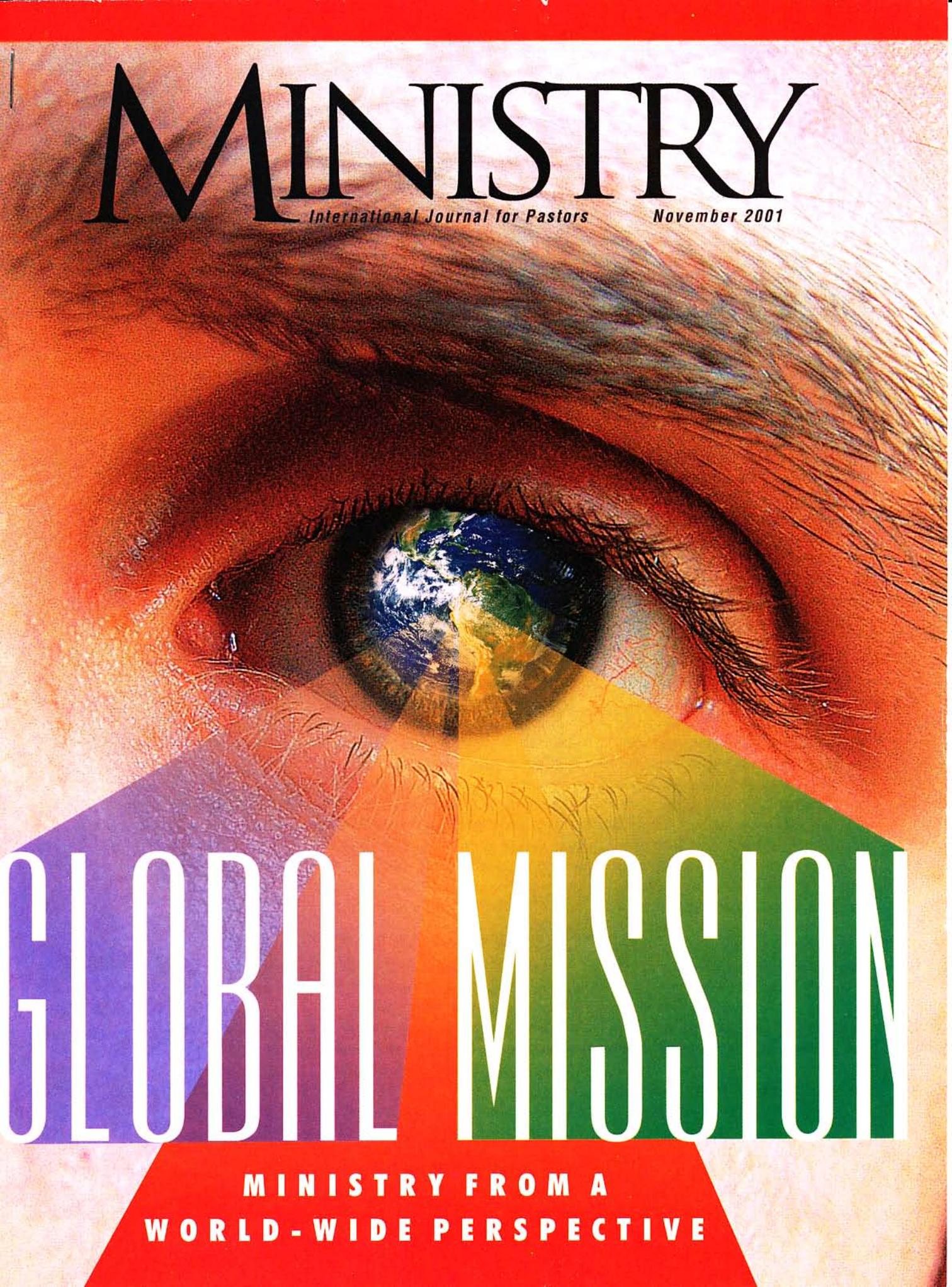


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WORLD-WIDE PERSPECTIVE

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Who's to blame?

Who is responsible when towers topple? In tragedy's aftermath, we seek to explain the unexplainable.

Unfortunately, even some clergy plunge into speaking without carefully studying the Word of God. Some have even declared that God uses tragic events to punish specific brands of sinners—liberals, homosexuals, civil libertarians, and abortionists. Such misguided individuals along with their dangerous pronouncements are wrong.

Scripture provides reliable answers: *"There were present at that season some who told Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And Jesus answered and said to them, 'Do you suppose that these Galileans were worse sinners than all other Galileans, because they suffered such things? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse sinners than all other men who dwelt in Jerusalem? I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish'"* (Luke 13:1-5 NKJV).

Beware jumping to quick conclusions. Enquiring minds might leap to several conclusions, only one of which is biblically valid for New York City.

Sometimes towers fall. Even solid-appearing buildings might disguise engineering defects which collapse the whole building. This seems to be the case when the tower of Siloam fell and killed 18. Insurance policies call random tragedies acts of God when structural insufficiency may be to blame. Clearly this is not what happened at the World Trade Center. This was not the consequence of shoddy workmanship.

God's wrath targets certain brands of sinners. Equally erroneous is the conclusion that God is punishing

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certain sinners who are worse than others. Jesus allows nonesuch when He twice queries, "Do you suppose they were worse sinners than all other men?" Scripture provides no offensiveness scale defining categories of sinners. All sin is offensive to God's holiness. Just as God hates all sin, He loves every sinner.

As Myron Augsburger says, "Men are all alike sinners, but not sinners alike." Those who categorize some offenders as especially deserving of punishment misread the Bible. This false logic is so appealing because the first preacher to declare God's intent opportunistically defines the terms of debate.

In rushing to pronounce God's wrath on your sin, I ignore His wrath on my own. I presumptuously compare my strengths with your weaknesses like the man who prayed, God, I thank You that I am not like other men. I even abuse prayer in self-congratulation. However, contrast my faults with your strong points and I do not appear so pious.

An enemy hath done this. Did this tragedy come because some were worse than other sinners? Jesus says, "I tell you, No!"

Answering the question of ultimate responsibility for evil, Jesus says, the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil (Matt. 13:38b, 39).

God does not use Satan's terrorist tactics. Jesus warns rebels of final consequences. "Unless you repent you will all likewise perish." But Scripture relentlessly affirms, "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

"To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity. They see the work of evil, with its terrible results of woe and desolation, and they question how all this can exist under the sovereignty of One who is infinite in wisdom, in power, and in love . . . It is impossible to explain the origin of sin so as to give a reason for its existence. Yet enough may be understood concerning both the origin and the final disposition of sin to make fully manifest the justice and benevolence of God in all His dealings with evil. Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause be shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. Our only definition of sin is that given in the word of God; it is the outworking of a principle at war with the great law of love which is the foundation of the divine government."²

Rather than rushing to pronounce God's judgment, we would better proclaim His love so that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ■

¹ Myron S. Augsburger, *The Communicator's Commentary* (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1982).

² Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press© Pub. Assn., 1888), 492, 493.

Thinking in stereo

Sometimes I just want to go back to the bush! By “the bush” I mean the wilderness of Africa, where I was born. When I feel enclosed, a captive of the artificial sophistication of silicon-chips and materialistic mazes, I long for the simple untouched bush that was mine as a boy. But I barely begin to luxuriate in those memories when I am unmercifully pulled back to the realities of my present world.

A similar thing happens with my Christianity. Confronted by the bewildering torrents of shifting thought, at times I long to return to the quiet currents that once made up my faith. This is a common and profound longing, I think, especially in conservative Christians these days; the desire to return to something more primal and simple, to the way it was, however mythical that way might actually be.

But, try as we might, as Thomas Wolfe once wrote, “You can’t go home again.”

Because of this we have developed elaborate mechanisms to reassure ourselves as we search for the feelings of certainty that once were one of our most prized possessions. One significant way we build protective walls around ourselves is to deny the immense need to rethink the essentials of our faith in the light of current paradigm shifts. This is a very significant part of our role as spiritual leaders among our people. It is something we cannot leave undone with the hope that somehow things will get better.

Of course, it is true that much contemporary thinking, especially a lot of the rethinking that has gone on, has ushered in corruption and confusion, both moral and spiritual, all of which we want to avoid. But the fear of this corruption should never lead us to stop thinking and praying deeply, because

WILL EVA



any form of well-practiced denial always leads to false security and further confusion. To dive under the incoming waves of changing perspective (eyes tightly shut) is no guarantee that we will surface on the far-side, in the calm we once had before the waves first swept over us. Inevitably as we surface, another wave is just ahead.

Of course, thinking by itself, no matter how deep it might be, is a futile pastime. The transcendent, uninhibited work of the Holy Spirit is indispensable to us here and now. It is a matter of carefully re-thinking our faith fundamentals in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Genuine spirituality, authentic thought—these are by no means mutually exclusive.

“Martyn Lloyd-Jones . . . addressed a conference in 1941 that was called to assess reasons for the intellectual weakness of British evangelicals that then seemed so obvious to its own leaders as well as to outside observers . . . [He] first highlighted the kind of ardent supernaturalism, which was manifest in the United States . . . which lessened the need of scholarship.”¹ These sincere approaches, he showed, reduced any real interest in a deeper, more thoughtful scholarship. He described the “false simplicity” behind the idea that any significant use of the human intellect is to be suspected as dangerous to the faith.

He was concerned that it was generally considered unlikely by some that a good theologian could at the same time be a holy person.²

Lloyd-Jones’s last diagnostic description concerns me. It is the notion prevalent today in many Christian circles, that a deep-thinking minister cannot also be holy. This is an ill-founded suspicion that soon leads, I fear, to simple intellectual laziness—a potent enemy to God’s high calling to real, complete Christian ministry.

In all of this lies the essential virtue: That of bringing into balance a manifestation of our whole person as ministers of Christ; that we be both good, responsible thinkers and, at the same time, holy, dynamic persons. Power lies in devoting our whole being to God. The Holy Spirit can use such a holistic dedication all the more effectively.

As watershed shifts in our thinking and perspective occur, we must minister in stereo.

The greatest Christians are those who lived and ministered stereophonically—with heart and mind, in Spirit and in truth. We must and we can master the art of pastoral surround sound.

The disrespect for Christians and Christianity, prevalent in so much of contemporary culture, is largely due to our trying to do ministry in monaural mode.

We can pray, and we can think, and we can become Christian ministers in the fullest sense of our highest calling.

The bush is fine. Most of us, however, just can’t live there anymore. And that is increasingly so the world over. ■

1 Mark A. Noll. *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1994), 123.

2 *Ibid.*, 124.

Missions—global and at home

Keeping the delicate balance

Mike Ryan and Gary Krause



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Finding the balance between the needs of mission at home and elsewhere has always been difficult. The local church has its own urgent needs to function as an effective witness in the community. And yet again and again, new mission areas around the world have virtually no resources of any kind.

Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago is often criticized for being too “local,” too oriented toward its own needs. During a convention in Sydney, Australia a clergyman stood to challenge Bill Hybels, Willow Creek’s pastor, on this very point.

