

The New Shape of Adventist Mission

by Gottfried Oosterwal

After a hundred years of overseas mission, the Adventist Church has grown from a small community of 6,000 believers to a worldwide movement of over 2.5 million people; from an American church to a universal church firmly planted in over 90 percent of the countries of the world. It is now the most widespread single Protestant missionary organization; and every year the Lord is adding nearly 250,000 believers by baptism or profession of faith, making for a net annual church growth of over 5.5 percent.

The vitality, growth and comprehensive scope of Adventist mission amazes even the casual observer. It is evidenced by the very high per capita giving of U.S. \$162 per year (over \$305 million in 1973); by the church's 50 publishing houses with 5,500 literature evangelists; by the 71,000 denominational workers, the 3,847 elementary schools, 345 hospitals and dispensaries, 462 colleges and academies, 3 universities, 49 orphanages and old people's homes and 27 food factories. But it is even more amazing that during these hundred years of world mission the church has preserved such a remarkable unity amid the forces that are breaking every global structure to pieces. Seventh-day Adventists are still proclaiming with fervor the one and the same message that moved the pioneers, namely that Jesus Christ, the Redeemer of all men and the Lord of the whole world, has entered the

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last phase of His mission to bring about the restoration of the Kingdom of God in full glory (Rev. 14:6-12). And even though, if present trends continue, by the end of this decade barely 10 percent of all Seventh-day Adventists will live in the United States of America, where the church had its origin, this worldwide community has remained one genuine brotherhood, one great family and one fellowship.

But a number of trends are now developing that are not only putting the unity of the church to a severe test, but are also affecting the whole life and mission of the church. Unless the consequences of these new trends and developments are clearly recognized, both in their positive and negative functions, the missionary advance and growth of the church may be seriously stunted. A greater awareness of the actual missionary situation may lead the church in this General Conference year to an honest self-evaluation in the light of the divine commission (Matt. 28:18-20), and to a reassessment of the present challenges and opportunities for Seventh-day Adventist mission in all the world.

With the church established in most of the world, a shift has occurred in the very nature of the Adventist overseas missionary movement. It took place in three stages. First, men and women left the shores of North America to proclaim the Gospel message and establish churches. Second, the work of the missionary shifted to the building up of the established churches. Institutions were established; increasingly, missionaries became involved in training indigenous workers, and in the organizational aspects of church growth and mission.

This shift continued even further in the third phase of mission, which became the most tumultuous and revolutionary one. Indigenous workers now became entrusted with the propagation of the message and the care and the building up of the churches. They also took over many—if not most—of the organizational and administrative functions of the missionaries, who now became advisers and specialists in academic or technical aspects of the work. In most areas of the world, the Adventist missionary movement today is characterized by this third phase. As a result, less than two percent of missionaries from North America and Europe are going out to evangelize or to plant churches. Nearly all teach in Adventist schools, serve in a medical or paramedical capacity, or work as specialists within the church organization or as administrators of Adventist institutions.

We should immediately recognize the dangers in this shift from evangelistic mission to intra-church movement, from being a sending community to being a lending organization. Although few people detect anything abnormal in this development, it has, in the light of a biblical view of mission, two negative consequences, which already are causing considerable stagnation in Adventist mission.

The first is the trend to leave the evangelization of the field and the planting of churches exclusively to the indigenous workers, while the missionary does the administrative, organizational or specialized work. The second is the concept that the missionary's role is to prepare and equip indigenous workers to take over as soon as possible, so that the missionary himself can move up to a higher or more specialized, organizational function. When all the positions have been taken over, and there is no higher place for the missionary to climb to, he returns home, thinking that his mission is accomplished.

This is already having a devastating effect on the advance of Adventist mission. What is wrong is not the principle of making the local church or field responsible for the evangelization of its surrounding areas. This clearly has a basis in Scripture. But the exclusivistic manner in which this principle has been used and the separation between church activity and mission that is the result of it, is wrong. Nowhere in Scripture does this principle mean that the foreign missionary movement should shift from pioneer-evangelism

and church planting to institutionalized service, or that after a while, when these institutions and organizational structures can be taken over by indigenous workers, the missionary should move out altogether. That concept is rooted in a wrong kind of colonialism and betrays an unbiblical spirit of paternalism. The example of Christ shows us that real mission is not climbing up, but coming down; not going out, but moving on. It is not making oneself dispensable, but making oneself nothing and becoming a servant to all men (Phil. 2:5-8; Matt. 20:28; etc.).

