affected by a transfer, tensions should possibly be avoided and a maximum benefit be derived.

To be able to evaluate answers and recommendations by the end of this year, I would like to ask you to fill out the questionnaire by the end of September at the latest, and to send it, sealed in the enclosed envelope, to your conference office.

Thanking you in advance for your kind cooperation, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

Johannes Mager

Enclosure

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Questionnaire IV

(For Church Elders)

I. The Elder and his Church

1. How long have you been the elder of your church? \_\_\_\_\_ (years)
2. Are you an ordained elder? yes \_\_\_\_ no \_\_\_\_\*  
Year of ordination \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many members does your church have? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How many persons were received into your church during the past 15 years by way of baptism vote? (This questions should be answered according to the quarterly church reports.)

1963	1964	1965	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970

1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977

5. For the past 15 years, please state the years in which transfers of the pastors of your church took place.

II. Pastors' Transfers and Effects

1. What are the effects of a pastor's transfer on your ministry as an elder? Please give details and explanations.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\*Check as applicable





III. Assessment and Recommendations for Pastors' Transfers

1. What do you think about the practice of pastors' transfers within the SDA Church in the GDR?
  
2. What are the positive and negative effects of pastors' transfers on the life of the church?
  
3. How many years do you think a pastor should stay in your church so that he can make maximum use of his evangelistic tasks (soulwinning), his pastoral activities (ministry), and his task to proclaim the gospel (sermons)?
  - a. For a younger, non-ordained pastor \_\_\_\_\_ (years)
  - b. For an ordained pastor (district elder) \_\_\_\_\_ (years)
  
4. After how many years of serving and giving in the areas of pastoral care and preaching do you consider a transfer necessary for the benefit of the pastor as well as the local church?
  - a. For a younger, non-ordained pastor \_\_\_\_\_ (years)
  - b. For an ordained pastor (district elder) \_\_\_\_\_ (years)
  
5. Taking into account that transfers may also be necessitated by retirement, appointments of pastors to other tasks, sickness, or death, what recommendations can you make so that pastors' transfers can be planned and implemented in a way which guarantees a maximum possible benefit for all those involved?

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In case the blanks do not have sufficient space for your answers and proposals, please use the reverse side of this questionnaire or add extra sheets.

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1974.



## VITA

Name: Johannes Erich Mager

Date of birth: March 22, 1929

Place of birth: Oschatz (Saxony), Germany

### Primary education:

Volksschulen in  
Pirna, Zittau, Ohorn, Germany 1943

### Secondary education:

Städtische Höhere Handelsschule  
Pulsnitz, Germany 1945

### Higher education:

Predigerseminar Friedensau 1950

Theological Studies  
Humboldt University, Berlin 1971

Andrews University  
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary 1980

### Experience:

Local pastor, Berlin 1950-1954

Youth director, East Berlin Conference 1954-1961

Lay Activities director and Evangelist  
East Berlin Conference 1961-1964

Lay Activities director and Evangelist  
Union Conference of SDA in the GDR 1964-1969

Ministerial Association director  
Union Conference of SDA in the GDR 1969-1974

Professor, Predigerseminar Friedensau 1975-1981

Ministerial Association director  
Euro-Africa Division, Berne, Switzerland  
Appointed--

1981

## REPORT

of the Examination for the D.Min. Degree of

JOHANNES ERICH MAGER

### Place, Date and Time of Examination

The examination was held at the Seventh-day Adventist (SDA) Theological Seminary "Marienhoehe," Darmstadt, Federal Republic of Germany (GFR), on Friday, the 12th day of March, 1982, from 9:00-11:30 a.m.

### Examiners and Guests

The examiners were Gottfried Oosterwal, professor of world mission and church growth, SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan, U.S.A.; director of the SDA Institute of World Mission (chairman, and thesis director); Johann Heinz, professor of systematic theology, SDA Theological Seminary, Marienhoehe, Darmstadt, GFR; Heinz Henning, professor of New Testament, SDA Theological Seminary, Marienhoehe, Darmstadt, GFR; president (gesamtschulleiter) of the Marienhoehe SDA schools (seminar and Aufbaugymnasium); Hans Gerhardt, professor of practical theology, SDA Theological Seminary, Marienhoehe, Darmstadt, GFR.

As a special guest attending the examination, Peter Joseit, evangelist, West German Union of SDA, GFR, was invited.

### Authorization and Language

The four examiners were officially invited and authorized by the D.Min. Committee of the SDA Theological Seminary, Andrews University, to conduct this off-campus D.Min. examination. The examination was based on the German version of the two project reports required for the D.Min. degree at Andrews University. The examination itself was also conducted in German, even though the candidate has an excellent command of the English language, as he has demonstrated by his work at Andrews University, and in conference and committee work while resident in the United States of America.