“You’re right,” Hybels replied. “We are too focused on ourselves, and we could do so much more for overseas missions.” He paused, and then named a multi-million dollar figure that Willow Creek had sent to overseas missions during the previous financial year. It was a figure so high that it almost rivaled that given by some denominations. Hybels wasn’t bragging. “But you’re right,” he continued, modestly. “We should do so much more.” The questioner quickly sat down.

The Christian church has always been a community of faith that cares for its poorer brothers and sisters. From the earliest days when Paul collected money from well-off churches to support poorer churches, to the phenomenal awakening in missions in late eighteenth-century Europe, the Christian

community has ministered to others in less-fortunate circumstances.

Researching the challenge

In the late 1980s Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders did some missiological stock-taking. Getting out the world map, they studied where the Church had a presence—through schools, churches, hospitals, or other institutions—and where the Church was absent. The results were startling. Vast areas of the world remained virtually untouched. After much prayer and discussion, they decided to establish a global strategy to reach the unreached areas. That strategy was captured in a document entitled “Global Strategy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.” In 1990 the office of Global Mission was established.

The Global Strategy document highlights major “unentered” areas such as China, India, and Western Asia. It points to the “great metropolises” of the world that are “barely touched.” It sets parameters and guidelines for an office of mission that will be truly global.

Researching the problem

Established in the United States, the Seventh-day Adventist Church at first assumed that its mission was to the various people groups within North America. Early Adventists did not recognize that they had a mission to foreign lands—at least not until 1870. After all, migration had turned the United States into a truly multicultural society, and Adventists were certain they were reaching out to every nation, kindred, tongue, and people right at home.

The idea of actually going overseas to fulfill the commission seemed an impossible task. However, it wasn’t long before the young Church realized that Matthew 28 was really a global commission, and soon Adventists were establishing the Church in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Pacific. By the turn of the century, the Adventist Church had established an extensive mission field, considering the small size of the denomination.

In the early 1920s, the Church faced a crisis. Exciting new opportunities for work were opening up around the world. However, after World War I, the world was in an economic slump, and the budget at the Church’s world headquarters was a quarter of a million dollars short. Missionaries were at risk of having to be recalled.

The problem headed the agenda of the 1922 General Conference Autumn Council. The delegates met and prayed. Finally, they adopted a plan to ask Church members to sacrifice a week's wage in a special offering. Despite the depressed financial climate, the 208,771 Church members rallied, and gave a third of a million dollars—the average gift per Church member in North America equaled six days wages.

Some today think Global Mission drains the resources of the Church in North America. It is true that North American donors are generous, but Global Mission receives no tithe and only one offering a year from the Church, and many Church leaders testify that concern for foreign missions has boosted giving for local needs. Others ask, "What are you doing for the needs at home?" The answer to that question depends, of course, on where home is. Global Mission allocates resources to every area of the world—including North America—but takes into account the priorities of different areas. Those areas where the Church is less established or is weakest, receive larger appropriations.

Mission is still important

The Adventist Church has kept its focus on a worldwide mission. Areas once considered mission fields are now sending out their own missionaries. Statistics show that the Adventist Church is one of the most rapidly growing Christian denominations in the world.

There has been tremendous growth in particular areas. There's one Adventist among every 65 people in the Philippines. There's one in 21 in Papua New Guinea, one in 33 in Rwanda and one in 54 in Zimbabwe. The Church has also been very successful in South and Central America.

But Global Mission still faces two major challenges: the 10/40 window and large urban areas, including the secular west.

Urban areas and secularism. Glance

through the demographics, and you'll soon see that over the past 150 years the Adventist Church has established itself most strongly in rural areas and on islands. Whatever the reasons, Adventists have found it easier to share their message outside the cities. That presents a problem when you realize that cities are by all means the fastest-growing areas in the world, with millions and millions of people in them.

According to some estimates, in five years half of the world's population will be living in urban areas. While there has been outstanding Church growth in the developing world, Church growth in the secular west—particularly in the cities—has been slow.

The 10/40 window. The Adventist Church has largely ignored the area of the world known as the 10/40 window. This geographical rectangle, with 10 degrees north of the equator as its base and 40 degrees north of the equator as its upper limit, extends east from West Africa through the Middle East and into Asia. Sixty percent of the world's population—3.4 billion people—live in the 10/40 window. About one percent of them believe in Jesus Christ. Few are Seventh-day Adventist.

It is true that over the years the Adventist Church has sent many missionaries into the 10/40 window. But like many other Christian churches, Adventists have tended to put most human and financial resources where the work is more established and less difficult. According to mission researchers, only eight percent of today's Christian missionaries go to the 10/40 window.

Nearly 90 countries touch this mission field, and they represent incredibly diverse populations. Culturally the 10/40 window ranges from sophisticated urbanites in Tokyo to the herdsmen of the central plains of Asia to migrants in northern Africa. In this area, the world's major belief systems hold sway: Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Animism. Although

the Berlin Wall and communism fell, 1.3 billion people in the 10/40 window are still atheistic communists. It contains the most economically challenged countries of the world, as well as one of the most prosperous—Japan.

The suffering of humanity in this geographical area is almost incomprehensible to the Western mind. How is the Christian church going to face the incredible challenge of the 10/40 window? To a greater degree than our church has ever realized, we must develop methods and structures that recognize and meet the challenges presented by the diversity of race, religion, wealth, and politics. We have no choice but to take action.

The Global Mission initiative

Global Mission has been the spark plug of Adventist mission over the past decade. Since 1990, more than 16,000 Adventist churches and thousands more congregations have been established—that's nearly five churches a day, not including congregations. Nearly 3,000 people a day have been baptized. Church membership has nearly doubled from 6 million to 12 million, in some 205 countries. New countries have been entered. In 1990, for example, there were no Adventists in Cambodia. Today there are 4,000 Church members and 65 congregations.

Yet in the face of the tremendous challenges that still face Global Mission, perhaps it's wrong to talk about success. And it's easy to get caught up in numbers and statistics, which are helpful only in helping us strategically place our resources for best results. But it is nevertheless true that behind every baptism statistic lies a story of how God's love has flooded a person's life, and given new meaning and hope.

Global Mission has been able to achieve what it has because of five major factors.

1. *Global Mission pioneers.* Global Mission's frontline workers are Global Mission pioneers. They have started the vast majority of new congrega-

tions around the world. Pioneers have had unprecedented success in reaching people who seemed to be unreachable. These pioneers are lay people, usually young, who volunteer at least a year of their time to work within their own cultural group to establish a new group of believers.

Pioneers represent a new wave of mission. They understand the culture and language of their own people, blend with the local people, and can communicate the good news in a unique way. They are also far less expensive than overseas missionaries. They have started hundreds of new churches in difficult areas such as northern India and west Africa.

The key is that the pioneers live, eat, and work with the people. They have a wholistic ministry, helping the people, understanding the people, and sharing the love of God with the people. Its an incarnational ministry modeled by Jesus and the apostles.

2. *Global Mission study centers.* Dr. Charles Taylor, one of the architects of Global Mission, once visited Egypt and was overwhelmed by the relative handful of believers after 100 years of Adventist work. "It's time we stop banging our heads against the door," he said, "and take time to find the combination to the lock."

In response to this kind of challenge, Global Mission has set up study centers around the world to help us find better, more effective ways of sharing with people from different belief traditions. These study centers are specializing in the areas of Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, secularism, and Islam.

So far these centers have established dozens of new models for reaching people groups that have traditionally been difficult to reach.

3. *A grassroots approach.* The Global Mission office at the Adventist Church's world headquarters rarely develops programs for other levels of the Church to implement. Rather, it asks local church organizations to come up with their own action plans for starting new congregations.

After all, who knows better what will prove effective than those closest to the action? Local people know best how to communicate the good news in a cultural language that the people will understand. Global Mission's major role is to support local efforts to reach the unreached with hope.

4. *Rigorous accountability.* Every cent spent on Global Mission projects is carefully accounted for. On more than one occasion Global Mission has withdrawn funds because of lack of evidence that money has been spent where it should have been spent. This can be tough for areas of the world field, but it's the least we can do as good stewards of God's money, and to honor the faith of donors who have trusted us to spend their money on frontline mission projects.

5. *The power of the Holy Spirit.* Everything that has been achieved through Global Mission has been because of the blessing and power of the Holy Spirit. Global Mission supporters and pioneers are men and women of prayer.

Reaching the unreached with hope

On one occasion I was visiting the Adventist seminary in Myanmar (for-

merly Burma). In the front row of the congregation was a girl three feet tall and one of the youngest students in the school. I have seen few people sing with such enthusiasm. Her eyes were bright and her smile shone from her face with each word. You could just feel the joy that was hers. The beauty of her spirit and innocence was contagious.

A little later I was worshiping with a new little congregation about three-hours drive from Cape Town, South Africa. The beautiful harmony and rhythm of the song service was refreshing. A little boy sitting on the front row was singing his heart out. Every fiber of his soul was engaged. I can't tell you how he ministered to me that evening.

As I remember those two children I'm reminded that their families were members of new congregations established by Global Mission. There are children all over the world who, along with their families, are waiting for just such experiences.

Somehow when you're worshiping in a new church group overseas or at home, the elusive balance between the homeland and overseas seems a little less of a problem. We must do whatever we can for God's children, wherever they are. ■

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Serious about secular society?

Christian witness in the secularized West

Barry Oliver

Christian witness is generally having a tough time in the secularized West. While the nations of Europe, North America, and Australasia have a strong heritage of Christian faith, most people in these regions live as though they had no such heritage. To them God simply has little or no specific impact.

The following perspectives may help us understand what is happening and how to meet it.

1. *Understand our responsibility to the world.* Traditionally, we have emphasized that the world is the devil's domain. This has led some to distance themselves from the world. But the world will always be God's creation, though marred by sin and its effects. All humans have been made in the image of God and are objects of His saving mission. God so loved the world that He sent His Son to salvage it. Our mission to the world is God's mission.

While we rightly emphasize separation from the sin of the world, we give too little attention to the New Testament theme of incarnation and what it implies. Paul recognized this imperative when he wrote that he had "become all things to all people," so that he "might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).*

Can we do any less? Isn't this as much a part of the Great Commission as is any other aspect of the biblical definition of it?

2. *Enlarge the concept of mission.* One reason for the success of the spread of the gospel has been a consistent focus on preaching the gospel to every "nation and tribe and language and people" (Rev. 14:6). By the grace of God may we never lose this emphasis.

To reach the secular world effectively we need to have a better understanding of our mission and method. A profound insight into the *method of our approach* is described: "Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"¹

Under this approach, Christ "mingled," "desired their good," "showed His sympathy," "ministered to their needs," and "won their confidence" before He asked them to follow Him. These actions—mingling, sympathizing, winning their confidence—were as much a part of His strategy as was the invitation to follow Him. There are four significant elements of such a comprehensive understanding of mission that must be implemented:

a. *Fellowship.* When God conducted the greatest evangelistic campaign of the ages, He did so as Immanuel—God with us. He chose incarnation (*fellowship*) as the first essential element of His method (Phil. 2:5-11). Christ's method was to be one with the people. His high ethical standards did not prevent Him from reaching people as diverse as Mary Magdalene, Levi Matthew, Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, Zacchaeus, the Roman centurion, and Simon Peter, to name a few. He did not remain distant, aloof, or separate. The exact opposite was true.

b. *Service.* Jesus' ministry was one of service. Service was so important to Jesus' ministry that He declared that Simon Peter could have no part with Him unless He willingly acknowledged Jesus' service (John 13:8, 9).