It is not just biblical theology that calls for a stop to this trend and for a new missionary spirit that will send thousands of missionaries overseas

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to evangelize and win converts and plant churches. The very missionary situation leaves us no choice! After a hundred years of mission, the Adventist church may have been planted in 90 percent of the countries of the world, but this is a far cry from having brought the Gospel to all nations, kindreds, tongues and people. There are some two billion (2,000 million!) people in the world who have never even heard the name of Christ and another billion, perhaps, who have not been confronted with the message of the three angels of Rev. 14:6-12.

The future of Adventist mission stands, or falls, with the concept that mission is always reaching out to those who do not know Christ—not by proxy, but by personal presence and proclamation. In view of all of this, three actions should be taken:

1. The preparation of a profile of the many tribes and tongues and people, country by country, who have never been reached with the Gospel; of what prospects there are for mission among them; and of the ways they can best be

TABLE 1

	Population (1973)	SDA Church Members (1973)	Ratio
Africa	374,000	685	1:546
Asia	2,204,000	358	1:6,156
North America	233,000	486	1:479
Inter-America	92,000	320	1:288
South America	206,000	376	1:548
Europe	472,000	171	1:2,760
USSR	250,000	40	1:6,250
Oceania	21,000	108	1:194
Total	c. 3,860,000	c. 2,400	1:1,608

reached. One way to implement such an action would be by establishing a *Seventh-day Adventist Institute of World Mission*, which could coordinate this—and other—urgently needed missionary research. Such an institute could stimulate the church's thinking on new missionary methods, and assist in the selection, recruiting and training of missionary evangelists leaving the various countries and continents for service abroad.

2. The setting aside, from the General Conference down through the various divisions, of special budgets for pioneer-evangelists to work among people not yet reached with the Gospel. At least one division has already begun to do this. But a hundred missionaries should be in the field where now there is one only.

3. Establishment of special training programs for these missionary evangelists and church planters to prepare them for their work of cross-cultural communication.

Every year, according to the 1974 United Nations population figures, 132 million people are born, while some 55 million die, making for a net population growth of two percent, or 75-80 million people per year. This means that in 1980, over 416 million people will have been added to the present world population of four billion. Unless the church will find ways to reach out more rapidly to a much larger population, the number of those who live and die without having been brought into contact with the Eternal Gospel will increase. More than ever, therefore, Seventh-day Adventist mission should be oriented towards those who have never even

heard the name of Christ. The road ahead for Adventist mission means *mission to millions*—in fact, some 3,500 million, 85 percent of whom are non-Christians.

About 60 percent of the world population lives in Asia, three times as many people as in all of North America and Europe and Australia and New Zealand combined. Less than three percent of the Asian people are Christian, while as Table 1 shows, the total number of Seventh-day Adventists is only 358,000, or one in 6,156 people.

One cannot deny the urgency of mission in Africa, Inter-America and South America, or Oceania, Europe and North America; even in North America barely 15-20 percent of the people have ever heard the Adventist message clearly. Yet, the situation in Asia is really indicative of the challenge of mission in the near future: the many millions of people of other faiths, the teeming urban populations and the millions of unbelievers in a secular world.

It is obvious that new approaches to mission are demanded. Bringing individuals in one by one will never accomplish what the Lord commissioned His church to do. Christ spoke of baptizing families (kindreds) and tribes and language groups. In these last days, the church should prepare itself for *people movements* toward Christ: whole villages, tribes, castes, families and communities accepting the good news of salvation and forming churches obedient to the commandments of God. Besides reaching out more rapidly to the millions, people movements bring a quality to church growth that individual conversions seldom do. People become Christian without social dislocation,

making for much more stable churches, greatly diminishing the present high apostasy rate of individual converts who have become separated from their own group, and establishing a link to those members of the group who have not yet taken their stand for Christ. People movements, of course, should not be equated with careless baptizing, without personal decision or involvement. They are not "mass" movements. Each member of the group participates in the decision to join the church, except that the members make their decision collectively, much as households did in Old and New Testament times.