### Pre-examination Meeting

On Thursday, March 11, from 5:00-6:30 p.m., the examiners met at the Marienhoehe Seminary to discuss the guidelines of the examination, and to establish basic rules for its proceedings. Each examiner had received a copy of the two project reports about a month in advance. During the discussion it became clear that some of the examiners were not quite aware of the fact that the D.Min. project at Andrews University consists in fact of two parts: a theological, and a practical. These two parts surely are: interdependent. The theological part also offers the basic building blocks of the practical investigation. But, the second part is not necessarily a continuation of the first part. The discussion on this matter proved to be very helpful, since the main criticism of the examiners in loco centered around this issue of the relationship between part one and part two of the project.

It was agreed to proceed with the examination the following day, as follows:

Official welcome and prayer by the chairman; preliminaries, such as the task of the examination committee, the authority invested in the committee, the order of the proceedings, and an introduction by the candidate concerning his project (reasons, findings, methods, etc.). Each examiner, except the chairman, would be given ten minutes to examine--and dialogue with--the candidate on issues related to the first part of the thesis. Johann Heinz would be the first, followed by Heinz Henning and Hans Gerhardt. The other examiners were free to raise questions at that time if a question or an answer was not clearly understood. After each examiner had had his ten minutes of examination, he would be given another five to seven minutes to question the candidate again. Then, a brief intermission would be held, at which time we could all stand up, and relax a little. After that, the same periods of time (ten minutes and five to seven minutes) would be given to each examiner to examine the candidate on issues related to the second part of the project, only, this time the order of examiners was reversed: Hans Gerhardt would be first, Heinz Henning second, and Johann Heinz third. (At no time was the guest allowed to participate actively in the examination.)

After the examination, the candidate and guest would be asked to leave the room, to allow the examiners to consider the questions, his project, his general knowledge on the issues involved, and the contributions he had made by his project to the understanding and practice of the Church's mission and ministry.

### The Examination

The examination proceeded as described: welcome and prayer, preliminaries, introduction, examination, evaluation, results and congratulations, further suggestions to the candidate, word of thanks,

prayer. The examiners wore a dark suit, which on the one hand reflected how serious they were taking this examination, and on the other, their respect for the candidate. It certainly contributed to the solemnity of the occasion.

#### Part One--Johann Heinz

The first part of the project deals with the Pilgrim People of God and the Exodus Community as a Motif of Salvation History in the Old and New Testament. After having complimented the candidate for his theological insight and his profound thinking, Johann Heinz raised the question of the "obvious tension between the first and the second part of the project." At times he noticed, that tension has created a discontinuity even between part one and part two. "It seems," said Dr. Heinz, "that the first part--though very beautiful and very well done--is actually a 'later addition to,' rather than the foundation of, part two."

Mr. Mager admitted that his research on the transfer of ministers in the German Democratic Republic came first, and that he had struggled to find sound Biblical-theological reasons for this practice, besides the more obvious organizational and practical reasons. He has found that Biblical-theological basis in the Biblical concepts of the church as a pilgrim people and an exodus community. The transfer of ministers is one form of the pilgrimage and the exodus of God's people, though certainly not the only form! The first part, therefore, should not be viewed as the theological foundation of the transfers of ministers, but rather as the theological basis for the church as a pilgrim people. One clear form of that pilgrimage, as well as a sign is the transfer of ministers.

Dr. Heinz was willing to admit that; but, how are these two: the transfer of ministers and the exodus nature of God's church, interrelated? In the New Testament, the minister is not (just) a pilgrim, but a shepherd of his flock, and part of the church.

Johannes Mager was aware of that, yet he maintained the New Testament puts great emphasis on the church's role as pilgrims, strangers, its dispersion, etc. That life is particularly, but not exclusively, exemplified by the continuous transfer of the ministers.

#### Part One--Heinz Henning

Heinz Henning, likewise, expressed his appreciation for the good piece of research Mr. Mager had accomplished, and for the way he had developed the concept of the church as God's pilgrim people and exodus community. However, with Johann Heinz, he too raised the questions concerning the interrelationship between part one and part two of the project.

Then, more specifically, Heinz Henning questioned Johannes Mager concerning the differences between Abraham, Israel, and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ as models of exodus and pilgrimage (pp. 24, 25 ff.), thereby clearly indicating that the motif of pilgrimage has many different forms, which also ought to be considered. Mr. Mager admitted that he had used a rather "daring formulation," whereby the emphasis was on what Abraham, Israel, and the Incarnation of Jesus Christ have in common. He was aware of the differences as well. Yet, was not Christ's whole life determined by pilgrimage and exodus? And, don't we find in His life a clear model for the transfer of ministers? The forms of the pilgrimage are historically conditioned and shaped by cultural and social conditions, but, its essence remains. The transfer of ministers is one concrete form of it, and thereby a sign to every believer!