Unselfish service is a very powerful moral force in secular society. People will take notice of those whom they perceive to be unselfish, humble, genuine, and caring. In fact, people who do not see themselves as "religious" will usually be much more willing to acknowledge such people as genuine Christians than they will be willing to recognize the person who delivers a "sermon."

c. *Justice.* Closely allied to service is the concept of justice. Micah's call is still valid today:



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"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8, NIV). The call for just action is repeated by almost all the prophets of the Old Testament (Isa. 1:15-18; Amos 5:21-24; Ps. 146:5-10).

Christ powerfully reaffirmed the same imperative. Notice, for example, Matthew 23:23, 24 (NIV): "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel."

Christ calls His people individually and corporately to strive for justice to the oppressed, the fatherless, the widow, the lost. We will be more like Christ if we "desire their good" in a practical way than if we preach the gospel in a theoretical, irrelevant, let-me-set-you-straight manner that makes it impossible for a person to hear what we are saying.

d. *Proclamation.* The climactic event in mission occurs when the invitation is given and accepted to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. To accomplish this, we must do as Christ did. We must mingle, desire the good of people, show sympathy for them, meet their needs, and win their confidence.

3. *Adopt an incarnational paradigm for mission.* We have called people out of the world to come and see what great things God can do. We have stressed the importance of obedience, sanctification, and separation. We have insisted on a lifestyle and ethic that is appropriate for one who honors Christ as Savior and Lord. And so it should be because to do so is biblical and true to the deep needs of the human soul.

Unfortunately in so doing, we may have failed to realize that there is another biblical imperative. That

imperative is to infiltrate the world. "Go ye into all the world . . ." "Go and make disciples . . ." "[Go] to every nation, and tribe, and language, and people." We have no option but by the Holy Spirit to incarnate ourselves in the world for the sake of the world, and for the sake of the gospel. Again, this is what Jesus did.

Maybe we have not sufficiently explored or implemented an incarnational paradigm of mission as described in Philippians 2:5-8. God's ministry through the church is done in the world just as Christ's ministry in His incarnation was done in the world. God is at work in the world. He is at work reconciling the world to

Then, when "the Word became flesh"—the climax of God's self-communication—the same process occurred. Christ became a first-century Palestinian Jew who experienced pain, hunger, and exposure. Yet when He became one of us He did not cease to be Himself. He remained forever the eternal Word—God Himself—yet incarnated in human form.

Christ's incarnation enabled Him to identify with us in our humanity while at the same time He retained His identity as God (John 1:1-3).

5. *Adapt relevant evangelistic practices.* We cannot assume that secular people will be able to hear the message if we use methods that only

WE NEED TO START OUR INTERACTION WITH PEOPLE IN OTHER WAYS THAN WITH OBJECTIVE TRUTH.

Himself (2 Cor. 5:17-19). The world is the object of the plan of salvation (John 3:16). It is to be the object of the church's activity.

4. *Understand God's self-revelation through the process of inspiration.* Perhaps one reason for our struggle with the incarnational paradigm is our failure to understand God's self-revelation through the process of inspiration. Despite the ravages of sin, God did not choose to remain isolated, separated and hidden from His creation. Rather, He chose to take a risk and submit the eternal gospel to such variants as time, culture, language, personality, and education.

Our doctrine of inspiration tells us that God communicated Himself, the gospel, and His intention to save through human words, images, and customs. He decided what He wanted to communicate, but in doing so He did not obliterate the language, personality, or culture of the chosen instrument. Each used his or her faculties freely, while the divine message or intent remained intact.

work well where there is a recognition of Christian values and norms.

In a secular context, the decision-making process demands that we commence our interaction with people differently.² Like Jesus, we need to meet them where they are and utilize strategies and methods that render the gospel hearable for them.

6. *How then should we reach out to secular people? Consider the following:*

a. *An incarnational mission.* To be incarnational in a secular context, we need to do several things:

We need to start our interaction with people in other ways than with objective truth. Secular people need to see how Christianity meets their deepest needs. This does not mean that we give up our commitment to objective truth. It means that we have another starting point.

Alastair McGrath has suggested two primary factors apart from the work of the Holy Spirit. The first is "the attractiveness of God"—the ability of God to satisfy the deepest fundamental needs of the individual;

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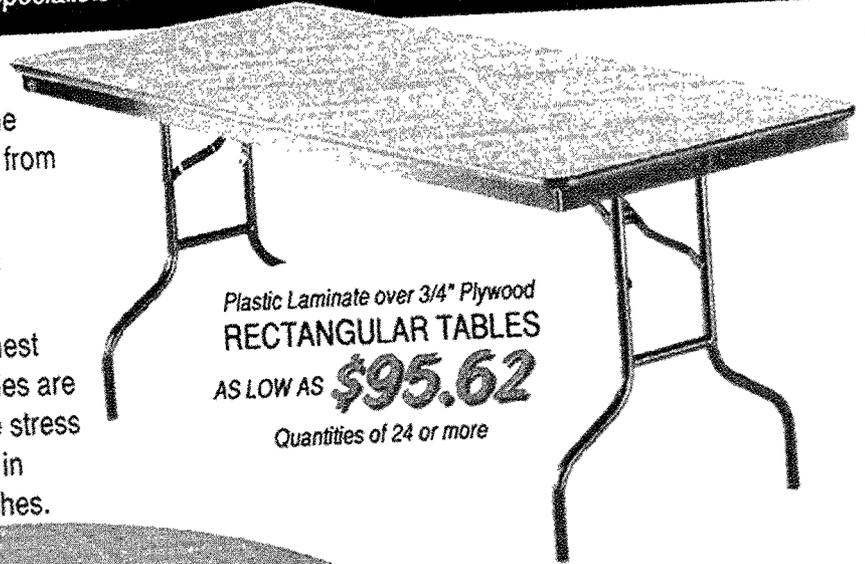
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the overwhelming love of God demonstrated in Christ's death, and the stability and purpose which we can have as faith in God develops within us. The secular relativist cries out for such stability and purpose.

The other factor is "the relevance of Christianity to life." McGrath has pointed out that all human beings have the need for a basis for morality. We have a need to have a framework by which we make sense of experience. We have a need for a vision to guide and inspire us as individuals.³

We need to remember that most people learn through a narrative/ inductive approach. Peter Corney has said it well: "Post-modern people are less linear in their approach to communication and knowledge than the previous generation. Less deductive, more inductive. Less word-oriented, more visual. Less cerebral, more experiential. Less propositional, more story-related.

"The questions in their minds will be 'Does it work?' and 'How will it affect my life?' After an event or service they are more likely to ask 'What did you experience?' than 'What did you learn?'

"This does not mean rationality has been abandoned—it simply no longer stands alone. It has been expanded to include experience. The subjective has invaded the objective. This also means that the context in which we preach . . . will be as important as the content."⁴

We should cultivate relationships with secular people. We need to express ourselves with humility maintaining an emphasis on servant-hood and Christ's Lordship.

b. *A God-centered mission.* All ministry is God's ministry. His intention is to save the world (2 Cor. 5:18, 19). Christ came as the supreme revelation of the person and character of God to facilitate that ministry (Heb. 1:1, 2). Those who have been created new in Christ Jesus are called to participate with God in that ministry (2 Cor. 5:17-21).

God sends (Mark 1:2; Luke 9:2;

Rom. 10:15), gives (John 3:16), serves (Luke 22:27), loves (John 3:16; 1 John 4:11-21), and calls (Acts 16:10). The world does not set the agenda for ministry. God sets the agenda and focuses it in the world, so that it becomes our agenda. Jesus was very clear on what that focus should be. If He were lifted up He would draw all people, including those with the strongest secular bent, to Him.

c. *The congregation as mission.* While it is true that the church must go out into the world, it is also true that the world must be invited and welcomed into the church. This welcome has two components:

First, the church must prepare the world to join the church. When the congregation is able to welcome the world and wrap it into the fellowship of believers in such a way that healing and growth forms a continuum, then the congregation fulfills its mission.

Second, is the manner in which the congregation engages the world. While there must always be a certain element of the haphazard in the interaction of the believer with the world, the congregation must be intentional about planning and resourcing a process that will provide opportunities for its members to interact with the world.

To reach secular people, *process* should have priority over *event*. One event will usually not be sufficient. The congregation must provide a variety of options to facilitate the movement of people toward faith.

d. *Values transmission.* Mission to secular people is not primarily information transmission. While we need to share information in the form of propositional truth, we must be more focused on values transmission.

Today, people rarely ask, "What is truth?" Their first question generally is, "Where is meaning?" Their interest will be aroused when their scale of values is challenged to the extent that they are led to realize that ultimate meaning cannot be derived from their secular scale of values.

Merton Strommen has suggested

four elements that contribute to a values-transmission approach to witness and evangelism:⁵

First, *commitment*. Commitment to the Lord and His message is foundational if we are to communicate values.

Second, *authenticity*. Nothing is as destructive to our witness as lack of authenticity. Contemporary people are particularly suspicious of those whom they perceive to be unauthentic. They are disillusioned with the church for that very reason. They are so accustomed to having their trust shattered that if they sense any hint of sham, there is an immediate and total loss of any further opportunity to share values.

Third, *modeling*. A model Christian is a powerful force for good. All people, secular or otherwise, are moved by the witness of those who live their life by the values they espouse.

Fourth, *personal witness*. Values transmission is best accomplished on a person-to-person level. Values are almost always caught rather than taught.

Conclusion

Nothing is impossible for God. God loves everyone. This being so, the church cannot relegate mission to the secular world to the "too hard" basket. Rather, we must believe Jesus' promise that "this gospel of the kingdom will go to all the world, for a witness unto all nations." With this conviction, we must go forward to accomplish that mission. ■

* All biblical quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

1 Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1942), 143.
2 For an insightful discussion of the decision-making process see James F. Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communication* (Nashville, Tenn.: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1979), 63-87.
3 Alastair McGrath, *Bridge Building: Effective Christian Apologetics* (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 226, 227.
4 Peter Corney, "Have You Got the Right Address? Post-Modernism and the Gospel," *Griid*, Spring 1995, 2.
5 Merton P. Strommen, "Communicating Values," in *Perspectives on Values*, ed. V. Bailey Gillespie (Riverside, Calif.: La Sierra University Press, 1993), 21-46.

Incarnational ministry

Mission and contextualization

Bertil Wiklander



Bertil Wiklander, D.Th., is president of the Trans-European Division, St. Albans, Hertfordshire, England.

Jesus said: “Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it” (Luke 11:28, NIV). Nearly two thousand years later, our dream is still to see this promise fulfilled in the lives of all people.

Obviously, nobody will hear the Word of God unless someone proclaims it. So, we proclaim it. Through campaigns, meetings, Bible studies, small groups, personal visits, worship services, books, magazines, tracts, Bible correspondence courses, camp meetings, youth and family ministries, audio and video ministries, Web sites, to name a few venues.

