



Gary B. Swanson

As I take up duties as the new editor of *Perspective Digest*, I think I'm now beginning to appreciate—at least to some degree—what it must feel like to manage a professional sports team.

In baseball, for example, on the field you'll find nine of the most brilliant athletes money can buy. As the result of God-given abilities and rigorous training, these are magnificent specimens of humanity with the skills to draw a stadium full of spectators instantly to their feet. (And this doesn't take into account the millions watching at home.) Notwithstanding all the recent controversy over performance-enhancing substances, an awesome home run, a brilliant catch, a breathtaking fast-ball: all of these and more bring to the game of baseball the status of what many consider to be an art form. Historian Bruce Catton has said that baseball is the greatest topic of conversation America has produced.

So, on the field you have these

“WHO AM I...”

gifted athletes, and in the dugout, supposedly running the team, slouches a usually aging, stoop-shouldered paunchy guy: the manager. He is suited up in the same colorful uniform as the team on the field, but he doesn't do it justice. His salary is roughly one-tenth of that of any single player on the field. And he has the temerity to tell these athletes how to play better—how to improve their game.

Sitting here at “Work Station Two” for the first time, this is how it feels as editor of *Perspective Digest*.

The writers for this publication are drawn from the best of academia. They have gone through rigorous training. They are the all-stars of religious thought, and somehow it is my task to present their spiritual leadership to the rest of us in a way that we'll be able to understand—and apply to our everyday lives.

This, for me, is my greatest challenge. And, if it weren't for quite a few scriptural characters who received calls with vast feelings of

inadequacy, I'd be tempted not even to attempt such an audacious assignment.

This was part of Moses' problem when he happened upon God in the burning bush. God assigned him to manage Team Israel as it was about to enter a long, difficult season. At that moment, Moses couldn't have known the challenges he would have to face for the next several decades, but he was aware of enough of the responsibilities of leadership to know that he was facing a forbidding task. And he knew his own limitations only too well. Even though as a youth he had received the very best possible worldly preparation for success, he had pretty much botched every opportunity that had come his way. Educated in Egypt's finest schooling to be a future leader of men, thus far he could boast of leading only sheep.

“Who am I,” he said, “that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” (Ex. 3:11, NIV). From his human view of things, this was a valid question. He asked what he should say. He claimed that the Israelites would not believe he was truly sent from God. He reminded God that he was not an eloquent spokesman. It was plain to Moses that he was not a reasonable choice for the task that God was giving him.

God's answer to Moses' sniveling was simply to remind him of where

all human skills come from: “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?” (4:11, NIV). Surely, if God made Moses' tongue, He could provide a way for him to overcome his problems of self-expression. Now that's reassurance, and it's a promise that I, personally, am taking to heart.

I hope I won't be misread here to be asserting that *PD* is in slavery to anything and that I'm supposed to lead it heroically from failure and defeat. This is clearly not the case.

To return to the analogy of a baseball team, I'm stepping into the cleats of a manager with well-earned trophies of his own, who has led the team to the World Series—more than once. Roland R. Hegstad is a winner—a legend! His career is punctuated regularly with awards of recognition for the editorial leadership he has brought both to his publications specifically as well as to Adventist journalism in general. If there were such a thing as Adventist journalism's Hall of Fame, he'd be in it long ago.

And entering into that kind of atmosphere brings yet another challenge: the responsibility of maintaining a winning (read “successful”) tradition. In one sense, at least, it would be preferable to take up leadership of a losing team, a “cellardweller” as it is sometimes called. In a situation like that, you have no

place to go but up. Just about anything you do works well.

But *Perspective Digest* boasts a distinguished past and a worthy objective: to present the ideas explored in current theological research in a fresh, complete way to those of us immersed in a too-often hostile culture. It is my personal hope that our readers will come to count on *Perspective Digest* to address the non- and anti-biblical ideas expressed explicitly and implicitly in today's society.

And this brings me to one last point: The future—and the never-ending goal of improving *Perspective Digest*—needs one further team member. This is where you, as the

reader, come in. There are only two ways for a sports team to gauge its success: (1) the number of people sitting in the stands; and (2) the feedback from fans and sports writers. Similarly, a publication can evaluate its work through (1) circulation; and (2) feedback from readers. We encourage you—yea, we implore you—to sound off about what you read in these pages. *Perspective Digest* is, after all, a human document—and therefore fallible. We will count on you, the reader, to round out the full texture of content through correspondence that we will be pleased to include in “Epistles.”

With these things in mind, let's “Play ball!”