In the past few years Adventist mission has repeatedly been challenged by such people movements, from Peru to Zaire to Indonesia and Korea. Many of these have not been recognized. Others have fizzled because the church was unable or unprepared to form such a movement of thousands of people into a genuine Adventist church in a relatively short time (being an important factor in harvesting a people movement). The immediate future will see many more such people movements arising in all continents. It is, therefore, imperative that Adventist workers and missionaries be instructed in how to nurture these movements and care for the churches that will grow out of them.

Though exact figures on the adherents of the world's religions are, of course, not available, the best estimates give the following picture:

TABLE 2 (1975)

Christian	c. 900 million
Muslim	c. 660 million
Hindu	c. 505 million
Buddhist (Outside of the People's Republic of China)	c. 275 million
Confucianist (Outside of the People's Republic of China)	c. 250 million
Animist	c. 150 million
Under Communist Regime	c. 1,200 million

The challenge of the world religions does not, of course, consist merely in their numbers of people, amounting to more than twice that of the Christian populations in the world. It consists rather in the fact that these religions are a total way of life, a culture, a value-system that has shaped these peoples' whole life and

thought, behavior and identity. The encounter between Hinduism or Buddhism does not take place, therefore, on the level of systems of thought or formulation of doctrines, but on the much deeper level of human experience. The communication of the Christian message has to take place, therefore, on that level, or there will be no communication at all. The evidence for this is all about. After centuries of missionary endeavor, barely two percent of India's population is nominally Christian. After more than a century of Protestant mission in Japan, fewer than one percent are professing Christians. In the Muslim world of the Middle East, the total harvest of Christian mission is even less. Moreover, the converts from the non-Christian world have by and large come from the minority peoples in these areas and from the isolated populations least affected by the dominant way of life.

Though the SDA church has far greater potential to reach out to Muslims and Buddhists than any other Christian church, until now it has made little or no concentrated effort to win these people to Christ. One reason is the church's self-understanding. It has looked upon itself as a remnant within the Christian community, and it has conceived of its mission as "calling the honest people of God out of the apostate and decadent churches which constitute Babylon." From the very beginning, therefore, Adventist mission has been oriented towards the Christian populations of the world. Even today, over 90 percent of all converts come from a Christian background. The others are won mostly from animist populations.

A second reason Adventists have not accomplished more among non-Christian religious groups is that the church has neglected to prepare special literature written for the Hindu or Buddhist or Muslim mind. Practically all Adventist mission literature in these non-Christian areas—and there is very, very little—is translated from English writings intended for Christians in a Western cultural setting.

A third reason is found in the prevailing concept of evangelism in Adventist mission. Evangelism, which in the Scriptures clearly means to present Jesus Christ in such a way that people clearly understand His promises and

demands, His grace and His conditions of salvation, thereby forcing them to make a decision about Him, has become identified with "soul winning." This has given rise to the tendency to concentrate on those individuals who are prospective church members. And though there is biblical support for working with those populations the Spirit has already prepared for harvest, the exclusivist application of this principle has led to a fatal neglect of non-Christian populations in Adventist mission.

Fortunately, in the last few years a new vision has gradually been emerging in Adventist mission circles. In the fall of 1973, after a hundred years of Adventist mission, the Annual Council of the General Conference appointed a committee on Adventist relations with people of other religions. There are new insights now on the role of these other religions in the Great Controversy between Christ and Satan. New concepts are developing regarding the most fruitful ways of communicating the Gospel to people of other faiths. To keep this newly awakened momentum going, it is imperative that the General Conference appoint someone as soon as possible to coordinate the new interest and activity in this area. Such a coordinator could be responsible for further research in communicating the Gospel to non-Christians, and could stimulate the preparation of Adventist mission literature especially written for such people. In order to keep constantly before the church Paul's ambition—and therefore ours—"to bring the Gospel to places where the very name of Christ has not been heard" (Rom. 15:20, 21), he could also organize and conduct workshops, seminars and workers' meetings in areas of the Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim world.