Another series of questions by Heinz Henning dealt with Mr. Mager's concept of the Sabbath, Baptism, the ordinance of foot washing, and the Lord's Supper, as concrete forms of pilgrimage (pp. 42, 43 ff.). "Aren't you allegorizing these Biblical notions here, i.e., giving them a meaning which even detracts from their real meaning in the New Testament?"

Johannes Mager rejected Heinz Henning's concept of giving baptism, or the Sabbath, or the Lord's Supper a new meaning, but, he wanted to show the theological relationship between these ordinances and the exodus/pilgrimage.

#### Part One--Hans Gerhardt

"I understand," said Hans Gerhardt, who also lauded Mr. Mager for his good project, "that it had not been your intention to give a theological foundation of the transfer of ministers, but rather, to show that those transfers are a concrete form of the pilgrim/exodus nature of the people of God. However, even in doing so, did you not thereby give these transfers a theological foundation, which makes them a requirement for all times, and unchangeable?"

"Sure," said Johannes Mager, "that danger does exist. These theological connections can be abused, but, that does not make these connections per se invalid."

"You have started from the premise that the transfer of ministers is a 'good thing,' for all the parties concerned. Now you have also proven from Scripture that they are a concrete form of the exodus/pilgrim nature of the people of God. Did this a priori not prevent you from taking also a more critical stance towards this practice in the church?"

"My task was not to question the practice," Johannes Mager answered, "in fact, none of the persons interviewed--the ministers, their wives, their children, the administrators, the elders in the

church--ever wanted to give up this practice of transfer. Transfers are of great significance to our church. I could not, and dared not, question the practice!"

"Does not this connection between the transfer of ministers and the pilgrim/exodus nature of the church actually mean a breviation of the whole concept of pilgrimage? A narrowing? For, it is the church as a whole which is called to be pilgrims! Why then limit yourself to the minister? Does the church really see the transfer as a sign and a signal?"

"No, the church does not see this sign, this signal clearly. We must make it aware of it, and, we must also look for other ways in which this call to pilgrimage and exodus can be realized in the church, by the church."

### Second Half of First Part

In the second half of the first part of the examination, a number of issues mentioned in the first half were further clarified, deepened and explained. Other questions dealt with some details of the theology of rest, the sacraments, the nature of the church, and the use of certain words that seemed too strong, too general.

Of great significance here was the discussion on the SDA understanding of baptism. The project seemed to reflect a rather "Zwinglian" concept of the ordinances. "But," said Dr. Heinz in particular, "is there not another dimension, and, is it not so that besides man, God also is doing something in us in baptism?" The candidate agreed wholeheartedly.

That applies also to the critique of the way he had spoken of the rest (Heb 4). The emphasis in the project is on its eschatological aspect. But, we do experience that rest already here and now. We are not just on our way! We have already arrived.

### Part Two--Hans Gerhardt

Hans Gerhardt opened the second part of the examination. Page 55 ff. speaks of the potentials for growth a minister has as a result of the transfer. But, is not that too optimistic a view? We also know of the loneliness of many older ministers. Is not that an aspect of the transfers? For, transfers prevent the ministers from building relationships. Moreover, transfers also prevent many ministers from really growing. For, if a minister has to stay longer, he must change in order to cope with the everchanging situations and conditions. With transfer, is there not the danger that ministers remain the same, while everything else around him changes? Transfers are one possibility of growth, but, cannot other possibilities be created by a democratization of the church's life, by changing the churches?

Johannes Mager clearly recognized the situation. In fact, some ministers did complain that as a result of their transfer they could not really grow, but mostly repeated what they had done--and been--before. For that reason, the project does recommend a longer period of service at one place. Yes, transfers have their disadvantages, but, the positive aspects greatly outweigh these negative ones.

#### Part Two--Heinz Henning

Heinz Henning drew attention to the fact that the aspect of suffering--as part of the transfer--seemed quite prominent in the discussion, and raised the question whether that was typical of the situation in the Adventist church in the GDR. Johannes Mager denied this.

Another series of questions dealt with the method of the research, in particular the questionnaire. Are the answers honest, open, freely given, and therefore really representative?

To these questions Johannes Mager responded: "Yes, they are representative. People were free to respond the way they wanted. I did meet with some suspicion, but this was extremely rare. Moreover, the questionnaires were followed up by personal interviews. These did confirm the data of the questionnaire, and deepened them."