The proclamation is not an end in itself. Since our primary concern is with people and the blessing that God’s living Word may bring them, the fact that so many still have not heard the Word and received its blessing gives us concern. The reason for our concern is not just a wish to present better baptismal numbers; the reason is that Christ’s love compels us, leaving in us a compassion for those who have not heard the good news of the gospel.

Finding the lost is simply not a matter of method or technique, but one of attitude. It is the attitude of the shepherd, the caretaker of the flock, who, driven by love for the sheep, goes after them until they are found. Too often, pastors see themselves as pastors only for the saved, and they forget they are also pastors for the lost.

Finding the lost is a two-phased action:

first, to go after the lost where they are; second, to help them find the lost things within them, their lost faith in God, their lost hope for the future and an eternity with God, and their lost love for God and their fellow humans.

Our mission is an exodus—an exodus from church buildings, where we may prefer to sit, and a going out to where the lost are. It is an exodus from our own concepts, thoughts, and language. Our mission is not just a matter of proclaiming the Word in people’s physical hearing; it is helping them to understand that which is lost within them—their faith, hope, and love.

Communication and contextualization

For its mission to be successful, the church needs to ensure that it communicates successfully. Successful communication makes Jesus convincingly known, so that people are led to hear the voice of God through the Holy Spirit, so that they want to worship Him (cf. Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 14:24f.; Rom. 10:14-17).

But how does communication work? Any model of communication has three basic components: sender, message, receiver. We have paid more attention to the sender and the message than we have to the receiver. We have emphasized the message—the Word of God, the Bible, the truth, our beliefs and theology. We have been strongly aware of the Sender—of God and His Spirit, and our calling as the people of God.

Providing adequate information is not a guarantee of successful communication. The question is whether or not the message is relevant and transparent to the receiver? In other words, is the message contextualized enough to meet the needs of the receiver?

Contextualization involves valuing other people more than ourselves, more than our cherished methods or equipment, regardless of their sophistication or financial value. As we encounter the lost, it is what they need that matters, not what I need or what gives me pleasure. This people-oriented task can be successfully performed only in Christ.

Christ’s spirit, love, and humility are the church’s most important resources. Church leaders must show God’s people these resources, “[using] whatever gift [we have] received to serve others . . . administering God’s grace in its various forms” (1 Peter 4:10).

In the parable of the soils (Matt. 13), Jesus explains that finding the lost involves finding the good soil for the seed of the Word. Our task, therefore, is to find or prepare that good soil in every person's heart.

Jesus says that the good soil represents individuals "who hear the word and understand it" (Matt. 13:23). Paul discovered that lost people must "understand the Word" to be that which restores to them the blessings that they are seeking. To help people understand, he used anything that worked, including radically adjusting himself to those he sought to reach. He said, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Anything to save people! No method or technique is holy. These are simply tools that are chosen or discarded depending on their effectiveness in reaching lost people.

Paul's incarnational ministry aimed at saving the lost—even at the cost of changing his methods to meet people where they were and help them understand. This is what Jesus refers to when He says we must leave the 99 sheep and go after the lost one.

A biblical illustration

Paul presents a fascinating illustration of Christian contextualization. Generally, the apostle went to the synagogue and used the Scriptures and the Jewish tradition to proclaim Christ. The method worked quite well, particularly with Hellenistic Jews, whose internal conceptual world that enabled them to "hear and understand" the Word. But not so the learned Greeks at the meeting of the Areopagus! (Acts 17:16-33).

In approaching them, Paul faced a dilemma typical to all missionaries. How would these Greeks understand the Word of God? By culture, they were as distant from the gospel as anyone could be. They had no Old Testament, no Jewish tradition, no eschatology, no expectation for Messiah, and no belief in the resurrection. Paul's approach to them was

quite different. Although his main purpose was to preach Christ, it was not until he established a common ground between himself and his audience that he spoke about God's revelation through Christ. First, he builds a relationship with them, developing trust and common ground.

If people don't trust us, they will not hear us. Paul began by appreciating what they had: "Men of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious . . ." (Acts 17:22). He then referred to their mode of worship. He

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spoke of an idol with an altar inscription, "to an unknown god." At this point there was not a word of criticism or judgment against idolatry. But then Paul moved from the Athenian polytheism to the nature of the true God. He spoke on their terms. To be heard and understood, He came down from his own superior insight to operate at the level of those to whom he was speaking.

Nobody would accuse Paul of supporting idolatry, even though he referred to altars and inscriptions on idols without condemnation and quoted from their own poetry. He did all this, using the conceptual world of

his audience. No matter how sacrilegious this might have felt to them, he argued on their own turf to make them hear, understand, and obey the Word of God.

In doing this, Paul accomplished two objectives. First, the wording of the proclamation was in harmony with the conceptual world of the hearers, enabling them to hear and understand. The wording established a common ground, it provided the soil in which the Word of God could be sown. Second, the purpose of the proclamation was in harmony with his confession. The arguments he presented led to a proclamation of the risen Jesus (Acts 17:31). The result was mixed: some scoffed, some spoke of hearing him another day, and a few believed and joined him. The task of communication was completed. The Holy Spirit turned the apostle's words into an avenue of conviction.

Coming down to where the people are is the attitude of Christ. Jesus "being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness" (Phil. 2:6, 7).

Christ's humility made God one of us. What will make God one with lost people and with us is Christ's humility in us. That must be the spiritual basis for any attempt at contextualization in Christian mission.

An incarnational ministry

The Motilonos in Latin-America frightened many. They were considered as cruel thieves and killers. Someone who had met them once said: "We found them extremely hostile, although we gave them presents and tried to be kind to them."

One day Bruce Olson, a missionary, arrived. No white man had ever gotten to know the Motilonos before, except for selfish motives and at a distance. During his first five years with these people Olson did nothing but live among them, on their terms. He

continued on page 29

Helping your local church through 10/40 window emphasis!

Jon L. Dybdahl



Jon L. Dybdahl, Ph.D., is chair of the Department of World Mission, Andrews University, Berrien Springs, Michigan.

Global Mission's concern and the General Conference's priority to reach the 10/40 window¹ often does not receive much notice in local churches. Wrapped up in local concerns, many churches show no particular concern for this most unevangelized section of the world. Nobody has written it off, but most—especially in the first world—know little about it.

In my seminary class "Mission to the World," I had a young pastor frankly tell me, "I can't remember saying anything to my churches about cross-cultural missions, much less the 10/40 window." I'm afraid he may be representative of hundreds of others. Preoccupied with the constant daily struggle to minister to the local arena in which they have been placed, it is easy to let concern for faraway places slip into the background.

Caring for the 10/40 window

Contrary to the opinion of some, I believe that stimulating interest in mission to the 10/40 window will not only help fulfill God's call to reach every "nation, kindred, tongue, and people" (Rev. 14:6), but will also profoundly change local churches and make them more healthy and evangelistic. Concern for the 10/40 window and its people will make local churches better! Let me give you some reasons.

1. *World mission consciousness enhances Adventist identity and combats obsessive navel gazing.*

The problems and concerns of the local church and its surrounding area often seem overwhelming. Many see the world and the church as a macrocosm of what they are experiencing locally. Nothing could be further from the truth. Seeing the deep needs of others can help us count our blessings. Beginning to reach others far away, as well as near, expands our vision and can help us forget some of the local problems we face. Besides, understanding the global nature of our church as it attempts to reach all the world—even the hard-to-reach parts—is a helpful thing. A sense of being part of a world movement with a global vision gives a larger, more compelling picture of who we are and what our task is. We become part of our worldwide family in ways that a narrow local picture can never give us.

2. *10/40 window concern corrects overly optimistic views of the success of Christian mission.*

One reason we see less cross-cultural mission emphasis in first world churches is that many have believed overly optimistic portrayals of what we have accomplished. Don't get me wrong! I'm not saying we have failed in our mission. Much has been accomplished. Adventists are in 205 out of 230 countries. The Christian missionary movement as a whole has made great strides. That, however, is only one side of the picture.

About two billion people in the world will be untouched by the gospel unless someone crosses a cultural boundary to reach them. Quick evangelistic forays into Jamaica, the Philippines, parts of Africa south of the Sahara, and Papua New Guinea are not the answer. These are the very areas where evangelism is most easily done by local people. Visiting these areas gives a false picture of easy success and a completed work.

Trips to such areas must be balanced by a serious look at places like India, China, Thailand, Albania, North Africa, and Turkey. The list could go on. These are the places where the truly stouthearted pioneers of the gospel could work. That is the reason our church's attention is being focused there. I believe people respond to need. The 10/40 window is the core of true need and the home of the major non-Christian religions. Clearly focusing on that need can spark renewed

interest in the Church's cross-cultural mission.

3. *Cross-cultural mission emphasis and experience feeds local evangelistic efforts.*

Some fear that an emphasis on cross-cultural mission will drain funds and personnel away from crying local needs. These fears have proven to be unfounded. The truth is that local church involvement in 10/40 mission actually promotes and enhances local area evangelism. True concern for unreached Muslims and Buddhists will in fact enhance local evangelistic efforts.

Witness the young student missionaries as they return from overseas. Because of their experience abroad, they reach out with new vigor to win friends and neighbors. Surveys of short-term evangelical missions² show that returned missionaries increase their home mission activities an average of 64 percent upon completion of their cross-cultural work.

"To show a liberal self-denying spirit for the success of foreign missions is a sure way to advance home missionary work; for the prosperity of the home work depends largely, under God, upon the reflex influence of the evangelical work done in countries afar off."³ If we take such a view seriously, we will begin to support mission not only because we care about the 10/40 window, but because we also are deeply concerned about the lost who are on our own doorsteps.

4. *Awakening to cross-cultural mission in the 10/40 window awakens us to the 10/40 in our own area.*

Many followers of Christ suffer from "people blindness." Since they live in their own culture and are so used to life with their own kind, they do not notice people of other cultures and religions who live near them. Being awakened to the crying need of the 10/40 window can alert us to those around us who have come from the 10/40 window. How many of us know anything about the foreign stu-

dents, recent immigrants, and cultural groups who live near us?

Many countries of the world are like the United States. People from a multitude of nations reside in North America for various reasons from education to job opportunities to the desire for freedom. According to the 1990 census, 25 percent of New York City is foreign born. Fifty thousand Chinese immigrate to the U.S. each year. At least 200,000 Arabs live in Detroit, which has the largest Muslim population in the U.S.

When we sense the tremendous challenge of reaching Muslims with the Christian message in the 10/40 window, it can raise our consciousness in countries like the United States to reach out to the Muslims who are near us. Working directly for Muslims in Saudi Arabia is not normally possible, but in Detroit we are free to do so. How much have we done?

Beginning to have a heart that cries out for the need of the unreached far away can help to give us eyes to see

and a heart to help the culturally diverse living and working beside us.

5. *Understanding the challenges of the 10/40 window can help us see evangelism near us in a new light.*

Adventism arose in the milieu of North America and from the beginning saw itself as a reforming movement in the Christian world. As such our doctrinal formulations and evangelistic methods developed with an eye to defending and explaining our beliefs to other Christians. Both personal and public evangelism methods were forged that explained and defended Adventist distinctives with the Western, Christian world in mind.