What are the prospects for a fruitful mission to people of other faiths in the coming decade? They are greater than ever. It is no exaggeration to state that a whole new day has come, challenging the church to prepare for an abundant harvest. Among the human factors responsible for this are the end of the colonial era and the technological and economical supremacy of the West, and the process of modernization and secularization. Until the 1940s and 1950s, Christianity was identified with the colonial West, and the church was considered an instrument of Western culture. This both brought success to Christian mission—and caused resist-

ance to it. Now, this stage is passing away, and the question is: Are Adventist missionaries ready for the new opportunity? Thrown back on our spiritual values and resources only, without the powerful incentives of Western technology or riches or power, are our message and spirituality and Christian example strong enough to convince non-Christian believers of the power of Christ? Success in mission now depends not on our management abilities, academic or technical specialization, or organizational strength, but on the kind of persons we are and the spiritual fruits in our lives. Here also lies the answer to the process of modernization and secularization that affects all religions today. A Spirit-filled life is what people need to find meaning in the confusion of the future shock with its neuroticizing effects on all men.

When the first century of Adventist mission was drawing to a close, at least four distinctive periods in human history also came to an end. One of these, already mentioned, was the colonial period. During the 25 years of decolonization since 1945, a hundred new nations have joined the United Nations. This process of decolonization, with the nationalism that accompanies it, has had a great influence on Adventist missions.

A special tribute must be paid here to the African and Asian leaders of the Adventist church who—often under the most adverse circumstances and immense social and political pressures—have shown such remarkable loyalty to a church that so unmistakably bears the stamp of the West. Many of these leaders have been *self-expressive* in their nationalism, but not *self-assertive* and never *self-satisfied*. With such leaders, we may expect the unity of the church to be maintained in the future, even though the present *cultural nationalism* could be more destructive than the political nationalism of yesteryear. As a new ideology, it works more subtly, affecting the believer's whole life and thought.

Further intensive contact between Adventist believers and leaders, a common sharing and especially a large and continuous flow of missionaries, from everywhere to everywhere, are means to counteract the negative consequences of growing cultural nationalism in the world. If

present trends are any indication, the future of the unity in the Adventist church looks very bright.

A tribute must be paid here to the Adventist church leaders, who have greatly strengthened the large flow of missionaries from home bases other than the United States and Europe. In this respect also Seventh-day Adventist mission has set an example to all other mission organizations. Adventist mission today has become a two-way street. Already some 45 percent of Adventist missionaries—that is, of the nearly 3,000 persons now serving the church in a

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country other than their own—comes from areas outside of North America. Filipino missionaries have been called to work in Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and as far as Africa. Missionaries from South America are not only serving in Inter-America or Africa, but in North America and Europe as well.

The other three distinctive periods of human history that have come now to an end are the era of capitalism with its individualism, free enterprise, private ownership, profit-making and competition; the age of belief, which is now making place for a secular mentality; and the rural era, which is now giving way to the age of the technopolis with its new kind of man, *homo metropolitanus*, and its radically new mode of existence.

The shock of these tremendous, and rather sudden, changes is also greatly affecting the shape of Adventist mission. Most of the new nations—and the old as well!—are accepting a form of socialism. The nation, the people as a whole, become the overriding interest. It is the freedom, the development and the pursuit of happiness of all—and not just of a few—that

count. Churches, and certainly foreign missions, lose many of the rights and privileges they had under the former capitalist (and colonial) system. In some countries, churches are forced to form a union, since the division among them is considered harmful to the ideal of unity, to the concept of equality and happiness for all. In most areas churches and missions are no longer exempt from joining labor unions, national councils and political activity.

All this compels Adventists to ask some serious questions. Can Adventists in the near future participate in joint action programs with other churches? Should we always insist on having our own schools or organizing our own relief and welfare and health programs? In quite a number of countries, Adventists already are operating schools together with other churches, paid for by the national governments. Should the church continue to insist that Adventist doctors, nurses and staff members leave their work as soon as a hospital is nationalized? What role should Adventist mission, with its strong emphasis on the restoration of the image of God in men, in its wholeness, and on the “healing of the nations,” play in nation building? Are not nations and tongues and tribes the object of God’s mission, besides the individual who is a part of that community?