#### Part Two--Johann Heinz

Dr. Heinz raised a series of questions concerning church practices in the GDR which differ from those in many other parts of the world. Transfers, for instance, are determined by the Union committee, not by the conferences, as in other parts of the world. Transfers are also more complex, involving so many families at the same time, all the time. Would it not have been helpful to make a comparison between transfers of ministers in the SDA church with the practice in other churches in the GDR, the Baptists, for instance?

These differences, Johannes Mager argued, are related to the particular situation of the SDA in the GDR, not the political--for the State exerts no influence at all on this practice of the SDA church--but the social and economic conditions. A comparison with other denominations would not have been practical because of the totally different organizational structures of these denominations.

#### Second Half of Second Part

The questions during the second half of the second part of the examination dealt with some details of the project, and again with the relationship between the first--the theological--and the second part of the project. For instance: Hans Gerhardt raised the question



about the "theology of the call." Who calls the minister to another location? The church? God? What happens if the minister hears God's call at that particular moment as a call to stay? Or, if the local church hears that call as a call to stay? In case of a conflict, what right does a minister and his family have? What institutional ways are there to solve this conflict?

Johannes Mager knows of the conflict. He does not deny that it occurs--to the contrary--but, ministers do have the possibility of a dialogue with the administrators about the transfer, and so do ministers' wives. On the other hand, ministers must themselves be models of obedience to those to whom they have been sent to minister.

Heinz Henning raised the question again of the church's "foreignness" in the world, with its far-reaching consequences of isolation, separation and confrontation. Does not Scripture also call the church to be the salt of the earth, urging it to mingle with the world? Is this emphasis perhaps also partly shaped by the situation of the church in the GDR?

"Every church must understand itself," said Johannes Mager, "in the particular situation in which it finds itself. But, though certain accents or emphases may be different from churches in other situations, it may not be disobedient to the whole Word of God, not to the task which God has given it. Foreignness is one aspect. The church does not exist for itself, but for the world. It must also mingle with the world, as Christ did. Confrontation is a necessity, but so are prayers and love for the world. I do thank you for your stimulating questions, for your deep concern, and for holding up a mirror in which I did see certain limitations. Thank you very much for your help."

### Results and Recommendations

After the candidate and the guest had left, the examiners considered carefully the candidate's responses to their questions, his knowledge and understanding of the issues, and the project's contributions to the church's mission and ministry. They unanimously voted to pass the candidate with the predicate "sehr gut"--very good.

The project was accepted as it was written, with the following suggestions:

- a. To substitute the word "many" for "all" on page IV.
- b. To soften the notion that this project was offering the Biblical-theological foundations of the practice of transfer of ministers in the SDA church, page II.
- c. To add, in a footnote, the concept of rest as an experience not only of the future, but also of the present, page 42.

- d. To explain more clearly the reasons for some of the differences in the practice of transfers in the GDR, also in a footnote, page 60.
- e. To include in the recommendation, the idea of a dialogue between the minister, his wife, and his family; and the administration of the church in the GDR before the transfer is determined.

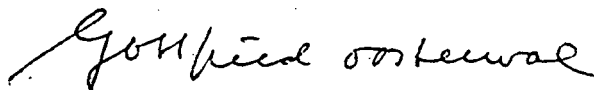
Johannes Mager has gladly accepted these recommendations of the examination committee.

The examination was concluded by prayer offered by Dr. Heinz.

The examiners are of the opinion that Mr. Mager's project deserves a wider distribution. They made the following suggestions:

- a. To place a bound copy of the project in the library of every German-language SDA seminary in Europe.
- b. To send a copy to every German-speaking Union president of the SDA church in the Euro-Africa Division, and to every conference president in the German Democratic Republic.
- c. To publish the first part of the project, with a slightly altered introduction, for instance in Aller Diener/Servire.
- d. To publish an extensive summary of the second part of the project, emphasizing the principles involved, but leaving out the locally colored situation.
- e. To discuss with conference and union presidents the findings of the project, and to suggest to them to have similar studies undertaken for their respective fields.
- f. To write up an English summary for Ministry Magazine.

NOTE: A draft of this report was sent to the candidate, to each of the examiners, to Drs. Dederen and Kurtz of the D.Min. committee, to the Dean of the Theological Seminary, and to the Provost and the vice-president for academic affairs of Andrews University, with the request to check on its accuracy and to comment on its wording, style and content. Their responses have been very helpful, especially those of Dr. Graham, and have gratefully been incorporated in the final draft of this report.



Gottfried Oosterwal

Andrews University  
June 21, 1982