Evangelism to the 10/40 window is mission to non-Christians. When one attempts to share Jesus Christ with tribal religions, Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists, one simply cannot use the same approaches and methods that may have worked for Western Christians. This means Bible studies, sermons, and our total approach must

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Ten Ways a Local Church Can Help Reach the 10/40 Window

1. Invite a missionary or visitor from the 10/40 window to give a special program in your church.
2. Preach a sermon series on God's concern to have His love shared to the whole world.
3. Adopt a 10/40 window city, country, or people group as your focus of ministry and prayer.
4. Send a church or youth group on a short-term mission trip to a particular part of the 10/40 window.
5. Foster 10/40 window awareness by featuring a country or need each week in the church bulletin.
6. Research the people from the 10/40 window who live, work, or study near you. Make friends with them.
7. Make literature that emphasizes mission to the 10/40 window prominently available in your church.
8. Feature the 10/40 window in children's Sabbath School divisions.
9. Comment on world news in connection with 10/40 window mission and let people know that Christians are still being persecuted all over the world.
10. Financially support those who desire to do both short-term and long-term mission work in the 10/40 window.

be examined and recast if we expect to get a hearing.

More than a few of my students at the seminary have begun to think creatively about evangelism on the home front after beginning to see the challenge that we face in sharing the message of Christ and the Adventist distinctives with non-Christians in

the third world.

The truth is that in principle, very similar challenges are being faced in our evangelistic outreach in the West, as are being faced in other less Christian cultures. While many in the first world (especially America) still believe in God, the forces of secularism, materialism, Eastern philosophy,

and the ideas of the New Age have progressively led people away from their former Christian roots.

Creative approaches are needed to fit the new cultural situation. A concern for evangelism in the 10/40 window can give birth to fervency and to new ideas for evangelistic outreach at home.

Conclusion

For all these reasons and others, local churches all over the world need to take seriously the challenge of the 10/40 window. We need to do this for the sake of the lost, for our own health and progress, and in obedience to the call of the three angels of Revelation 14. It is past time for those who care about God and His kingdom to sound the trumpet and awaken to the need there is for our help in the battle raging for the hearts of human beings all over the world. ■

- 1 A shorthand term for the roughly rectangular area of the world from 10 degrees to 40 degrees north of the equator. This least evangelized area of the world covers North Africa, the Middle East, and the bulk of Asia.
- 2 "Is Short-term Mission Really Worth the Time and Money?" STEM Ministries Inc., Minneapolis.
- 3 Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers* (Hagerstown, Md.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1948), 465. See also *Testimonies for the Church* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press® Pub. Assn., 1948), 6:27.

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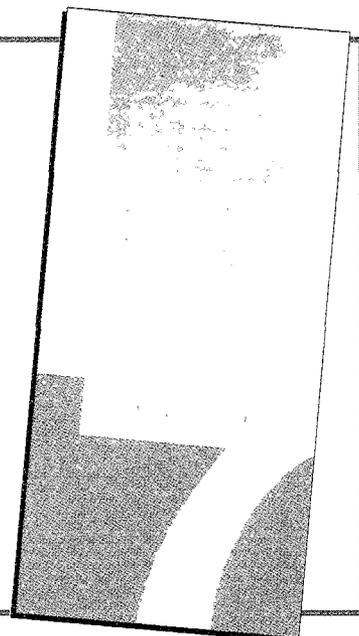
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Missions across cultures

It takes more than a call

Pat Gustin

As a child I feasted on all those books Mother had brought home—*Tommy Goes to Africa*, *Bride on the Amazon*, and Eric B. Hare's *Clever Queen*. The books did their work, and so one day, I announced that I would be a missionary on the Amazon river in Africa. I was nine years old. Obviously, my geography needed serious revision before my dream could be realized. But there would be more—much more—that I'd need to learn, and unlearn, to be a missionary.

I grew up in a small American midwestern town. We regularly attended the Adventist church. It was there that I got my early sense of how one "does church." Our congregation was small compared to the others in town, but we had enough in common to nurture and reinforce in me a healthy idea of "church."

I learned to show reverence by silence, to sing the hymns of Fanny Crosby, never to chew gum in church, always to wear my best polished shoes, and to kneel or stand quietly for prayer. In addition to these general lessons, I learned how to be a "good Adventist"—what to eat and wear and think and be. By the time I was ready for college, I had pretty much mastered the whole church scene. Obviously, I was well on the road to being a good missionary.

In college I majored in education and minored in religion. It seemed like a good combination—especially for a woman wanting to be a missionary. When I graduated, I

felt as if I were ready to go. All I had to do was wait for a "call," which when translated meant a job. After all, I'd been called by God when I was nine years old.)

Eventually I did go to the mission field—not to the Amazon, but to the Far East, serving for 23 years in Singapore and Thailand as a teacher, dean of girls, pastor, and school administrator. It wasn't all I'd dreamed of. It was more in many ways, less in others, and different in all. As time went by the shocker proved to be the fact that much of my early life had actually been quite ineffective in preparing me to meet some of the greatest challenges of missions.

The missionary across cultures

A cross-cultural missionary is one who leaves the comfort and familiarity of his or her culture to go to a place where the gospel needs to be presented. I was eager to go as a teacher, church planter, medical worker, or in any other position. And for this special mission a missionary must be prepared.

Obviously, the first requisite for a missionary is a commitment to follow God's leading, coupled with a deep faith and trust in His love, power, and willingness to "be with us always—even to the ends of the earth" (Matt. 28:20). Then the missionary usually needs some kind of work training—as a pastor, doctor, accountant, whatever.

Then comes a whole host of other necessities—*flexibility*, a sense of adventure, *flexibility*, team-building skills, *flexibility*, a knowledge of the new place of service, *flexibility*—I think you get the picture.

The greatest challenge of all is adapting to culture change. Culture affects everything we do and think. It affects the kind of music we like, the food we eat, the way we raise our children, how we talk to our parents, and virtually everything in our lives. It also affects what we believe and value (what is beautiful or ugly, good or bad, polite or impolite, appropriate or inappropriate).

At the deepest level it affects our worldview—what is real (the spirits or God), what is plausible (going to the moon or having "evil eye"), and how we view time and space. Our culture is such an integral part of us, governing all we think and do, that we are unaware of its impact on us. But it's there, quietly defining what is "normal," helping us make "rational decisions," and enabling us to func-



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tion in a reasonably integrated fashion from day to day. Only when we run head-on into a different culture does our own culture become fully apparent.

When we as missionaries go into another culture, we come face-to-face with a different but equally valid culture and we quickly discover that at all three levels (external behaviors, beliefs and values, and worldview) there are major differences.

Some of these differences may be dictated by climate and geography. Some foods will be available and others not, making it hard to eat corn flakes for breakfast and potatoes for lunch in many places. Other differences are the result of centuries of varying history, religion, and tradition.

In today's world, one does not have to move physically from one country or cultural group to another to face this challenge. Globalization and mass migration have created multicultural situations in every major city in the world. Most churches today have multi-cultural congregations with people from many different ethnic groups. Pastors are faced with the same questions missionaries face about worship, behavior, standards, and other cultural issues.

When a missionary or pastor encounters a new culture, their view of "normalcy" evaporates. Familiar behaviors and products, familiar "behavior cues" and accustomed values and beliefs undergo challenge. Life takes on a surreal feeling.

Cultural adaptations

Of necessity, missionaries must make huge cultural adaptations. This is not just a case of some flexibility; it's much more than that. The missionary must become as a child and begin slowly learning the outward manifestations of the new culture, as well as what is behind the behaviors, beliefs, values, and worldviews of that culture. Instead of judging everything by their own standard of what is "normal," missionaries must revise

and expand that standard in almost every area.

Traditional ways people live—their foods, houses, clothing, travel modes, games and sports, singing and worship—are not intrinsically right or wrong. Ministers and missionaries must come to know, understand, and ultimately learn to appreciate new and different ways of doing almost everything.

Unfortunately, our own culture tends to get in our way at every turn. As a result, the first tendency is always to give negative attribution to

In the areas of both life and worship, we see in the Bible a mosaic of cultures, in and through which God has worked to accomplish His purpose. He rarely changed anything in the day-to-day lives of people and almost always worked within their concept of "normal," in areas of life and worship.

During the nomadic life of Abraham and Sarah, God met with them at simple altars scattered throughout Mesopotamia. He directed the wandering Israelites to build Him a traveling tent so He could live

MINISTERS AND MISSIONARIES MUST COME TO KNOW, UNDERSTAND, AND ULTIMATELY LEARN TO APPRECIATE NEW AND DIFFERENT WAYS OF DOING ALMOST EVERYTHING.

everything that is different from our own ways. We tend to judge these differences as foolish, wrong, inefficient, evil, stupid, wasteful, backward, etc.

Worship is one of the most sensitive areas for religious leaders and missionaries. I had to learn that not all churches had to look like those back in my home town, and not all worship services had to follow the same patterns as the ones I attended as a child. Though pianos and Fanny Crosby hymns, organs and Bach are wonderful in some places, I had to learn that the simple chanting of a hymn or psalm is more meaningful if that is the acceptable cultural mode of expression in another culture.

Many different musical instruments can be used to bring praise to God. To insist that people wear polished shoes to church would be absurd where people wear rubber sandals and their culture requires them to leave these at the door of the church to show true reverence. Sitting cross-legged on the floor or even lying prostrate may be a more appropriate position for prayer than the standing or kneeling of my childhood.

as they did. Later He dwelt in a magnificent temple "fit for a king" during the period of the kingdom. The meetings of the New Testament communities were radically different from any that might have occurred during the patriarchal period. Always we see God adapting Himself to the ways of the people to whom He was reaching out.

Jesus and Paul as missionaries

Consider the life of Christ from a missiological viewpoint. Jesus also made major adaptations in His life to fit into the culture of His "mission field." In theological terms we refer to this as the incarnational model. The missiological implications of Jesus' ministry are enormous.

Christ left behind the advanced and glorious culture of heaven, and for 33 years lived, dressed, ate, and worshiped like any other first-century Jew. Instead of worshiping to the strains of celestial anthems, He worshiped to the blast of a ram's horn trumpet and the chants of temple worship.

Paul, following Jesus' example of
continued on page 29

Church fights and the "third voice" middle

David Brubaker

Conflict over the issue of homosexuality was tearing apart a congregation of about 100 members. One member of the congregation, involved in a committed long-term homosexual relationship was in a leadership role in the congregation, and for some members that was unacceptable. The governing body of the congregation wrestled with the issue for months, and ultimately brought it to the congregation for a vote. I was asked to facilitate the congregational discussion and vote.

The three groups in the conflict

In this instance there were, as usual, those who were for allowing the homosexual person to continue in office and those who were against it. I sought to empower a "third voice" in the conflict: those persons, present in every group conflict, who are more concerned with the process of resolving the conflict and less with the issues themselves. They are often the least heard and at the same time the most able to nurture the struggle. Thus the conflict broke down into three groups.

I asked for each of the three groups to choose spokespersons to talk with each other and with the congregation. All three representatives spoke with passion—the first two about the issues, and the third about her love for the congregation and the members involved on "both sides." The outcome of the

final vote was probably not changed by this dialogue, but the many in "the middle," who were more passionate about the future health of the congregation than about the identified issue, did influence the tone and the content of the debate.