It is absolutely imperative that the church officially takes stock of its present attitudes and concepts in mission in order to give an answer to such questions. This may be done through a series of General-Conference-organized seminars on the present missionary situation, or through a world conference on mission, or both.

Of particular challenge to Adventist mission is the rapidly increasing city population of the world. While the world population increased four times in the period 1850-1975, the population living in cities of 100,000 or more increased 70 times in that same period. At present, already 35-40 percent of the world population is living in urban centers. Twenty-five years from now, about two-thirds of the world population will live in cities, most of them in large metropolises. A church that is devoted to reaching the millions will find in the sprawling cities its largest mission field.

Since urbanism is a way of life that in many

ways greatly contrasts with the ideals of a church shaped in the rural world of yesteryear, Adventist mission has found it very hard to reach out to the cities. In fact, with some rare, though very significant exceptions, such as São Paulo in Brazil, Adventist mission has failed in its mission to the cities. Even though large

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amounts of money have been spent on “city work,” results have been very minimal. And of those who are won to the faith in the cities, a very large percentage leave.

All this seems to indicate that the city *per se* presents a climate so hostile to the Adventist message that no great harvest can be expected there, no matter what approach the church might use. But in light of spreading urbanism, this conclusion would lead to a horrid pessimism, even to a flight away from the cities, not unlike Jonah’s flight from Nineveh. This pessimism is clearly present among many church and mission leaders, in East and West alike. In fact, an anti-city mentality has developed among most Adventists which has become fatal to the advance of mission. To turn the trend, it is imperative that Adventists begin to apply some of the new insights and methods that other churches or religious groups have used with great success, from Tokyo to Bangkok to New York and San Francisco: the training of the laity for city mission; the use of people’s relationships with neighbors, friends and colleagues at work; the formation of house churches or factory (company) groups; city colonization; restaurants and health clinics and joint evangelism and social action efforts. But all of these will remain without effect unless Adventists will have overcome their anti-city attitude. There’s where the crux lies to our success or failure in mission.

The anti-city attitude is rooted in a one-sided application of the writings of Ellen White. She emphasized that Adventists should leave the cities to avoid their polluting influence. These counsels, however, were given not as a principle of mission, but in the context of our spiritual growth. Whenever Ellen White speaks about the city as an *object of mission*, she urges that “there should be in every city a corps of organized, well-disciplined workers; not merely one or two, but scores . . .” (ChS 72)*; that centers, restaurants, plants, hospitals, even church schools should be established in the cities (CG 306); that families should not leave the cities, but rather work in the neighborhoods of their homes, “carrying with them wherever they go the atmosphere of heaven” (ChS 116); that Adventist families should move away from the (rural) areas where there are already many Adventists and *settle in the cities to raise up there the standard of Christ* (8T 244; ChS 180; etc.). To Ellen White the city was not just a symbol of evil or confusion, but also an object of God’s love and care and mission. Hearing only one part of her message has been fatal to the advance of the Gospel for which we must give an account.

The new road of Adventist mission is leading to the cities. May God give us the power and the grace to be in the city, without being of the city.

Two strong pillars of Adventist mission in the past have been the medical and educational work. Like every other aspect of the church’s work, these two also are greatly affected by changes in the missionary situation today. Schools and hospitals are being nationalized or put under severe restrictions of government control; secularization is undermining the particular aims and goals of Adventist education; the end of the capitalist system has led to the socialization of medicine, making it difficult for Adventist hospitals to continue supporting themselves by serving the affluent classes. The last five years the church has lost many more hospitals in the mission fields than it was able to open. This trend will continue also in the future.

*6T26: “In the city of London alone no fewer than one hundred men should be engaged”! And this was written long before London had grown out to its present form or had developed its present style and spirit.

Nationalization of Adventist medical facilities will be one important factor, but there will be other reasons as well—economic, medical, cultural and missionary.

When Adventist mission hospitals were first established, they filled a real need. But as the work of the church grew and developed, mission hospitals became more and more patterned after the institutions in the United States. There was the same specialization of the physicians, nurses and staff; there were similar, if not identical, facilities and equipment, and the same pattern of individualized care and orientation toward curative medicine. This kind of health care, however, has begun to cost prohibitively—even in America. And it is now virtually impossible to operate mission hospitals on a similar level as those in North America or Europe, even if they were allowed to continue their operation. The church will increasingly be called upon to make up the deficits, something it cannot afford, and should not do! The alternative, operating mission hospitals on a much lower standard, has no future either. Already modern government hospitals and well-equipped institutions operated by universities or international foundations are giving the much older mission hospitals serious competition, causing a serious decline in income and a further deterioration of the good image these mission hospitals have enjoyed for many years. Moreover, such a solution will make it much harder still for mission hospitals to attract American doctors and staff. And national Adventist personnel would likewise be less inclined to work there, only compounding the problem.

What other alternatives are there for Adventist medical mission? Which road should it take?

In light of our mission to the millions, the question arises whether the almost exclusive emphasis on curative medicine and individual care is really the best missionary approach, to say nothing of the economic aspect.* Hospital work, though necessary, is the least effective in reaching out to the millions who still suffer from malaria, hookworm, amebiasis, trachoma, yaws, diarrhea, filariasis, pneumonia, schistosomiasis, dysentery, influenza or malnutrition. And these

*A survey sponsored by the Loma Linda University School of Medicine Alumni Association in 1958, and again in 1963, indicated that about half of the SDA hospitals had no programs in public health, in health education or in preventive medicine for their surrounding areas.

account for 50-75 percent of all deaths in most of the developing countries of Africa and Asia. Small—even mobile—clinics, health education to prevent many of these diseases and community health programs are what is needed. The change of people's health habits, eating patterns, system of hygiene seems to be a much better criterion to evaluate success in medical mission than the number of operations or occupied beds in a hospital. Moreover, such work is really oriented to the whole man: his physical, cultural, social, mental and spiritual life.

Since today about 90 percent of Adventist medical mission is concentrated in hospitals, the road ahead may mean a rather radical change from the established pattern. But at stake is the advance of the Gospel. Hospitals are necessary, and specialized individual care is needed. But first the real needs of the millions should be solved, and the root of their problem lies in their environment, in the community or the family. It is the problem of sanitation, hygiene, facilities, drinking water and malnutrition. What good does it do a person to find healing in a hospital when he has to return again to his disease-infested environment and disease-promoting evil habits?

The crisis in Adventist hospital work overseas may prove to be a blessing in disguise. It forces mission leaders to take a hard and bold look at the situation, and thereby discover new openings and better opportunities for mission. And, really, the future of Adventist medical mission looks bright. Not only do the programs and approaches suggested here make it possible to reach out to the many millions who are now virtually shut off from Adventist medical mission; not only is this work economically possible and in harmony with the Adventist concept of mission to the whole man; but it also enables, more than ever, the ministers and other workers—and the *whole church*, in fact—to become part of this medical missionary work.

Adventist educational mission is faced with similar problems and challenges. It demands, therefore, similar changes and new approaches. In many countries, of course, the Adventist church can no longer operate its own schools. Governments feel that education is too powerful an instrument for the molding of

national character to be left in the hands of foreigners or private institutions. It is only a matter of time until most church schools will either be nationalized completely or put under rather strict government control.

But the question arises: even if Adventist churches are allowed to operate their schools, are the costs worth the effort? If, in the affluent United States, Adventist schools are already hurting for lack of funds and more and more Adventist youth (now at least 55 percent) are attending public schools as a result, how would the churches in the poverty areas of the world, where most Adventists live, be able to support church schools? The answer is: They cannot. These schools would have to be supported by mission funds from abroad, and still only a fraction of the thousands of Adventist young people could be absorbed. To accommodate our Adventist youth in Africa and Latin America, for example, would mean to build there in the next one or two years as many schools as the church has built these past hundred years in the whole world.

What other road is there for Adventist educational mission? Most Protestant mission organizations have given up educational mission as part of their plan to evangelize the world. In fact,

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mission leaders are feeling quite relieved now that their schools have been taken over by governments. It frees the missionaries for work more directly connected with the spread of the Gospel and the growth of the church. And the money saved that way can be spent in other, evangelistic programs of the church, including the strengthening of local churches, youth programs, family evangelism, literature evangelism and other missionary activities. They consider the loss of their many schools, though painful at

first, a gain in the long run. Schools, so necessary in the beginning phase of mission, had begun to absorb far too much in resources and personnel without giving a proportionate evangelistic harvest in return.