The overlooked "third voice"

Scilla Wahrhaftig has written compellingly of the need to nurture the "third voice" in conflicted organizations.¹ If those in the non-polarized middle of a conflicted group are recognized and listened to, she concludes, the likelihood of reconciliation increases. My fifteen years of congregational conflict consulting has confirmed Wahrhaftig's thesis. The group most crucial to resolution and reconciliation is the group least likely to be noticed or consulted to any significant extent—the critical middle or the "third voice."

We overlook these crucial voices simply because they're generally not very loud or demanding. The voices of the passionate advocates of one issue or another predominate—for or against homosexuality, the building project, or whatever issue has generated intensity. These voices become so passionate that they must be heard. In fact, attempts to silence or ignore them only increases their intensity. Thus our conventional decision-making and intervention processes tend to privilege these voices at the expense of calmer and quieter ones.

Democratic decision-making processes, particularly parliamentary procedures, encourage active participation and reward passionate argument. Those participants who can "control the mike," "marshal the right arguments," and "get out the vote" are most likely to prevail. Linear thinking and either/or arguments tend to prevail over nuanced considerations and a tolerance of paradox in a two-party system where one person or view must eventually "win" over another.

The hesitant, the confused, and the quiet are at a disadvantage in these debates, as are those who are simply able to see both sides. How much passion can we expect from presentations that take the approach: "On the one hand. . . . But on the other hand. . . ." In the heat of debate such valuable voices tend to get lost in the noise.

Like it or not, religious congregations are not only families of faith, they are also political organizations that tend to adopt

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decision-making models that are consistent with the dominant culture in which they are situated. Thus, most congregational discussion and decision-making models also tend to privilege the passionate over those who appear perplexed.

Giving voice to the majority "middle"

The "middle" in any polarized debate is crucial not only because of its perspective but also because of its

remain, smaller groups and opportunities for individual input (listening sessions, surveys, etc.) are also needed.

2. *Provide training opportunities for both better advocacy and more skillful listening.* One reason that debates over important issues become polarized shouting matches is that we're really not very good at assertive speaking or attentive listening. Some congregations have learned to offer training in cooperative communication skills to members before times

volunteer for such roles, the value of their presence and input means that we must often seek them out.

The third voice is always present

The "third voice" is always present, even in the midst of the most polarizing debates. Our challenge is to recognize that it exists, provide an opportunity for it to emerge in the midst of passionate intensity, and respect its wisdom. It is from the third voice that I have most often heard the third way—a new perspective of looking at a particular conflict and its resolution that those most passionate about the issue were not able to see.

Listening to the third voice requires a conscious choice on the part of organizational leaders. Will we allow only the strident speeches, or will we also give space for the more reticent reflectors. Perhaps not surprisingly, it is in such still, small voices that a word from God is most often heard. ■

THEY ARE OFTEN THE LEAST HEARD AND AT THE SAME TIME THE MOST ABLE TO NURTURE THE STRUGGLE.

size. No organization where I have intervened in the last 15 years has been truly "split down the middle." In "position spectrums" that I have facilitated on a range of apparently divisive issues, those feeling "strongly" either for or against the identified issue generally have numbered 20-40 percent of the reportedly "conflicted" group. That leaves from 60-80 percent of organization members somewhere in the middle. These do perhaps favor a particular perspective but they are also well aware that there is validity in the opposing position.

So how do we hear from the critical middle, especially in times of congregational anxiety and stress? Wahrafftig offered several suggestions in her article, including using smaller, facilitated home meetings to hear from those who may not speak out in a larger public forum. Yet I am also challenged to assist congregations in structuring regular opportunities for "nurturing the voices that are least heard." Several ideas that I've seen used in regular congregational discussion and decision making include:

1. *Offer multiple methods for hearing from members.* Large group forums probably work for 20-40 percent of the members. For the many who

get rough. This provides for realistic expectations in the group, along with the skills needed for healthy dialogue.

3. *Recruit members of the third voice to serve on critical leadership boards and process planning committees.* Although their passion may not lead them to

1 See *Ministry*, May 2001, 12, 13.

Seasoned With Love II A Second Helping



It's no secret that pastoral wives are some of the best cooks in the world. Whether preparing huge quantities of food for potluck dinners or entertaining angels unawares, food and fellowship form an integral part of their lives. Now these special women share their favorite (ovo-lacto) recipes from around the globe for your enjoyment.

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A tension that's good for corporate health

James Coffin

People are responding to the gospel by the tens of thousands in many developing countries. On the other hand, things are slow-going and costly in most of the world's affluent nations. Granted, the Seventh-day Adventist Church has limited resources, so where should our outreach dollars be spent?

Let me begin to deal with this question by way of a few confessions.

Confession 1

I grew up in an American home that knew no luxury. We didn't have a bed for every child, so someone had to sleep on the couch each night. I was five years old before we had running water at the kitchen sink and ten years old before we had the comfort of an indoor bathroom.

We didn't replace furniture to improve our home's aesthetics. Rather, we did so because the old couldn't be cobbled together one more time. We rarely bought new if something used would suffice. We wore hand-me-downs. And we subscribed to the Protestant work ethic simply because a more demanding standard hadn't yet come along. In short, we were ascetic both by circumstance and conviction.

At times we debated whether a true Christian could drive a Cadillac. But the debates were short-lived because we already knew the answer. It was No. Resoundingly. Categorically.

When it came to how church funds should be distributed, there was little question: Mission-field necessity must always take precedence over home-field luxury.

Confession 2

In the early 1970s, as a student missionary representing Union College (in Lincoln, Nebraska), I taught school in a developing country.

While there, I ate in the dining hall with the students. The food was the epitome of plain. Yet every day villagers from nearby waited close to the school for hours for the garbage to be brought out. Ostensibly they were scavenging for their pigs. But it wasn't uncommon to see them surreptitiously slipping morsels into their own mouths.

During this time I regularly received the student newspaper from Union College. Back there, a debate was raging over whether to spend \$200,000 to build a new clock tower so a long-standing landmark wouldn't be lost when the old administration building was razed. Needless to say, I sided with those opposing construction. I just couldn't get the garbage-eaters out of my mind.

Confession 3

In the early 1980s I was news editor at the *Adventist Review*. Daily I sifted through reams of stories written by people with limited education and even more limited command of English. But the stories had one common element: the financial struggles the Church faces in developing countries as it tries to maintain and expand its outreach.

Then one day a well-typed, well-written article landed on my desk. The report told about a large church in North America that had just invested tens of thousands of dollars so a handful of people in a retirement home could watch the church service live rather than having to watch a recorded version an hour later.

Somehow it all got to me.

I wrote to the author of the article (an insensitive and ill-advised act, I now realize), asking if he had any idea of the impact that printing such a report would have on those who, without even the basic necessities, are trying to reach the world for Christ.

The article's writer became so distraught by what I said that he resigned his position as church communication secretary. I'm sure



James Coffin is senior pastor of the Markham Woods Seventh-day Adventist Church in Longwood, Florida.

I'm persona non grata in that congregation to this day.

Confession 4

In the mid 1980s I was editor of the *Record*, the weekly paper of the South Pacific Division of Seventh-day Adventists. One of my early editorials was titled "Saving the High Heels." I told of two churches I had attended where we had spent a combined total of about US\$100,000 to pave the parking lots "to protect the church carpet and to save the women's high-heeled shoes."

I wrote: "I couldn't help gulping slightly to think of spending \$100,000 to protect carpets and high heels when there are such crying needs in many mission fields. Can we truly justify many of the luxuries that we allow ourselves as individuals and even as congregations? . . . I get the impression that we need to do some re-evaluating."

Reflection. Because of my less-than-affluent childhood and because of my exposure to the struggles of the Church in developing countries, my default setting is toward the "have not's." I would argue that far too much money gets wasted on home-field non-necessities, both personal and organizational.

But, much as I hate to admit it, there is another side to the story. And it deserves to be heard.

Confession 5

Since early 1994 I've pastored an affluent North American congregation. Our members are accountants, builders, business proprietors, college professors, corporate executives, dentists, doctors, entrepreneurs, financial advisers, land developers, middle managers, nurses, real-estate agents, teachers, and a host of other professionals. These are busy, high-achieving people who seek and expect excellence at every turn.

They expect the same from their congregation.

Because they want to invite their professional colleagues and friends to

our services, they want everything to be top-of-the-line. They want the building to be clean, well-appointed, and aesthetically pleasing. They want the lawn well-tended. They want the service well-organized. They want quality music. They want well-presented, carefully reasoned, thought-provoking sermons.

They want a parking lot where the friends they invite won't hesitate to park a BMW, Lexus, or Mercedes. They want to know that they won't be embarrassed by anything. And they provide hundreds of thousands of dollars to the local church each year to ensure that their wants are realized.

In short, the carpet and high heels are well and truly protected here!

Confession 6

My congregation is in Orlando, Florida, the tourist mecca of the world. Disney's Magic Kingdom, MGM Studios, EPCOT, Universal Studios, SeaWorld, and many lesser-known but equally alluring attractions are in our backyard. Life is fast-paced, and the distractions are legion. So it's no small challenge to keep the attention of children and youth—and even adults; and doing it costs money; lots of it.

Aside from spending nearly \$100,000 per year to subsidize Adventist education for our congregation's children, we spend tens of thousands more for Sabbath School, Vacation Bible School, and other social and spiritual programs for our children and youth.

Our Pathfinder Club alone costs nearly \$25,000 per year. But the investment pays off. Contrary to the trend among predominantly Anglo clubs in North America, our Pathfinder numbers keep growing.

But think what this money could achieve in a developing country.

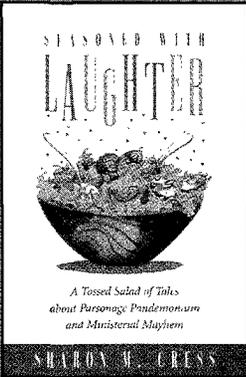
Reflection. To put it simply, I'm a highly conflicted person!

On the one hand, I'm an enthusiastic supporter of global outreach and foreign mission. I want to see as much money as possible used to share the gospel with those who are hungry to hear it. How can we short-change people who respond with such enthusiasm and in such breathtaking numbers? How can we not channel every available penny to those areas where the harvest is there for the taking?

On the other hand, I have an intense burden for retaining members

continued on page 26

Seasoned With Laughter



This book has been described as a "tossed salad of tales about parsonage pandemonium and ministerial mayhem." Author Sharon Cress has collected hilarious tales from pastoral families around the world and compiled them in this book. Proceeds from *Seasoned With Laughter* will be used to help pastoral spouses spread the gospel in their own neighborhoods.

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Preaching with certainty here and now

J. Grant Swank, Jr.



*J. Grant Swank, Jr.,
is pastor of the New
Hope Church,
Windham, Maine.*

Now is the age for prophetic preaching. People who come to hear the Word are looking for conviction from their spiritual leaders. They are so weighed down with one burden or another that they cannot tolerate some wimpy preacher. In some places, if anyone shows up for worship it is to get hold of power from the pulpit. Consequently, a renewed power must return to the weekly sermon. That will in turn give practical guidance to weary travelers for another week of battling against the invisible powers of darkness.