There is great validity in this attitude, and Adventists should learn from it. But there are some dimensions of educational mission that these churches clearly have overlooked and where Adventist mission can make a tremendous contribution, if it chooses to walk that road. The first is to establish models of education.

Without arrogance or pride, it may be stated that there is something in genuine Christian education that is lacking everywhere else: the concept of the harmonious development of the whole person. It is clear that Adventist mission won't be able to operate many schools everywhere. But it can operate some schools in a few, centrally located areas. The impact of such schools, if genuinely built on the counsels given to us in Scripture and in the writings of E. G. White, will be far greater than the relatively small number of students that can attend. The whole surrounding area will see the difference! And governments of these new nations will be persuaded to follow the example set by these few real Adventist institutions. I strongly recommend that Adventist mission as soon as possible consolidate its educational institutions. Quality, not quantity, is the answer.

A second dimension, closely related to the first, is that Adventist education must consider the real needs of the people. One of the weaknesses of educational mission in the past has been that it has transplanted Western education systems into cultures and societies that, in fact, demanded a totally different emphasis. What need is there, really, for the many liberal arts colleges that now cause an overproduction of people with degrees in the humanities, etc., for whom there is no employment? The basic need in most of these new countries is technical, agricultural and vocational training. Liberal arts programs tend to stimulate—if not create!—an aversion to manual labor. They are conducive to a strong rationalism and often produce a mentality of elitism. Seventh-day Adventist schools in the past have not altogether escaped these negative influences.

Most of the new nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America are perpetuating in their state schools the model inherited from the West, emphasizing mental development and neglecting the other aspects of man and his existence. The real exception to this rule has been the People's Republic of China, with its emphasis on the unity of head and hand, theory and practice. Genuine Adventist education has a mission to perform that greatly transcends the conversion of individuals who are attending our schools, however important that is. By establishing schools, founded on a genuine Adventist philosophy of education, that really fulfill the most basic needs of the population, millions of people will truly be helped and at the same time be reached with the message where now only a few are influenced.

There is a third dimension that Adventist educational mission needs to explore more fully: theological education. The aim of that education should be the training and equipping of leaders and workers in the countries of Africa and Asia. Nearly 2,000,000 converts have been won in recent years. Thousands of churches have been established. But in most of these fields we have not trained nearly enough leaders. The church should make this task one of its first priorities, if not its very first! The problems connected with implementing such a program, worldwide, are well known: lack of finances, a paucity of qualified teachers and small enrollments. One of the best ways to overcome these difficulties is to establish a system of Theological Education by Extension. The church would not have to wait until it had enough qualified teachers in the particular locales themselves, since these could come from various areas in the world. Neither will the church have to invest a lot of money in expensive buildings.

A beginning has already been made through the extension programs of the Theological Seminary and Graduate School of Andrews University, and of the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary Far East in Manila. The following should be considered, however, in order to fulfill the pressing needs in the fields:

- a. The program should be greatly expanded beyond its present format.
- b. The *need of the field* should be the determining factor, not just the requirements for a degree program as it is listed in the bulletins of

the Seminary.

c. The program should fit within the educational system, and be offered on the level of, the requesting field.

d. Contacts between teacher and the field should be recognized as a necessary requirement for a successful training by extension.

As soon as possible, the church may wish to appoint someone who could serve—with a representative committee—as the coordinator of such a program of Theological Education by Extension.

The varying circumstances taking place in the world," Ellen White wrote, "call for labor which will meet these peculiar developments" (MS 8a, 1888). Though the mission remains the same, methods and approaches must change. Reforms are necessary, and new priorities will have to be established. "Never say, therefore," Ellen White warned, "that this has never been taught. Away with these restrictions. That which God gives His servants to speak today would not perhaps have been present truth twenty years ago, but it is God's message for this time." And "present truth, from the first letter of its alphabet to the last, means missionary effort" (MS 8a, 1888; CH 300).