Ezekiel's example of powerful preaching

Ezekiel provides an excellent example of powerful preaching.

First, he was not "doing his own thing" when he got behind the pulpit. Instead, he was surrendering to the inrush of the Holy Spirit: "the Spirit entered me when He spoke to me . . . and I heard Him who spoke to me" (2:2, NKJV). We are to be so close to the mouth of God that we pick up His words for our people. That means basically a life of ongoing prayer. It seems that many preachers want to do anything else but pray: duplicate flyers, play with computers, drive around town, dial numbers, and so on.

This kind of thing goes on among us when there is so much God wants to reveal by way

of divine secrets (Amos 3:7; Ps. 19:1; Dan. 2:10, 22, 28).

Second, Ezekiel confronted a spiritually stiff-necked people. "I am sending you to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that has rebelled against Me" (2:3). Rebellion is the mark of our time. Religious profession without religious conviction is part of our problem.

We seem to want the fruit of faith but not the obligations. We profess to revere the Bible, but don't read it. We believe in God, but we do not allow Him to command our complete allegiance.

This rotting under heaven spelled doom for Israel; can many of the nations of our world be far behind?

Third, Ezekiel lived out the prophetic presence. "As for them, whether they hear or whether they refuse—for they are a rebellious house—yet they will know that a prophet has been among them" (2:5).

The prophetic preacher is not to carry the weight of others' decisions. Each person will answer for his own choices. However, the mouthpiece of God will be expected to stand firm, communicating with certainty that the standard of the Lord has been erected amidst the people.

Do our congregations realize that we are holy before God? Can they know assuredly that we are utterly focused on Heaven's will for our calling? Deep down, most parishioners have had it with "good buddy" preachers who stroke, play up to them, and coddle; these do not command respect from thinking people. Today's demand is for a preacher who is unreservedly on the line for truth.

Fourth, Ezekiel was not to flinch when cold-eyed lookers-on tried to stare him down. "Do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks" (2:6). Having preached for 40 years, if looks could have killed, I'd have been dead a thousand times. What about the person who slides behind another human body so that the preacher cannot see him while the sermon is delivered? Have you ever noticed that happening as you preached? What about that individual in the back of the sanctuary who locks his eyeballs against yours for the 30-minute fight against truth? "Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads.

Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks” (3:8, 9).

Finally, Ezekiel was cautioned to watch out for smoothies who gushed over his sermons but purposefully concluded not to act upon them. “So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people, and they hear your words, but they do not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain” (33:31).

These are the parishioners who paw us in public but push us aside in their hearts. “Indeed you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them” (33:32).

Speak God’s Word

Today’s preachers may be tempted

to blur God’s message. There is great pressure to soft-pedal truth, accommodate Scripture, slice out the more severe passages. God warned Ezekiel not to join the rebellious house of Israel: “Hear what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth and eat what I give you” (2:8).

To eat God’s Word is to sit at His table more than we ever have before. The food is strong, healthy, and nourishing. God’s menu will give the might to withstand; but it must be devoured as those who are starving. To be effective in proclaiming the message with Ezekiel’s candor requires that we be filled with the Word of God.

When God’s preacher gives the message, he will certainly feel the outside press of “lamentations and mourning and woe” (2:10). This is the expected impact of God’s Word against the world’s word. One force

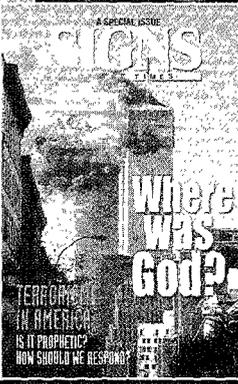
will contend against the other. The preacher will certainly feel the conflict and be tempted to withdraw from it, to ease back from it.

Yet the longer the biblical prophets remain unmoved by the world’s indifference, the more they taste within their souls the reward of staying true to heaven’s menu: “So I ate it, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness” (3:3). There is no trade-off for God’s “honey in sweetness.”

So it is that present-day preachers will spend the rest of their ministry amidst turbulent times that will no doubt grow more threatening. Yet as we climb higher into the heart of God, we will discover there the “plain” (3:22). There God will talk with us. There we will “behold the glory of the Lord . . .” and with Ezekiel exclaim: “I fell on my face” (3:23).

Isn’t that what is most needed? Isn’t that enough? ■

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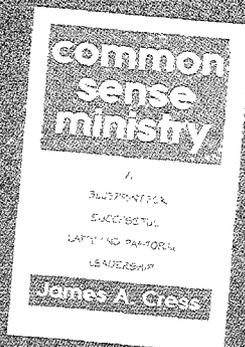
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A tension that's good for corporate health

continued from page 23

and gaining new ones in environments where there's little sense of need; where we struggle to convince them that they have a problem, let alone that Christ is the answer. I have a burden for people who are "rich and increased with goods and [feel they] have need of nothing."

I realize that winning and retaining high-level professionals—even in paltry numbers—costs much more than what's required for far more dramatic results in many developing areas of the world. But isn't everyone precious in God's sight? How can we put a price tag on the gospel?

Observation 1

I admire the willingness of North American Adventists, especially those of a bygone era to provide the personnel, effort, and money required to reach out to everyone, whatever the cost or inconvenience.

When the Seventh-day Adventist Church sent out its first missionary more than 125 years ago, the real challenges lay in the mission field; the home field was easy. Back then, cost per convert was high in the mission field and low in the home field.

The question now is: Are we willing to bear the cost and inconvenience of working for the affluent in the world's

developed areas? Or have they priced themselves out of the gospel market? Are we going to write them off as too tough an assignment?

Observation 2

Despite our church's impressive numeric growth in many developing areas, and despite a dramatic increase in indigenous leadership, the Church in those regions still needs assistance from members in more affluent countries. One group has been blessed with fertile soil for planting the gospel seed, the other group has been blessed with financial resources.

For this reason, it's imperative to keep the Church strong everywhere. We must ensure its vitality and viability. Let me employ an analogy:

When flying, it's not selfish to follow the command of the flight attendant to fit our own oxygen mask first and then attend to those who are traveling with us. But it's the epitome of self-centeredness to become so absorbed in fitting our own mask that we forget that we even have fellow travelers who need our help.

Too many of us have an all-or-nothing mentality. We're either totally focused on the good soil of the mission field, or we're totally focused on the rocky ground of our own field. The truth is that both need our attention, our energy, our money.

It's easy to understand how those who have little might look at home-

field expenditures as extravagant. But we need to help them recognize that all things being equal, paradoxically, it may be the only way to keep adequate funding headed their direction.

Observation 3

Our church's "have not's" have a great responsibility toward the "have's": to keep us abreast of the wonderful things being accomplished with the resources being sent their way. The cash flow will be in proportion to the flow of information about what's being achieved. This fact is too little appreciated.

Proverbs 11:25 says: "He who refreshes others will himself be refreshed." It's a law of life that we get by giving, that we hold on by letting go. The greatest blessing for any congregation is the joy of service, the sense that they're actually making a difference in the world.

Recently our congregation raised money to build a church in Honduras. A few dozen members traveled there and actually built it. The fact that more than \$50,000 was channeled into an overseas project did not diminish local giving. But it did fire up a group of people as they haven't been fired up before.

As long as people know what's happening with the money they send elsewhere, as long as they have the joy of seeing it put to productive use, they'll be excited about sharing their resources.

Concluding reflection. We're never going to resolve the tension over how the Church's money should be distributed. The tension is inevitable. And, believe it or not, the tension is vital for optimum health.

As long as we understand and appreciate the needs that exist at home and abroad, we will be healthfully conflicted about how to allocate our resources. When we concentrate on one area of need to the exclusion of the other, some of the tension will be reduced. But when that happens, watch out. At that point the Church will be in trouble. ❧

SEEDS 2001

How to plant a church, reap a harvest

More than 600 pastors, evangelists, and lay persons attended SEEDS 2001, A Church Planting Conference, held at Andrews University last July. The delegates came from across North America and 12 other countries. They came to study, pray, and share how to “Plant a Church . . . Reap a Harvest.” The conference featured inspiring devotionals, challenging sermons, in-depth analysis, and some 170 break-out seminars in English and Spanish led by 80 presenters, themselves church planters, specialists in various cultural missions, evangelists or church administrators.

In the “re:church” module, participants learned ways to reach people of today’s pluralistic, nonauthoritarian, secular, experience-oriented society. In groups they discussed practical ways to initiate conversation, build relationships, and develop interest. Then they went out to interact with people in the community, and returned to tell what they had discovered during these excursions.

Developing a church planting movement, as envisioned by SEEDS, requires a strong infrastructure with several basic components:

- ◆ An active, ministering laity, equipped and empowered by the pastors
- ◆ A continued emphasis on growing healthy churches, both church plants and mother churches
- ◆ A belief that healthy churches reproduce themselves (A church plant is not the end of a process, but it must grow, mature, and then plant another church.)
- ◆ A contextual understanding involving worldview-based surrounding cultures, languages, nationalities, and age groups
- ◆ A commitment to the mission—not our mission, but God’s mission—to reach lost people and draw them to

MARTI SCHNEIDER



Him. Churches are not planted just to increase our domain, tithe base, or power. They are planted to increase God’s kingdom!

SEEDS does not advocate a particular style of church, nor does it have a single target audience. It is as broad as the assignments God gives to His modern-day disciples. Church plants can be conventional or cell churches; traditional, liturgical, or contemporary churches; ethnic, multi-cultural, or cross-culturally ministering churches . . . each kind of church has its value and place in the ministry line-up.

Church plants are not simply buildings to house people. Church plants are people gathering to worship God, and moving into a community and workplace to share the gospel. Church plants can begin with a family unit, a Bible study series, a small group or a single cell . . . even a lunch group at work or a women’s baby-sitting group. A church plant can also begin with a mother church or district sending out a core group, or with a series of evangelistic meetings sponsored by a group of churches for the purpose of developing a new church.

Is SEEDS a kind of pastor’s meeting? Yes . . . and No. It’s a ministers’ meeting that includes all of us! In fact, SEEDS is a meeting for ministry teams—pastors, their lay leaders, and ministry coordinators—to learn, dream, and develop

plans. It is a place for conference presidents and their teams to network with their counterparts and plan strategies that will support and encourage these people who will return home full of enthusiasm.

Is church planting intended to replace public evangelistic efforts? Definitely not! Instead, church planting re-joins the evangelistic team . . . the lifestyle, relationship building, and need-oriented evangelism. It connects with educational, literature, visitation, and Bible work evangelism, including public seminars and preaching evangelism. Church planting is a vehicle to bring the other methods of evangelism to an unentered city or people group.

So what is the key to success in church planting? Don Schneider, North American Division President, said it in his keynote address: “Whatever challenge we are facing in whatever mission God has given us, we are not big enough to meet it. But God can handle it and bring victory and success . . . and He will, if we will depend on Him.” ■

Marti Schneider is coordinator for SEEDS Church Planting Conference and director for programs, Global Mission, General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, Silver Spring, Maryland.

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May 8-11, 2002, at Andrews University

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WELL MANAGED, CONFLICTS CAN BE
 A MEANS OF BLESSING RATHER THAN
 BECOME A CURSE TO THE CHURCH.

Managing conflict in the church

I was enriched by Jack Morris's article "Managing Conflict in the Church" (May 2001). The suggested way of handling church conflict is a must to every minister. Pastor Morris also delineated the psychological reasons prompting people to be a problem by no dispute, like cancerous cells, conflicts unsettled can split the church into fragments. Also, it is interesting to learn that, if well managed, conflicts can be a means of blessing rather than become a curse to the church.

—Sylas K. Tochim, pastor, Kabarnet, Kenya, East Africa.

July 2001 issue

Ministry is interesting, relevant, and stimulating to read, as it provokes critical thinking on current religious, spiritual, moral, and ethical "social issues" that pastors and church leaders and administrators face on a daily basis.

Three articles that caught my attention and caused me to re-examine some assumptions and questions that were part of my psyche were "The Witness of Preaching: An Interview with G. Thomas Long," by Derek J. Morris; "Ministerial Mendacity," by Ellie Green; and "Pastoring on the Postmodern Frontline," (part 1) by Samir Selmanovic.

In general, I agree with the thrust of these articles but question the assertion in Selmanovic's article that "modernism is responsible for producing slavery,

wars, dictators, ethnic cleansing, urban violence, drugs, poverty, and a growing gap between rich and poor."

Haven't these evils extensively plagued our human societies globally since the fall of man? I think so. Modernism tried to address them with good intentions, some success, and disappointing failures, as will postmodernism and all the other "isms" that will surface in the future. The good news is that we never give up hope or quit trying to blaze new trails.

—Warren S. Banfield, Washington, DC.

The article "Dealing with Difficult People" impressed me profoundly, and a special thanks and recognition to author V. Neil Wyrick, who has an exquisite presentation of this article.

It touches my indifferent looks toward people who are inflexible. It is the most captions manners that everybody dislike. I like the phrase which says, "A large bucket of liquid love pour its entire contents over his head and the liquid love forms puddles at his feet."

Yes, we are living in this battlefield, surrounded by nit-picking, difficult people, where the enemy is close to every direction of our struggles; however, it is also a challenge to be in the midst where we can be trained to wrestle and to stretch to our limitations of humility and patience with untiring fulfillment of our destinations.

Let's focus our thoughts way back to the life of Jesus while He was still on this earth. He met various difficult people,

yet He swallowed everything with love and sympathy. Even at the cross of His agonizing period, still He can resist in His human nature to forgive tough people although He was in the most painful, ferocious situation. And because of this unfathomable love, we are preserved. He alone can remove all this complications if we allow Him to work with us.

And above all, unconditional love is the greatest influence in dealing with difficult people.

—Estrella Anacleto Jordan, Prilly, Switzerland.

Appreciation

Thanks for sending *Ministry* to me. And thanks especially for the article by Larry Yeagley, "The Lonely Pastor" (July 2001). Pastor Yeagley has a special gift of sensitivity for the pain of living in a fallen world, whether from grief or from ministering in imperfect congregations. He has been a channel of God's comfort for me.

Tom Warner, via email.

Iwish to thank you for sending to me your very inspiring magazine, *Ministry*. Since I began reading the rich articles from your journal, the level of my ministry has changed, and I am now taking my church to a higher height. We appreciate the excellence in all that you are doing to change the perception of ministry and those involved. Please keep my name on your mailing list. ■

—McDonald Imaikop, senior pastor, The Revival Mission, Calabar, CRS, Nigeria.

Free Subscription

If you're receiving *Ministry* bimonthly and haven't paid for a subscription, it's not a mistake. Since 1928 *Ministry* has been published for Seventh-day Adventist ministers. We believe, however, that the time has come for clergy everywhere to experience a resurgence of faith in the authority of Scripture and in the great truths that reveal the gospel of our salvation by grace, through faith alone in Jesus Christ. We want to share our aspirations and faith in a way that will provide inspiration and help to you as clergy. We hope you will accept this journal as our outstretched hand to you. Look over our shoulder, take what you want and find helpful, and discard what you can't use. Bimonthly gift subscriptions are available to all licensed and/or ordained clergy. Requests should be on church letterhead and addressed to the editorial office.

Incarnational ministry

continued from page 13

learned their language and acquired their culture. He became a Motilone. He gained their trust, and they gradually learned to see him as one of them. Only when that had happened, were they able to learn what he had to share with them.

Many of the Motilones became Christians, and Olson's opinion of them was something never heard before: "Having got to know them, I began to admire their honesty, faithfulness in marriage, truthfulness, social organization, and mutual care. I felt they had one of the most perfect communities I have ever seen."

To do real missions means to ensure that we understand the people to whom we have been sent. It means to be with them. That, in turn, involves practicing the spirit of Christ in our churches. It means actually demonstrating this love in outreach efforts, in churches that think, speak, and do the work of seeking the lost.

In Christ, God has broken down all barriers between people. The question we need to ask as we continue our mission is: Do we have the spirit of Christ? Do we love the lost enough to break down all the barriers between us and them, seeing them as truly one with us? ■

Missions across cultures

continued from page 19

adaptation, stated his "methods," ending with these significant words: "I have become all things to all men, so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Cor 9:19-22). As Ralph Winter states, "God did not require a Gentile to commit cultural suicide to become a believer."¹

Both Jesus and Paul, model missionaries, adapted their lives to the culture and needs of the people they were reaching. But beyond that, they

adapted the way they delivered their message. Compare Jesus' words to the Samaritan woman (John 4) to the way He spoke to the Pharisees. Consider the way He taught the common people in parables based on familiar events in their everyday lives. Examine Paul's words to Agrippa (Acts 25:25-26:23), and compare them with the way he spoke to those gathered in the synagogue in Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-3), to the "heathen" crowd in Lystra (Acts 14:15-17), or to the Greeks on Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-32) and see how Paul presented the good

news, always taking into account his audience's perspective, knowledge, and cultural background.

I've learned a lot since those early days when I first decided to be a missionary. Looking back at the mission story books I read as a child, I'm convinced that good missionaries throughout history have followed the example of Jesus and Paul, "becoming all things to all [people]," so that they can save some. In the end everyone who is a minister is a missionary. ■

¹ Perspectives (1992), 177.

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Listening differently now?

Will the world listen differently now? Believers have always been called to preach in the face of unspeakable evil; to confront the worst wickedness, to proclaim good in the midst of bad news, and to offer a message of hope and restoration to hopeless souls.

But what do we say in the face of such overwhelming loss? Do we really have something to offer New York City, Washington, D.C., or the rest of humanity which has watched terrorists hijack our dreams, murder our friends and relatives, and jolt our world into a horrible reality beyond the worst we could have ever imagined.

We believed secure cocoons of steel, glass, and technology could insulate and protect us. Harsh reality has stripped our souls more bare than the hole in Manhattan's skyline. What is really eternal and what is transitory?

Before we glibly assure ourselves that our message is of unchanging and eternal value, we must stare long into the hearts of families who have been ripped apart and ponder the questions they confront.

Does the Christian message change after terrorists destroy twin towers? If it doesn't—and I believe even now that the gospel's good news remains constant—can we assume that people will now listen differently? Or will God's word be drowned in the cacophony of voices which cry for retribution or threaten even greater catastrophe.

Can we speak God's word in such a way that we will break through humanity's traumatized preoccupation barrier? Isn't our greatest mission challenge the streets of the world's greatest cities more than the dense jungle or small backwaters of remote lands.

Historic Edinburgh, Scotland, will be the site of the next International Congress Preaching (ICOP), April 9-11,

JAMES A. CRESS



2002. Appropriately, "Preaching in a Missionary Age" is the theme for this great interdenominational event sponsored by *Preaching* magazine.

While some have thought that the age of missionaries—and thus the need for preaching in a missionary setting—has past, reality is far different. Many nations which once were considered Christianized are now the very mission frontiers of post-modern society. Likewise, some countries previously the target of mission endeavors now send missionaries to reach those people who once sponsored gospel proclamation.

Presenters include Lloyd John Ogilvie, William Augustus Jones, Jr., John MacArther, Peter Grainger, Edwin Young, William Hinson, David Jackman, Robert Leslie Holmes, John Huffman, William Self, William Willimon, Greg Scharf, and David Searle.

Ministry magazine's annual satellite Professional Growth Seminar will be uplinked live from Edinburgh on April 10 in a unique joint-venture project between the two hosting magazines. Adventist preacher, Rear Admiral Barry Black, Chief of U.S. Navy Chaplains, will join other speakers in the live broadcast which will also feature highlights of various congress events. Other preachers or seminar speakers familiar to *Ministry* readers include Peter Bath, Sharon Cress, and Ian Sweeney.

Register your attendance for the International Congress on Preaching, P.O. Box 369, Jackson, TN, USA 38302-0369, or online at www.preaching-congress.com. Phone: 800.288.9763 or 731.668.9948. Fax: 731.668.9633. Make registration checks payable in US\$ 225.

To register your site for the live satellite downlink (available in most parts of the world), contact Nikolaus Satelmajer, *Ministry* Professional Growth Seminars, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD USA 20904; Call 301.680.6507; Fax 301.680.6502 or email 102555.2473@compuserve.com.

Edinburgh is a perfect city to host this event with its rich tradition of great preaching from the fiery reformer, John Knox to James Stewart, the gifted professor/preacher of the twentieth century.

By the way, ICOP attendees will want to read a new biography, *John Knox*, by Rosalind K. Marshall, 2000, Birlinn Ltd. Edinburgh (Available online from Amazon.com). The book presents a balanced yet sympathetic treatment of the great preacher and debunks some of the myths often tossed about by his critics. Once you read the book, you'll be eager to visit St. Giles Cathedral and the John Knox House (whether or not he ever actually lived there)!

Edinburgh is also an enjoyable city for visitors. The "Royal Mile" is one of Europe's most popular tourist destinations from Edinburgh Castle at one end to the Palace of Holyroodhouse, official residence of the royal family while in Scotland. Allow several hours to explore and enjoy the sites.

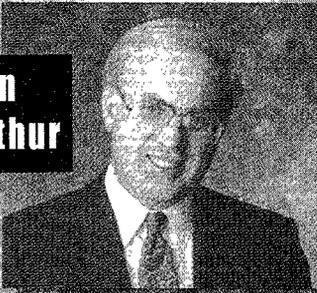
You will benefit and grow from this great congress. Plus, perhaps more than ever, in the light of recent tragedies, the world may be ready to listen differently as we preach Christ in a missionary age. ■

On The Historic Campus Of The University Of Edinburgh

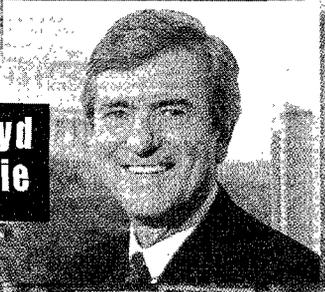
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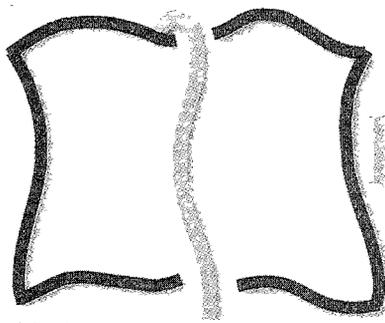
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