Today, after a hundred years of Adventist mission, there are nearly ten times as many persons who have not heard of Christ as in the days of the apostle Paul. We know the work is not finished. But the question is: Can our mission be accomplished in this generation? The answer is: Yes, definitely so! Christ's promise is sure: This Gospel of the Kingdom *will* be preached in all the world (Matt. 24:14), and the power to do so has been given to us long ago (Matt. 28:18-20) and is with us every day, every hour (John 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-21).

What is lacking then? The right methods? These are important. But they are not the heart of the matter. "A revival of true godliness among us is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work" (CS 41).

Perhaps the greatest hindrance to accomplishing our God-given task lies in our selfishness, which reflects itself in complacency, a decline in the missionary spirit, the lack of sacrifice and hearts that "are no longer aglow with love for

souls, and a desire to lead them into the fold of Christ" (4T 156).

Ellen White calls for "doing the right thing at the right time" (2T 36). This takes different forms for different people in different locations and at different times. Each believer, each church and each corporate structure, from the smallest institution to a union or a division, may examine itself. For North America, to be specific, it means a change in the giving pattern and the way we spend our money. According to the church's statistics, mission offerings in the Adventist churches in North America show a tremendous percentage decline, from 33.5 percent of the total offerings in 1930 to 11.1 percent in 1971. At the same time, the rate of spending for home and local projects has doubled—and continues to rise sharply. During the first six months of 1973, the actual offerings for mission in North America were \$52,000 less than during the first six months in 1972. At the same time, however, the churches outside of North America, and especially those in the Third World, increased their mission offerings 26.5 percent, from \$4,020,894.73 during the first half-year of 1972 to \$5,085,623.57 for the first six months of 1973.* Sabbath School offerings during that same time also rose 26.11 percent outside of North America, but only 7.05 percent in the North American Division.

The relative decrease in mission offerings over against a rapid increase in spending for home and local projects is only one symptom of a dangerous trend that, unless it is reversed, will seriously hinder the advance of Adventist mission in the world.

One fatal result of the decline in mission offerings is the ever-widening gap between the number of workers in the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America and the number of members. Already there are places where there is only one minister for 25 to 30 churches. Apostasies are very high—in some places 40-45 for every hundred that are won—because of the lack of pastoral care. At the same time, however, the growth rate of workers in North America is increasing more rapidly than that of the mem-

bers. The result is that the rich are becoming richer and the poor poorer. While the percentage of Seventh-day Adventist world membership in North America decreased from 39 percent in 1930 to 20 percent in 1970, the percentage of the workers in North America increased from 38 percent to 47 percent. At the same time, the percentage of Adventist workers in overseas fields decreased from 62 percent in 1930 to 53 percent in 1973. And every year the gap is becoming wider and wider.

Lack of funds prevents Adventist mission in many areas in the world field from reaping the harvests that the Spirit so abundantly has already prepared. But the crisis is not caused so much by a lack of giving per se, as by our pattern of spending it. While we are enriching ourselves by adding more specialized institutions, more elaborate programs, more expensive buildings at home, God's work in many areas of the world is seriously stagnated. For instance: From 1965 to 1970 over 10,000 workers were added in North America, an increase of 12 percent. At the same time, the number of workers outside of North America *dropped* from 37,337 to 36,618, an actual decrease of nearly 2 percent. And that at a time when a veritable church explosion was going on. Not only is the pastoral care and nurture of the churches seriously threatened, but hundreds of well-prepared and well-equipped potential indigenous leaders have to seek employment outside of the denomination, or they leave their own countries to come to the United States. All this is causing serious stagnation in the advance of Adventist mission today. If this trend could only be reversed, there could be a hundred workers in the field where there is only one today.

It is possible, indeed, to accomplish the work God has entrusted to us in this generation. The rapid increase of population, the revival of the world religions and the rise of new ones, the mushrooming of the cities, the process of secularization, the closing of doors and the rising of inflation are really no problems to a church that is wholly committed to the task of world mission. A church so committed will be prepared to adapt its structures, the spending of its money and the deployment of its personnel and resources for that supreme goal. But this means that after a hundred years the battle of Adventist mission has to start in our own backyard.

*Fortunately, by the end of the year (1973), the mission offerings in North America showed a total increase of 12.5 percent over the previous year (1972). At the same time, however, the mission offerings in the world field showed an increase of 19 percent!